Evaluating the Gender-Sensitivity of Digital Content for Educational Purposes

Focus: Digital Games

Introduction

These questions for consideration are provided to help you evaluate if the digital games that you are using with your students has an inherent gender bias or if the characterization, imagery and language, storyline and results of the game play is gender sensitive. The value of these questions is to jumpstart new discussions about how to enable equitable and non-biased learning opportunities for all students.

Guide for Evaluating Gender-Sensitivity within Digital Games

Questions for Consideration

Characterization	
How many men/boys and women/girls are portrayed or mentioned in the game?	
When and how often do women/girls appear in the game compared to men/boys?	
Are women/girls explicitly identified and named in the game as frequently as men/boys?	
Are women/girls referred to by their names or roles or only in their relationship to men/boy characters?	
Are there differences in the types of roles or activities ascribed to the characters based upon gender?	
Are there differences in the psychological traits (such as courage, resourcefulness, intelligence, kindness) attributed to one gender vs. another?	
Who are the heroes in the game?	
Is there evidence of stereotyping or tokenism in the role definitions of the characters?	
Imagery and Language	
How are women/girls and men/boys portrayed in the game imagery? How do they compare in terms of size, placement in the foreground and positioning in both public and private spaces within the game?	
Which places in the game signify importance or value? Are both genders portrayed in those places equitably?	
Are the images used gender-sensitive or responsive? Are they free of traditional stereotypes or gender-bias?	
Is the use of language, words and phrases by the characters free of traditional stereotypes or gender bias? Are "loaded" words used in the game?	

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Storyline	
Is the storyline constructed around preconceived or traditional ideas about how problems are solved by men/boys?	
Are the achievements of women/girls in the storyline based upon their own initiative and intelligence or are they due to traditional stereotypes around how women/girls get ahead? Are the achievements of women/girls valued?	
Are women/girls or men/boys represented as central characters within the storyline of the game?	
How are gender roles incidental or critical to the characterization and the plot of the game?	
Results	
What will be the impact of this game on a student's self-image or self-efficacy?	
What types of messages are articulated in the game about gender differences? Are those messages positive or negative?	
Does the game reinforce gender stereotypes?	
Does the game promote gender equality, self-reliance by women/girls and women/girl empowerment?	
Does the game promote equal partnership between women and men, girls and boys?	
Is the content and messaging realistic in terms of roles and responsibilities for women/girls and men/boys within your community or culture?	
How would this game help to change stereotypes?	
How would you improve this game to be more gender sensitive?	

For more information about how to evaluate gender-sensitivity in digital learning projects, please contact us:
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