GENDER INCLUSIVITY FRAMEWORK (GIF): A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN GAMES

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Abstract

Despite the dramatic growth of gender and games research, many challenges remain in designing a more gender inclusive game. This research addresses the problem of how to support gender-inclusivity in games by incorporating theories in games and gender. Existing research in games and gender tend to focus on finding out how each gender plays and their preferences in games. However, there is little evidence that researchers have approached the issue of gender inclusivity in games with the intent of building a cohesive understanding of gender inclusivity in games and the relationships that exist between the different dimensions and components. Consequently, the aim of this research is to develop an integrative conceptual framework that can support gender inclusivity in games.

The development of the Gender Inclusivity Framework (GIF) aimed to understand the makeup of gender inclusivity in games, how to define gender inclusivity in games and measure the level of gender inclusiveness in games. Drawing upon established theories and prior research findings, the proposed framework suggests that gender inclusivity in games can be determined by 3 dimensions:

(1) *gameplay,* which describes the game behaviour and 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,* that relates to the aesthetics elements of a game and consists of character/avatar portrayal (AVP), game world graphics (GW), sound/music (SM) and storyline (STOR) and;

(3) *genre,* which categorizes games into twelve broad genres: racing, simulation, classic/board, strategy, sports, shooting, role playing game, platform, children, puzzle/quiz, action and adventure.

Each dimension in the framework is divided into individual components that can be modified or further investigated in future studies. Each component in combination describes the dimension in terms that can be measured and evaluated in empirical studies. Hence, the combination of dimensions and components used to construct the framework provide the description of gender-inclusivity in games, which in turn is expected to predict the degree of gender-inclusiveness in games.

For educators, GIF allows the identification of gender-inclusivity components in games so informed decisions can be made on how to evaluate and choose appropriate games for classroom activities. For researchers, GIF provides a common framework in which to conceptualize their research and make it easier to see how individual variables fit into the larger picture. For game designers, GIF enables deconstruction of the concept of gender inclusivity in games into smaller, conceptually distinct and manageable component to guide the design of gender inclusivity in games.

Keywords: game framework, game design, gender inclusive, gender neutral,conceptual framework

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