

ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades game studies has been able to come into its own, yet our understanding of video games is still limited and plagued by misunderstandings and miseducation. In particular, mass media and society continually privilege other mediums and texts as more capable as educational and developmental tools, particularly when it comes to morality, while decrying video games on the whole. This thesis seeks to understand the capabilities of games for moral education and identity-based development by examining the moral and ethical complexities embedded in many games, namely their narratives. Using Activity Theory, the understanding of moral development via video games becomes clearer as we can more easily understand and observe the factors that go into constructing a moral identity from both internal and external structures. This thesis analyzes three games, *Spec Ops: The Line*; *Fallout: New Vegas*; and *Papers, Please*, for their significance as mediating, cultural tools for players' moral edification and exploration.