

Using Online Interviews with young people: Exploring the Game Transfer Phenomenon

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Research context

In-depth interviews were used with young people to examine whether experiences in the virtual world somehow influence players' mood state and mental processes (such as fantasies, thoughts, and behaviours). This is what the authors describe as Game Transfer Phenomena (GTP).

GTP occur when video game elements are associated with real life elements triggering subsequent thoughts, sensations and/or behaviour among players.

Methods

Participants: Forty-two Swedish frequent video game players aged between 15 and 21 years.

Criteria selection: Play at least 10 hours per week, play different games, and aged between 15 to 21 years.

Data collection: In-depth interviews. The majority were done online through instant messaging systems, mainly MSN Messenger.

Data analysis: Thematic analysis. Some data were quantified to show the prevalence of GTP.

Published data: Blog
<http://playersexperiences.wordpress.com/>

Findings

Players experiences were classified as either intentional or automatic experiences.

Based on a relatively small number of video game players, the findings suggest that playing video games intensely can be associated with the elicitation of automatic thoughts, altered perception of real life scenes, altered sensory perceptions, and dissociative experiences.

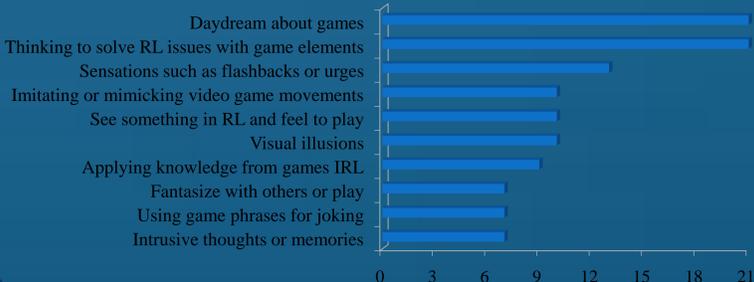
The most invasive automatic GTP occurred when players did not control their behaviour, and actually did something without intending to do so, or when players saw text boxes hovering above peoples' heads.

Conclusions

Modern video games' realistic scenes appear to trigger associations between the two worlds among some individuals.

The personal characteristics of the individual may influence the presence of Game Transfer Phenomena (GTP) experiences, although, different individuals experienced similar phenomena in the same games.

Main GTPs



Forums Recruit participants



E-mail Schedule interview & further questions



Instant Messaging Interview platform



Blog Publishing & Get feedback



Recruiting participants

Compensation: Movie tickets

- Many players wanted to participate, even though they were not interested in getting the movie ticket.
- When offering no compensation or reward, only a few players wanted to participate.

"nha i dont need that ticket did it for fun ^^ but i got a headache so i need to eatyeat*"

Preparing for the interview

- An interview protocol was created.

Ensuring credibility

- Blog or webpage about the research.
- Researcher's profile available online.
- Researcher's photo in the Instant Messaging window.

Ethical issues

- Participants' consent needed to be ensured at different phases of the study. This is especially the case if the transcript is published online or data is used for another purpose.

@ "YES, YES and YES. When its all done I want the URL so I can have a look on everything! =)"

@ " You have my full approval to post anything I've said anywhere!"

Advantages

- Social multiplicity → facilitates "snowball" effect.
- Recordability → No need to transcribe.
- Typing is slower than talking → More time to reflect → May enhance in-depth interviews.
- Collect large amount of data from many participants in short time.
- Majority of the young people trust technology.
- Collect a sample for the study's second phase (e.g. Post a weblink to a survey after the interview).
- To receive additional material from participants (e.g. weblinks).

Challenges

- Identity verification vs. Anonymous population
- Generational differences
- Participants expect the researcher to know a lot about the topic
- Online platforms may facilitate disclosure of information not related with the research and may have ethical implications.
- Learning the basic rules of online communication, Internet slang (e.g. abbreviations, :, ^^) and software.
- Should the data be used without modifying the transcripts?

"You did a great job but I hardly can understand what I said in the interview..."

Tips (Suggestions)

- Identity checking:** MSN photo, FaceBook profile and/or when possible RL address to send movie tickets.
- Ways to show empathy:** Do not worry about grammar or typing mistakes, be curious and interested in the participant's additional comments. Be patient when the participant types.
- Be familiar with the research topic and with the target population under investigation.
- Interviews can be enhanced through weblinks, images, etc.
- Publish the findings in a blog to get feedback from the participants and disseminate the study findings.

Characteristics of Cyberspace

Equalized status

"Ok if i ask how you said 'My fridge is homosexual in spanish?'xD I collect every language I can in that frase".

Text communication - Emoticons

"My routines is to play ^^ . But if something comes in the way I usually accept it".

Dishinhibition effect

"When is late, or when I havent ate too much during the day and when i havent ..."

"If your teacher is irritating, you just want to grab a gun and shoot her... i would never do something like that, so dont report me or something".

Temporal flexibility

Participant- So remember interview at 6:am ;D
Researcher- Are you serious? I still cannot believe it..!! I hope u dont only make me weak up too early!... See you then tomorrow at 6 am!
Researcher- Hey (7:30)
Participant- could i just prepare myself? I'll be back
Researcher- ok
Participant- ok, now im ready (8:00)

Transcended space

Can we do this another time my dad said i had to walk my dog. I am so sorry... Im done walking my dog now :)".

"btw (by the way) how much is it left on this interview? Sorry for the cross talk but my stomach suddenly crashed haha gross*... can we do that?... I will be back in a few, emergency Xp... thanks a bunch brb ()".

Media disruption

Researcher- Do you still there?
Participant- I have experience that kind of things a few years back when I was trapped in WoW I didnt notice that I gained in weight and I often did lose my temper and hit the desk with my mouse and stuff
Researcher- oh sorry
Participant- (long sentences) xD
Researcher- I didnt see the pencil hehe. It is ok take u time

Stretching of time

Researcher- Have you ever heard to talk about the tetris effect? Some player have experienced that after play Tetris for long time, they look at the wall or something trying to fix in their mind the patterns.
Participant- Aha, that problem. I had that before when I really was a hardcore player in WoW that when I got my adrenaline pumping I started seeing health bars above peoples heads... I can still remember how it looked like... it was funny the first time but after the second I was scared :/