

Homework 1 (Week 1)

Observe and described a variety of experiences where you feel particularly immersed.

I feel the most immersed when I am reading a book for pleasure. When I am reading a book that I have chosen, rather than one that was chosen for me, I feel like I am actively involved in the activity from start to finish: from choosing the book all the way to reading it to the end. I read best in a quiet room. When there is nobody around to distract me reading makes me feel as though I am being transported to a different world, and I can almost picture myself in the various scenes with the characters, as if I were living the words printed on the page. Reading is engaging for me because it is something that I find calming and satisfying. It is something that I have always enjoyed doing, even more than watching TV. With reading I can come up with ideas and pictures in my head, rather than seeing the picture already formed for me on the screen. If two people read the same book, they may not see the same images in their mind while reading. However, if two people watch the same movie, they see the exact same images and there is no room left for imagination. The ability to be creative in imagining how words form images is why I find reading for pleasure so captivating.

I also feel immersed when I am running. I enjoy running because just like reading, I find it to be calming. However, I only feel immersed in running when I am listening to music, but I do not feel immersed when I listen to music on its own. Listening to music while running makes me feel like I am in my own world, and I often feel myself slow down or speed up my pace depending on the tempo of the song that I am listening to. Just like with reading, running requires me to be actively involved in the activity. Sometimes, I become so involved that I begin to pay attention to things such as stride length and foot placement. While doing so removes my focus from the music I am listening to, it centers my engagement on running itself and being deliberate about my form while running.

What thinking about my response for this assignment made realize is that I am only immersed in experiences where I am actively involved. I cannot think of any experiences where I have been an observer and felt immersed. For me, immersion is directly related to engagement, and I feel the most engaged in activities where I am compelled and eager to participate in.

Observe and describe times when you are engaged in some forms of analyzing

I am the most engaged in analyzing when I am at the grocery store or cooking. At the grocery store I have to think about the meals that I would like to make during the week and what ingredients I need to make those meals. I also have to analyze the cost of what I am putting into my shopping cart, so as to not go over budget. When I am cooking I don't follow any recipe and make up the ingredient measurements as I go. I have to analyze what ingredients make sense to put together and in what ratios. Additionally, I have to analyze whether I have enough of all the necessary ingredients to make the meal and evaluate how many people I am making the meal for.

Another instance in which I am engaged in analyzing is when I am debugging code, either my own code or helping the students in the class I TA. For debugging code, I walk through test

cases in my head and on paper. Then I add print statements in various locations to further analyze where the problem could be occurring. If I am working with a student in the class I TA I also need to think about how to best explain the debugging process to them, and what questions I should be asking them to prompt them in the right direction.

I feel like I am constantly analyzing in my day-to-day activities. I am engaged in analyzing from the time I wake up (what to wear, what to make for breakfast), taking the bus to school, working on projects and assignments, taking the bus home, making dinner and deciding when to go to sleep. Not all activities make me feel immersed, but nearly all activities require me to analyze and solve problems.

Homework Week 2

Response about interactions with VR and VR headsets

I was not able to get my Microsoft Mixed Reality headset to work before doing this assignment, since I own a Mac computer and the headsets only work on Windows computers. However, I have experienced VR in the past, so I will base my responses off my previous experience. In the Winter 2018 quarter I took Katherine's Social and Emotional Approaches to HCI course. For one of the assignments we had to user test a project that we had been working on with the other students in the class. Tiffany was also in the class and she brought a star catching game that she had been working on for adults with developmental disabilities. The game was played using the Google Daydream headset and required the use of a small controller to touch ("catch") flying stars to earn points. Each time a star was caught, there was a "ding" sound.

I played Tiffany's game and I thought the visuals were very engaging. I liked that while I had the headset on, it felt as though I was in my own world, and I almost forgot that I was in a class, surrounded by other individuals. I felt as though I could picture myself in the scene. However, I am not as enthusiastic about most VR headsets. I find that they are heavy, often fall off my head mid-game or require readjustment and are difficult to use with glasses. I experienced all of these while using the Google Daydream to test Tiffany's project. I feel that if VR headsets were more comfortable and easier to use, VR would feel a lot more realistic to me. The content of VR interactions is usually quite immersive and like I experienced, makes it easy to be drawn into the game or scene. VR does provide us with something that can't be replicated in more common media formats. No other media format has the ability to make one an active participator of a game. We're either watching other people play as observers, or we're playing the game on a computer while situated in the "real world". With VR, however, we have the ability to feel as though we are in a different location, which is a completely different experience than that offered by other technologies.