

Chapter 7

Using Digital Technologies in the 21st Century Classroom: How Video Games Support Dynamic Learning Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have acknowledged the potential contribution of video gaming to complex forms of learning, identifying links between gaming and engagement, experiential learning spaces, problem-solving, strategies, transliteracy reflectivity, critical literacy, and metacognitive thinking. Using a multiliteracies lens, this multi-case study examined the experiences of four boys engaged with video gaming in two different contexts: a community centre and an after-school video club. In this chapter, the author describes how these four boys developed their multimodal ways of learning by engaging with visual perspectives of video games.

INTRODUCTION

Interpretations of the cultural meanings made by these boys, based on their individual unique experiences engaging with video games, can provide readers with insights into how to approach adolescent aged boys' literacy development. My methodological approach documented what boys are saying, as much as possible, which is currently understudied in the literature surrounding boys and their video gaming practices. Studying the ways in which boys make meanings through multimodal ways of

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learning can offer insights into strategies for cyber culture that can potentially reinvent traditional literacy pedagogical boundaries and establish new ways and practices for building knowledge. The adoption of video games as an alternative classroom multiliteracies resource is acknowledged in technology and multiliteracies discourses as a strategy for meaning-making and developing cultural knowledge (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; The New London Group, 2000). Scholars explained the complex forms of interactive visuals—intertextual and multimodal—that are part of video games, and key to inviting players to understand a variety of texts in a variety of circumstances. This chapter provides an overview of a multi-case study I conducted about four boys' out-of-school video gaming practices which may support their meaning-making. There were a number of findings emanating from this study, including the following: (i) boys use their video gaming practices for meaning-making and collaborative efforts in order to gain an understanding of several knowledge processes (such as decision-making, predicting, analyzing, strategizing, etc.), (ii) boys extend and apply their cultural knowledge as creative innovators, producing and publishing YouTube instructional videos for video game players and designing video games for a history project, (iii) boys demonstrate peer mentoring through storytelling, face-to-face interactions or in their online community of practice, (iv) boys make meanings using metacognitive literacy skills in a variety of ways, and (v) boys focus on cultural preservation and narrative storytelling. Cyberculture continues to evolve, for example video games, representing many forms of literacy, yet video games are met often with concerns when introduced as a pedagogical strategy. While acknowledging concerns related to video gaming, such as negative identity construction, violence, distraction, and time commitment for integration, this chapter seeks to contribute to the scholarly discussion about the use of video games in classrooms by explicitly considering the ways in which gaming may support boys' meaning-making and cultural knowledge.

BACKGROUND_

Using a multiliteracies lens, this multi-case ethnographic study examined the experiences of four boys engaged with video gaming in two different contexts: a community centre (Albert & Jeffrey) and an after-school video club (Mike & Brian). The case study helped me to gain an understanding of the nature of boys' behavior and learning in social settings while they engage in video game play. Studying the ways in which boys make meanings through multimodal ways of learning can offer insights into strategies that can potentially reinvent traditional literacy pedagogical boundaries and establish new ways and practices for building knowledge. which can offer insights to how they constructed cultural knowledge and meaning-making.

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