

Despite Their Popularity Amongst Youth (ages 6 - 14)

This dissertation endeavors to deeply understand the options of Minecraft servers explicitly created for youth by three studies utilizing mixed methods analysis. Another forum -Pc Interaction (HCI) research shows that sandbox-style virtual world games like Minecraft operate as interest-driven areas the place youth can discover their artistic pursuits, build technical experience, and type social connections with friends and near-friends. Despite their recognition among youth (ages 6 - 14), we know little in regards to the social and technological features of "in-the-wild" Minecraft servers that present themselves as "child-pleasant" or "household-friendly." The aims of this work are three-fold: 1. To investigate the rhetoric of child-/household-friendliness and the socio-technical mechanisms of such servers (Study I: 60 servers), 2. To know the lived experiences of server staff who reasonable on such servers (Research II: Eight youth and 22 moderators), and 3. To explore a design paradigm for technological mechanisms that leverage the strengths of a kid-/family-pleasant server neighborhood whereas also supporting moderators' practices (Study III) I draw from interdisciplinary theories and construction this dissertation round two fundamental arguments about child-/family-pleasant Minecraft server ecosystems. First, I argue that they are instantiations of play-primarily based affinity networks created by adults that promote alternatives for youth to discover their interests and social connections. Second, I argue that the social and technological mechanisms mirrored within the server guidelines and moderators' practices are characteristic of servers that self-describe as child-/family-friendly. Research I contributes a taxonomy for understanding server guidelines and an empirical characterization of three server genres - kid-/family-friendly (n1 = 19); normal-family-friendly (n2 = 20); and basic (n3 = 20) in Minecraft. Study II reveals moderators' motivations and socio-technical practices in child-/family-friendly servers. The findings show that grownup moderators encourage youth-led creative roleplays, support the pursuits of young players (e.g., Hogwarts digital world, virtual Pride Day celebrations, and so on.), and supply mentorship to youth moderators on their servers. Research III theorizes the potential for automated prosocial instruments in play-primarily based areas by means of a Discord Bot known as "UCIProsocialBot" within OhanaCraft, one among the child-/household-pleasant server communities. Collectively, these findings present a set of social and technological options that will substantiate a mannequin for designing kid-/household-friendly online playgrounds. This work theorizes that kid-/household-pleasant servers can actualize optimistic youth development when their self-narratives, social practices, and technological mechanisms are aligned with adolescent developmental wants.