

Online Gaming Identity and Community Autoethnography

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Introduction

In my childhood, at the age of 8, I went to my friend's house, and I saw him playing RuneScape for the first time. RuneScape is a fantasy MMORPG created and released by Jagex, which was first released in 2001. He was a big-time fan of RuneScape and told me he could spend hours and hours playing and would not get tired. He explained to me the basics of the game. He told me how to perform various tasks in the game, e.g., how to make weapons, cut trees, and finish mobs. It was fun to play RuneScape. I found this video game quite different and more interesting than other video games I used to play those days as this one involved two players, whereas other games I used to play at that time involved just one player. My friend helped me create my account, and then I got a chance to play RuneScape at home.

The major reason for preferring RuneScape over other online games is that it is very much different from other online games. In other games, for instance in the online version of 'The Last of Us', players form a team and try to compete and kill the players of the other team, there are not many options and they do not give difficult and complex targets. The only target is to kill the opponent's team's players. The layout, maps, and scenario are quite simple; in short, there is nothing much to explore. Other games, such as Call of Duty, do not have a variety of quests, tasks, or targets to achieve. On the other hand, RuneScape, unlike other games, provides the gamer with an open world of games with a huge variety of tasks/ targets and jobs. Its complex world provides hundreds of targets to achieve every day. Its complexity of targets and gaming possibilities make RuneScape superior to other available online games.

Part 2

Narrative

Although RuneScape does not involve physical interaction among players, it should be remembered that a person actually encounters real people while playing RuneScape. With few exceptions, the characters, players' names, and their characteristics are controlled and decided by real people who possess real identities, names, hobbies, values, strengths, weaknesses, etc. These facts must be kept in mind as during the play, at one point or another, the players get a chance to interact with one another in the virtual world. It is very much possible to come across a person who leaves a negative

impression on another player. Sometimes, players are not nice to other players; however, just like in the real world, it should be learned how to interact with such a category of players and handle them while maintaining peace. If a person fails to handle such a situation, it may affect their personality and even life while they are offline. Just as it is important to communicate and interact with people positively and carefully in real life, it is also important to handle people wisely while gaming online.

This is important to talk about as I, too, have experienced situations where I had to deal with the nasty behavior of other players. In my childhood, when I was still in the process of learning to interact efficiently with others, I used to get upset on such occasions. I would become sad and start to argue with the opponents. For instance, one day a player said to me 'you are useless' and another day someone said 'you must quit playing you are an online garbage at play'. After such incidents, I would either start a verbal argument, or I would not play for several days as I was not willing to interact with bad people in the virtual world.

Neil Clark in his book 'Game Addiction: The Experience and the Effects' mentioned that while discussing the impact of online games with Ms. Denise she said that her son refused to play WoW as he came across several players that were rude to him. (Clark, 120) Just like people in real life can be either nice or nasty, in the virtual world, too, people can have any impact on others in their surroundings (Yang, 2012).

Consalvo (2009) in 'Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames' revealed that inappropriate language is common in online games and chat. Moreover, male players sometimes call other male players 'small girls.' It is a more common practice for male players to treat other players disrespectfully; it has been found that such people treat others disrespectfully in real life, too. Clark (2009) also mentioned that sending and receiving threatening messages while online is also common in active users of social media and online gaming.

However, I am not trying to say that all online persons show inappropriate behavior. Suppose I say that, I would be wrong. This is just like our life, every day in our life we experience good and bad things and this is only us, that we need to take control of. No one can change the entire world; however, one may control oneself and one's own temperament. Lots of helpful and nice people too visit online gaming websites every day. For instance, while I was playing RuneScape, I visited a trading page and read what users were communicating with one another. I observed that there were lots of people talking to each other in a respectable manner. Below is a screenshot where a player of RuneScape is being thankful to another player for information sharing about the game.

Check this conversation, too, where one player was unable to help the other player. So he felt bad about it and said that he was apologetic for being unable to help another player. The name of the player is Tzu.

As I said earlier, wherever a person goes or whatever a person does, there remains a likelihood of experiencing something negative in interactions and encounters. Check the screenshot below that shows rude language being used by one of the players in an encounter where one player said to the

other player that his father ruined the world by not using birth control.

Conclusion

With the passage of time, I have learned that the key while browsing the online world is to not take such conversations and encounters personally. One must remember that these incidents may happen every day, every minute in the virtual world, just like in the real world. It is better to be ready to accept the fact that in the virtual world, we may come across any type of people. All you need to do is prepare yourself to experience any negative or positive encounter and practice handling the situation in a positive manner. The situation can be simply controlled by laughing at the situation, blocking or ignoring the person, leaving the chat room, or simply ignoring the opponent. The virtual world has taught me to stay calm and handle an encounter with a negative or disrespectful attitude in the most positive way. It is true that just like the real world, the virtual world has good and bad people, too. However, in order to enjoy the virtual experience to the fullest, it is a must to understand the most appropriate ways to navigate through the online world in a positive manner. Only then will a person be able to enjoy his virtual experience to the fullest.

References

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