YOUNG PEOPLE’S AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING WII

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Recently, scholars in physical education have begun to explore how young people experience exergames. The research is often undertaken in the light of increasing public health problem among young people. The purpose of this study was to investigate students’ experiences when playing the exergame Wii in an educational context. Questions that have guided the analysis were: (1) Which meanings do the students make when playing Wii exergames? (2) How are aesthetic experiences in terms of likes and dislikes used in this meaning-making process?

Drawing on the work of John Dewey, the later works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and socio-cultural approaches, a practical epistemology analysis (PEA) with focus on aesthetic judgments was used as approach in order to investigate situated learning.

The empirical data consists of video recordings of two groups of 15 year olds (3 boys and 3 girls) playing different exergames once a week for ten weeks.

When analyzing the data three themes emerged as essential to students’ meaning-making. The major theme was to interact socially with their peers, and the two minor themes were to participate in a struggle and to develop technical skills suitable for the game. By analyzing the aesthetic judgments used by the students during gaming it was clear that participating could not be reduced as just being “fun”, instead the students showed feelings ranging from enjoyment, engagement, isolation to frustration. Conclusions: To understand the healthy aspects of exergaming we must broaden the definition of health, not to only interpret health in terms of physiological benefit, but as psychological and sociological benefit as well. It is also clear that the understanding of “fun” must be problematized. It is not appropriated to only understand young people’s gaming in terms of enjoyment, but as a complex social interaction were young people form their identity in relation to the social situation as well as the game.