The social poetics of analog virtual worlds: toying with alternate realities

Abstract

While online virtual worlds draw increasingly wider audiences of players and scholars alike, offline games continue to evolve into more complex and socially layered forms as well. This dissertation argues that virtual worlds need not exist as online, digital environments alone and probes three genres of non-digital gaming for evidence of the virtual: tabletop role-playing games, murder-mystery events, and localized alternate reality games. More broadly, then, this dissertation is about deliberate make-belief: practiced by adults, taken seriously by participants, engaged with for long hours at a time, performed in public, and integrated into everyday social relationships. Drawing on scholars who study games as social activities (McGonigal 2006, Montola 2012) and social institutions (Goffman 1974, Searle 1995), I present three ethnographic case studies that illustrate how complex forms of social gaming can conjure and sustain environments best understood as analog virtual worlds. Through the widespread use of mobile technologies and the concerted efforts of innovators, game spaces are increasingly permeating our everyday lives on- and offline. This dissolving boundary demands anthropologists to revisit questions of how, where, and with whom we play games. Dovetailing Martin Heidegger’s notions of worlding and poiesis to the semiotics of C.S. Peirce, this dissertation investigates how new forms of social gaming demonstrate the same qualities of shared intentionality, intersubjectivity, and performance essential to the production of new social meaning and cultural forms. Following, I situate the bold ethnographic case studies of make-belief in dialogue with scholars who figure exclusively online virtual worlds (Castronova 2005, Taylor 2006, Boellstorff 2008) and argue that analyzing both on- and offline virtual worlds together can help scholars better understand the fundamental nature of social interaction and shared intentionality, those everyday mechanisms that both sustain personal relationships on the one hand and maintain our broadest and most serious social institutions on the other.
Virtual reality entrepreneur John C. Briggs, for one, predicted in the May 2002 issue of Futurist magazine that “in the next 10 to 20 years, VR experiences will be fully integrated into real life.” Connection or Isolation? People also argue about the possible social effects of having most personal interactions occur online, in the virtual or cyberspace world. Supporters of virtual reality and online communities say that future VR and computer technology could change the nature of communication, bringing people around the world closer together. Supporters of online games and other forms of virtual reality say that the cause of the addiction is the addicts’ psychological makeup, not the games themselves. Virtual reality games make a player feel like part of gameplay. Now, gamers can see the virtual world through the main character’s eyes. Also, VR provides a possibility for watching a video in 360 degrees. It is mainly used in short videos, for instance on YouTube. When a user turns his head in the virtual space, the latency should be minimized and as close to real life should be maximized.

VIRTUAL REALITY 101: What You Need to Know About Kids and VR. Common Sense is the leading independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology. We empower parents, teachers, and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in all kids’ lives. His lab builds and studies systems that allow people to meet in virtual space and explores the changes in the nature of social interaction. His most recent research focuses on how VR can transform education, environmental conservation, empathy, and health. In virtual reality, however, weight loss is as easy as a keystroke. In a world where everyone is beautiful, can we see any psychological effects associated with it? In a virtual world, where perfect bodies are not only free but the norm, the psychological consequences of being a physical outcast are aggravated to a great extent. In sum, virtual worlds offer an unprecedented opportunity to separate people from their physical identity and to role-play in a variety of manners. However, the role-playing is not ‘free’ and actually has consequences not only with regard to online behaviour but also for behaviours carried over into the physical world. Private experiences. Worse, it could also result in deterioration of social relationships in reality. Virtual reality can be used to enhance student learning and engagement. VR education can transform the way educational content is delivered; it works on the premise of creating a virtual world — real or imagined — and allows users not only see it but also interact with it. Being immersed in what you’re learning motivates you to fully understand it. It’ll require less cognitive load to process the information.