Self-transformation

... through game design
Mikro Mortal Tennis (1995)
Dangerous Heaven (2006)
The Unfinished Swan (2011)
Gua-Le-Ni (2012)
Which yet survive, stamp'd from the hand of man
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
Self-transformation

... through game design
Implicit attitudes are automatic (pre-conscious) judgments through which a subject evaluates an object or a situation. They can be positive or negative.
A positive automatic association with sugary and unhealthy foods can have a number of causes (family, culture, food representation in media & advertisements, etc.)
B.S.I. HYPOTHESIS:

A positive implicit attitude towards sugary and fatty food is a key factor in the development of teenage obesity in the Western world.

How to prove?
Take a group of overweight teenagers and make their attitude towards unhealthy food less positive. Then observe if that transformation corresponds with a change in their eating behaviors (and weight).

TRANSFORMATIVE VIDEO GAMES *
An interesting challenge for my M.Sc. students in Game Design at the University of Malta!

Which methods?

1) EVALUATIVE CONDITIONING
2) ATTENTIONAL BIAS
3) GO / NO-GO PARADIGM
INCREASE THE PLAYERS’ IAT SCORES (more positive towards healthy food, less towards fatty, sugary food)
“Yikes! I can’t use these ingredients!”

**Final Score:** 623

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time played</th>
<th>3:43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy food collected</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy food ignored</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy food ignored</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy food collected</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Accuracy:** 95%  
(correct responses divided by total trials)
Playing as a transformative practice

... and games can be powerful allies of scientific research!
Transformative practices are activities that are deliberately designed to provoke or facilitate specific psychological, cognitive, behavioral, or convictional effects.
TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES

TRANSFORMATIVE VIDEO GAMES *
TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES

PAPERS, PLEASE

McDonald's Videogame by Molleindustria - Some rights reserved CC 2006
TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES

In my latest work, I do not address the transformational qualities that (video)games have on their players...

BUT ON THE GAME DESIGNERS THEMSELVES!

What happens to the designers, when they are engaged in the processes of designing a game that is transformative for the players?
Game design is explored as a ‘technology of the self’, as a self-transformative practice.
CONCEPTUAL BASIS: during the process of structuring transformative experiences for somebody, we inherently develop and refine our own sensitivity and knowledge.
SELF-TRANSFORMATIVE VIDEO GAMES
MY HYPOTHESIS: in the process of designing a (video)game with transformational goals for its audience — the designers inevitably self-fashion themselves in ways and in directions that are analogous to those that they intended to elicit in the recipients of their work.
“There is a greater liberation potential in designing games rather than playing games.”

Squinky @TheSquink · 8 lug
In classrooms, boring game design exercises will one day be as omnipresent as boring writing, drawing, painting, and crafting exercises.
MY HYPOTHESIS: in the process of designing a (video)game with transformational goals for its audience – the designers inevitably self-fashion themselves in ways and in directions that are analogous to those that they intended to elicit in the recipients of their work.
WE TRACKED THE DESIGNERS’ OWN IMPLICIT ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOOD DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS!
Game Design?

BRIEF / RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CLIENT

RESEARCH (bibliographic, experimental...)

CONCEPTUALIZATION (and feedback)

ITERATION (testing, redesign, feedback)

QUALITY ASSURANCE / TUNING

NINE STUDENTS (7 DESIGNING, 2 CONTROL)
Subject with the most improved score
Subject with the most decreased score
The group that designed food-related transformative games improved its IAT results during the design process. The other two subjects both decreased it.
Q1: Did the students’ implicit attitudes towards food change during the process of designing a transformative video game?

A1: Our answer is a tentative ‘yes’, which encourages more research.

Q2: Is there a correlation between the students’ changes in their implicit attitude towards healthy foods and changes in their weight?
Subject 2 was the biggest loser (- 6 kg)
Subject 6 was the biggest gainer (+ 4 kg)
The first group lost weight (-7Kg), while the second gained 6 Kg, suggesting the existence of some correlation between changes in IAT & changes in weight.
Albeit not conclusively, our hypothesis seems to be confirmed (less sure about the weight).

- CONCLUSIONS -

Future research will hopefully clarify for which transformative and educational activities the design of games and videogames can suitably and effectively function as a self-fashioning practice.