

The Ideology of Play

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Abstract: Several game scholars have shown concerns for the pervasiveness of the capitalist ideology in video games. However, very few game scholars have tried to understand how play can itself be conceived as an ideology that efficiently masks the power relations between the game industry and the players. With the help of Stuart Hall's theories on ideologies, I will explain what this ideology of play consists of and identify different functions and mechanisms on the basis of which it operates and naturalizes some ideas about play that mask or justify exploitation, violation of privacy and surveillance. I will argue that the ideology of play works in concert with the capitalist ideology to the benefit of game companies, and show how it permeates various types of discourses in the game culture that are not solely conveyed by the gaming industry, but also by the players themselves. I will finally provide a glimpse of how game scholars can challenge this ideology of play.