Making Connections: An Investigation into the Motivation of Gaming and Learning

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LRC 605 Qualitative Research Methods in Education

University of Arizona

The Background and Positionality

- 3-D Animator
- Masters in Educational Technology
- Instructional Designer
- Designer in Second Life
- Two teenage boys active in virtual worlds
- Player of World of Warcraft
  - Horde, Blood Elf, Preist, Level 6

Primary
Research Question

- How do players of the Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG) World of Warcraft successfully navigate the complexities of the game?

Secondary Research Questions

- How do adolescent players learn how to complete "quest" and "achieve higher levels" in World of Warcraft?

- What motivates adolescent players to persist and move to higher levels of competence in the game?

Theoretical Framework

- **New Literacy Studies**
  - Developed from the work of Gee, Street, Heath, Barton and Hamilton
  - According to Gee video gaming is a form of literacy involving social practice and construct of symbolic meaning

- **Self Determination Theory**
  - Initially developed as a motivational theory by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan
  - Supporting our natural or intrinsic tendency to behave in effective and healthy ways

Method Context

Two Worlds Collide
- Real World
    - Suburban neighborhood in Southern Arizona
    - Snowball sample of players
- Virtual World
    - Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (World of Warcraft)
    - A variety of races, roles and classes

Method Participants

Two Worlds Collide

- Real World
    - 11 – 17 year old students (male)
    - Socioeconomic status – Middle to Upper Middle class
- Virtual World
    - All races, roles and classes are represented
    - Must have achieved level 30 or above

Method Data Collection

Two Phases
- Observation
    - Physical (sit behind and observe)
    - Virtual (participate in world with players)
- Focus Group Interviews
    - 3 to 4 players
    - Questions about playing, motivation and learning

Method Data Analysis

- Code the observations and interviews looking for themes and patterns and relationships across and between the data

- Massage the data into smaller subsets to answer RQ coming from a bottom-up approach (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999)

- Conducting Member Checks with individuals/groups

- Peer Debriefing for themes and patterns of the data

Method Data Analysis

- The organization of data will be conduct through an audit trail (Lincoln & Gubb, 1985) consisting of six categories:
    - Raw data
    - Data reduction
    - Data analysis
    - Data reconstructions and synthesis
    - Process notes
    - Instrument development information

Ambassador Jemmorah

Implications

How can educators translate the motivation and learning players gather from a MMORPG to the classroom environment?

Insight from James Gee: http://vimeo.com/16430819

The End