Crafting Lets Plays: Examining literacy 2.0 practices between adult and child

PART I: PURPOSE

According to Wilbur (2012) there is an interesting dichotomy surfacing between the out-of school learning and formal learning environment of school with children who are engaging in "participatory practices" (Wohlwend, 2010) when creating video tutorials or Let's Plays (an informal walk through of how to play a video game). The purpose of this case study is to compare and contrast the use of an emergent domain called Let's Plays and traditional tutorials for video games. How might the production of Let's Plays or tutorials inform the curriculum field related to new literacies? Wohlwend (2010) posited meaning-making varies depending on how we view the use of new media and understand new literacies. Findings suggest that participatory practices of new literacies vary the meanings across a child's and adult's diverse roles during the creation of a Let's Play or tutorial. This paper will compare and contrast the practices of making Let's Plays and tutorials as used for video games, review existing central literature and studies across the field, and discuss emergent findings of one case study that raise important questions that necessitate further exploration and next steps.

PART II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research reviewed for this paper focused on new media literacies and the importance of designing learning environments that value the digital culture that toddlers to teens are steeped in daily (Ito, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Gee, 2008; Knobel and Lancaster, 2005; Bers, 2007; Peppler, 2010; Kafai, 1995; Wolwhend, 2010). Most literature focused on the affordances of new media literacies, understanding and acknowledging the value of participatory culture and how people learn in digital, informal, interest-driven learning environments (Bers, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Wohlwend, 2010; Gee, 2008). There was little

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literature that addressed explicitly the interaction between adults and children and how their interactions might influence learning in Web 2.0 media (Jenkins, 2006; Gee, 2005, Wohlwend, 2010; Wilbur, 2012). In addition, little or no existing research literature could be found regarding how young children (ages 6-12) are taking up roles as "teachers" or "facilitators" sharing to a wider audience their expertise by producing video game tutorials or Let's Plays and posting them in public online locations, such as YouTube.

PART III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Drawing on Gee's (2010) critical discourse analysis framework, I analyze how Let's Plays fall in the genre of Web 2.0 technologies, which facilitates learning new literacies via participatory practices (Wohlwend, 2010). I examined the identities an adult and child assume, within the context of making video game tutorials and Let's Plays. I focused my analysis on the adult/child interaction while the child produced the video artifact. Findings suggest a tension between the meaning-making between the adult and children's practices were dependent on the role being assumed during the production of the Let's Play by either participant.

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, and SIGNIFICANCE

In conclusion, I argue that Let's Plays and online tutorials represent another set of practices that need to be explored more closely, especially at the intersection of adult and child participation. How might gaming discourse be utilized in the discourse of schooling? What might happen if adults and children reciprocate mentoring relationships in the era of new media? Recognizing the new literacies children (ages 6-12) are engaging in out-of-school is necessary in order to bridge the school's curriculum with the informal curriculum children are self-designing out-of-school.

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