Chapter 19
Meaningful Video Games:
Drama–Based Video Games as Transformational Experience

Stephen Brock Schafer
Digipen Institute of Technology, USA

Gino Yu
Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

The development of more meaningful video games is becoming increasingly possible by recent advances in video game technologies, neurosciences, and biofeedback. In the near future, meaningful video games will be designed to facilitate personal-psychological transformation. Unlike "serious games" that focus on education and "conditioning" the mind, meaningful games will cultivate emotional intelligence, somatic awareness, and archetypal integration in order to "un-condition" the mind and thereby facilitate psychologically meaningful personal transformations. Meaningful game research will access the dynamics of psychological transformation in order to enhance archetypal awareness, intuition, and insight on the part of players. Within the genre of meaningful video games, Drama-Based Games (DBG) add an unprecedented dimension for psychological engagement and decision-making. Because they extend psychological player immersion to the dimension of "physical" interactivity, (DBG) incorporate the full range of psychological functions defined by Carl Jung. Because psychological experiences are correlated with physiological processes, DBG may be used as research instruments for quantifying diverse biometric-psychological interactions that occur during game play. Advances in electronics now enable the real-time and non-intrusive capturing of physiological data such as brain waves (e.g., electroencephalography), heart-rate variability, skin response, and facial expression. This data can provide an objective basis for measuring dimensions of the cognitive unconscious in test subjects as they respond to game experiences. The ultimate goal of research is to provide veridical data relative to the psychological parameters of an increasingly mediated global environment—a Psychecology—and to study the ensuing world-view.

INTRODUCTION

The study of consciousness as both a human and universal phenomena is older than written history. Always the cornerstone of Eastern Philosophical schools, this unified field approach to ontology is rapidly reincarnating in the psyche-physics or *psych*ecology of western science. Long regarded by western science as an intangible subject unfit for empirical study, in the last few decades a renaissance of consciousness studies has emerged within fields such as neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, humanities, and the arts. Described as *one of the last great frontiers of science* by the Tucson Center for Consciousness Studies, an international scientific community is continually providing insights relative to this vast multidisciplinary subject. Technological advances are constantly bringing new insight to research in multiple domains related to: neurocorrelations between brain function and external stimuli, rigorous study of meditators, and enquiry into the more subjective neurolinguistic dimensions of the cognitive unconscious. There is a growing body of research published in Journals and presented at conferences attended by the international community of consciousness researchers.

Because psychological experiences are correlated to the physiological processes in the body, meaningful games may be used as research instruments for quantifying the diverse biometric-psychological phenomena that occur during game-play. Advances in electronics now enable the real-time and non-intrusive capturing of physiological data such as brain waves (e.g., electroencephalography, heart-rate variability, skin response, and facial expression. In addition, gaze tracking can be used to corroborate conscious reports relative to symbol recognition in images in order to correlate them with subliminal biometric indicators of symbol recognition. Such correlations can provide an objective "map" or framework for measuring subjective states of game players as they respond to game experiences.

Such research will begin the process of mapping the *psych*ecology. *Psych*ecology is a term that evokes the sense of both "map" and "territory" as portrayed by Alfred Korzybyski. Korzybski's Dictum is cited as an underlying principle of neuro-linguistic programming where it is used to signify that individual people do not have access to information about reality, but only to a set of beliefs they have built over time about reality. Therefore, the "map" is not the "real territory". In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) Gregory Bateson also addresses the essential impossibility of knowing what the territory is. However, he points out that the usefulness of a map (a representation of reality) is not necessarily a matter of its literal truthfulness but its having a structure analogous, for the purposes at hand, to the territory. For the purposes at hand, the psyche-physics is the territory of the psychological paradigm shift. Its archetypes reside in unconscious dimensions, and its images are projections of this narrative architecture of the unconscious. The term *psych*ecology applies to both the territory and its projections into consciousness.

Each of us constructs our own personal "contextual" world-view based upon our "conscious-unconscious" perceptual experiences in life, and this enactive process is continuously altering the parameters of our world-view and how we perceive life. Situations are perceived and experienced physiologically through the body and interpreted psychologically. Current cognitive-linguistic research verifies that the conscious-unconscious "mind" or "psyche" translates our experiences into the stories and beliefs that make up our world-view. (Lakoff) Whether our *psych*ecology derives from direct experience, or from the indirect experiences of others communicated through media and culture, it serves to shape our perception of reality. The narratives and metaphors of our personal and collective *psych*ecology may serve to inspire and give deep meaning to our lives, or to imprison us with feelings of fear, depression, and despair.

Related Content

Effects of High-Fidelity Virtual Training Simulators on Learners' Self-Efficacy
Heather A. Holbrookand Katherine S. Cennamo (2014). *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations (pp. 38-52).*
www.irma-international.org/article/effects-of-high-fidelity-virtual-training-simulators-on-learners-self-efficacy/116508

Development of a Game Communities of Inquiry Scale (GCoIS)
Ilker Soyturk, Enrico Gandolfiand Richard E. Ferdig (2020). *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations (pp. 37-58).*
www.irma-international.org/article/development-of-a-game-communities-of-inquiry-scale-gcois/263770

Video Games in Education: Opportunities for Learning Beyond Research Claims and Advertising Hype
P.G. Schrader, Kimberly A. Lawlessand Hasan Deniz (2010). *Design and Implementation of Educational Games: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives (pp. 293-314).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/video-games-education/42461

A Hostile World: A Pervasive Urban Game to Sensitise and Foster a Cross-Cultural Reflection
Maresa Bertoloand Ilaria Mariani (2014). *Cases on the Societal Effects of Persuasive Games (pp. 232-253).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-hostile-world/113490

Exploring User Experience While Playing Educational Games: Focus on Temporality and Attractiveness
Panagiotis Zaharias, Christos Gatzoulisand Yiorgos Chrysanthou (2012). *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations (pp. 19-32).*
www.irma-international.org/article/exploring-user-experience-while-playing/74832