

Games and Pr0n 2.0: Methodologies

DiGRA 2026 - Intersectional Pleasures

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Workshop Description

Pornographic games are located in the margins of the game industry (Brathwaite 2006). However, the emergence of new digital distribution channels and funding models for pornographic games has increased their visibility in online media landscapes as well as game researchers' interest in the phenomenon (e.g. Dymak & Lankoski 2020; Lankoski & Välisalo 2023; Passmore et al., 2020). Within this rapidly evolving subgenre of digital games, scholarly attention from the field of Game Studies remains somewhat fragmented, largely due to the risk associated with entering this field of research (Harviainen et al., 2018). It is precisely this awareness of risks and of how to manage and mitigate such risk-filled research that this workshop, a second instalment of the Games and Pr0n Workshops (the first took place at DiGRA2023), aims to address by drawing attention to research methodology.

Questions of research methodology are integral to the research process and to the kind of knowledge research produces. They are by their nature epistemological, ontological, pragmatic, and ethical. In research on porn games and porn in games, methodological questions are especially salient. Studying both porn and games at the same time requires understanding the methodologies of both fields. Studying pornography presents particular methodological and analytical challenges as it constitutes a "body genre," relying heavily on affective, sensory, and embodied responses. Maintaining critical distance is necessary for scholarly analysis; however, as Paasonen (2011) notes, excessive distancing risks overlooking the affective and experiential dimensions through which pornography operates and acquires meaning. Research on porn has documented a wide range of challenges related to methodology, including potential risks to the researcher and the participants (e.g., Møller 2023) and challenges in finding research participants, particularly those who are not heterosexual males. However, the study of porn games is still a rather new area, and we wish, collectively, to explore the methodological questions of game porn and porn game research. Currently, game studies lack venues where intersections of games and porn can be discussed, which became evident during our first workshop in 2023. As such, we want to provide a safe space for porn game scholars to present their research and connect.

Aims and topics

The main theme of the workshop is (qualitative) methodological challenges in researching games and porn. As such, we invite submissions discussing, for example, but not limited to, the following questions:

- What are the methodological challenges?
 - coming with pornographic content
 - coming with game systems incorporating porn

- What kind of challenges does porn games research propose in comparison to other porn research?
- How to find and access data, particularly in cases like reception research?
- What are the ethical challenges of researching games and porn?

The workshop is meant as a safe space to express the issues of studying games, porn, and sexuality at the intersections of *research ethics, privacy and intimacy*. The overall aim of the workshop is for participants to gain methodological insights and inspiration for novel methods of enquiry. In other words, the workshop has the specific goal of offering potential solutions to the many challenges and issues of researching games and porn, which is only possible to the extent that the workshop participants engage in sharing experiences of both successes and barriers and limitations of their research (or intended research). In line with this, we strongly encourage junior scholars to apply to the workshop to identify issues and develop solutions to inherently difficult and sometimes risk-filled research. *Research ethics*, particularly issues related to participatory and/or participant-based research in these processes, is a high priority.

Structure

This will be a half-day workshop (approximately 4 hours), and we anticipate accommodating six to eight presentations. The format will consist of short presentations on methodological challenges, followed by more in-depth discussions. The first 2 hours will be devoted to general introductions and short presentations. This is followed by a 1-hour controlled process centred on specific topics. The main aim of this process is to examine methodological issues from multiple perspectives, articulate research barriers, and simultaneously develop mitigations and potential accommodations to reduce or circumvent these barriers.

The final hour will be dedicated to discussions of the findings and potential future directions. This hour is also dedicated to producing a synthesis summarising the discussed topics, including, but not limited to, an assessment of the viability of joint publications in relation to the workshop themes.

Submission Guidelines

The participants will be asked to submit within one of the two formats: 1) an abstract presenting mature or finished research, 2) a reflection note on early or future research, including presentation of research questions or research data to be discussed together.

Submission length is 500 words maximum (excluding references). In addition, participants will be asked to provide an estimate of how explicit their presentation will be. Soft-semi-hardcore is our general idea of a categorisation, and all are welcome, given sufficient content warnings. Participants will be asked (if applicable) to provide a link or other reference to specific games or materials used in their research, so it can be distributed before the workshop for attendees to familiarize themselves with. This additional information does not count towards the word limit.

Within the submission, participants are additionally asked to provide information on whether the material contains explicit mentions or visual representations of:

- sexual abuse or sexual violence
- homophobia or transphobia

- other sensitive content

Submissions will not be anonymously reviewed. Program decisions will be made by the workshop organizers based on connection to the workshop aims and topics.

The deadline for submissions to this call is the 4th of May

Announcement of workshop acceptance will be on the 11th of May at the latest

The workshop will not be open to the general public; however, non-presenters may join by submitting an expression of interest, with the aim of contributing to the discussions and the development of methodological solutions. The deadline for this is June 7.

Send your submission to: [gamesandpr0nz\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:gamesandpr0nz(at)gmail.com)

References

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Biographies of the organisers

Mike Hyslop Graham

PhD Mike Hyslop Graham is a teaching postdoc at the IT University of Copenhagen. His PhD dissertation addressed challenges and solutions to methodological issues in researching single-player play practices, including how to study the intimate spheres of private activities. He teaches (and manages) courses for graduate and undergraduate students in Qualitative Research and Academic Communication and Digital Technology in Society, and also teaches Games and Culture, Games and Porn/Sexuality, and Player Studies.

Maria Ruotsalainen

PhD Maria Ruotsalainen (she/her) is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Jyväskylä. Through her research, she seeks to better understand the complex ways in which human and non-human animals connect and disconnect through material, affective, and discursive means. Her current research interests include games and porn, gender and games, and game and esports cultures.

Tanja Välisalo

PhD Tanja Välisalo is a researcher of media studies and game studies. Her research themes include player engagement with game characters, transmedial games and play, and esports audiences. Pornography, both in games and in fan-created content, is one of her current research interests. Välisalo holds a teaching position in Game Studies and Game Development at the University of Jyväskylä. Currently, her focus is on developing research infrastructures and digital humanities research methods.

Petri Lankoski

Petri Lankoski is a Professor of Media Technology at Södertörn University whose research focuses on game research methods, game design, and production processes. His recent work examines pornographic games, with particular interest in the intersection of game design, content, and funding structures.