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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

MASTER THESIS

GENDERED SPACES IN DIGITAL GAMES: THE SIMS

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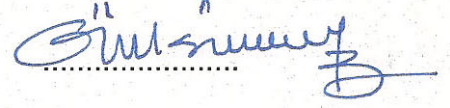
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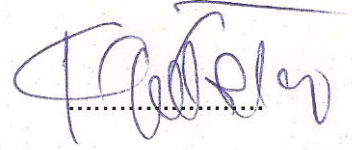
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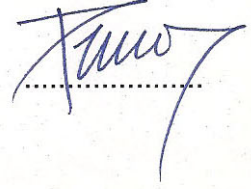
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In loving memory of
my grandmother Semiha Türkyılmaz
and my grandfather A. Kemal Türkyılmaz.

ABSTRACT

GENDERED SPACES IN DIGITAL GAMES: THE SIMS

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In digital games gender and sexuality are represented in normative and stereotypical ways. Since these games reproduce gender norms and expectations, the analysis of space gender relationships in the virtual realm of digital games appears to be a critical field of study. The Sims, which is one of the most popular games to date, embodies such norms and reproduces stereotypical gender and space representations.

The historical roots of the Sims can be traced to the European doll-house tradition. At one level, the Sims can be said to carry this tradition to the digital medium, modelling its context on the consumptive traditions of the American suburb. Both the Sims characters' bodies and their spaces are based on stereotypical representations and normative expectations. In setting limits on bodily properties and spatial characteristics, the game consolidates and reproduces conservative social codes regarding gender.

Although the players are seemingly free to construct their characters and their spaces, the structure of the game limits to their moves in implicit ways. This study analyzes the game from the viewpoint of both the game structure and the players who may seek to undermine the normative structure of the game, within the historical development of its various versions.

Keywords: Gender, Digital Games, Domestic Space, The Sims

ÖZ

DİJİTAL OYUNLARDA TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET VE MEKAN: THE SIMS

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Dijital oyunlarda toplumsal cinsiyet kavramı ve farklı cinsel kimlikler oldukça normatif ve stereotipik bir şekilde temsil ediliyor. Oyunların da bir medya aracı olarak toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını ve beklentilerini yeniden ürettiği göz önüne alındığında, oyun mekanlarının toplumsal cinsiyet ile ilişkisinin incelenmesi önem kazanıyor. The Sims de dijital oyun tarihinin en popüler oyunlarından biri olarak, toplumsal cinsiyet normları ve stereotipik temsiller ile sosyal ve mekansal anlamda ilişkili.

Oyunun yapısı mekanlar ve öznelerin birbiri ile ilişkisi prensibine dayalı ve bu oyun aslında Avrupa bebek evleri geleneğinin bir devamını, Amerikan banliyöleri bağlamında dijital olarak sürdürüyor. Oyunda mekan ve beden tanımı; stereotipik temsiller, normatif beklentiler ve kodlar üzerine kurulu. Oyun, kadın ve erkek bedenlerinin ve ilişkilerinin nasıl olması gerektiği konusunda sınırlar belirlerken, aynı zamanda bir takım kalıplaşmış kodlamaları ve ev mekanları ile ilgili sınırları da tanımlıyor.

Oyuncu topluluğunun sürekli oyun geliştirme sürecini tutucu ya da özgürleştirici adımlara yönlendirdiği kadar, oyun tarafından üretilen tüketim ve toplumsal cinsiyet sınırları da oyuncuları normatif beklentiler içinde kalmaya yönlendiriyor. Bu çalışma da oyun ve oyuncu arasındaki iki yönlü ilişkiyi, mekan ve kullanıcı bazında, toplumsal olarak inşa edilmiş normlar ve stereotipler üzerinden inceliyor.


Anahtar sözcükler: Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Dijital Oyunlar, Ev, The Sims

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zgecan ZAFER
İzmir, 2016

TEXT OF OATH

I declare and honestly confirm that my study, titled “Gendered Spaces in Digital Games: The Sims” and presented as a Master’s Thesis, has been written without applying to any assistance inconsistent with scientific ethics and traditions, that all sources from which I have benefited are listed in the bibliography, and that I have benefited from these sources by means of making references.

18/01/2017

Özgecan ZAFER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	i
ÖZ	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TEXT OF OATH	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
INDEX OF FIGURES	viii
INDEX OF TABLES	x
INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Aim, scope and method	2
1.2 Digital games and gender studies	4
1.3 Digital games and the Sims	12
2 GAMEPLAY	14
2.1 Constructing the Game	15
2.1.1 Framework: Spaces and Subjects	15
2.1.2 Process: Space/Subject Interaction	18
3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT	23

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd)

3.1 Gender and Domesticity: From the Dollhouse to the Sims	23
3.2 Comparative history of the Sims series	30
3.2.1 The Body	31
3.2.2 The Household Structure	32
4 GENDER AND SPACE IN THE SIMS	34
4.1 Representations of the Sims	34
4.2 The Urban Context	36
4.2.1 The Urban Organization	37
4.2.2 The Urban Community	40
4.3 The Domestic Context	43
4.3.1 Gender Roles in the American Suburb and the Sims	44
4.3.2 Domesticity in The Sims Series	49
5 THE PLAYERS	57
5.1 The Sims Simulations	57
5.2 The Sims Forums	60
6 CONCLUSION	66
REFERANCES	68
CURRICULUM VITEA	80

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd)

APPENDICES

81



INDEX OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
Figure 1.1 Circuit of culture. (du Gay, 1997, by Wirman, 2014).....	6
Figure 1.2 Lara Croft, the heroine of the famous game Tomb Raider. ("Lara Croft, the heroine of the famous game Tomb Raider", 2016).....	8
Figure 1.3 Singstar (2004) advertisement in Attitude. ("British gay gamers get pitched", 2016).....	10
Figure 1.4 Taric, hero form League of Legends online game ("Armor Of The Fifth Age Taric Old Skin - League of Legends Wallpapers", 2016).....	11
Figure 2.1 The Sims 3 algorithm visualized by the author.....	16
Figure 2.2 Constructing and furnishing the house (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009).....	17
Figure 2.3 Screenshot from subject catalogue (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009).....	18
Figure 2.4 Categories of subject constitution that structure everyday life throughout the game.....	18
Figure 2.5 Screenshot showing the needs of a subject (Electronic Arts Inc, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2014).....	21
Figure 3.1 A replica of a dollhouse, built in the 1950s, based on the owner's original childhood toy ("Ancestral homes", 2016)	24
Figure 3.2 A replica of an 18th century baby house. All the furnishings were handmade by John Kim ("Ancestral homes", 2016)	25
Figure 3.3 Patent document of a dollhouse (United States Patent and Trademark Office , K. Suyehiro, 1920)	27
Figure 3.4 Ready-made house examples from The Sims 3 (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009).....	28

Figure 3.5 A Barbie Doll House example, marketed as “Barbie Dreamhouse” (“Barbie Dreamhouse”, n.d.)	29
Figure 3.6 Body features of a “Fat Sim” (Mod The Sims, 2016).....	31
Figure 4.1 Representations of The Sims 4 characters ("The Sims - Images & Videos - Official Site", 2016)	35
Figure 4.2 Sunset Valley (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	37
Figure 4.3 Sunlit Tides (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	38
Figure 4.4 Maids from The Sims 1,2,3 and 4 ("Maid", 2016).....	48
Figure 4.5 Girls’ rooms (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	50
Figure 4.6 Boy’s rooms (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	50
Figure 4.7 Children’s rooms of Langerak Family (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	51
Figure 4.8 The house of Sekemoto Family. (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	52
Figure 4.9 The House of Gobias Koffi, ready-made sim of The Sims 3 Sunset Valley (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)	54
Figure 4.10 The House of Agnes Crumplebottom, ready-made sim of The Sims 3 Sunset Valley (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009).....	56
Figure 5.1 The Sims 4 representation of Create a Sim update ("The Sims - The Sims 4 Expands Gender Customization Options - Official Site", 2016).....	63

INDEX OF TABLES

Table 4.1 The Sims 3, Sunset Valley ready-made sims' occupation percentages. 40

Table 4.2 The Sims 3, Sunset Valley, ready-made sims' chart for occupation levels in relation to gender. 42



INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations:

IDSA Interactive Digital Software Association

MMORPG Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game

PEGI Pan European Game Information

RPG Role Playing Game



1 INTRODUCTION

Today digital games constitute a growing market, not only for children's entertainment but also for a broad range of social, cultural and academic media. From e-sports to newly emerging fields like Digital Humanities, digital games can be tools for education, community building and cultural politics as well as entertainment. As such, they embody cultural, political and gendered sub-texts, which are often overlooked by their designers and users. According to sociologist Garry Crawford (2008),

“Digital gaming is now an important and major global media and leisure industry rivaling the film, music and publishing industries. For example, in 2002 global digital games sales were worth \$18.5 billion, not far behind global box-office taking at \$20 billion, with game sales increasing at a much faster rate.”

Since the early 2000's, digital games can be accessed through different devices other than computers such as televisions, mobile phones, hand-held gaming devices and digital watches, which partially accounts for their increasing popularity.

The Sims was released in 2000. It was developed by EA Maxis and published by Electronic Arts. The game created a huge impact in the game industry. According to Digital Humanities Professor Mary Flanagan (2003, 1-2),

“The Sims is at the forefront of gaming as a cultural phenomenon on an international scale: the initial release of The Sims was worldwide and the game was translated in 14 different languages, and it is the most popular game featuring domestic space.”

Paralleling the continuous development of the game's capacities, The Sims' worldwide fame increased to date. According to the 2010 statistics of EA Games, it was translated into 22 different languages and sold in 60 different countries. Fans of the game added to its increased popularity by downloading new elements related to The Sims, such as characters and houses, more than 130 million times (Electronic Arts Inc, 2010).

According to David Chan (2003, 1), the author of *The Philosophy of The Sims*, the game is admirable both for its play mechanics and content:

“The Sims marks the first time that a computer game has so deeply presented a philosophy of life within the context of entertainment. The carefully orchestrated play mechanics of The Sims charge the player in designing narratives and lifestyles within a behavioral psychology simulation that furthers a number of implicit theses about human behavior and life. It is one of the most deeply thoughtful games ever created and serves to legitimize computer games as a meaningful art form.”

While Chan’s evaluation accounts for the commercial success of the game, it overlooks the fact that the Sims promotes a specific life style based on modern, middle class, suburban family life. This study focuses on the gendered connotations of the game within a historical and social context.

1.1 Aim, scope and method

As media scholars have argued, digital games are effective on the production and reproduction of social norms (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976, Buckingham & Willett, 2006). Taking the Sims as a case study, the aim of this work is to understand how gender norms figure in digital games. The main question is to what extent are normative gender roles reproduced or subverted by both the producers and the consumers of the game. Such critical analyses will hopefully lead towards increased gender consciousness and sensitivity on the side of game designers as well as players.

In terms of method, The Sims game, its official website and the gamers’ forum constitute the primary sources in this study which are supported by critical analyses of cultural theorists who work on digital games and gender theorists.

The work of gender theorists provides the background to understand gender norms and stereotypes, and to understand space from a gendered viewpoint. While writings of Alcoff (1996), Duncan (1996) and McDowell (1999) provided knowledge on gender studies, works of Hayden (1980), Trogal (2007), Rendell (2000) and Myslik (1996) contributed to this thesis in terms of the historical relations of domestic and urban spaces to gender norms. Also the works of Mou

and Peng (2009), Gee and Hayes (2010), Iversen (2014), Kodrat (2015), Brice and Rutter (2003) and Beavis (2005) helped to establish the background of this study regarding the role of gender in digital games. Butler's (1993, 1999), Liu's (2012) and Consalvo's (2003) work on queer theory contributed to the understanding of non-heteronormative sexualities as they figure in various media including digital games.¹

Following the introduction which delineates the general context of the Sims within digital games and gender studies, the second chapter focuses on the mechanics of the game. It clarifies the nature of subject space relationships and the gameplay processes.

The third chapter, offers a historical background for the Sims, both in terms of its precedents that date back to 16th c. dollhouses and in terms of the development of the game itself through its various versions, with particular emphasis on gender related issues. The fourth chapter is a critical analysis of the media representations of the Sims, followed by the urban and domestic contexts that frame the course of the gameplay. The final chapter focuses on the players. After an analysis of the players' identification with the game characters, the chapter concludes by a critical perspective on the Sims forums, which reveal the players' perspectives on the gendered characteristics of the game.

The thesis concludes by re-stating how the game supports a consumption based, normative family model and re-inforces heteronormative gender roles and domestic environments. It calls for an awareness that recognizes that digital games play a part in the production of culture as much as its reproduction.

¹ There are studies by Mathews (2006), Zampi and Morgan (1995) and Richens and Nitsche(2005) on virtual architecture. However, this thesis analyzes the virtual space of the game as a new media tool. Hence the relevant sources are mainly on video game spaces.

1.2 Digital games and gender studies

Gender stereotyping in popular media has been a recurrent topic of academic discourse since the 1980s. One of the most frequent criticisms involves significantly fewer representations of women than men who are more likely to be portrayed in more successful and socially significant positions (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995 by Mou and Peng, 2009). These stereotypical images insistently reproduce gendered norms (Mou and Peng, 2009, 923). Men are represented as strong and intelligent leaders, heroes, and family heads who bring income, while women are most likely to be in inferior roles as weak and emotional victims who need to be saved, and mothers who take care of the domestic work.

Video games are no different in their representations of gender. First and foremost, they are criticized in terms of their projection of impossibly idealized body images. As communication and media scholar Xeniya Kondrat (2015, 172) explains:

“Researchers are trying to show that mass media is affecting our perception of the real world and its standards by providing us with unreal, made-up beauty and moral rules. Since video games are a part of mass media, nowadays they are partly responsible for the unrealistic, ideal body perceptions as well. Girls and boys who play video games that use this ideal shaped body image for females are more likely to create their concept on how females should look like based on this representation.”

Being critical of gender stereotyping in games, Kondrat adds that “some video games use wrong, disrespectful and sometimes even violent representations of both genders.” (2015, 171). As an example, she cites the game “Grand Theft Auto III Vice City,” where the player can have sex with a prostitute, then kill her and achieve a health bonus (Kondrat, 2015, 172). According to Sociologist Tracy L. Dietz’s study on 33 popular Nintendo and Sega Genesis video games, only 41% have female characters (Dietz, 1998). When all the female characters are analyzed, 28% are sex or prize objects, 21% are victims or “Damsels in Distress”. Others are either villains or play the role of supportive characters. For example in Road Rash (1992), there is a female police officer who is unable to complete her duties because she

wants to watch the popular TV show, Oprah. According to Dietz only 15% of the games have female heroines and action characters.

Likewise, Beasley and Standley (2002 by Mou and Peng, 2009, 924) studied 597 video game characters and found that only 82 of them were women. When they analyzed the characters' outfits, they found that women had more revealing clothes and 41% of women had oversized breasts. Also, according to Downs and Smith's study on 60 video games (2005 by Mou and Peng, 2009, 924), female characters were represented in a hypersexual way; wearing revealing clothes and bearing unrealistic body measurements.

These issues call for critical attention because modes of representation affect the cultural production and reproduction processes of gender roles. Hanna Elina Wirman (2011, 81), explains gendering of the games using Paul du Gay's (1997), concept of "circuit of culture": (Figure 1.1)

"[Representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation] all relate to each other and help to structure each other at different points in the cycle. While discussing women players, we then need to acknowledge that a game 1) is represented in various forms such as in game marketing and media, 2) offers meanings that offer a basis for constructing player identities, 3) is produced under specific design, development and manufacturing contexts and by people with specific kinds of cultural capital and education, 4) becomes experienced and used in a particular process of consumption, and, finally, 5) is regulated as a certain kind of leisure object whose typical use takes place in a specific time and space."

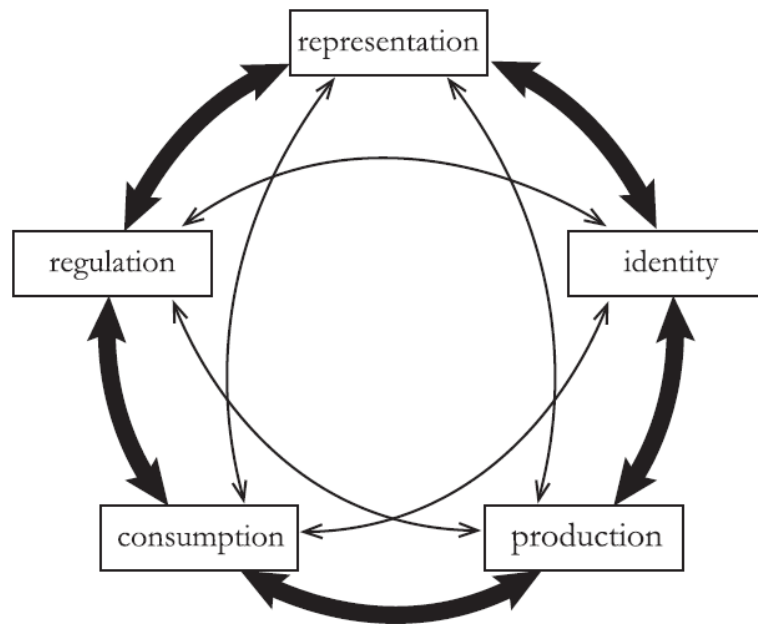


Figure 1.1 Circuit of culture. (du Gay, 1997, by Wirman, 2014)

According to Wirman (2011, 82), games are represented as masculine both in marketing and in media. For this reason, women see games as a manly leisure activity and do not prefer to be involved. Hence men dominate the so-called gamer society and game production companies prefer to hire men who are already keen players. This male dominated sector produces games for men and their masculine desires and market them as such.

However, women's interest in video games is not as low as it is assumed. According to Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), 43% of the US gamers were females in 2001 (2001 by Kondrat, 2015, 178). Also, a more recent report from Entertainment Software Association (2013 by Kondrat, 2015, 172) shows that 55% of gamers were males while 45% were females. The growing number of female players resulted in a newly emerging market for video games since the 2000s. However, as Kondrat (2015, 179) states, this doesn't lead the industry to develop games for both genders:

“The industry was not (and it seems like is still not) interested in creating video games for both genders. As it was said at “ABC Nightline” news program by Sherry Turkle (1997) “If you market to girls and boys according to just the old stereotypes and don't try to create a computer culture that's really more inclusive for everyone, you're going to just

reinforce the old stereotypes. . . . We have an opportunity here to use this technology, which is so powerful, to make of ourselves something different and better.” It is important for the game industry to carefully develop games for girls so that they show the diversity of women’s lifestyles, interests and identities (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000). Sadly, it is easier for the industry to produce games for girls based on stereotypical views because they will sell better. “

There are a considerable number of examples and websites offering “games for girls”. Websites such as playpink.com or gamesforgirls.com offer stereotypical female themes for female players. Gamesforgirls.com has a pink interface and offers games such as “Briar Beauty Dress Up” or “Cooking Tale”. Similarly, playpink.com offers options such as cooking, dress up, kissing, and decorating.

Some of the leading game companies such as Core Design and Electronic Arts, have attempted to change this situation by introducing female heroines to the gaming industry. For example, the Tomb Raider (1996) game series is a popular one with a female heroine. Kondrat (2015, 179) explains that:

“Tomb Raider: Lara Croft”, (...) is a good example of the game industry’s attempt to create a game for both genders. As it was mentioned, Lara Croft is the female protagonist of the game called “Tomb Raider” created in 1996 by Core Design Company. She is independent, strong, smart, wealthy, and has an amazing body and countless skills. It is a perfect fantasy for both girls, who want to be like her, and boys, who want to be with someone like her. A big mistake of the company was that they market the game extensively to the male audience and less so to the female. When the game was advertised to the public it was represented by half-naked female models at trade shows.”

Even though Lara Croft is a powerful female figure, her image fits the stereotypically idealized female figure (Mou and Peng, 2009). She has an oversexualized thin figure with large breasts. As Kondrat states, the female audience wanted to be like her and the male audience fantasized about her unrealistic figure. (Figure 1.2)



Figure 1.2 Lara Croft, the heroine of the famous game Tomb Raider. ("Lara Croft, the heroine of the famous game Tomb Raider", 2016)

According to Kondrat, it is important to understand the role of gender studies in game studies to avoid stereotyping and discrimination between male and female gamers. Although this understanding will hardly stop companies from producing “male only” or “female only” games, it points to the significance of producing and marketing games for both genders (Kondrat, 2015, 179).

Besides conventional gender roles, the representation of LGBT subjects in video games is also an important topic to be critically analyzed. Although the visibility of the LGBT culture in mass media is not new, (Gross, 2001, by Shaw, 2009) its representation in video games is largely inadequate. Communication specialist Adrienne Shaw’s (Shaw, 2009) interviews with LGBT subjects, revealed a sense of optimism in some who emphasized that video games were a ‘new medium’ and they would get better in time. Others argued that it was better not to be represented in digital games rather than being represented in stereotypical ways. However, Shaw (2009, 231) argues that remaining unrepresented is problematic as well.

“In essence, lack of media representation is a way of saying: “Your concerns/thoughts/lifestyle and so on are/is not important.” Framing this in terms of cultural studies, we can think of this issue in the way Couldry does: “[C]ultural studies thinks of culture in relation to issues of power; the power relations (whether driven by economics, politics or other forms of social discrimination) which affect who is represented

and how, who speaks and who is silent’’ (2000, p. 2). In this sense, the heterocentrism of most video games, as Consalvo (2003a) describes and as it is often spoken of in popular media and in interviews in this project, is an ideological problem that requires attention.”

Indeed, the Game industry has reservations about representing the LGBT community in video games in a heteronormative cultural environment. Gamers, the dominant portion of whom are assumed to consist of white male subjects, are known to display homophobic acts and statements especially in online games where such words as “fag” and “gay” are commonly used as insults (Chonin, 2006; Leupold, 2006; Sliwinski, 2006a, 2006b; Vargas, 2006; by Shaw, 2009, 237). In discussion forums, gamers say that they do not use those terms “in that way” but to offend people in general, which shows the naturalization of homophobia in an embarrassingly obvious way (Shaw, 2009, 237).

This attitude began to change by the recent targeting of “gaymers” by the game industry. Sony’s karaoke game Singstar (2004) for example, is advertised in the UK gay magazine Attitude by a photograph of half-naked muscular firemen² singing joyfully in an all-male residential setting (Shaw, 2009). However, Shaw (2009, 237) argues that in this case the choice of medium itself is problematic: (Figure 1.3)

“Notably, however, the ad appears in a gay magazine, not a gaming magazine. Like girl gamers before them, the homosexual market for games is being appealed to as gays, not as gamers.”

² For further information about representations of homosexuals see Liu 2012.

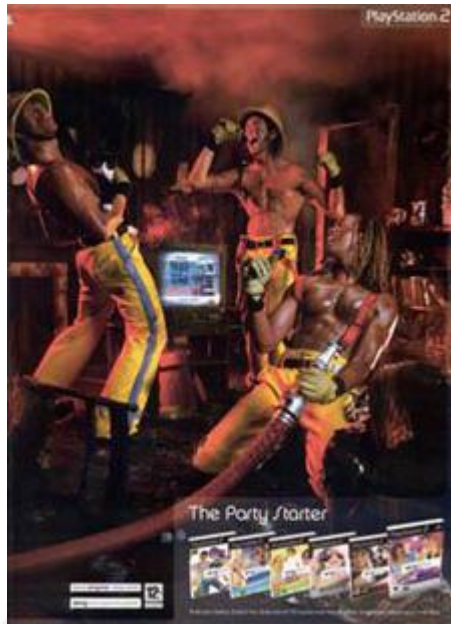


Figure 1.3 Singstar (2004) advertisement in Attitude. ("British gay gamers get pitched", 2016)

Due to the homophobic convictions of their target group, game development companies are wary of the backlash of representing LGBT subjects such as loss of profits, low ratings and even censorship (Shaw, 2009).

On the other hand, there are some online games which feature characters whose sexuality are left ambivalent. For example, Taric, who is one of the hero figures of the MMORPG³, League of Legends game, has overly athletic masculine bodily features. Although the game producers do not specify his sexuality, the pink outfits that are offered for sale for him, are suggestive clues to his homosexuality. (Figure 1.4)

³ Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game



Figure 1.4 Taric, hero from League of Legends online game ("Armor Of The Fifth Age Taric Old Skin - League of Legends Wallpapers", 2016)

A senior member of the official game forum openly asked if Taric was gay and continued to say; ("Is Taric gay? - League of Legends Community", 2012)

"Okay, there's nothing wrong with him being gay, but i'm just curious with some of his skins being more effeminate (All pink Taric with furry boots). Are the creators of Taric trying to imply that he is gay? Again, nothing is wrong with this, and in fact, I think it would be lovely if we had a gay champion."

This player assumes this character to be gay referring to his outfit. Discussions on Taric's sexuality has a conspicuous presence in the game forum. Some participants respond to the former post saying "Does it really matter?" or, "No he's not gay, he [is] fabulous. Nothing wrong with being gay and being Fabulous is a good thing." Some players, on the other hand display homophobic reactions. "If he is, he should be banned." says a member. Some players try to justify the heterosexuality of the character by pointing to some of his masculine features: "He's a knight that wears solid rock as his armor, carries a hammer the size of him. He's definitely straight." ("Is Taric gay? - League of Legends Community", 2012).

Although digital games are a relatively new media they raise serious questions regarding gender sensitive issues. The perpetuation of conventional

gender relationships which are built into the very structure of the games prevent the players from constructing alternative and liberating spatial and social relationships.

1.3 Digital games and the Sims

The Sims is a real life simulation game, which is one of the pioneers of the digital games market. At this point, understanding the position and categorization of The Sims in the digital game market is important for understanding the significance of the game.

Digital video games can be categorized according to different criteria. Jo Bryce and Jason Rutter (2003) identify six categories based on the nature of the game: shoot-em-up games, strategy games, simulation games, role playing games, sports games and dancing games. Carlo Fabricatore (2000) separates games into two categories based on the relationship between the player and the playing environment: Games that “include an interactive virtual playing environment” and the ones where “the player always has to struggle against some kind of opposition”. Psychologist Mark Griffiths (1996, 1999) states nine categories based on activity type: Sports simulations, racers, adventures, puzzlers, weird games (those that do not fit into another category), platformers, platform blasters, beat ‘em ups and shoot ‘em ups (Mitchell and Savill-Smith, 2004). Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams’ (2003), action based categorization on the other hand, identifies ten categories: action, strategy, role-playing, sports, vehicle simulations, construction and management simulations, adventure, artificial life, puzzle games and others. Interestingly, space does not feature in any of these categorizations.

For the purposes of this study, games with spatial emphases can be classified into two categories. While some use given spaces using city maps, sports fields and boards, others allow the player to create or design new spaces. The Sims is an example of the second category. It is a simulation role playing game which allows players to design and use domestic spaces. It is preceded by SimCity, which is a city simulation game.

First published in 1989, SimCity is one of the earliest games that involves players as designers. The co-founder of the game's production company Will Wright explains the game using the metaphor of gardening. According to him, the player is in charge of the preparation of the soil and seeding and waits for the plants to grow. During the process s/he can choose to enlarge the garden (Chan, 2003, 1). Thus, SimCity endows its players with Godly abilities to create modern cities from scratch, to determine zones and to control urban sprawl. Following SimCity, Wright decided to design a house simulator after his own house was demolished in the Oakland-Berkeley fire in 1991. While he was rebuilding his house, he invented "Home Tactics: The Experimental Domestic Simulator." The Sims is an improved version of the latter, which is a social simulator as much as a physical one (Chan, 2003).

The Sims legitimizes the consumption patterns of consumer capitalism and reproduces heteropatriarchal gender stereotypes. Players are prompted to design different lifestyles but only within the given structure of the game. Furthermore, far from being gender-neutral, the Sims is overwhelmingly patronized by female players. According to one online research carried out in The Sims 2 web page in the Netherlands, (www.desims2.nl; by Jansz, Avis and Vosmeer, 2010) 84% of the players are female and 74% of the players are younger than 18. The consideration of such limitations and contextual aspects of the Sims, reveals significant sub-texts which provide a framework for a critical analysis of the game.

2 GAMEPLAY

The Sims is a role playing game (RPG) that is based on the construction of a household. It simulates ordinary daily routines carried out by ordinary actors. As Charles Paulk (2006, 1) who writes on game studies, aptly puts,

“To be sure, the game offers no carjackings or buxom, gun-toting heroines-just regular people, or rough approximations thereof, going about their day-to-day routines. A home is built, a family moves in, and Sim life takes its course.”

Within two years of its release in 2000, the game became the bestselling pc game of all times (Paulk, 2006, 1). A year later, the producers released extension packs, such as “The Sims House Party” (2001) and “The Sims Hot Date” (2001). These packs included new features and objects. For example, “The Sims Hot Date” brought dating into the game, which resulted in the introduction of new shopping centers, night clubs, restaurants and recreation areas (Boland, 2010). In 2004, EA games published The Sims 2, which was a more developed version of the original one in terms of graphics and play mechanics. The Sims 3, which is the focus of the following section, was published in 2009.⁴ The company released extension packs for every Sims version. Those packs can be categorized as “stuff packs,” which add new objects, and “compilation packs,” which add new elements. For instance, while “The Sims 3 World Adventures” (2009) is a compilation pack and it includes new features such as traveling new areas like China, France and Egypt; “The Sims 3 High-End Loft Stuff” is a stuff pack and includes objects such as modern sofas or contemporary outfits. (Boland, 2010).⁵

⁴ Although the last version of the game is The Sims 4, which was released in 2014, it is still under development as the Company releases patches for fixing problems and changes the codes of the game. Hence this chapter focuses on the basic game structure of The Sims 3.

⁵ List of The Sims games published until 2014 can be found in appendix 1 (Moby Games, <http://www.mobygames.com/game-group/maxis-sim-series/offset,0/so,1d/>)

2.1 Constructing the Game

The Sims 3 is based on a simple framework, the main elements of which are spaces and subjects (Figure 2.1). The gameplay is structured on an algorithm which defines the relationship between these two elements. Spaces and subjects interact with each other in the context of everyday life.

2.1.1 Framework: Spaces and Subjects

Spaces consist of towns and houses. This is significant as public spaces are largely excluded from the main framework of the game. Hence from the start, the game excludes public activities such as sports organizations or other forms of collective acts such as festivals and protests. Even though some expansion packs allow users to use public spaces for gathering, politically charged acts are conspicuously excluded. The characteristics of both the towns and the houses are provided in the given menus of the game. The players have the option of choosing from the given spaces or constructing their own.

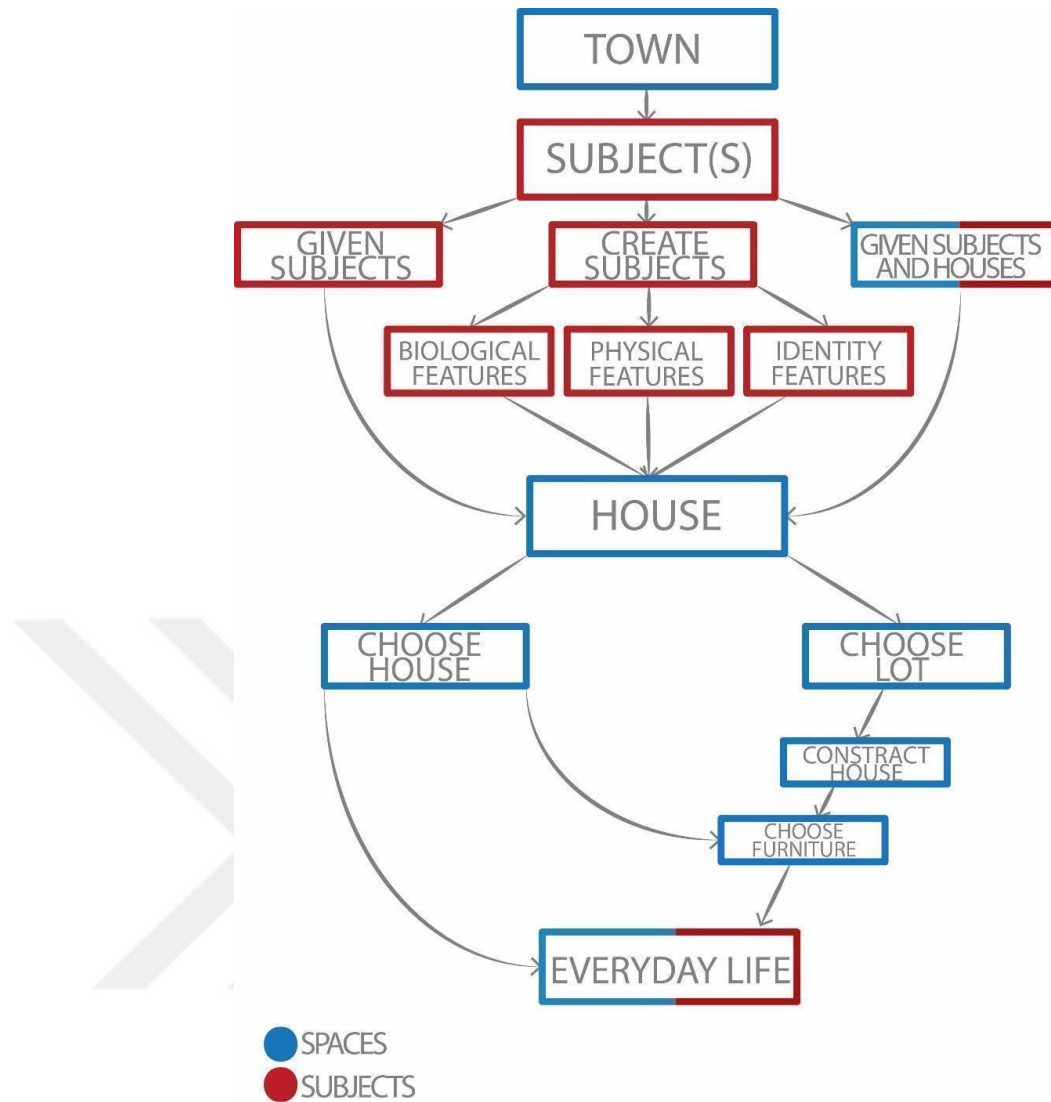


Figure 2.1 The Sims 3 algorithm visualized by the author

A single lot and a house constitute the basic spatial elements of the game, which can be purchased by the players. While some of the lots come with a house, others are vacant. Prices are directly proportional with the lots' square footage, the luxury measures of the houses and their siting (Pault, 2006). The game provides constructional elements like columns, walls, openings, steps, staircases, roofs, finishings and landscape elements to build detached houses for the subjects who choose vacant lots. The exclusion of any other residential type such as condominiums or apartments guarantees the integrity of the conventional suburban setting.

Construction is possible on a grid system where walls provide the main structure. Other elements are purchased based on a catalogue system, tagged with varying prices depending on quality and size. The furniture catalogue, which is classified by room types rather than the function of the objects, is remarkable in reinstating conventional uses of residential spaces. (Figure 2.2) Even though the game doesn't restrict the players about placing furnitures to specific rooms, it defines a set of rules about which furniture should be where, by leading them via pre-defined categories. For example, although the game doesn't warn or block the players when they place a fridge to a bedroom, they have to use the "kitchen" category for purchasing a fridge. This system re-produces the preconceptions about how a house should be furnished.



Figure 2.2 Constructing and furnishing the house (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

The constitution of subjects follows a similar pattern. While a set of ready-made subjects are available, it is also possible to construct one by combining various traits that are offered in the catalogue. (Figure 2.3) These include biological, physical and identity traits. Biological features consist of gender, skin, eye and hair color, face and body shape. Physical features include clothes, voice tone and age

group. First and a last name and personality constitute the catalogue of identity traits. Personality traits are the most complex ones as they consist of physical, social, mental and emotional features. They include a broad array of choices ranging from a lifetime wish to a favorite food, color and music.



Figure 2.3 Screenshot from subject catalogue (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

The relationship between the subjects depends on the choice of the player. They can be roommates, siblings, spouses, sons and daughters. Relationship types between the subjects can be chosen or defined by the players. The gameplay structure is constructed on subjects' interactions with spaces which is explained further in the next section.

2.1.2 Process: Space/Subject Interaction

The house is the focal point of the Sims. The available options for the Sims subjects' character traits, relationships, careers, needs and opportunities which are embedded in the game package need some elaboration as they are critical in deciphering the underlying assumptions that structure the game (Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4 Categories of subject constitution that structure everyday life throughout the game

Relationships are classified as romantic, friendly and hostile. Possible actions within these categories are limited by the game. For example, teen Sims cannot have sexual interaction and they cannot get pregnant. Other features such as clothes, jobs, and toys too are classified based on age groups. Children cannot quit school and have full time jobs, and adults cannot play with toys. The game clearly promotes conformist lifestyles with high social esteem. Although the adult Sims subjects can have jobs, work spaces are out of reach throughout the game. However, job performances can be tracked from the menus and necessary skills can be learned by interacting with related objects. For example, a subject can use a chess board or a book for having logical skills, or swim for athletic skills.

Character traits such as bravery, geniusness, flirtatiousness and clumsiness effect subjects' interactions with spaces and other subjects. For example, a 'neat' Sim wants to keep the environment clean and tidy. The character traits and the personality of the subject determine his/her desires. When the player fulfills the desires of the subject, s/he collects points that are called "lifetime points." This is exemplary of the reward system in the game. Collecting points not only makes the subject's mood happier, but also enables the player to select social rewards such as being "never dull", "an office hero", or "a legendary host". Happier, subjects are rewarded with increased acceptability in social life.

One of the most important character traits that is provided in the game is based on the needs of the subjects. (Figure 2.5) Besides vital needs such as food, sleep and hygiene, the game includes the need for having an aesthetic environment. Such items as paintings, plants and furniture are provided to effect the quality of the domestic environment. The décor of a house is considered to be compatible with the needs of the Sims that inhabit it (Cited in Paulk, 2006). As journalist Clive Thompson (2003) explains, these needs have a hierarchy:

"Wright [creator of the game] boned up on psychologist Abraham Maslow's Motivation and Personality, including his famous theory of the hierarchy of needs. Maslow argued in the '40s and '50s that human behavior could best be explained as a quest to satisfy primal needs such as hunger and safety before addressing demands such as love or self-actualization. The Sims are programmed this way, which is why they seem so true to life.

For example, your Sim won't enjoy a movie if she's hungry. Aesthetic appreciation of a movie is a higher-order pleasure—and she can't do it if her stomach is growling.”

For example, if a Sim owns an expensive painting, his/her need of being in a pleasant environment is satisfied. On the other hand, if a subject doesn't fulfill his/her environmental needs by buying goods, s/he is denied lifetime points and his/her social acceptability diminishes. Chan states that (2003, 4),

“The context of the player's creation is the characters that live within the house that the player builds. According to the argument made in Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*, the design of one's environment directly affects one's behavior. Serving as the context for the creation of the home, the characters react to the architectural design of their environment by modulating their behavior. The characters are happier when they're living in a more thoughtfully and functionally designed home.”

Indeed, in his book *Pattern Language* the renowned architectural theorist Christopher Alexander offers a structure to design built environments (1977). Working at urban, neighborhood and household levels, he develops a structure for the users to make their own decisions about their immediate environment. Accordingly, householders make decisions about the design of their house while neighborhood residents make decisions about their neighborhood. The Sims also supports this idea as it gives the players the opportunity to design the houses that are appropriate for the characters that they have created. While creating a household, the player learns how to design the living environment according to the needs of the users. S/he learns to make appropriate design decisions. However, these decisions are inevitably determined by the structure of the game whereby the desirability of any object increases in proportion with its monetary value – which is the basic premise of the culture of consumer capitalism.



Figure 2.5 Screenshot showing the needs of a subject (Electronic Arts Inc, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2014)

The game clearly promotes the dominant values of consumer societies by presenting commodities as indispensable needs. Ownership of goods is the precondition for happiness and social acceptance. The game directs subjects' preferences to spacious residences, higher income, higher consumption levels and social escalation (Paulk, 2006, 5). Since marginalized life styles are not deemed acceptable, such choices make the subjects unhappy and a failure in life. Play Scholar Miguel Sicart (2003) explains,

“Speaking with game language, in order to succeed in playing the game, there are no restraints in the avatars we select, as they are all equal to the game system. One of the goals, to obtain happiness, can be acquired by those means the player believes useful or relevant, no matter what the simulation's degree of realism is. Nevertheless, the sun is not always

shining in Simland (or simcity). This idyllic vision can be discussed going further in the exploration of the boundaries of the game. I called this exploration the Kurt Cobain Refutation.”

In his exploration, Sicart tried to replicate the reknowned late musician Kurt Cobain’s life to see if it is possible to live a life out of norms and still be happy in the course of the game. He created a SimCobain and built a mansion for him filled with a broad variety of goods. He created his short term wife Courtney Love for an unhappy marriage. He made Cobain an alcoholic musician, skillful in guitar playing. Having few friends, the Cobain character spent his time at home watching TV and playing the guitar. After a few moves, the game started to refuse complying with Sicart’s choices. It forced the character to want a job, a decent relationship with his wife and friends (Sicart, 2003, 9). Sim subjects are allowed to be happy only in a specific social frame that follows a conservative cultural politics of gender based on consumerism.

As Sicart’s experiment strikingly reveals, although the Sims seemingly offers a free-hand to the player in terms of the creation of spaces and characters, his/her moves are limited by the very structure of the game. As Sicart (2003, 9) aptly puts, “no misfits are allowed in The Sims, only the stereotyped winners of late capitalist societies.” Similarly, according to David Chan (2003), a materialist lifestyle is the precondition for a subject’s happiness. In order to satisfy the characters’ consumerist desires, players are continuously prompted to spend in order to build, to maintain and to increase their possessions.

3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Games and toys that children play are neither randomly chosen objects nor purely innocent tools. According to cultural theorist Roland Barthes (1972),

“All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects, as if in the eyes of the public, the child was, all told, nothing but a smaller man, a homunculus to whom must be supplied objects of his own size.”

This common characteristic may have seen variations in time but covers a broad variety of games and toys ranging from fantasy creatures to sophisticated digital scenarios. Dolls are arguably the most powerful toys that enable ways of teaching and perpetuating social rules including gender roles. As digital media theorist Tanja Sihvonen (2009, 225) explains,

“Children’s toys are “technologies of gender” in the sense that the politics of simulation inscribed in them instruct their players on how to be properly socialized into being either a boy or a girl.”

Space and gender are significant aspects of the Sims not only because %60 of the players are women, (Paulk, 2006) but also because the main setting is the home where space/gender relations are most powerfully played out. The Sims participates in the construction of the patriarchal roles of men and women in the house and is structured to perpetuate dominant gender norms. As such, it follows a lineage of other toys and games that can be traced back to the dollhouses of the 16th century, which call for elaboration in this context.

3.1 Gender and Domesticity: From the Dollhouse to the Sims

Historical doll houses inform the basis of the social function of the Sims in contemporary social settings. According to digital media theorist Tobey Crockett (2007, 219), making miniature versions of our world is an ancient human activity and there are samples made of bone and ivory dating back to the Ice Age. Dollhouses, which originated in the Protestant countries of Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries and spread to the Anglo-Saxon countries, were popular among

bourgeois families. These toys were meant to teach girls how to be successful as mothers, mistresses and housekeepers. Sihvonen (2009, 223) states that,

“The doll’s house was the perfect vessel for transferring the bourgeois ideology: It subtly demonstrated the wealth of the commissioning family while simultaneously acting as a reminder of the proper social order.” (Wade, 2014)

According to Lisa Antrim, the author of *The Family Dolls’ Houses* these houses were originally termed as “baby’s houses”. They not only reflected their contemporaneous interior decoration taste, but also the culture of upper class families. These hand-made houses were highly decorated and had wallpapers with vivid colors which replicated the family home they belonged to. (Figure 3.1, 3.2) Although some parts of these dollhouses got lost in time, replicas are produced and broken parts are restored (Wade, 2014).



Proctors House is unusual in that it opens both at the front and back.

Figure 3.1 A replica of a dollhouse, built in the 1950s, based on the owner’s original childhood toy (“Ancestral homes”, 2016)



PHOTOS: T. DE HOGHTON PHOTOGRAPHY

Figure 3.2 A replica of an 18th century baby house. All the furnishings were handmade by John Kim ("Ancestral homes", 2016)

Dollhouse items were handmade and valuable because of their intricate craftsmanship. They were not only toys, but also decorative items that were displayed in the houses as a sign of wealth (Sihvonen, 2009). These precious toys were used as a method for keeping little girls in the house and familiarizing them with the life they should expect.

The Sims is hardly different in that respect. Role playing in virtual reality too consolidates dominant social norms and is a rehearsal of everyday life. Even though

the PEGI System⁶ evaluates The Sims series as +12, the game can be played by every computer-literate person. This limitation may point to a difference between the player group of dollhouses and The Sims series, as the age group of dollhouse players can be younger than The Sims players. However, as Flannagan (2003, 1) explains there are unmistakable similarities between the two types of play:

“[The Sims] offers the ability to create a virtual house, wherein players control characters as though it were an interactive, intelligent dollhouse. Known also as a "paper doll" game among consumers, the space of the game is a site of negotiation between the real and the virtual domestic experience; it ironically, yet wholeheartedly, embraces suburban-style consumption and domesticity. Because both computer gaming and playing house are mechanisms of fantasy, it is valuable to examine domestic space and The Sims carefully; both types of play also involve a good deal of gender role definition, projection, and reversal or subversion, and thus looking at gender roles and space within The Sims in relation to historical models.”

The first patent for a dollhouse was given to C. J. Schmitt and K. R. Schundler in the USA in 1920 where only a few features were specified. Consisting of three connected rooms, it has one main entrance from the central one. In the later patents, features were defined in more detail. For example, a patent that was given in 1920, specifies the rules of assemblage, organization and materials. This dollhouse is similar to the typical suburban houses of the 1920's. It has an orthogonal plan with a veranda at the entrance, defined by columns and balusters; a gable roof; and a gable window at the front façade. (Figure 3.3)

There is an indisputable resemblance between the first American examples of dollhouses and The Sims houses. (Figure 3.4) Most of the ready-made The Sims houses are in the American suburban style including verandas surrounded by columns which define the entrance area. These ready-made houses also have one

⁶ PEGI (Pan European Game Information) system is a consumer oriented rating system for evaluating entertainment content based on age.

or two storeys based on orthogonal plans. Some of them have openings for attics which is again similar to the first doll house examples.

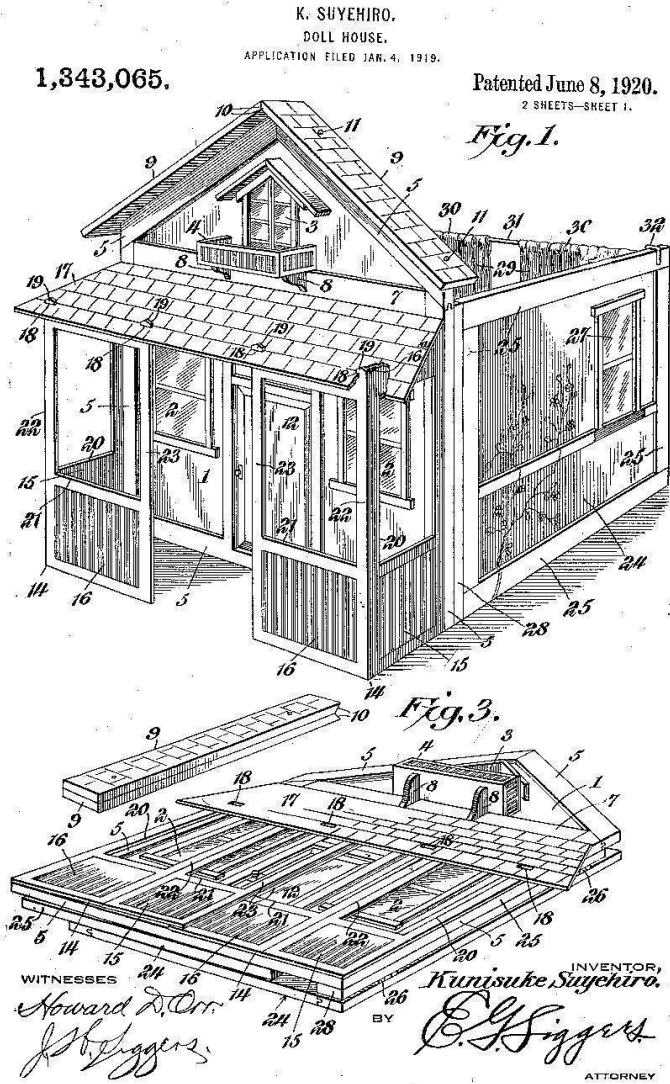


Figure 3.3 Patent document of a dollhouse (United States Patent and Trademark Office , K. Suyehiro, 1920)



Figure 3.4 Ready-made house examples from The Sims 3 (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

The second wave of popular dollhouses came in the 1960s, when Barbie Doll houses began to be produced by the Mattel Company. These were initially made of cardboard and then plastics, including furniture, fixtures and fittings (Anne, 2015). Unlike their precedents, where the house and the dolls were inseparable components of a package, the Barbie doll houses were a backdrop for the dolls, which could be purchased separately. Yet they provided a significantly gendered mise-en-scene for their characters, with features that were totally compatible with the dolls'. Unlike the earlier dollhouses, which mimicked their contemporaneous interiors, Barbie doll houses use popular signs of femininity in a world of make-believe.

According to Seçil İçke (2013, 50), who did extensive research on Barbie dolls, toys produced for girls bear feminine traces such as references to normative domestic roles and are produced to invoke their characterization as “cute”. Barbie is presented and marketed with a lifestyle including a boyfriend, a doll house, furnitures, clothes and cars (İçke, 2013, 34). Barbie’s doll houses and accessories are mostly pink and white. In the example of “Barbie Dreamhouse” toy set from Mattel Company, (“Barbie® Dreamhouse® - Shop.Mattel.com”, n.d.) there are highly decorated, bright pink rooms and accessories. (Figure 3.5) The web site has

illustrations showing the Barbie doll cooking in the kitchen, in the bathtub with her swimsuit and resting on her pink sofa. (Mattel Company, n.d.)



Figure 3.5 A Barbie Doll House example, marketed as “Barbie Dreamhouse” (“Barbie Dreamhouse”, n.d.)

Rogers (1999; by İçke, 2013) explains:

“Barbie is a cultural icon, a figure that any girl cannot escape, whether she has or has not owned one as a child. Much further than being only a plastic toy, she is a persona, a western female, a teenager, a supermodel or even president of USA. Above all her characteristics, one most obvious thing that she refers to is femininity. Barbie is a female in every condition, as any character she takes on. This is the reason why this toy is mostly referred to as “she” rather than “it””

Conforming to a specific understanding of femininity, the impossibly tall and slim Barbie doll turned out to be an icon with its identity, appearance and surroundings. Her excessive femininity echoes in the Barbie doll houses which provide a dream world of pastel colors, mirrors and decorated surfaces. Like the Barbie dollhouses, The Sims too uses gendered features such as creating a pink environment for female characters; pastel colored decorative elements, and cosmetic products in ready-made girls’ rooms.

The dollhouse metaphor is used frequently as a marketing strategy for The Sims. Even the creator of the game, Will Wright, referred to The Sims as a computerized dollhouse (Wirman, 2014, 8). Game studies researcher Hanna Wirman (2014, 8) argues that likening the game to a dollhouse is “one of the strongest tools for gendering the game as it creates prejudices among players and defines a target group. She states that: “While he (Wright) has been careful when giving interviews on who The Sims games were designed for, the target audience seems rather clear given that the game’s working title was actually ‘Dollhouse’.” The dollhouse metaphor helped the game to be publicized in such magazines as Cosmopolitan, Mademoiselle and Working Woman which are targeted to female readers (Kline et al., 2003, 272).

However, games magazines whose readers are predominantly male, need to adopt a different discourse in articles on The Sims. Wirman argues that the game had to be “more than just a dollhouse” to attract the male dominant gamer society at large. According to the GamesRadar magazine “It’s kinda like a dollhouse, except way cooler.” (Stapleton, 2006; by Wirman, 2014, 45).

From the primitive versions to the digital age, many aspects of dollhouses saw significant changes. But the word “dollhouse” still signifies a game atmosphere for women. Despite its marketing strategies The Sims is a continuation of the dollhouse tradition including all its gendered connotations.

3.2 Comparative history of the Sims series

The Sims game series witnessed considerable changes since its first appearance in 2000. There are four main versions respectively titled, The Sims, The Sims 2 (2005), The Sims 3(2009) and The Sims 4(2014), each of which have improved graphic quality and game components. All versions have expansion packs and stuff packs, which can be bought separately. For the purposes of this study, the changes that were introduced in terms of the body features of The Sims characters and their household structures are the most significant topics that call for analysis.

3.2.1 The Body

The body features of The Sims characters were treated differently in different versions of the game. The first game doesn't allow any modification on the bodies but offers a choice between three skin colors. The bodies of all characters, come with their own outfit and hair style. The Sims 2 offers four skin color options and a selection between "slim" and "fat" bodies. The "fat" sim comes with a larger waistline and -for women- bigger breasts. As the term "fat" bears negative resonances, the discourse of the game clearly reproduces normative beauty standards. (Figure 3.6)



Figure 3.6 Body features of a "Fat Sim" (Mod The Sims, 2016)

The Sims 3 on the other hand, offers more choices in terms of body figures. Rather than having standardized options, it features sliding bars for body weight, muscle size, muscle definition and breast size (for women). However, these sliders indicate the degree of acceptability for the body in question. For example, it is impossible to create a female sim with no breast mass. There is a slider bar for skin tone and there is a broad range of skin colors including pink, blue or green. The Sims 4 lets the player to modify the body in a more detailed way. Although there

are sliders for weight and muscle definition, the player can directly modify the sim's body by pulling or pushing parts of the figure on the screen. This seems to create more freedom for sculpting the body, despite the limitations that are imposed on the dimensions.

Even though the game sets limits on how fat or athletic a sim can be, successive versions of the game offered broader options to the players for defining the sims' bodies. However, all versions ignore height and body disabilities. The height of a sim is dependent on her/his age and it is standard. It is impossible to create dwarfs or short and tall sims. Consequently, there is no room to create spaces for disabled bodies as well.

3.2.2 The Household Structure

The first Sims game is the most primitive one. There are only five houses available, two of which are populated by ready-made families. Although no empty lots are available for new buildings, it is possible to modify a given house. The ready-made families are called the Goths and the Newbies. The former consists of a woman, a man and a child and survives in the later versions of the game as well. The latter consists of a woman and a man and is mainly designed for tutorial purposes to teach the rules of the game. Although a nuclear family structure is implicit in the ready-made households, players are allowed to assign other relationships between the subjects, e.g. the man and the woman in the Newbies can be acted out as siblings. The name of the house bears its owner name, which all the family members adopt. Even when a man moves into a woman's house he adopts the woman's surname.

The Sims 2 amended this unpredictable, and supposedly undesirable situation by introducing the notion of the family tree to the structure of the game. The Sims 3 allowed the inhabitants to keep their surnames despite the original name of the household ("Comparison between The Sims base games", n.d.)⁷. Same sex

⁷ For understanding comparison between the gameplay structures of The Sims series, open source web sites such as sims.wikia.com is used. These web sites are created by The Sims players, for improving other players' gaming experiences. Because there are no academic sources explaining gameplay, those sources were the only way to explain game structures.

marriages were also made possible in The Sims 2. These were identified as “joining union” rather than “getting married”. This comes with a price however, as same sex couples get less points in the “aspirations” category ("Marriage", n.d.).

The Sims 3 has a more complex marital system. There, Sims can ask the parents' permission before proposing. Also, if the sim that has been proposed has children, the latter adopt their step-parent's surname. Step-siblings are not allowed to form romantic relationships. Only after The Sims 3, same sex couples were allowed to get married without any difference from heterosexual marriages ("Marriage", n.d.).

There is no option for pregnancy in The Sims 1, although the question of whether or not to have a baby could be discussed by the couples, and adoption was offered as a choice. Only the Sims 2 included pregnancy, whereby even male characters could get pregnant through “alien abduction”. Abortion was not an option ("Pregnancy", n.d.) The Sims 2 offered social services to amend the possible failures in the family system. If a child is not sufficiently taken care of, the related social service took him/her under its care and/or secured a foster family for him/her. However, this feature disappeared in The Sims 3.

In a somewhat similar manner, the first version of the game forced children with poor grades to go to the military school with no prospect of returning back to the family. The Sims 4 introduced a grading system for children, which was related to their moods. The first two versions of the game did not provide any support for children who did not fit into the official education system. However, the relationship between schooling and careers was left loose, whereby career skills could be gained by means of other tools which ranged from books, to telescopes and treadmills.

Even though there are social improvements in the game, such as the inclusion of same sex marriages, it is predominantly structured to limit the player within its given parameters, rather than allowing him/her to produce new kinds of relationships. The improvements are based on changing social norms in the (Western) society at large rather than extending the players' imaginative capacity.

4 GENDER AND SPACE IN THE SIMS

As researchers in gender studies have argued, to be a proper part of the society, an individual need to perform an appropriate gender identity (McDowell, 1999, 7). These identities are produced and reproduced through the family, schools, and work spaces by norms which are further strengthened through the media. According to cultural theorist Henrietta Moore (1988), gender can be perceived from two simultaneous perspectives as a symbolic construction and a social relationship. Although male and female roles vary in different cultures and geographies (McDowell, 1999) binary constructs of gender are attributed stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics in patriarchal societies. Most typically, while “public, outside, work, production, independence and power” are seen as masculine attributes, notions of “private, inside, home, leisure, consumption, dependence and lack of power” are seen as feminine (McDowell, 1999, 12).

The Sims series provides fertile ground to explore space and gender relationships by means of the attributes of both the characters and the range of spaces that they occupy. This chapter provides a critical analysis of the Sims in terms of the characters’ gendered relationship to their spaces.

4.1 Representations of the Sims

As research has revealed, the Gaming market and industry are strongly male dominated (Wirman, 2014; Kafai, Heeter, Denner, & Sun, 2011). For most of the games, both producers and potential players are men. Marketing strategies are fabricated accordingly, which largely exclude potential female players. Most of the games in the market are built on patriarchal norms and stereotypes (Wirman, 2014, 45). Jansz, Avis and Vosmeer state that (2010, 237):

“Female characters are under-represented, and generally appear in submissive positions with an emphasis on their virtual breasts and buttocks (Beasley and Collins Standley, 2002). Recently, there has been a tendency to include competent female protagonists like Lara Croft, but these heroines are still portrayed in a hyper-sexualized fashion.”

The Sims corporeal representation is relatively more realistic but as its official website shows, the characters conform to conventional gender norms. (Figure 4.1) There, the female Sims are mostly happy looking, slim, young and beautiful. The male characters too are mostly young, athletic and masculine. Even though there are few examples otherwise, the big picture presents a group of happy, young and healthy looking figures. Just as cosmetic products' use "perfect" women figures for selling their products, the Sims game offers its potential players the chance to identify with a desirable figure. Both male and female players are encouraged to design avatars that fit into normative standards of beauty.



Figure 4.1 Representations of The Sims 4 characters ("The Sims - Images & Videos - Official Site", 2016)

The media, especially online communication channels, play a major role in the promotion of the game industry in terms of creating a sense of community for gamers, whereby they can learn and share playing techniques and exchange opinions on various aspects of the game.⁸ Paper publications too play a major role in this respect (Newman, 2008,29).

According to Wirman (2011) game magazines choose predominantly male players as a target group. In the Finnish magazine *Pelit*, a male writer addresses

⁸ Online forums of The Sims players are analysed in chapter 4.2.

gamers as ‘us guys’ and writes about the female game characters from the point of view of a sexualized male gaze, based on their physical attractiveness. Indeed, most games feature over sexualized women figures and masculine male figures that reproduce conventional representations of heteronormativity. This leads women players to be marginalized in the gamer society. Games which are imputed to women are classified as ‘pink games’. However, some of the best-selling games, such as Pac-Man or The Sims, do not fit into this classification (Wirman, 2011, 83-84).

Unlike the majority of digital games, The Sims series is often perceived as a “girl’s game” (Wirman, 2014) due to its domestic focus and emphasis on family life. This situation is explained at an interview conducted by Hanna Wirman (2014, 75) where a male player states:

“I assume they [male classmates] just haven’t bothered to try, exactly because it is considered a “girls” game, it would make them look somehow “sissy” in their friends’ eyes.”

Although The Sims is associated with femininity, in English-language game web sites such as GameZone or EuroGamer, it is represented as suitable for ‘anyone’ to play. Wirman (2014, 45) explains that being a professional and hardcore “gamer” is associated with masculinity. The term “anyone” in the discourse on the Sims, refers to the ones who lack game knowledge and skills. As the gaming industry is a male dominated industry, the term “gamers” predominantly represents knowledged and skilled male game players (Wirman, 2014, 45). Therefore, it can be safely argued that by being marketed as a suitable game for “anyone,” The Sims is implicitly presented as a game for a female audience.

4.2 The Urban Context

Urban settlements of The Sims series witnessed changes in time. In the inaugural version, The Sims had only one “neighborhood”, that was included in the game package. This neighborhood was given the name of “Pleasantview” in the second version where two new neighborhoods called “Strangetown” and “Veronaville” were added. Players’ access to urban experiences were limited. Only

in the third game, neighborhoods were changed into which were a collection of individual lots, placed on a larger map. This change brought free access to the urban context, letting the sim characters to walk or drive freely between residential and commercial lots and green areas. Hence the analysis of urban and social organizations became possible with The Sims 3.

4.2.1 The Urban Organization

The basic Sims 3 game comes with a single town, called Sunset Valley, which is a suburban setting with single storey and duplex detached houses located around the city center (Figure 4.2). Each house is placed on an individual lot with a garden. Public spaces are situated around a City Hall which faces a park. While some, such as parks, the graveyard, the beach, the public library, the gym and the Modern Art Museum can be experienced by the subjects, others are not accessible. These include the City Hall, the bookstore, the hospital and the police station.



Figure 4.2 Sunset Valley (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

Players have the option of purchasing game packages which offer eleven alternative town settings. These are called Roaring Heights, Midnight Hollow, Dragon Valley, Aurora Skies, Monte Vista, Sunlit Tides, Lucky Palms, Lunar Lakes, Hidden Springs, Barnacle Bay and Riverview. These names connote

romanticized landscapes and suggest an upper class lifestyle. Some are highly suggestive of the physical characteristics of the related towns. For example, Monte Vista, is a Middle Age European town, dotted with piazzas and located on a hill top with a citadel. ‘Roaring Heights’ and ‘Modern Heights’, on the other hand, are towns that offer metropolitan amenities and multistory buildings. Sunlit Tides is a luxury vacation town with bungalows. (Figure 4.3) The game leaves no room for any alternative urban arrangements.

The Players’ intervention to the organization of the town is also limited by the game, which provides the general layout and functional zoning. In cultural theorist Richard Sennett’s (2011) terms, the modernist concept of zoning reflects a “fear of touching”. Sennett states that planners separate different ethnical or economical groups into different zones, often demarcated by highways. They place public facilities such as schools at the center of the zones, instead of the edges where different social strata can interact. We can see this fear of touching in Sunset Valley too where houses are grouped according to their prices, which differentiates neighborhoods according to the financial status of their residents. Although social relations are encouraged in the game, as characters from the same social class live in the same neighborhood, meeting with others is an unlikely opportunity. However, at least in theory, the placement of the public facilities of The Sims towns enables the interaction of different income groups.



Figure 4.3 Sunlit Tides (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

Each city is endowed with a city hall and every citizen can choose to have a political career, but there are no elections. Although the City Halls are the centers of urban administration, possibilities of political activity are limited and the latter are designed to be inconsequential. There is no democracy in the city states of the Sims. An idealized urban administration is run by the structure of the game which does not involve political agency. Sims towns don't provide options for collective action apart from parties which are classified as wedding, birthday and house parties. Towns are spaces of socialization and consumption rather than political agency for the Sims.

The Sims towns are highly secure places and except from household thefts, common urban crimes such as purse snatching or rape are not possible. The system excludes homelessness. Every Sim is prompted to leave the streets after 11 o'clock since all shops and activity nodes, including night clubs are closed at later hours.

Consumption patterns are largely disconnected with urban life as the Game involves a catalogue system whereby the characters can buy goods without leaving the house. Game designer Celia Pearce (2002) refers to the Sims as "the IKEA game" which marks the centrality of the house in everyday practices (Paulk, 2006). In early versions of the game there had been no access to the city at all. With the expansion pack "Hot Date," which was introduced in 2001 a somewhat poor connection with consumption spaces was established. Thereby the characters could call a cab and go to restaurants but no further interaction with the city was possible. Only in later versions of the game, such as The Sims 3, the characters can experience the town; walk in the streets, go jogging, ride their car or bicycle. Although most of the commercial lots are accessible in later versions, work spaces still have limited access.

The game clearly developed in increasing the intensity of urban life for the sims characters. However, the latter's participation in urban life is rooted in consumption rather than collective political action.

4.2.2 The Urban Community

Sunset Valley has 24 ready-made households consisting of 64 characters. The latter can be analyzed under three categories to surface the gender issues that are embedded in the game: Occupations, traits and lifetime wishes.

In terms of occupation, the majority of the sims consist of students (25%) with equal numbers of male and female subjects. However, although the business career is dominated by men (75%), culinary is dominated by women (100%). These results reinforce the normative gender based occupational segregation. Also, criminal career has a female dominancy (66,7%) which is a representation of women in villain roles. However, careers such as military and professional sports which are traditionally viewed as masculine are equally occupied by both genders, the political career is conspicuously populated mostly by women (80%). However, because the game doesn't have an election system, this rate doesn't mean woman politicians have more support from the community. (Table 3.1)

	Frequency	Percent	Male Percentage Within Career	Female Percentage Within Career
Unemployed	6	9,4	66,7%	33,3%
Student	16	25	50,0%	50,0%
Business	4	6,3	75,0%	25,0%
Criminal	3	4,7	33,3%	66,7%
Culinary	2	3,1	0,0%	100,0%
Journalism	4	6,3	50,0%	50,0%
Law Enforcement	3	4,7	33,3%	66,7%
Medical	3	4,7	33,3%	66,7%
Military	2	3,1	50,0%	50,0%
Music	6	9,4	33,3%	66,7%
Politics	5	7,8	20,0%	80,0%
Professional Sports	4	6,3	50,0%	50,0%
Science	3	4,7	33,3%	66,7%
Part-Time Jobs	3	4,7	33,3%	66,7%
Total	64	100	43,8%	56,2%

Table 4.1 The Sims 3, Sunset Valley ready-made sims' occupation percentages

Sims 3 presents a desirable and 'ideal' community which is highly educated, artistic and has a low crime rate. However, high rate of unemployment is posed as a problem which is expected to be solved by the player. Yet, the domination of business careers by men and culinary careers by women are indicative of the

reproduction of stereotypical gender roles. However, there are other occupations such as political careers which are dominated by women and military careers which have an equal gender distribution that go against normative expectations.

Every career in the Sims 3 has 10 levels except unemployment, studentship and part-time jobs. Part-time jobs only have 3 levels. Every Sim starts her/his career from level 1. S/he climbs up the numerical ladder upon completion of certain tasks that are indicative of her/his improvement. Level 10 is the ultimate level in a career that corresponds to maximum salary. The analysis made for ready-made sims shows that the beginning positions are populated mostly by women. While they dominate levels 1,2,4,5 and 6, levels 3,7 and 8 are dominated by men. Level 9 which is the highest level that is populated has one male and one female subject. (Table 3.2)

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Level 1	Count	3	6	9
	% within Career	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%
	% within Gender	10,7%	16,7%	14,1%
Level 2	Count	1	4	5
	% within Career	20,0%	80,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	11,1%	7,8%
Level 3	Count	3	2	5
	% within Career	60,0%	40,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	10,7%	5,6%	7,8%
Level 4	Count	3	4	7
	% within Career	42,9%	57,1%	100,0%
	% within Gender	10,7%	11,1%	10,9%
Level 5	Count	2	3	5
	% within Career	40,0%	60,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	8,3%	7,8%
Level 6	Count	0	5	5
	% within Career	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	13,9%	7,8%
Level 7	Count	1	0	1
	% within Career	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	0,0%	1,6%
Level 8	Count	2	1	3
	% within Career	66,7%	33,3%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	2,8%	4,7%
Level 9	Count	1	1	2
	% within Career	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	2,8%	3,1%
Unemploy ed- Student	Count	12	10	22
	% within Career	54,5%	45,5%	100,0%
	% within Gender	42,9%	27,8%	34,4%
Total	Count	28	36	64
	% within Career	43,8%	56,2%	100,0%
	% within Gender	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.2 The Sims 3, Sunset Valley, ready-made sims' chart for occupation levels in relation to gender.

In terms of the second category, i.e., traits, there are 62 different traits that a sim can have. While an adult sim can have 5 traits, teenagers can have 4, children can have 3 and infants and toddlers can have only 2. Being “charismatic” and “good” are the most commonly used traits of the pre-given sims society. These are followed by “ambitious,” “artistic,” “family-oriented,” “frugal,” “loves the outdoors,” “neat” and “perfectionist”. Women are dominant in “artistic”, “charismatic”, “good”, “neat” and “perfectionist” categories, while men are dominant in “family-oriented”, “frugal” and “loves the outdoors” ones. Pointedly, the “neat” category is reserved to the domestic sphere, which is always already

associated with women. “Disliking children”, “being a coward”, “heavy sleeper”, “hydrophobic”, “a mean spirited sim”, “unlucky”, “virtuoso” and “never being nude” are relatively less frequent traits among the sim society. “Not liking children” is discouraged which supports the ideal of creating bigger families. “Being heavy sleeper” is not acceptable by a consumerist society. The only “coward” sim in the game is a female character which supports the image of women as needy characters. (See appendix 2 for the ready-made sims’ trait statistics in relation to gender.)

The “lifetime wish” category is the most significant one, as the characters are highly rewarded when they fulfill their designated wishes. These wishes are closely related with their traits. For example, if a sim is family-oriented, there is a strong chance of her/his wish to be surrounded by family. Lifetime wishes have a strong effect on the gameplay as they create a visible goal for the player. However, lifetime wishes also provide information on the game developers’ vision of the characteristics of the sim society.

In the course of the game, lifetime wishes are defined when the sims grow to be adults. Hence, 26,6% of the sims are excluded from this category. There are 26 different lifetime wishes available in the Sims 3. 7,8% of the sims wish to be “surrounded by family” which means parenting five children ranging from infants to teenagers. Within all sims wishing to have a large family, 60% are females. Other common wishes include “Living in the lap of luxury” (6,3%) and “Heartbreaker” (6,3%) which are equally distributed between women and men. The following common wishes are “being a CEO,” “having a perfect aquarium” and “being super popular”. All these wishes point to a “perfectly healthy” society which consists of large, high-income families. (See appendix 3 for the ready-made sims’ lifetime wishes statistics in relation to gender.) Most significantly, the game does not permit its characters to forego the chance to have a lifelong wish. Ambition is considered to be an unmistakable trait for normative constructions of success.

4.3 The Domestic Context

The Sims series is focused mainly on domestic spaces and their surroundings. As Flanagan (2003) states:

“The imagery of the home never leaves the screen, and players themselves are confined within or near the inner/outer bounds of the walls. While point of view can change through player commands, the house remains the focus of interaction and play; the structure of the house is the only space in which sims really operate.”

Although the house is the focal element in the game, the house is not a “home” for its residents. According to Sociologist Birthe Bech Jørgensen (1994), house and home are different concepts. While house is a material being, home is a phenomenon constructed by its dwellers. Home is what that structure means to its residents. Dwellers construct that meaning through social interactions, furnishing their houses with objects and memories (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen, 2004, 25). Jørgensen (1994) states that the objects in the house have special meanings for the residents as they are loaded with personal stories, symbols of identity or social status.

Such meanings are annulled in The Sims’ domestic environments, where objects are devoid of narrative content. The Sims characters do not get attached to objects and spaces. The loss of an object that has been used for a long time or moving out of a family home does not affect their moods. Although they have recorded memories of such events as getting married or having sex for the first time, they are not attached to particular spaces or objects. Hence the term “home” is rendered irrelevant in the context of the game, which is based on an economy of consumption rather than emotive connections.

The game’s emphasis on both consumption and reproduction of gender stereotypes are akin to the values of the American suburb. Indeed, the domestic environments of the Sims are modelled after the American suburban neighborhood and its gendered implications.

4.3.1 Gender Roles in the American Suburb and the Sims

According to traditional notions of gender roles, home is associated with women and femininity. According to geographer Rachel Pain (2001), “Femininity has traditionally been associated with the home and with private activities, while masculinity has been associated with the public sphere and work-related activities.”

Furthermore, Gregson and Lowe state that, home is a place “where gender identities are created, expressed and recreated.” Also According to Bahloul (1992, 129 by; McDowell, 1999, 72) “Domestic space is ‘the material representation of the social order’ and ‘social reproduction is achieved through the symbolic perpetuation of the social order represented in the habitat.” According to these scholars, patriarchal ideologies insist on women’s, especially mothers’, dominant role in the house and the importance of the heterosexual family in raising children. This ideal is supported by governments, social and moral campaigners and educational institutions as well as design professionals (Hayden, 1980; Pain vd., 2001, 128-129; Giles, 2005). Jane Rendell (2000, 103) explains the gendered nature of spaces as follows:

“The most pervasive representation of gendered space is the paradigm of the ‘separate spheres’, an oppositional and a hierarchical system consisting of a dominant public male realm of production (the city) and a subordinate private female one of reproduction (the home). The origins of this ideology which divides city from home, public from private, production from reproduction, and men from women is both patriarchal and capitalist.”

The American suburbs, which provide the model for the Sims environments, and which have formed a major part of the USA’s urban sprawl since the last quarter of the twentieth century, are arguably the most prominent stage sets that exemplify the paradigm of the separate spheres. The early suburbs consisted of middle and upper class single family houses served by shopping malls and other public facilities. The majority of the house owners were white, male skilled workers (Hayden,1980, s171).

“Men were to receive “family wages,” and become home “owners” responsible for regular mortgage payments, while their wives became home “managers” taking care of spouses and children. The male worker would return from his day in the factory or office to a private domestic environment, secluded from the tense world of work in an industrial city characterized by environmental pollution, social degradation, and personal alienation. He would enter a serene dwelling whose physical and emotional maintenance would be the duty of his wife. Thus the private suburban house was the stage set for the effective sexual division of labor.” (Hayden,1980, s171)

In this spatial organization each house had almost identical spaces: Kitchen, dining room, living room, bedrooms, garage and parking area. Although residential

zones were physically apart from commercial zones, the suburban houses were temples of consumption. They came with high energy consumption and a considerable amount of mechanized household needs such as cars, stoves, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and washers. These were promoted by advertisements which included such slogans as “I’ll buy that dream!” (Hayden,1980, 174).

These dream houses helped but reproduce specific patterns of patriarchy at a time when the number of women in waged jobs increased. Hayden states that “More and more married women joined the paid labor force, as the suggestible housewife needed to be both a frantic consumer and a paid worker to keep up with the family's bills.” In 1975, 39% of the USA population consisted of two-worker families (Hayden,1980, 174). However, domestic expectations from women did not change when they started to participate in working life (Hayden, 1980, 176).

There is a dilemma for the working woman both in suburban American society and in the Sims as its reflection. Because of the gendered division of labor, women are expected to do the domestic work, take care of the children and elderly people in the family. With women joining the workforce, these expectations did not fade. Being a single parent is even harder than living alone in the Sims. Miguel Sicart (2003) made an experiment to compare the lives of a single woman and a single mother. First he created Marcia. He built her a nice house and found her a job, made her a sociable person and a successful politician with a good salary. Then he created Selma, a single mother, and gave her the same amount of money and built her a house. Her life was much harder than Marcia’s according to Sicart. It took more time for her to achieve success in her job and it was more difficult to have friends. Additionally he states that, (Sicart, 2003)

“Taking these two examples into consideration, a first thought came into my mind: In The Sims there is no discrimination according to sex in terms of salaries. As long as you follow the pre-established ways of being happy in the game, and you have the patience and the gaming skills to succeed, all sims are treated in the same way. Same salaries, same job opportunities, same concept of success.”

Although the game lets every adult character to have a job, it works better if one character takes care of housework such as cleaning and dishes. Shivonen (2009,288) states that, “the logic of The Sims game-as-product is initially built on the premise that the family is more likely to succeed if one of the parents (or one adult among many) does not get a job but spends the day at home, doing housework and socializing with the neighbors.” Although double-income households are discouraged, the player is free to choose who will stay home and take care of the domestic work.

In American suburbs, the participation of the woman in her working life did not diminish the expectation of the domestic work being done by the woman. The working woman was forced to work both outside and at home. This led to the birth of day-care and domestic-care services for the families who could afford them, which meant poor working conditions for other women who were working in those services.

This condition also reflects in The Sims. Houses of The Sims invariably include house-care and day-care systems for working sims who can afford a daily payment. Players have the option of calling a nanny or having a maid with a daily payment. It is possible to order fast food or have a microwave oven for alleviating domestic duties. However, these services provided by the game follows a pattern. When the nanny is requested, an old lady comes over, who wears conservative clothes such as a long skirt and a cardigan. Housework helpers on the other hand, can be maids or servants who are called by means of “maid service” despite their gender and are overly sexualized figures. (Figure 4.4) Maids always wear a black French maid dress with a white apron and a tiara and servants wear tight black pants, half buttoned shirts and gloves. Maids are always slim and beautiful and servants are always athletic and handsome. Among the few interaction options that are offered to maids, “flirting” stands out in their association with sexuality.



Figure 4.4 Maids from The Sims 1,2,3 and 4 ("Maid", 2016)

To conclude, American suburbs have been a powerful means of constructing stereotypical suburban characters, which have been reproduced through various media including recent TV shows. According to the writer of “Postwar America and the Suburban Housewife”, Cristin Stracke (Stracke, 2013, 6-7),

“As a key concept of American history, suburbia has received much attention ever since its involvement in the late 18th century. Even today the notion of American suburbia “still evokes a specific and culturally powerful idea” (Hebel 187). TV series such as “Desperate Housewives” or “Weeds” reveal the currency of the concept and the thorough and complex reception it has undergone so far.”

Digital games too play a significant role in the reproduction of traditional gender roles. Due to its focus on domestic life, *The Sims* is one of the most prominent examples to be analyzed from a gendered viewpoint.

4.3.2 Domesticity in The Sims Series

The Sims lets the player to design stories regarding everyday life and urban and domestic spaces. However, it also offers a ready-made domestic life with a pre designed house and a backstory for the inhabitants. Those houses and stories tell us about the kind of society that is envisioned by its designers. For example, Jamie Jolina is a single sim with a medical career. Her character description says, “Jamie Jolina is as intelligent as she is beautiful. Can she prove to the world that the two traits can coexist?” This statement clearly reproduces the popular belief that intelligent women are not beautiful. The spaces that the game developers designed for these pre-made sims provide clues about the game as well. There are moral expectations and stereotypical representations within the game, which are reflected in the design of domestic spaces.

When the ready-made single sims are taken into consideration, it is possible to compare how spaces are designed according to different genders. There are two male and four female single living sims in the game package and kitchens that belongs to female subjects are significantly larger. When we analyze the rooms of sons and daughters, this differences become more visible. The families with only daughters mostly have dollhouses in the kids’ rooms and such objects as “beauty boxes” with cosmetic equipments or flowers in a vase. None of these objects can be seen in boys’ rooms. With a few exceptions, little and teenage girls’ rooms are decorated in pink. (Figure 4.5) On the other hand boys’ rooms are predominantly blue with blue sheets, toys, wallpapers or cribs. (Figure 4.6)



Figure 4.5 Girls' rooms (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)



Figure 4.6 Boy's rooms (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

For example, The Langerak family has a daughter (Kaylynn) and a teenage son (Parker). Their rooms are next to each other with similar plans but different decorations. (Figure 4.7) One, which clearly belongs to the girl, has a color scheme

of pastel purple with colorful heart shapes on the sheets. The handbook for the game indicates the responsibilities of Kayleen as follows: “Kaylynn Langerak cleans up after her brother and stay-at-home dad while her mother works all day. Now Kaylynn’s Aunt Zelda has arrived with a jungle of half-dead plants in tow and things are messier than ever!” Even though both women in the family work and the father is unemployed, the daughter is kept responsible for the domestic chores. Kaylynn’s description also states that: “Kaylynn - unlike her father, brother, and aunt - tries to keep a spotless house. She enjoys painting when she gets a break from cleaning up after everyone.” Hence the game normalizes the idea of domestic work being done only by women, regardless of her age.



Figure 4.7 Children’s rooms of Langerak Family (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

Another interesting example is the Sekemoto family. This family consists of an elder woman (Yumi), her adult son (Leighton) and his toddler (Sam). The family description indicates that Yumi has recently moved in with her son to help him raise his baby. There is no information on the mother of the baby. Their house consists of a main living area with a kitchen, a small living space, kid’s nursery and a double bed bedroom. There is another bedroom which is detached from the main living area. This arrangement offers one person to take care of the baby and cooking while the other has more personal space. (Figure 4.8) This leaves the player with two scenarios. Either the grandmother will have the attached room and leave the private

area to his son so that he may find a “new mate” or the father will have the attached house and have easier access to the baby and kitchen. However, the game describes him as: “Leighton is an aspiring professional athlete who makes time for his son but doesn’t think he has time to look for love.” It is clear that his priority is his job, while the duty of his mother is to take care of the baby.



Figure 4.8 The house of Sekemoto Family. (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

Although normative gender categories are kept intact, sexuality remains as a conspicuously blurred category in the game. For example, Gobias Koffi is a single male sim who lives in luxury. The character description says “Gobias Koffi is a well-meaning single Sim who just hasn’t met the right woman. Is this because he actually prefers the company of his male friends?”. Although the implications of homosexuality are obvious in this statement, gayness is not presented as a legitimate category. Furthermore, Koffi’s late father, Gaylord Koffi, bears no physical similarity to his son, and there are no references to his mother. The Sims Wiki web site (“Gaylord Koffi”, n.d.) describes Gaylord Koffi as:

“His first name may be a pun the term “gay” - slang for “homosexual”, thereby implying that he is homosexual or that his son is gay. However, “Gaylord” is an actual, if uncommon, given name. It may have been intended to sound somewhat “old-fashioned”. It is possible that his name doesn’t imply he’s gay, but implies he’s the father of a gay son. Lord implies an authority, for example, he’s the authority of someone who’s gay.”

The ambiguous crafting of the sexuality of these characters derive from a broader context of popular culture. For example, the name Gobias Toffi refers to Tobias Fünke, a character from the tv show, *Arrested Development*. In this tv series, Toffi suffers from the “never nude” syndrome, a trait that Gobias Koffi has as well. The sim and the artist who plays Fünke have physical resemblances and the latter’s sexuality is questioned throughout the tv show (“Gobias Koffi”, n.d.) (“Tobias Fünke”, n.d.).

Gobias Koffi’s house is a double storey, modern villa with an open plan. It is decorated with blue tiles and wood finishings against a neutrally colored wall. However, his bedroom, which has bright pink walls and pink decorative elements such as rugs, lighting fixtures and wall decorations, is constituted by the elements of a different vocabulary, which further accentuate the possibility of his homosexuality. (Figure 4.9)



Figure 4.9 The House of Gobias Koffi, ready-made sim of The Sims 3 Sunset Valley (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

Agnes Crumplebottom, a widow sims character is provided with the following story: “Agnes Crumplebottom hadn’t even changed her last name to her husband’s when an unfortunate accident on her honeymoon ended the marriage. Between her growing bitterness and her husband’s ghost scaring away gentleman callers, only the bravest Sim would ever try to win her heart and fortune now.” This story bears the tone of a fairy tale where a heart broken rich woman, seeks a prince charming who will defeat her ghost ex-husband. The woman is represented as a victim who needs to be protected by a man.

Crumplebottom’s house reinforces her story. She has a big luxurious two-storey villa with a gravestone of her husband in the garden. Significantly, there is

an incomplete nursery room at the second level with no furniture except a blue crib and a teddy bear placed on the floor. This is clearly indicative of the desire for a baby who would complete the picture of a nuclear family once a partner appears. (Figure 4.10)

The Sims's gender stereotyping is paralleled by normative moral standards that have gendered connotations. For example, a single but pregnant female sim, Claire Ursine is described as “[...] Since she lives alone, she is hopeful that no one will notice her unexpectedly changing waistline.” As Ursine is separated from the baby's father, she tries to keep her pregnancy out of sight, once more reproducing the normative expectations of the priority of the nuclear family.





Figure 4.10 The House of Agnes Crumplebottom, ready-made sim of The Sims 3 Sunset Valley (Electronic Arts Inc, 2009)

These examples indicate that the sims society is based on the expectations of a conservative culture of consumption which supports heterosexuality and the nuclear family based on normative gender roles.

5 THE PLAYERS

Producers of The Sims allow the player to shape the upcoming features of the game. Discussions between the of gamers their feedback to the producers shape the new patches and updates. Hence the gamer community has a major significance in understanding how The Sims Series produces and reproduces gender norms.

5.1 The Sims Simulations

According to Flannagan (2003) both men and women who play The Sims are “encouraged to be household consumers, feminized and capitalized by the system which creates them” and this made gaming a politically charged site (Flannagan, 2003).

Playing the Sims creates a social platform for the players, where male players are generally absent. As the interviews that Wirman (2014, 45) conducted with male players demonstrate, the latter are defensive about their position and try to find a masculine way of playing the game by such moves as creating ugly babies. This is a paradoxical situation for Wirman as male players choose to masculinize the game rather than abandoning it altogether. One male interviewee, who argued that playing The Sims should be done in secrecy, used such masculine expressions as “riding a moped”, “hell of a lot of fun” and “mates” and suggested appropriate ways of playing the game for male players (Wirman, 2014, 45). According to Wirman, playing the game in other ways than expected and using a masculine language enables male players to justify their own masculinity.

Regardless of gender, players relate themselves to The Sims characters in various different ways. According to Paulk (2006, 1):

“Some coerce their Sims into soap opera narratives, others engineer autobiographical what-if scenarios, and a fair number cook up ever-more elaborate ways to kill off their little creations. In short, people relate to the game in a fascinating variety of ways. Particularly intriguing is that the better part of The Sims' fanbase may have less interest in the Sims themselves than the spaces they inhabit. According to Psychology Today, “most long-term players say designing Sim households is the chief delight of the game” (Thompson, 2003),

and indeed, The Sims' construction and interior design aspects are as impressively realized as its "human" element."

Thompson (2003), describes how The Sims players relate their daily life with to the game. In a striking example, a pregnant woman who had worries about raising a child tried simulating her life as a mother. First she lost control and social workers took her baby away. She said "I was devastated! I was sure that I wouldn't be able to handle a real baby". However, as she kept playing, she surpassed her fears and began to feel like she is capable of being a parent. Another instance is narrated by Wright, about an adopted child who was depressed and not willing to talk about his biological parents. When her foster parents bought him The Sims, he started to play his younger self with his biological parents. The game became a way of expressing himself (Thompson, 2003).

Thompson (2003) explains these different scenarios as experiments for real life situations:

"Ever wonder what would happen if you had seven kids? Or if you were living in a huge frat house? Try it out—set up a Sim with that lifestyle and turn it loose. In one sense, The Sims is a private laboratory to experiment with the forbidden "what-ifs" of your existence. It may be the first form of high-tech self-gnosis: mass therapy disguised as a computer game."

According to Maxis's data mining on the players playing habits, there are two types of Sims players. The first type of players stop caring about the house after its construction and start focusing on the social life of their characters. The second group plays the game for building bigger and a better houses. For them, the predominant role of the characters is to work and earn money to purchase new materials for the house (Chan, 2003, 8). These players are drawn into a cycle of building, maintaining and expanding by accumulating better and better objects (Chan, 2003, 9). As the designer of the game, Wright contends that there is a relation between the built environments of the game and the players who build them, who can mirror their own desired living spaces to the Sims. He states that the Sims is "a laboratory for understanding not only our personalities, but also our personal spaces." (Thompson, 2003; by Paulk, 2006).

Sims players create their real or ideal world in a virtual space and try to accomplish their goals and fantasies there. From this perspective, the Sims can be seen as a tool for reflecting and expressing the self (Paulk, 2006, 223-224).

According to Sihvonen (2009, 224):

“It is no wonder then that the player’s own home and predispositions of her everyday life may closely link to the design of her game characters and houses. ... The drive towards representing the everyday life as “realistically” as possible encourages the players to develop ways and means through which they can reproduce a naturalistic feel to the game space of their creation.”

Also, Paulk (2006) mentions that, recreating one’s personal environment is one of the most popular ways of playing The Sims. In fact, some players commit themselves too much to the game and spend more time in their virtual houses than their real homes (Paulk, 2006).

What pleases the player is not always a positive attribute for the Sim character. The construction and destruction of a Sim relationship can be entertaining to the player but detrimental for the character in question. For the players who choose a materialistic life style, it is important to have their character to focus on work in order to increase her/his income. This decreases the time spent at home and meet social needs such as entertaining guests. Yet the structure of the game requests the formation of friendships for promotions and pay rises. The work-eat-sleep routine, leaves no time for social interactions which causes the Sim character to be depressed. Hence the pursuit for material wealth is not a sufficient condition for happiness. Chan (2003, 8-9) explains this as follows:

“Although the character does benefit by having a nicer environment, the game acknowledges that for the character, this is false happiness in the fact that the objects break down and are costly to maintain. By designing this reaction into the simulation model, the game implicitly proposes the thesis that material wealth holds false happiness, but social relationships are necessary for characters to lead a fulfilling narrative.

However, the structure of the game is designed to promote the “healthy” reproduction of consumer culture rather than encouraging alternatives. Having

social interactions in the game is encouraged with a reward system on jobs as more friends helps the sim to get a promotion. Even social relationships are established with the expectation of material return.

5.2 The Sims Forums

Although The Sims is not a multiplayer game, a community of players are created by means of online forums. Even the game's official web site offers a forum for the players, where the latter can engage in discussions on various aspects of the game. The most popular topics can be analyzed under three categories: Technical, sceneographical and developmental.

In technical discussions, players ask questions about system updates, bugs, patch notes and system news. Sceneographical discussions relate to gameplay. Some produce mini games such as constructing a male sim and asking others to offer their creations of female sims for romantic relationships. Others share the happenings in their sim household on a daily basis. There are forum topics such as "creative corner," for players to share their house designs. The last category consists of shared ideas, suggestions and feedbacks on the current status of the game.

The advantages of the official forum are that this platform is technically reliable and enables communication with the makers of the game. However, it is controlled by the game's production company, which ban discussions on illegitimate activities such as how to download the game for free, how to "crack" it and how to share accounts. Discussions on mods⁹ which may change the age rating of the game are also forbidden, e.g., mods offering teen pregnancy or nude hacks ("UPDATED Forum Rules", 2015).

⁹ Mod is the abbreviated version of modifications in game terminology. There are players who offer modifications on the gameplay, adding new features or changing existing ones. These mods can be downloaded from online sources and they should be installed properly for changing the operating systems of the games.

In addition to the official forum, there is a large number of unofficial forums for The Sims games. Most of those platforms have the advantage of freely discussing any game related topic within more basic limits on such issues as pornography, spamming and swearing. Because these platforms are not related with the producer company, discussions on such illegal topics as cracking the game and playing it for free are possible.¹⁰

Gender is a common subject of discussion on the official forum. There, discussions focus mainly on the body, stereotyping and sexuality. For example, in September 2016, there was a discussion thread on face and body hair related to gender ("More facial hair, and body hair", n.d.). The thread contains entries asking for more hair options without gender reference. However, some members were against body hair for female sims. One said: "You mean body hair for the men sims right? I don't like it on my women sims. Lol." When another member indicates that it should be available for female sims too, she continues: "I said I meaning me myself and I don't want it on my female sims I didn't say we as a whole, I meant myself. So it can be optional but I wouldn't want it on my female sims." Besides the members who support the idea of more face and body hair for both genders and say "I want body hair, for my sims of all genders. Ladies grow body hair too, no-one is forcing you to use it.", there are also members who find the idea disturbing: "Sorry but no. I clearly do not want to see those in game if you want to use such content then use cc (custom content) and keep that out of the sims 4 so this is a terrible idea." Some players react negatively to this addition even if it is an optional feature.

Like the body hair issue, the addition of same sex pregnancy to the June 2016 update received mixed reactions. Many players appreciated and celebrated this on the forum saying that the game is "evolving". There are many forum members who indicated that they prefer the game to be realistic. Some even suggested that the insemination should be held in hospitals with the help of technology, instead of making it look like a natural process.

¹⁰ The present research on the forum discussions on gender is limited to the official forum. ("The Sims Forums", 2016)

The hottest discussion on gender on the forum is about the “Create a Sim Update” (2016) which is mentioned in the forums as “Gender Fluid Update”. Producer company Maxis (“The Sims - The Sims 4 Expands Gender Customization Options - Official Site”, 2016) explains this new feature as follows:

“For the first time, you'll be able to customize your Sims without the gender boundaries previously set in place. This means you can now create Sims with any type of physique, walk style, and tone of voice you choose – regardless of their gender.

We've also made clothing, hair, jewelry, and other visual options available to all Sims. Over 700 pieces of content previously only available to either male or female Sims, have now been made available to all Sims regardless of initial gender selection. This includes content from The Sims 4 base game and previously launched packs.”

This new update is released with a video showing new Sims possibilities and illustrations of cross dressed sims. (Figure 5.1) Although the user reactions under the announcement are generally positive, there are some contrary views as well. A member called Muggez (“Gender fluid Update - How will this affect me?”, 2016) claims:

“As a disclaimer I'd just like to say I don't have a problem with anyone who identifies as gender fluid etc as I do not see how you living your every day life impacts me. My question is - will this new update affect me? ... But I want to know if the Sims in the world who are already created. If they are going to have a baby who is going to be a male who dresses like a female. I don't want to see Joe Smith walking down the street in a skirt. That's something I want for MY game as some people would want that for THEIR game. If anyone could let me know if it is only their sim it affects or if the randomly created sims will be affected by this (just by randomizing CAS).”



Figure 5.1 The Sims 4 representation of Create a Sim update ("The Sims - The Sims 4 Expands Gender Customization Options - Official Site", 2016)

Some forum members responded to this post indicating that the game will not automatically generate gender fluid sims and ensured the player that he/she would not be involuntarily effected by the update. Such user responses as this one show how the homophobic tendencies of the game community affect the modifications of the game. While some members of The Sims community appreciate novelties, others don't. The production company constantly faces the challenge of finding ways to please every member of the player community to maintain their success as one of the best-selling games.

The creation of the Sim update on gender generated discussion not only in terms of the representations of LGBT sims, but also on cross-dressing. One forum member GalacticGal ("Gender fluid Update - How will this affect me?", 2016) stated that:

"I'm not in the least bit a transgender, but I did wear my older brother's masculine sweater for years after he died. And when Dad passed away, I was allowed to choose what I wanted from his closet. I took my favorite of his causal shirts and wore that until it got too tattered to wear anymore. And, yes, I'm miffed that in RL the men get better looking sweaters and some of their shirts are quite fashionable, too. I will flip through the men's wardrobe in the game, to find a shirt I like for some of my female Sims, for that reason and that reason alone."

However, she continued saying:

“I'm almost always having to take my little boys and immediately change their outfits. First off, I hate the color pink. And for a certainty, I don't see boys wearing pink shoes! Let alone girly styled shoes. Oi! I'm very old-fashioned, don't hate me. I simply believe in biology.”

While this player states that nothing is wrong with cross-dressing, she also points out that boys should not wear pink and feels the need to say that she is not transgendered. Furthermore, she naturalizes gendered stereotyping in her use of the term “biology” (“Gender fluid Update - How will this affect me?”, 2016).

Gender stereotyping and color codes of the spaces are also subjects of discussion. Forum member Cororon states color stereotyping can be handy as such: “Yeah, I love pink, but my favorite color at the moment is cool blue-grey. I don't care much about the "gender color" stereotypes, but they are handy sometimes. When I build community lots in my game I often put something red/pink in the ladies' restroom and something blue in the men's', so I can see which one to send my sim to when the walls are down and I can't see the signs on the doors.” After this comment, other members agreed with this user about this kind of stereotyping being useful in other situations as well, such as in differentiating baby boys and baby girls (“What happened in your sims game today? - Page 857”, n.d.). The structure of the game leads the players to make such choices as they have three options in arranging the walls' appearance. The first one is to make the walls disappear, the second is to show them only at the back facade of the structure, and the third one is to keep all the walls up, which is impossible to use during the gameplay except the building mode. So, in the previous example, the player had to use the stereotypical color coding for understanding which restroom is the women's and which is men's, because she couldn't see the door signs during the gameplay., Hence the game interface leads the players to use stereotypical colors to differentiate gendered spaces.

Another subject of discussion is the bathroom doors which bear the signs king and queen. The catalogue description of men's toilet door is “king door: only male sims are allowed beyond this door,” while the women's is “queen door: only female sims are allowed beyond this door. Any problem with that?” Forum member Aerihk

("King and Queen "gendered" Doors with new update", n.d.) is concerned about these phrases after the gender fluid update. After her experiment with a male sim and a transgendered male sim with the ability to get pregnant, she found out that both could enter both the king's and queen's doors. She explains; ("King and Queen "gendered" Doors with new update", n.d.)

“Now while neither is true, as there is no longer a sex restriction, and sex is no longer clear, my issue is with "Any problem with that?", which appears only for the females' door, and is unnecessarily aggressive. Unfortunately it bears the disturbing reality that many trans women face, where using either single-sex bathroom can (and frequently does) mean facing violence of any and every kind. As such, that phrase can be very triggering for people, and as it doesn't resonate with the welcoming attitude of the new overhaul, it has no place.”

Aerihk also proposes some new updates for these doors. She proposes either their removal or a different categorization based on the use of the toilet in standing or sitting positions.

To sum up, As the game evolves, reactions and concerns of the community of players change accordingly and the latter demands new social and spatial innovations from the game developers. With a few exceptions, the discussions in the forum clearly indicate the relatively conservative position of the players on issues that stray away from dominant cultural norms on gender issues.

6 CONCLUSION

The Sims's promotes a modern, upper class, suburban family lifestyle with consumerist connotations. It supports heterosexuality and the nuclear family in a conservative way. The game is constructed to create a "perfectly healthy" conformist society which consists of large, high-income families based on normative gender roles. The "ideal" towns, where the residents are highly educated, don't have street crimes and no room for any kind of political act. A conservative cultural politics is embedded into the algorithms of the game, hardly leaving space for ideological differences and collective acts. Social life is limited to one-to-one interactions and consumerist activities.

At one level The Sims is an updated version of the dollhouse, based on consumptive habits of suburban life added on to the cultural codes of the bourgeoisie. The desire for consumption is most visibly built into the value placed on spacious and expensive houses and furnishings. The sims can only be accepted by the sims society and be happy as long as they satisfy their consumerist desires. A non-materialist life style is not encouraged by the very structure of the game; which sets limits to possible alternative life styles that may be created by the players.

The gender stereotyping of the Sims, on the other hand, is based on heteronormative moral standards that govern the game structure. These too are embedded in the household structures and domestic spaces. The use of stereotypically gendered color codings on decorative elements, furnitures and finishings; the gendered connotations in the proper use of different toys and cosmetics; and the grey area that is reserved for alternative sexualities are the most visible signs of this. These heteronormative norms which are produced and reproduced by the game does not only effect women, but also imposes values on male players in terms of norms regarding masculinity.

The Sims is modelled on the American suburban tradition by means of its architectural and urban design, as well as its social structure. The relatively more liberal moves in later versions of the game, such as its allowance of house-husbands

and same-sex marriages follow the limited liberal moves of contemporary (western) cultural politics.

The body politics of the Sims is also based on normative beauty standards of consumer culture. The game is structured to reproduce gendered body expectations by setting limits to such features as how fat, small-breasted or muscular a person can be for social acceptability.

To conclude, although the number of women playing digital games increases every day, game producers do not release enough games that appeal for both genders. They see women and men as different target groups and reinforce traditional gender norms by producing games through stereotypical gender images. From this point of view, it is very important to design digital games playable for both genders and represent different genders and sexualities in a liberating manner.

The Sims series play a significant role in this context as they reach a massive female and male audience. The latter's opinions and desires are a major factor in the development of more advanced versions of the game. However, the producer company and its developers largely continue to reproduce given norms with little allowance for variation. It is important to surface these by means of critical social and spatial studies, towards the development of an awareness for both the producers and the players. It is crucial to remember that digital games play a part in the production of culture as much as its reproduction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 All The Sims games published until 2014 (Moby Games, n.d.)

Appendix 2 The Sims 3, Sunset Valley, ready-made sims' trait statistics in relation to gender

Appendix 3 The Sims 3, Sunset Valley, ready-made sims' lifetime wishes statistics in relation to gender



All The Sims games published until 2014

Game Title	Year	Platform	Publisher
The Sims 4	2014	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Ultimate Collection	2014	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity: BuildIt	2014	Android, iPad, iPhone	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Super Collection	2014	Macintosh	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 3: University Life	2013	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 Plus University Life	2013	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity: Cities of Tomorrow	2013	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts Inc.
SimCity	2013	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 Plus Pets	2013	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity (Digital Deluxe Edition)	2013	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 Plus Seasons	2012	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Social	2012	Browser	Electronic Arts, Inc.

The Sims 3: Pets	2011	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: FreePlay	2011	Android, BlackBerry, iPad, iPhone, Windows Phone	EA Mobile
The Sims Social	2011	Browser	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3: Pets	2011	PlayStation 3, Xbox 360	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 Deluxe	2010	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Deluxe	2010	Android, iPad, iPhone	EA Mobile
The Sims 3: Ambitions	2010	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimAnimals	2009	Wii	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3	2009	Macintosh, PlayStation 3, Windows, Xbox 360	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 (Collector's Edition)	2009	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 (Collector's Edition Pre-Order Pack)	2009	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3 (Pre-Order Pack)	2009	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3: World Adventures	2009	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 3	2009	Android, bada, iPhone, MeeGo, Symbian, webOS, Windows Phone	EA Mobile
SimCity	2009	iPhone	EA Mobile

MySims Kingdom	2008	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Societies: Deluxe Edition	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims Stories Collection	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Creator	2008	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The SimCity Box	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
Die Sims 2 Add-On Bundle	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: IKEA Home Stuff	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Apartment Pets	2008	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Mansion & Garden Stuff	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Apartment Life (Limited Collection)	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Apartment Life	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Creator	2008	Wii	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Societies: Destinations	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Double Deluxe	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.

The Sims 2: Kitchen & Bath Interior Design Stuff	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: FreeTime	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Castaway Stories	2008	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Carnival - SnapCity	2008	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Castaway	2007	PlayStation 2, PSP, Wii	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Bon Voyage	2007	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Pet Stories	2007	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 2: H&M Fashion Stuff	2007	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2 (Limited Edition)	2007	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
MySims	2007	Wii, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
MySims	2007	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Seasons	2007	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 2: Celebration! Stuff	2007	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Castaway	2007	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.

The Sims 2: Teen Style Stuff	2007	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2 Deluxe	2007	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Life Stories	2007	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
SimCity DS	2007	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity Societies	2007	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2 (Holiday Edition)	2006	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Open for Business	2006	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 2: Pets	2006	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Family Fun Stuff	2006	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 2: Pets	2006	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Glamour Life Stuff	2006	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 2: Pets	2006	GameCube, PlayStation 2, PSP, Wii	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Happy Holiday Stuff	2006	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims 2: Pets	2006	Game Boy Advance	Electronic Arts, Inc.

The Sims 2: Holiday Party Pack	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: University	2005	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims Expansion Collection: Volume One	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims Expansion Collection: Volume Two	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims Expansion Collection: Volume Three	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2: Nightlife	2005	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
Sim Mania 3	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2 (Holiday Edition)	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Complete Collection	2005	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Expansion Three-Pack - Volume 1	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Expansion Three-Pack - Volume 2	2005	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2	2005	GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2	2005	Game Boy Advance	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2	2005	Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.

The Sims 2	2005	PSP	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Urbz: Sims in the City	2004	Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2 (Special DVD Edition)	2004	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims 2	2004	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Full House	2004	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims Triple Deluxe	2004	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Urbz: Sims in the City	2004	GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Mega Deluxe	2004	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity 4: Rush Hour	2003	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Makin' Magic	2003	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Bustin' Out	2003	GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Double Deluxe	2003	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Bustin' Out	2003	Game Boy Advance, N-Gage	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity 4	2003	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.

Sim Mania 2	2003	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Superstar	2003	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
SimCity 4: Deluxe Edition	2003	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sim Collection	2003	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
Sid Meier's SimGolf	2002	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
Sim Theme Park (Gold Edition)	2002	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Online	2002	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Unleashed	2002	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: Deluxe Edition	2002	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Vacation	2002	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims: House Party	2001	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims Bonus	2001	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Hot Date	2001	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
The Sims	2000	GameCube, Linux, Macintosh, PlayStation 2, Windows, Xbox	Aspyr Media, Inc.

SimMania Pack	2000	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimCity 3000 Unlimited	2000	Linux, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
The Sims: Livin' Large	2000	Macintosh, Windows	Aspyr Media, Inc.
SimCity 64	2000	Nintendo 64	Nintendo Co., Ltd.
SimCity 3000	1999	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimSafari	1998	Macintosh, Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
Ultimate Sim	1998	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
My 3 Sims!	1997	Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
Streets of SimCity	1997	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimClassics: 3 in 1 Pack	1996	Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity 2000: Network Edition	1996	Windows	Maxis Software Inc.
SimTunes	1996	Windows	Maxis Software Inc.
SimPark	1996	Macintosh, Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.

SimCopter	1996	Windows	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimGolf	1996	Windows	Maxis Software Inc.
SimTown	1995	Macintosh, OS/2, Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimClassics: Maxis Collections 2	1995	DOS, Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimIsle: Missions in the Rainforest	1995	DOS, Macintosh, Windows	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity 2000 Scenarios Volume 1: Great Disasters	1994	DOS, Macintosh, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimTower: The Vertical Empire	1994	3DO, Macintosh, SEGA Saturn, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimHealth	1994	DOS	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity 2000	1994	DOS, Macintosh, PC-98	Imagineer Co., Ltd.
SimClassics: Maxis Collections 1	1994	Amiga, Macintosh, Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity 2000 Urban Renewal Kit	1994	DOS, Macintosh, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity Classic	1994	Amiga	Maxis UK Ltd.
SimCity Classic Graphics	1994	DOS, Macintosh, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software

			Inc.
SimCity: Enhanced CD-ROM	1993	DOS, Macintosh	Interplay Entertainment Corp.
SimCity 2000	1993	Acorn 32-bit, Amiga, DOS, FM Towns, Game Boy Advance, Macintosh, Nintendo 64, OS/2, PC-98, PlayStation, PlayStation 3, PSP, SEGA Saturn, SNES, Windows, Windows 3.x, Windows Mobile	Black Pearl Software
Sim Farm	1993	DOS, FM Towns, Macintosh, PC-98, Windows, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity De Luxe	1993	Amiga, DOS	Infogrames Europe SA
SimCity 2000: CD Collection	1993	DOS, Macintosh, Windows, Windows 3.x	Electronic Arts, Inc.
SimLife	1992	Amiga, DOS, Macintosh, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimCity & Populous	1991	Amiga, Atari ST, DOS	Infogrames Europe SA
SimCity Graphics Set 2: Future Cities	1991	Amiga, DOS	Maxis Software Inc.
SimAnt: The Electronic Ant Colony	1991	Amiga, DOS, FM Towns, Macintosh, PC-98, Sharp X68000, SNES, Windows 3.x	Maxis Software Inc.
SimEarth: The Living Planet	1990	Amiga, DOS, FM Towns, Macintosh, PC-98, SEGA CD, Sharp X68000, SNES, TurboGrafx CD, Wii, Windows 3.x	FCI
SimCity Graphics Set 1: Ancient Cities	1990	Amiga, DOS	Maxis Software Inc.

SimCity	1989	Acorn 32-bit, Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, BBC Micro, CDTV, Commodore 64, DOS, Electron, FM Towns, Macintosh, OS/2, Palm OS, PC-98, Sharp X68000, SNES, Symbian, Wii, Windows, Windows 3.x, ZX Spectrum	Brøderbund Software, Inc.
SimCity: Terrain Editor	1989	Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, Macintosh, PC-98, Sharp X68000	Infogrames Europe SA



The Sims 3, Sunset Valley, ready-made sims' trait statistics in relation to gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Absent-Minded	Count	2	2	4
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	7,1%	5,6%	
Ambitious	Count	5	5	10
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	17,9%	13,9%	
Angler	Count	2	3	5
	% within traits	40,0%	60,0%	
	% within gender	7,1%	8,3%	
Artistic	Count	2	7	9
	% within traits	22,2%	77,8%	

	% within gender	7,1%	19,4%	
Athletic	Count	3	2	5
	% within traits	60,0%	40,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	5,6%	
Bookworm	Count	2	5	7
	% within traits	28,6%	71,4%	
	% within gender	7,1%	13,9%	
Brave	Count	2	4	6
	% within traits	33,3%	66,7%	
	% within gender	7,1%	11,1%	
Can't Stand Art	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	
Charismatic	Count	5	8	13

	% within traits	38,5%	61,5%	
	% within gender	17,9%	22,2%	
Childish	Count	3	4	7
	% within traits	42,9%	57,1%	
	% within gender	10,7%	11,1%	
Clumsy	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	
Commitment Issues	Count	3	1	4
	% within traits	75,0%	25,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	2,8%	
Computer Whiz	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	

Couch Potato	Count	3	1	4
	% within traits	75,0%	25,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	2,8%	
Coward	Count	0	1	1
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	2,8%	
Daredevik	Count	1	4	5
	% within traits	20,0%	80,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	11,1%	
Dislikes Children	Count	1	0	1
	% within traits	100,0%	0,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	0,0%	
Easily Impressed	Count	1	2	3
	% within traits	33,3%	66,7%	

	% within gender	3,6%	5,6%	
Evil	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	
Excitable	Count	2	2	4
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	7,1%	5,6%	
Family-Oriented	Count	8	4	12
	% within traits	66,7%	33,3%	
	% within gender	28,6%	11,1%	
Flirty	Count	2	5	7
	% within traits	28,6%	71,4%	
	% within gender	7,1%	13,9%	
Friendly	Count	4	0	4

	% within traits	100,0%	0,0%	
	% within gender	14,3%	0,0%	
Frugal	Count	6	3	9
	% within traits	66,7%	33,3%	
	% within gender	21,4%	8,3%	
Genius	Count	2	5	7
	% within traits	28,6%	71,4%	
	% within gender	7,1%	13,9%	
Good	Count	4	9	13
	% within traits	30,8%	69,2%	
	% within gender	14,3%	25,0%	
Good Sense of Humor	Count	3	1	4
	% within traits	75,0%	25,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	2,8%	

Great Kisser	Count	4	1	5
	% within traits	80,0%	20,0%	
	% within gender	14,3%	2,8%	
Green Thumb	Count	1	2	3
	% within traits	33,3%	66,7%	
	% within gender	3,6%	5,6%	
Grumpy	Count	3	2	5
	% within traits	60,0%	40,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	5,6%	
Handy	Count	2	1	3
	% within traits	66,7%	33,3%	
	% within gender	7,1%	2,8%	
Heavy Sleeper	Count	1	0	1
	% within traits	100,0%	0,0%	

	% within gender	3,6%	0,0%	
Hopeless Romantic	Count	1	4	5
	% within traits	20,0%	80,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	11,1%	
Hot-Headed	Count	1	3	4
	% within traits	25,0%	75,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	8,3%	
Hydrophobic	Count	1	0	1
	% within traits	100,0%	0,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	0,0%	
Inappropriate	Count	5	2	7
	% within traits	71,4%	28,6%	
	% within gender	17,9%	5,6%	
Insane	Count	1	1	2

	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	
Kleptomaniac	Count	0	2	2
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	5,6%	
Light Sleeper	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	
Loner	Count	2	5	7
	% within traits	28,6%	71,4%	
	% within gender	7,1%	13,9%	
Loser	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	

Loves the Outdoors	Count	7	2	9
	% within traits	77,8%	22,2%	
	% within gender	25,0%	5,6%	
Lucky	Count	0	1	1
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	2,8%	
Mean Spirited	Count	1	0	1
	% within traits	100,0%	0,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	0,0%	
Mooch	Count	1	1	2
	% within traits	50,0%	50,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	2,8%	
Natural Cook	Count	1	2	3
	% within traits	33,3%	66,7%	

	% within gender	3,6%	5,6%	
Neat	Count	2	7	9
	% within traits	22,2%	77,8%	
	% within gender	7,1%	19,4%	
Neurotic	Count	3	1	4
	% within traits	75,0%	25,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	2,8%	
Never Nude	Count	1	0	1
	% within traits	100,0%	0,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	0,0%	
No Sense of Humor	Count	1	2	3
	% within traits	33,3%	66,7%	
	% within gender	3,6%	5,6%	
Over-Emotional	Count	1	3	4

	% within traits	25,0%	75,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	8,3%	
Party Animal	Count	1	4	5
	% within traits	20,0%	80,0%	
	% within gender	3,6%	11,1%	
Perfectionist	Count	2	8	10
	% within traits	20,0%	80,0%	
	% within gender	7,1%	22,2%	
Schmoozer	Count	4	3	7
	% within traits	57,1%	42,9%	
	% within gender	14,3%	8,3%	
Slob	Count	3	2	5
	% within traits	60,0%	40,0%	
	% within gender	10,7%	5,6%	

Snob	Count	1	7	8
	% within traits	12,5%	87,5%	
	% within gender	3,6%	19,4%	
Technophobe	Count	0	2	2
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	5,6%	
Unflirty	Count	0	3	3
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	8,3%	
Unlucky	Count	0	1	1
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	2,8%	
Vegetarian	Count	0	2	2
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	

	% within gender	0,0%	5,6%	
Virtuoso	Count	0	1	1
	% within traits	0,0%	100,0%	
	% within gender	0,0%	2,8%	
Workaholic	Count	2	5	7
	% within traits	28,6%	71,4%	
	% within gender	7,1%	13,9%	
Total	Count	28	36	64
	% of Total	43,8%	56,2%	100,0%

The Sims 3, Sunset Valley, ready-made sims' lifetime wishes statistics in relation to gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Become an Astronaut	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Become a Master Thief	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Become a Superstar Athlete	Count	2	0	2
	% within Lifetime Wish	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	0,0%	3,1%
CEO of a Mega-Corporation	Count	1	2	3
	% within Lifetime Wish	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	5,6%	4,7%

Chess Legend	Count	1	1	2
	% within Lifetime Wish	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	2,8%	3,1%
Forensic Specialist: Dynamic DNA Profiler	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Gold Digger	Count	1	0	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	0,0%	1,6%
Heartbreaker	Count	2	2	4
	% within Lifetime Wish	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	5,6%	6,2%
Illustrious Author	Count	1	1	2
	% within Lifetime Wish	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	2,8%	3,1%
International Super Spy	Count	0	1	1

	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Jack of All Trades	Count	1	0	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	0,0%	1,6%
Leader of the Free World	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Living in the Lap of Luxury	Count	2	2	4
	% within Lifetime Wish	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	5,6%	6,2%
Master of the Arts	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Perfect Mind, Perfect Body	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%

	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Presenting the Perfect Private Aquarium	Count	2	1	3
	% within Lifetime Wish	66,7%	33,3%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	2,8%	4,7%
Renaissance Sim	Count	1	0	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	0,0%	1,6%
Rock Star	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Star News Anchor	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Super Popular	Count	1	2	3
	% within Lifetime Wish	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	5,6%	4,7%

Surrounded by Family	Count	2	3	5
	% within Lifetime Wish	40,0%	60,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	7,1%	8,3%	7,8%
Swimming in Cash	Count	1	0	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	0,0%	1,6%
The Culinary Librarian	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
The Emperor of Evil	Count	1	0	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	3,6%	0,0%	1,6%
The Perfect Garden	Count	0	2	2
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	5,6%	3,1%
The Tinkerer	Count	0	1	1

	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
World Renowned Surgeon	Count	0	1	1
	% within Lifetime Wish	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% within Gender	0,0%	2,8%	1,6%
Not Defined Yet	Count	9	8	17
	% within Lifetime Wish	52,9%	47,1%	100,0%
	% within Gender	32,1%	22,2%	26,6%
Total	Count	28	36	64
	% within Lifetime Wish	43,8%	56,2%	100,0%