Real Life Games:
The Sims 2 & MySims

Sisi Zhu :: CMS.600 :: 11.26.07
Overview

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# Head-to-Head Comparison

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The Sims 2

• Sequel to best-selling PC game, The Sims
• Strategic life simulation
• User defined sims, environment, & goals
• Elements of immersion & agency through formal & material constraints
Formal & Material Constraints

• Formal Constraints
  – Game elements that convey author’s intended story

• Material Constraints
  – Anything players are able to control

• Agency & Immersion
  – When players use material constraints to produce story, optimally one that matches formal constraints
  – Balance of formal & material lead to immersion and agency
Game Mechanics

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Gameplay

- Formal Constraints
  - Needs, Wants, Fears
  - Time (Aging)
  - Sense of Materialism

- Material Constraints
  - Resources ($)
  - Actions & Interactions

- Agency & Immersion
  - Actions have consequences
  - “God-like” immersion
  - Interactivity is key
Fun Stuff

• User generated celeb sims & videos

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http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/450/450954.jpg
MySims

- Released for Nintendo Wii & DS

- Mixed reviews:
  - Gamespot 6.5/10
  - Nintendo Power 7/10
  - Game Informer 8/10
  - Official Nintendo Magazine 94%
Shortcomings

- Custom design only on superficial level
- No actual effect -> lack of agency
- Most time spent in dreaded workshop
- Complexity doesn’t increase with play
- Gets old fast, like the music

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http://mysims.ea.com/images/screenshots/screenshot_3.jpg
Reasons for Shortcomings

• Unbalanced formal & material constraints
  – Formal: renovate rundown town
  – Material: move in sims, build stuff
  – *The extent of how you build stuff doesn’t matter to the game, only that you do it.*
  – Agency lost b/c material constraints don’t align with formal constraints.
  – “Looks like a danceclub, but doesn’t act like one.”
Summary

• The Sims 2
  – Able to create and operate sims in environments that change dynamically with input
  – Formal and material constraints afford agency and allow for interactive experience

• MySims
  – Material constraints misaligned with formal – game is unresponsive to user input
  – Agency is lost
Questions?

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http://mysims.ea.com/images/bg_coolstuff.jpg