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Role playing Games: Virtual or Reality?

Internet is often criticized on its dangers, provided from the addiction especially from the on-line games and the internet for the users. This paper has as main target to illuminate the advantages of the internet, to reveal the “other side of the moon”, and particularly the new perspectives of virtual worlds. Virtual environments were seen as the ideal places that people choose massively to immerse and expose themselves and the way they interact and relate. It is a very interesting environment, the MMORPG, for psychologists and other social scientists for all the above reasons. All in all before we assume that on-line games are addictive, we should take into consideration that is due to the character of the person and the pleasure accomplished through the game.

The Object of this particular paper is the study of the development of personality and the dynamics of the development of social relations in the virtual worlds and more specifically in the Massive Multi player On-line Role Playing Games (M.M.O.R.P.G.), thus their significant role in the social and psychological development of players.

Life in Virtual worlds could be seen as something of less importance. Whereas- due to personal estimation-it has the importance that anyone has chosen to give. It is based in the subjectively dimension. It is important to understand the games as laboratory of identity, some places where the character can experiment himself in a safer environment and start over any time he wants.

We will present the bibliography in general for the social and psychological condition of the players and their motivation. We attempt to examine the relationship of avatar with the personality of player and basically the impact of the game in the mental health of the player. To sum up we could consider the virtual environments as a supplementary dimension of reality, where that person could discover himself and get involved into relationships as important as in an off-line life.

Virtual self

Definition

The term cyberself refers to the identity that takes someone in the Internet: an identity in a chat room or in MMORPGs . In the virtual space, what is called "self" is separated from the body, goes through a computer and transformed in a digital form. The information now is manufactured and processed from this projected self, so called “self”.

Psychological theories for “self” in cyberspace

According to the theories that try to interpret the phenomenon cyberself, self in the internet, we can see the scientists turning themselves particularly to the theory of symbolic interaction. Self as result of social interaction, constitutes a nodal point for the social psychologists the 20th century. The "social self" of James was based in the significance of theory of symbolic interaction by Charles Cooley (1902) and George Mead (1934). The particular theory fixes a “self” as activity of interaction of individual with every social environment. The significance of self perception acquires social tinge and its important factor of configuration is the picture that the others have for the individual and how high is appreciated. Cooley supported that the picture of child for self perception is a social mirror and constitutes the impression we believe the others have for us. What is more, we imagine what they see in us, what they judge on us and to the sentiment that is created by these processes.

Due to Mead, important element in the perception self' constitutes the symbolic codes and specifically the languages. Moreover, the individual via this can re estimate his substance through the behaviour and the language of the others by adopting their point of view.

The psychology of player and more generally the self in cyberspace tried to be interpreted by Turkle with the theory of multiple identities. It basically explains the growth of different personalities and identities as a result of Internet use. The reasons for the growth of different personalities are that "it releases the individual from the body" and allows him to live an alternative version of life.

The cyberspace integrate the human body in a new environment, in a different space; in particular to an unlimited number of potential worlds. This unlimited potential worlds give to the individual the possibility to create also unlimited potential selves and adopt any self they wish to (Bruckman 1996).

Respectively Stone considers that the body belongs in the real world. “I” however which is a social creation, is expressed in these potential environments of MMORPGs with the help of technology that combines the two worlds: potential and realistic.

The internet helps to discover the persons in a safe environment. MMORPGs function as "laboratories of identity" where they appear possible selves in a safe environment.

Psychology of players

New way of existence and interaction

According to Turkle (1996) "the players, that participate in the MMORPGs, become their constructors self via the social interaction. Each player has the possibility to create a

character which will represent, according to the Kelly, the players in the 15 and under and from 40 and above. They have the tendency to create characters with which they have a lot in common. The virtual form of themselves, which is called avatar, constitutes representation in the game and their presence. They give the possibility in each player to create a new identity. It selects and new name for his new identity and what he wants to be in this environment through an abundance of choices. It has the possibility of making a lot of characters in each game and experiment as long as he wants with an enormous number of new identities. This new environment is consisted of the total of players who contribute in its creation and constitution.

The environments of game function as laboratories of experimentation of new identities and this is the freedom they provide to each player; a space in which they can try new behaviours and new identities. Known in a lot of versions, in different situations and with different consequences from what these behaviours may occur in the everyday life, the restrictions and discriminations in their life

Characteristics of MMORPG environment

The player has the need to act within a specific environment. The use of metaphors of "real world" and the distribution of space are basic logics of MMORPGs. The MMORPGs structure their virtual worlds in multiple localities and allow users to move from region to region, participating in these worlds, activities and discussions. The places in MMORPG are within the limits of a central space or located in several places. A room is a space in where are characters and objects. The term "space" has a different meaning in real life, because it doesn't refer to a real located place. It doesn't have the usual restrictions. In virtual environments people from each side of the world have the opportunity to come in touch and to interact. Another basic characteristic is that in these environments the player gets in touch with decreased senses and communicates with the others not by the language but by writing and the body language. The players can also observe reactions of others in their communication.

The sense of movement of a player is something interesting because it doesn't obey in the natural laws. We could tell that it is like the movement in a dream. Time in these environments is something different. Because the only thing that matters is to be in the same time with someone in this virtual space. Real space as a dimension doesn't have meaning, the restriction of time has importance. You can find anyone you want, from your guild to play with and it is enough to be connected the same moment in the game.

Types of Players-behaviours

In order to understand the behaviour and the psychology of players, Richard Bartle made a research and with the help of Erwin Andreasen created the Bartle test. Bartle test divides through questions the players of MMORPGs in four categories based in the way of playing, the choices they made to develop their character in the game. The four categories of players are the achiever (the one that achieves targets), the explorer (explorer), socializer (the one that cares to be social) and the killer (murderer).

The achiever is the player which enjoys the game, to gain points, level, improving his equipment. This type of player is not interested simply to complete the game but to gain a prestige as player. He uses to complete difficult missions even if he does not have the suitable profit. MMORPGs are ideal games for this category of players. They have the possibility to demonstrate the force and their prestige in the game. They are enjoying the company of socialisers and they become considerable opponents killers. Their aim is to be first in the total grades between the other players.

Explorer is the player who likes to discover and explore the environment of the game. The limits of time, depends on each mission, it's something unpleasant for this type of player. He is not allowed to have the time he wants to find hidden objects and secret places. MMORPGs are ideal games for this type of players because in their spaces they have the opportunity to interact with other people and to have the possibility to exchange their experiences and their knowledge about the game. Their aim is to explore the environment of game and to discover hidden elements and places.

Socializer is the player that plays for the social interaction despite the game. He understands the game as tools of social networking in the virtual and also in real life. MMORPGs we would say that they are made mainly for this category of players. Social interaction from the consistency of all of players is a natural consequence. Players have unlimited possibilities to create new relations and even marriage can be contracted in a game. They become very popular in virtual environments of MMORPGs and provide their services even in Killers.

Killer is the player who likes to conflict with other players and other characters in the games. He reaches high levels in the game because he satisfies his target to kill and gains points from this procedure. He likes mainly to constitute bugbear to the other players, especially to feeble players and when help comes from other players he prefers to escape.

These four types of players do not exclude one another. Somebody who is a socializer, and likes playing for the socialization providing of the game could also and achiever, wanting to achieve every target in the game and to reach higher levels. The way to measure this is in on the hundred scale of all categories. As a result we could tell that it has

not been proved that the 4 types are independent categories of players, but they are able to coexist very well within the players.

Virtual or Real experiences?

Turkle, a clinical psychologist with an interest in cyberspace and specifically in psychology of MMORPGs, claims that some players get into temptation to consider life in cyberspace as insignificant, a way of escape where the reality is different. Our experiences in this space have real consequences. We could tell that it depends on ourselves to give the appropriate meaning in those experiences. They have the gravity that we choose to give each time. We could estimate them with high importance or we could considerate them as unimportant. Nevertheless is not the cyberspace that rules, so as our personal perception for the things.

The research of Aleks Krotoski (2004) claims that the gamers of Massive Multiplayer On-line Role Playing Games have benefits in the fields of: academic success, study in the university even the search of work, women use them to get knowledge. The characteristics of on-line relations created in the games, are the proximity and frequency of contact, the resemblance, the presentation, the reciprocity and the consequence according to Aleks Krotoski (2004). All the above reasons make internet a space of communication, work and amusement.

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