Chapter 12

World of Warcraft: Screen Time and Identity Building

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ABSTRACT

World of Warcraft (WoW), a game of the genre MMORPG (massive multiplayer online role playing game), has proven to be a valuable field of study for researchers interested in understanding the functioning of online communities and social relationships in those communities. This chapter seeks, through literature review and interviews conducted within the game itself, from player/researcher immersion, to discuss the relationships of a group of players in a new context of relationship and (in)formation, considering the significant screen time, communication processes, identifications, and identity building.

INTRODUCTION

In the possibility of experiencing realities empirically inaccessible to the body, we understand that the digital universe moves one of humanity’s greatest longings: exceed its own limits. Become something or someone whose “nature” does not exert an impediment on any wills of the being. To be something or someone with the unlimited and unrestricted presence in time and space.

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We observe an individual who starts to build, supported by Information and Communication Technologies – ICT, their own space-time to involve in experiences whose variables are under their control, with the processes of interactivity and choice in their hands. In this way, when they find themselves in the same virtual space in which they have decided to be, individuals converge interests, exchange information and experiences. Finally, they institute a virtual community where they participate in the production of knowledge and meaning (culture), through processes of immersion that reveal an incessant (re)construction of self.

Virtualization, empowering the creative matrix of the individual (Lévy, 2003), opens paths to diverse spaces of socialization and collaboration, as in the case of games, platforms where it is allowed to create scenarios for fun and social interaction. That is, where there is an exchange of knowledge and recognitions, where references and identifications are constructed (Hall, 2004). Thus, attention to communicational processes and (in)formation in this context is important, so that they are studied as a hermeneutic (an interpretative mediation) that can update the look on the new daily experiences, of mediations and interactions in these immersive environments (Mattos; Junior; Jacks, 2012), namely the impacts and transformations in these relations - processes of identifications and learning. This, considering the fact that the permanence of individuals in these places has increased in duration and quality, since the virtual environments, especially those sustained on platforms, in the case of games, are configured as incubators for the emergence of individuals whose online identity categorically influences their “I”.

This work seeks to contribute to the visibility of a new relationship context that exists among World of Warcraft users, through mediation and interaction in a multiuser environment of players – characters, characteristics and the context itself – from where emerge (self)representation, (in)formation and authorship. In the relationships built in these environments, information about imagery and realities is merged, as experiences lived in the online, offline and hybrid realities, predominantly lived on screen. These experiences contribute to the emergence of “selves” and “others”, as identifications and collective construction of knowledge.

BACKGROUND

In the universe of games, individuals emerge that touched this border of being something beyond their “nature”, seeking this critical and “no return” point of being more of oneself, like art itself that extrapolates the human condition in search of being a hero or even being a god (Maldonado, 1991). It is therefore, in this society, based on the digital technologies of information and communication, that
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