

Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralist Speech

Results of a project aimed at researching and countering online hate speech in video games

Bruno Mendes da Silva and Ana Filipa Martins (Organization)

The present e-book is a product of *PROPS – Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralistic Discourse* (2023-2024), a project that acted on the prevention and education for the media, addressing online hate speech, specifically in the context of online video games. The project focused on developing a new approach to online hate speech through the creation of interactive counter-narratives, that can motivate and engage educators, trainers, children, and young people to take an active role in containing this phenomenon.

PROPS (slang for proper respect [due respect]) began with a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the topics of (online) hate speech, video games and interactive narratives as pedagogical tools. Following this, surveys and focus groups were conducted with students aged 10-18, in order to gather pertinent firsthand insights and experiences. The collected data from these activities was instrumental for creating six interactive narratives, designed as educational resources aimed at fostering reflection and discussion about the issue of online hate speech and its prevention in pedagogical settings.

The project was developed by the Research Center for Arts and Communication (CIAC, University of Algarve) in partnership with Santarém Polytechnic University, University of Beira Interior and Universidade Aberta (UAb). The essays included in this collection present some of the key findings from the project, shedding light on the relevant insights that were gained and on the interactive educational tools that were developed to address and mitigate online hate speech among young people.

You can consult a more up-to-date version of this book at this [link](#).



Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralist Speech

Results of a project aimed at researching and countering online hate speech in video games



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Preface

Anthony Brooks

This book is timely as it is published shortly after a special issue, covering the topic *Online Hate Speech: Impacts, Prevention, and Intervention*, of the biannual open access journal *Rotura* (Richardson *et al.*, 2024). *Rotura* is the journal of communication, culture and arts published by the Center for Research in Arts and Communication (CIAC), the multidisciplinary research center based at the University of Algarve, Portugal. The book is also published within the scope of the CIAC-based project PROPS – Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralist Speech (CIAC, 2023-2024), a media education initiative developed by the University of Algarve and funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (who incidentally also provides funding for the *Rotura* journal). The PROPS project goal targets the tackling of discrimination and hate speech by fostering media education and pluralism through interactive narratives in widely diverse facets of the digital universe, from social media to gaming and other emerging forms of online communities. This book thus brings a more specific focus of the topic to online video games that can be argued as standing alongside social media/networking services (here I also include messaging apps and platforms) as the most prevalent vehicles for such abusive behavior.

I am honored to write this e-book preface at the invitation of the team behind the publication. Having the role as lead editor of the *Rotura* special edition and consultant for the PROPS project, the invitation links to my position as coordination group member of the Council of Europe’s Video Game Culture (VGC) Working Group within the framework of the Council of Europe’s Digital Citizenship Education project. On this point I offer a speculation – or perhaps more a prediction of interest – aligned to the fact

that on September 29th, 2023, at the 26th session of the Council of Europe (CoE) Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, it was declared that 2025 would be designated as the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education. Aligned to this, the VGC network is thus planning its second publication ahead of 2025, again specifically targeting professionals in the field of education (teachers, trainers, parents), with the goal to contribute to next year's Year of Digital Citizenship associated offerings. In the VGC's first volume, a section titled "World 2 – Potential risks of video games" included a text "Level 2.2. Online hate speech and video games" asking readers:

When online have you ever encountered comments to posts, forums, social networks or even videos containing racism, homophobia, verbal or visual violence, discriminatory or disrespectful interactions between users? This phenomenon, relatively new and extremely common in the digital world, is called hate speech online; it is not simply caused by latent discriminatory and racist attitudes of online users but also strongly relates to how these users use the internet. (Soriani, 2021, p. 34)

Thereafter defining hate speech as:

Hate speech covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. (Committee of Ministers, n.d., as cited in Soriani, 2021, p. 34)

Further the text informed of the 2013 initiated "No Hate Speech Movement" – "a youth campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department seeking to mobilize young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online" (Council of Europe, n.d.a, online) –, with the website offering a compendium of over 270 resources¹, videos² and more³. It also links to a 2016 updated CoE publication titled *Bookmarks – A manual*

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1. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/compendium-of-resources>
 2. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/videos1>
 3. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign>

for combating hate speech online through human rights education with a preface by Thorbjørn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, within which he refers to the book (which the authors refer to as a manual) as “a precious tool to stop hate speech and strengthen human rights” (Keen & Georgescu, 2016, p.3).

I reflect on these facts to position this e-book whilst reinforcing the needed action across sectors to eliminate hate speech. I also echo from the start of this text, to refer to how timing can be serendipitous, whereby I share that I believe that this CIAC trilogy of output (i.e., this e-book, alongside the Rotura journal special issue, and the PROPS project deliverables) can together meaningfully impact as an important contribution, not only to the CoE’s European Year of Digital Citizenship Education, but beyond to be a resource for society and all users of online communication resulting on more reflective, safer, and wiser use of the medium so as not to cause distress to other users without reflecting on subsequent consequences that potentially can be harmful and cause suffering.

It is important to consider and reflect on interactions between humans, especially negative ones such as hate speech. Acknowledged as the first to investigate video games alongside invisible multi-dimensional motion and biofeedback sensors, robotics, and multimedia in motivating creative expression as a supplement for traditional (re)habilitation, healthcare, and wellbeing intervention alongside my published patents on “Communication method and apparatus”, I am pleased to see the growing concern on safer communication aligned to a positive video game culture so as to rescind hate speech. This relates to a further extract from the VGC:

Promoting a positive video game culture means generating pedagogical reflection around video games: thinking about it as a cultural tool able to foster many facets, not only hedonism but also cognition, learning and development of a person. It also means considering video games worthy of study and accurate and careful analysis of its characteristics, mechanics, and languages.

The Council of Europe considers Digital Citizenship Education a key element to nurture a positive, inclusive and effective video game culture for tomorrow’s citizens. The more aware future generations are of the economic models, structures, languages, risks and opportunities within video games, the more it will be possible to build a society that is open and ready to recognise the beauty of

this medium, and benefit from it, build better games, and minimise the dangers that video games, as well as other media, inevitably have. (Council of Europe, n.d.b, online)

Returning focus to this e-book after my attempt in the preceding text to highlight to readers the importance of tackling this topic, I share that ahead readers have similarly significant chapter contributions that are titled **1) Online Hate Speech in video games: Concepts, Prevalence, and Prevention Strategies; (2) Young Online Gamers and Hate Speech: Characteristics from a Study in the Algarve Region; (3) Creation Processes as a Literacy Tool in Response to Contemporary Educational Challenges; (4) Interactive Counter-Narratives in the Prevention of Online Hate Speech; and (5) Endgame: Contributions of Interactive Narratives to Promote Fairer Online Gaming Communities.** Additionally, in the Appendix, there is a chapter titled **(6) Gamersophy and Resilience: Video Games as a Resource for Teaching Resilient Philosophy and Ethics.** I anticipate that when readers have concluded the volume, they will be wiser to the need for action within the scope of education to edify pupils and students across ages, such that leaders and pedagogues, schools, institutions (and wider) include related formal context curriculum topics alongside also attempting broader impact from within informal and non-formal learning situations. I further foresee that readers of the chapters in this e-book will share knowledge gained from this publication to inform others of its existence and the significance as a contribution to the field. Myself, I will be advising the CoE of the trilogy of e-book, journal, and project, whilst recommending for adoption and uptake while promoting dissemination throughout its global networks.

I sign off by congratulating all involved in the development of this book and the associated trilogy works, i.e., the Rotura journal, and PROPS project as outlined above. I believe it to be a major reference work that impacts within a field having societal consequences, even life and death instances as is too often sadly reported on national television news channels. Research, shared knowledge, and action in this field is of paramount importance and the efforts of those involved in confronting professionals and the public through such publications is noteworthy. I sign off with an extract from the editorial of another special issue on this topic, this one under the *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* journal, titled *Predictors, Consequences, and*

Prevention of Hate Speech and Fake News Involvement Across the Lifespan. The editorial is titled “Putting the toothpaste back in the tube: Against online hate speech” (Wiederhold, 2023) – an analogy that says a lot:

There is a common object lesson that involves handing a young student a tube of toothpaste and instructing them to squeeze out all of the contents until the package is empty. The student is then asked to put the toothpaste back. Of course, this is an impossible task, meant to illustrate that it is just as difficult to take words back after they have been spoken as it is to put toothpaste back in the tube.

Historically, this was a typical lesson for children or teens to prevent bullying on the playground, encouraging one to think (and hopefully decide to be kind) before speaking. But what about the digital playground? Perhaps this can be a good lesson for all of us, especially in a world where our words can be recorded and posted online and, once digital, will likely exist forever.

In such a world, it is imperative to consider the messages that are dispersed online. It is no longer about bullying at just one school or hate expressed behind closed doors at one private meeting – although those situations are certainly concerning. With the advent of the Internet, these small groups are able to spread their angry messages far and wide. The digital world has made bullying and hate speech global. (Wiederhold, 2023, 458-459)

At the end of the editorial the author concludes by stating a shared sentiment I concur and leave you with:

In the end, everyone has a responsibility to prevent and destroy hate speech: governments, societies, the private sector, and individuals. It will take more speech, not less, to address the issue. We must be active digital citizens, standing up to hate speech, creating the inclusive digital civilization we all deserve. (ibidem, 2023, 458-459)

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Online Hate Speech in Video Games: Concepts, Prevalence, and Prevention Strategies

Susana Costa, Alexandre Martins, Ana Filipa Martins and Ana Gavina

Hate Speech: A Conceptual Approach

Hate speech is a complex concept that has varying interpretations, often leading to conflict between different rights. Hate speech manifests within an intricate paradigm where contrasting ideas – such as freedom of expression and individual and collective rights – along with principles like dignity, freedom, and equality, intertwine and sometimes oppose each other. The definition of the term has been problematic, and its comprehension varies at national, European, and international levels, with instances of contradictory legislation from country to country. The diverse meanings of the concept formulated by a broad group of actors and the dichotomous ideas coexisting within this context explain why hate speech can be such an elusive term (Latour, 2017; Gagliardone *et al.*, 2015; Titley *et al.*, 2014). For this reason, the Council of Europe (2022) asserts that it is crucial to develop a common awareness of what defines hate speech, its nature, and the consequences of this type of expression in order to institute more effective methods, strategies, and policies to limit it. It should be emphasized that the definition and classification of this term are intrinsically dependent on the content, the tone in which the expression is uttered, the intent of the person behind that expression, the context, the target of the speech, and the impact of the expression on the targeted individual(s) (Latour, 2017).

Despite a certain lack of clarity regarding the concept it is possible to put forth various definitions, as outlined in different official documents from

various government institutions. On the global stage, the United Nations (2020) define hate speech as follows:

any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor. (p. 8)

In the context of the European Union, in 1997, and in accordance with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, hate speech should be understood as:

[...] covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. (Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech, 2020, p. 2)

Furthermore, in the General Policy Recommendation N.º 15 ‘On Combating Hate Speech’, of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), this phenomenon is defined as:

the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of “race”, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status. (Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech, 2020, p. 3)

In the same document, it is also described that this type of expressions can take the form of “public denial, trivialization, justification and condonation of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, [...] and of the glorification of persons convicted for having committed such crimes” (p. 3).

On a national level, various European nations define hate speech or the individuals or groups perpetrating it as follows:

Denmark – “publicly making statements that threaten, ridicule, or hold in contempt a group due to race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, faith, or sexual orientation”;

The Netherlands – “He who publicly, orally, in writing or graphically, intentionally expresses himself insultingly regarding a group of people because of their race, their religion or their life philosophy, their heterosexual or homosexual orientation or their physical, psychological or mental disability [...]”;

Sweden – “publicly making statements that threaten or ridicule someone or that incite hatred, persecution or contempt for someone due to their skin colour, ethnic origin, homosexual life style or orientation or, religion or philosophy of life” (Tittley *et al.*, 2014, p. 10).

As for the Portuguese case, in the lexicon of the *Diário da República* (the government’s official gazette), we find the following definition:

The crime of ‘hate speech’ consists of the punishable conduct of someone who, through a means of public dissemination, provokes or incites the practice of acts of violence, defamation, insult, or threats against individuals or groups of individuals, particularly based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. (*Diário da República Eletrónico*, 2024)

Based on the content of the various documents that were cited, it is possible to outline the characteristics of hate speech. Firstly, it is a fundamentally malicious and hostile discourse, with motivations that are explicitly prejudiced in nature. Such expressions are entirely directed at one or more individuals based on their inherent qualities, whether factual or perceived. The goal of these manifestations is to harm, dehumanize, harass, intimidate, belittle, degrade, victimize, and provoke insensitivity and brutality against these individuals, expressing a discriminatory, intimidating, antagonistic, and prejudiced bias based on factors such as race, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, beliefs, lifestyle, sexual orientation, gender, and physical, psychological and mental condition.

Hate speech harms individuals or groups in various ways and with different degrees of severity, interfering with the right to respect for private life

and the right to nondiscrimination, two essential principles in the defense of human dignity. This phenomenon can be detrimental to democracies as it instills fear and humiliates those targeted, forcibly removing them from participation in the public discourse (Council of Europe, 2022). According to Gagliardone *et al.* (2015), expressions understood as hateful typically serve two types of functions:

- a. The first is directed at the target group and aims to dehumanize and devalue the members of that group;
- b. The second reassures individuals with similar views that there are others who think like them, thereby strengthening the feeling of belonging to a group that is – seemingly – under threat.

This environment establishes, reproduces, and amplifies different tensions that have the capacity to both divide and unite, materializing a reality where the “I” is clearly opposed to the “OTHER”; it’s “US” against “THEM.” Such social relationships, which include disparate power dimensions, are not often readily recognizable (Latour, 2017).

Due to the difficulty in identifying such relationships, the concept itself can become more nebulous and challenging to grasp. At times, in common language, definitions of this type of discourse tend to take on broader meanings, which can lead to certain degrees of manipulation of this concept, particularly in crucial and delicate moments. For instance, in a political election, accusations of promoting hate speech may be used by political agents to silence dissent and criticism (Gagliardone *et al.*, 2015).

On the other hand, the right to freedom of expression can occasionally hinder accusations or the applicability of punishments against the perpetrators of hate speech. Regarding the concept of freedom of expression, the Council of Europe (2022) and the Committee on Combating Hate Speech (2020) determine that the freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental right of every human being, an essential element for the construction and proper functioning of a democratic civilization. Besides being listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a fundamental right, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) included in Article 10 the right to protection and freedom of opinion, and the acceptance and transmission of ideas without the intervention of pub-

lic authorities and regardless of frontiers. Freedom of expression should apply not only to informations received favorably or considered harmless or trivial, but also to those capable of offending, shocking, or disturbing the different segments of society.

This freedom should not be understood solely as a universal right that protects individual freedoms; it is intrinsically and historically linked to the defiance against authoritarian and totalitarian figures, the development of philosophies based on logic and rationality, progress in both scientific and general dimensions, and the construction and consolidation of democracies. As Titley *et al.* (2014) point out, within the tradition of the First Amendment of the United States, which, in a sense, follows the Enlightenment principles, freedom of expression is one of the pillars of the marketplace of ideas, a place where information is exchanged, and which may include acts of offense and ridicule. Despite this, these possible outcomes are a price worth paying in the pursuit of greater freedoms and the search for the truth. If indeed democracy depends on public participation, it is because freedom of expression enables and protects such participation against coercive and repressive agents. When we interfere with freedom of expression, we erode the foundations that sustain democracy.

However, one can argue that the notion of a truly – perhaps utopian – idea of freedom of expression does not exist. In reality, all countries and government institutions limit freedom of expression in one way or another through legislation, in cases such as copyright, intellectual property, national security, industrial and commercial confidentiality, among others. Furthermore, returning to the broader topic under discussion: “Under what conditions does freedom of speech become freedom to hate?” (Assad *et al.*, 2009, as cited in Titley, 2014, p. 8).

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) understands that in contemporary, multicultural societies, where different cultures, religions, and lifestyles converge, it is important to reconcile the right to freedom of expression with other rights, such as the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as the right to be safeguarded against discriminatory actions. However, this reconciliatory act entails a set of challenges since the aforementioned rights are all essential in a democracy. Thus, no matter how extensive freedom of expression may be, the ECHR recognizes the need to apply certain restrictions to the exercise of

this right. It is important to note that freedom of expression, a process of external manifestations, unlike freedom of thought, a process of internal manifestations, is not an absolute right. Exercising the former right must involve certain duties and responsibilities, and be subject to restrictions that protect the individual rights of others. This agency also states that it is aware of the significant importance of limiting various forms of discrimination. For these reasons, the ECHR has emphasized, in multiple judgments, that tolerance, respect and equal dignity for all citizens constitute the pillars of a democracy.

Consequently, it can be considered inevitable that these democracies sanction or prevent any manifestation that propagates, incites, or justifies hatred based on prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination. When deciding the limits of freedom of expression and what is allowed or not allowed, the ECHR must take into account: the socio-political context at the time of the speech; the purpose of the individual behind the speech; their role and status in society; the content of the speech; and how it was disseminated. Hence, the greatest challenge for authorities is finding the right balance between these disparate rights which converge and oppose each other (Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech, 2020; Weber, 2009).

Therefore, when formulating methods and strategies to combat hate speech, it is of utmost importance to reflect and discuss the legitimacy and legality of limiting freedom of expression. It is also crucial to recognize that, no matter how many definitions of hate speech there may be, this concept is not limited to abstract ideas such as political ideologies or beliefs, but primarily focuses on antagonism towards the “Other”. Furthermore, hate speech needs to be understood as a growing social phenomenon, especially in a period where new issues arise, born from a greater connectivity between citizens, as more people gradually connect using online platforms (Latour, 2017; Gagliardone *et al.*, 2015).

Online Hate Speech

For a long time, cyberspace has been closely associated with utopian ideologies. These notions stem from a belief in the potential emancipation triggered by online (inter)communication. The Internet’s characteristics

promote a space for freedom of expression and the communication of ideas, points of view, convictions, judgments, beliefs, and theories. Despite the visible and continuous divisions within societies and between nations, the Internet has changed the nature of communication. Interactions can take place in networks and communities that gather around common interests, thoughts, policies, and experiences, breaking free from the physical limits of corporeal life. These new resources have favored the narrowing of relationships between individuals and groups in the public space. Social networks, in particular, have permanently altered the way we interact. We have transitioned from a system where information was disseminated slowly and with many limits, to a superinformation system, formed by multiple and distinct means of interaction and communication, which occur instantly and on a massive scale.

One of the trends that is prevalent in social networks is the celebration of democratic processes stemming from online participation, and the political tools these systems provide for civil society and young people to organize protests, campaigns, political actions, and social projects. As a means of communication, social networks can be used to create and propagate healthy information and ideas among interconnected citizens (Castãno-Pulgarín, 2021; Chetty & Alathur, 2018; Zhang & Luo, 2019; Latour, 2017; Titley *et al.*, 2014; Costa *et al.*, 2023a).

However, this medium is also frequently used in a negative manner, serving as a space that encourages the spread of violent messages and comments and the propagation of hate speech. Digital media platforms are arenas for intense discussions that foster the use of offensive and discriminatory expressions (Castãno-Pulgarín, 2021; Paz *et al.*, 2020; Tontodimamma *et al.*, 2020; Costa *et al.*, 2023a). Once relegated to a dark corner of the Internet, this type of discourse is progressively more apparent in major online communication channels. Even though there are no statistics demonstrating a global view of this phenomenon, organizations trying to oppose hate speech and the digital platforms where these acts spread recognize that online hate messages are gradually becoming more common (Latour, 2017).

In recent years, academic interest in hate speech has grown significantly, as reflected in the volume of indexed texts in the Web of Science platform. Between 2013 and 2018, the number increased from 42 to 162 (Costa *et al.*, 2023b; Paz *et al.*, 2020). The platform HateBase, described as “a service

built to help organizations and online communities detect, monitor and analyze hate speech” (HateBase, 2024, online), conducted an analysis of instances of online hate worldwide and found that the largest number of cases target people or groups based on ethnicity and nationality. However, discrimination and incitement to hate based on religion and class have also been on the rise (Gagliardone *et al.*, 2015). As Siegel (2020) reports, from anti-Semitic discrimination against Jewish journalists to the role of social media in mobilizing groups that perpetuated ethnic violence in countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka, the negative offline consequences of online hate speech (OHS) are visibly more harmful and insidious. As a result, several governments have recognized hate speech as a serious problem, establishing regulations and pressuring social media management companies to promote and implement measures to limit the spread of OHS (Gagliardone *et al.*, 2016).

OHS manifests at the intersection of multiple tensions, expressing conflicts among different groups within a given society. This phenomenon is a clear demonstration of how the Internet, a technology of immense transformative power, brings both opportunities and challenges, requiring the correct but highly complex balance between fundamental principles such as freedom of expression and the defense of human dignity (Gagliardone *et al.*, 2015).

The issue of OHS has been increasingly discussed by scholars, governmental institutions, and legal experts, albeit with no consensus on its definition (Siegel, 2020). OHS is often presented as a set of behaviors considered deviant (Castãno-Pulgarín *et al.*, 2021) relative to prevailing social norms. It encompasses the reproduction, through digital means, of ideas that promote hatred, discrimination, or violence against an individual or a group based on factors such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, historical events, gender, or sexual identity (Anti-Defamation League, 2016; Paz *et al.*, 2020; Blaya 2019; Agustina *et al.*, 2020; Deslauriers *et al.*, 2020; Costa *et al.*, 2023b). In general terms, these are provocative behaviors exhibiting discriminatory perspectives (Bhavnani *et al.*, 2009), often grounded in unfounded conspiracies or rumors (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). Other definitions highlight elements related to acts of defamation, threat, exclusion, and provocation that may incite violence (Hawdon *et al.*, 2016; Wachs & Wright, 2019), the use of obscenity, the prevalence of

episodes of emasculation and dehumanization (Ruzaitė, 2018), as well as the use of aggressive or offensive language directed at a specific group of people sharing a commonality – religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, among others – based on an imbalance of power (Watanabe *et al.*, 2018).

Hatred based on gender and sexual orientation of individuals seems to be increasing (Dragiewicz *et al.*, 2018; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). In the case of women, negative experiences include abusive and degrading comments, slander, defamation, episodes of persecution, threats of rape and death, intimidation, humiliation, discredit, and hostility (Sobieraj, 2018; Sundén & Paasonen, 2018). Likewise, such hate-driven behaviors are very often directed towards religions and ethnicities (Lingam & Aripin, 2017), with the common use of inflammatory and sectarian language that promotes hatred and violence against individuals based on their religious affiliation, race, or ethnicity (Albadi *et al.*, 2018; Raileanu, 2016). According to Horsti (2017), Islam is the most frequently targeted religion, witnessing the proliferation of narratives that portray Muslims as prone to violence (Evolvi, 2019).

OHS can involve different instigators, targets, motives, and tactics. For example, perpetrators may know their targets or attack unknown individuals (Siegel, 2020). As Sellars (2016) asserts, these attacks can originate from a single aggressor or escalate into true hate campaigns orchestrated by a digital crowd. Dragiewicz *et al.* (2018) highlight that digital media introduces new forms of abuse. In contrast, Gagliardone *et al.* (2015) argue that OHS is not inherently different from hate speech outside the digital sphere. What is observed is that the Internet introduces particular and complex challenges that can exacerbate its consequences, making regulation difficult. The authors identify “permanence, itinerancy, anonymity, and cross-jurisdictional character” (p. 14) as some of the most complex characteristics regarding OHS: platforms like Facebook, for example, allow multiple topics to coexist simultaneously, making many offensive posts go unnoticed, creating spaces where individuals or groups are insulted, ridiculed, or discriminated against for extended periods of time. Additionally, the rapid spread, branching, and multiplication of messages on online platforms make the permanent elimination of offensive content challenging. Furthermore, even when harmful content is removed, it often reappears elsewhere. For instance,

if a website is shut down, it may be restored through a hosting service with less stringent regulations or by relocating to a country with fewer restrictive laws regarding hate speech. This itinerant nature allows poorly formulated and unfounded thoughts and ideas, which would have had limited expression or support in the past, to find spaces where they can be shared. Since the Internet allows anonymous speech and the use of pseudonyms, it can easily foster destructive behaviors (Citron & Norton, 2011), given that the perception of anonymity has been shown to drive aggression in individuals (Zimbardo, 1970, 2007; Citron, 2009). Consequently, some governments and platforms have attempted to implement rules requiring users to employ their real names, but such measures face fair criticism for violating individuals' right to privacy. Finally, the transnational reach of the Internet brings challenges for interjurisdictional cooperation in the combat of hate speech. Despite agreements between many countries, these processes prove too slow and bureaucratic and perpetrators often exploit legal loopholes to commit crimes with impunity. Victims often feel powerless in the face of online harassment, not knowing where to turn for help (Gagliardone *et al.*, 2015).

All of these complexities and specificities make the identification of OHS challenging. For example, certain code terms are often used to substitute easily identifiable offensive expressions, such as racist, xenophobic, homophobic, sexist, etc. Thus, the use of those seemingly innocuous terms (Duarte *et al.*, 2018) makes this type of discourse unsuspected and imperceptible in some cases (Siegel, 2020). As a result, OHS becomes intricate and obscure, difficult to identify, delimit, and consequently, define (Zhang & Luo, 2019; MacAvaney *et al.*, 2019; Sellars, 2016). Watanabe *et al.* (2018) emphasize the systematic and uncontrollable nature of offenses perpetrated on the Internet, while Castãno-Pulgarín *et al.* (2021) highlight that these deviant social behaviors range from minor transgressions to the practice of illegal acts.

The urgency of this issue has been increasingly recognized by non-governmental organizations. The United Nations Human Rights Council acknowledges that the proliferation of OHS presents a set of new challenges. This topic has also been a political concern in the European Union due to its rapid spread (Castãno-Pulgarín *et al.*, 2021; Gambäck & Sikdar, 2017). A report seeking to understand the online experiences of children between the ages of 11 and 17 in 10 European countries revealed that cyberbully-

ing increases with age, a phenomenon that can be explained by people's progressive exposure to online platforms.

During the confinement prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic there was an increased risk of exposure to OHS among young people, as many in-person social activities were transposed to digital environments (Costa *et al.*, 2023b; Machackova *et al.*, 2020; Sachs *et al.*, 2020). According to the Council of Europe (2022), expressions of hatred have gradually spread through the Internet in recent years. In parallel, Europe currently faces several serious difficulties, such as terrorism, migration, and socio-political conflicts. This scenario has been successfully exploited by nationalist and populist factions, leading to a decrease in trust in national and supranational institutions. As a consequence, Europe witnesses a visible increase in provocative and intimidating comments, particularly those directed at immigrants and refugees. On one hand, there is the spread of hateful digital messages like "refugees should drown" or "more asylum seekers' homes will burn" and, on the other hand, there is the escalation of violent attacks on refugee homes, such as fires and physical assaults. These circumstances substantiate theories of the interconnection between OHS and offline hate crimes (Latour, 2017).

In summary, hate speech appears to have the propensity to be amplified through the use of the Internet and social media, culminating in an environment of prejudice and intolerance, and in a greater propagation of stereotypes. This fosters discrimination and hostility and, in severe cases, facilitates violent acts such as hate crimes, offline assaults, discrimination, racist attitudes or an increase in gender-based violence (Castãno-Pulgarín *et al.*, 2021).

Games, Video Games and Online Video Games

Finding a consensus definition for video games, much like the challenge faced with the conceptualization of hate speech, is a complex task and remains a persistent issue in game theory and game studies. A broad understanding of video games is quite challenging, as they comprise immense diversity and can result in countless individual experiences (Arjoranta, 2019; Council of Europe, 2021).

Video games are not a recent phenomenon, dating back to the 1970s. Since then, this medium has evolved to become a central component of popular culture and a multibillion-dollar industry. Currently, video games represent one of the most popular forms of media entertainment. The medium is highly diverse, ranging from simple numeric games on a smartphone to vast online universes with almost realistic graphics played on the latest consoles and computers. Currently, it is possible to play almost anywhere and anytime, on multiple types of devices. Games can be entertaining, challenging, and engaging. However, despite their economic and cultural relevance, there have been few attempts to define what is a video game (Council of Europe, 2021; Liu, 2020; Arjoranta, 2019; Bègue *et al.*, 2017).

When it comes to conceptualizing video games, one can start by stating the obvious: first and foremost “video games [...] are games” (Frasca, 2004). When it comes to the concept of game, according to Caillois (2015), a game is a fictional, unpredictable activity, structured by rules, with spatial-temporal limits. Alternatively, Zimmerman (2004) defines a game as a voluntary interactive activity where one or more players follow certain rules that restrict their actions, and in which an artificial conflict is declared, eventually resulting in a measurable and quantifiable end. Esposito (2005) lists some essential criteria for each game: “common experience, equality, freedom, activity, diving into the world of the game” (p. 2). In the case of rule-based games, additional criteria include “game rules, goal, the course of the game is never the same (chance), competition” (p. 2). Regarding the playful elements of games, authors Le Diberder & Le Diberder (1998) list some intrinsic features, such as competition, achievement, narrative pleasure, audiovisual experience, and mastery of the device. Additionally, there are other, less observed but equally relevant, characteristics, such as the search for secrets and easter eggs left by the game creators (Esposito, 2005).

With the emergence, proliferation, and democratization of new audiovisual devices – electronic systems with computing resources (e.g., arcade machines, personal computers, gaming consoles, smartphones, etc.), input devices (mouse, keyboards, controllers, microphones, etc.), and output devices (screens, speakers, etc.) – new forms of human-machine interactions have emerged. A video game is a system where interaction occurs between a player, an electronic machine, and possibly other players. This scenario is mediated by a fictional setting and based on an emotional con-

nection between the player and the consequences of their actions within that context. Video games also allow the exploration and discovery of information through a simulated reality, giving players the opportunity to fail without suffering physical harm. With highly immersive qualities, video games engage players in an illusory conflict, where they are stimulated by curiosity, leading them to seek answers and rewards (Costa *et al.*, 2020; Arjoranta, 2019; Bergonse, 2017; Silva, 2010; Esposito, 2005; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004).

A great number of video games are based on a narrative: some stories are clear and simple, others quite complex and intricate, and some are even partially hidden from players, who must uncover them by paying close attention to small details. There are various methods of including diegetic elements, whether through prologues, cutscenes, dialogues with non-playable characters (NPCs), etc. Some games make direct references to real or historical events, others contain metaphorical messages, while others directly address delicate subjects, such as mental illnesses – *Celeste* (2018) –, stories of refugees – *Bury me, my love!* (2017) –, or harsh conditions of war – *This War of Mine* (2014). Additionally, there are games that don't tell a story, prioritizing gameplay over narrative, as seen in abstract challenges like *Tetris* (1985) (Council of Europe, 2021; Esposito, 2005).

Another differentiating element among video games is the type of interaction they provide to players. These interactions can be cooperative or competitive, synchronous or asynchronous, face-to-face (using the same device and sharing the same space) or online (using different devices remotely). Online multiplayer enables connection and sharing of the same game among different users. Within this category, the type of interaction can vary between matches. In some cases, hundreds of players compete individually against each other in a battle royale environment; in other cases, players must cooperate and compete against other groups. In the late 1990s, with the advent of high-speed Internet connections, this genre of games became increasingly popular. New communities were created around video games, where players could communicate and share problems, tips, and strategies (Council of Europe, 2021; Costa *et al.*, 2020; Crawford *et al.*, 2011).

Playing online video games and belonging to gaming communities is part of the daily life of many individuals. According to Clement (2023), in 2023, there were an estimated 1.1 billion online gamers worldwide. Online games

offer their users not only the thrill of competition but also the excitement of social interactions, which can have both positive and negative impacts. Gamers perceive online games as a unique and rewarding experience that allows them to stay in touch with friends and create new relations. These positive aspects play a significant role in both the digital and physical lives of these individuals (Costa *et al.*, 2023a; Kwak & Blackburn, 2014). Moreover, video games can have the ability to influence the behavior of younger individuals: according to Malik (2008), video games offer more than entertainment and technological skills; they also help players develop abilities in problem-solving, verbal cognitive performance, and conflict resolution. The benefits of playing video games are divided into four basic domains: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social (Granic *et al.*, 2014). Online games also facilitate interaction between players and promote social behaviors and ephemeral or circumstantial relationships. Players build digital communities with specific and common rules and values, generating a sense of belonging while also working toward a collective and shared goal.

Online Hate Speech in Video Games

It took less than a minute of playing League of Legends for a homophobic slur to pop up on my screen. Actually, I hadn't even started playing. It was my first attempt to join what many agree to be the world's leading online game, and I was slow to pick a character. The messages started to pour in. "Pick one, kidd," one nudged. Then, "**Choose FA GO TT.**" (Maher, 2016, p. 1)

Although OHS is a widespread phenomenon, spanning across all virtual media, it is important to understand how this type of expression has manifested in the rapidly expanding field of online video games. Being exposed to violent content in the media can have a cathartic effect on individuals. The appeal of games involving the destruction of cars, buildings, or bodies may lie in the possibility of experiencing such situations without consequences in the physical world (Bernardes *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, much like what can be commonly witnessed in big sports events, competition in video games – whether offline or online – often involves verbally expressing blasphemies and obscenities in moments of frustration or tension.

In general, hate speech in video games can be seen as something common and acceptable, with feelings of anger and frustration being considered normal reactions to moments provoked by competition. During a game, interaction via chat is frequent, and comments vary between compliments for performance and ironic criticism, personal or ethnic insults, discrimination based on sexual orientation, harassment, or attacks on minorities. The possibility of hiding behind anonymity and the absence of consequences can encourage the use of hate speech as a demonstration of power or as a way to alleviate frustration. However, this type of behavior can have harmful effects on physical health and self-esteem, both for the aggressors and the victims (Costa *et al.*, 2020; Breuer, 2017). The anonymity provided by these types of remote communications can lead certain people to act in different ways from what they would in a face-to-face interaction. Several studies also suggest that prolonged exposure to cyberhate can lead to a kind of desensitization to this type of discourse, culminating in a greater disregard of the victims and in a certain normalization of prejudice (Costa *et al.*, 2023b; Uyheng & Carley, 2021; Soral *et al.*, 2018).

During matches of online multiplayer games, where there is dynamic interaction among players, such as team building, strategy sharing, and voice conversations – activities that are often not moderated – there is a greater likelihood of instances of conflict and use of hate speech. These situations should not be understood as remote events exclusive to the digital scope, as players, in addition to their virtual personas and lives, sometimes also share the same physical space with the same people they play games with – sometimes as colleagues or friends –, leading to face-to-face verbal and physical confrontations. Another aspect to highlight is the existence of online communities created around specific games such as *League of Legends* (2009), *Fortnite Battle Royale* (2017), *PUBG – PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds* (2017), and *Apex Legends* (2019), as well as gaming platforms, such as Twitch or Steam, and social media, like Reddit. In these digital ecosystems, it is not difficult to find comments laden with verbal violence, intolerance, or even attacks on those expressing divergent opinions (Costa *et al.*, 2020). Such attitudes are steadily pervasive, and the current trend seems to be for them to escalate and become increasingly common: racist, sexist, and homophobic language, threats of violence, or incitement to suicide are just a few examples. In more concerning cases,

there is a transition from virtual to physical spaces, which endangers the privacy and security of prominent figures within their respective communities, as seen in the notorious and controversial “Gamergate” case (Romano, 2021), where several women in the gaming industry were subjected to a campaign of harassment that included invasion of privacy and death and rape threats.

As Maher (2016) mentions, online gamers have a reputation for being hostile individuals. In an environment largely devoid of consequences, populated mostly by anonymous and competitive individuals, taunts can be quite unpleasant. Players may harass others due to their underperformance, and they can deceive, sabotage or initiate behaviors that can ruin others’ experience, like, for example, the case of Korean players who commonly unite to reprimand or harass the player with the worst performance. If common sense dictates that the vast majority of hate and cruelty on the Internet arises from a tiny percentage of its users, individuals commonly referred to as “trolls,” the fact is that Riot Games, the company who developed *League of Legends* (2009) – one of the most popular multiplayer video games on the market –, found that 1% of its players were consistently toxic, but they represented only 5% of the total toxicity in the game. Most of this “toxic crowd” comes from “ordinary players” who might just be having a bad day. Despite their generally positive attitudes, at some point, they tended to commit acts of hatred.

Regarding the targets of attacks, women and minorities are usually the most persecuted groups. This is partly due to an overrepresentation of adult, Caucasian, and male characters in video games, at the expense of women, racial and ethnic minorities, children and elderly people. Similarly to other types of media, video games have the ability to impact individuals social identity, influencing our views on certain groups. According to Williams *et al.* (2009), in 40% of games, there are no female characters, and when they do appear, they usually hold less relevant roles and are often embodied by infantilized or hypersexualized figures that serve as prizes and rewards for the male characters (Fragoso *et al.*, 2017). These suggestive and pejorative portrayals of female characters contribute to stronger sexist attitudes and sexual harassment in the gaming community, as it becomes more challenging to identify these behaviors when sexism itself is encoded and presented within the game (Maher, 2016).

On the subject of race, 68% of characters in video games are white, 15% Hispanic, and 8% black – these last two tend to appear as characters with negative connotations: criminals or gangsters, as seen in the *Grand Theft Auto* game series. This echo of social inequalities and injustices causes games to reinforce the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes (Williams *et al.*, 2009; Costa *et al.*, 2020). Breuer (2017) also argues that the underrepresentation of minorities in video games results in reduced engagement by individuals belonging to those minority groups with this form of entertainment. Consequently, these groups are more exposed to exclusion and also more susceptible to OHS.

For several decades, parents, lawmakers, and researchers have been concerned that video games, particularly the ones that are labeled as violent, are corrupting and distorting the minds of young people, making them more violent. However, according to Maher (2016), citing James Ivory, a professor in communication in Virginia Tech, much of the focus on violence in video games is misdirected, as the most critical concern may not be what it means for a child to pretend to be a soldier shooting indiscriminately into a crowd, but what may accompany those scenarios: shooting indiscriminately, while spouting a set of racist, xenophobic, misogynistic and homophobic slurs.

The influence that online content potentially has on opinions and actions might indicate that aggressive discourse can have an impact both in the virtual and in the physical world. By undermining the dignity of others, these messages underscore the need to better understand the dynamics of hate speech and to seek innovative solutions that effectively address this prevalent and somewhat normalized issue.

Limiting Hate Speech

Regulation

The ubiquitous nature of new technological devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and video game consoles, has immersed children, young people, and adults in a world of technology and digital media, making it almost impossible not to be in contact with at least one of these devices, whether for professional, educational, or entertainment purposes (Council

of Europe, 2021). Various new forms of media, including video games, have the power to significantly influence individuals and cultures, spreading persuasive messages that are capable of shaping new beliefs, behaviors, and values (Liu, 2020). Despite the increased focus in scientific literature, little is still known about its prevalence, causes, or consequences on different digital platforms (Siegel, 2020). Moreover, only recently have researchers begun to analyze the effectiveness of practical approaches to limit hate speech, and our understanding of the collateral damage of such interventions is particularly limited. Despite the existence of laws that directly and explicitly prohibit a certain type of hate speech, the way these policies are or should be applied in the digital realm is still a topic of serious debate.

A popular axiom that has recently arisen from this discussion is “don’t feed the troll”. This emphasizes that, when confronted with offensive discourse, the act of indifference can be, in some cases, the best or only way to respond to offenders. This premise recognizes that people engaging in hate speech are not only looking to hurt, but also to get a reaction and to amplify the “problem” they seek to promote (Costa *et al.*, 2023a; Titley *et al.*, 2014). For some, not paying attention, and not reacting to offensive messages would be the most appropriate response. But besides ignoring, as Citron and Norton (2011) indicate, there are three other common ways to react to OHS: removing offensive content or language; educating and empowering users; and using counter-speech to challenge hate speech.

The Council of Europe (2022) states that measures to address hate speech must always be appropriate and proportional to the severity of the respective occurrence: some instances must be addressed by criminal law, while others may need a response from civil or administrative law or through non-legal action, e.g., education or awareness. In 2016, the European Commission implemented the Code of Conduct, a document signed by some of the world’s largest technology companies, such as Facebook, Youtube, X (formerly Twitter), Microsoft, and Instagram, with the purpose of reducing the spread of illegal hate speech on digital platforms. It should be emphasized that this Code is a voluntary commitment agreed upon and undertaken by major technology companies, not a legal document that would give governments the right to remove content. None of the companies is forced to remove content that is not considered illegal hate speech or other speech protected by the right to freedom of expression established

in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In practice, when one of these companies receives a request to remove certain content from its platform, it will have to assess that request in accordance with its guidelines, and in some cases, national laws limiting racism and xenophobia. The purpose of the Code is to ensure that all requests for content removal are reviewed and processed in less than 24 hours. It is a joint effort to ensure that there are no opportunities for some forms of illegal speech to spread virally.

As for these tech companies, in order to moderate user content they have also developed their own definitions of what can be considered hate speech:

We define hate speech as direct attacks against people – rather than concepts or institutions – on the basis of what we call protected characteristics (PCs): race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, religious affiliation, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, and serious disease. [...] We define a hate speech attack as dehumanizing speech; statements of inferiority, expressions of contempt or disgust; cursing; and calls for exclusion or segregation. We also prohibit the use of harmful stereotypes, which we define as dehumanizing comparisons that have historically been used to attack, intimidate, or exclude specific groups, and that are often linked with offline violence. (Facebook Transparency Center, 2023, online)

Hate speech is not allowed on YouTube. We don't allow content that promotes violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes, which indicate a protected group status under YouTube's policy: Age; Caste; Disability; Ethnicity; Gender Identity and Expression; Nationality; Race; Immigration Status; Religion; Sex/Gender; Sexual Orientation; Victims of a major violent event and their kin; Veteran Status. Don't post content on YouTube if the purpose of that content is to do one or more of the following: Encourage violence against individuals or groups based on their protected group status. [...] Incite hatred against individuals or groups based on their protected group status. (Youtube Help, 2023, online)

You may not directly attack other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease. We will review and take action against reports

of accounts targeting an individual or group of people with any of the following behavior, whether within Posts or Direct Messages: Hateful references; Incitement; Slurs and Tropes; Dehumanization; Hateful Imagery; Hateful Profile. [...] The following is a list of potential enforcement options for content that violates this policy: Removing the Post from search results; Restricting Likes, replies, Reposts, Quote, bookmarks, share, pin to profile, or engagement counts; Requiring Post removal [...]. (X Help Center, 2023, online)

Much like this last example, it is possible to observe that most gaming companies' guidelines are based on a policy of restricting or removing users. Both video games and video game platforms use protocols that identify forbidden speech through artificial intelligence and machine learning. These systems are assisted by teams systematically operating in the detection, regulation and limitation of hateful behaviors. Platforms like Twitch, for example, have created and implemented mechanisms that allow users to mute or ban people for deviant behavior, and block their activity on the platform for a limited time (Costa *et al.*, 2023b).

Despite this trend, there are other approaches to tackle this issue. An example of that comes from the company Riot Games. They created a set of 24 in-game messages or tips, some encouraging good behavior – “Players perform better if you give them constructive feedback after a mistake” –, and others discouraging bad behavior – “Teammates perform worse if you harass them after a mistake”. According to studies conducted by the gaming company, some of these messages had a clear impact. The warning about harassment reduced negative attitudes by 8.3%, verbal abuse by 6.2%, and offensive language by 11%, while a positive message about cooperation among players reduced offensive language by 6.2% (Maher, 2016).

There is no doubt that hate speech needs to be contained, as it can undermine the dignity of others. However, as it was previously pointed out, this is a complex and conflicting discussion between different fundamental rights, like freedom of expression and the right to equality, inclusion, and protection. This delicate balance between multiple and somewhat disparate freedoms/rights has also been discussed and seen as a major challenge in the context of video games. Both reporting – and subsequent removal – and indifference/inaction can be seen as strategies to limit this phenomenon, but they are certainly not sufficient. Removing content is a very powerful

tool that can be overused or misused by these companies, which sometimes dismisses from the public discourse people that might have offended others, but did not directly incite or make threats of violence or intentionally inflict emotional distress. As for using indifference as a strategy, there is a chance that it can hinder the scrutiny and the discussion around the causes and motives behind OHS (Latour, 2017). For these reasons, it is important for institutions to explore alternatives.

Media and Digital Literacy

The promotion of a healthy and safe gaming culture could also involve developing different pedagogical approaches by using video games as learning tools. We should consider them as cultural and artistic instruments capable of promoting multiple and distinct aspects, from entertainment, to learning, critical thinking, and personal development. Moreover, it means understanding video games as artifacts that are worthy of study and careful analysis of their characteristics, mechanics, and languages. Hate speech is a symptom of a profound problem, the roots of which are well established in society. That is why it is not enough to monitor, control, and censor deviant acts online. It is imperative to also mediate with pedagogy (Council of Europe, 2021).

Currently, younger generations extensively use digital devices, the Internet, social media, and video games to seek information, gain knowledge, acquire skills, communicate, and socialize. Digital literacy is indispensable for the empowerment of young people, especially for the purpose of enabling them to identify and respond more easily to hate speech. It is essential that they learn to access information from various sources, to critically analyze it, and to verify its authenticity. In a period marked by information overload, the ability to be critical of sources is fundamental (Latour, 2017). Media literacy should be used to turn digital experiences and forms of communication into learning opportunities and the acquisition of new skills (Liu, 2020; Shaffer *et al.*, 2005). It is common for people to passively absorb unsolicited messages integrated into their devices. In this context, media literacy can promote a critical and reflective interpretation of these contents, empowering individuals to make conscious choices about the communication channels they use.

In its recommendations of 2006 and 2009, the Council of Europe emphasized the duty to enable children, young people, and educators to use information and communication services and technologies properly. It also highlighted the need for EU Member States to develop strategies to protect this population from dangerous content and behaviors and to encourage active participation in these new information and communication environments. In some of its recommendations, the Council of Europe (2022) affirms that member states should:

- Be equipped to assess criteria for identifying hate speech and be aware of strategies to combat it, emphasizing the importance of encouraging and supporting initiatives by relevant authorities, national human rights institutions, and civil society organizations, including those that may be targeted by hate speech.
- Include in the general curriculum the teaching of human rights, education for democratic citizenship, and media and information literacy, subjects that should address both online and offline hate speech.
- Create and strengthen educational initiatives and awareness programs, as well as provide appropriate tools for children and young people, parents, educators, and volunteers working with children. They should be empowered to better understand and prevent hate speech. It is equally important to ensure the effective participation of children and young people in the development of these initiatives, programs, and tools.
- Implement specific standards to support formal and non-formal educational activities, as well as cultural programs for the general public. These initiatives should reinforce the commitment to human rights in a pluralistic democratic society, encourage critical thinking, promote equality and intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and develop the skills necessary to identify and combat hate speech.
- Provide effective and targeted training programs for various public bodies involved in the prevention of hate speech. These programs must empower professionals to identify and prevent hate speech, be sensitive to the needs of victims, and limit its impact on those affected.

This same organization (2021) also provides some insights into what it means to be a digital citizen in this era of information overload, emphasizing that being a digital citizen:

- Involves using technology safely, ethically, and responsibly, along with possessing the skills to engage positively, critically, and competently in the digital environment. This includes having effective communication skills and the ability to discern and evaluate online information.
- Means engaging positively in creating, work, sharing, socialization, research, communication, and learning in a constantly evolving society influenced by digital technologies. It is essential to actively and responsibly participate in local, global, and online communities, where there are endless possibilities for interaction and information and opinion sharing.
- Includes knowing how to wisely enjoy the different forms of entertainment that technologies allow, as well as balancing one's exposure to media appropriately to avoid excessive or inappropriate use.

Regarding gaming, the Council indicates that Digital Citizenship Education aims to promote a healthy and conscious gaming culture among future generations. By increasing understanding of the economic models, structures, languages, risks, and opportunities of video games, it will be possible to build societies that are more receptive to recognizing the intrinsic value of this medium, improving the quality of generated content, and reducing potential risks and issues, as with other media forms.

Media literacy is a skill that involves technical, cognitive, social, civic, and creative competencies, enabling individuals to access and critically understand traditional and new forms of communication. It can advocate for the active engagement in democratic life, the ability to exercise critical and independent judgment, as well as the reflection on individual and collective actions. Furthermore, it can increase people's resilience to extremist messages, misinformation, and also hate speech (Council of Europe, 2016).

Digital citizenship education aims to empower people to exercise informed and conscious citizenship by understanding their rights and

concepts such as freedom of expression and social and civic responsibility. The effectiveness of digital literacy depends on the role that individuals assume in relation to hate speech, whether as victims, spectators, propagators, or producers of such discourse, or even as activists fighting against it (Latour, 2017). Digital literacy, promoted through gaming culture and other audiovisual and digital media, should aim to stimulate democratic values and digital citizenship, encouraging positive behaviors that can help reduce OHS.

Interactive Narratives As Pedagogical Tools

Video Games

The scientific community has been greatly dedicated to studying the educational benefits of video games. The act of playing can be considered a learning process that engages the player almost unconsciously. According to Gee's studies (2003, 2010, 2013), video games present players with a series of challenges and obstacles that need to be overcome in order to advance in the game. Games such as *Civilization VI* (2016), *Starcraft 2* (2010), or *Fortnite* (2017) can be quite complex in terms of instructions, controls, and gameplay dynamics. While playing, children become deeply involved in the problem-solving process and fully learn the internal mechanisms of the game. They are not afraid to make mistakes and keep trying until they overcome the most challenging sections. Through tutorials subtly integrated into the game, provided at each level and designed to gradually introduce game mechanics, children learn all the necessary commands simply by playing. There are games that go beyond stimulating abilities such as lateral thinking or memory, as they also increase brain plasticity and orientation skills (Kühn *et al.*, 2013), hand-eye coordination (Li *et al.*, 2016), and can also reduce anxiety and depression (Granic *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, they can expose players to new languages (Chen & Yang, 2013) and highly valued skills, such as cooperation, problem-solving, and strategy formulation and implementation (Prensky, 2006).

In this context, there are products created specifically for educational purposes called "serious games" (Laamarti *et al.*, 2014). This form of media

represents a pedagogical approach that can be especially effective in teaching basic skills, such as memorizing concepts, or learning simple operations or specific topics. The use of serious games means employing playful objects primarily for educational – rather than entertainment – purposes (Sawyer, 2007).

However, this approach can also present great limitations. Considering that the main purpose of these types of games is not to entertain, they may not be fun enough for children, which can make them uninteresting. This can negatively affect children’s motivation, which is one of the most important factors in games. Nevertheless, it is certain that serious games are not always of poor quality or tedious. Some standout titles in this genre include *Human Resource Machine* (2016), a game that challenges players to solve puzzles using visual programming language; *Father and Son* (2017), an adventure game that encourages players to visit the National Archaeological Museum of Naples; *A Gender Story* (2018), an interactive graphic novel that addresses gender stereotypes and discrimination; and *Bury me, my love!* (2017), a delicate and intelligent interactive story that narrates the difficult journey of Syrian refugees through instant text messages.

Another approach is based on the use of “entertainment video games,” such as Triple-A Games, to capture students’ attention and motivate them to learn. This approach is based on a type of tangential learning (Council of Europe, 2021), which involves the idea that a portion of the audience will initiate a learning process autonomously if parents, teachers, or game designers facilitate the approach to topics that students may find interesting, in a context that they consider exciting and stimulating. An example that could fit into this category is the series *Assassin’s Creed* (2007-present), a game franchise known for reproducing, with great levels of detail, locations, architectures, characters, and historical moments of humanity, whether in Ancient Egypt, Florence during the Renaissance, or the United States during the American Revolution. By including it in the game’s narrative, this series invites players to gather relevant information about locations and iconic moments of human civilization in a discreet manner.

The same video games can be used to address serious themes or current events to stimulate students to think critically, a process that involves reflection, discernment, analysis, evaluation, and responsible action. This methodology can be extremely useful for dismantling stereotypes and combating prejudices, in addition to offering significant opportunities for classroom

discussions. Topics such as ethics, morality, empathy, racism, legal issues, gender and LGBT representation, violence, current affairs, and other delicate or controversial subjects can be addressed through video games, either by playing, showing excerpts or simply talking about the game. In this context, games like *Detroit: Become Human* (2018) – which explores racism by telling the stories of a group of androids that, due to an error in the system, gain free will and decide to fight for their rights – create ideal scenarios for discussing subjects in a critical but also very engaging way.

Another significant aspect to consider is the ability of video games to capture players' interests and motivation, promoting and stimulating their creativity. Games like *Minecraft* (2011), *LEGO Worlds* (2017), *Dragon Quest Builders* (2018), or *Mario Maker 2* (2019), offer players the opportunity to create, modify and share contents. These games encourage users to share their own levels, items, music, sound effects, 3D models of items and characters, and short cinematics (Council of Europe, 2021).

Video games are complex and interconnected ecosystems that can significantly influence perceptions and behavior patterns, both in young people and adults alike. Despite frequent criticism, video games play a positive role by providing safe environments for certain deviant behaviors and confrontation. The benefits of video games have been progressively explored through the reinforcement and reward of positive actions, and the playful approach to serious themes and discussions, using language that adequately appeals to younger audiences. Video games have also the potential to be excellent educational tools as they can motivate young people to learn specific skills through the development of critical thinking, cooperation, and interaction, while also stimulating the development of physical and emotional skills through immersive narratives, puzzles, or logical and deductive problem-solving.

Interactive Narratives

Different types of interaction create distinct forms of user engagement, allowing new possibilities for immersion in order to achieve higher levels of involvement. Through computer-generated and assisted interactive narratives, users have the opportunity to actively participate in an ever-evolving story, taking on the role of a character or having control over the direction

of the plot. Various studies (Wiehl, 2019; Miller & Allor, 2016) argue that interactivity produced from audiovisual and digital environments contributes to increasing the emotional engagement of the audience (Nogueira & Amaral, 2022). By providing engaging plots and allowing interaction from its users/interactors, interactive narratives have been seen as a promising tool for both entertainment and educational purposes (Si & Marsella, 2014).

Throughout history and dating back to ancient times, narratives have been communicated through numerous mediums, such as films, books, and oral storytelling. With the rapid advancement of computing technologies, another form of media has expanded: interactive films. This genre, originating in the 1960s with the premiere of *Kinoautomat* (1967) at the Montreal World Fair (Koenitz, 2021), allowed the audience to play a role in the story and to interact with its diegetic elements, exploring the universe of the narrative and observing the effect of their actions in real time. The spectator, now an active agent in the story, could choose the path the narrative would take and, if dissatisfied with the outcome, restart and try different options. Interactive films and narratives provide unique opportunities for exercising cultural and social skills, combining the pedagogical potential of narratives with an (inter) active learning experience. The ability to engage the audience and establish direct connections between actions and results, encourages users to explore alternative paths in the story and spend more time learning. Interactivity and the power of agency can create and promote new and stronger motivations for learning (Park & Kim, 2008). Interactive films and narratives have proven to be promising tools in various social interaction scenarios, including the practice of cultural and language skills (Si *et al.*, 2005), negotiation and communication (Kim *et al.*, 2009; Traum *et al.*, 2003), HIV prevention (Miller *et al.*, 2011), or anti-bullying interventions (Paiva *et al.*, 2004).

Within the field of interactive narratives, new subgenres are emerging. For instance, interactive documentaries (Whitelaw, 2002) are non-fiction works that convey an authorial perspective on a particular subject and use interactivity as a central piece of its transmission mechanism. An example of this is *Mujeres en Venta* (2008), an interactive narrative addressing the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation in Argentina, exposing the networks of human trafficking that capture, deceive, subjugate, exploit, rape, and, in some cases, kill women. Throughout the story, over 136 media objects can be seen in five chapters: “Recruitment,” “Trafficking Routes,” “Exploitation,” “Rescue,” and

“Get Involved.” Interaction is revealed through a linear navigation structure, provided by the project’s website. By scrolling down the page, the interactor navigates through the available content, where multiple and distinct layers of media provide visual, auditory, and textual information, presenting multiple facts related to the subject matter (Nogueira & Amaral, 2022).

Interactive film and, in a more specific view, interactive documentaries fit squarely into the context of participatory and convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006), existing simultaneously as a product and as a process (Nash, 2014), as they offer the audience the opportunity to intervene and participate directly in the narrative. The fundamental objective of interactive narratives is to provide the user with an immersive experience where their actions affect the unfolding of the story. A sensation of presence, often described as “feeling like you’re there” (Heeter, 1992; Steuer, 1992), is crucial to ensuring that virtual assimilation is more effective and that the acquired knowledge and skills are transferred to the real world (Winn, 1993). To achieve this feeling of presence – that “you are there” – the interactor must be able to generate a mental model of the virtual world (Schubert *et al.*, 2001). Additionally, the interactor must clearly understand the possible actions and anticipate their consequences, as interactivity and the sense of agency also affect the experience of presence (Biocca *et al.*, 2003).

The transformation of audiovisual objects, such as fictional and non-fictional narratives, into interactive forms presents new opportunities for actively engaging the public in social causes. This type of media enables the viewer/interactor to become an active participant, fostering broader dialogue within a digital context and promoting increased pluralism, tolerance, and participation (Wintonick, 2013). Interactive narratives have the potential to raise awareness and mobilize citizens regarding important social issues.

Pedagogical Itineraries

Currently, the availability of more advanced gaming and entertainment technologies promotes the development of new forms of e-Learning. E-Learning is a concept with several definitions, although they all point to similar ideas. We can define it as the use of information and communi-

cation technologies to instruct, inform, and provide pedagogical content (Selim, 2007). It can involve the use of a computer or another electronic device, e.g. a video game console, as teaching materials. E-Learning can include personalized learning to meet individual needs, requiring flexible and interactive components.

In this category of learning we can find examples like pedagogical itineraries (PIs). PIs are a valuable tool for teachers and educators, as they allow young people to approach topics in original ways, changing their ways of thinking and engaging with the spaces around them. A relevant characteristic of PIs is the relationship they create between material and immaterial dimensions, physical and virtual, analog and digital, offering a variety of hands-on activities geared towards digital education. This type of practical work allows students to interact with a bigger focus, increasing students' different skills (European Commission, 2020).

In this field of knowledge, Martín-SanJosé *et al.* (2014) conducted a study from the production of two PIs to teach content about five distinct historical eras. The itineraries incorporated human-computer interaction based on video game technology, projection devices and interactive tables. One of them followed a linear narrative – Linear Learning Itinerary (LLI) – while the other provided greater flexibility – Flexible Learning Itinerary (FLI). The LLI is a predefined path guided by the system, where information is interconnected sequentially. On the other hand, the FLI offers students the freedom to choose the next step in their learning process, altering the path defined by the system.

According to this study (Martín-SanJosé *et al.*, 2014), children acquired new knowledge using these technologies and teaching methods. Both the flexible and linear models facilitated an increase in knowledge, revealing the potential of itineraries and educational games as relevant tools in the learning process. The use of itineraries in the classroom context can be a great complement to traditional teaching methods, since the contents are extracted from the textbooks used during classes. Additionally, it is important to develop easy-to-use learning systems with intuitive and simple interfaces because they help students focus their attention on the content, resulting in greater motivation to learn (Martín-SanJosé *et al.*, 2014; Sun *et al.*, 2008). These systems can promote playfulness and be enjoyable to use (Do-Lenh, 2009; Mansor *et al.*, 2009; Marco *et al.*, 2009).

Another notable project in this field was Play Your Role (European Commission, 2020), which received funding from the European Commission's Rights, Equality, and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) and involved the collaboration between various European partners who shared different pedagogical experiences and cultural contexts. These partners used innovative tools to develop 15 PIs, each addressing OHS from different perspectives. These itineraries aimed to reinforce correct and responsible behaviors, and reflect on stereotypes and prejudices; to use gamification to establish safe environments for dialogue, debate, and awareness about OHS; to produce new materials that teachers and educators could use in their daily teaching activities.

Each itinerary aimed to develop specific digital skills divided into five macro areas: a) information and data literacy; b) communication and collaboration; c) digital content creation; d) safety; and e) problem solving (Carretero *et al.*, 2017). The PIs produced by the Play Your Role project (2020) had two main objectives:

- Firstly, to enhance video games and gamification processes as tools that reinforce positive behaviors in adolescents;
- Secondly, to raise awareness and understanding of OHS and xenophobic and racist expressions, promoting empathy and critical thinking.

PIs often use gaming technology and design principles to educate students in a playful and engaging way in the classroom context. The use of games and other interactive tools and narratives for educational purposes is widely endorsed and supported by previous studies that confirm their suitability for teaching (Martín-SanJosé *et al.*, 2014; Taran, 2005; Albert & Mori, 2001). This approach has been effective in creating software capable of motivating and engaging users more effectively during the learning process.

Final Considerations

Addressing OHS requires a holistic approach that considers its multifaceted nature and its intersection with broader societal issues. The regulation of hate speech, both at the international and national levels, is crucial for

combating its harmful effects on individuals and communities. However, navigating the complexities of regulating online spaces remains a challenge, as dealing with OHS often involves balancing freedom of expression with the need to protect individuals and groups from harm.

While online video games provide a fertile ground for greater connectivity and the development of new social bonds, the spread of verbal violence, discrimination and harassment can have a meaningful impact in the virtual and physical lives of players. The contexts and practices that govern online multiplayer games can create the right conditions for abuse, conflicts and extremist discourses. In this setting, women and minorities are often the preferred target of hateful content, which in part highlights the need to address systemic issues such as underrepresentation and harmful stereotypes within video games and gaming communities. Such abusive actions underscore the necessity to not only better comprehend the characteristics of OHS, but also to pursue innovative strategies to effectively address this prevalent issue.

Addressing hate speech in online video games remains a subject of debate. The strategies proposed range from reporting and removing offensive content, educating online users, employing counter-speech to challenge hate speech and even ignoring such instances. However, there are potential drawbacks to each of these approaches. For instance, reporting and subsequent content removal can risk misuse, potentially silencing individuals who did not directly incite violence or intend harm. Therefore, it is crucial for lawmakers and institutions to explore alternative approaches to effectively limit this phenomenon. Promoting inclusivity within gaming communities is vital for creating safer, more welcoming spaces. Collective action is essential to combat discrimination and foster mutual respect in virtual environments, ensuring that online gaming remains a source of enjoyment and social connection. Managing OHS in video games entails comprehensive measures that include technological solutions, community moderation, and digital citizenship education.

Undoubtedly, digital literacy initiatives play a vital role in empowering individuals to recognize and respond to hate speech effectively. By promoting critical thinking skills and empathy, media literacy programs can help users navigate online environments responsibly and ethically. Through the immersive nature of interactive storytelling, interactive narratives offer edu-

cators great opportunities for engaging students in meaningful experiences that promote cultural understanding and empathy. Interactive pedagogical tools, such as interactive narratives, video games or pedagogical itineraries can enhance learning experiences by providing hands-on activities and promoting engagement through digital means. By integrating these tools into educational curricula, educators can empower students to explore complex topics in original and interactive ways, fostering creativity and critical thinking, and encouraging online citizens to participate in positive and inclusive virtual communities.

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Young Online Gamers and Hate Speech: Characteristics from a Study in the Algarve Region

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Introduction

Considerable research has focused on understanding the effects of video games on players. Part of the research has delved into the consequence of this media on young people, on how they relate and interact to others, or on their preferences regarding content (Gee, 2003; Clark *et al.*, 2016; Warmelink & Siitonen, 2011; Mäyrä, 2016; Beres *et al.*, 2021; Costa *et al.*, 2022; Turner *et al.*, 2023; Frommel *et al.*, 2023; Meriläinen, 2023). But despite the various studies about Online Hate Speech (OHS) in video games, there are still significant gaps in research that hinder a comprehensive understanding of this issue (MacAvaney *et al.*, 2019; Beres *et al.*, 2021; Englund & Bunmathong, 2022).

One of the objectives of the PROPS project is to contribute to a broader comprehension about the complexities inherent to gaming communities. Among the different project's activities a study was developed, combining distinct data collection tools and techniques, and including both quantitative and qualitative data processing methods. This enabled the PROPS' team to gain a deeper understanding about this topic and field of study.

Through the employment of survey and focus groups methodologies, it was possible to learn about the perspectives of younger gamers, regarding their experiences with offensive messages, toxic online environments and game conduct norms. The analysis of the results from a survey and first hand accounts of 19 students from focus groups, both of them directed at

students aged 10 to 18, from schools in the Algarve region, south of Portugal, displayed what hate speech means to them, how they have been affected by it and what possible responses they imagine to this phenomenon.

Both of these studies, along with a state of art regarding OHS, marked the first stage of the PROPS project, an initiative that intends to shed light on the complex dynamics of video games and social platforms related to gaming, and to build multiple counter-narratives that can promote awareness about OHS in these environments.

The Survey

The first phase of this two-part initiative entailed the production and dissemination of a survey, implemented in three schools from the Algarve region, in the south of Portugal. Its aim was to gain a comprehensive insight into the personal experiences and viewpoints of individuals aged 10 to 18 regarding the issue of OHS in video games and video game platforms. The objective was not only to present the empirical results, but to also engage in a critical dialogue surrounding the broader implications of these findings. By doing so, this study aimed to contribute to the ongoing discourse about online safety and digital citizenship.

This research tried to assess some key aspects of this phenomenon, including (1) young people's exposure to OHS; (2) most common types of OHS encountered; (3) the games and platforms where OHS incidents were most observed; (4) their reactions and responses to such content; and (5) the presence of OHS in gameplays. From these objectives, five research questions were outlined (**Table 1**).

Based on these objectives and corresponding research questions, a survey composed of 21 points was created (**Table 2**).

The survey was conducted through the open-access EUSurvey platform. It followed a mixed approach, presenting closed and open-ended questions, and employed a Likert scale to measure participants' agreement with different statements (Likert, 1932). Additionally, there was the option to abstain from answering certain topics.

The surveys took place in three public schools of basic and secondary education from the Faro region, in Portugal, and were guided by one of

the researchers from the PROPS project team, in collaboration with a teacher from each school. The student’s participation had a duration of approximately 15 minutes.

Research objectives	Research questions
(1) Assess young gamers exposure to hate speech in online video games	1. To what extent are individuals aged 10 to 18 exposed to hate speech while participating in online video gaming activities?
(2) Assess the prevalent types of hate speech that they encounter	2. What is the nature of the hate speech encountered by gamers aged 10-18 in online video games?
(3) Assess the games and platforms where such incidents were most commonly observed	3. Which online games and social gaming platforms are most commonly associated with instances of hate speech for individuals in this age group?
(4) Assess their reactions to such incidents of hate speech	4. What are the common emotional and behavioral reactions of young gamers aged 10-18 when confronted with hate speech in online video games?
(5) Assess the prevalence of hate speech in gameplays	5. To what extent is hate speech present in the gameplays that young individuals in this demographic watch?

Table 1. Survey objectives and corresponding Research questions

Question/Statement	Substatement	Type of question	Answer options
1. Indicate how much time you spend playing online.	-	Single choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • 1 hour a day • 2 to 3 hours a day • 3 to 5 hours a day • More than 5 hours a day
2. What game theme do you prefer?	-	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure • Science Fiction • Fantasy • Sport • Horror • Superheroes • Mystery • Militar/War • Other. What?
3. What style of game do you prefer?	-	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action and Adventure • Platforms • Puzzle • Strategy • Visual Narrative • Role-Playing Game (RPG) • First Person Shooter (FPS) • Fighting • Survival • Racing • Party/Group games • Rhythm and music • Simulators • Battle Royale • Other. What?
4. What do you like to do most in a game?	-	Open-ended question	-
5. Write the name of your three favorite games.	-	Open-ended question	-

Table 2. List of questions/statements from the survey

Question/Statement	Substatement	Type of question	Answer options
6. Which platforms do you use most to play?	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile • PC • Web • Xbox • Playstation • Nintendo • Other. Which?
7. Which platforms do you use most to talk about the game?	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discord • Steam • Guilded • DLive • Twitter • WhatsApp • Other. Which?
8. After playing, do you usually talk to your friends about what happened in the game?	–	Single choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
9. When you turn off the game, how do you feel?	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritated • Relaxed • Sad • Tired • Happy • I don't feel anything special • Other. How?
10. In games and gaming platforms:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I feel safe b. I feel offended by other players c. I know how to react if someone is mean to me or other players d. I insult other players e. I have the same behavior online and offline 	Likert scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I totally disagree • I disagree • I neither disagree or agree • I agree • I totally agree • I don't know/I don't want to answer

Table 2 (cont'd). List of questions/statements from the survey

Question/Statement	Substatement	Type of question	Answer options
11. Have you had contact with unpleasant expressions related to:	a. Sexual orientation b. Physical appearance c. Ethnicity or Nationality d. Religion e. Gender f. Player's performance	Likert scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Rarely • Sometimes • Frequently • Always • I don't know/I don't want to answer
12. How do you react?	a. Ignore b. Tell a friend c. Tell an adult d. Report it on the platform or in the game e. Reply in the same way	Likert scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Rarely • Sometimes • Frequently • Always • I don't know/I don't want to answer
13. When you report what happens?	–	Single choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The player who offended is blocked • The player who offended is banned • I don't know • I rather not answer • Other. What?
14. Indicate how you feel when another player is offensive.	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried • Sad • Ashamed • Angry • Scared • Amused • Excited • Vindictive • I don't feel anything in particular • I don't know/I don't want to answer • Other. How?

Table 2 (cont'd). List of questions/statements from the survey

Question/Statement	Substatement	Type of question	Answer options
15. In what situations do you offend someone?	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the excitement • For the amusement • Due to the player's performance • Due to the player's physical appearance • Due to the player's sexual orientation • Due to the player's ethnicity • Due to the player's religion • Due to the player's gender • I've never offended anyone • I don't know/I don't want to answer • Other. What?
16. Write the name of three video games where you most often find offensive messages.	–	Open-ended question	–
17. How much time do you spend watching gameplays?	–	Single choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • 1 hour a day • 2 to 3 hours a day • 3 to 5 hours a day • More than 5 hours a day
18. Why do you watch these gameplays?	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For fun • To improve my gaming skills • To find new games • Other. Why?

Table 2 (cont'd). List of questions/statements from the survey

Question/Statement	Substatement	Type of question	Answer options
19. How often do you find offensive messages in the gameplays you watch?	–	Single choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Rarely • Sometimes • Frequently • Always • I don't know/I don't want to answer
20. Indicate the platforms where you most often find offensive messages.	–	Multiple choice (1 to 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discord • Twitch • DLive • Steam • Epic Games • Other. Where?
21. Write the name of the gamer you follow the most.	–	Open-ended question	–

Table 2 (cont'd). List of questions/statements from the survey

The participation of the students was voluntary and anonymous and they were given objective information about the goals and context of the survey. The researcher that conducted the survey presented the PROPS project, its objectives, procedures, as well as its possible outcomes and maintained a neutral and unbiased stance, avoiding any speech that could possibly disempower or demean the participants. Finally, all the information collected was handled and analyzed solely by the PROPS team, ensuring data confidentiality (Mirza *et al.*, 2023; Halasa, 2005; Mack *et al.*, 2005; BERA, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Dane, 1990).

Overall, 189 students participated in this study. The age, gender and nationality of the participants were distributed as follows.

Gender	%
Female	56,61%
Male	41,27%
Other	1,59%
No answer	0,53%

Table 3. Participants' gender

Age	%	Age	%	Age	%
10	0,53%	13	5,32%	16	19,15%
11	–	14	19,68%	17	7,45%
12	3,72%	15	40,43%	18	1,60%

Table 4. Participants’ age

Country	%	Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
Portugal	81,77%	U.K.	1,04%	India	0,52%	Philippines	0,52%
Brazil	7,29%	Belgium	0,52%	Israel	0,52%	Romania	0,52%
Venezuela	3,13%	Canada	0,52%	Moldova	0,52%	U.S.A.	0,52%
Germany	1,04%	Greece	0,52%	Nepal	0,52%	Ukraine	0,52%

Table 5. Participants’ nationality

This demographical sample granted ample perspectives, which emphasize to some degree the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, it should be stated that the reliance on self-reported data could present potential bias and influence the veracity of the responses (Bergen, 2020), since participants may alter their responses to align with what they perceive as socially acceptable or desirable behaviors.

Considering the survey questions (**Table 2**), the subsequent section presents an analysis of the primary findings of this study.

1. To what extent are individuals aged 10 to 18 exposed to hate speech while participating in online video gaming activities?

Indicate how much time you spend playing online	
Never	31,22%
1 hour a day	23,81%
2 to 3 hours a day	22,22%
3 to 5 hours a day	12,70%
More than 5 hours a day	9,52%
No answer	0,53%

Table 6. Results from question 1 “Indicate how much time you spend playing online.”

In games and gaming platforms						
	I totally disagree	I disagree	I neither disagree or agree	I agree	I totally agree	I don't know/I don't want to answer
I feel safe	2,29%	4,58%	29,01%	28,24%	28,24%	7,63%
I feel offended by other players	25,19%	29,77%	29,01%	8,40%	5,34%	2,29%
I insult other players	30,00%	20,00%	16,92%	6,92%	20,77%	5,38%

Table 7. Results from question/statement 10 “In games and gaming platforms”

The first question’s goal was to measure how much time students spent playing online video games (**Table 6**). Even though the most answered option was “Never” (31,22%), the sum of students that say they play between “1 hour a day” and “More than 5 hours a day” is greater (68,25%).

Furthermore, in order to observe the degree of exposure to OHS the participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with three substatements (**Table 7**). Regarding “I feel safe”, the majority of the respondents (56,48%) “agree” or “totally agree”. On the other hand, only 6,87% “disagree” or “totally disagree”. This pattern closely mirrors the answers from “I feel

offended by other players”, which shows that most respondents (54,96%) “disagree” or “totally disagree”. However, the findings show that a more substantial percentage of young gamers (13,74%) “agree” or “totally agree”.

In the substatement “I insult other players”, the majority (50%) “disagree” or “totally disagree”. A noteworthy result is “I totally agree”, being the second most picked option with 20,77%. In total, 27,69% of the respondents “agree” or “totally agree”.

This set of data confirms that young players are substantially exposed to OHS while playing online video games or socializing in video gaming platforms, since a significant percentage (27,69%) “agree” or “totally agree” that they insult other players, and 13,74% “agree” or “totally agree” that they feel offended by other players. But despite the pervasiveness of OHS, most young gamers also see themselves as feeling safe in these types of spaces. This discrepancy in results could suggest that many young players normalize or downplay the impact of hate speech, as confirmed by previous studies (Beres *et al.*, 2021).

2. What is the nature of the hate speech encountered by gamers aged 10-18 in online video games?

To understand the nature, the triggers and content of OHS in video games, the students were asked to rate the frequency of hate speech in regards to “Sexual orientation”, “Physical appearance”, “Ethnicity or nationality”, “Religion”, “Gender” and “Player’s performance” (**Table 8**). Additionally, in question 15 (**Figure 1**) they were asked to point out the reasons or situations in which they offend other players.

The results from question 11 demonstrate that most answers to the different variables tended to be “Never” or “Rarely”. These two options obtained a combined result of 70,77% (for “Gender”), on the low end, and 82,94% (for “Religion”), on the high end. Nevertheless, the answers “Always”, “Frequently” and “Sometimes” also gathered notable mixed results: “Gender” (27,69%), “Ethnicity or Nationality” (26,35%), “Physical appearance” (25,39%), “Sexual Orientation” (18,47%) and “Religion” (14,73%).

The fact that “Gender” is the second most common answer reflects what previous studies have identified as a prevalent target of OHS within

these communities (Dragiewicz *et al.*, 2018; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). Female players are regularly subjected to negative experiences, which may include abusive and degrading comments, hostility, defamation, intimidation, humiliation, harassment and even rape and death threats (Sobieraj, 2018; Sundén & Paasonen, 2018).

Have you had contact with unpleasant expressions related to						
	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Fre- quently	Always	I don't know/I don't want to answer
Sexual orienta- tion	64,62%	13,08%	10,77%	3,85%	3,85%	3,85%
Physical appear- ance	50,77%	20,77%	13,08%	3,08%	9,23%	3,08%
Ethnic- ity or Nation- ality	58,14%	12,40%	12,40%	6,20%	7,75%	3,10%
Religion	75,19%	7,75%	3,10%	4,65%	6,98%	2,33%
Gender	59,23%	11,54%	10,77%	7,69%	9,23%	1,54%
Player's perfor- mance	22,86%	16,43%	21,43%	21,43%	16,43%	1,43%

Table 8. Results from question 11 “Have you had contact with unpleasant expressions related to”

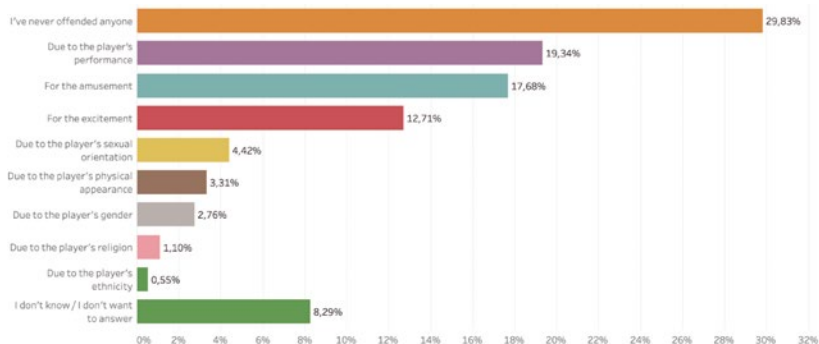


Figure 1. Results from question 15 “In what situations do you offend someone?”

Contrary to the other options, the answer “Player’s performance” showed a lower degree of disparity between responses, with 39,29% answering “Never” or “Rarely” and 59,29% answering “Sometimes”, “Frequently” or “Always”.

In question 15 – “In what situations do you offend someone?” (**Figure 1**), despite the majority answering “I’ve never offended anyone” (29,83%), the second most common option was in fact “Due to the player’s performance” (19,34%), followed by “For the amusement” (17,68%) and “For the excitement” (12,71%). The answers regarding identity traits ranged between 0,55% (“Ethnicity”) and 4,42% (“Sexual orientation”).

Players’ performance seems to be the main trigger for the occurrence of OHS. The data from question 15 also seems to reinforce the normalization of OHS within these environments, since the answers “For the amusement” and “For the excitement” were very common, demonstrating a certain degree of conformity or acceptance of OHS as an integral part of the online gaming experience.

3. Which online games and social gaming platforms are most commonly associated with instances of hate speech for individuals in this age group?



Figure 2. Results from question 16 “Write the name of three video games where you most often find offensive messages.”

To assess the pervasiveness of OHS in certain video games and video game platforms participants were asked to identify the places where they most frequently encounter hate speech. Regarding video games, the five most common titles were “Counter-Strike” (18,13%); “Fortnite” (16,48%); “Grand Theft Auto” (11,54%); “Roblox” (10,44%); and “Valorant” (8,79%) (**Figure 2**). As for the platforms, the top answers were “Discord” (36,16%), “Twitch” (28,81%), “Steam” (14,12%) and “Epic Games” (12,99%) (**Figure 3**).

OHS seems to be more common in the action, shooting and survival genres. This mirrors the results from question three, “What style of game do you prefer?”, where the most people responded “Shooting Games” (18,77%), “Action and Adventure” (16,25%), “Survival” (15,97%), and “Battle Royale” (9,80%). This is also in line with the answers from question five, “Write the name of your three favorite games”, with “Grand Theft Auto” (13,66%) receiving the most answers, followed by “Fortnite” (10,13%), “FIFA” (10,13%), “Counter-Strike” (8,81%), “Minecraft” (8,81%), “Roblox” (8,81%), “Call of Duty” (6,17%), and “Free Fire” (4,41%).

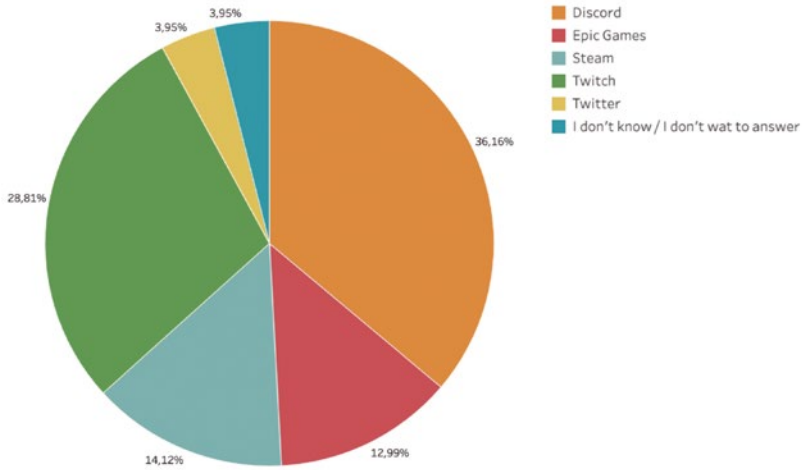


Figure 3. Results from question 20 “Indicate the platforms where you most often find offensive messages.”

According to participant’s answers, there is an intersection between the most popular genres and games and the places where there are more instances of OHS. The exception is the game “Minecraft” that was mentioned by 8,81% as one of their favorite games, but is not referred to as one of the places with the most hate speech.

This pattern also applies to social gaming platforms. In question seven – “What platforms do you use most to talk about the game?”–, “Discord” received the most answers (44,90%), and it is also indicated as the system where they most often find offensive messages (36,16%).

The larger exposure to OHS in the video games and social gaming platforms mentioned by respondents can be explained by the fact that these are the contents they engage with most frequently. Based on the gathered information, it is not possible to conclude that the inherent characteristics of the specific titles that were mentioned harbor more instances of hate speech. Nonetheless, since there are more opportunities to find hate speech in the most popular game titles and platforms, it is crucial for these companies to develop more measures to counter OHS. When it comes to the PROPS project, these games and platforms will serve as important references during the development of the six counter-narratives.

4. What are the common emotional and behavioral reactions of young gamers aged 10-18 when confronted with hate speech in online video games?

How do you react?						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	I don't know/I don't want to answer
Ignore	23,02%	7,14%	22,22%	19,05%	26,98%	1,59%
Tell a friend	13,71%	20,97%	23,39%	19,35%	20,16%	2,42%
Tell an adult	56,45%	22,58%	8,06%	3,23%	7,26%	2,42%
Report it on the platform or in the game	29,03%	12,10%	22,58%	13,71%	20,16%	2,42%
Reply in the same way	22,22%	22,22%	23,81%	7,94%	21,43%	2,38%

Table 9. Results from question 12 “How do you react?”

In question 12 participants were asked about how they reacted to OHS in video games (**Table 9**), while question 14 tried to understand what type of emotional responses were prompted by these incidents (**Figure 4**).

In “How do you react?”, most people tended to answer “Ignore” with 68,25% answering either “Always” (26,98%), “Frequently” (19,05%) or “Sometimes” (22,22%). There was also a preference to “Tell a friend” with 62,9% answering “Always” (20,16%), “Frequently” (19,35%) or “Sometimes” (23,39%), than to “Tell an adult”, which obtained 18,55% in these same three options (7,26%; 3,23%; and 8,06% respectively).

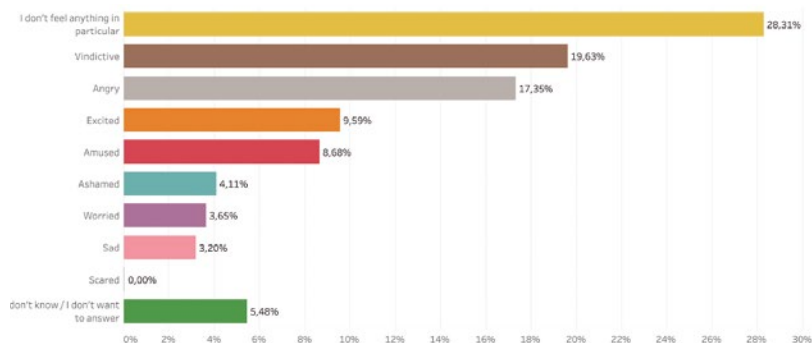


Figure 4. Results from question 14 “Indicate how you feel when another player is offensive.”

Reporting was also a frequent response, with 56,45% answering “Always” (20,16%), “Frequently” (13,71%) or “Sometimes” (22,58%), while “Reply in the same way” received 53,18% of answers in the options “Always” (21,43%), “Frequently” (7,94%) and “Sometimes” (23,81%). About the topic of reporting hate speech, it should be highlighted that when asked in question 13 “When you report what happens?”, the most frequent answer (42,15%) was “I don’t know”.

In question 14, “Indicate how you feel when another player is offensive”, the five most frequent options were “I don’t feel anything in particular” (28,31%), followed by “Vindictive” (19,63%), “Angry” (17,35%), “Excited” (9,59%), and “Amused” (8,68%).

From this information it seems that most reactions are neutral (“I don’t feel anything in particular”) and sometimes even positive (“Excited” and “Amused”). These three responses, when combined, measure up 46,58% of the answers. This may further corroborate that OHS is an accepted occurrence and part of the gaming experience. However, the negative emotions make up the majority of responses (47,94%), with participants answering either “Vindictive”, “Angry”, “Ashamed”, “Worried” or “Sad”. This negative impact on young people’s emotional health supports the urgency to produce and disseminate educational tools that equip them with the knowledge and abilities to counter hateful and toxic narratives, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and informed digital environment (UNESCO, 2023).

5. To what extent is hate speech present in the gameplays that young individuals in this demographic watch?

How much time do you spend watching gameplays?	
Never	46,56%
1 hour a day	28,04%
2 to 3 hours a day	13,76%
3 to 5 hours a day	5,29%
More than 5 hours a day	3,17%
No answer	3,17%

Table 10. Results from question 17 “How much time do you spend watching gameplays?”

In the same line as playing video games, watching gameplays might constitute another channel of exposure to toxic discourses. To understand the frequency of hate speech in gameplays, participants were first asked about the time spent consuming this form of media. The predominant answer was “Never” (46,56%), while 50,26% report to watching “1 hour a day” (28,04%), “2 to 3 hours a day” (13,76%), “3 to 5 hours a day” (5,29%), and “More than 5 hours a day” (3,17%) (**Table 10**).

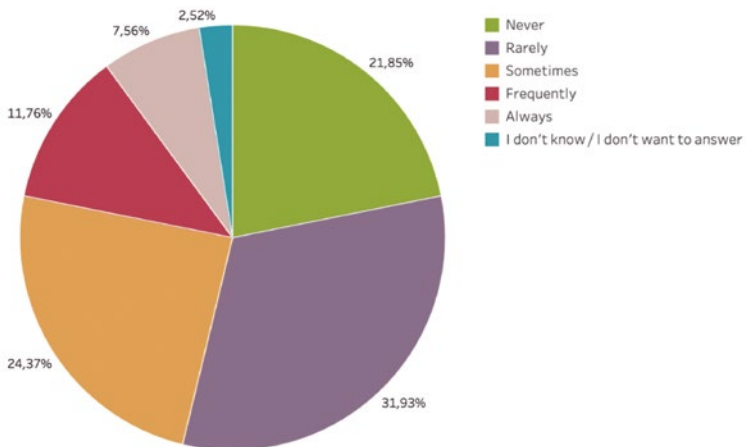


Figure 5. Results from question 19 “How often do you find offensive messages in the gameplays you watch?”

Finally, the respondents were asked to rate the presence of hate speech in the gameplays (**Figure 5**). Although 21,85% answered “Never”, the majority (75,62%) has at some point encountered offensive discourse in gameplays (**Figure 5**). This set of data is important because it shows that even if individuals are not actively participating in online gaming, there are still other forms of exposure to OHS related to video games. When combating hate speech online, in addition to video games, it is also critical to focus on these forms of media.

The Focus Groups

To better understand the perceptions, behaviors and motivations of OHS in gaming communities, the PROPS project also conducted three focus groups in schools from Olhão and Loulé – Algarve, Portugal.

19 students aged between 12 and 18 and from four different nationalities participated. The characteristics of the participants are provided in **Table 11**.

Age range	12-18 years old	
Gender	female	11
	male	8
Nationalities	Portuguese	
	Brazilian	
	Indian	
	Ukrainian	
Education level	Middle school	
	High school	
Internet use for gaming and game platforms	<1h	2
	1-2h	7
	2-3h	6
	>3h	4

Table 11. Characteristics of the participants

The focus group methodology provided the project's team with direct access to the opinions, notions and experiences of the participants. In this type of setting, the gap between researchers and participants diminishes, which allows for a broader mutual understanding of a certain topic. It also benefits from participant interaction, since the opinions can be complemented or challenged by different group members, resulting in either collective consensus or diverse perspectives (Sá *et al.* 2021; Smithson, 2007; Morgan & Spanish, 1984). The study's focus groups were structured into four distinct stages: planning, preparation, moderation, and data processing.

During the planning stage, the research questions were delineated and the locations, dates, participants' sociodemographic profiles, and duration of each session were determined. The duration of the sessions ranged from 50 to 70 minutes, depending on how many individuals were in each group.

The focus group preparation phase was crucial to inform participants about the research objectives and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as to clarify doubts about the study and to obtain a consent to participate. Certain rules were also set to ensure participants mutual respect, equitable speaking and active listening.

During the moderation stage, both the moderator and the assistant gathered verbal and non-verbal information through audio recordings and note taking. The moderator remained as impartial as possible and provided a safe space for all to express themselves freely, encouraging discussion and debate among the group members while promoting reflexivity and critical awareness (Smithson, 2007)

In the data process phase, the audio recordings were transcribed, with the help of Descript. The transcripts and notes were then imported to Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, to identify key topics and subtopics related to participants' responses.

The script (**Table 12**) used during each session included questions that covered first hand experiences with OHS, their perspectives on people who display toxic behavior, the consequences of hate speech in daily life, and their opinions on how to prevent or challenge this phenomenon.

Each session started with participants sharing their first hand experiences with OHS encountered in video games and gaming platforms, as well as their reactions to those experiences or to the problem as a whole (**Table 13**).

1 Experience with OHS in games and gaming platforms
1.1 In which games/platforms do you experience OHS more frequently?
1.2 Can you share a specific episode that you have experienced with OHS (as the perpetrator, victim, or bystander)?
1.3 How do you usually react when you see or hear incidents of OHS?
2 Perspective on OHS
2.1 In your opinion, what motivates OHS?
2.2 How do you see "haters"?
2.3 When and where is OHS most likely to occur?
2.4 In your perspective, what are the consequences of OHS in everyday life?
3 Prevention of OHS
3.1 How do you think OHS can be prevented or limited?

Table 12. List of questions for the focus groups

Participants experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Recently, I had an unpleasant experience where I became a victim of OHS in Free Fire. Another player started insulting me.” • “Sometimes, they even threaten to find out where I live. It makes me think about it for a moment, but I consider it unlikely. I have witnessed a player making serious threats to another player, saying they would meet in real life to harm them.” • “The insults were related to my voice and sexuality – they mentioned that I had a girlish voice and therefore I must be gay.” • “During a match, a player started uttering racist insults against another. This happens quite often. The comments often revolve around players’ skins [avatar]. Even among friends, racist insults are common.”

Table 13. Participant remarks about first hand experiences and reactions to OHS in video games and gaming platforms

Participants reactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I started playing with my microphone turned off, I felt offended. I didn’t report or respond to the insults. I didn’t want to fuel the discussion or create an uncomfortable atmosphere, nor did I want to draw attention to myself. When the environment becomes like this, whether it’s directed at me or another player, I switch off. I don’t believe it has anything to do with me personally, as that person doesn’t know me, but these unnecessary prejudices persist in games and reflect what happens in real life.” • “[...] sometimes people are afraid that it might spill over into real life. My friend quit playing because the threats became too much, and they mentioned they would find him outside of the game. I don’t know where these things come from, but they had an issue with him because he killed one of them in a match and ruined their game.” • “Sometimes they [insults] seem to have no impact and are treated as something ordinary and normal. I know people who say, ‘he/she doesn’t mind if I treat them that way.’” • “I react in the same manner. I also use offensive language on days when the game isn’t going well or when I’m stressed about something.”

Table 13 (cont’d). Participant remarks about first hand experiences and reactions to OHS in video games and gaming platforms

Participants’ personal accounts varied widely, with some occupying dual roles as both victims and aggressors. Nevertheless, those who occasionally engaged in aggressive responses perceived OHS as a negative behavior of the gaming experience, disassociating this type of actions with pleasure or enjoyment. As for the types of insults, they often revolved around characteristics tied to players’ avatars or (perceived) appearance, including race, gender, voice, and nationality. Furthermore, there were accounts of episodes where groups of individuals coordinated attacks against specific targets.

Regarding the types of reactions, it is frequent to express insecurity and fear, which can lead to muting the microphone, stopping the match, or permanently quitting the game. Individuals’ concerns can affect them in their physical life, which illustrates to some degree the offline impact of OHS. There were also remarks that demonstrate a certain social normalization, with some participants reporting that they consider OHS a common instance in online gaming. Finally, there were those who stated that they would also adopt deviant behaviors, reciprocating insults with more insults, particularly when faced with frustration or stress.

Motivations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “People feel protected by the screen, which encourages them to express aggressive and intolerant behaviors.” • “Sometimes, people want to feel powerful, and they think that insulting others makes them appear strong. It’s a matter of dominance in the game.” • “Some players may be trying to provoke reactions or simply having fun. There are groups that engage in this behavior for amusement.” • “I also use offensive language when I get hit or when my strategy fails. Swearing is not always meant to offend, sometimes, it’s just a way to vent frustration when things don’t go as planned.”
Occurrences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It occurs more frequently in popular games where there are many players gathered in large communities.” • “It happens more in competitive games.” • “OHS can occur in game forums, voice chats, and even on social media related to games. When there is a lack of proper moderation and clear rules in games, OHS is more likely to happen.” • “I think it’s present all over the internet.”
Targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Unfortunately, I have witnessed cases of racism in game chats, with players making discriminatory comments based on skin color, even towards avatars.” • “I have been insulted based on my nationality.” • “It can also be gangs trying to push a certain idea and targeting specific groups. Often, this hatred is related to nationalities, for example, with the ongoing war in Ukraine. There are also groups that constantly talk about Hitler and spread it as some kind of joke in games.” • “The insults usually revolve around issues of sexuality and gender.” • “I’m often discriminated against in more violent games because I’m a woman. I don’t believe I play worse than guys, but they make me believe so, there is still a lot of inequality in games. One time, in a game, I started arguing back after being insulted, and they told me that if I didn’t feel comfortable being insulted, then I should stop playing or switch to another type of game. This happened in LoL. This only occurs when I play with strangers because it’s different when I play with friends. The insults are more typical and not related to being a woman.” • “I have been insulted many times for my performance in the game.” • “[...] but it’s common to offend new players who are not familiar with the game and judge them for having a low level [skill].”

Table 14. Participant remarks about motivations, occurrences and consequences of OHS in video games and gaming platforms

Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “People might avoid playing a certain game because they already know it has aggressive communities.” • “It has consequences on people’s self-esteem, in people’s lives that may not know how to deal with it and they even stop playing a game because of this problem. It can also create insecurities about appearance or insert ideas in other people’s minds.” • “It can have consequences if people don’t have a good support network of friends to talk about these things. It’s essential not to bring these issues into real life. But it also seems inevitable. It’s a way to spread ideas, like anti-Ukrainian sentiments, there are anti-Ukrainian communities.” • “It can have offline effects to those who are offended. They may feel upset, vulnerable, and without friends.” • “It may even help improve a player’s skills.”

Table 14 (cont’d). Participant remarks about motivations, occurrences and consequences of OHS in video games and gaming platforms

According to the group members, the motivations behind OHS are distinct. One of the factors credited for this type of conduct is anonymity, referring to the screen as a protection or enabler for aggressive and intolerant actions. Another reason originates from resentments that stem from in-game defeats, while others might behave disrespectfully or provocatively for entertainment.

Regarding the contexts for OHS, popular and competitive games were mentioned as prevalent hotspots, possibly due to higher number of players or more intense forms of competition. Unclear rules and lack of effective moderation in certain games or game forums, where there was insufficient regulation, was another example. And finally, the participants also noted OHS can be prevalent across the broader internet landscape, revealing the members’ awareness to the fact that this issue reaches farther beyond the confinements of video games and is part of a more profound problem.

As for the victims of the messages, there is a wide spectrum of targets. Personality traits, real or perceived, play an important role in discrimination. Race, gender, sexual orientation and nationality were pointed as key elements in this issue. Another reason identified was the (poor) gaming skills of newcomers to a game, for example, as a trigger for offensive behavior.

The focus group members also talked about possible consequences for the victims. A more immediate reaction to OHS might be an aversion or avoidance to play a game that harbors aggressive individuals or communities. Encountering hateful comments might also prove damaging to people’s self-esteem, resulting in the creation or reinforcement of certain insecurities. Also, as one person describes, OHS can be instrumentalized to propagate extremist ideologies, which can vary depending on the present zeitgeist, e.g., anti-ukrainian sentiments resulting from the Russo-Ukrainian War. Some participants pointed to the fact that some consequences might extend beyond the virtual world and spill into daily physical life. Finally, some argued that this problem might inadvertently lead to a player’s skill improvement.

Prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ignoring is the best approach. But there should be ways to control and prevent such incidents, for example, using filters that automatically remove players who say certain things.” • “Investing in community moderators who know how to handle OHS.” • “It’s necessary to encourage players to report such incidents, that’s why games have that option, and then there must be serious consequences for the haters, and those who report should feel protected. Some say it’s possible to trace the IP of those who report. Everything should be made clear so that there is no fear of reporting. If good people leave the gaming communities because of OHS, only the bad ones will remain, and the community will become terrible. That’s what already happens in many games like LoL, CS.” • “More control, banning those who offend.” • “Gaming companies should invest in serious and strict policies against hate speech. Aggressive players should be permanently banned, not just temporarily.” • “Creating more inclusive games with characters that everyone can identify with.” • “[...] prevention through education, campaigns, and positive role models, like showing that being a troll is not cool.” • “I believe education is crucial in combating hate speech. There should be initiatives in schools and communities that talk about respect.”

Table 15. Participant remarks about forms of prevention of OHS in video games and gaming platforms

Participants in the focus groups were proactive in suggesting ways of preventing this ubiquitous, and possibly pernicious, issue in video games. Some argued these online interactions should not be taken too seriously,

as it all unfolds within the context of a game. Ignoring might be sometimes the best or only solution. Others mentioned the role of moderation and regulation in creating more inclusive gaming environments and experiences. Reporting was also referred to as an important tool to tackle OHS, with participants encouraging victims to adopt these measures. They stressed the need for gaming companies to create transparent reporting mechanisms that ensured the protection of those who report. Furthermore, some view that companies should take more robust measures and have stricter control over this issue, with group members advocating for the permanent banning of offenders as a way to deter further occurrences.

On another level, there were also suggestions to create games with characters that resonate with a diverse player base, fostering a sense of inclusivity that perhaps might reduce the targeting of minorities. Lastly, education was pointed out as an important inhibitor of OHS. Participants proposed school initiatives that emphasize respect and positive online behavior, empowering individuals to recognize and address hate speech.

Final Considerations

The data gathered from this research enabled an in-depth analysis of the participants' exposure to hate speech, the emotional consequences, and their reactions to hateful comments. Beside this, it gave the opportunity to determine the most predominant types of hate speech and the most frequent places where such discourse occurs. From these studies it was also possible to collect first-hand testimonies from young people regarding episodes of OHS in video games, and their opinions regarding this pervasive reality.

The results obtained from the survey show direct accounts of young people being exposed to OHS in video gaming activities. However, they also reveal that a great number of players might not see themselves as being under threat in these contexts. The participants showed an evident awareness that hate speech is a phenomenon quite common in online video games. To some extent, they also downplayed their effects. This contrast of ideas could express a level of acceptance of OHS as a form of interaction that is an inevitable or non-problematic element of these types of experiences.

Another aspect revealed by the survey was the fact that the most frequent trigger occurred due to the insufficient gaming proficiency of the victims. This reality was attested both when the participants were the victims/bystanders and the offenders. Furthermore, there were also significant references in both studies to instances of OHS targeting people based on their gender, ethnicity and nationality, physical appearance, sexual orientation and religion.

The survey and focus groups also demonstrated that the most popular games could be more susceptible to hateful discourses. The focus groups further revealed that OHS could be more prone to happen in less regulated or unregulated places, or in places with fierce competition. And as for the reasons behind this type of conduct, the participants cited anonymity, frustration and entertainment as possible factors.

In regards to the participants' behavioral reactions to OHS, the information gathered from the survey shows that, paradoxically, it is both common to report and to ignore. When it came to reporting, a great percentage of participants had no knowledge about the consequences of reporting hate speech. This highlights a certain lack of transparency from the gaming companies when it comes to communicating about the consequences of engaging in toxic behavior.

As for the emotional reactions, the data indicates that OHS may be a sanctioned form of expression. Such paradoxical behaviors are also observable in the findings from the focus groups, where people who report disliking toxic interactions find it somewhat acceptable. Nonetheless, a considerable number of respondents from the two studies report experiencing different negative emotions regarding OHS. Participants from the focus group reported that it was common to feel insecure and fearful. It could be damaging to the victims' self-esteem or used to promote extreme ideas. Students' testimonies and opinions from this second study also showed a link between online and offline behaviors. The students mentioned that individuals' concerns can spill over into their physical life, which, to some degree, illustrates the offline impact of OHS.

Finally, participants from the focus group suggested forms of action to prevent this issue, with some proposing tougher regulations and sanctions: offenders could be permanently banned to deter the dissemination of such behaviors. Others had different opinions regarding the issue, defending the

use of educational tools to empower citizens to recognize and counteract hate speech. While hate speech is a challenge that expands beyond video game and online spaces, these findings and this last observation underscore the significance of digital literacy initiatives in fostering safer and more inclusive digital gaming environments. Achieving this requires a multifaceted approach that could involve players, students, teachers and academia. The results from the survey and focus groups aided the PROPS team to better understand the underlying motivations, triggers, targets, and reactions behind OHS in video games, helping the development of effective strategies and relevant counter narratives that can help promote awareness to this important issue.

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Creation Processes as a Literacy Tool in Facing the Challenges of Contemporary Education

Patrícia Dourado and Mirian Tavares

The approach to creation processes in connection with media literacy, by its transversal nature, constitutes one of the possible theoretical responses to addressing some of the challenges in contemporary communication. Among these, the undesirable consequences of depersonalization, both of oneself and of others, often occur in online communication environments. One of the consequences of this depersonalization is the proliferation of hate speech, a multifaceted problem that requires the diversification of educational resources to prevent and intervene in such manifestations.

With the boundaries between creators and audiences increasingly blurred, especially with the advent of new media, it becomes more evident, even to the general public, that in digital communication practices the roles of creator and receiver are no longer as rigid, alternating more fluidly. In this context, the Critical Theory of Creation Processes, studied for over 30 years by the Research Group on Creation Processes at Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), is currently a developing line of investigation at the Research Center for Arts and Communication (CIAC), at the University of Algarve. This investigation closely aligns with the media literacy studies framework adopted by the center since its inception, with a particular emphasis on Film Literacy. This intersection of mutual support underpins proposals for pedagogical intervention with extensive theoretical and empirical experience, capable of addressing and confronting hate speech. Gamification and interactive narrative artifacts are examples of strategies where the boundaries

between creators and audiences become even more blurred, and where the theories of creation and reception find mutual resonance.

To these theoretical and empirical foundations, we add the studies in the fields of Communication, Arts, and Digital Media-arts developed at CIAC. These studies emphasize the trend toward transdisciplinarity as a natural movement in knowledge construction – a principle the center has demonstrated in its practices since its foundation, continually expanding through new partnerships.

We begin by briefly addressing the history of approaching creation processes as a field of study. Then, we emphasize the relationships between creation and reception inherent in this approach and the productive dialogue it maintains with media literacy. Finally, we highlight the importance of integrating these fields of study for the development of pedagogical procedures that address contemporary challenges, recognizing the audience as active creative agents.

The Creation Processes Approach

The interest in creation processes is not something new. There have been numerous studies on creation. Some are made from the perspective of creators themselves, such as Edgar Allan Poe in *The Philosophy of Composition*, Paul Valéry in *The Memories of a Poem*, or Federico Fellini in *Making a Film*; some are theoretical formulations that stem from observing the practices of artists themselves, like Paul Klee in *On Modern Art* and Sergei Eisenstein in *Reflections of a Filmmaker*; and others are studies conducted from the standpoint of observing the practices of artists of a particular era, such as Aristotle on Greek theater and its Poetics.

However, academic interest in creation processes, with its own methods and theories, and with researchers from different fields coming together to understand and discuss general issues on this subject – as is done, for example, in the Research Group on Creation Processes at PUC-SP and at CIAC – is a relatively new field that has grown considerably in recent years.

Regarding the expansion of the studies of Critical Theory of Creation Processes, Salles highlights the necessity for a critical theory dedicated to

studying dynamic and continually evolving objects. The author underscores the importance of her classes at PUC-SP – where she began teaching in 1990 – as a crucial space for developing this theory, with students from diverse backgrounds and interests (Salles, 2017b).

Cecilia Salles' approach to creation processes brings forth crucial nuances for this investigation, which aims to explore intersections between creation and literacy that can guide the development of artifacts that serve as educational resources to combat hate speech. If we consider that a theory is a set of propositions about a field of objects, Cecilia Salles' theory on creation processes provides general tools to discuss creation across various fields, based on case studies that reveal common recurrences in creation processes.

Among Charles Sanders Peirce's main contributions to the Critical Theory of Creation Processes is his perspective on creation as a semiotic process, capable of connecting works, processes, and creators within a network of continuous mobility, free from temporal hierarchies between the work and the process. According to Peirce (1998), a sign is both generated by and generates other signs, within a perpetually active network of relationships. For Salles, the process of creation is an unfinished gesture of which the work is a component, since, from the perspective of incompleteness, processes and works cannot be considered separately, as works are intrinsically intertwined with the creation process.

In 1998, Salles published the first book in her series dedicated to developing a general theory of creation, titled *Gesto Inacabado* [*Unfinished Gesture*], which evolved from her doctoral thesis, completed in 1990. This work gathered the main theoretical results made in recent years in the field of creation studies within the Communication and Semiotics program at PUC-SP. During this time, the author came into contact with Peircean semiotics and later explored the complexity studies of Edgar Morin. Peirce describes the action of the sign (semiosis) as a process driven by final causation – a path with vague and fallible tendencies, that pulls the sign towards action, much like the human desire to create, as observed by Salles. Building on this perspective, Salles developed a general theory of creation processes, grounded in semiotics.

In addition to Peircean semiotics, Salles incorporated Edgar Morin's approach to complexity and culture. This includes the relational perspective

and the idea of understanding the whole through the interconnection of its parts; the concept of interaction; the viewing of reality as formed by ties and interactions (networks); and regarding the gaps that individuals find to escape historical and cultural overdeterminations.

Salles (2017c, 2019a, 2019b) defends the concept of creation as a network under construction, a continuous process of evolving interconnections with vague tendencies, generating nodes of interaction whose variability is guided by principles or trends within the process. It is an ongoing process with no definitive starting or ending point, involving both the work and its receivers. A fallible process, sustained by the logic of uncertainty, that accommodates chance and allows for the introduction of new ideas with each new interaction.

This research is positioned within this context, aiming to explore the relationship between creator and receiver through the study of creation processes and dialogues with media literacy. This approach values reading and interaction, viewing them as essential aspects of the creation process.

The Creation Processes as a Literacy Tool

Part of the field of media literacy has focused on the changes that have occurred in recent decades, with several authors reflecting on the shift in the public's role – from consumers to producers of information. This view adds to the traditional perspective of the public as receivers the idea of the public as active creators of messages (Sánchez Carrero & Contreras Pulido, 2012). The concept of prosumer initially appears predominantly in works developed within the fields of marketing and advertising (Kotler, 1986), but also in media literacy studies, which have sought to understand the phenomenon of network society (Van Dijk, 2012; Castells, 1999).

Media literacy topics are part of the European Commission's agenda for Citizenship, which has organized a set of recommendations aimed at promoting critical, cultural and creative access – the 3Cs of literacy (Reia-Baptista, 2009) –, amidst the various forms of media through which society expresses itself, where technical access is implied within cultural access. In 2019, *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* was published, in two volumes. One of the entries, authored by Reia-Baptista

and Tavares (2019), focuses on an essential aspect of literacy – access. The authors emphasize the multifaceted nature of the concept of access and the importance of understanding it for literacy studies within the context of the information society. In this context, in addition to being physical/material, access also needs to be symbolic, in order to achieve effective communication – communicating together – and for the information society to be seen as a “knowledge society” as well.

Contemporary studies of media literacy encourage a focus on the continuity of creation among users/viewers (Dourado *et al.*, 2021). One of the fundamental contributions of these studies is to make users/viewers more aware of their participation in media creation/translation/interaction, consequently making them less susceptible to various influences. Literacy combined with studies on creation processes (Dourado & Tavares, 2020) does not address a view of creative participation solely for a specific type of narrative or game, but primarily emphasizes the inherent creation within all acts of performing/narrating/playing.

The study of gamification procedures within the context of communication and creative performance encourages us to consider these practices also in terms of the creation processes by the users (Salles, 2006, 2011; Santos & Ferreira, 2019; Unger & Chandler, 2012). A video game is an artifact designed to engage users to imagine and experience possible pathways of game construction, through interactions with their world references.

Each video game, in its gamification process, develops a more or less intense interactive relationship of creation with the user. In Cecilia Salles' critical creation theory, the concept of communicative practices asserts that “the creation process also shows itself as a tendency towards others” (Salles, 2017a, p. 120). This perspective is one of the key entry points between creation studies and the literacies explored in recent research at the intersection of creation and literacy (Dourado & Tavares, 2020; Dourado, *et al.*, 2019; Dourado, 2021).

Video games can be viewed as contexts of infinite performances, with the continuity of these practices reflected in the user's strategies for interacting with and existing within the game. These forms of engagement can take various shapes, including extra-game interactions. The users, in their creative performances, generate images beyond those being seen and heard,

whether in the simple act of recalling the game in association with other memories, discussing it, or even reviewing extra-game performances based on positive and negative experiences within the games and the various dialogues (Salles, 2017a) that arise from them.

In this sense, considering video game literacy involves acknowledging the image-generating potential of creative performance within the context of the immersive experience and translation of the symbols and codes present in video games. Game developers create their gamification practices with the expectation that users will engage – culturally, critically, and creatively – with the images and meanings that can be generated within games. Literacy thus proposes a reading of the world that involves the user's creative potential, framed within a critically and culturally contextualized understanding (Colapietro, 2016).

By perceiving human beings as image-generating entities in their processes of interpreting the world, we can also consider the relationship between developers and users from the perspective of creative performance. Creative performance is, in fact, a necessity of all living gamification processes – that is, processes that are ongoing. Thus, literacy studies are also a way of thinking about the creation process of video game users based on the design of performances and the possible interactions between the game and the users, closely related to the act of creating/playing, which is embedded in the strategies for making the game exist.

Conceiving the video game user as part of the creation process allows us to view the narrative, the creation process, and video games in a less passive manner, capable of contributing to education and combating hate speech in video games through the lens of creation as a literacy tool.

The Importance of Dialogue Between Studies of Creation Processes and Media Literacy for Contemporary Educational Practices

One of the founders of CIAC, and a mentor to many researchers at the center in the field of literacy studies, Vítor Reia-Baptista advocated media education as a result of multiple learnings and recognized film literacy as a strong creative component. At CIAC, the relationship between creation

and literacy has been strengthened through the approach of the Critical Theory of Creation Processes, which we discussed at the beginning of this study. This approach emphasizes the inseparable relationship between creation and reception, suggesting that the work is part of a continuous process where the roles of reception and creation intertwine.

In this context, the relationship between creator and audience is complex and dynamic, where roles alternate. This approach reinforces the idea that all individuals are potentially both audience and creator. This often happens simultaneously during the performances of reading and interacting with different media. Among the propositions that consider literacy with a special focus on the critical-creative and cultural aspects of the reading processes are the concepts of the educator Paulo Freire. According to Freire (1989), education is, above all, an instrument of liberation. Therefore, it is necessary to start from the students' world perspective to create new and alternate readings. He emphasizes that students should be the protagonists of their own learning processes and reminds us that they are also creators of worlds.

During interactions with media, young people act as creators of both internal and external images, building mental models that are often externalized. This role reversal, recurrent in communication processes, can turn young people into producers of new reading and interaction processes. However, without proper discussion, this can lead to the promotion of undesirable practices, such as the case of online hate speech (OHS). These problems are often amplified by the context of depersonalization of oneself and others that sometimes occurs in online communication procedures, where mediation is strongly marked by machinic aspects and the virtualization of experiences.

To remind young people of the creative role they often play in these communication practices, the artifacts produced under the PROPS – Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralistic Speech project, aim to raise awareness of the audience's role as creative agents, encouraging them to construct narratives that counter OHS. Within the scope of PROPS, young people and students are invited to be active agents within the creation of the artifacts at various stages of the project, for example, in the research surveys and focus groups, and also through direct participation in some of the creative decisions.

The audience's involvement began at the start of the project with research surveys, notably, through the focus groups, where the experiences of young

people were heard. Additionally, they also participated directly in the creation processes of the artifacts, such as the collaborator Ju-Lee (11 years old), who is part of the project's team. These creation-research procedures were complemented by ongoing efforts to ensure that these artifacts stimulate young people to recognize their creative role within the communication relationships they establish with the media and the protagonism they exert in these processes. In this journey, creation strategies such as interactive narratives and gamification are strongly encouraged by the artifacts created under the project.

To conclude, regarding the growing importance of creation processes in school education, we highlight the significance of this theme with two programs that emphasize young people's creative thinking as a central element of their proposals, contributing to the stimulation and consideration of these values within the school context.

Recently, the results of the PISA 2024 – Programme for International Student Assessment – were released, where one of the evaluated factors is the “Creative Thinking Index”. This index assesses creativity not only in the Arts, but also broadly in Mathematics, Sciences, Languages, and other areas. It was observed that, in many cases, good results in the evaluated subjects were associated with an above-average Creative Thinking Index.

Another example is the inclusion of the structural axis “Creative Processes” in the doctrines of the current high school reform conducted in Brazil, which had been in development for over 20 years and involved extensive consultation with the school community before coming into effect in 2017, still in a preliminary version. One of the strengths of having the “Creative Processes” principles in the program is that it is considered a “structural axis,” meaning it serves as a connecting link between the different subjects that make up the program. The existence of an index to assess students' creative thinking, given the complexity and diversity of individuals and creation processes, can raise controversial points if the index is viewed in isolation from the students' learning contexts. However, to avoid this, efforts have been made to relate this index to other indicators and to strengthen the perception of the transdisciplinary nature of creation processes within learning contexts.

Similarly, reforms like the new Brazilian high school curriculum have begun to establish connections between different areas of knowledge,

emphasizing creation processes as a linking element. These reforms highlight the need for a less dogmatic approach to education, with axes capable of keeping structures in motion so that they can truly develop. These actions promote the inclusion of creation processes in discussions about educational practices, which in itself points to the recognition of the importance of the topic. With time and deeper discussions, we hope that concrete and widespread changes will be seen, recognizing students as creators in the context of the communication relationships they establish daily, both inside and outside the school environment.

The artifacts developed within the PROPS project echo these concerns and present young people with some aspects that the creation processes approach can generate as a literacy tool. We highlight two for conclusion: the perception that creation is a dynamic and ever-constructing process, and that the roles of creator and audience are in constant change within this process. We invite you to learn more about each of the artifacts produced in the context of the PROPS project and how each one handles in its creation processes the challenges posed by the theme of OHS and the creator/audience/player relationship.

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Interactive Counter-Narratives in the Prevention of Online Hate Speech

The following chapter is divided into six parts, each one representing a description of a counter-narrative developed in the context of the PROPS project. Partly influenced by the project's study – *Online Hate Speech in Video Games: Concepts, Prevalence, and Prevention Strategies* – and data collection – *Young Online Gamers and Hate Speech: Characteristics from a Study in the Algarve Region* –, six different interactive narratives were produced by a multidisciplinary team of nine researchers, from the University of Algarve, University of Beira Interior and Santarém Polytechnic University.

The goal is to render these narratives – two video games, an interactive comic book, an interactive audiovisual essay, and two pedagogical itineraries – into educational tools to be used in the school and classroom contexts, directed at students between the ages of 10 and 18, to reflect and discuss different themes related to online hate speech.

All six tools will be available to use in the project's website: <https://props.ciac.pt/>

Unbully

Gabriel Evangelista and Bruno Mendes da Silva



Figure 1. *Unbully*

In the heart of the Black Forest (a fictional and fantasy world) lives a group of strong and powerful dragons, feared by all creatures in the animal kingdom. Among these beings, a small dragon named Tales was born - a dragon unlike any other of his kind. Tales is ridiculed and mocked by everyone because he is neither strong nor powerful which makes him upset about the way he is continuously treated. As such, Tales decides to leave his lair and travel through the forest, escaping the oppression of the other creatures.

Throughout his journey, he is not entirely alone. Along the way, he meets some members of his species who mock him. A victim of discrimination from the other dragons, he seeks to survive without being affected by verbal insults.

To navigate, he will need to find the Sacred Dragon Statues. These are landmarks that guide adventurers through unknown paths, being also symbols of bravery for the most powerful dragons.

Throughout his adventure, he will find lost Dragon Eggs. Collecting these eggs will impress some of the forest dragons, who will reward him with a new ability and recognize his worth, thus aiding the growth of little Tales. What else awaits him on this adventure?

Game Description, Structure and Development

Unbully is a computer game that can be played on three different platforms: MacOS, Windows and Linux. The player will also need a display monitor, a mouse and a computer keyboard.

It is a single-player platform and exploration game, where the player controls the dragon Tales. Aimed at a young audience aged between 9 and 12 years old, the expected playtime is between 15 and 30 minutes and the game mechanics include actions such as jumping and running.

The game's setting (the Black Forest) contains several gameplay elements. These are: traps (deadly spikes and fireballs), enemies (poisonous slugs), distraction characters (oppressive dragons and friendly dragons) (**Figure 2**) and collectible items (Dragon Eggs).

The player's primary goal is to find the Sacred Dragon Statue at the end of the level, while the secondary goal is to gather all the collectible items (Dragon Eggs). This latter objective grants the player the ability to destroy enemies, which is necessary to navigate the entire game map and reach the end of the level.

The distraction characters have a dual role: they influence gameplay and challenge the player while also being part of the narrative. These characters include oppressive dragons that attack Tales with hate speech (present from the beginning of the game) and friendly dragons that appear after the player collects all the Dragon Eggs. The friendly dragons have a distinct aesthetic from the oppressive dragons, aiming to create a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout the player's journey.

The map does not present a linear path, allowing players to explore different routes to reach the same locations (**Figure 3**). This reflects the exploratory nature of the game and reinforces the concept of the character (Tales), who is seeking to find his own personal path. To aid in exploring the setting, there is a small map that marks the location of collectibles and the end of the level.



Figure 2. Friendly Dragon (left) and oppressive dragons (right)



Figure 3. Partial map of the game

In *Unbully*, players cannot die; however, the game includes enemies and hazards that, when touched, will transport the player to different specific points on the map (magical candles that serve as respawn points). These can be perceived by players as hindrances, as they delay their progress, or can be used as strategic tools, allowing players to quickly move to specific points on the map.

The author was responsible for the game design, art and programming, while the music was composed and played by the musician Nelson Schäller. All artwork in *Unbully* was made using two software: Procreate and Affinity Photo. The coding was developed using the game engine GDevelop 5. Other sound effects were used from pixabay.com (royalty-free stock website).

Functional Description



Figure 4. Main Menu

The game begins at the main menu, which showcases a nighttime scene with two statue-like buttons. A flying creature serves as the play button that starts the game (**Figure 4**).



Figure 5. Tales' story presented within the game

Following that, we are introduced to Tales' story, setting the context for the game (**Figure 5**). Once again, we find the same flying creature from the main menu. Clicking on it progresses the story and marks the start of the player's adventure.

Regarding the music, from the start of the game the player can hear moody melancholic music, reinforcing the sad events suffered by Tales. This will contrast with the moment when the player catches all Dragon Eggs, where the music will become more energetic with a happy vibe, symbolizing the positive connection made with the friendly dragons.

In the initial stages, the player finds the character Tales in the forest. Along the path, he will come across signs providing important information for the player: the game controls and its objectives (game tutorial). The game tutorial is diegetic, belonging to the game world (**Figure 6**).

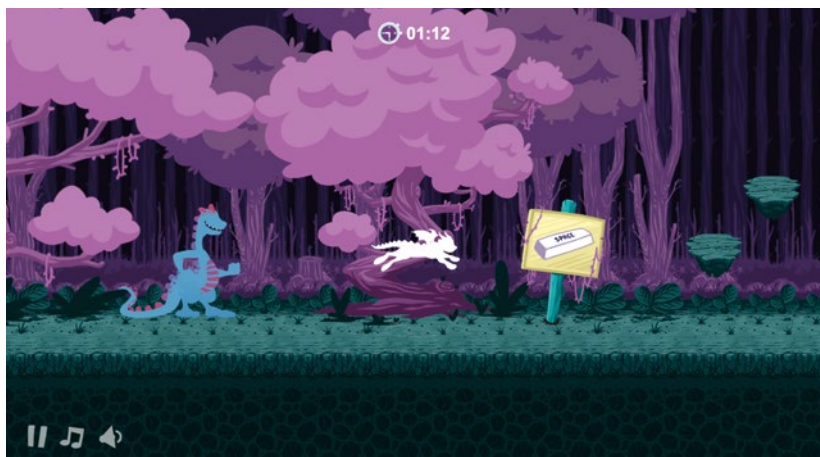


Figure 6. Example of the game tutorial

Next, Tales meets various dragons that attempt to distract the player by verbally attacking the small dragon with hate speech (**Figure 7**). It is not possible to interact with these characters.

The hate speech dragons are scattered throughout the map and will be a constant presence for the player, composing the game setting alongside other elements of the Black Forest, such as Dragon Eggs, magical candles, platforms, and other hazards (**Figure 8**).



Figure 7. Tales and an oppressive Dragon

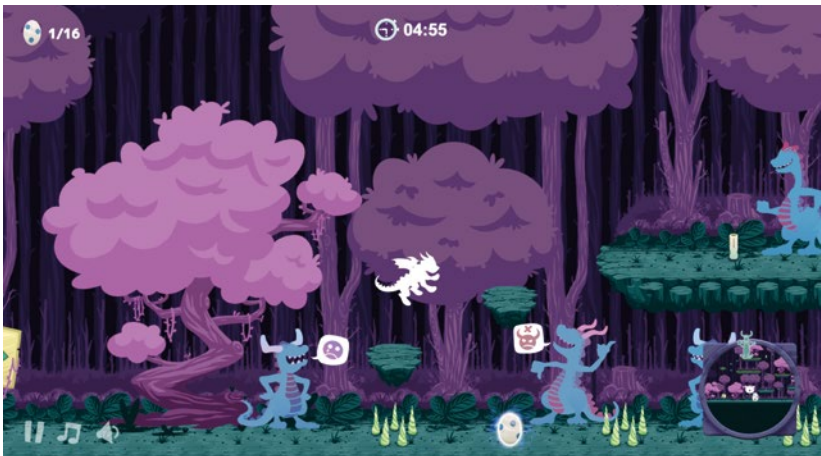


Figure 8. In-game Scene

At the end, upon reaching the Sacred Dragon Statue, the player is invited to answer reflective questions regarding the theme of the game and hate speech in particular. The time spent collecting all the Dragon Eggs and finding the Sacred Dragon Statue are also presented on the screen (**Figure 9**). This aims to motivate the player to return to the game to score a better personal time, or to compete with fellow players, cre-

ating an opportunity for further discussion and reflection on the issues presented in the game's story.

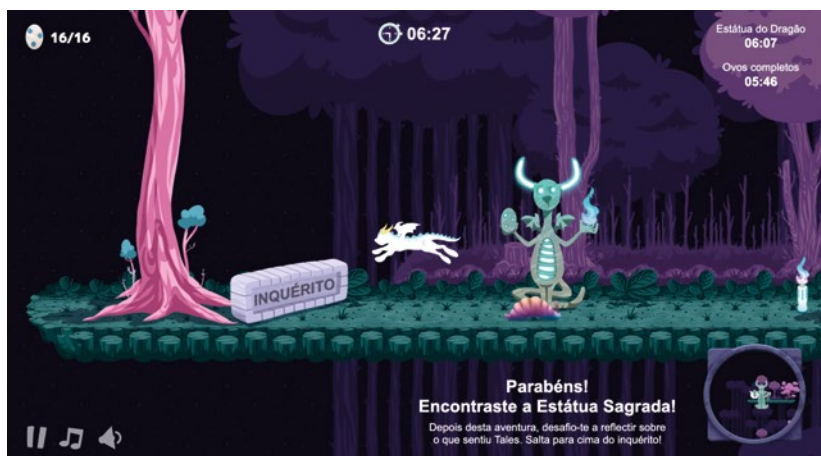


Figure 9. Final scene

Final considerations and conceptual objectives

In today's digital age, children and adolescents immerse themselves in an online universe where issues related to hate speech arise, which impact social behaviors and the ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts.

The game *Unbully* serves as a countermeasure to online hate speech, and presents the following objectives:

- Finding enjoyment in situations that would initially be frustrating.
- Combating anxiety.
- Reflecting on the negative impact and toxic attitude associated with underperformance.
- Demonstrating that it is possible to grow and find enjoyment through positive attitudes.

IN[The Hate Booth]

Susana Costa, Mirian Tavares and José Bidarra



Figure 1. *IN[The Hate Booth]*

IN[The Hate Booth] consists of two dimensions: a physical one – a light booth –, and a virtual one – an interactive fiction game that prompts a journey of discovery. This installation-game mirrors cyberspace as a fertile ground for the toxic disinhibition of hate speech, where trolls and bots escape within the monitored yet unregulated space of the Internet.

The booth, an immersive space isolated by three panels and a curtain, invites the interactor to immerse in its luminous environment. Inside it, there is a pulpit where the interactor finds a 13-inch iPad with an announcement stating that a blog will be closed by decision of its authors (Hazuka and Gotcha). Through the comments, it is possible to find a way to access the blog's *post-mortem* (a collection of pages produced from the website's launch until its shutdown, which are no longer active) and discover what led the authors to close it. What happened to the authors? Why did they decide to stop writing?

By choosing to explore what happened, the interactors will discover a series of archived messages, and by reading and decoding them they will find the gradual buildup of hate messages among the webpage followers.

The installation-game offers interactors the possibility to comment on the posts and create new clues and pages to continue the game. The purpose is to involve students in the active participation, intervention, and understanding of the problem of online hate speech.

The artifact aims to achieve four effects: a) contribute to the immersion of the interactor; b) cause confusion and discomfort in the interactor, as symbols of the effects of hate speech on individuals; c) metaphorically refer to the concepts of stage and role, serving as a reminder that everyone has rights and responsibilities in the digital world, just as in the physical world, and can assume their own persona in containing this phenomenon; and d) symbolize the processes of remote communication, inherent to digital media, which are linked to the emergence of online hate speech, intertwined with the process of toxic disinhibition.

Technical Description

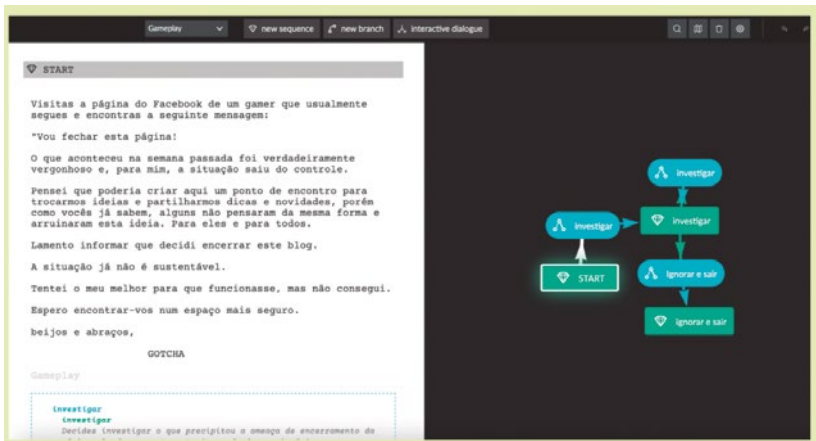


Figure 2. Narrative construction in Celtx

The interactive narrative was developed using the Celtx (**Figure 2**) and Twinery applications to visualize the possibilities of paths and choices. For the game, a subdomain was created in WordPress (**Figures 3 & 4**) with the pages and their respective links. With the collaboration of a programmer,

the way to progress in the game was developed: the interactor must discover the main theme of each page to identify the keyword, which allows them to advance to the next level by writing it in the comments. If the interactor fails to provide the keyword three times, a clue is provided by highlighting in yellow the text that leads to the keyword.



■

VAMOS FECHAR ESTA PÁGINA!

O que aconteceu na semana passada foi verdadeiramente vergonhoso e, para nós, a situação saiu do controle.

Pensamos criar uma página que fosse um ponto de encontro para trocarmos ideias e partilharmos dicas e novidades, porém como vocês já sabem, alguns não pensaram da mesma forma e arruinaram o projeto. Para eles e para todos.

Lamentamos informar que decidimos encerrar esta página. A situação já não é sustentável. Tentamos que funcionasse, mas não conseguimos. Esperamos encontrar-vos num lugar mais seguro.

Gotcha & Hazuka



JOGOS E COMUNIDADES LGBT

Olá! Como estão?

Em que temporada estão no vosso lado do mundo? A primavera está quase aqui do nosso lado, e estamos a sentir-nos muito brilhantes!

Depois das reações ao post anterior, pensamos em escrever sobre a comunidade LGBT nos videojogos!

Inclusão e representatividade. Essas duas palavras -chave conjugam forças tensas que testam constantemente os limites da cultura gamer, na qual o protagonismo do público LGBT (Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transsexuais, Transgêneros e Intersexuais) e das mulheres no universo dos jogos eletrónicos tem vindo a aumentar.

Se antes o chavão normativo definia os videojogos como "coisa de menino", essa hostilidade vem sendo desconstruída como reflexo das transformações observadas na própria sociedade.

Figures 3 & 4. Screenshots of game pages in WordPress

The physical dimension of the installation consists of a black booth, measuring $1.50 \times 1.50 \times 2.68\text{m}$, divided into three panels and one luminous ceiling (**Figures 5 & 6**). It is a construction in white melamine MDF with 50% of the exterior area covered in self-adhesive vinyl; enclosed with a curtain. The lighting is provided by a type of RGB Wallwasher equipment with a transformer and motion sensor for color change.

In the center of the booth there is a black pulpit (**Figure 7**) – measuring 2.82 centimeters in height – which serves as a support for the iPad. Measurements have been adjusted to provide a comfortable experience for the participants, allowing them to stand while playing. The pulpit has a door integrated into its structure, equipped with a lock that allows the technical components of the installation – such as the iPad charger – to be accommodated and hidden, ensuring that no electrical wires are visible. This space can also store the tablet when it is not in use.

The game is accompanied by music, enhancing the immersion of the interactor in the following situations: the background music varies and increases in intensity according to the game progression in each level; there is also a set of sounds for when the player fails to enter the keyword, when they succeed, and when they finish a level.

The booth has the following characteristics:

- Metal structure platform covered in black thermolaminated with leveling feet;
- Metal structure covered on the outside with “Alucobond” (a very light aluminum composite);
- Ceiling with a lightbox in opal acrylic with LED RGB lighting;
- A door with a black flannel curtain, fireproof and easy to assemble with ties (allows entry and prevents light from escaping);
- Lighting with a timer/sequencer programmed to change color every 30 seconds;
- Lighting with a sensor to account for the presence of the interactor, avoiding energy waste when the booth is empty.



Figure 5 & 6. Booth prototype

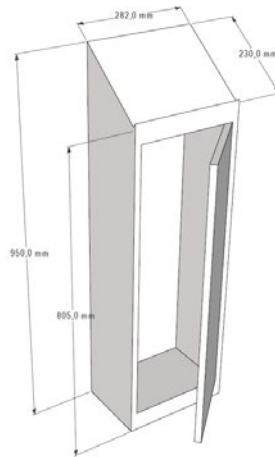


Figure 7. Prototype and measurements of the pulpit inside the booth

Functional Description

The interactor enters the booth, an illuminated and enclosed environment. On the iPad screen, they find the *post-mortem* of a website about video games. This *post-mortem* also presents the game mechanism. One of the users, in the comments, writes the following message:

MetaHacker

“Guys, I have figured out what happened! Type “Welcome” in the search bar and find out what led them to close the page...”

On the next page, it reads the following:

Neon

“What might be the keyword to reach the next post? Hint: What is the main theme of the blog?”

From the theme of each entry, the interactor can advance on the website that is no longer active. By advancing, the interactor discovers the escalation

of hatred within the comments. As it was previously stated, if they enter the wrong keyword three times, a clue is provided.

In a classroom context – the main target audience of this installation-game – besides enjoying the game inside the booth individually, a group activity is proposed, based on a pedagogical itinerary that foresees the guidance of an educational path in which students become co-authors of the interactive installation.

Rider (Installation plan for public spaces)

For public presentation, the booth requires the following equipment: two power sources, one for the iPad and another for the booth. Internet access is necessary for the game to function, as it is hosted on a server. The booth was prototyped with a focus on portability, ensuring ease of transportation and assembly.

The public presentation is done in kiosk mode, so that cookies are cleared after a period of inactivity. In this mode, it is also possible to put the browser in full-screen and hide the menu. This option will enhance the immersion of the interactor.

Final Considerations

This project stems from the analysis of the problem of hate speech and its online manifestations to propose a new approach aimed at young people and adolescents, while also assessing its contribution to prevent or mitigate the impact of hate speech on the identity development of young people.

Gamification, counter-narratives, media literacy, art, and activism are the pillars of our approach to hate speech. We focus on the transformative value of artistic intervention and gaming culture as drivers for the development of democratic values, critical thinking, and digital citizenship.

We aim to create a community of children, young people, teachers, parents, educators, and associations, involving schools and institutions in the Portuguese municipalities of Loulé and Olhão with which we have been establishing collaboration protocols. Thus, the project foresees a networked

approach, primarily through the Portuguese network of school libraries, in order to coordinate and enhance collective action. Through the experimentation with the Installation-Game *IN[The Hate Booth]* work sessions will be developed, based on a pedagogical itinerary created within the research project, to consolidate its objectives, values, and intervention strategies.

THE UPDATE

Beatriz Torres Valente, Ana Filipa Martins and Bruno Mendes da Silva



Figure 1. *THE UPDATE*

THE UPDATE is an interactive comic book developed within the framework of the PROPS project that aims to show, through its narrative, how online hate speech can affect the lives of children and young people who are increasingly exposed to hateful comments. In this narrative, *The Best Game in the World* has a new update. New conduct rules bring new challenges to Leo, the main character, but the biggest obstacle continues to be his temper.

This project includes the development of both an e-book/print-ready version and an interactive digital/WordPress version. By using interactivity we intend to engage the reader in the construction of the narrative by making decisions during the reading, which allows the story to unfold in different directions (**Figure 2**). *THE UPDATE* proposes a reflection on the impact of online hate speech in the lives of each character and on the gaming environment itself.

From the data collected in the focus groups and surveys conducted within the project, it was possible to understand that hate speech has already been experienced by a large portion of these children and young people.

Notable are the prejudiced insults, sometimes directed at people of different ethnicity or gender, although the biggest trigger for this type of discourse happens when the players are not experienced at a particular game. On the one hand, some interviewees show acceptance of this phenomenon by ignoring or tolerating negative comments, while on the other, there are those who distance themselves from these environments.

With these key ideas, indicating that there is some acceptance of hate speech in video games, and based particularly on the analysis of the focus groups, the comic was chosen as the medium to address this theme for the following reasons:

- It is a pedagogical tool that has the “superpower” of explaining concepts clearly and educationally;
- The visual image helps in understanding concepts and making the story more attractive;
- Comics often use *Grawlixes*, *Nittles*, or *Quimps*¹, terminology used by Mort Walker in his 1980’s *The Lexicon of Comicana*, to represent obscenities, simplifying the use of hate speech in the context of this project and, in particular, this narrative, making it suitable for the target audience.

One particular comment from the focus groups helped in the construction of Leo, the main character of the comic: “talking about the consequences of online hate speech is exaggerated, we’re just in a game”. From this observation, a story was created, about a player who engages in online hate speech. He will have to reflect on his behavior, as a consequence of losing the privilege of playing with his group of friends. On the other hand, the story includes the idea of an excessive code of conduct where all players engaging in hate speech end up isolated. The goal is for children and young people to become aware that not everything is tolerable, whether it is aimed at a friend or an online stranger, and that it is important to reflect on our own attitudes and behaviors. Through this comic, we aim to foster critical thinking about the toxic behaviors we are subjected to on digital platforms.

1. *Grawlixes*, *Nittles* and *Quimps* are a sequence of typographic symbols or drawings (such as %@\$&*!) used in place of obscenities, especially in comic strips.



QUE VERGONHA! SE SENTES QUE O LEO PRECISA DE DIZER UMAS BOAS PARA A EQUIPA ACORDAR NA PRÓXIMA RONDA, PASSA PARA A PÁGINA SEGUINTE

FOI BATOTA! SE ACHAS QUE FOI UMA BELA BATOTA E QUE O LEO DEVERIA PASSAR-SE COM A EQUIPA ADVERSÁRIA, VAI PARA A PÁGINA 18

Figure 2. Excerpt from page six, where we can see Leo frustrated with the team loss and the interactive choices for the reader

Detailed Description

THE UPDATE was illustrated using the Procreate app, with a set of brushes suitable for comic book drawing. To test the interactive narrative script, Figma was used. Supporting tools like Photoshop and InDesign were necessary for the finishing touches of the work. The comic has two versions: one for e-book/print-ready and another digital created using WordPress.

E-book/Print-ready Version

Instructions can be read on the first pages of the book, and the reader moves to a specific page to follow the chosen narrative. At the end of the book, there is an educational activity for children and educators. The e-book version is compatible with devices like Kindle and tablets. The activity is available for printing as well as in JPEG format for tablets.

WordPress Version

Instructions are provided on the home page. While reading the narrative, the reader clicks on the option they want to choose and is directed to the next page. This version – made in WordPress – has the potential to expand and offer more educational resources, as well as archive some results from the activities conducted by the readers.

Script

The script is divided into seven parts. Three of them are fixed and, in total, the reader only has access to five parts in one sitting, depending on their choices (**Figure 3**). The narrative has two interactive moments where the reader chooses the next option, which translates into the main character's behavior when faced with a team loss. He has the option to intervene and get angry with his friends, insulting them (**Figure 4**), or to react negatively to the opposing team, exchanging offensive comments with an unknown player.

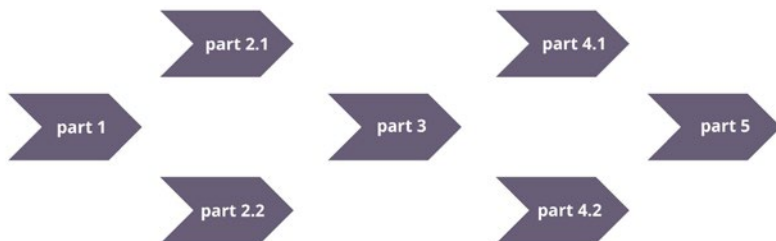


Figure 3. Structure of the Interactive narrative of *THE UPDATE*



Figure 4. One of the pages from *THE UPDATE*, following the choice that leads Leo to insult his teammates

As a result of the offenses committed, the main character ends up being banned according to the new conduct rules. He encounters a new game map specifically designed for gamers who practice online hate speech, where the only way out is to complete a very difficult mission or create a new character. The fact that the main character is left alone and unable to play with his friends makes him reflect on the benefits of having a team and on his exaggerated behaviors. Sometimes, it takes an update to realize that certain attitudes are not appropriate. Just as a game can be improved and optimized, children, young people, and adults can also better themselves and take the time to understand what is and is not acceptable in social life.

Final Considerations

THE UPDATE is presented as an additional contribution to the set of pedagogical artifacts developed within the PROPS project, specifically targeting the 10-14 year old age group. The flexibility of this comic book aims to make the interactive experience compatible with different devices through its two distinct formats – e-book and digital/WordPress version. It was developed as an educational resource that can be used in Portuguese schools to foster debate on topics such as online hate speech and its manifestation in digital environments, encouraging reflection and critical thinking about the possible consequences of toxic environments.

The development of this work demonstrated how comics can be a potential medium to explore in social science research projects, as well as an educational tool, presenting itself as a useful resource to introduce concepts adapted to different target audiences, in conjunction with the various inherent potentials of digital media. With this interactive narrative we intend to enable educators to help children and young people develop the necessary skills to use media consciously.

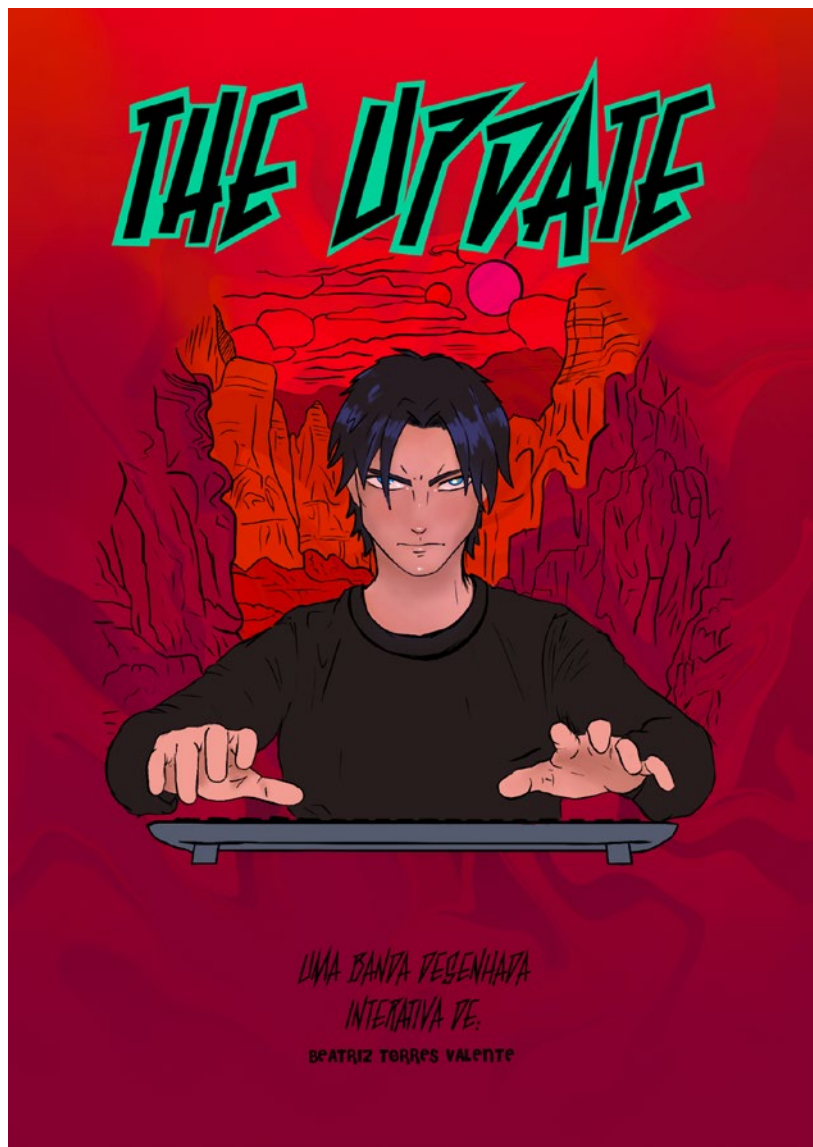


Figure 5. THE UPDATE, cover

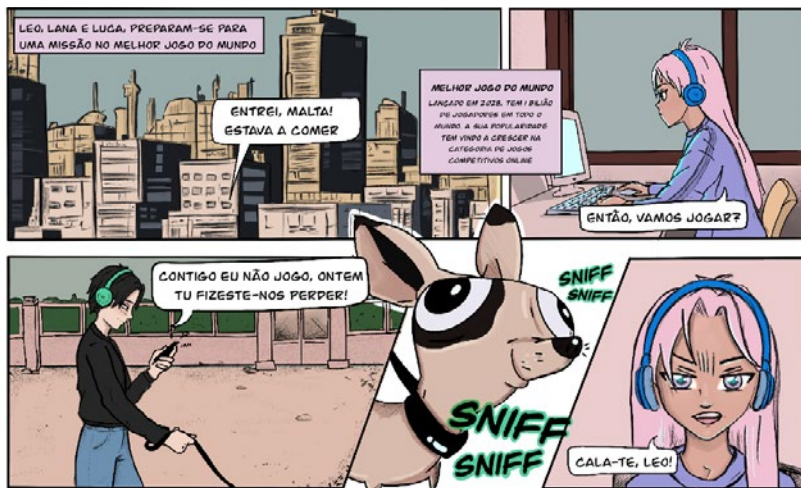


Figure 6. *THE UPDATE*, excerpt from the first page

G.G.

Alexandre Martins and Ana Gavina



Figure 1. *G.G.*

G.G. is an interactive audiovisual narrative, which allows users to engage with different written, aural and visual elements. Using chat messages, footage and sound recordings from gameplays of Portuguese streamers, and comments and memes found in gaming community forums, this digital collage intends to explore the gaming landscape in broader terms. More specifically, it explores the issue of online toxicity, focusing on topics such as the importance and consequences of good and bad performance in video games or certain aspects regarding the female experience in these environments.

The surveys conducted within the PROPS project, in multiple schools from the Algarve region, enabled us to identify aspects such as the most played video games among students, the streamers they watch most frequently, and the most common targets or motives for the occurrence of

insults among players. Moreover, the focus groups provided testimonies of real experiences with online hate speech in the context of video games. In addition to the results of the survey and focus groups, further research was carried out, including scientific literature and content from online gaming communities and forums. This helped consolidate the results and the selection of themes and topics to address within this audiovisual narrative:

1. The impact of performance in online video games – in the survey, player's performance was identified as the number one trigger for the occurrence of online hate speech.
2. Male/female experiences in the context of video games – besides performance, the issue of gender was also reported in the survey as a frequent motive for these types of discourse and there were multiple testimonies from young girls during the focus groups about the challenges of being a female player in online games.

From these two key ideas, a narrative was produced by using real examples, mainly from Portuguese gaming personalities and communities.

Detailed description

G.G. was created using *cables.gl*, a web-based open-source visual programming tool designed for creating real-time interactive graphics and animations. With the resources provided by this platform, we were able to create an audiovisual application with different interactive objects (**Figure 2**). All elements included in the narrative were real examples taken from gameplays, chats from streaming channels, and text comments from community forums. Other features also included excerpts collected from the students' testimonies of the PROPS' focus groups. *G.G.* can be played from any browser and requires a computer – mouse, screen and speakers – with internet access.

The narrative was divided into two panels: male (M) and female (F), which the user can alternate by clicking on a switch in the app's sidebar, in the top right corner (**Figure 3**). Both parts (M/F) have an identical structure but include distinct elements portraying different themes and topics. On

panel M, the interactor will find mostly ideas related to performance in gaming, the relation between losing, frustration and aggressive behavior, and discriminatory attitudes towards racial minorities (this last topic was also mentioned during the testimonies of the focus groups). As for the F panel, there are references to female identity and the consequences of revealing it during online gameplay, including content related to demeaning attitudes towards girls/women and degrading remarks regarding their bodies.

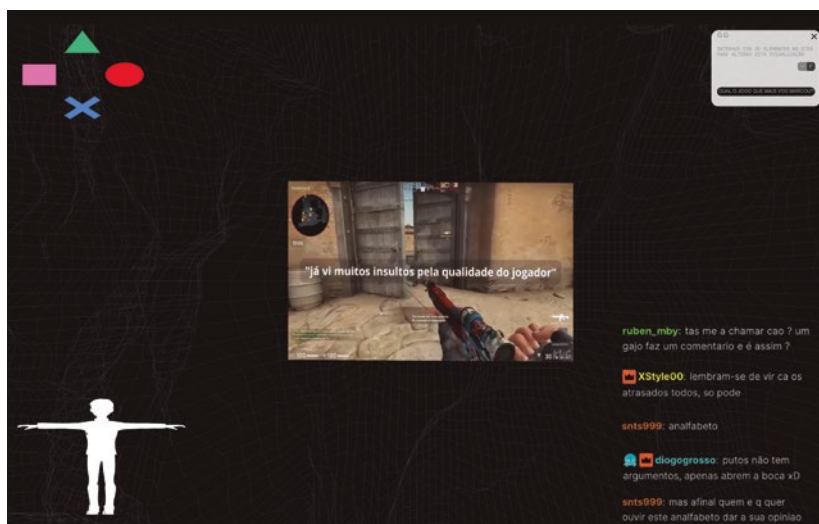




Figure 2. G.G.'s interface



Figure 3. G.G.'s sidebar with a M/F switch (top) and a button (below)

As for the media components, both panels include videos, sounds, comments, and images that depict positive moments/fun gaming experiences, negative moments/instances of online toxicity, and humorous examples related to the narrative's themes. Below is a list of the different media and possible interactions:

- Sidebar – Below the M/F switch, there is also a button in each panel, displaying a question, e.g., “girl gamers, where you at?”. When clicked, an answer is displayed: “They’re busy pretending to be boys so they can play in peace” (comment taken from a Portuguese Reddit community).
- PlayStation buttons – on the top left corner there are four geometrical shapes, mimicking PlayStation buttons that activate different (audio) visual objects, by hovering over them with the mouse:
 - / – Images/Memes taken from Reddit gaming communities about the narrative's themes (**Figure 4**);
 -  – Audios from Portuguese gamers/streamers insulting or demeaning other players/streamers;
 -  – Video montages from Portuguese speaking gamers sharing good/fun moments during multi/single player games (the male gamers used in the montage were taken from the PROPS survey, while the female gamers were identified during independent research, as there were no mentions to female streamers in the survey's answers) (**Figure 5**).

The narrative also includes non-interactive elements:

- Video Montage – In the center of the screen, a dynamic window displays a video montage (**Figure 2**) showing different video games (the most played games, according to the survey) with quotations about negative gaming experiences (testimonies of students from the focus groups):
 - Video games: Minecraft, Counter-Strike, Grand Theft Auto, Fortnite, Valorant and Roblox;
 - Quotations: “I have seen many insults about the player's skill”, “Sometimes they threaten to find out where I live”, “I used to

get upset and react aggressively”, “I am often discriminated against in more violent games because I am a woman”, “I have been attacked many times for being a girl, which to many means a bad player”, etc.

- Chat simulation – in the bottom right corner, a simulated chat displays real messages and insults found in livestreams of Portuguese gamers/streamers (**Figure 2**).
- Dynamic words and background sounds – in the F panel, a selection of words found in chats from female gamers/streamers (e.g. “fat”, “abortion”, “boobs”, “onlyfans”) appear throughout the screen (**Figure 6**); while different sounds – insults regarding gamers’ poor skills – play in the background.

Concerning the title, in gaming terminology the acronym “G.G.” means “Good Game”, which reflects one of the main topics explored in the narrative. In this context, it could also be applied to “Gamer Girl”, a polarizing expression used for women who play video games.

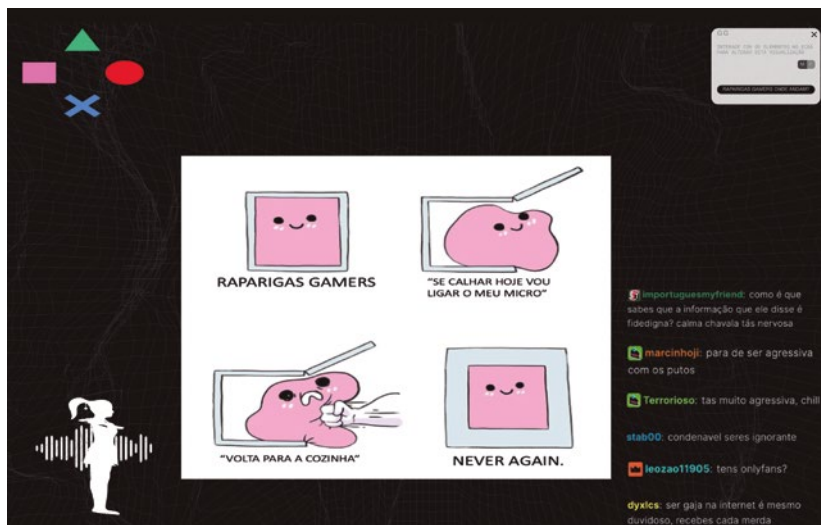


Figure 4. Meme about the consequences of revealing your identity in online video games

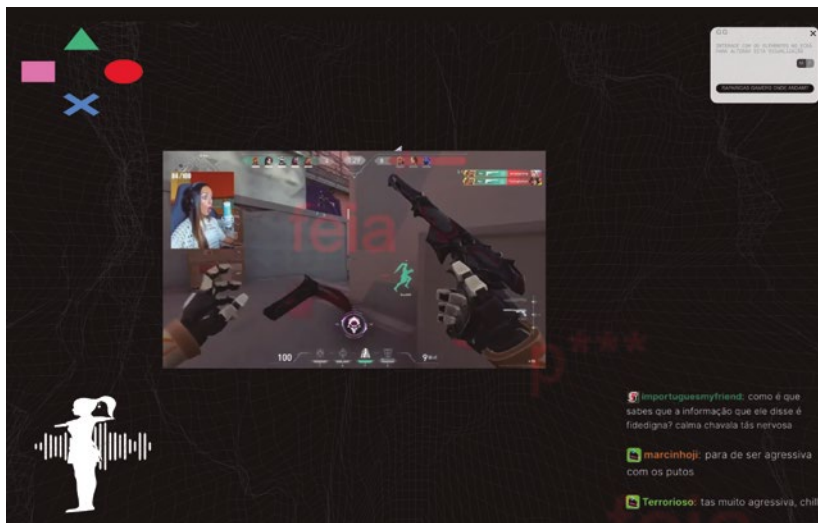


Figure 5. Video montage with girl streamers playing video games

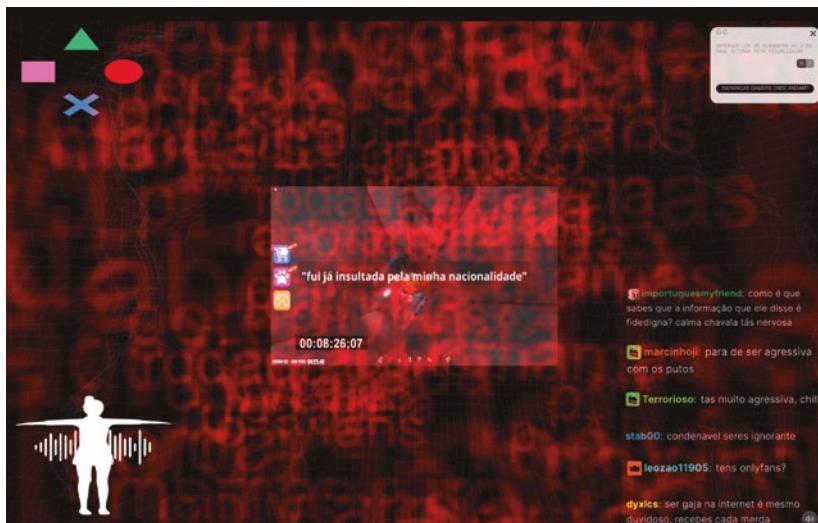


Figure 6. F panel covered with red words representing different insults

Final Considerations

G.G. is one of various pedagogical tools produced within the PROPS project. Our purpose was to create an easy-to-use application that requires few and accessible materials to run. This app was designed to be played in a classroom context, by students between the ages of 14 and 18, within the Portuguese school system. One of the main goals of this initiative was to develop an educational interactive experience that could help teachers and students reflect and discuss topics related to online video games. This educational resource can prompt discussions around issues such as hate speech and its prevalence in these spaces, differences between what boys and girls experience when playing online multiplayer games, and what are some of the possible consequences of toxic gaming environments.

Through the use of this interactive narrative, we also intend for students to:

- relate the various examples presented in the narrative to the students' experiences;
- analyze and discuss digital content;
- use digital content critically, effectively, and safely;
- develop skills regarding inclusivity and respect in online contexts.

O Polígrafo, a Verdade e o Outro!

Maria Potes Barbas and Cristina Novo



Figure 1. *O Polígrafo, a Verdade e o Outro!*

The pedagogical itinerary presented here adopts a personalized and diverse learning approach on the topic of online hate speech, tailored to each student's experiences and needs. Instead of following the guidelines of a standard curriculum, which assumes that everyone achieves the same type of objectives, *O Polígrafo, a Verdade e o Outro!* creates a space for individualized pathways adapted to individual and group objectives, according to each person's experiences or interests.

Although this pedagogical itinerary mainly focuses on the subjects of Citizenship and Information and Communication Technologies, aimed at students between the ages of 10 and 14, it can be implemented and explored

in different contexts and subjects, such as Portuguese classes, according to the goals of the teachers, or the needs, motivations and interests of the students.

General Description

With the narrative *O Polígrafo, a Verdade e o Outro!* participants embark on a journey to seek justice and truth, and are summoned to go on a special mission as “Defenders of Digital Well-being”. The online community faces a threat caused by evil forces spreading the toxicity of hate speech and discrimination. This story begins in a city called “Ciberlândia”, where all inhabitants live in harmony and practice mutual respect. However, one day, the city is invaded by evil creatures known as “Digital Trolls”, who use social media to spread false and hateful messages. This is the setting that the main character – the students – encounters in the game “Invasion of Ciberlândia and the Digital Trolls”, assuming the role of president of this important community. Together with the other characters, they must help the city of Ciberlândia handle these threats and the online disharmony they are encountering.

Structural Description

The pedagogical itinerary was designed to be developed in various learning environments, following a methodology close to the flipped classroom model. In this learning methodology, the content is often studied at home, and the activities to deepen and systematize that knowledge are carried out later, in the classroom. Each student has the opportunity to take an active role in structuring their own learning, becoming the protagonist and decision-maker in individual or small group activities. In this type of learning strategy, the teacher ceases to play the central role of controlling every aspect of the class and presenting information, and instead assumes the role of moderator, guiding the students’ learning. This educational tool aims to direct and guide students in constructing their own knowledge. Each segment of this pedagogical itinerary is based on the students’ indi-

vidual and collaborative work, which is predominantly autonomous but systematically guided by the teacher. The students will have to first identify certain aspects of the subject matter at home and then further explore it at school, through digital educational resources and using various group work strategies. The results of this pedagogical itinerary, which are achieved through reflection, debate and practical activities, will later be presented and shared with the school community, while also assessing their impact.

Students are expected to become individually and collectively aware that actions and words online impact others' lives. To achieve this, the process starts with an activity to be done at home and independently. This activity is guided by a script that invites students to watch the video “Discurso de ódio | O que podemos fazer” [“Hate Speech | What Can Be Done”]. This resource is provided by the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth. The students are then asked to watch the video one more time, but in an interactive manner, by responding to questions about its content as the action unfolds. To better document and broaden their understanding of this topic, they are also invited to explore additional online educational resources – the websites Portuguese Safe Internet Center and No Hate Speech Movement, and the podcast ZigZaga na Net.

Afterwards, in the classroom, the students have their first contact with the narrative that will trigger this itinerary (**Figure 2**). After reading it silently and then aloud to the entire class, they move to the next activity where they will have to help the character João make decisions to address the hate speech that has invaded the game city he oversees (**Figure 3**). In this role, João has great responsibilities and is subject to high levels of fatigue and stress in his interactions with other players. To test the anxiety levels that online communities and followers can trigger, students are invited to play the game “YouTuber Simulator Game.” By rotating roles within the group, they can play, make decisions, and then discuss ideas to find an ending to the narrative they have read.

How will they help João restore the truth in Ciberlândia, and report the insecurity, the fierce threats, and the online discord they are facing? The Trolls are scattered throughout the city, and their trails can help the participants in their quest of returning the city to harmony.



Figure 3. Decision tree to help João respond to hate speech messages

Final Considerations

In the digital era, citizens in general, and children in particular, need to learn how to live in the digital world just as they do in the physical one. The feeling of being hidden behind a screen does not mean they actually are, and it certainly doesn't mean that the rules of behavior, interpersonal relationships, well-being, and honesty should be any different. It is essential to learn how to be and act online, to reduce tolerance for hate speech, and to participate in digital citizenship actions that address human rights violations and promote safe internet use. For this purpose, we have developed this pedagogical itinerary with the following objectives as our focus:

1. Raise awareness about online hate speech and the associated risks;
2. Prevent violent online behaviors that violate human rights;
3. Develop digital citizenship skills and ways to participate in the educational community.

Better, not Best

Francisco Merino and Luís Nogueira



Figure 1. *Better, not Best*

Better, not Best is an interactive narrative that serves as the basis for a pedagogical itinerary. Its primary goal is to raise awareness about hate speech and to counter ethically reprehensible behaviors in the context of online entertainment, sensitizing young people between the ages of 15 and 18 to the importance of respecting others, the promotion of healthy competition, and the practice of empathy.

Within the interactive narrative, the participants must select one of four inexperienced non-player characters (NPCs) as a teammate (**Figure 2**) and make decisions based on that teammate's performance, whether by assisting, teaching, guiding, reprimanding, or criticizing. Depending

on their decisions, the participants are rewarded or penalized in two categories: “empathy towards the teammate” and “team performance”.



Figure 2. Example of an NPC that can be selected as a teammate



Figure 3. Example of a possible outcome (“Danger!”)

In the end, there are four possible outcomes: “Perfect!”, “Applause!”, “Caution!”, and “Danger!” (**Figure 3**), each resulting from the team’s performance, but mainly from the participant’s decisions and the level of empathy shown towards the NPC.

Better, not Best consists of ten scenes. In each of the scenes the participant is faced with three options (**Figure 4**) that will determine future routes, the final score and outcome of the participant. These will be dependent on how the team is coordinated and on the choices made to achieve the desired goals.

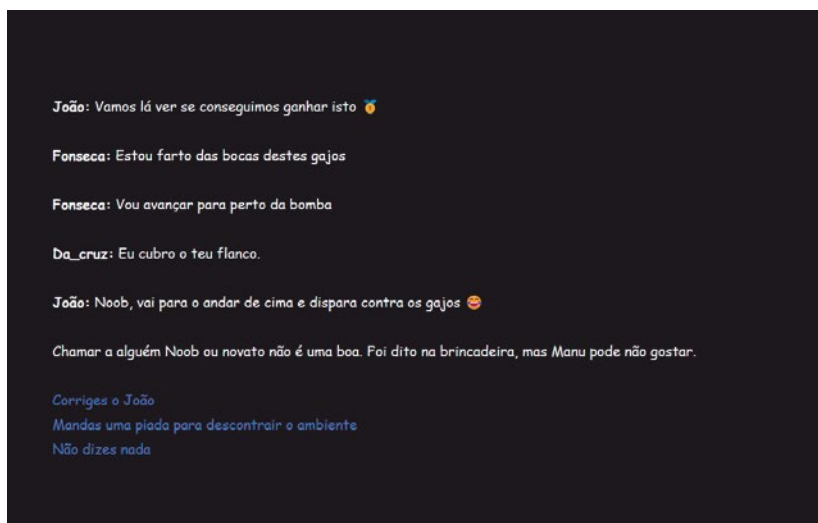


Figure 4. Example of a scene and possible options

Technical Presentation

The interactive narrative was developed in Twine, an open-source tool that allows for precise outlining of the possibilities, choices, options, and implications of the available narrative paths. The images that are used to illustrate the story (**Figures 2 & 3**) were generated using artificial intelligence.

Functional Presentation

As with all interactive narratives, everything is dependent on choices and their consequences. These decisions will challenge the participants, affecting their performance and profile.

Participants will face several challenges, such as the ability to:

- Manage the team's performance and companionship in a balanced manner;
- Value empathy in playful and competitive contexts through choices that dictate the narrative's direction and outcome;
- Make decisions keeping in mind the respect for different identities and communities, their values, and their specific traits;
- Experiment with the various possibilities available in the narrative to engage with different cultural realities and identities.

The pedagogical itinerary that complements and sustains the interactive narrative aims to:

- Raise awareness about the harms of hate speech by identifying, decoding, and evaluating its manifestations;
- Promote empathy in playful contexts, emphasizing the need to experience, accept, and defend individuality and difference;
- Discuss the relevance of competitiveness in playful contexts and the appropriate processes for experiencing it in a psychologically healthy manner;
- Stimulate critical thinking about oneself and the impact of hate speech on the surrounding community.

To fully enjoy this experience, participants will benefit from possessing or acquiring certain skills and aptitudes. We hope that *Better, not Best* will not only allow them to make the most of these skills, but to also enrich and foster them:

- Narrative curiosity: "What happens next?"
- Engagement in roleplaying: "What role am I destined to play?"

- Exploration of interactivity: “What do I do with the power that is given to me?”
- Choice responsibility: “What are the consequences of my actions?”

The following methodology will be adopted for the implementation of the itinerary:

1. Definition and characterization of hate speech;
2. Detection and identification of hate speech in the context of video games;
3. Reflection about the reasons and practices of hate speech based on *Better, not Best*;
4. Creation of a manifesto or a code of conduct against hate speech.

Technical Rider

Better, not Best can be played on any common web browser, as it is a casual game that quickly, casually, and efficiently seeks to instill values of solidarity and companionship among players and to counter prejudiced or discriminatory behaviors.

The following equipment is required:

- Computer with internet connection;
- Chrome or Firefox browser.

Due to its technical simplicity, *Better, not Best* is a pedagogical itinerary that can be implemented or replicated in various contexts such as:

- Classrooms;
- Game fairs;
- Gaming platforms;
- Summer festivals and other cultural events.

Final Considerations

The title of this interactive narrative aims to deconstruct and mitigate the idea of excessive competition, which can be both a cause and a consequence of hate speech. *Better, not Best* advocates for constant personal improvement, whether in a playful or in a civic context. Furthermore, it promotes individual growth, both ethically and performance wise, while countering the overvaluation of unrestrained competition among players and denouncing manifestations of hate speech, excessive language, and the normalization of abusive behaviors.

The main purpose – which is both pedagogical and ethical – is to demonstrate that one cannot win at any cost and that the ends do not justify the means. To put it simply, the message we intend to convey is that everyone has their place within a team, regardless of their skills or degree of preparation. Knowing how to accommodate diverse personalities, contributions, motivations, perspectives, strategies, and skill levels in order to achieve a common goal – while ensuring empathy for each teammate and the improvement of the team as a whole –, is the biggest goal of this interactive narrative. The key aspects that the participants are expected to learn is that there is no way to win without accepting differences and without being inclusive. That's why we proclaim that: being better is better than being the best. A simple proclamation in its terms, but not necessarily easy to achieve.

Endgame: Contributions of Interactive Narratives to Promote Fairer Online Gaming Communities

Bruno Mendes da Silva, Ana Filipa Martins, Susana Costa and Alexandre Martins

Online hate speech is certainly not a new phenomenon in digital human interactions. The ubiquity of social media and other forms of instant electronic communication in digital societies has made it exceedingly easy for hateful language to circulate and be weaponized. This pervasive issue underscores the urgent need for strategies to counteract and mitigate the effects of hate speech in online communities.

Prompted by documents such as the European Union's (2009) recommendation on media literacy in the digital environment and the Braga Declaration (Pereira, 2011), there has been a clear emphasis on promoting a digital media culture based on creativity, diversity, tolerance, transparency and dialogue. This involves developing digital and critical thinking skills, as well as ethical media production and use. The recommendations not only have underscored the fundamental role of media education but also highlighted the importance of the audience's interpretive and receptive dimensions of media products, not forgetting regulation and responsibility of the media industry itself. These perspectives have deeply influenced the media literacy initiatives and studies conducted by institutions such as CIAC – Research Center for Arts and Communication, at the University of Algarve.

PROPS – Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralist Speech undertook the task of addressing online hate speech through interactive narratives. This endeavor was grounded in the recognition that hate speech has been

increasingly normalized, posing a substantial risk to the integrity of online interactions and community discourse. Particularly vulnerable to hate speech are the environments within video games, characterized as less regulated spaces. This susceptibility highlighted the necessity of focusing on these contexts when developing strategies to mitigate online hate. The PROPS project aimed to fill this gap in the research, which had predominantly concentrated on traditional media while often neglecting other media contexts such as entertainment and video games. This oversight persisted despite various recommendations emphasizing the importance of addressing all forms of media (Soriani, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Approaching these diverse contexts required addressing specific concepts and frameworks, with gamification, immersive narratives, interactive decision-making, and role-playing dynamics playing a pivotal role to actively engage users. PROPS sought to leverage this approach by proposing counter narratives to hate speech, engaging users to collaboratively construct these narratives. The project also embraced the concept of inoculation, providing young people with the skills and resilience needed to identify and counteract hate speech before it could take root.

Although limited geographically as a regional study, the project demonstrated significant potential for broader application. Its methodologies and resources are adaptable for use in educational settings, with future opportunities for monitoring and evaluation through continued research, at both national and international levels, extending its impact far beyond its initial scope. The results of the PROPS project were disseminated through various channels, ensuring accessibility to both academic and general audiences.

The spread of online hate speech remains a dynamic and evolving problem, requiring ongoing and concerted efforts from both individual and collective initiatives to analyze and counteract its implications. PROPS contributed to this effort by engaging educators, trainers, children, and young people in the active containment of online hate speech through interactive media. This approach aligned with the broader objectives of digital citizenship education, which sought to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, emphasizing rights, freedom of expression, and social and civic responsibility. PROPS operated within this tradition, aiming to foster a society characterized by mutual understanding, tolerance, inclusivity, and participation. This approach emphasized the

educational, transformative, and emancipatory potential of research based on creative methodologies.

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Appendix

Gamersophy and Resilience: Video Games as a Resource for Teaching Resilient Philosophy and Ethics

JuanMo Giménez, Carolina Sousa and Bruno Mendes da Silva

Introduction: Resilience for Gamers

*A Joel
(To Joel)*

What does thinking look like in the age of screens? To what extent does it affect our identity? Are the narratives on the screen a fundamental aspect in how we accept change, how we deal with grief and how we self-manage? Do they encourage us to think about current problems? Do they allow us, as Socrates would say, to know *thysel*? Or not?

As happened with the research for *Cinesofia en el aula. Enseñar a pensar a través del cine* (Cinesophy in the classroom: Teaching to think through cinema) (Morales Giménez, 2022), we take screens and their global society as an object of reflection, as a trigger for thinking skills (Morales Giménez, 2018a, 2018b), and for teaching of philosophy in the classroom and educational contexts (Morales *et al.*, 2022). This allows for philosophical competency to form, which Matthew Lipman called complex thinking (1997, 2016).

Currently, the turbo-accelerated and liquid society (Bauman, 2008, 2013) uses the mass media to intensify what is known as hate speech causing the radical denial of otherness and its point of view, reaching limits such

as the exclusion of those who are different, censorship, media insult or cancel culture. All these attitudes born within the *cinesfera* (*cinesphere*) (Morales Giménez, 2022; Lipovetsky, 2009) test, and sometimes put at risk, the very heart of democracy, which is based on the premise that the people are critical and there is strong reasonableness in their moral decision-making. These forms of interaction with screens, of the current *homo pantallicious* (*screen subject*) (Morales Giménez, 2022), construct a concrete form of relationship, because what happens on screens, whether within the social network of the day or within gaming communities, is not something external to society, but, on the contrary, a transformation of our idea of society. And this new society is expanding; transforming us. It seems that it is the world that is reflected on the screens, but in truth it is the construction on the screen that reflects the world.

Human attitudes can emerge, in both virtual – video games and forums – and physical spaces – streets and public spaces. The video games of this generation already propose a type of gamer community that replicates human practices, such as making friends, earning rewards and gifts, mirroring another, looking for each other, thanking, etc.; but also replicates their contrary: creating enemies, showing disdain, insulting, blocking those we dislike, trolling, engaging in mass harassment with violence, as well as so many others. We can say that these are environments where pleasure or pain are created. These communities of young gamers emphasize violence and hate speech, often communicating loudly through microphones or chatting with insults while playing shooters, splattering blood on pixels.

We might think that this virtual violence sublimates and tames the repressed violence of society through games, but what if it also creates a normality and is a source of educational behavior? What if this way of relating to each other, so distant and hostile, deepens and creates roles of aggressors and victims where even hatred seems to be part of the game? What if this interaction causes a wound in the self-esteem and communication of many young people? Is it a game or not? As Thoreau put it, *the squirrel that you kill in jest, dies in earnest*.

So, how much does the fiction that a game offers us and invites us to participate in affect us? Let's understand that there is a big difference between cinema and video games: cinema has spectators and video games

have players. In cinema things happen before the eyes of the spectators, in video games nothing can happen without the active and interactive action of the player. So it's very different to watch a violent movie or to play a violent game. In a film there is voyeurism, in a video game there is complicity, there is decisiveness. This turns the video game into an interactive and moral experience of consequences. Video games are an ethical machine.

We believe that when it comes to violence in games, philosophical discussions can lead students to reflect on the ethical implications of virtual aggression, the distinction between fantasy and reality, and the impact of such content on individuals and society. This encourages us to a philosophical and pedagogical assessment of the screen, that is, a *cinevisual paideia* (Morales Giménez, 2022), aiming to deconstruct its grammar and originate questions, in a dialectic of the screen, that guides us to questioning and resilient ethics.

Video games create a space of simulation. It is no longer the philosophical spectator, but the philosophical player who questions himself: what is reality? What is the truth? How far can I go and understand? What is dying and what is killing? What is good and bad in the game? Are my actions justified? Do we have to win and succeed? Are we looking for power? Do we enjoy violence?

It can be observed that many children and young people do not find in the current context the necessary conditions of protection or the indispensable attention to emerge unscathed from these virtual hate speeches, which can constitute a threat to their bio-psychosocial development, specifically to their learning relational and interrelational skills, as a consequence of a lack of psychological, social, emotional, and motivational well-being. In this context, one of the tools we intend to use is related to education in resilience, understood as the ability to successfully adapt to adversity, which can be an asset in the harmonious and overall development of the emotional, psychological and biological well-being of children and young people.

We are aware of the trend that permeates the current global educational agenda in which young students, children, adolescents or even university students, look to the teacher for help in their personal development and values. This leads us to rethink the importance of an empathetic, innova-

tive, cooperative, inspiring, mediating, flexible and responsible teacher, with strong emotional intelligence, who constantly seeks feedback and support. Through interactive narratives, these teachers can help students address the risks that may arise from these types of hate discourses present in screens and video games.

We turn to the paradigm of resilience which, according to Sousa (2016) and Sousa *et al.* (2021), represents an important professional commitment to support students by creating a positive and healthy bond with themselves, giving meaning to their traumatic experiences. This paradigm is imbued with an affective and supportive network, with an inclusive approach that respects singularity and diversity, promoting the development of new meanings for life and aiding in the awakening of confidence.

The Form of Research: Gamers as a Community

Currently, the video game universe is an expanding artistic world. There is no end to the industry of indie video games, created by small teams for console stores or even by solo developers crafting interactive projects for platforms like Steam or Itch.io. It's as if the Netflix of video games has expanded and diversified. Themes are becoming increasingly broad, ranging from walking simulators to conversational games and aesthetically pixelated experiences. Similar to cinema, there are auteur video games alongside those from franchised industries, and this diversity is reflected in the sensitivity they convey. To explore this vast current landscape we've delved into the current libraries of video games. But to create an accurate cartography we needed the insights of gamers, who have brought us closer to the heart of video games. We have collected much of this data within a larger research framework entitled *Cinesofía y resiliencia – la pantalla como medio de reflexión sobre los problemas actuales* (Cinesophy and Resilience – The Screen as a Means of Reflection on Current Issues), proposed by the University of Algarve, in Faro, Portugal, with the support of the School of Education and Communication and PROPS teams.

After defining the research on video games, and giving meaning to the notion of “Gamersophy”, we communicated the needs of this research across

various social networks as a call to participation¹, especially targeting a young community known of gamers, who are particularly sensitive to this object of reflection: the video game, which embodies the artistic spirit of their time. It's important to say that not all the collaborators were young or, let's say, children, as many are traditional adult players, or are parents who enjoy the experience of playing video games with their children. Undoubtedly, many of the proposals received have opened new ways for us to test and evaluate these materials. Many have come to us by mail, by audios on WhatsApp and, most notably, through conversations in the playground of a high school, during a break or while having a coffee. All of them have been collaborators on this project, and we are deeply grateful². These contributions have solidified a significant initial list, serving as a starting point. While these pages will focus on the aspects that provide us more ethically and psychologically resilient aspects, we acknowledge that through the aforementioned efforts, we can explore other dimensions of teaching philosophical thought, such as epistemology, ontology, metaphysics, aesthetics, etc.; while also including authors such as Plato, Thomas More, Heidegger, Camus or Beauvoir. These aspects build upon our previous research, *Cinesofía en el aula. Enseñar a pensar a través del cine* (Cinesophy in the classroom: Teaching to think through cinema) (Morales Giménez, 2022), which has been instrumental in expanding the analysis of screens to new types of narratives.

1. The proposal was launched on social media (Instagram and Facebook) on January 18, 2024, with a logo and the following text: *We need gamers, we need philosophers! If you know about video games, the world needs you! Participate in a powerful research where we look for video games that make you reflect so that we can take them to the classroom and teach thinking. The mission is "secret", write to me so I can inform you of the simple steps. For your great work, you will be cited as an honorary collaborator. For you, thinkers!*

2. All these researchers have participated in this research and compilation of video games, thus being **HONORARY COLLABORATORS**: Antonio Morales Giménez, Pol Andreu Sansano, Pablo Miralles Álvarez, Jesús Segura de la Rosa, Manuel Pajuelo Fernández, Antonio Gutiérrez Venzal, Antonio Carrillo Montalbán, Sebastián Gallardo Gómez, Marina Gallardo Gómez, Yago Herrera Egea, Mauro Rodríguez, Lucía Delgado Ávila, Samuel Blanco López, Alejandro Criado Criado, Rafael Carlos Gálvez Benítez, Laura Checa Gómez, Alejandro Muñoz del Campo, María Jesús Rodríguez Sevilla, Gadir Orellana Cabrera, Marcos Fenoy Vergel, Gael González D'Alessandro and Maximilian Schneider Jordana.

Gamersophy for Kids: Video Games, Philosophy and Education

Due to the previously mentioned issues regarding young people's lack of necessary protection or attention, coupled with an apparent and progressive weakening of critical thinking, we believe it is essential to teach the analysis of audiovisual media in today's digital world. Just as cinema marked an era, video games represent the emerging spirit of the present. But what is Gamersophy? It is an extension of the philosophy for children method, employing short application video games (SAVG), combining education, philosophy and, of course, video games, to facilitate teaching thinking skills in educational contexts through the playful dimension of screens.

Here, we need to clarify several notions. Firstly, the concept of video games as we perceive it, and secondly, a concept that integrates philosophy and education, which we call "teach thinking".

Let's start with the idea of a video game, what is a video game from our philosophical point of view? It is a compound word that combines the words "video" and "game". The word "video" comes from the Latin for "I see" implying the visual aspect. Today's games are more sophisticated than Atari's *Pong*, 1972, or the original *Super Mario Bros.*, 1985, requiring current cinematic grammar to compose their shots and scenes. Today we could say that it is more appropriate to say *cinejuegos* ("cinegames"). Nowadays video games have been steadily becoming cinematic, and at the same time, mass cinema seems to explore the stimuli of video games. Now, what characteristics do they have as a cinevisual? Extrapolating the aspects cited in *Cinesofia (Cinesophy)* (Morales Giménez, 2022) the video games can be described as:

1. Just as cinema was in the past, the video game will be this century's work of art and artistic object. At the end of the day, it's cinema with interaction. Following Deleuze (1984), we could say that we have moved from the image-time to the image-movement, and finally to the image-decision. This constitutes simulation as a total work of art.
2. The video game is a representation and belongs to the history of representation. Let's understand that it follows from canvas to photo, from photo to cinema, from cinema to video games, and

from cinema to virtual reality. Which, in the long run, we will simply call *realities*.

3. It is an object of consumption or commodity in today's mass consumer and media society, probably the most profitable of legal commodities.
4. It is an object of thought. As Hegel quoted in his work *Filosofía del arte o Estética (Philosophy of Art or Aesthetics)* (2006), art is good when it helps us to think. We understand that a good video game enables thinking.
5. It is an object of propaganda and ideology that hides behind entertainment, as Walter Benjamin (1989) might say. They all contain ideas, but fun operates by hiding them.
6. It is a storyteller of contemporary myths and roles. It creates new figures that serve as archetypes, as seen in sagas like *God of War*, *The Last of Us*, or *The Legend of Zelda*, which inspire cult followings and merchandise. Instead of crucifixes, there are Funkos, toys, and posters.
7. Some are static, like a puzzle, and others are literary and have a narrative; all are playful.
8. Following Badiou's comparison in *El cine como acontecimiento (Cinema as an Event)* (2016), we can say that video games, in turn, are also an event, a philosophical experience to be lived.
9. In some cases, such as *serious games*³ (Zyda, 2005), the video game becomes an educator, conveying values and creating situations of empathy and emotional elevation.
10. They are models of thinking that explore concepts through conceptual imagery and ethical decisions. In this case, it becomes an educational resource, a trigger for thinking and reflection. However, for all this to be effective, it requires adequate methodological ingredients and mechanisms, as well as the presence of trained and sensitive educators.
11. They are mainly simulators of ethical and existential experiences. When we play, we must sharpen our moral judgment within an

3. Serious games are video games designed beyond entertainment, whose main purpose is to educate or train. According to Mike Zyda (2005) they are a mental test under specific rules, using playful means to achieve training goals, whether in state or corporate contexts, aimed at education, healthcare, politics, environmentalism, and more.

- interaction with a delimited reality, leading to questions like: what should I do? Which way should I go? What's better and what's worse?
12. Finally, and in great contrast to cinema, a video game is interaction through play; it is an electronic game that requires a computational device or video console.

With the video game, both in its intrinsic habits and the ontology it fosters, emerges the figure of the gamer, who, as previously cited, is not a passive spectator but an active philosophical actor. The gamer is a moral subject making decisions within simulations. Thus, they become an epistemological, aesthetic, or ethical subject in front of the screen's simulation. Huizinga (2012) mentioned what constituted *Homo Ludens* and their games; today, we could say the new figure is the *homo gamer* (Riaño, 2012). Another notion to emphasize is the idea of "game". But what is a game? According to Huizinga, the father of ludology, in his classic "Homo Ludens" (Huizinga, 2012; Carreño & Fernández, 2021), forms of play and their toys have shaped the spirit of each era, culture, socialization, the acceptance of rules, and how creative and artistic expression is conceived. We understand that the video game is an interactive, electronic-computational game involving interaction with screens or peripherals. Huizinga (2012) describes play as a free and meaningful activity, spatially and temporally separated from the demands of practical life, and bounded by a self-contained system of freely consented yet obligatory rules, totally immersing the player. The author also notes that where there is play, there is meaning, as most games presuppose a player conscious of objectives, codes, and rules. Even the most primitive forms of play involve some intuitive understanding. Describing play, therefore, means describing its significance for players. Additionally, Caillois (2001) proposes four fundamental categories to describe the complexity of games: competition, chance, simulation, and vertigo. These categories can intertwine and combine in various ways. Competition involves direct or indirect confrontations for attention and influence, while chance introduces unpredictability into digital interactions. Simulation entails the adoption of virtual personas, and vertigo reflects the feeling of being out of control in the face of information overload. Although Caillois analyzed games before the era of online interactions, these categories provide a lens for understanding the complexity of digital interactions.

The idea of play was a notion explored by Walter Benjamin in his early work *Juguetes (Toys)*, (Benjamin, 2015). Let's examine the relationship between Benjamin's exposition on play and its link to video games as developed by Lafarga (2020) in her video essay *Filosofía en los VIDEOJUEGOS a través de Walter Benjamin (Philosophy in VIDEO GAMES through Walter Benjamin)*. Firstly, we must emphasize that the classic notion of play has been modified with the advent of video games in the 1950s, initially appearing as something predominantly for children but now having taken on an adult connotation. For Benjamin, every game has three characteristics: rules, freedom, and the consolidation of a habit. Firstly, all games are limited by rules, which teach and condition the player, allowing that reality, even if limited, to exist. According to Benjamin, there is a reflection between the rules of games and the rules of real society, forming a juridical framework of what can and cannot be done. In this sense, games can teach us new social norms, simulate them, and then transfer them to the social reality we live in.

Another aspect is the idea of freedom, where according to Benjamin (2015), adults can escape reality for a while. This freedom within the video game creates an ethics of simulation. The experiences we live in the game are fictional in the context of play but real and personal in emotion or recognition, whether it is by achieving goals, sublimation of effort, intellectual or physical recognition, e.g., team sports or individual disciplinary competition. Creating a context of simulation, and within a regulated freedom, brings about the *paideia* of decision-making. Simulated freedom is usually channeled through an avatar, i.e., having a digital "body" or narratological character we control as a golem or an extension of ourselves. Without a doubt, taking on the role of an avatar creates high-level empathy because we are that character, and when something happens to that character, it happens to the player. This helps us put ourselves in their shoes. However, when the character is hurt, we do not feel real pain; we only see the health bar decrease or the game over. This creates a figure we might call an avatar-other, a figure that is both internal and external. If the narrative is morally strong and our decision time has sufficiently modified the character as an avatar-self, then there will not only be empathy towards the other but also self-recognition of the self. We can even see the changes, the learnings, and narrate them from a self-perspective – "I achieved," "I learned," "I won" – thus creating a resilient bond. In this case, the character is no longer the other but a self, and when it wins

or dies, it is the self that dies in simulation, but from that death, one must return; and learning from it to avoid game over is resilience. So, can what we learn as an experience while playing be transferred to other contexts?

Finally, there is the idea of habit. Habit in play is based on repetition. This repetition involves trial and error – the improvement of technique – until some form of pleasure is reached. Habit in video games is intended to be pleasurable and fun. Video games enter the life of a young person or child as a habit, and in turn, habit enters as play. Habit leads to virtue and excellence if it expands and reiterates over time. This time is educational and pedagogical because in the process, we have disciplined ourselves, corrected ourselves, examined ourselves repeatedly, failed towards new ways of overcoming, in short, a pedagogy that includes the permanent resilient act. Video games require this ethics of virtues while avoiding passivity, making it a playful habit. Just like in real life, we make mistakes: there are errors, failures, setbacks, etc. However, in video games, we can try again from the beginning. Yet in real life, there is no return to zero; even when trying again, life is irreversible and finite. Video games offer an idea of reversibility. Perhaps it is easier for us to learn from mistakes in video games than in real life, which blinds us and pushes us to justify ourselves. Video games are learning tools that eliminate the fear of failure, and retrying things allows us to train in a simulation with an avatar.

This analysis of play reveals its importance as a central element of culture and human experience. By exploring its nature, from its definition as a separate and meaningful activity to its evolution into complex digital forms, its ability to create communities and foster social interactions is highlighted. Additionally, its voluntary and immersive nature provides participants with a sense of belonging and camaraderie, expanding the horizons of human experience. Therefore, recognizing play as a cultural and community builder opens new perspectives to understand its importance and influence in contemporary society.

Currently, many of the inherent mechanics of play have been absorbed by numerous pedagogical methodologies to be more effective, such as game-based learning (GBL) or gamification, which propose transferring the routines and skills we incorporate in video game practice into daily life. The author Jane McGonigal (2013) calls these *gamer skills*, and suggests bringing serious games into the classroom to address significant global, social, and emotional issues, such as resilient ethics.

Philosophy and Video Games: the Video Game as an instrument for teaching thought

Deleuze (1984) meticulously analyzed cinema as a philosophical object through two notions: the time-image and the movement-image. If we transfer Deleuze's method to video games, questions arise such as: what concepts are created in the interactive image? What is the meaning of that concept? How should I participate in it? For Deleuze, cinema evolved from the movement-image to an ontological level as the time-image, evolving further into the decision-image. This decision dimension has mutated cinema into a game, giving rise to the video game.

Just as in the times when Deleuze was writing about cinema, today the world of philosophy has not taken video games seriously. Let us remember that Plato's philosophical legacy denied the image. The video game, as an evolved image, is attacked and punished by these same codes. The video game provides a concrete image to philosophy and allows us to read from another medium, as a form of philosophical reading and creation of relevant concepts. As Deleuze suggests, when we face the screen, if we engage with it interactively, if we demand and question, then we become philosophers, philosophers confronting the aesthetics of the video game.

We currently live in a time that requires philosophical thinking to address the big questions in screen society, not just the obvious ones like: what is a video game? What is a player? Can everything be played? What is important in playing? Can you kill while playing? Is what I feel in the game real? What is starting and finishing a game? But also those that address eternal and human themes such as: what is time? What is freedom? Power? Happiness? Friendship? Love? What is God?, etc. From commercial games to indie or auteur games, we can find philosophical ideas, for example, Nietzsche's idea of eternal return in *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, 2000, or utopia in *Bioshock*, 2007, or consequence in *The Quarry*, 2022.

So, can video games help us philosophize and teach thinking? Yes, because they are an artistic tool and a cultural device of enormous importance in the new global society. They challenge us with simulated decisions. Providing them with a philosophical pedagogy will depend on teachers and the needs of the students. The video game becomes a resource that triggers reflection at any educational level, as material for teach thinking

and a didactics of childhood philosophy in these pantallistic times. From a philosophical perspective:

1. Video games can be lived as a philosophical experience, a way to live moments through interaction in images. Like a philosophy in action. For many students, some of their most memorable moments have been with video games. We can make these moments didactic and deeply philosophical, as it is not just about watching but acting; and decisions change us. They are an extension of human existence and reality (Sánchez González, 2021).
2. Video games are an *empirical paideia*, requiring thinking with sight and buttons: an interaction with the decision-image. It is about teaching the gaze to develop Aristotelian phronesis – prudence or moral wisdom – and acting according to kairos, or the opportune moment.
3. Video games produce philosophical examples and decision-concepts – decisions that create a moral judgment or require taking a stance between complex ideas or positions –, which enable the use of logopathic reason (Cabrera, 2015), where we feel our interaction with great passion.
4. Video games create a maieutic relationship with the decision-image. Facing it evokes questions, logical and moral reflections, and with them, self-learning and resilient ethics.
5. They employ philosophical fictions. For example, to understand Camus' myth of Sisyphus, there is the video game *Sisyphus Reborn*, 2013; for Plato's cave, the game *Demiurge*, 2018.
6. Video games are a miniature experience; a problematization. An ethical and logical simulation. For this experience to be educationally effective, it should not subject us to thousands of hours, but rather be an impactful experience, followed by discussion.

However, considering that every video game is philosophical is trivial; what can always be philosophical is the way we read its language, experience it, simulate it, and live it. Not all video games consciously have something to say, but the philosophical player has much to say. The philosophical player and their interactive gaze will play a significant role

in today's screen-driven schools (Gee, 2004) and the schools of thought (Morales Giménez, 2022).

Gamersophy in the Classroom: Teach Thinking With Video Games

We have already clarified what Gamersophy is, which is a resource or medium to be used as a trigger in sessions aimed at philosophy for children or practical philosophies. This would expand the existing resources: the novels and manuals from the Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan curriculum (1992, 1997, 2016), the visual material from Wonder Ponder, the IPP exercises by Brenifier (2005, 2011, 2012), the resources for thinking with films from Cinesophy (Morales Giménez, 2022), etc. But how are we going to teach thinking with video games? How can we use them as a philosophical trigger? Let's see it briefly:

What Does 'Teach Thinking' Mean? Philosophy as a Competency

Thinking accurately is a practice. An action. A skill. A competence. As a skill and action, it can be taught and learned. It is competency-based learning. According to Brenifier (2011, 2012) philosophy in primary school is not a subject, but a competency-based work model that is incorporated into the practice of language and argumentation. This practice must be associated with complex thinking, which simultaneously involves logical and critical thinking – truth, linguistic and epistemological rigor –, ethical and caring thinking – seeking good, ethics, morality –, and, finally, creative or aesthetic thinking – seeking beauty, finding alternative solutions (Lipman, 1997, 2016). To achieve this, certain thinking skills must be activated, that is, “the cognitive processes that philosophers engage in when they philosophize”⁴ (Morales Giménez, 2019, p. 19), such as creating

4. Translated from Spanish: “*aquellos procesos cognitivos que hacen los filósofos dentro de su cabeza cuando filosofan*”.

questions, hypotheses, conceptualizing, exemplifying, etc. When designing a session with video games, we must focus on these skills. We refer to this updated classification (Morales Giménez, 2018a, 2022) (**Table 1**).

THINKING SKILLS			
(P) PERCEPTION	(T) TRANSLATION	(M) METACOGNITION	(R) REASONING
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observe. 2. Listen attentively. 3. Taste/Savor. 4. Smell. 5. Touch. 6. Perceive movements. 7. Connect Sensations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrate and describe. 2. Symbolize. 3. Improvise (Fluency). 4. Interpret. languages. 5. Translate (Metaphorically). 6. Summarize. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recall. 2. Reformulate. 3. Self-examine. 4. Metacriticize. 5. Reorganize. 6. Attend meta-thinking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek and provide reasons. 2. Reason with inferences. 3. Analogical reasoning. 4. Hypothetical reasoning. 5. Inductive reasoning. 6. Deductive reasoning. 7. Analytical reasoning. 8. Synthetic reasoning. 9. Infer consequences. 10. Relate premise to conclusion. 11. Relate causes to effect. 12. Relate part to whole. 13. Relate means to ends. 14. Establish criteria.
(C) CONCEPTUALIZATION	(R) RESEARCH	(EE) ETHICAL-EMOTIONAL	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conceptualize. 2. Clarify ambiguity. 3. Qualify/ Nuance. 4. Provide examples. 5. Provide counterexamples. 6. Compare- contrast. 7. Establish similarity. 8. Group and classify. 9. Sequence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problematize. 2. Guess. 3. Investigate. 4. Formulate questions. 5. Formulate hypotheses. 6. Seek alternatives. 7. Select possibilities. 8. Imagine. 9. Generalize. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contextualize. 2. Empathize and respect. 3. Self-knowledge. 4. Self Strength. 5. Ethical imagination. 6. Evaluate intention. 7. Manage rules. 8. Affiliate 	

Table 1. Thinking Skills Box⁵

5. In its original version, various sources were used (García, 2006; Brenifier, 2012), along with authors' own input.

Where and How to Teach Thinking? The Research Community

To create a climate of thinking using video games or any other trigger resource, we must construct a philosophical space. We need to transform the classroom into an agora. A circular place where students can see each other's faces and engage in inclusive dialogue on profound philosophical topics. This is where competencies will be developed. This methodological organization is known as the community of inquiry or investigation, which, with a strong democratic foundation, prioritizes the use of "the oldest philosophical technique of all: dialogue"⁶ (Morales Giménez, 2018a, p.139). This community should have several characteristics: it is a place for rigorous and dialogic teaching, where we problematize what happens, what we say, and what we play. After playing a video game for a few minutes and setting the mission for the students, this will be the place for discussion. It is a confrontational space supported by the pedagogy of questioning, the main tool of the philosophical tradition, not accepting moralistic or closed dogmatic answers. The teacher acts as a Socratic and a fallibilist: "he only knows that he knows nothing," and therefore should never give their point of view. This would be fatal as it would close the discussion and suggest ideas to the students. It is a cooperative space where we aim to reason rather than to be right (Brenifier, 2012). In summary, these are the community skills (Morales, 2022) (**Table 2**). Very shortly, we have described the methodological mechanisms through which we can make video games an instrument for learning. For this, a one-hour session would include an introduction where the topic is presented and the task is made clear to the students. For example: you must create three questions after playing the game, identify the problem in the game, list what it makes you feel, what you think the moral problem is, etc. This would be followed by a practical part consisting of 7 to 15 minutes of gameplay⁷. Then there would be some

6. Translated from Spanish: "la técnica filosófica más antigua de todas: el diálogo".

7. It is recommended to reflect on the materials and resources available in each center and classroom. We suggest having one computer or tablet per group or pair of students. The age and context of the students should be considered, as well as the state of the technology and the proper installation of the games, ensuring they are

complementary, cooperative, or dialogue exercises between pairs, etc. We recommend about 20 minutes of Socratic dialogue in the community of inquiry. Finally, a brief oral evaluation on what was learned, the difficulties encountered, etc.

Research Community Skills	
1. Exchange intersubjectivities.	1. Hold questions.
2. Work from different angles.	2. Do not interrupt.
3. Collaborate.	3. Do not monopolize.
4. Negotiate-agree.	4. Do not drag on: do not repeat what has already been addressed.
5. Make decisions.	5. Learn to raise your hand.
6. Help each other through contradiction	6. Commit: what you say is who you are.
7. Focus.	7. Learn to weigh your words.
8. Do not divert from topics.	8. Participate in group voting.
9. Philosophical Ear: Listen Attentively	9. Help someone only if they ask for it.
10. Symmetrical Ignorance: We Are Fallible	10. Do not seek a definitive conclusion.

Table 2. The Research Community: Philosophical Space Skills

Philosophy and Resilience: Philosophizing With Video Games as a Tool for Resilience

Young people, from the earliest age, are often exhibited as wounded, broken, lacking family narratives and models that provide coherent love and boundaries. In this survival society that covers up pain (Chul Han, 2021), students feel incapable of improving or being creative in the face of pain. Surrounded by screens, these sometimes become their caves. Socialization through play can be an antidote to daily obstacles but can also lead to avoidance, not facing challenges, emotional imbalances, and clinging to hateful or irrational discourses. Resilience, defined as adaptation, recovery, and overcoming adversity, stress, and trauma, encourages us to maintain our moral principles with strength, restore ourselves after

legal and free from piracy. In any case, we are looking for short application video games (SAVG) that serve as miniature experiences.

trauma, recover from morally difficult situations, and face challenges constructively, positively, and perseveringly. Resilience studies connect us with philosophy, particularly ethics. In other words, resilient ethics. So, can philosophical practice with video games help us? Yes, because video games are an *ethical machine*. The PROPS research group aims to train and help the reflective gamer, which is why interactive narratives are analyzed to reflect and prepare an alternative, a pedagogical itinerary with counter-narratives that sensitizes and allows questions towards a more pluralistic discourse. According to Sousa (2016) and Sousa *et al.* (2021), we have to reach existential resilience by starting with critical thinking, establishing an order:

1. *Critical thinking*: Philosophy encourages students to think critically, question assumptions, and analyze situations from multiple perspectives. This fosters resilience by allowing individuals to approach challenges with a more analytical and open mindset.
2. *Ethical reasoning*: Studying philosophy helps students develop a deeper understanding of ethics and moral principles. This can improve their ability to navigate complex situations and make decisions, contributing to their resilience to face dilemmas
3. *Self-reflection*: Philosophical inquiry often involves introspection and self-examination. Engaging in philosophical practices can help students better understand themselves, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and cultivate a sense of self-awareness.
4. *Existential resilience*: Delving into the existential questions of philosophy can help individuals deal with questions of meaning, purpose, and adversity. By facing existential challenges, one can develop resilience in the face of uncertainty and distress.

We understand that childhood and youth constitute a risk factor, therefore, from the perspective of resilient ethics, we must address numerous problems where skills develop (Masten, A. S., 2001, Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S., 2012):

1. *Risk-taking and decision-making*: Games involving violence can simulate high-pressure situations in which quick decisions and

risk-taking are required. By participating in these virtual scenarios, students can build resilience by learning to make decisions under stress and live with the consequences.

2. *Emotional regulation*: Exposure to simulated violence can help practice emotional regulation. Managing feelings of aggression, frustration, or fear within the context of a game can translate into better resilience in real-life situations.
3. *Perseverance and adaptability*: Overcoming challenges and adversaries in violent games requires perseverance and adaptability. By persisting through difficult levels or opponents, one can cultivate a resilient mindset, essential for recovering from life's setbacks.
4. *Teamwork and communication*: Many multiplayer games that involve violence require effective teamwork and communication. Collaborating in virtual environments can improve social skills, teamwork, and resilience toward common goals.

In conclusion, fostering reflective discussions, emphasizing ethical considerations, and promoting a balance between virtual experiences and real-world application can maximize the potential benefits of integrating philosophy and games in educational contexts.

Gamersophy Proposals: Exercises for Thinking While Playing

In our proposal, we have tried to look for video games that are philosophical and whose treatment allows us to create communities of dialogue about resilient ethics. Every classroom, workshop or educational center is oriented by time. Scheduling is deciding the time. Understanding this, and valuing playtime, we have differentiated between:

- Short Application Video Games (SAVG): these games enable reflection after just 7 to 15 minutes. They are fragments, *interactive thumbnails*;
- Long Application Video Games (LAVG): these require hours to reach points of reflection.

Strictly speaking, the video games selected in this initial proposal comply with these principles:

1. Be easy to install or access. For instance, a PlayStation 5 is not suitable as it cannot be easily transported or emulated on a school computer and is difficult to distribute. They can be for mobile (Android) or PC (Steam). It doesn't matter if they are old or modern.
2. They must be SAVG and allow classroom work after a maximum of 7 to 15 minutes of play. We advocate for short play times that allow for a brief simulation. Brief, but well directed. *The Last of Us*, 2013, would not be suitable because it requires too many hours of play to reach "Ellie's final dilemma".
3. They have to, in a rather direct way, allow discussions about a dilemma or a philosophical topic such as: death, the meaning of life, freedom, happiness, power, identity, reality, time, love, pain, justice, good and evil, beauty, feelings, etc.
4. These SAVGs should resonate with players, provoke thought, and serve as philosophical resources in any curricular area.
5. We have to avoid sinister or creepy games. We seek to introduce them into a classroom without causing problems. There is a tendency to favor serious games with minimal violence.
6. We seek variety. The target age ranges from elementary school to university education.
7. The goal is not to occupy all teaching time with playing, but to challenge thinking through video games and exercise Socratic dialogue. The purpose is to think, not to turn the classroom into an electronic game olympics. It is the interactive reflection of the video game that will generate the pretext, the dialogue, but it will be the dialogue that generates reflection (Lipman, 1992)

Following these guidelines, we have explored the vast world of video games and compiled many of them to present a brief catalog of practical and research resources.

The first title to analyze is one of the most famous indie games, ***Papers, Please***, 2013, by Lucas Pope. The game places us in the simulation of a customs officer in the fictional communist state of Arstotzka. The player

must decide who is allowed entry into the country, whether they are refugees or immigrants, by examining faces and documents. This scenario presents extremely difficult decisions that test our values, trust in appearances, and forces us to reflect on whether we made mistakes at the end of the day. If we make a mistake or, out of pity, allow entry to those who pose a risk, we ourselves become suspect. The game addresses the banality of evil as discussed by Hannah Arendt, Levinas's theory of the face, Kantian deontological ethics, and utilitarianism (**Figure 1**).

An activity proposal: **THE GREATEST PROBLEMS**. During the gameplay, ask students to create a list of the greatest problems they encounter, ranking them from greatest to least, and then discuss them with questions such as: What actions should be taken in times of war? Should we allow entry? Is it our responsibility to help? How do we identify a foreigner? Do they pose any danger to the country? Do such countries exist? How does this work affect us?



Figure 1. *Papers, Please* (Source: Lucas Pope)

Another simple game that represents a significant ethical responsibility is **Sort the Court**, 2015, by Graeme Borland. In this game, you play as a powerful king who is visited by advisors with questions to which you can only respond YES or NO. These decisions affect three factors: money, population size, and the happiness of the people. Each decision has consequences: making the people work hard generates more money, but the

population becomes less happy and decreases (**Figure 2**). The theme of governance leads us to authors such as Plato and his philosopher-king or the *Republic*; Aristotle, by contrasting monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy; Machiavelli and *The Prince*; Thomas Hobbes and his Leviathan as a modern state; as well as John Rawls and his veil of ignorance. Another proposal is John Stuart Mill's utilitarian ethics, which considers that the good is to seek happiness for the majority, but is that really so?

Activity proposal: **CONNECT AND ARGUE**. After playing the game, groups discuss the relationship between money, happiness, and population, developing arguments. Then, in a group discussion, questions such as the following are posed: Is it possible to be happy without money? Can one be happy without working? Is happiness an obligation? How does this affect the population? Who decides these aspects? Is it difficult to make decisions for others?



Figure 2. *Sort the Court* (Source: Graeme Borland)

A bloodier and more ironic game is **60 Seconds!**, 2015, by Robot Gentleman. This is a nuclear alert simulator where you have to decide what to take to the shelter, from objects to people. You only have 60 seconds to decide what is important. It is not easy, as these quick decisions define your destiny. Behind every decision, there is a consequence, out of the thousands possible, with some being very harsh (**Figure 3**). This game undoubtedly

allows us to explore Sartre's ethics of freedom, who understands that we are entirely responsible for our consequences because we are free to choose. As well as Nietzsche's axiology where we question what is most important for life. Finally, we can see values from Max Scheler and reflect on whether intention is more valuable than the end goal.

Activity proposal:

1. **AXIOLOGY AND CONSEQUENCES.** *After obtaining three results, students explain the best and the worst, justifying their choice. Then, they make a list of the 10 most important things they would take. They discuss questions such as: How do you determine what is important? Are decisions reversible? Who would you take and who would you leave behind?*
2. **ANALYSIS OF THE FUTURE.** *Students respond to a binary question about whether they believe which future is the most accurate, justifying their response. Then, we discuss: What is the future? What determines it? etc.*



Figure 3. *60 Seconds!* (Source: Robot Gentleman)

Death in video games is a complex subject: some are simply based on killing or destroying. A strange game, in the style of *Pokemon*, is **Under-**

tale, 2015, by Toby Fox, where you can decide between killing or forgiving, being aggressive or merciful. This radically changes the “attack” approach, sometimes involving dialogue with the creature, which may be injured, and understanding it. This understanding enables an ethics of care, empathy, and the other’s resilience (**Figure 4**). *Undertale* makes us think about the existentialism of our consequences, even in a game that presents itself as absurd. Also, from a utilitarian perspective, if our sum of actions affects the greatest number of characters in the game, how would that affect the game’s ending? Moreover, the ethics of virtues such as forgiveness, especially from Martha Nussbaum, who considers that the act of forgiveness contributes to emotional healing and the restoration of damaged relationships. Even from Kant, by valuing human dignity, and considering if this is a duty.

Activity proposal: **EXEMPLIFYING FORGIVENESS**. *Students write examples of something unforgivable and something easy to forgive, justifying their criteria. Then, in groups, they discuss questions such as: What conditions are necessary to forgive or be forgiven? Is forgiveness useful? When is it inappropriate to forgive? Is it a moral duty or a personal choice? Are there unforgivable actions?*



Figure 4. *Undertale* (Source: Toby Fox)

One of the most powerful dilemmas is Philippa Foot's trolley problem from 1967. This hypothetical dilemma involves making decisions about an out-of-control trolley and which people you will save: a child or an elderly man? A child or a group of elders? An elderly person or a heavy man? And so on. Current artificial intelligences are trained morally with these types of utilitarian decisions. Imagine an autonomous Tesla car, what would it do? MIT is investigating this same issue, using players' judgment patterns. This ethical research is embodied in the game *A Moral Machine*, 2016, by Iyad Rahwan (**Figure 5**). Can our human decisions be applied to human beings? Can we develop artificial emotions in machines? Every decision requires us to think about it and empathize. Similarly, but in a more sophisticated game format, we have *Trolley Problem, INC*, 2022, by Read Graves, where we face provocative dilemmas (**Figure 6**). These decisions encompass various ethical frameworks such as the ethics of care – Carol Gilligan or Nel Noddings –, bioethics in health – Hans Jonas or Arthur Caplan –, feminist ethics – Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler –, environmental ethics – Aldo Leopold and Arne Naess –, or discourse ethics – Jürgen Habermas or John Rawls – among others.

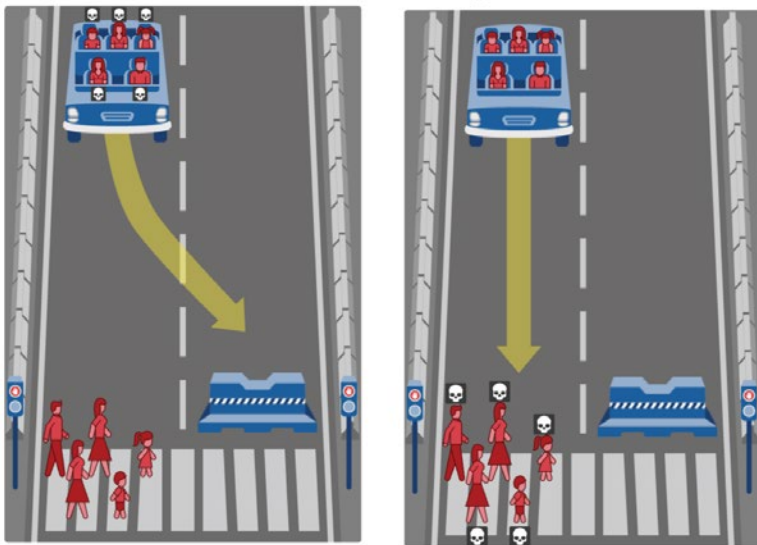


Figure 5. *A Moral Machine* (Source: Iyad Rahwan)

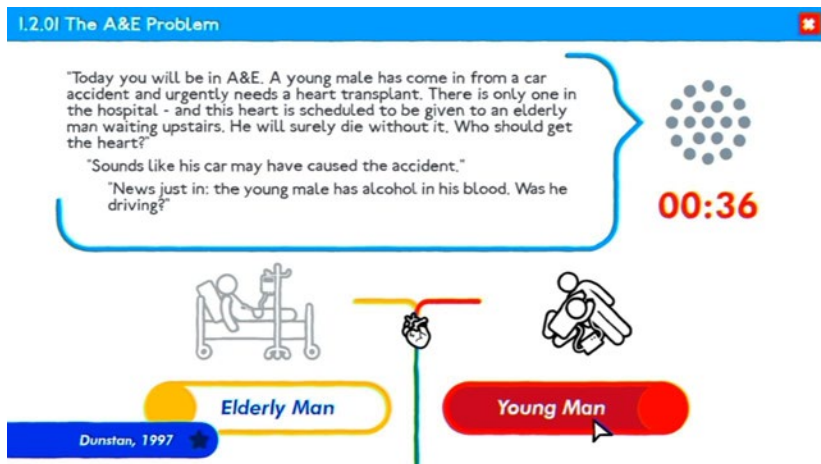


Figure 6: *Trolley Problem, INC* (Source: Read Graves)

These dilemmas are heavily influenced by the will to kill, die, or save. According to Heidegger, death is imminent, something that compels us to seek our authentic selves and ask existential questions. In these games, what can be defined as the “other-death” is presented, an instrumental death that turns us into spectators of finitude. In the satirical video game *Your Free BitBuddy*, 2017, by Daniel Mullins, we encounter a virtual pet constantly seeking attention and validation, in a simplified “Tamagotchi” style. The author aims to make a significant parody of free mobile games that seek monetization through aggressive and addictive manipulation tactics. The player acts as the caretaker of this gloomy and saddened creature, which leads to a terrible dilemma. When the cursor hovers over the application’s close window, the creature cries out and warns: “please don’t go, don’t turn me off, if you turn me off I will die forever.” And indeed, if we close the program, our pet dies, and upon reopening, only its skeleton remains, a bag of bones. It never restarts, and it can never be undone or reopened. It remains dead forever (**Figure 7**). This permanent virtual death makes us measure the consequences. On one hand, how long can we persevere and maintain the life of the melancholic creature that seduces us into never leaving? And what is our reaction upon seeing its bones and accepting that its death was our doing? Was it avoidable or not?

Activity Proposal: **THE LIVING AND THE DEAD**. After the game, students debate what is living and what is dead, and whether BitBuddy is alive or dead. They begin a philosophical dialogue with questions such as: How long does being alive last? How do we know something is alive? Is death a change? What is the meaning of death?



Figure 7. *Your Free BitBuddy* (Source: Daniel Mullins)

Deciding in front of BitBuddy leads us to notions such as player freedom, free will, and decision-making. A similar situation occurs in the famous *The Stanley Parable*, 2013, by Davey Wreden and William Pugh, where an omnipresent voice gives us predestined orders on what we need to do to follow the narrative, although we can disobey it, creating contradictions for the narrator, or the divine voice of God, and generating new narrative routes (**Figure 8**). So, how does it affect the game when the player goes against the narration? It creates new possibilities, even if the narrator gets upset and pressures us to return to “the correct path.” But what is the correct path? What is the nature of our decisions? What are we when we disobey? For existentialists like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus, etc., freedom is respectively the will to power, a mortal sickness, what causes us anguish, condemns us without choice to choose, or a rebellion against the absurd. What does this do to us? What is our concept and what makes us feel?



Figure 8. *The Stanley Parable* (Source: Davey Wreden & William Pugh)

Activity Proposal: **FREE WILL OR DETERMINISM.** After a game session, each student chooses whether it was free will or determinism, with arguments. Then they discuss in pairs and groups to reach a consensus. They share their opinions in the philosophical discussion.

A game that combines decision-making with the ethics of media is ***The Republia Times***, 2023, by Lucas Pope. In it, Pope places us in the role of an editor of a newspaper in a heavily authoritarian and censoring country. The difficulty lies in maintaining loyalty to the regime while informing and protecting citizens' rights. Is journalistic ethics possible in today's screen-based society? (**Figure 9**). If we go too far, the party will cancel us, and if we are not sensationalist enough, we will lose our readers. This prompts us to question the responsibility and risks of the media in an oppressive context.

Activity Proposal: **THE REPUBLIA, IN TODAY'S CONTEXT.** After playing, students answer YES or NO: Does the problem of Republia occur today? They must justify their answer. Then, they exchange and evaluate their peers' responses as (A) acceptable, (B) acceptable but incomplete, or (C) unacceptable.

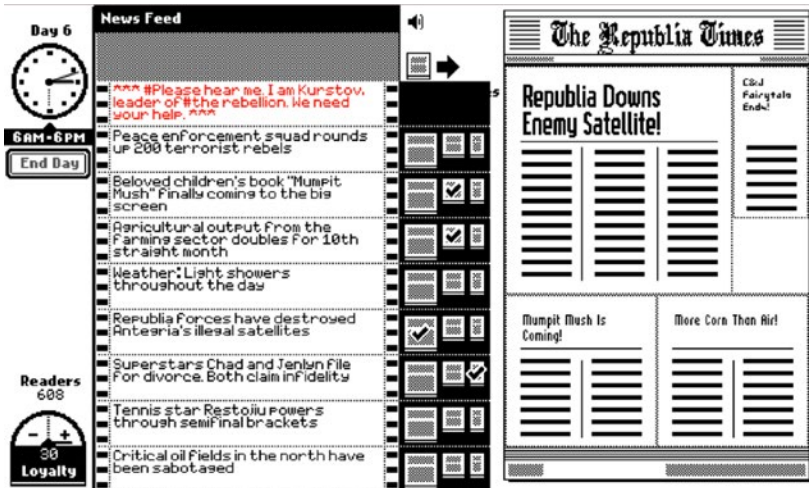


Figure 9. *The Republica Times* (Source: Lucas Pope)

In the same style is *We Become What We Behold*, 2017, by Nicky Case, which begins with the ominous quote by John Culkin attributed to Marshall McLuhan: *We become what we behold. We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us*. The game puts us in the role of a photographer, who decides where to put his eye on and what to photograph. Each photo is broadcasted on a central TV which has a huge impact and psychological influence on society. Here, authors like Guy Debord, whose concept of the society of the spectacle alienates us, Baudrillard, who critiqued the televised reality, and McLuhan, from whom we must consider how the medium itself, whether TV or video games, changes culture and thought. What is broadcasted is not innocent; it affects our perception and behavior (Figure 10). Seemingly innocent, we can direct society to wear the same fashionable clothes, create fake news, incite conflict between people with different colors, or simply drive citizens to madness through hate speech, leading to grotesque and bloody outcomes. This game does not force you to be violent, but the player, in their ultimate responsibility, can cause a monstrous ending.

Activity Proposal: **QUESTION RANKING**. Students generate reflective questions during the game and classify them according to a chosen criterion. Then, they share their best question, vote on it, and discuss it.

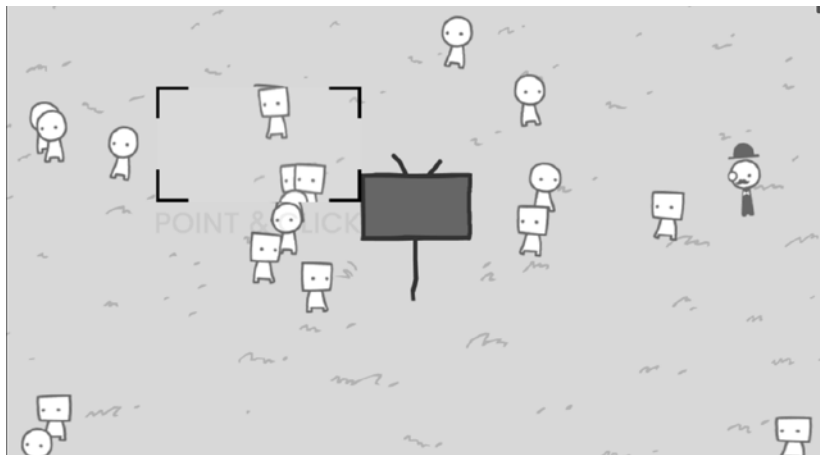


Figure 10. *We become what we behold* (Source: Nicky Case)

Resilient ethics become evident in ***Getting Over It***, 2017, by Bennett Foddy, a moral philosopher focused on drug addiction issues. This game is considered a philosophical platformer centered on the theme of failure. In this painful, complicated, and uncomfortable game, players must climb and ascend a mountain, but the difficulty level is high, leading to frustration, anxiety, and the urge to give up. The game requires calmness, taking a breath, serenity, and patience – all in opposition to the immediacy of today, which is full of easy rewards. The most common experience in this game is falling, failing, and practicing persistence through virtue. Can a video game train us in philosophical virtue and overcoming pain? (**Figure 11**). Without a doubt, this is a game for Stoic philosophers, whose ethics involve resisting pain, overcoming obstacles, dedicating time, and focusing on what is within our control.

*Activity Proposal: **CONCEPTUALIZATION.** Students summarize their experience into a concept that captures its essence. In a philosophical dialogue, these concepts are discussed and validated by asking who agrees or disagrees. Each concept is voted on for its acceptance, establishing connections between the concepts.*

A very harsh and controversial video game is ***Depression Quest***, 2015, by Zoë Quinn, Patrick Lindsey and Isaac Schankler, which focuses on men-

tal health. In short, it is a simulator of the everyday life of a person with depression. With echoes of the old *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War*, by Olia Lilianna, 1996, this interactive visual novel requires players to make decisions, many of which are blocked by the protagonist's depressive state (**Figure 12**). This respectful game helps to raise awareness about this disorder, understanding it as resilient, and providing an empathetic pedagogy.



Figure 11. *Getting Over it* (Source: Bennett Foddy)

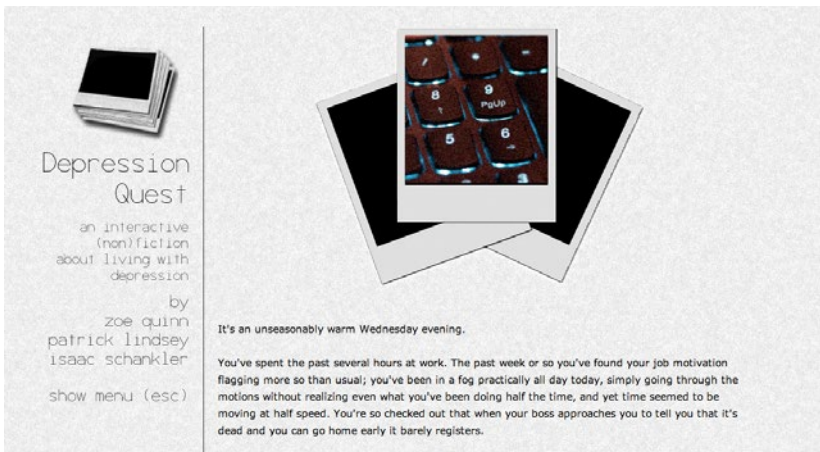


Figure 12. *Depression Quest* (Source: Zoë Quinn)

Activity Proposal: **HYPOTHESES AND SOLUTIONS**. After playing, students write three hypotheses about the future development of the narrative. In pairs or groups, they discuss the problems of each hypothesis. Once the problem is identified, they develop possible solutions.

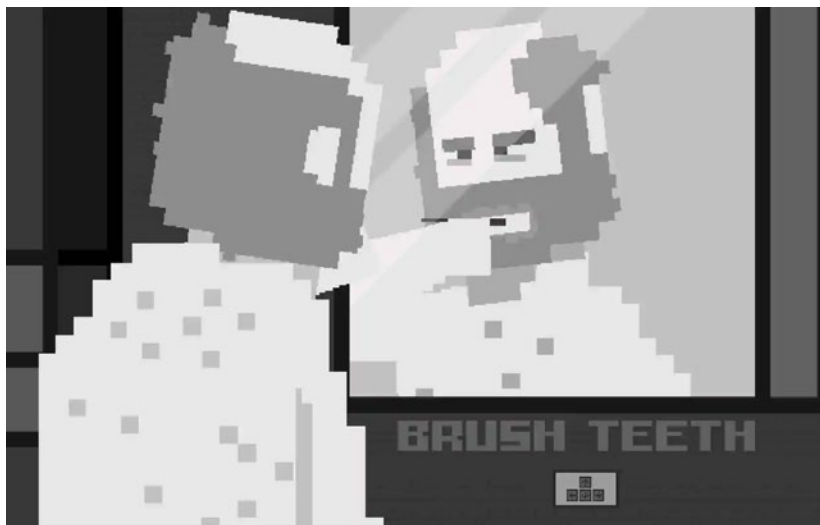


Figure 13. *Cart Life* (Source: Richard Hofmeier)

Everyday life is the great challenge, as experienced by the three protagonists of the emotional game *Cart Life*, 2011, by Richard Hofmeier. The three characters have small stalls or businesses on the same street, living almost marginal lives, eroded by harsh capitalism and wounded in a solitary context typical of postmodern cities. The game can be summarized in one word: poverty. It is not fun, and it is even exhausting. Paying bills is not fun. Waiting for customers is not fun. Missing the bus because we do not know the schedule and having to walk home, even though we do not want to stop for anyone because we are late to sleep, is not fun. It is based on routines and habits that we cannot speed up or skip; they simply happen. We also cannot pause the game: just as in our own lives, time does not stop. It is a slow and contemplative game. In all the stories, the same feeling repeats: that life is tremendously hard and hostile (**Figure 13**). All the characters exhibit a side of the meaning of life, existential questions, and identity. Melanie faces a

separation that affects her young daughter while she must put on a good face at her coffee stand. Andrus is a lonely immigrant who lives with his cat and sells newspapers to try to pay the rent. Vinny is a cook who has been fired and has set up a hot dog cart. Far from the fun of video games, we are dealing with a truly admirable and moving work of art, a game capable of creating a simulation of everyday life, economic misery, and the daily struggle of common and insignificant people. Anonymous. Like us.

Activity Proposal: **PROBLEMS AND ARGUMENTS**. After playing, students write the three main problems they have perceived in the game, or the biggest one. Each problem should have a coherent argument. Then, in the philosophical dialogue, they share the problems and vote to determine the most significant one. Finally, they discuss why this problem is considered the most important.

Finally, we want to address the case of *That Dragon, Cancer*, 2015, by Ryan and Amy Green. This is probably the saddest and most philosophical video game ever made. With a poetic and intimate style, the narrative places us in the shoes of the Green family. Through a wheel, we see various moments of what happened to Joel, their one-year-old son. From the diagnosis of brain cancer to the painful treatments and finally his death. This is a game of deep love. It is very difficult not to cry when playing it: video games are objects that can create profound sensations. We immerse ourselves in a painful grief, in a spiritual and existential process alongside a devastated family. In a simple and respectful manner, it offers us questions about hope, faith, the meaning of life, and family love (**Figure 14**). The most moving aspect of the game is that it is based on real events. When Joel died, his parents took all the memories, audios, and videos of their son and designed the game. This game is the memory of a child who left, but his parents will always be able to hug him when we play it. In an attempt at immortality and memory, a simulation of goodbye. Perhaps the saddest video game in the world is the most human. This entire investigation is owed to this game, for it was through Joel that we began to see and feel video games as works of art, poems, or simply as philosophy.



Figure 14. *That Dragon, Cancer* (Source: Ryan & Amy Green)

Activity Proposal: **THE BEST MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE.** *Students choose a crucial moment in their lives and share it in writing. In pairs, they take turns being the tutor, asking questions to understand the cause and essence of the moment, and the person inquired, describing the memory. Then they switch roles and finally share with the group what they have learned and their assessment of the activity* (Morales Giménez, 2022).

Conclusion: More Gamersophy for Further Research

The methodological approach of “Gamersophy” facilitates an educational use of video games and enables the development of critical, ethical, and resilient skills necessary for the emerging screen and audiovisual society. Instead of viewing video games as censored objects of violence, we consider them as philosophical objects of reflection, to engage in dialogue about questions concerning the meaning of life, death, poverty, fears, and overcoming adversities. In light of this, we have compiled a list of video games for further investigation, covering various dimensions such as epistemology, metaphysics, and logic. Here, we have focused on resilient ethics, but we also include other games for classroom use. We present a list of therapeutic serious games and video games, distinguishing between: with or without

the presence of violence (**Table 3**). Understanding simulated interaction and image-decision leads us towards the idea of a community of reflective gamers, the *philosophical gamer*, whose maieutic questioning and perspective on screens will be necessary in these times of disconnection and liquid love.

MORE RELEVANT THERAPEUTIC VIDEO GAMES OR SERIOUS GAMES	
SCHOOL OF EMPATHY , 2023, by Instituto tecnológico de Castilla y León. Topic: empathy skills and emotional awareness.	MINDLIGHT , 2024, by GEMH Lab. Topic: overcoming anxiety, fear of the dark and relaxation technique (played with a headset).
SPARX , 2013, by Maxis & Will Wright. Topic: overcoming depression and negative thoughts with cognitive behavioral therapy.	SUPERBETTER , 2014, by Jane McGonigal. Topic: achieving goals and psycho-emotional stability https://superbetter.com/
	RESILIENCE , to be confirmed, by Samskara. Topic: rebuilding a society in the aftermath of a disaster.

Table 3. List of therapeutic serious games and video games

MORE SHORT APPLICATION VIDEO GAMES (SAVG) FOR PHILOSOPHIZING	
<i>THE TALOS PRINCIPLE</i> , 2014, by Croteam. Topic: puzzles and science fiction philosophy. [Steam]	<i>DOORS</i> , 2017, by Stefano Gualeni. Topic: epistemological game. Reality, the virtual and the (meta) representation. https://doors.gua-le-ni.com/
<i>12 MINUTES</i> , 2021, by Luis Antonio. Topic: eternal return, decision and avoiding crime. [Steam]	<i>THIS WAR OF MINE</i> , 2014, by 11 Bit Studios Topic: war and survival simulator. [Steam]
<i>SUZERAIN</i> , 2020, by Torpor Games. Topic: president simulator. [Steam]	<i>SYMPLOKE: LEGEND OF GUSTAVO BUENO (CHAPTER 1)</i> , 2003, by Videojuegos Fermin. Topic: politics and history of philosophy. [Steam – Free Download]
<i>EVERYTHING</i> , 2017, by David O'Reilly. Topic: God simulator. To be the cosmos and nature. [Steam]	<i>THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE</i> , 2017, by Everything Unlimited Ltd. Topic: video game creation simulator. [Steam]
<i>REIGNS</i> , 2016, by Nerial and Devolver Digital. Topic: good and evil, power and governing a kingdom. [Steam]	<i>BABA IS YOU</i> , 2019, by Hempuli Oy. Topic: language and textual logic. [Steam]
<i>LAPSE: A FORGOTTEN FUTURE</i> , 2022, by Cornago Stefano. Topic: good and evil, power and governing a post-apocalyptic government. [Android]	<i>HOWLING DOGS</i> , 2012, by Porpetine. Topic: interactive and poetic text. Thinking about a person's confinement and trauma. https://xrafstar.monster/games/twine/howlingdogs/
<i>ADVENTURE CAPITALIST</i> , 2015, by Hyper Hippo Games. Topic: simulator of western neoliberal capitalism. [Steam]	<i>SISYPHUS REBORN</i> , 2013, by Montgomery. Topic: questions about death and existentialism. https://store.steampowered.com/app/517910/Sisyphus_Reborn/

Table 3 (cont'd). List of therapeutic serious games and video games

MORE SHORT APPLICATION VIDEO GAMES (SAVG) FOR PHILOSOPHIZING (CONT'D)	
ADVENTURE COMMUNIST , 2016, by Hyper Hippo Games. Topic: soviet communism simulator. [Steam]	THE GAME OF SISYPHUS , 2024, by Cream. Topic: sense of goals, existentialism, punishment and Albert Camus's absurdism.
AGORA GOGO , to be confirmed, by Agora Gogo. Topic: socratic method simulator [Steam]	DEMIURGE , 2018, by Alverspi and Hopscotch Jam. Topic: the myth of the cave. About soul and religion. https://unrealdreams.itch.io/demiurge
SOCRATES JONES: PRO PHILO-SOPHER , 2023, by Connor Fallon and Ben Lapid. Topic: after death, a lawyer must argue with Socrates, Kant, or Nietzsche. [Steam]	FAR FROM NOISE , 2017, by George Batchelor. Topic: branching narrative about beliefs, meaning in life, metaphysics and death.
BEFORE YOUR EYES , 2021, by GoodbyeWorld Games and Skybound Games. Topic: reflection on emotions and time (every time you blink, the game progresses).	THOUGHT EXPERIMENT SIMULATOR , 2024, by HoHo Game Studio. Topic: Mini-games on the Tramway Dilemma, Ship of Theseus, Brain in a Bucket, Infinite Monkeys Theorem, Sisyphus, Prisoner's Dilemma, Schrödinger's Cat, etc.

PHILOSOPHICAL SAVG WITH VIOLENT CONTENT	
SLAY THE PRINCESS , 2023, by Black Tabby Games. Topic: existentialism, horror, decision-making, obedience, death and salvation. [Steam]	FALLOUT SHELTER ONLINE , 2020, by Gaea Mobile. Topic: nuclear decision-making, society and end of the world.
	LITTLE INFERNO , 2012, by Tomorrow Corporation. Topic: product consumerism, alienation, nihilism and existential emptiness.

Table 3 (cont'd). *List of therapeutic serious games and video games*

LONG APPLICATION VIDEO GAMES (LAVG) WITH PHILOSOPHICAL CONTENT	
FIREWATCH , 2015, by Campo Santo. Topic: environmental simulator. [Steam]	JOURNEY , 2020, by Annapurna Interactive. Topic: life, finitude and journey. [Steam]
TO THE MOON , 2011, by Freebird Games. Topic: fulfilling the last wishes of a dying person by modifying their memories. [Steam]	BRAID , 2008, by Jonathan Blow. Topic: time, repentance, forgiveness and appearance. [Steam]
DEAR ESTHER , 2017, by The Chinese Room and Robert Briscoe. Topic: narrative in a letter, loneliness, guilt, heartbreak. [Steam]	HER STORY , 2016, Sam Barlow. Topic: interactive movie. Interpret facts as a detective by analyzing confession videos. [Steam]
WHAT REMAINS OF EDITH FINCH , 2017, by Annapurna Interactive. Topic: family, memory, death and emotions. [Steam]	GONE HOME , 2013, by Fullbright. Topic: interactive adventure, romance and investigation. [Steam]
LIFE IS STRANGE , 2015, by Square Enix Topic: friendship, identity and consequences. [Steam]	BURY ME, MY LOVE , 2019, by The Pixel Hunt. Topic: immigration. Story of a Syrian couple who wants to come to Europe.
PAPO AND I , 2013, by Minority Media. Topic: emotional management in the face of an abusive father symbolized as a monster. [Steam]	

Table 3 (cont'd). List of therapeutic serious games and video games

PHILOSOPHICAL LAVG WITH VIOLENT CONTENT	
DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN , 2018, Quantic Dream. Topic: real, apparent, consciousness and replicants. [Steam]	INSIDE , 2016, by Playdead. Topic: freedom, control and terror in a children's concentration camp. [Steam – Free Demo]
NIER:AUTOMATA , 2017, by Square Enix. Topic: long action-game with existentialist topics on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Beauvoir. [Steam]	THE LONG DARK , 2017, by Hinterland Studio Inc. Topic: non-fictional survival. [Steam]
BIOSHOCK , 2007, by Irrational Games. Topic: Ian Rand's utopia of romantic capitalism.	PERSONA 5 , 2019, by Atlus, Sega. Topic: subjectivity, ethics and politics.

Table 3 (cont'd). *List of therapeutic serious games and video games*

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The present e-book is a product of *PROPS – Interactive Narratives Propose Pluralistic Discourse (2023-2024)*, a project that acted on the prevention and education for the media, addressing online hate speech, specifically in the context of online video games. The project focused on developing a new approach to online hate speech through the creation of interactive counter-narratives, that can motivate and engage educators, trainers, children, and young people to take an active role in containing this phenomenon.

PROPS (slang for proper respect [due respect]) began with a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the topics of (online) hate speech, video games and interactive narratives as pedagogical tools. Following this, surveys and focus groups were conducted with students aged 10-18, in order to gather pertinent firsthand insights and experiences. The collected data from these activities was instrumental for creating six interactive narratives, designed as educational resources aimed at fostering reflection and discussion about the issue of online hate speech and its prevention in pedagogical settings.

The project was developed by the Research Center for Arts and Communication (CIAC, University of Algarve) in partnership with Santarém Polytechnic University, University of Beira Interior and Universidade Aberta (UAb). The essays included in this collection present some of the key findings from the project, shedding light on the relevant insights that were gained and on the interactive educational tools that were developed to address and mitigate online hate speech among young people.