Article

Digital Difference: Theorizing Frameworks of Bodies, Representation and Stereotypes in Digital Games

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Abstract

This article presents a theoretical framework for making sense of gaming, ethnicity and race through the conceptual lens of critical approaches to the body, representation and the relationship between bodies and technologies of gameplay. Taking the view that gaming is a core activity of contemporary digital sociality that always involves bodies, whether represented on-screen or as game-players who are neither disembodied nor radically separated from those on-screen representations, this article addresses the fact that, in everyday social life, stereotypes of representations of bodies of difference circulate in embedded ways in all communicative activities including digital gaming. However, if re-thinking the relationship of the body and its on-screen representations through assemblages of bodies–technologies beyond the more rudimentary real/virtual distinctions of older conceptualizations of media use, it is possible to open new critical frameworks for addressing race and ethnicity discrimination in the contemporary *activity* and *performativity* of gameplay. This article begins with a brief introduction to critical approaches to the body, followed by a discussion of on-screen representation and bodily stereotyping, finishing with an analysis of the relationship between bodies, gaming *avatars* and mutually constitutive body–technology relationships.

Keywords

Digital gaming, race, ethnicity, bodies, gaming technology

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Introduction

Race, ethnicity, multicultural difference and the visually based demarcation of bodies in gaming are broadly represented in contemporary digital media culture at the point of convergence of bodies and stereotypes in two ways: (a) through forms of representation that both constrain and enable the capacity for new, ethical and welcoming representations that overcome both the invisibility and the dominance of whiteness and (b) engagement between the body as a corporeal entity and the body produced, chosen or otherwise performing on-screen depiction, whether as a profile image, an *avatar* or a generic marketing image designed to foster identification. The relationality between bodies and representations requires new theorization in order to move beyond linear concepts of the media process in which racial and ethnic difference is seen either to be grounded in a 'real' and represented on-screen as 'virtual' or, conversely, in which difference is seen to be established discursively and articulated in media and digital spheres and then come to be unjustly enacted in embodied sociality. In an interactive, participatory and co-creative digital media environment, it is in the complex relationship between representation and corporeality in which both are actively performative that we find both the unethical and unjust forms of regimentation and exclusion and, on the other hand, the opportunities and engagements which productively activate new, potentially ethical relationalities.

Such a theorization can be understood best in the example of digital games which, if approached through new theorizations of a participatory culture in which bodies and articulations operate together (Cover, 2004) or new theorizations of interactivity that overcome linear models of communication and understand the implication of user co-creativity in the narrative and discourse of gaming and other media use (Cover, 2006). When considering the co-creative engagement of new, participatory media and gaming culture, the complex and sometimes-problematic relationship between representation and the body presents a new set of potential articulations by which we come to a more ethical, engaged and nuanced understanding of the representation of race, ethnicity, racialization of bodies and social justice through equality.

This article presents a theoretical framework for making sense of gaming, ethnicity and race through the conceptual lens of critical approaches to the body, representation and the relationship between bodies and technologies of gameplay. Rather than presenting an analysis of specific instances of racialized games, this article takes the view that gaming is a core activity of contemporary digital sociality that always involves bodies, whether represented on-screen or as game-players who are neither disembodied nor radically separated from those on-screen representations. This opens the fact that, in everyday social life, stereotypes of representations of bodies of difference circulate with a force that is difficult to eradicate, and that the activities of digital gaming involve stereotyped representations as well. However, it re-thinking the relationship of the body and its on-screen representations through assemblages of bodies–technologies beyond the more rudimentary real/virtual distinctions of older conceptualizations of media use, it is possible to open new critical frameworks for addressing race and ethnicity

discrimination in the contemporary *activity* and *performativity* of gameplay. This article will begin with a brief introduction to critical approaches to the body, followed by a discussion of on-screen representation and bodily stereotyping, finishing with an analysis of the relationship between bodies, gaming avatars and mutually constitutive body–technology relationships.

Defining the Body: Race, Ethnicity and Culture

The way the body is understood in media theory, cultural studies, social psychology and the social sciences changed during the 1990s, differing from the common public and pedestrian views of the body as a machine controlled by the mind of the subject. What has been referred to as the 'corporeal turn' has informed substantial scholarship since the mid-1990s by investigating how Western philosophy and culture had been premised on a profound separation or disregard of the role of the body in lived experience and thought (Grosz, 1994, p. 5). There is substantial value, I argue, in applying a corporeal lens to the question of contemporary digital gaming, race and ethnicity given, first, the centrality of representations of bodies to contemporary on-screen visuality as dominant in gaming activity and participatory narrative creation and, second, the fact that game play in not a disembodied activity but one which wholly involves an ever-closeness of the body to the activity of play.

Following the important work on corporeality of Elizabeth Grosz (1994), we can understand the body to be constituted and produced within frameworks of social, cultural and psychic representation, discourse and language (pp. x–xi) which, for us, includes mediated and digitally communicated discourses of embodiment and corporeal normativity. For Grosz, 'bodies must take the social order as their productive nucleus. Part of their own "nature" is an organic or ontological "incompleteness" or lack of finality, an amenability to social completion, social ordering and organization' (p. xi). Grosz (1995) defines the body as a material, animate organization of

> flesh, organs, nerves and skeletal structure, which are given a unity, cohesiveness, and form through the psychical and social inscription of the body's surface. This body is so to speak, organically, biologically "incomplete"; it is indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities that requires social triggering, ordering, and long-term "administration." (Grosz, 1995, p. 104)

Put in the context of subjectivity, it might be then be argued that the practice of gaming, media use, interpretation, representation and digital communication becomes the site which simultaneously (a) provides the codes and conventions by which a body will be inscribed to make bodies both intelligible and recognizable and thus able to participate socially as racial, ethnic and culturally determinate bodies (Butler, 1993, pp. 4–5) and (b) through the practices of interactive and participatory engagement are, as Grosz puts it, 'administered' by being channelled, rehearsed, performed and made sensible over time as racially 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1977).

Rather than the pretence of the body-less subject floating in the digital ether, or the idea of the subject who can express an on-screen identity differently from that which is coded and constituted in a 'real body', it remains that digital gaming is very much about the body. This includes, and is not limited to, representations of the self in gaming as a visual presentation, the drawing-together of bodies and digital interactivities through new relationalities that focus on the body such as wearable technologies, citations of bodily practices and norms from online representation in the materialization of the body. The potentialities for critique of the culturally constituted ways in which the body is conceived, framed, interpreted, racialized and articulated in everyday life is a central, ongoing benefit of earlier perspectives on the relationship between bodies and perceptions of digital gameplay.

On-screen Representation, *Avatars* and Stereotypes

One highly important aspect of gaming narratives is that these narratives are not, by design, the site for critique of normativization of bodies through active racialization, but are designed specifically to communicate information quickly and efficiently. While there are certainly many examples of games which are produced within a context of critical engagement with—and desire to move beyond—normative, exclusive or discriminatory representations, there is a broad tendency for game narratives to rely on stereotypes which communicate information and recognition to players quickly, whether of *avatars* or other characters in the play setting of the game's on-screen visual world. Stereotypes work through repetition in language, fixing an identity category and a set of attributes, behaviours or beliefs (Rosello, 1998). This is typically centred on the image and representation of particular categorizations of body, which might include racialized bodies, gendered bodies, the bodies of a minority sexual orientation or the bodies of persons with a disability. The image or idea of that particular body is fixed, highly reductively, to particular notions which, here, might be to suggest that particular racialized groupings behave in particularly violent or ignorant ways, or that women are unlikely to catch a ball, or that all gay men are fit and toned or that persons with disabilities hold bitter, negative attitudes. Stereotypes work, always, to bind the figure of the human by producing particular sets of borders that articulate some subjects as more patently human than others, and thereby more worthy—in ethical terms—of having a liveable life.

In digital gaming, the stereotype becomes an even more important form of communication, due to the requirement to represent recognizable identities, bodies, avatars, scenes and characteristics with speed and without lengthy or detailed framing that would otherwise permit complex interpretation (as in, e.g., a novel). Stereotypes are more ubiquitous within abundant information systems and cultural practices that involve fast-paced activities of visual recognition for the very simple reason that they communicate information, no matter how wrongfully, in very quick 'bytes'. By working with the existing cultural knowledge and falsities that reduce an identity category to a particular set of attributes and behaviours, they

circulate through images of bodies in which readers and users actively recognize that body as doing particular things or behaving in particular ways. In that sense, when one represents the figure of a non-white, non-Anglo body through a particular image of violence or crime or a career pathway, the image is read through the stereotype as holding a core element of 'truth'. This is not necessarily the fault of the game player—stereotypes simplify communication and that is necessary when communication is so rich and one must make quick interpretations of information about the bodies one sees represented on a screen. The ubiquity of digital gaming use today needs to account for the fact that not all users will have had access to radical discourses informing how they represent themselves and others, and that there is a greater capacity for popular games therefore to circulate, rather than combat, negative stereotypes of racialized, gendered and sexualized bodies (Nakamura, 2008, p. 30). This is not, of course, to suggest that such ignorance is anything but socially cultivated, nor to argue that the subversive potential of digital gaming is altogether lost—only that it is a site for the circulation of stereotypes just as much, if not more so, as traditional media forms.

But what is the effect of gaming stereotypes on contemporary subjectivity? If we consider the shift in digital gaming representation from one which is grounded in text to that which, today, makes available discursive information through moving audio-visual imagery, then we need to understand the linkage between identity and attribute in stereotypes as one which is fully a representation of a relationship between the visual representation of bodies and what those bodies do. By 'doing', I mean the movements, spatial relations and gestures of the body. I do not mean that a body has been previously constituted and then goes on to play a game (a bodily doer behind its gaming deeds), but that in its movements the body is constituted as a specific type of body. At the same time, a dynamic operates through the cultural force of stereotyping to suggest that a particular image-body will make movements in particular ways. This is in line with the 'knowledge' element of the stereotype, whereby the stereotype employs a visual image and the cultural connotative 'knowledge' provides it with attributes. The assignation of identities to the bodies of others, as Alphonso Lingis suggests, has the power to pain or gratify subjects (Lingis, 1994, p. ix). I suggest that these sorts of identities to which Lingis refers are what can be labelled stereotypes in terms of their role as the culturally intelligible—if reductive—codes of particular subjectivities. This is particularly so in the ways in which a stereotype operates to make that link between the imaged-body and the movement (capacities, skills and inclinations) of the body. Such stereotyping may pain or gratify, which although seemingly reductive, does imply that stereotypes may be viewed retrospectively by a subject as either positive or negative. The connection between image and body movement is likewise seen in the work of Grosz (1994, p.69) who suggests that the 'body image includes both the representation of the movements necessary to attain a specific goal and all the various intermediary actions required to move the body from its present position to this goal'.

I have been suggesting here that one element of the representation of corporeality in on-screen image and moving visuals circulates stereotypes that, then, are cited and taken on-board by subjects unwittingly as ways in which to make

performativity of an identity category intelligible and recognizable to oneself and to others (Cover, 2016, pp. 113–114). However, that is not to suggest that diversity is not present nor to say that diversity is not a founding notion of the ways in which information, entertainment, discourse, language and interpretation are practised in the use of digital communication and online media. Indeed, with the right kind of access to critical knowledge—a culturally aware 'gaming literacy' perhaps—a critical engagement with material and textuality encountered online and knowledge that allow for broad interpretations, there is a great deal of diverse representation of bodies available in digital games, and it is sometimes difficult to suggest that any particular racial, sexed, ability, class, national, religious or sexual orientation category is un-represented. It does remain, however, that one needs to be very careful with claims to diversity and not to simply say that stereotypical representations online do not matter simply because we can point to diversity. As Sara Ahmed (2011) has pointed out, diversity claims are often a way of protecting the dominant (i.e., identities of whiteness, masculinity, middle-classed and western nationals) by shutting down critical arguments, discussions and accusations of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination. Pointing with a critical eye to gaming discrimination or stereotyped characterizations is necessary as a way of undoing the false notion that contemporary digital media and entertainment is somehow free from discrimination or inequitable representation on the basis of diverse bodies.

Digital *Avatars* and Gaming Bodies

The idea of immersion has regularly been used in connection with digital gaming experiences in which it is often argued that the gamer's identity extends into and beyond the screen into a conceptualization of 'cyberspace', whereby the user either leaves the body behind while engaging in the imaginative, virtual world or extends the body to into an amalgamation of corporeal self (real) and gaming *avatar* (virtual). This, again, works with the out-dated notion of a real/virtual or real/digital divide. In some cases, this notion of immersion is one characterized by becoming (other), by becoming that which the user has created as an articulation on-screen. For example, Miroslaw Filiciak (2003, p. 91) makes the following point in relation to gaming, bodies and identity:

> The process of secondary identification taking place in cinema theaters depends paradoxically on distance while in the case of games we encounter something more than just intimacy. Identification is replaced by introjection—the subject is projected inward into an 'other'. We do not need a complete imitation to confuse the 'other' with the 'self'. The subject (player) and the 'other' (the onscreen avatar) do not stand at the opposite sides of the mirror anymore—they become one. While using an electronic medium in which subject and object, and what is real and imagined, are not clearly separated, the player loses his identity, projecting himself inward becoming the 'other,' and identifies with the character in the game. During the game, the player's identity ends in disintegration, and the merger of user's and character's consciousness ensues.

This is a useful account of gameplay that describes some of the ways in which the player's identity is not necessarily to be understood as fixed while only ever performing an interactive non-real playful theatrics; rather identity is conditioned by performances that include the performance of on-screen play. However, problematic here is the persistence of the real/virtual distinction, presented through a corporeal real (the subject) and an avatar (object) that, in the act of playing are seen to unify and fuse. An alternative approach might be to view the subject/object, real/virtual distinctions here as meaningless in the first place—that is, that there is no pre-existing reality in which there is a corporeal subject separated from his or her online presence that comes to merge through being introjected into one's own online representation, nor is there the possibility of a digital character having its own consciousness that merges with the consciousness of its corporeal creator/user. Such a distinction is, in today's culture of ubiquitous connectivity and digital interactivity, both outdated and unhelpful (Cover, 2016, p. x).

Of course, within certain practices online there are real, genuine separations between the corporeal real and the virtual activity, and we see that most commonly in the actions of subjects while playing digital games. While I do not argue that gamers leave behind a conscious sense of the body and, instead, only embody a character on the 'other side of the screen', there is a clear separation of intent. Filiciak (2003) makes this point in thinking about how banal and mundane activities that, for most middle-class subjects, would be avoided in everyday life or would put enormous strain on our bodies through difficult repetitive actions are, instead, points of excitement in gaming. As he (Filiciak, 2003, p. 99) puts it:

> [T]he effort put into the development of a game character do not necessarily need to be the opposite of what happens to us in everyday life. Even worse, it often happens in games that we encounter things we would not want to do every day, and yet we do them. … In reality I wouldn't like to do such a monotonous thing as carrying crates. Within online games there are even more examples of repetitive and boring actions. While playing EverQuest, I spent long hours running around the forest and looking for some creature or artifact. It would be boring in a real life, but in the context of the game it was fun.

If we take this query to the extreme levels of traditional old-school games of a generation ago too, we would note that the barrel-hopping undertaken in Donkey Kong would be something we may be physically capable of doing in a real-world, corporeal existence, but something we would never seek. Likewise, using our bodies to fight, harm or kill others in a first-person shooter, for example, is something we would never do in our corporeal existence as social subjects, but this activity forms a particular staple of gaming narratives and interactivity. In that context, a game character as an avatar of the theatrics of selfhood presented in digital activities can be, perhaps, a representation of the self-adopted for specific moments of pleasure in which the body's activities extend into the representation of otherness on-screen, but this relationship is, from the very beginning, underlain by a radical separation and difference between what we desire to do with our bodies and what we might do as the points of entertainment on-screen. Performing online is, of course, one possible experience of identity performativity, which is not

to suggest that there is a corporeal body which performs an identity in one way and—through a split personality framework—a separate performativity on-screen. Rather, this is to point to the fact that the adoption of a character on-screen and the actions it takes can be both consciously deliberate and non-voluntaristically articulations of a self, in both cases lending the sense of performative stability to the corporeal subject playing the game.

This is not to say that subjects do not form deep attachment to the interactive representations they perform in the act of gaming. Bodies can, indeed, come to feel excessive when the minute movements of a game-controller shift a representation that has been actively chosen and, in some respects, feels to be a replacement for the body. This is not to suggest that the corporeality of the subject is, at times of play, a passive body, for not only is the brain-chemistry, the cognitive processing (Grodal, 2003, p. 130), the adrenalin, the movement and the engagement always active and corporeal (perhaps just not as apparently 'extensive' as a fast-paced avatar shifting across the minute smaller space of the screen at inhuman speeds). What I am suggesting here, however, is that the two are actively linked in a way which is deeply felt, and felt indeed in a way which is corporeal. Pierre Bourdieu (1990, p. 73) argued that in the context of social practices '[t]he body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. What is "learned by the body" is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 73). In that sense, we can say that in playing a game the body comes to feel what the on-screen world insinuates imaginatively, much as the actor who remembers joy or pain in order to perform a part in a play is able to express this corporeally in a way which would convince a spectator and, importantly, convince the self-joy or pain is really felt. We might, however, reverse and twist Bourdieu's formulation and state that what is learned by the body in acting out the theatrics of a character represented on-screen comes to feel as something that one is. In trying to work away from Web 1.0 assumptions of a passive body left behind while one engages as an active on-screen character.

It is tempting therefore to argue that there is a performative self who articulates an identity and that the behaviour on-screen is merely theatrics, much like the actor on a stage who has an identity as an actor which is not necessarily subsumed by the character she plays. However, in the context of the deeply felt connection between body, self and on-screen character we do not need to fall into this alternative trap and consider gameplay to be little more than a pleasurable guise—it can have palpable implications for subject-hood by serving as a particular kind of interactive encounter with a representation one may have chosen or built and now serves as in a form that feeds back to the body invoking affect. The separation, however, comes in the knowledge that what it is which invokes affect is the context of the game's narrative. Just as it is no longer helpful to think in terms of a real/virtual distinction, it is likewise unhelpful to understand digital media as comprising a new, separate space or 'cyberspace' behind the screen as many writers on gaming, following William Gibson's (1984) coinage of the term in his cyberpunk book Neuromancer, have done so (Lahti, 2003, p. 157). What, instead, is at stake is the process of narrative in the form of the game that is at a distance from the narrative through which we articulate and move our corporeal selves in

everyday life. Naturally, both inform each other and they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are understood as having a distinctiveness—gamers are not fooled by the game, no one is hypnotized into an alternative path of thinking and the game's narrative itself no more sucks us in that did a book or television series. Indeed, all gamers play games in the full knowledge of a game's bounded separation from the everyday. The parent of ludology, Johan Huizinga (1949), made clear that all 'play' must be understood as separate from the everyday with its own boundaries of time and space: 'A closed space is marked out for it, either materially or ideally, hedged off from the everyday surroundings. Inside this space the play proceeds, inside it the rules obtain' (Huizinga, 1949, p. 19). That is, the conceptual space of the game—which I relate here as a narrative—is consciously understood as being radically different from the narrative spatiality of everyday life; in an era of digital games, it is not that the body is left alone in a space radically separate from the space of play, but that the player is aware of the narrative's difference and yet open to the affective and, subsequently, emotional formations that produce particular responses, articulated corporeally. Gaming, in that sense, may not necessarily disrupt the identity of the subject, but it informs the performativity of that self by adding experiences and perceptions that are simultaneously felt as 'real' in a real bodily sense and as separated from the narrative, cultural and social space in which that body moves and, indeed, must move as part of biological and social existence.

Beyond Representation: The Racialized Body in Gaming Assemblages

The role of the corporeal body in online engagement has been, at least until the very recent past, subject to a problematic real/digital distinction that assumes a separation of the geo-physical space in which the corporeal body moves and a digital space or 'cyberspace' in which the subject's extended representation, interactive engagement, imagination, or even wholesale identity and selfhood move, separated from the 'real world'. At the same time, this establishment of a conceptual separation between the real and the virtual narrative is upheld by articulations that see it as collapsed when in the process of digital communicative or interactive engagement such as gaming or online communication, as I have described above. The separation of 'spaces' leads to the notion of immersion, whereby a user, gameplayer or web-surfer is seen to reduce the 'importance' of the corporeal body while being cognitively immersed in the imaginative world of the game. As Lahti (2003, p. 159) has described it in thinking about the relationship between text, play and self through a concept of penetration,

> much of the development of video games has been driven by a desire for a corporeal immersion with technology, a will to envelop the player in technology and the environment of the game space. That development has coincided with and been supported by developments in perspective and the optical point-of-view structures of games, which have increasingly emphasized the axis of depth, luring the player into invading the world behind the computer screen.

Certainly it is the case that technological development has fostered and been sponsored by an idea of immersion, and this crosses not only gameplay but also other digital entertainment technologies. For example, in the marketing of the contemporary 'home theatre' suite of gaming devices (audio, video, recording, play, connectivity), we have seen over the past 15 years a move towards an immersive environment for players, from larger and larger plasma, LCD and now LED-based monitor screens that, in the increasing size, draw the viewer in as if in a persistent approach towards the screen. In audio terms, as well, we have witnessed the increasing popularity of 5.1 surround sound (often now 7.1 surround sound) which, likewise, has the game player immersed in the space of entertainment by hearing sounds as if from the centre of the visual action, rather than understanding the relationship as one which a viewer peers through a window and hears the sounds as if at the edge of that frame. In the field of non-mobile gaming, then, there is an increasingly closeness, made even more the case in certain expert gaming setups of multiple monitors which partially curve around a user, lending the illusion of immersion in the space. The development of the touch-screen on laptops and now available increasingly for large-size desktop monitors again brings the player close to the screen, whether for work, entertainment, spectatorship or play. Gaming chairs have been designed that literally *surround* a user's body, with monitors, controls all around, foot pedals and sometimes arranged in ways which 'lock in' a user much as a pilot is strapped into a military combat plane's cockpit. The virtual reality helmet is, of course, one of the points of fruition of a shift towards immersion, although the interest, popularity and research and development endeavours on VR devices have come-and-gone over the years, with a recent up-take in interest and reportage of new investment towards new development in recent years (Grubb, 2014).

A more productive way of understanding the corporeal subject's relationship with digital activities avoids conceptualizing online activity as a separate space and, instead, allows us to focus on the corporeal relationship with the technologies of digital media and communication themselves. What does this mean for the contemporary body, then? If we are to understand the body as materialized in the terms given by Butler (1993) as described above, and if bodies of players are materialized as racialized and ethnic bodies through categorizations that occur in the narrative, representation and visual depiction of game-space, then that materialization occurs in the context of the 'hidden' everydayness of contact with the technology in ways that bring us closer to those representations as assemblage. Our bodies are given intelligibility and matter as bodies by virtue of the spatial, temporal movements and boundaries that come to lend the illusion of a fixed, stable and unchanging corporeality, hiding the fact that we only have those bounds by virtue of the knowledge and practices that are at stake in how the body is perceived, used, moved and engaged with and how it engages with others. If gaming technologies that represent a kind of 'seam' between the space of corporeality and the space of the game's representations and interactive participation are part of the everyday experience of how bodies move, engage and gain intelligibility, then it is necessary to consider the racialized experience of gaming as an experience based not merely in (a) representation of race on-screen, nor in (b) statistics of

game players based on race and choice, but instead on the assemblage that operates between the two.

Grosz' conceptualization of the relationship between the body and the city provides some important ideas that are useful in helping to understand our subjectivities as assemblages of body and digital technology without having to resort to the outdated notions of the cyborg or the disembodied subject. For Grosz (1995), the city is too-often problematically seen as a reflection or projection of the body in which bodies are understood mythically to pre-date the city and be its cause for design and construction, whereby the human subject is presented as sovereign, responsible for 'all social and historical production' (p. 105). If we were to replace the notion of the city here with the idea of digital gaming (controllers, screens, narratives, avatars) as a site through which digital activities are carried out, then this view would suggest that digital technology is always knowingly produced by subjects with agency over that space and in which digital spaces are only ever the effect of a willed creation and human creativity—for example, choosing an avatar that matches one's perception of a racial or ethnic body; games that are produced with particular categorizations of racialized bodies. This is not, of course, the case, since subjects are at least in part constituted by those activities in those spaces, and in ways we cannot always know in advance. This is not to say that we are digital technologies' effects either, but that the relationship is more than simply one-way, whatever the direction.

In the case of bodies and cities, Grosz (1995, p. 108) critical contribution was to shift the understanding of the relationship between the two as neither causal nor representational and, instead as assemblages (though not necessarily in a state of permanency):

> [B]odies and cities are not causally linked. Every cause must be logically distinct form its effect. The body, however, is not distinct from the city for they are mutually defining. Like the representation model, there may be an isomorphism between the body and the city. But it is not a mirroring of nature in artifice; rather, there is a two-way linkage that could be defined as an interface… This model is practical, based on the productivity of bodies and cities in defining and establishing each other… their interrelations involve a fundamentally disunified series of systems, a series of disparate flows, energies, events, or entities, bringing together or drawing apart their more or less temporary alignments.

If we again are to replace the notion of city in this long quotation with the terms related to digital gaming, we can see that there is a framework here for understanding bodies within concepts of the 'seam' as an interface that is mutually determining of game narrative spaces and activities and of racial or ethnic bodies that are *actively materialized* and given coherence in the context of the use of digital gaming. Linkages, communicative flows, collective actions and activities over global spaces that comes to resemble machines, temporary sites of group-work, in a disunified series of systems and flows becomes not only normative in the everyday engagement of embodied subjects with others, but produces meanings in ways which mutually define bodies and technologies. Here, the 'seam' becomes again the most important element in that it is the site at which we locate the

conceptual and practical links, tools, techniques of wearing or manipulating gaming technologies, as well as the many other activities conditioned by cultural practice rather than agential decision. It is in re-thinking that relationship between bodies and technologies as assemblages that involve a seam that new opportunities emerge for considering racialization of bodies in the sense that it is not possible to think racialization of bodies as separate from the racialization of (stereotyped) representation of diverse bodies. Here, the assemblage points to the opportunities for opening new diversities in the complexity of this relationship beyond merely inclusion and counter-stereotypical representations in games.

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