

Digital Games in Austrian youth culture. An analysis of quantitative data with qualitative methods.

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Video games exist since 1961. Therefore, they are a comparative new cultural form (Juul 2005: 3). This cultural form has led to a new youth culture that is described as gamers culture (Jesse 1995). However, gamers culture has to be understood in the broader context of every day youth cultures. In Austria, young people describe them self as belonging to 2,5 different youth cultures in average (Zentner 2004). Since nearly all young in Austria are playing computer games at least occasionally, our research question is, how the young make use of computer games in their every day culture. The research reported in this talk was conducted as a representative study with 850 interview partners in Austria in 2006. The instrument used to collect the data was a quantitative questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions about the preferred youth culture, the perception of parents educational styles, political preferences and the usage of computer games. While analysing the quantitative data, we came across the question how the interview partners integrate their computer game usage in their every day culture. This information could not be derived by statistical data analysis, since the single persons disappear behind the figures in a statistical data analysis. Thus a new approach for the interpretation of the quantitative data was needed.

We decided to use qualitative interpretation methods on the quantitative data. This included the consideration of the cognitive processes of the research team (Morse 1994) and the connection between data and theory (Glaser/Strauss 1967). This approach led us to turn around the common relation of quantitative and qualitative research: Instead of using qualitative research to generate ideas that are later on proved by quantitative research, we used the quantitative research to generate ideas that were later on investigated by using qualitative interpretation methods. The interpretation method we used was derived from the case study approach (Kohlbacher 2005).

In the first step of our analysis, we identified three persons by attributes measured with quantitative methods (number of friends, amount of computer game usage, preferred computer game genre, preferred youth culture). In the second step, we analysed the answers that these persons gave on the quantitative questions with qualitative methods in order to reconstruct the person behind the quantitative answers. The first result is, that the approach of using qualitative data analysis methods on quantitative data proved as successful. It was possible to reconstruct the person behind the quantitative answers, although this interpretation was limited compared to the analysis of qualitative data. As a second result we could show how the young connects computer game consumption into every day culture. The researched young used computer games according to their preferred youth culture, while parents educational styles do not have a major influence. It can be concluded, that computer game preferences depend on youth cultures. Therefore computer game usage by the young should be understood in the context of youth cultures.

Literature

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