

Game Experience May Vary: Understanding Play

Gonzalo Frasca

Researcher in Game Design, Director of Powerful Robot studio, Uruguay.

Abstract. Why do we call it game research and not play research? For the last decade of videogame studies, most of the attention has been paid to games as formal entities. At first, games seem easier to understand: they generally have clear rules and goals. They would be perfect machineries with formal mechanics if it was not for one factor: humans and their stubborn love for misbehaving. This talk provides an ontological approach to play and games and will analyze the relationship between the two concepts by taking into account the player's mindset. If this sounds too theoretical and abstract, there's no need to worry. It holds the key to better understanding the differences between casual and hardcore games.

The Author: Gonzalo Frasca (1972) is a game developer & researcher. He's co-founder of Powerful Robot Games, a game studio based in Uruguay with clients including Cartoon Network, Lucasfilms, Mattel and BBC. His latest hit game for Cartoon Network, AwesomeHouseParty.com, gathered over 22 million player accounts. Frasca obtained his PhD on games at the Center for Computer Games Research in Denmark. His research focuses on game design and rhetoric, particularly educational and political games. In 2003, he co-developed the first official videogame ever created for a US Presidential campaign. In a previous life, he blogged at Ludology.org