

# Chapter LIX

## Revealing New Hidden Curriculum and Pedagogy of Digital Games

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter examines hidden curricula and pedagogy of digital games in order to clarify their educational meaning and importance. The experiences which players get from the inherent ideology of digital games was categorized into four areas: fantasy, immersion, representation and identification, and making sense of the game's system or model. These hidden curricula are important for learning-game designers to consider in that they are internalized subconsciously. Also these hidden aspects of games are important for teachers to help motivate players for learning, to facilitate self-directed playing and learning, to improve gender sensitivity, and to help with the transfer of knowledge from games to real life. Games have the magical ability to inspire players through compelling stories, challenges, and activities. The hidden curricula of games are bound to continue to be an issue of great concern for educators in coming years.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Internet-connected computers are now more than just a tool and a medium for packaging and presenting information; they have achieved an importance that rivals the former king of popular media, television. Computers have become a universal source of entertainment as more people discover

the joys of computer-based gaming. People across the world today spend a huge amount of time and money playing computer games. Digital games are now a dominant cultural form of the 21st century. Inherent in any technology or media is a certain set of assumptions and an ideology that is either overtly or imperceptibly transmitted along with it. Because of the increased importance of computer

games in today's media culture, as well as because they make up such an important part of the lives of today's children, they have become an area of serious thought and examination. "Computer game playing is increasingly the leisure activity of choice for children, and needs to be considered closely" (McCarty, 2001, p. 22).

The computer has become ubiquitous in young people's lives much as television was for the Baby Boom generation that grew up after the Second World War. It is used as a productivity enhancing information management tool, as well as an entertainment and communication device. The "computer is a [...] toy that adults and children can both use to find inspiration, stimulate the imagination, explore the world and meet other human beings, and gain new experiences that can rejuvenate their senses and personalities" (Tapscott, 1998, p. 159). Many of these types of experiences can be obtained playing computer games. "During the early nineties [...] video and computer games became a matter-of-course in the everyday life of young people, including children" (Fromme, 2003, p. 1). For game players, the computer is a toy. However, "toys are also cultural objects, socializing agents, [and] carriers of the dominant ideology" (Gottschalk, 1995, p. 4). In addition, "computer games, like other texts, circulate and are embedded within existing discourses to do with gender, ethnicity, class and power" (Beavis, 1998, p. 8). What children learn from computer games is of great concern to society at large and to educators, who should adjust to the different formative experiences of what has been called the "games generation".

The generation gap that has occurred since the emergence of the computer and the computer game, changing the patterns of play (and of thinking) of today's students are of great importance for teachers who wish to better understand their students' experiences with computers, and computer games in particular. In education, computer games must be examined for two important reasons. First, it is essential that teachers understand

the media environment their students experience and participate in away from school, so that they may instruct them in being informed and critical members of it. Second, teachers can and should use its language that their students understand best in order to further learning of young children.

This chapter will examine the inherent ideology that computer games transmit, or what Gottschalk calls "videology"—the system of interrelated assumptions video-games articulate" (p. 5), in order to clarify the educational meaning and importance of these media, including issues of gender and violence. What are those aspects and how do they affect teaching and learning will also be examined. In addition, their implications for game design and utilization in classroom will be summarized.

## **HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF DIGITAL GAMES**

It is first important to note that although it is widespread and practiced by a great number of diverse individuals, computer gaming cannot be considered an activity that has been totally accepted or legitimized by mainstream society. A number of critics accuse computer games of contributing to a variety of social ills. "Since their inception, computer and video games have both fascinated and caused great fear in the politicians, educators, academics, and the public at large" (Squire, 2002). However, of course "extreme cultural reactions to technological and cultural innovations are hardly new" (Squire, 2002). What persists is a prevailing negative attitude in the popular imagination towards computer games. "Computer game playing is often regarded as one of the most negative types of play" (McCarty, 2001, p. 22). What constitutes this general perception? It is claimed that "games represent at best a childish pleasure long since left behind, and at worst a threat to every position on the home front: children obsessed and bewitched, partners distracted and preoccupied, money spent,

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