

A Conceptual Framework for Supporting Gender-Inclusivity in Games

Roziana Ibrahim¹, Gary B Wills² & Lester Gilbert³

School of Electronics & Computer Science, University of Southampton

[1]ri07r@ecs.soton.ac.uk, [2]gbw@ecs.soton.ac.uk [3]lg3@ecs.soton.ac.uk

Short Description (29 words)

This research addresses issues related to gender-inclusivity in games, presents the implications of these issues towards gender-inclusivity in games and proposes a conceptual framework that defines gender-inclusivity in games.

Abstract (298 words):

Gender-inclusivity in games has been a much debated issue and despite the dramatic growth of gender and games research, many challenges remain in designing a more gender-inclusive game. Gender-inclusivity in games may support certain features and in turn may even determine the features of applications built based on it. This poses a challenge: although we have good techniques for analyzing, designing and evaluating current games, our techniques for gender-inclusive games are much less formed. We present a brief outline of some unresolved issues concerning gender-inclusivity in games and the gaps in designing a more gender-inclusive game. There is little reported experience in the issues that arise in determining what features should go into a gender-inclusive game and for determining the success or failure in the evaluation of those features. The questions that arise from this situation are how to define gender-inclusivity in games, how to incorporate gender-inclusivity into a game creation process and how to accurately measure gender-inclusivity in games.

We propose a framework that defines gender-inclusivity in three key themes:

- (1) *gameplay*, describing the game behaviour and how a player experiences the game. It include non-violent action (NVA), game support (GS), forgiving gameplay (FG), non-violent challenge (NVC), feedback system (FS), variety of activities (ACT), personalization (PER) and collaboration (COLL);
- (2) *content*, describing the aesthetics elements of a game. It consists of character/avatar portrayal (AVP), game world graphics (GW), sound/music (SM) and storyline (STOR) and;
- (3) *genre*, categorizes games into twelve broad genres: racing, simulation, classic/board, strategy, sports, shooting, role playing game, platform, children, puzzle/quiz, action and adventure.

On-going research is being planned for experiments to validate the framework through expert reviews, game evaluations and game design projects. We believe the results may extend to other domains in technology enhanced teaching and learning applications to commercial games design.

Keywords:

Gender-inclusive, games design, gender-neutral, games framework, video games, design guidelines.