Take It All Remix: Engaging Students in Social Psychology Concepts

Jessica A. Stansbury and Geoffrey D. Munro
Towson University

Motivation and game research continue to demonstrate that the use of games in education can be engaging, intrinsically motivating, challenging, and fun (Gee, 2007; Felicia, 2012; McGonigal, 2011), precisely the qualities that traditional lectures are perceived by students to lack. So, despite the belief that gamification may be disruptive to higher education values and traditions (Baker, Bujak, & DeMillo, 2012), the use of games in the classroom may provide the characteristics that are sought by those seeking effective educational tools. Thus, it is important that educational researchers investigate students' perceptions of games in higher education. Therefore, we adapted and created a *Take it All Remix* version to teach social psychology concepts related to course content on group processes, and explored student's perceptions of learning, engagement, and enjoyment.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted on the campus of a medium size university during the course of one academic year. Forty-eight undergraduate students (overall M_{age} = 22.27, SD = 3.59) in two different social psychology sections, taught by the same instructor participated.

Procedure

***Take It All Remix* Game.** The original game show, *Take It All* (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.), aired in December 2012 on NBC for two weeks. The *Remix* version of the game was designed to teach material on the topic of group processes in a social psychology course. A few days prior to class, students received an outline that addressed topics related to group processes and concepts that would be present in the game. This outline included defining groups, group cohesion, factors of arousal, risky shift, social loafing, and the difference between zero-sum conflicts and mixed-motive conflicts.

At the beginning of class on game day, students were randomly placed into five teams, and the instructor explained the rules to the students. There would be a total of three initial rounds, where each team would randomly select a number from 1-5 on the screen. A prize would be revealed behind the selected number. The goal was to have the most expensive prize, because the group with the least expensive prize would be eliminated each round. Before selecting from the prize screen, each team had the ability to steal another team's prize instead of selecting from the prize screen. However, all teams had one block, which could be used during any round. Once a team's block was used, and a second team decided to steal the first team's prize, the first team would have to select from the remaining numbers on the prize screen. Each round increased in monetary values. For example, round one ranged from $5,000-$12,000, and round two ranged from $15,000-$25,000. This process was repeated for rounds two and three with one team being eliminated each round until round four, the final round, which included only the final two teams. In the final round, both teams were still in possession of their prizes from all previous rounds. Their total amounts of prizes were calculated giving an overall monetary worth. Then, each team randomly selected but did not look at a card containing an amount of possible extra credit points. The teams were given the final rules which presented a Prisoner's Dilemma situation. They were informed that if both teams chose "Take It All," both teams would end up with no prizes at the end of the game. If both teams chose "Keep Mine," both teams would end up with the prizes they had each collected throughout the game. However, if one team chose "Take It All" and the other chose "Keep Mine," the team that chose "Take It All" would keep its prizes and the other team's prizes. Because the prizes were fictitious prizes, the extra credit points were used as 'real' prizes and created a personal investment in the game. Next, the two teams were told to deliberate with each other and make their final decisions.

Following the game, the group processes outline was reviewed in relationship to game play in order to solidify concepts from the chapter. For example, the concept of cohesion was discussed in relationship to the students' teams. Risky shift was demonstrated within each individual round when students decided to steal from another group and, in the final round, when making their ultimate choice to either "take it all" or "keep mine". Mixed-motive conflict was demonstrated via the prisoner's dilemma that the last round forms between the two final teams. Though these are just a few examples of course concepts within game play, other concepts were evident within the game and classroom. Upon completion of the game and class discussion, students completed a survey assessing perceptions of learning, engagement, and fun.

Student Perspective Measures. A 15-item survey (α = .91) assessing students' perspectives was created to

assess three constructs, learning content (seven questions, α = .93) (e.g., “did the activity increase understanding of course content?”), engagement (three questions, α = .82) (e.g., “to what extend did you feel engaged during the activity?”), and enjoyment (three questions, α = .92) (e.g., “did you enjoy participating in the activity?”). All responses were measured on 7-point Likert scales with endpoints *1* (not at all) to *7* (extremely).

Results

Students’ ratings within each of the three constructs were averaged to create an index for learning, engagement and enjoyment. Using the 1 to 7 scale as a reference, the mean for learning (*M* = 5.72, *SD* = 1.20) indicated that students perceived themselves as learning while playing the game. This included being a good supplement to lecture (*M* = 6.08, *SD* = .99), incorporating course content (*M*=5.77, *SD* = 1.12), and being recommended for future students in social psychology (*M* = 6.27, *SD* = 1.07). Similarly, students reported feeling engaged by the game and subsequent discussion (*M* = 5.61, *SD* = 1.25). Also, students reported game play made the class more enjoyable and fun (*M* =6.17, *SD* = 0.96).

Discussion

Results suggest designing and implementing more game based learning, gamification, into the higher education setting seems to be a worthwhile venture. Research suggests that games promote engagement, and encourage collaboration among peers (Gee, 2007; Kapp, 2012). Playing *Take It All Remix* provides students the opportunity to experience course content in action (e.g., group processes, risky shift, conflict styles) and become involved in learning, rather than be passive participants of hypothetical examples. These results contribute to research that suggesting that games, as a supplement to traditional lectures can be an enjoyable learning enhancement to students (Stansbury & Munro, 2013). Using the game as a supplement to course material provided an opportunity for students to think critically about concepts related to group processes; following game play with a discussion allowed students to apply specific examples of course content (e.g., risky shift) directly to their game play experience. In class discussion, for example, many students reported that if they were playing the game alone, they would have been less likely to steal from opponents and may have been more trusting of other teams motives.

Future research should begin to assess the effectiveness of this increased engagement on students understanding of content knowledge and overall course performance. More specifically, assessing not only whether active engagement with course content increases content knowledge, but also if that content knowledge can be retained over an extended period of time. In addition, assessing student’s position in the game and its effect on student’s perception of game play and knowledge integration is worthy of future investigation.

References

Baker, P. M. A., Bujak, K. R., & DeMillo, R. (2012). The evolving university: Disruptive change and institutional innovation. *Procedia Computer Science, 14*

Felicia, P. (2012). Motivation in games: A literature review. *International Journal Of Computer Science In Sport, 11*(1), 4-14.

Gee, J. P. (2007). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kapp, K. M. (2012). Games, gamification, and the quest for learner engagement. *T+D, 66*(6), 64.

McGonigal, J. (2011). Reality is broken. New York, NY US: Penguin Press.

Stansbury, J.A., & Munro, G.D. (2013) Gaming in the classroom: An innovative way to teach factorial designs. *Teaching of Psychology, 40*(2), 148-152.

Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., (n.d.). *Take it all (gameshow)*. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Take_It_All_(game_show)