The Sims 2: Reflective Learning and Identity Construction
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Abstract

For more than 20 years, digital games have caught the attention of scholars across a variety of disciplines who are examining them for their potential as a learning tool. Recent studies have looked at how digital games support learning in different contexts (e.g., game semiotics and knowledge domains for learning, skill development through problem solving, and game communities as networks for learning). However, in terms of digital games and the opportunities they offer for learning through reflection, most research focuses on the reflection that occurs as a game player consciously and purposefully applies ideas in each phase of problem solving. Relatively few studies focus on the deep reflection that occurs during players' emotional engagements, narrative experiences, and identity construction within game play, and whether such reflection leads meaningful learning.

Using the digital game *The Sims 2 (TS2)* as an example, this study was designed to advance understanding of how digital game play provides an interactive narrative interface through which players may play, explore, and express themselves, via ludic narrative. Ultimately, the goal of the study was to discover whether the experience of narrative play and sharing in *TS2* encourages reflective learning and the construction of identity.

Adopting a qualitative case study method, this study addressed three main research questions: (a) How does *The Sims 2* (*TS2*) provide an interactive narrative interface for its players? And how has the nature of *The Sims 2* interactive narrative interface impacted players' experiences?; (b) In what ways does the nature of narrative play in *TS2* facilitate players' identity construction?; and (c) In what ways does the nature of narrative play in *TS2* promote reflective learning? These primary questions provoked further inquiry and analysis about the nature of the digital game *The Sims 2*, its players' narrative play experiences, and the impact of identity formation, reflection, and learning.

Based on the analysis of the research data collected from various resources, this study revealed that the digital game *TS2* provides an interactive narrative interface (INI) that enables players to construct their own play experiences through gameplay, narrative, sharing, discussion, and reflection. These narrative play experiences, at the same time, inspire players to construct and uncover dimensions of their identities. Further learning by recapturing and sharing narrative play experiences through self-reflection, storytelling, and reflective dialogue with others provide players with new understandings and meanings through which they may examine the meaning behind their narrative play.

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