

Experiences of the Self in Affinity Spaces with Videogames

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Abstract: This research aims to observe how the experience of playing video games makes perceptions of the self emerge and how these experiences provide conditions of normativity in affinity spaces arising from games. We understand normative capacity as the ability to establish other standards for other conditions, as a health production, which can be expanded through experiences with the different sets of rules of videogames. Through discussion of the concepts of normativity, experience of the self and affinity spaces, we seek to provide an important referential to support empirical studies on video games applied to areas such as health and education.

Affinity Spaces

The experience of playing video games also includes the social networks of interaction that occur around the games, called "affinity spaces" (Gee, 2003). Some of these spaces consist of forums on specific contents of each game. According to Gee (2004), the forums are formed by the sharing of content and actions rather than by identity marks or institutional ties. To be considered as affinity spaces, it is important that the forums have: participation open to any user; shared space for beginners and veterans; possibility to transform the environment, knowledge sharing among players.

Thus, different groups create different ways of participation, cooperating and/or competing, which may eventually stabilize ways of reading the technology. Therefore, literacy in the field of video games also involves examining the ideological aspects, of valuation of certain types of experience over other possibilities. The concept of affinity space does indeed challenge the stereotype of the player isolated in an individual experience. Games can be a source of agency of experiences, in a common level of action, where they operate as devices with the ability to aggregate and produce sharing.

Experience of the Self

According to Kastrup (2012) the experience of the self refers to a kind of self-awareness in the field of perceptive awareness, which should not be confused with a reflexive awareness and does not reflect the idea of changing the view that one has about him or herself but to noticing oneself doing things that he or she did not imagine would do. In terms of experience, perceptions and effects may surprise or bring questions, be they ideas or emotions. The experience of the self causes effects on the relation with the self thus opening areas of connection to the collectives, allowing actions of normativity.

According to Canguilhem (1995), the illness can be understood as the loss of normative capacity. In this sense, normativity actions refer to the possibility of establishing other rules in different conditions, becoming thus production of health.

When thinking these concepts in the context of interactive media, we believe that the experience of playing video games can make perceptions of the self emerge, enabling normative conditions in affinity spaces in which they occur.

In video games, the player is immersed in the specific rules system of the game. This set of rules may or may not be different from other rules systems with which he has everyday life contact. For example, in first-person shooters, there is a normative change of the action of killing, because it is not about annihilating the opponent, but defeating him. Therefore, what happens in the game does not refer to violence against each other, but rather to a narrative content between characters in the game.

These experiences of performing different actions in different sets of rules can configure experiences of the self, as the player finds himself doing something that he could not imagine himself doing in other contexts. Thus, the games allow practices of establishing new norms in different domains of experience, in other words, exercises of the normative capacity through the game. This characteristic is important, because the player is not only learning a routine of actions, but experiencing actions he would not do in other contexts, and therefore experiencing a new experience of the self.

Conclusion

In immersive experiences in video games emerges the possibility of experiences of the self and a perception of a plan of virtuality of the self, which appear as new experiences of the self in line with other current rules, not the usual everyday rules.

In this direction, some games have features that allow thinking the production of normativity, being understood as production of health. Experiences with games that have countless combinations of actions also allow countless possibilities of creating new perceptions of the self and, with these, new standards of life and relationship, intervening in the Modes of Subjectification of players.

An affinity space allows experiences of the self in a group that emerges from the encounter between its participants, whether in a forum, in an online game, or in face meetings to play. In this sense, video games allow participatory spaces that encourage interaction, communication and exchange of knowledge about the experience. Some spaces allow many ways to participate, encouraging feedback to game developers, which can lead to remodeling of the games. Some games are even designed to support players who wish to modify them, including tools for the "modding".

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