VIDEO PLAY PATHWAYS FOR FEMALES: DEVELOPING THEORY

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by
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the diversity of females in the realm of video games. Previous studies have focused on the differences between males and females in order to understand the dearth of female gamers. However, these studies have failed to acknowledge that even among subjects of the same gender, great diversity can, and does, exist. For this reason, the research contained herein will focus solely on females; trying to understand what sets female gamers (for they do exist) apart from female non-gamers.

The main question guiding this thesis is; “How do female gamers and non-gamers differ in their perceptions of and engagements with video games?” That is, how do members of each group (gamer vs. non-gamer) tend to define videogames? How and why do they interact with them (for social reasons, for the challenge, to relieve boredom, because they are conveniently available, etc.) if they interact with them at all? How do their videogame experiences relate to childhood experiences, non-game interests/skills, and social climate if there is any correlation at all?

The project sought out women who have set themselves apart by participating in game-related activities (the Cornell Dance Dance Revolution Club and the Game Design Initiative at Cornell) and compared their experiences and opinions to those of women who neither participate in these activities nor would consider themselves “gamers” in any other way. Some of these non-gamers were found among participants in a pilot study. Others were found within COMM201—a undergraduate communication class. In-depth one-on-one interviews provided the data that helps us to see the complexity of the female game experience.

Results of the study indicate that the dearth of female gamers may be tied to social factors more than the psychological ones some scholars have proposed. At younger ages, females seem to generally enjoy video games and other recreational
technologies however, with maturity and gender socialization come a mindset that “women don’t play video games”. In order to overcome the gaming gender gap, it may be necessary to change the way we as researchers think about games in order to change the way that women think about them. Furthermore, in order to advance the field of video game research, it may be necessary to question some popular assumptions, and press for standardized definitions of the major terminology.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Meredith Aquila is a graduate of the Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences. Her undergraduate work focused on film and television in the department of Communication and Culture and media and society in the department of Telecommunications. In addition to these two majors, she also earned a minor in Spanish.

After graduation, she joined the Communication program at Cornell University where her focus was gender issues in the field of video game research. During the course of her studies, she also served as a teaching assistant. Following successful completion of her masters degree, she hopes to take up a teaching position in the field of Communication.
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Professor Austin Caswell, a scholar and a gentleman who inspired us to think deeply, speak freely, and whenever possible, sit on the floor.
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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

AI : Artificial Intelligence

DDR: Dance Dance Revolution (a challenging dance-step video game)

MMORPG: Massively Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Game

Console: gaming system hardware
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis further explores the subject of gender and video games. Specifically, data were collected to better understand the well-documented dearth of female\(^1\) video game players in American society. A field study focusing on the habits, histories, personalities, and opinions of a number of young women who have grown up in the era of the video game is described in detail.

This chapter includes background information, a literature review, and results from a pilot study as a foundation to justify the study’s methods. Research questions and methods are explained further and supported in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the study data. Data are then analyzed and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 covers the significance, limitations, and possible applications of the findings while also considering directions for future research. References are listed at the end.

Video game research is a young and only partially developed area of scholarly concern. Early research was often met with suspicion and even ridicule (Pearce 2002). Today, video games are more commonly seen as a viable new medium worthy of academic attention but not enough time has elapsed yet to allow the field to fully blossom. There are many perspectives on video games, and many possible methods for exploring them. Although very few conclusions have been drawn at this time,

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\(^1\) For my purposes, “girl” refers to any female under the age of 18, “woman” refers to any female aged 18 or older, and “female” refers to any female regardless of age. Females almost certainly perceive and interact with games differently than males, but in order to better understand these differences, I have opted to focus on women—females who have reached an age when they are most likely to strongly contrast with males in their gaming habits and opinions.
numerous solid projects have been completed which offer us direction and inspiration to take the next steps as a field. De Castell and Jenson (2003) sum up the research thus far into the following categories:

1. Play and Pleasure—theories of play; structures, functions, outcomes, considerations of the elements of pleasure, entertainment, enjoyment, and psychoanalytical perspectives, mostly restricted to childhood studies
2. Genre—studies that articulate commonalities and distinctions between simulations and games, and games and subtypes of games
3. Game Development—systems, content, graphics, AI, rule-systems, playability, etc.
4. Narrative—based in literary theory, narrative elements, analysis, plot-structures, characterization, setting, dialogue, etc.
5. Effects—psychological, behavioral and cognitive effects of gaming, especially violence. Emphasis on plot analysis, characters, depictions of violence, causation/behavioral effects, etc.
6. Gender—gendered play and game preferences
7. Constructionism—study of children as game designers, considers designs and learning as children create their own games

The majority of scholarship has been concerned with effects. The most common question asked has been whether or not violent content has an effect on young game players, and if so, to what extent? To a lesser degree, questions of gender portrayals and their effects on perceptions of gender have been raised. De Castell and Jenson’s other categories have been developed much less thoroughly but hold a great
deal of promise as sites of rich and intriguing materials for academics, politicians, consumers, designers, and marketers.

One question stands out as being often asked, but rarely answered in any satisfying way: Why do females tend to play and enjoy video games to a much lesser degree than males? This question concerns not only theorists and scholars, but educators, parents, and policy-makers as well because many of them see video games as a technology gateway for young people. Many believe that in the information age, any technology that can make children feel comfortable and empowered can be an important tool for development. A few individuals have even gone as far as studying ways in which technology can be integrated into the classroom for digitally enhanced learning (Kirriemuir 2002, Jenkins, Klopper, Squire, & Tan 2003, Mangan 2005).

As long as girls and women fall behind men in their use of computers and consoles for recreation, there is reason to believe that they will tend to feel less empowered than will males to work with and manipulate technology. Most males apparently come to enjoy technology from an early age and continue to feel positively toward it throughout their lives. Looking at the gender gap in computer science and informational technology career fields (Rabasca 2000, Nzegwu 2000, Laurel 2001, Hafner 2004), we see an aura of optimism surrounding the concept of embracing video games. If something as simple as gaming can break down gender technological inequality in the workplace, it is necessarily a medium with which to reckon. However, this assumption that video game play will bridge the digital gender divide should be viewed with skepticism and treated with caution, as we shall see later.

Regarding the larger question of gendered play, some theorists have considered a biological answer; that females simply do not care for technology the way that males do. Certainly, men and women respond to technology differently, with women tending to focus on communication and integration, and men tending to focus on control and
manipulation (Bruner, Bennett & Honey 1999). Further, males and females even seem to look for different types of challenges and rewards in play such as spatial challenges versus logic challenges, and competition versus cooperation with certain “male” preferences being better represented in the average video game (Kafai 1999, Lucas & Sherry 2004, Rabasca 2000). However, these differences—though they are clearly tied to gender—are not necessarily innate factors of the sex chromosomes.

Research indicates that males and females do not seem to begin their early lives with any noticeable gap in use of technology, at least not in their desire to engage it. Calvert, Rideout, Woolard, Barr, and Strouse (2005) found in their studies that

“[t]here were almost no gender differences in early computer patterns… older boys seemed to use computers more so than older girls, but at younger ages a gender divide was not present” (p. 590).

Cassell and Jenkins (1999) also pointed out that “None of [the existing] research shows that girls are inherently less skilled at computer tasks than boys” (p. 13). These studies indicate that whatever inherent differences may exist in the way that males and females relate to technology, they are not significant enough to either encourage or discourage the use of technology in and of themselves. Something in the maturation period and socialization process apparently affects the extent to which females engage or avoid engaging with technological processes and mechanisms related to computer and video game play (and perhaps consequently, cutting-edge careers).

Degree of video game access is not a simple explanation either. Although access to computers has increased over time with gender gaps decreasing in the areas
of technological skill and computer use in the 3-17 age group (Calvert, Rideout, Woolard, Barr & Strouse 2005) Colley and Comber (2003) found that even with increased exposure to computers (due to increasing prevalence of systems in schools, homes, and libraries) in recent years, in later stages of development:

“…some gender differences [remain], particularly in attitudes. Boys still [like] computers more, [are] more self-confident in their use and, unlike previously, [sex-type] them less than girls. They also [use] computers more frequently out of school, particularly for playing games. There [is] some evidence that, as found previously, older girls [hold] the least positive attitudes, and it is suggested that their approach to computers may be influenced by the cultural pressures of gender stereotyping…. Although [there is] evidence of some change since the early 1990s, increased exposure to computers has not closed the gender gap” (155).

Laurel (2001) points out that many parents try to encourage their young daughters to play with video games the way their sons do (with the hope that they will come to love computing), but they are met with resistance at every turn. This seems to indicate that simply providing or not providing video games would not necessarily affect a girl’s desire to play with them.

In further support of a primarily sociological perspective of gendered play rather than a primarily psychological view², Funk and Buchman (1994) found that as preteen girls’ self-concept scores dropped, their use of video games increased. These self-concept scores considered self reported levels of confidence and feelings of being

² We say “primarily” here because it is impossible to fully separate sociology from psychology. In gender and play, the two perspectives are consistently fused together and although one may dominate slightly in its influence on behavior, an individual would be hard pressed to show that it is the only influence on behavior.
accepted by peers. This may indicate that it is generally females who are less likely to “fit in” who are playing video games as they get older, whereas females who feel confident and accepted have a lesser desire to play video games. This supports the idea that it is less a matter of biology and more a matter of sociology whether or not an individual likes video games. A sociological framework would also tend to support the argument that video games hold less appeal for females due to elements of content.

Some scholars have explored the possibility that females don’t play video games because video games do not mesh with feminine norms of play. As mentioned, men and women seem to prefer different types of challenges and most video games tend to represent male tastes more than female tastes (Kafai 1999, Lucas & Sherry 2004, Rabasca 2000). This may be a result of the industry’s demographics. Most designers, producers, marketers, and programmers in the video game field are male and so it is rather difficult for manufacturers to know how to attract female interest (Rabasca 2000, Nzegwu 2000, Laurel 2001, Hafner 2004).

Additionally, many games go so far as to potentially exclude females by either representing women only marginally with a limited number of female characters or representing women inappropriately as excessively sexual, passive, or ineffective. In other words, women cannot find themselves in video games and for that reason, they may not be interested in playing (Rabasca 2000, Children Now 2001, Laurel 2001, Castronova 2004, Ivory 2006). This would help explain Funk and Buchman’s (1996a) findings that the “average” girl does not play video games, only the girl who falls outside her peer-mainstream.

Going along with the idea of content-based play discouragement, play theory has been applied to video games, exploring girls’ play tendencies which involve social skill-building and relationship-based play. Some scholars have suggested that the way
females play is not (and perhaps cannot be) supported by the video game medium. Females seem to prefer social play without much competition. They emphasize cooperation rather than competition, competition generally being preferred by males.

In 2004, Pellegrini, Blatchford, Kato and Baines conducted a short-term longitudinal study of children’s playground games in primary school. This study described changes in children’s games as they progressed in school, noting age and gender differences in play. Generally, boys came to play more games, and more complex games, than did girls.

“… boys engaged in more total games, ball games, and chase games than did girls. Girls engaged in more jumping/verbal games, such as jump rope and clapping/chanting games… boys are more physically active than girls…Girls, on the other hand, are more sedentary and verbally more facile than boys. Games utilizing these skills, such as jump rope, chanting, and clapping games, showed corresponding female preferences…. Girls participated in fewer games and ball games with time. Also consistent with the hypothesis these results support the notion that gender role stereotypic behavior is socialized in peer groups at school. Girls find the playground unpleasant and spend less time in competitive games than boys and games. [There is] anecdotal evidence of English girls complaining that their outdoor breaks are too long and pretending to be sick so that they do not have to go out on the playground during break. When they are compelled to go outdoors, our data show that they do not participate in games on the same level as boys” (p. 117).

De Jean, Upitis, Koch, and Young (1999) found in a 1993 study that:

“substantial gender differences in what children liked in electronic games. While the majority of girls felt that the important elements were storyline, characters,
worthwhile goals, social interactions, creative activities and challenge, most boys liked the elements of entertainment, fast action and adventure, challenge, and violence…” (p. 208).

Their 1999 study added to this with a look at “Phoenix Quest”—a children’s learning game for the computer. Phoenix Quest was intended to encourage learning in language and mathematics, while offering features that were thought to appeal specifically to girls.

“The findings provided evidence that PQ appealed to girls because the protagonist was of their age and gender, and because the puzzles and searches were engaging throughout the game… more girls than boys used the postcard-writing feature of PQ and appreciated following the adventures of a female protagonist. More boys than girls were reported to offer advice to other students, discuss the game during their free time, and observe others playing the game. Some boys even formed groups to exchange information and game-playing strategies… Both the case study and the large-scale study revealed that among computer games, PQ’s uncommon approach of celebrating and challenging a female protagonist is important to girls” (p. 217-218).

Most video games available currently do not allow much room to play with narrative, characters, relationships, or other elements associated with female play. There are a few exceptions that have been explored recently such as The SIMS and EverQuest—games that allow maximum customization and the kind of open-ended play that girls seem to prefer. (Taylor& Kolko 2003, Nutt & Railton 2003, Schiesel 2005a)
There are no definitive goals in these types of games. Players have many
paths they may take through the games, some of which involve social network-
building and relationship role-playing (Nutt & Railton 2003, Schiesel 2005a) and they
are some of the few exceptions to the “girls don’t play videogames” rule. Games such
as these suggest that it is possible to attract more girls to video games if only game
designers experiment with increasingly diverse formats.

It is important to remember, however, that this idea of the cooperative-play
female leaves female gamers (for they do exist) out of the equation. If females truly
do tend to prefer cooperation, how can we explain professional, competitive, female
gaming groups? Although these women represent a definite minority, they are a
significant minority and they confound efforts to explain female play easily.

As we have seen, there are currently many people trying to explain the dearth
of female gamers. These researchers and theorists have provided us with many ideas
and recommendations for understanding video games and gendered play, but each of
them comes up just a little bit short. Part of the difficulty in supporting these
individual theories-in-progress is that there is a dearth of reliable data in the gender
area of video game studies. Most studies mentioned are very new and often the first of
their kind. Under these circumstances, there is not much foundation for any definitive
conclusions. There are still too many generalizations to break down, assumptions to
question, and results to reproduce.

Many authors seem to believe that girls and boys simply develop their play
habits differently as they mature. This is possible, but it is difficult to know for sure as
many studies ignore context, peer interaction, and home life as they seek to explain
gender phenomena (Pellegrini, Blatchford, Kato & Baines 2004), while many more
seem guilty of bringing gender stereotypes into the mix as they attempt to observe
children at play (De Jean, Upitis, Koch, & Young 1999). Such authors begin their research with the assumption that males and females are inherently different and this undoubtedly colors their results and conclusions. Likewise, the assumption that the encouragement of video game play will encourage technological proficiency is common, but inherently flawed. At this time, there is no evidence for this assumption-only an observation that males are more likely to enjoy video games and go into technology-related careers than are females.

The hasty conclusion that video games are the key to occupational gender equality causes researchers to ignore outliers (female gamers, males that dislike video games, women who love technology but may not play video games, etc.), lose focus on larger issues of the field such as standardization of definitions and examination of popular perceptions of video games (which we shall see later is a complex issue among women), and fail to notice and question common misconceptions and stereotypes carried by researchers and much of the American public. In this thesis, I will show that the inherent flaws in video game research are a major inhibiting factor in the field’s progress and suggest new ways of looking at video game play, gender, and the field itself.

The original concern guiding this project was the broad existence of gender stereotypes in the current research. A great number of comparisons have been made between males and females that seem to fail to acknowledge the diversity within each gender. Clearly, some females love video games. The Interactive Digital Software Association’s website estimates (perhaps over-optimistically) that 43% of game players are women (IDSA 2003), and one may find numerous websites created by and for female gamers (i.e., womengamers.com), but we are no closer to knowing why. Are these women just tom boys? Do they know something that their non game-playing counterparts do not? Have they merely been exposed to games more frequently? Are
they playing games that are different from the popular ones we come across in most academic studies? Unfortunately, most existing studies are conducted with the assumption that females do not like video games and this has prevented much complex thought regarding the diversity of females in their perceptions of, and experiences with, video games.

Although there is currently no real video game theory (with the possible exception of some tentative theorizing being done in the puzzle/game design arena), scholars continue to apply existing theories to video game studies in the hope of building unique, new models and theoretical frameworks through which to better understand this new medium. Because video games are so different from previous media (more interactive, more customizable, more demanding of focus, attention, dexterity, and technical knowledge, etc.), it is difficult to apply older models. However, this difficulty is no excuse for ignoring existing theories entirely. A great deal can be learned about what video games are and aren’t by comparing and contrasting them to previous media and by looking at human-game interaction within the context of existing social network theories, play and gender models, and well-established social and psychological frameworks.

In the case of this study, I have found it interesting and useful to examine gender studies, game studies, and general media studies in order to better understand my data and possible implications. While I have not found a single unifying theory, I have discovered several useful works that merit further examination, as well as a few studies that may require closer scrutiny.

The Communication Perspective

The study of communication has gone through various paradigms or stages, especially in terms of assumptions about media messages and audiences. These stages
can be seen in the evolution of media studies such as those surrounding television and film. Initially, we can find a great deal of concern and suspicion as assumptions abound about media effects and passive audiences; however, over time, audiences gain control in the eyes of researchers and new media become increasingly benign and even beneficial in their perceived effects (Lowry & De Fleur 1983, Bauer 1971, Craig, 1999).

Video games may well be going through a similar period of scholarly evolution. Many of the concerns surrounding gaming are similar to those that were voiced in the early days of television and movies. These include: potential negative effects on audience behavior, possibilities for propaganda or transmission of anti-social messages, and unrealistic portrayals of race, gender, societal norms, etc. While many of these concerns are still alive and well in the fields of film and television studies, their power is tempered by the balancing effect of perceived possible benefits: film as an art form, television as a learning tool, mass media as a window to the world.

Although video games still have a dark shadow surrounding them, there is also an ever-increasing light. Educational games are quite common, video games are being explored as an art form and a source of narrative, MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) and their chat boards are showing themselves to be a tool of social networking, new games offer customization options that put the player in the drivers seat, allowing more control and influence than ever before.

Williams does an outstanding job of exploring this evolution in his article *The Video Game Lightning Rod* (2003). The article describes Williams’ content analysis of three news magazines’ portrayals of video games between the years 1970 and 2000. The author demonstrates that portrayals actually go through “waves” of utopian and dystopian perspectives that seem to correspond to political and social circumstances.
Williams compares video game communication to previous media studies by referring to the work of Wartella and Reeves.

“… media coverage and subsequent research has followed a three-wave pattern. First, fears emerge out of concern that the new medium might be displacing a more ‘constructive’ activity, ironically often the use of a previously feared medium. The fears of health effects appear, followed by fears of social ills” (525).

Williams points out the influence of politics and society on widespread acceptance or rejection of media. His data show that during the Reagan administration’s push for a traditional family, many writers were airing concerns about video games as electronic babysitters; a medium which would displace other “more healthy” activities. The public was frequently offered numerous images of arcade junkies and gamer delinquents. However, as disposable family income increased in a prosperous period, video games became a more common form of entertainment and some went so far as to frame them as beneficial and revolutionary.

In short, Williams found that video games went through a process of vilification and at least partial redemption as their fan base aged and allowed a more mainstream acceptance of game play. Many of the fears that surrounded video games are typical of any new medium and the change in attitude occurred not because of any major opinion shift, but rather because of a natural evolution—the children who grew up with video games grew up and ran society.

If not entirely beneficial, video games are at the very least gaining widespread credence as a viable medium with potential for unique networking and social opportunities. This leads to a growing respect for video game studies as relevant, important, and useful from a scholarly perspective. Evidence for this acceptance can
be seen in the growing number of video game classes and programs among American colleges and universities (Schiesel 2005b, Mangan 2005).

Media studies in the communication field may help us to better understand the practices of video game critics and advocates as well as the progression of video game studies as a sub-field of communication research, however, they do not do as much to help us understand the strong gender divide in relation to video game perceptions. According to the communication perspective, men and women should adopt similar attitudes towards video games as time goes on. We’ve seen, however, that this is not the case and women have been much more hesitant than men to associate positive characteristics with video games. To better understand this contrast, we must look to gender studies and theories of gendered play.

The Gendered Play Perspective

Barrie Thorne’s theory of “doing gender” (Thorne 1993) offers a great deal of insight into the issue of gendered gaming. She finds a number of things in the course of her research that may help us to understand why play is often gendered and how certain expectations for gender are enforced.

Thorne points out that socialization begins at a very young age. From the time a child is born it is placed in either a pink or blue blanket and given a gender-specific name to ensure that there is no ambiguity relating to its sex. Most parents tend to implicitly promote stereotypical gender play and activities (sports and trucks for boys and cooking and dolls for girls, for example) with their children. In this way, children become very sensitive to their own gender and the gender of others. They define themselves as “big boys and girls” and identify with those of the same sex while differentiating between themselves and those of the opposite sex. Gender is a clear
distinction to make, and differentiation is made easier when such typically gendered features as clothing, toys, hairstyle, and behavior are visible.

Thorne explains that generally, a child will come to identify more with the parent of the same sex. Gender is seen as a common bond and the child will try to emulate and cling to the same-sex parent while avoiding aspects of the opposite-sex parent’s personality that are viewed as gender-typical. For example, a young boy may be eager to learn to help his father fix a car, but he may be less likely to help in the kitchen if this is a room typically dominated by his mother. This being the case, it is understandable why women would not see video games as a viable entertainment option — most children’s mothers do not play video games.

Parents aren’t the only driving force in terms of socialization, however. Peers become increasingly important as the child grows and begins to spend larger periods of time outside of the home. This fact may help us to understand why young girls who enjoy video games grow into young women who cannot tolerate them.

Although gender may be explored and even ignored to some extent when the child is alone or in small groups, when a child is introduced into a larger circle, same-sex self-categorization is largely inevitable. In American schools, it is typical for children to be segregated by age into classrooms of 20-30 male and female students. Thorne finds that this sort of environment is exactly the kind of setting in which gender can play a major role in socializing behavior.

Though children may cross gender lines when alone or in small or mixed-age groups, in larger, same-age groups, they tend to cling more to members of their own sex. Children seem to gravitate toward segregation either because it is the obvious choice (i.e., making up sports teams by pitting boys and against girls is a quick and easy way to set up a game) or because it is the safest choice (i.e., to avoid teasing,
“cooties”, or disruption from those with different play preferences). Maccoby (1990) confirms this preference for segregation:

“…behavioral differentiation of the sexes is minimal when children are observed or tested individually. Sex differences emerge primarily in social situations, and their nature varies with the gender composition of dyads and groups. Children find same-sex play partners more compatible, and they segregate themselves into same-sex groups, in which distinctive interaction styles emerge” (p. 513).

Thorne shows that as children age, gender becomes more important. Whereas a preschool child may have friends of either gender without fear of reprisal, a fourth grader is very likely to either refuse to socialize with members of the opposite sex or publicly deny any cross-gender socializing in which s/he partakes. As children enter adolescence, cross-gender socialization can become even more difficult as teasing turns into speculation and confusion about romantic ties. In short, it is “safer” to stay with one’s own gender.

The fact that developing individuals tend to be surrounded by other members of their own sex explains why gender socialization is so strong and consistent. Children learn from a young age what behaviors and activities are appropriate and the pressure to stay within gender boundaries is strong. Conformity and same-ness is appreciated; difference and dissent is not. This scenario makes it very difficult to make headway in bringing girls into a previously male-dominated realm (video game culture, in this case), but as we will see, it is not impossible.

In an effort to better understand gendered attitudes toward video game play, I conducted a pilot study for this thesis in the spring of 2005. During a two week period,
I asked my graduate colleagues who were serving as teaching assistants in undergraduate communication classes to hand out my surveys to any willing volunteer participants. The survey consisted of multiple choice and short answer, open-ended questions designed to learn about the subjects’ video game habits, opinions, and experiences. Of the many packets handed out, 97 completed surveys were returned to my office. These were then coded and analyzed using the statistical analysis program SPSS. Originally, it was expected that the survey would show the following:

- Households with male children are more likely to have a video game console.
- Girls are less likely to name themselves as the primary owner of a household video game console.
- Females tend to play video games less as children and less in the present when compared to males.
- Males more frequently name sports games as their favorites while girls more frequently name puzzle games as their favorites.
- Males tend to like video games more than females.
- Females are more likely than males to play video games on devices other than consoles (cell phones, calculators, etc.)
- Individuals tend to keep their attitudes about gaming from childhood (eg; a child who likes video games “strongly” will probably “like” or “strongly like” games as an adult.)
- Girls are more likely to quit playing video games at some point.
- Females who play video games are more likely to have male relatives.
- Individuals who play games with others regularly are mostly playing with regular, male gamers.
- Boys are more likely to visit and enjoy arcades than girls.
- Males are more likely to own video game consoles as adults than females.
- Males will be more likely to have handheld gaming devices (not including cell phones, palm pilots, etc.)
- Adult females are more likely to play video games alone than with female friends.
- Parental attitudes towards video games correlate to individual attitudes towards video games.
- Females are less likely than males to see video games as a good use of time.

Although there was some support for gendered differences, there were far more female subjects than male subjects, which served to confound conclusions. However, the uneven ratio in the study allowed for a wide range of female responses, many of which came as a surprise after being immersed in the current literature and poked numerous holes in the preconceived notions discussed earlier. It did not appear that increased exposure to video games would necessarily lead to heightened appreciation of video games among women (in some cases, the opposite was found to be true), and the gender of siblings in the household did not immediately explain differences in gaming preferences.

The survey found that with the exception of sports games and some first person shooter games, many males and females enjoyed the same games. Furthermore, among those who no longer played video games, the same reasons were most often given regardless of gender (lack of time, broken equipment, out-dated games and no desire to buy newer ones, other interests, etc.). What was more interesting was the diversity of responses from women. Some responses were almost stereotypical in their assertions that videogames “…take boys away from their girlfriends” or that “I was a
girly girl growing up [so I didn’t play many video games].” Others could have been confused with a stereotypically male response: “I played a ton of computer games when I was a child, [a] couple hours each day.”

These findings and a lack of definitive explanations for them in the existing research encouraged a deeper look. Since female responses were so diverse, the subsequent research project for this thesis opted to focus entirely on women in order to better understand the complexity and nuances of a woman’s experiences with video games. In so doing, the goal was to achieve a better understanding of women at play in a digital world. This choice would come to show me that there is a lot we have not considered about females and video games, and a lot we need to discuss before we can really tackle the data.

Chapter Two will explain the steps taken following the completion of the pilot study and attempt to justify the methods used in the main research project.
CHAPTER 2: METHODS

I will attempt in this thesis to compare, not males and females, but female gamers and female non-gamers. How are they different? Were their upbringings consistently different? Were their peer groups different? Are the natural recreational inclinations of non-gamers in some way oppositional to video game activities? This information is the key to understanding the female gamer and the many more females who are not gamers.

In order to gain this knowledge, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with women from all over the Cornell University campus. I believed that among the student body, a variety of opinions could be found. In order to diversify the subjects, I found women gamers by going to places where video games are generally seen as legitimate forms of play (i.e., a video game design class, the Cornell gamers society, and the Dance-Dance Revolution club). More “mainstream” women were needed for comparison, and I found these in an undergraduate oral communication class (COMM201), a required course for many students. I chose a few more students from the pilot study for their strong opinions against video games and their willingness to be interviewed again. Thus, I ensured that there were some vehement non-gamers in the subject pool in addition to gamers and various degrees of moderate gamers.

Although it would obviously be ideal to observe many women from different demographic groups over time, it was nonetheless very useful to choose college-aged subjects (ages 18-23) because this age group was born shortly after the advent of video games and so has matured in an environment in which video games have come to be fairly common and natural. These women have grown up in the video game era and are more familiar and comfortable with digital gaming than the previous generation, but they will be less likely to take video games for granted than some members of the current generation who have never known a time when video game production was not
a booming industry. The scope of this project could not allow anything as expansive as a long-term study of a randomly selected pool from the population at large. Still, this small, focused, image of the female-gaming experience allowed me to look at an especially interesting, but manageable group while still keeping in mind the bigger picture.

I chose a qualitative approach because in a young field such as this, there are few data of any kind, and one great fault of much of the existing research is a failure of some researchers to delve into their subject to the point of actually looking at games and gamers. It seems foolish to try to quantify gamer behaviors or game content before one is truly familiar with the range of behaviors and the games accessible. De Jean et al. (1999), for example, do a wonderful job of bringing certain gender behaviors to light. However, they tarnish their credibility when they remark on a video game which, had they played it, they would know did not contain the objectives or activities that they listed.

It is important in these early stages to obtain the most thorough and solid data possible. Though collecting such data may lead to a deluge of information that seems nonsensical initially, over time it may be whittled down, categorized, and analyzed, but only if the foundational knowledge is rigorously collected. My individual efforts will certainly not be enough to overcome the shortcomings of the entire field, but when combined with the work of many others, they may serve as a small piece of the foundation upon which the future of the field will be built.

I aimed to learn about the subjects’ early experience with video games, their home lives, their male and female peers, their perceptions of games, their perceptions of the opinions of others regarding games and gender roles, and their gaming habits in the past and in the present. Although each interview was unique based on individual
differences among subjects, the following list was brought into every meeting and each woman heard some minor variation of these questions:

**Some general questions:**
What is/are your major(s)?
Do you have a job? What is it?
Do you participate in any extracurricular activities? What are your hobbies?

**Video Games and You**
How would you define “play?” “Games?” “Video games?”
How often do you play video games? What would make you play more/less?
What do you like/dislike about video games?
How good a use of your time are video games?
What are some possible costs and benefits of video game play?

**Video Games and Gender**
Males tend to play video games more than females. Why do you think this is?

**All about You**
How do you play/relax?
How do you kill time when you just have a short period free?
What do you and your friends do when you are together?
How many hours a day are you surfing the net (shopping, blogging, etc.)?
How many hours a day are you on the computer playing games?
Did your family have a computer when you were young? When did you get it?
Do you own a game console?
Did you own a console as a child? At what age? How did you get it?
As a child, how did you feel about video games?
Who introduced you to video games? Who (if anyone) did you play with?
If you stopped playing, what was the reason?

The general questions were aimed at learning about the girls’ personalities—
their interests, activities, and skills. The “Video Games and You” questions were
meant to get the girls talking about video games and get at their candid feelings on the
subject. The “Video Games and Gender” question was meant to start a dialogue to get
both the interviewer and interviewee thinking about what it means to be female, what
it means to be a gamer, and what roles society and personality play in the female-game
relationship.

In the “All About You” section, the women were asked various questions
about their past and were pushed to consider ways that past exposure/lack of exposure
to video game technology may or may not have affected their present habits and
opinions. This portion also worked toward the goal of learning how young women
perceive play, how they play, and how they may or may not use technology to mediate
or initiate play. This section had the added benefit of drawing out differences between
childhood and adult attitudes towards play where they existed and delving into issues
of social play which existing research indicates is very important to females of all
ages.

The interviews generally lasted 45 minutes. The shortest was 25 minutes and
the longest was well over an hour. Most subjects seemed very interested in the topic
and were eager to discuss video games. It should be noted that it was not difficult to
find subjects for the study due to the nature of the subject search. As one might expect,
women in the video game club and video game design class were enthusiastic about
the subject and eager to discuss. Similarly, women in the communication classes were already somewhat familiar with the controversies and issues surrounding video games and were eager to discuss what they knew and learn more about this field of research. In a few cases, communication students were offered extra credit for participating in any departmental research study which helped increase recruitment, though occasionally this meant a rather sullen student with little patience for the interview.

Generally speaking however, most of the women were very interested in this new medium either for its entertainment values or its societal implications and it was not at all difficult to find volunteers to come to my office and talk for a while. It also helped that I made scheduling as flexible as possible and allowed the women to set the date and time of their interview to ensure a convenient, unhurried scenario. Because there was no deception (only open dialogue) and no major incentives or impositions, it was a very straight forward process to obtain permission from the Human Subjects Committee for my project and it was a very pleasant endeavor to find study participants. Furthermore, I assured all of the subjects that their identities and answers would remain confidential in order to ensure honest opinions and comfortable discussions.

Each interview was recorded onto audiocassettes and accompanied by the interviewer’s notes. The recordings were later transcribed and examined carefully. In order to better understand the information, I used a color-coding system on a hard copy of the interview transcripts. Pink highlights were used for details relating to personality such as hobbies, interests, etc. Orange highlights indicated information relating to access and habits such as the number of times each week an interviewee played video games or the play where she typically played video games (i.e., at home, at a friend’s apartment, etc.). Green highlights were used to signify each woman’s likes, dislikes, and feelings. This could include specific video game elements the
subject preferred, or the subject’s opinions on video games as a waste of time or a
good social tool. Blue highlighting was used on portions discussing general play
issues and definitions such as the question “How do you define play/game/video
game?” or discussions about whether or not computer solitaire was the same as
playing card solitaire. Finally, yellow highlights were intended to draw the
researcher’s attention to interesting quotes or ideas that seemed to warrant further
scrutiny for one reason or another. Often these were subjects’ strongly worded
thoughts on video games or the subjects’ musings about play, video games, and
gender.

Throughout the transcripts, my thoughts and questions were written in the
margins. Possible connections, trends, and theories were considered while reading.
Personality (pink) details were linked to habits (orange) in an attempt to generalize
about the type of girl who is likely to be a gamer. Access (orange) details were
compared to feelings and opinions (green) to see if there is a tie between exposure to
video games and feelings about video games. Personality (pink) and musings about
play (blue) were also compared with the hope of finding perceptual differences
between gamers and nongamers.

One of the most difficult parts of the study involved labeling the subjects of the
interviews. Some of the women felt very strongly that video game effects were very
negative and dangerous. Others enthusiastically defended video games against
common criticisms and were quick to offer redeeming qualities. As one might expect,
there were also a number of women who were somewhere between those extremes. In
order to compare gamers and non-gamers, each woman had to be labeled based upon
her opinions, habits, and beliefs. This task was not easy as many women who called
themselves non-gamers actually played a great deal more than the average subject.
There was also the problem of determining what constituted gaming. The interviewees
were asked questions about everything from MMORPG, CD ROM games and console games to cell phone games, online puzzles, and the “accessories” folder on most computers which includes such classics as solitaire, free cell, mine sweeper, hearts and even poker.

When the question came up in interviews as to what was to be considered a video game, I was careful to tell the subjects that “it’s whatever it means to you” in order to allow free thinking without researcher influence. In truth, most researchers—and even gamers—cannot agree about a definition of video games. Some only consider console games, while others include computer and arcade games. It seemed best to allow the women to express themselves by defining games on their own terms and discussing what games meant to them. Some interesting discussions resulted, but it made comparisons even more difficult. Should a woman be called a gamer if she did not call herself one? Such labeling actually proved necessary because every single woman out of the twenty-five total subjects had a reason why she wasn’t a “true gamer.” Surely a woman who spends 4-5 hours a day on a Nintendo system is to be considered a gamer. After all, a woman who spends 4-5 hours a day practicing guitar is safely called a musician, is she not? With this thought in mind, I opted to call some of the women gamers even though they had avoided that term.

This lack of women who self-identified as gamers made me think harder about the way the field defines “gamer” and “video game”. The interview subjects had no concrete definitions and I found that I was at a loss to provide any sort of unifying concept. Ultimately, this haziness allowed the women to express themselves on and in their own terms, but as a field, surely it is difficult to know that we are effectively combining our efforts if we cannot agree on the most basic terminology of our conversation. As we will discuss later, it may well be worth the effort to rethink our
preconceived notions of “gamers” and in the case of gender studies, perhaps throw out the term “gamer” entirely as most females avoid it, thereby rendering it useless.

Even more complicated was the type of games being played. Some women claimed to hate video games, but they would play computer solitaire almost every day. Among the interviewees (and I get the impression this is true among many professional gamers and scholars as well) some would define computer solitaire as a video game while others would not. Finally, I decided that any form of digitalized game played on a regular basis each week or for extended periods of more than an hour on a somewhat less regular basis would denote a gamer. This criterion was chosen because for the purposes of this study, it was important to know how much a part of life video games are to a woman. Several hours a week, or several days at a time during school vacations seems to indicate that games are a priority for an individual and this priority status seems to be enough to place a gamer female apart from the non-gamer female mainstream. Some may argue that this was an arbitrary decision, and in large part, it was. However, it was broad enough to allow for female gamers and narrow enough to provide some solid foundation for labeling the subjects, so functionally, it was a good choice. It does, however, force us to question our use of the term “game” as well as “gamer” if we intend to continue video game/gender studies.

Non-gamers were much easier to identify than gamers. There were a few women who would play no computer games, had no access to consoles whatever, and did not play cell phone or online games of any kind. This extreme wasn’t terribly common, but it was definitely present. Most women interviewed could be located between the extremes of avid gamer and non-gamer. These women were labeled with
various degrees of “moderate gamer” from low-moderate gamer to high-moderate gamer.

A low-moderate gamer would be a woman who occasionally played computer solitaire, had access to console games and played once a month but only because everyone else was playing, or perhaps liked video games as a child but now couldn’t find the time for them even though she might like to. A high-moderate gamer might be someone who didn’t have access to video games on campus but who kept a video game console at her permanent residence and played somewhat regularly during school breaks. (The difference between this individual and a gamer would be the amount of time spent on the game system and the opinion of the game system. For example, a woman who looked forward to playing video games and would do so for 3-4 hours a day while on break might be a gamer, but a woman who didn’t care about games but was happy to play them for a few hours in order to bond with a younger sibling who loved them would be a high-moderate gamer.)

The title “moderate gamer” was avoided as much as possible for being too ambiguous to be helpful. Most women fell slightly away from center in their video game opinions and habits and it was important to acknowledge these leanings when coding. A depiction of the labeling results can be seen in the table on the following page.
Table 1 Breakdown of Subjects by Gaming Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-gamers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Moderate Gamers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Gamers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Moderate Gamers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the twenty-five women interviewed, thirteen fell into the middle of the spectrum with five low-moderate gamers, 2 moderate gamers, and 6 high-moderate gamers. At the two extremes, non-gamers made up seven of the twenty-five total interviews and gamers comprised five of the total subjects. For the sake of testing the label schema, I tried relabeling the interviews, changing some of the labels for interviews that had troubled me initially (“Should this be a non-gamer or a low-moderate gamer?”), but the results were much the same with a fairly large number of non-gamers, a larger number of low-moderate, moderate, and high-moderate gamers and a group of gamers only slightly smaller than the rest. It is possible that a second coder would contribute greatly to coding consistency, but it was important to me at the very least, to ensure that I was individually consistent in my coding efforts.

Worth discussing, is the gaming spectrum itself. Once again, for the sake of utility, I had to come up with something that would allow a comparison of the interview subjects, but had no ruler in my literature toolbox. As nothing is black and white, it seems necessary to go farther than thinking about males vs. females, and even
gamers vs. non-gamers. This study taught me that there are indeed, many *degrees* of gamer, and very few people actually seem to exist at the extreme ends of the spectrum. Future scholars would greatly profit if they took the time to develop a coding schema and a truly inclusive, comprehensive measurement for gamer activity. This would, of course, require firmer definitions of games and gamers (if we opt to keep those terms at all), but the discussion would certainly be a rich and rewarding one for all its inherent complexities and hardships.
CHAPTER 3: DATA

Speaking to women with different backgrounds and experiences was fascinating. The conversations recorded in the transcripts were lively, informative, and unique. Every woman interviewed had something to say about video games—sometimes more than she realized. In speaking about her own preferences, habits, and beliefs, each subject opened up about herself and occasionally let slip a tiny indicator of something deeper in the form of a choice of words, a turn of phrase, a nervous giggle, or an exasperated shrug of the shoulders accompanied by a roll of the eyes. I was very gratified to note that not only did I not have to probe very much to encourage women to speak and think deeply about the subject (many had had reason either as media scholars, game players, or “game widows” to consider the implications of gaming prior to our meeting), but many of them offered up amazingly decisive and poignant remarks which not only challenged those who would disagree, but would challenge me as well.

I gave very little information at the beginning of the interview as to my intentions, leaving the women to decide how I felt about video games. I hope that because of my attempts to remain completely even and neutral, they did not feel any pressure to answer one way or another. Many of them seemed to assume that I was either trying to find support for anti-game theories, or else prove to the world that video games are a great form of recreation, but there was no indication that there was any trend in these conclusions based upon the women’s status on the gamer spectrum. Some women (both gamers and non-gamers) were somewhat confrontational and seemed to feel a need to defend their beliefs while others (again, both gamers and non-gamers) were very enthusiastic and positive; seemingly assuming that we were in total agreement at all times. At least some degree of success is evident in the opinions expressed. Without prompting, many women provided me with powerful arguments
both for and against video game play. They cited articles they had read, they described their own experiences and their observations of other people, and they confidently explained why they felt the way they felt. It would surprise some to note that some of the most interesting quotes within the interviews came in the middle of tangents and musings that came without any prompting on my part. From the data, I learned many things.

Issues of Access

Among the greatest surprises was the realization that one of the expected outcomes never came to pass. I initially predicted that women with early exposure to video games, computer games, and the like would be more likely to appreciate and enjoy such things as young adults. There was little or no evidence to support this prediction. Several women whom I labeled as a gamer had only the most minimal exposure to video games as children. One only came to enjoy video games as a college student. Other women admitted that they loved video games as children but refused to play as adults.

In hindsight, this should not have been so surprising. The women interviewed, the game industry, and the marketing we can now see (pink Nintendo DS systems, game commercials featuring young girls, etc.) all indicate that at least younger females in the last decade or so have had equal numbers of opportunities to play video games and computer games. Further evidence of this can be found in a keynote address to the Kaiser Foundation in 2003. In this speech, it was announced:
“A nationally representative random-digit-dial telephone survey of more than a thousand parents of children ages six months to six years old [found]… that children today are growing up absolutely immersed in electronic media even at the very youngest ages… Half of them have used computers, and that includes a third of all the kids zero to three and by the time they’re a little bit older, seventy percent have already used computers. Fewer children this young have played video games, although you can see that by the time they’re in that four to six age group, about half of them have played video games. Using these different screen media accounts for on average about two hours a day each and every day among all children from six months to six years old…. many children six and under are active computer users. Nearly three out of four kids now in this age group, which is six and under, have a computer at home, and 63 percent of them have internet access at home… Each and every day their parents say they use a computer…. It’s not as frequent as TV or videos, but it’s certainly not a rarity or an occasional thing either… it’s not a particularly brief activity either” (Rideout, Wartella, & Vandewater 2003).

Looking at gender, we can see that the gender gap—though it is quite large among adults—is very small among children at present. Calvert, et al. (2005) found that:

“…computer use patterns are now similar for girls and boys. Similarly, data collected in the census of 2000 reveal that there are no longer gender differences in children’s use of computers at home for the 3-17 year-old age group… A gender divide favoring boys over girls was not found in our data. Boys and girls began to use the computer at about the same point in development, and they had similar skills in diverse areas ranging from turning on the computer to asking to go to specific Web sites…Contrary to past research, we did not find that boys were more likely to have
played games on the target day than girls (Subramanyam et al. 1999), suggesting that the content of games may now be more favorable to girls, at least for computer games directed at very young children. These findings further support the premise that gender patterns in computer interactions favoring older boys over older girls are learned…” (Calvert, Rideout, Woolard, Barr, & Strouse 2005).

Though childhood certainly may play a role in adult views of video games, the equation in question is clearly not as simple as early exposure = future interest and a lack of early exposure = future disinterest. If this were the case, then we would have many more women gamers.

The interviews confirmed this complexity. Most women involved stated that they had some access to games as children either in the form of learning games at school (Oregon Trail, Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego, etc.) or recreational and learning games at home. Many had video game consoles and, though these were often used more by males in the household than by females, they were available to, and enjoyed by, the young girls. This information raises the question again of what happens between childhood and adulthood to determine whether or a not a woman will be a gamer? Going deeper into the transcripts, interesting things can be seen which may shed some light on the answer to this question.

Recreational Choices

Many reasons were given for playing or not playing video games. Fun/not fun, social/anti-social, engaging/boring, thought-provoking/mindless, appropriately-challenging/too difficult, activity/inactivity are just a few of the dichotomous reasons provided by the women interviewed. While it is to be expected that different people
would have different definitions of a fun activity, it is very interesting to see how different women explained their positive and negative outlooks on video games.

In many cases, the same reason was given for different points of view. For example, one female non-gamer preferred television to video games because TV has “a plot, you get excited, you get into it, you know, [it’s] something you look forward to, it’s an escape from reality” while a gamer stated a preference for video games because “it’s a very rich fantasy world…I like games with [a] story.” Likewise, many gamers presented gaming as primarily a social activity—they played with friends at get-togethers, they used online games as a way to connect with friends in far away places, and they learned about new games from gamer friends. Non-gamers, however, saw games as primarily anti-social—something that people sit in front of, ignoring the rest of the “real” world around them. “Even though movies, you’re not talking or anything I guess it’s kind of more of a social thing than if you’re just sitting in your room playing some game.” This perception was very well-known among gamers and they occasionally challenged it in the form of assurances that “whenever I play an online game, I usually end up playing with friends…we all always end up playing together” or “I guess it’s kind of like, associated with like, dorkiness and like, not having friends if you’re sitting around and playing video games but whatever! I don’t agree with that!” A common sentiment was “I try to limit it. I swear!”

One thing that gamers and non-gamers could agree on was that video games are best in moderation. Both gamers and non-gamers felt that video games could be addictive or could be used as procrastination tools, but among gamers, this possibility was not enough of a concern to stop playing entirely. They simply monitored their time and kept their gaming in balance with the rest of their activities and obligations. In some cases this meant no video games until after homework was finished, or perhaps limiting play to three hours or less a day. A few gamers refused to play while
in school; instead they waited until they were home on vacation to play their favorite games.

Parental Example

It was interesting to talk to some of these women and learn that although their parents might have been supportive of educational gaming, very few women had ever seen their mothers play video games, either alone, or with the women and/or their siblings. The only exceptions were a few mothers who played solitaire, scrabble, or other puzzle games online or through the accessories folder on their computers. In several cases, women and/or their siblings played video games on a console or computer with their fathers (or uncle in one case) when they were very young but could never recall playing with their mothers. Mothers also were less likely to be supportive of video games when compared to fathers. This may indicate that most women grow up never having seen an adult female play video games. Such an environmental factor may be a major force in socializing girls to the notion that women don’t play video games.

Peer Influence

Peer interactions may further socialize women to avoid video games. One gamer admitted “when I’m with my [non-gaming] friends I kind of push my video game background to the—to a minimum so it doesn’t interfere with anything.” Here we see that there is pressure to avoid the label “girl gamer.” Gamers and non-gamers are well aware that girls who play video games are not the norm. One gamer admitted to being the town “oddball” as a way of explaining why she liked video games from a
young age. Several women stated that they usually played video games with male friends or boyfriends rather than close female friends and a couple suggested that their “tom boy” habits growing up might explain their love of video games. These women seemed to feel that because they get along well with males and can understand the male point of view especially well, they are more able than their female peers to appreciate video games.

The women indicated that their most common activities with close friends were usually talking (either on the phone, or in person), “going out” (to parties, bars, or restaurants), or watching movies or favorite television shows together. The things they liked about these activities (unwinding, getting away from work, building social bonds) were generally not benefits associated with video games. Though a few individuals felt that video games could be social, most women (especially low-moderate gamers and non-gamers) felt that it was unlikely that they would ever use them to socialize with friends.

Girls and Gamers

It actually seems “normal” for women to denounce games. Though video games may be seen as being acceptable in moderation, fine for children if the content is not violent, and grudgingly accepted as the toys of choice of boyfriends, brothers, and male peers; generally speaking, video game culture is alien territory for most women.

One non-gamer referred to video game controllers as “remote controls” indicating a lack of familiarity with basic game terminology. Another non-gamer used news stories and studies of video game violence to supplement her knowledge of
video games. She had no experience herself and so she frequently fell back on “I’ve heard of” and “they say that” to answer the questions posed. While this lack of experience and exposure is perhaps unsurprising in light of what we already know about females and games, it is very surprising that in a time when many other areas in which gender gaps have existed are being challenged, women often seem to accept or define video games as a male zone.

Most women admitted that they were used to being beaten by males at most every game they played. Some stated this as a reason for quitting at a young age—they got tired of losing to the computer and tired of being beaten by male friends. Female gamers even seem to place themselves in an inferior position among other gamers:

Interviewer: “Do you ever beat guys at DDR?”
Girl Gamer: “Yes, I always beat them at DDR… it makes me feel good that I can beat them at something but it’s 'cause I played DDR a lot when I was younger so I don’t know whether that’s a valid reason. I’m sure if they had played DDR for as long as I have…they would probably be better than me or as good as me.”

Here we see the gamer putting herself down by assuming an unfair advantage on her part has given her the edge in her favorite game. She cannot seem to accept that she may be a better dancer or game-player than her friends and instead, points to their higher skill in most other games. A high-moderate gamer stated “I wouldn’t expect myself to [play as well as my boyfriend] so I just knew I’d never be able to beat him.” It’s not just about skills either. There’s also the matter of gamer culture.

Even women that I coded as gamers were hesitant to call themselves gamers. They expressed concern that they were not privy to the in-jokes, language, and industry knowledge that characterized “true” gamers. One young woman who was
designing a video game for a game design class and had extensive experience with many types of games insisted that even after many years of studying and playing video games, “it’s kind of hard to like, get into, like… it’s kind of like cultural, you know? Like, when I’m… with my game design group… I’ll sit there and … I’ll like, have no idea what they’re talking about because it’s just like one big inside joke. They like, make references to all these like, weird things… it’s like they’re talking a different language.” When asked if she felt strange playing video games with males, she answered, “Yeah. I don’t mind though….I don’t really get what they’re talking about but… it’s fun anyway.”

Meanwhile, a low-moderate gamer described an evening in which she attended a party. At the party, several males were playing video games and she said “[I] didn’t… feel the need or desire to join in and it wasn’t like they were asking me to join in, they were like, pretty much into it…. even if I had wanted to I probably wouldn’t have felt comfortable being like ‘can I join?’ but I really didn’t think much about it.”

Game Content

Most women—gamers and non-gamers—agreed that more complex games were not desirable. While gamers were more likely to enjoy complicated plotlines and intricate quests, even they preferred a game which didn’t require a great deal of time in order to understand game controllers, 3D world physics, and spatial manipulation (this tendency coincides with Lucas and Sherry’s observations of gender and play in 2004). The women generally believed that an ideal game would allow one to just jump in and begin playing and exploring.

Additionally, as previous research has indicated, the women interviewed generally preferred non-violent, non-sport games. Gamers were more likely to enjoy a wider range of games, but they generally professed to preferring “happy” games with
bright graphics, positive motives (defending a kingdom rather than offensively attacking others), and a wide array of skill-types including fighting, strategizing, puzzle-solving, and collecting.

Although some women cited game content as a reason for the gender gap in gaming, most women who were pressed admitted that even if content were altered, they would still not play video games. Most non-gamers and low-moderate gamers could not even think of games that they themselves could enjoy. Instead, they suggested feminine themes that might attract other types of women. One woman went so far as to predict that any game made for women would inherently be pathetic. She joked that it would probably involve shopping or some other similarly stereotypical feminine activity and assured me that there was no way she would play something like that. She—and a few other women I interviewed—could not even fathom a game creation that could ever hold her interest.

An interesting exception to this trend came in the form of a couple of women who suggested educational games for adults. One imagined a game that would evaluate her digital art and serve as a tutor—informing her if something was asymmetrical or coaching her to improve the quality of her creations. She became very enthusiastic thinking about this “game” and stated that she would buy it if it existed. The other young woman suggested a game that would mimic a business scenario. It would be something that would help her learn to buy supplies, invest capital, and advertise successfully in order to make a small business prosper.

What both of these exceptions have in common is a tendency to think of computing hardware as primarily a tool rather than a toy. Both of these women turned their games into something pragmatic and educational for their real-life areas of interest—graphic design and business. Similarly, many other gamers counter-argued
against the popular non-gamer complaints (games are anti-social, replace physical activity, and do nothing to advance learning or relaxation) with assertions that gaming taught them something valuable (one gamer was interested in joining the video game industry and used her play as research), gave them a creative outlet (the gamer who wrote stories about her online game avatar based on her adventures in a role-playing game), allowed an opportunity for exercise (dancing games such as Dance Dance Revolution), and opened up lines of communication to allow social bonding among friends and siblings (MMORPGs played by friends many miles apart, game nights in which several friends or relatives would get together to play, the social interaction that occurs when friends tease one another during play and compete in a friendly way, etc.).
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

It seems clear from the data and the work of previous researchers that although gaming technology is available to women, it is not perceived by most women as a feminine past-time. Many concerns heard from an earlier generation of television critics were voiced by interviewees (It’s too violent, it discourages creativity and physical activity, it is not educational, etc.). There also were many implicit statements that video games are childish and male-dominated.

A non-gamer put the situation in an interesting way when she said:

“Maybe because we’re more like, stereotypically like, girly and feminine, but like, there are other things we like to do [instead of playing video games].” The same non-gamer later stated:

“Our town’s like, very social and like, all my brother’s friends have always been close so they’ll come together and [video games] sometimes but like, they’ll go out with the girls and like, hang out with them and go to the movies and do stuff like that which kind of took them away from sitting at home playing video games… With my brother and his friends like, they’ll do it like, in a social atmosphere it’s like, the boys are just like, hanging out ‘cause they’re still younger, they’re just becoming teenagers now.”

Here, video games are associated with antisocial tendencies while “going out” is naturally associated with females as well as more mature males. It is implied that a “normal” adolescent boy is one who would rather go out with girls than stay home and play video games with his friends. This assumption may point to an implicit belief that
video games are socially unhealthy or indicative of inherent social shortcomings. Such a belief would seem to support Funk and Buchman’s (1994) assertion that it is girls who do not feel accepted who are more likely to play video games. If girls are expected to be social and video games are seen as anti-social, it seems only natural that girls who enjoy video games would be labeled as atypical—a label that surely wouldn’t escape their own notice. Meanwhile, girls who fit in with their peers would be pressured to give up video games as they matured, making it less likely to find a popular, self-confident girl gamer.

Not only do peers play a role, but perhaps parents do as well. As was mentioned earlier, although some fathers were reported as playing video games, it was extremely difficult to find a subject who reported her mother as having positive feelings toward video games, let alone playing any herself. This lack of maternal presence in gaming culture may help to explain how girls are socialized to see video games as male-dominated. It may also at least partially explain why most women do not perceive video games to be an appropriate recreational sphere for mature adult women—they have grown up without ever seeing an adult female play.

Female gamers are very aware of the stigma attached to game play—especially for females. They are quick to defend their activities, they are ready with support for their recreational choices, and they are very sensitive to the way non-gamers and male gamers perceive, or seem to perceive them.

Surprisingly, if we open up our definition of video games, there are actually very few women who play no games at all. Even low-moderate gamers generally pause to play a little computer solitaire while writing papers. If we replace video games with “video play” we capture the rest of the “non-gamers.” That is, if we consider chatting on AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), using The Facebook to browse
through acquaintances and their photos, or shopping online to be a form of play or recreation that is executed in a digital environment, then all women interviewed are digital players, and perhaps even gamers in some way.

What we learn from this broadening of definitions is that the women interviewed are not afraid of computers—they quite appreciate them as a tool for communication, commerce, and creative endeavors such as web page design, digital photography, graphic design, and writing/publishing. These women are also not against using computers for recreational purposes such as shopping, chatting, and playing music. The problem with video games as we generally know them seems to come from perceptions of games as juvenile, purposeless, time-wasters that eat up money and social opportunities.

It is possible that over time, the stereotypes and negative associations attached to video games will subside—just as the concerns over television eventually lost their edge as it became a mainstream medium (Williams 2003). Perhaps video games will move into the feminine sphere and overcome gender stereotypes the way professional athletics have done. In order to speed this process along, industry, educational institutions, and parents would be well-advised to look to history and scholarly theory of gender and video games for guidance, while thinking harder about what it means to play and what it means to be a gamer.
CHAPTER 5: APPLICATION AND THEORY-BUILDING

Gendered Gaming: More Research

Jenson and de Castell conducted a research study of females and games (2005) and their results mirror mine in many ways. Many of the subjects could not correctly name the video games they had played—either forgetting titles entirely, or mislabeling games. Typically, the girls (ages 12-13) and women (ages 22-23) interviewed played card games, puzzle games, “gender appropriate” games and board games either online or on their computers through the accessories folder. Note: these games are often not considered video games by many scholars, gamers, and game designers. The women mostly played these games alone. When they played games with males, they were generally “gender-inappropriate games” such as first-person shooters and other violence-based games. Jenson and de Castell suggest that females will most frequently cross gender boundaries in gaming when the activity “is legitimated by male relations” (p. 7). This suggestion goes along with my findings that women gamers tended to play frequently with male friends and were more likely than non-gamers or moderate gamers to play games like Halo, Counterstrike, or EverQuest (games that Jenson and de Castell, along with most other game researchers, would call “gender-inappropriate” for the traditional female at play.)

Perhaps more interesting is the fact that Jenson and de Castell found something odd that I came across many times—a refusal by women to place themselves in the video game sphere or culture. Without any prodding from me, many of the women used the term “gamer” and they consistently used it in the negative—they did not consider themselves gamers, they did not want to be gamers, or they did not understand gamers. It was evident that most saw gaming as a culture to which they did
not belong. They did not understand the inside jokes, they did not know the
tricks/skills/vocabulary, and they did not know the industry secrets and current events.
All women interviewed—regardless of their individual places on the gamer spectrum—felt inadequate as gamers to some degree.

“Throughout our interviews, girls and women characterized their own game
play as being inadequate and/or less competitive for reasons which make little or no
sense in relation to their own lives and experience. One young woman claims that she
doesn’t play video games anymore because the controls “got too complicated,”
another claims that her “fingers are too stubby” to work the controls properly to
navigate RPG games, and yet another, herself an athlete in a sport requiring
exceptional hand-eye coordination, claims that she lacks the hand-eye coordination
required for competitive game play” (pp. 4-5).

Based on earlier research showing similar tendencies of women to avoid
“male” activities, Jenson and de Castell developed a theory of “magical realism”
which proposes that:

“when girls and women see themselves as competing directly with their
masculine counter-parts they tend to side-step the possibility of such gender-
inappropriate engagement by discounting themselves as equal-opportunity
competitors” (p. 5)

The women I spoke to insisted that they were not true gamers, that they got
motion-sick looking at 3-D spaces on a screen, that the new console controllers were
too complex for them to handle, etc. Even the women I labeled as gamers were
hesitant to call themselves gamers. There was a clear feeling of discomfort with the term in general, all across the spectrum. It was associated with males, with “others”, but never with the self. It was evident that gaming was viewed as a culture to which the interviewees would not or could not belong.

Jenson and de Castell also noted that most of the adult females they interviewed ceased to play video games around age fourteen. This information coincides with my data—many of the women I interviewed said that they discontinued video game play around the time they started high school. High school is a time when Thorne has found gender to be especially powerful. The urge to cling to same-sex friends is stronger than ever before, and largely safer than the alternative. Under these circumstances, a young women gamer would be hard pressed to find fellow gamers and perhaps even hard-pressed to find understanding of her gaming activities.

Among the women that I interviewed some claimed that in high school, time became the issue, while others insisted that they came to find other activities more rewarding. Still others stated that with greater independence (being able to drive and go out with friends) that age brought, they no longer felt a need to “escape” into video games for adventure and social opportunities—they had “the real world.” This practice may or may not be an example of magical realism—finding excuses to avoid a male-dominated challenge, but it is a possibility worth considering. It seems very likely from the women’s rhetoric and the gender research available that there is a common mindset among females that gamers are male, gamer culture is no place for females, and video games are not rewarding for females. This mindset would be a clear impediment to those who are advocating video game play for females, and it would give us a good reason to turn away from research based on assumptions of access or content. Those elements matter very little if society or socialization is training females
to hold a bias against all games. Further evidence for a problem of female mindset can be seen in the way that Jenson and de Castell’s subjects categorized their game play.

“Many are reporting that, unlike boys who play “for fun,” girls who continue to play beyond adolescence aren’t really, by their own accounts, “playing” at all, they are “de-stressing,” relaxing, or passing the time when they are bored—which is surely a very different, and significantly different thing from our invisibly but deeply gendered conceptions of “play.” Equally significantly, the games girls report playing or having played are those bundled with the consoles they purchased (e.g., “Duck Hunt”), or else, like Tetris and Solitaire, those readily available free of charge online. Economics intersects here in all-too-familiar ways with gender, and we see that where women do purchase games, they do so for their sons, their brothers or their boyfriends. Their rights to and control over their own leisure time are slight relative to their male counterparts, whether men or boys” (pp. 5-6).

Within the gender literature, there is strong evidence that the female mind tends to associate games with males and play with children. It is difficult for women to allow themselves the label or the activity of an individual at play, or a “gamer”. Many of the women I spoke to explained their game play as “a procrastination tool,” a symptom of multi-tasking (alternating between a game of solitaire and an essay in-progress, for example), a way to unwind or escape. However, it was only the gamer minority that tended to call video games “play” and acknowledge video games as a legitimate sphere of recreation. When non-gamers and low-moderate gamers were asked to define “play,” their answers usually involved “activity” and “imagination”—two words that were not always involved when the same subjects were asked to define
“video game.” These women felt guilty for playing games because they required time and occasionally money. The same guilt did not apply to such activities as going out to eat or going shopping with friends — the justification being that these activities promoted social bonds and healthy living through friendship and activity. Though “going out” was commonly listed as a favorite way to relax and have fun, it was not always associated with play, which was labeled as a more juvenile concept by some.

The idea of women feeling guilt over personal indulgence is further explored by Janice A. Radway in her book Reading the Romance (1991). Radway explores the subject of romance novels and the people who write and read them. She finds some interesting trends in her interviews with women who regularly purchase and enjoy romance novels. One of these trends is guilt. The women who read romance novels feel quite guilty for the time and money they spend on their entertainment. They acknowledge that reading these stories distracts them from housework, family, and friends and although they feel good after reading these books, they have trouble stating exactly why that is.

Much like the women I interviewed who enjoyed video games and played them regularly, Radway’s subjects felt a need to justify their activities.

“…one of their most effective strategies for justification involves the equation of romance reading with other forms of escape, especially participation in and attendance at sports events, which are activities enjoyed by most of their husbands… they are not comfortable with [this] defiance. They confess that they sometimes hide their books and usually acquiesce to their spouses’ wishes if they specifically demand their complete attention. Romance reading, then, is an acceptable way of securing
emotional sustenance… only if the activity can be accomplished without mounting a fundamental challenge to the previous balance of power in the marriage relationship” (p. 103).

Similarly, the gamers with whom I spoke felt a strong need to explain their habits. They insisted that they were “not addicted,” that they only played after their work was finished, and that they didn’t play alone as much as they played with friends. One woman who was a prominent member of the Cornell DDR Club seemed to personify Radway’s romance reader when she said:

“I personally think that people need to escape a little bit, I mean, if you get stuck down in this life…it’s really easy to get burned out and … if you waste a little time playing a video game, I don’t really think it’s that much of a waste. I think you know, you’ve just done something for yourself. It’s like going out and getting a spa treatment I guess, like, I don’t see any point in getting your finger nails done when you’re just going to you know, like, chip ‘em up or whatever later so like, if you ask me, that’s a waste of time, but you know what, for those women who do that, they enjoy it. You know, it’s something they do for themselves and this is just what I do for myself… I play video games. I escape into these other worlds and I have fun.”

We see here that rather than justifying her actions by comparing them to those of a spouse who didn’t understand, this young woman justified her game play time by comparing it to the habits and preferences of other women her age who most likely would not comprehend the attraction of video games. As we have seen from Thorne’s research, peers are a very important part of social development and gendered self-
concept. Perhaps the dearth of girl gamers can be explained by peer pressure related to
gender expectations equating video games with males. As a female grows and
matures, she is surrounded more and more by same-sex friends and peers. This takes
her farther and farther away from males and their play, and increases the pressure to
conform to a stereotypically feminine mindset that play is juvenile and irresponsible.

If a female is unable to justify video games as either socially worthwhile or
acceptably and responsibly escapist, then she will be unable to negotiate her interest in
game play with the pressure placed upon her by stereotypical feminine expectations to
avoid play for play’s sake after childhood. Failing this, she will most likely either hide
her activities (like the woman who admitted to pushing her gaming “to the
background” while in the presence of female friends) or minimize them, possibly to
the point of giving them up entirely. Only occasionally, will women find reasons to
rationalize their game play, and these members of the minority (such as the woman
quoted above) generally seem more comfortable with the overlying concepts of play
and escape. It is important to understand female views of play, both so that we can
comprehend the subtle nuances of gender and so that we can ensure that one half of
the human population is not being cheated out of its right to play by pressure to be
full-time, “maturity martyrs” without any opportunity for free play.

Women need not be a lost cause, however, to the gaming world. As Williams
(2003) pointed out, all new media go through patterns of fear and loathing before they
are accepted or praised. He found that for quite some time, mainstream media
portrayed video games as a purely solo/child-centric pursuit. We now see that this is
not the case. Currently, it is very common for adults to purchase consoles for their
own personal use and many games are manufactured with the T (Teen) or M (Mature)
rating, indicating an aging audience. Similarly, video games have traditionally been male-dominated, but that is changing ever so slowly.

Funk and Buchman (1996b) studied 4th and 5th grade children in 1996 and the children agreed that it was “OK” for boys and girls to play video games. The researchers believe that socialization is becoming more similar though it is not identical yet. More boys thought that it was “OK” for boys to play video games “a lot” and thought that popular boys could play video games. More girls than boys thought a popular girl could play video games a lot. So we see that boys may be less accepting of girl gamers but girls are beginning to change their minds about what a gamer can be. It is quite possible that the natural progression of new media will take video games into mainstream female society if we simply wait long enough (Williams 2003).

For those who would like to even out the gender divide but who have less patience than Williams, there may still be cause for optimism. Recently, there have been some games that have achieved success with mainstream female audiences. These games typically involve more problem-solving, real world skills, social interaction, and customization than previous games. A perfect example of this type of game is “The Sims.” Many of the women I interviewed had played it and even some of the low-moderate gamers recalled having enjoyed it immensely when it first came out (they were in high school at the time).

“The Sims” is the latest of the Sims (short for simulation) line which began in the early 90s with “SimCity”—a game that challenged players to build, develop, and run an entire city to the best of their ability. “SimCity” was very different from other software out at the time and gained popularity with both boys and girls. Later games from the product line included “SimEarth”, “SimAnt”, “SimCoaster”, “SimUniversity” and many versions of “The Sims” in which the player determines the
daily activities and long-term success of customizable avatars called “Sims.” The player can design houses, choose jobs, go on dates, start families, move to the city, or become a star depending on which software is installed and which choices are made for the character.

Unlike many other games, the “Sim” line doesn’t end or even have a real goal, other than to get creative and do what you want to do. Players often converse and share their progress and program tips. As Nutt and Railton (2003) point out, this makes it very appealing to those who find more typical video games repetitive and constraining. Indeed, they point back to Jenkins’ work to show that “The Sims” may be the epitomy of the “ideal” game for girls. Many of the women I spoke to did enjoy the Sims games because they involved problem solving (i.e., how to provide power to a growing city without putting power lines over residential areas, or how to earn a Sim enough money to buy a bigger house in the least amount of time) and non-violent, non-competitive social play.

Nutt and Railton also point to the tremendous fan community surrounding “The Sims.” Many players create stories and photo albums based on their in-game personas which they then share with their fellow players in the game fora. As Cumberland (2000) has pointed out, fan writing is more commonly a female pursuit involving strong social ties, creative exploration of emotion and social bonding and occasionally, the breaking of taboos or expectations. The fact that the format of “The Sims” allows and encourages this kind of activity may explain its popularity and help us to see a direction which video game designers might take if they wish to entice more women to buy their products.

Some game designers are doing just that. Schiesel (2005a) talks about a very recent game called “Façade” as an example of the movement toward smarter A.I. that
will allow full customization, realistic social interactions, and a level of emotion and human-computer interaction previously unheard of in game design. The game involves an awkward social situation that must be resolved by the gamer. The prototype sends the player to a dinner party only to reveal that the host and hostess are considering divorce after a long period of marital discord. The atmosphere is tense and it is up to the player to decide how to deal with the situation. S/he can either try to diffuse it, or opt to push the couple to the brink.

With advances in technology and game designers eager to test the limits of games and gamers, it is increasingly likely that a combination of hardware and software will be developed that will be successful with “average” women. Games that offer greater opportunities for customization and socializing may be the key to offering women an “out” in their gaming. Games like “The Sims” are seen by some as good practice for real life (city planning, organization, etc.) and thus may be justifiable as something that is “not-play.” Likewise, game fora offer social opportunities that may encourage women to see games as more social, participatory activities than previously believed.

As we consider ways in which to entice girls to gaming, however, it is worth noting that the girl gamer problem does not seem so dire if these data are any indication. Although many of the women I interviewed were non-gamers, there were no women without any video game experience and very few who play no video games at all in the present if we count such activities as computerized solitaire as video games. Although commercial video games (those which must be purchased) were not very popular except among gamers, free games such as solitaire and certain online games were commonly played by most, at least in small amounts. Similarly comforting was the fact that regardless of their feelings about video games, most of
the women interviewed felt very comfortable with technology in general. They used
word processing software for their school work, felt comfortable browsing the internet
for information and recreation, and many had experience with digital photography,
graphics design and editing, web page design, and even basic programming.

Additionally, computers were seen as a source of fun, at least in small doses.
Even women who hated computer games said that they enjoyed using their computers
for shopping, chatting, social networking, and idle surfing. These facts imply that
although video games may not be successful with most women, technological skills
are still being learned and incorporated into everyday life.

So although we should always aim to encourage equal-opportunities in all
things and attempt to minimize gender-related limitations on what is and is not
appropriate behavior for adults, at least in the realm of technology-education, video
games seem not to be much of a concern. This brings us back the issue of the
technology gender gap.

Much of the existing research has been conducted under the assumption that
the gender gap in technology-related fields might be minimized through earlier
exposure to video games and encouragement of female game play. However, as we
have seen, females are not afraid of technology, nor do they fail to equate computers
with fun. Furthermore, younger females have been shown to enjoy video games and so
additional support of educational games and girl games are not necessary. Instead, we
need to focus on changing our perspective from pressuring girls to play video games,
to thinking more about how girls play and how we can encourage women to continue
playing through adolescence and adulthood.

Perhaps educational games that mix fun and practicality are the answer the
adult play problem, but that still assumes that women want any games. At a more
basic level, women don’t seem to enjoy games, at least not in the form of what is commonly considered a game. Researchers need to rethink the definition of games, and perhaps, all adults should be pushed to do so as well in order to question our assumptions about recreation and appropriate adult behavior, while encouraging gender equality in an activity that has been proven to be essential to a healthy, happy life: play.
CHAPTER 6: SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In addition to the possibilities for subjectivity in coding the interviewees on the gamer continuum and coding their responses to discern meaning, there were a few other complications involved in this study that may have affected its results. Further investigations will be useful in either confirming this analysis or bringing to light its shortcomings.

The fact that all subjects of the study were Cornell students (with the exception of one woman who was an undergraduate attending nearby Ithaca College) may be significant. It is possible that certain opinions, habits, or background statistics will prove homogenous among students of the same university. The study was conducted using these students, however, because it was believed that by using Ithaca-area students, access would be easier, and perhaps, clearer comparisons would be possible with the loss of diversifying elements such as school, occupation, and age. It should also be pointed out that Cornell draws to its campus students from a variety of geographic, ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds.

Certainly, future studies will want to look at students from other schools, non-students ages 18-23, individuals outside of the 18-23 age range and if resources permit, individuals of even more varied demographics, eventually looking at women and men to make a full, thorough, comparison. Using fewer students had the benefit of allowing me to conduct in-depth personal, and lengthy interviews that I could then transcribe, code, and analyze. For the purposes of generalizability, a larger group of subjects could be very helpful and a team of transcribers could contribute to standardization of coding.

Increased reliability in coding would help to ensure that women are accurately categorized in order to give us a better understanding of the female video game experience while also helping us to better interpret female game-play patterns and come
up with an improved coding schema and gamer spectrum for measuring game play and female play habits. For the purposes of this study, I have come up with a very simple spectrum and largely grouped together non-gamers with low-moderate gamers and gamers with high-moderate gamers in my analysis for the sake of simplicity. A larger sample and a more detailed, standardized spectrum would allow greater understanding of the less obvious differences in the gamer degrees. Alternate methods such as quantitative experimentation and probability-based sampling might also provide unique perspectives on gender issues and should be encouraged as a means to either confirm or challenge existing data.

Another concern to the researcher is diversity. The initial aim of this study was to bypass some of the generalizations and stereotypes that come with gender discussions by ignoring males and focusing on the diversity and variety that exists in the female population alone. The hope was that once females were better understood, improved studies could be conducted which compared females to males. The problem still exists in this study, (though it was addressed as extensively as possible) that gamers and non-gamers are also very diverse groups. There may still be a need to further categorize gamers and non-gamers (low-moderate, moderate, moderate-high is a start, but certainly not all-encompassing) but this would be made easier by larger samples and numerous studies.

Finally, (and perhaps most importantly,) future researchers must work harder to standardize definitions of such essential terms as “game,” “gamer,” “play,” and “video game”. As was mentioned before, “video play” might be a more appropriate term to use when comparing males and females in order to be more inclusive. Furthermore, if researchers cannot agree upon a definition of “game” and “play”, it will never be possible to hold a discussion in which subjects, (who also seem to have confusion and
disagreements regarding definitions) can express their feelings in any meaningful or understandable way.

On a larger scale, it may be necessary for our society to work harder to challenge the gender-based assumptions that (1) mature, responsible women can’t play without purpose, but mature, responsible men can, and (2) that females are inherently inferior to men in the world of the gamer. Such internalized beliefs will prove to be the greatest, most challenging obstacles to fair play.
APPENDIX A

Pilot Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the circumstances under which individuals gain access to video games and how early exposure affects play habits. This survey is being conducted by Meredith Hahn, a graduate student in the Communication department.

The survey is completely confidential. Your answers will not be connected with your name, and no one will have access to your personal data except for the researcher. You may stop at any time. The questions generally take 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation will help us to understand more about video games as recreation.

Please take a moment and answer the following questions as honestly and thoroughly as you can.

I have read the instructions above and I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential. I understand that I may stop participating at any time and if I have questions, concerns, or complaints, that I may bring them to the Cornell University Committee on Human Subjects.

(Signature) ____________________________________________

(Date) ________________________________________________

Please note that this cover sheet will be detached from your answers and your identity will be carefully guarded.

Pilot Study: Video Game Access

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Thinking of when you were a child (age 3-12), please answer the following:

1. Did you have a video game console in your household as a child? (Please note: by video game console, we mean such systems as Nintendo, Sega, and Atari game platforms. Please do not include handheld games, arcade games, computer games, or VCR-based games) (Check one):
   ___ Yes (If “Yes”, please go on to the next question)
   ___ No (If “No”, please skip to question 13.)

2. How did a video game console come to be in your household? (Note, if you had more than one console, just think about your first console.)
   ___ Gift I had not asked for/ sibling had not asked for
   ___ Gift I had asked for/ my sibling had asked for
   ___ Something I (or my sibling) bought for Myself (Him/Herself)

3a. Did the console have a primary owner or was it a shared toy?
   ___ Owner
   ___ Shared Toy

3b. If there was an owner, who was it? (check one):
   ___ You
   ___ A Sister
   ___ A Brother
   ___ A Parent

4. How often did you play with the console? Check one:
Never
Several times a year
Several times a month
Several times a week
Several times a day

5. Regardless of ownership, who in the family used the console regularly—at least once a week? (check all that apply):
   __ You
   __ Older Brother(s)
   __ Older Sister(s)
   __ Younger Brother(s)
   __ Younger Sister(s)
   __ Parent(s)

6. Who played it the most? (you may check more than one if there was a “tie”)
   __ You
   __ Older Brother(s)
   __ Older Sister(s)
   __ Younger Brother(s)
   __ Younger Sister(s)
   __ Parent(s)

7. Which games did you like the best? Please list your favorites below.
8. How much would you say that as a child you liked playing video games on a console? (Check one):
   ___ Strongly disliked video game console
   ___ Disliked video game console
   ___ Liked video game console
   ___ Strongly liked video game console

9. Did you most often play (Check one):
   ___ Alone
   ___ With Relatives
   ___ With Friends

10. When did you start playing video games on a game console? Please list an approximate age.

11. When (if ever) did you stop playing with a game console? (approx. age):

12. If you stopped playing with your console, what was the reason?

Still thinking of yourself from ages 3-12, please answer the following questions.
13. Did you have regular access to a game console outside your household? (i.e., a friend’s house, close relative, neighbor, etc.) Note: By regular access, we mean access to a console at least once a week.

___ Yes (If “Yes”, go on to the next question)

___ No (If “No”, go to the next page)

14. Where was this console? (List all locations that apply)

15. Was the primary owner of this console (Circle your answer):

Older than you? Yes No

Younger than you? Yes No

Male? Yes No

Female? Yes No

A regular game-player (Someone who played with the console at least once a week)?

Yes No

16. What video games did you typically play with this person? (Please list the games below)
17. Among these games, did you have a favorite? (Please list)

Still thinking of yourself from ages 3-12, please answer the following questions.

18. If you played video games with friends as a child, were most of these friends males, females, or a mixture?
   ___ Males
   ___ Females
   ___ Mixture
   ___ Did not play video games with friends

19. As a child, did you go to video arcades?
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

20. If you went to video arcades, did you enjoy this activity?
   ___ Yes
   ___ No
   ___ Did not go to video arcades

Thinking about yourself in the present, please answer the following questions:
21. Do you *currently* own a video game console (Nintendo, Play Station, X-Box, etc.)?
(Please do not include any consoles which you did not bring to campus)
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

22. Do you have regular (at least once a week) access to a video game console? (friend,
neighbor, house lounge, etc.)
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

23. How much do you like playing video games on a console? (Check one)
   ___ Strongly like
   ___ Like
   ___ Dislike
   ___ Strongly dislike

24. How often do you typically play video games on a console?
   ___ Never
   ___ Several times a year
   ___ Several times a month
   ___ Several times a week
   ___ Several times a day

25. Do you have any favorite video games?
___ Yes (If “Yes”, please list them below)
___ No

26. Do you play computer games that came with your computer?
(Hearts, Free Cell, Solitaire, Pin Ball, Mine Sweeper, Checkers, Etc.)
___ Yes
___ No
___ Don’t own a computer

27. Do you play computer games that did **not** come with your computer?
(RPGs, online video games, CD Rom games, casino games, simulators, etc.)
___ Yes
___ No
___ Don’t own a computer

28. Do you play games on your: (please check all that apply)
___ Calculator
___ Cellular Phone
___ PDA/Palm Pilot/Blackberry
___ Other (please specify) _________________________________
29. Do you play handheld versions of games such as Poker, Solitaire, Game Shows (Wheel of Fortune, Family Feud, etc.) or handheld versions of console games (Nintendo, Playstation Portable, etc.)
   
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

30. Thinking about all types of video games, do you typically play alone or with others?
   
   ___ Alone
   ___ With Others
   ___ I Don’t Play Video Games

31. If you play video games with others, do you mostly play with females, males, or a mixture of males and females?
   
   (check one)
   
   ___ Males
   ___ Females
   ___ Mixture of males and females
   ___ Do not play video games with others

32. Do you enjoy going to video arcades?
   
   ___ Yes
   ___ No
   ___ I don’t go to video game arcades
33. What are your parents’ opinions on video game play? (check one)

33a. My mother:
   ___ Strongly approves of video game play
   ___ Approves of video game play
   ___ Disapproves of video game play
   ___ Strongly disapproves of video game play
   ___ I do not know if my mother approves or disapproves

33b. My father:
   ___ Strongly approves of video game play
   ___ Approves of video game play
   ___ Disapproves of video game play
   ___ Strongly disapproves of video game play
   ___ I do not know if my father approves or disapproves

34. In your opinion, how much fun are video games?
   ___ They are very fun
   ___ They are somewhat fun
   ___ They are somewhat not fun
   ___ They are not fun at all

35. In your opinion, how good are video games as a use of your time?
36. Do you have anything else that you would like to tell us? (Your thoughts on video games, your play habits, your experiences with video games?)

37. Please describe your family (Names are unnecessary but we would like to know about the ages and genders of your siblings and parents. Please include any step-siblings or half-siblings that lived in your household with you.)

38. Please mark your gender:
   ___ Male
   ___ Female

39. In what year were you born? ____________________________

40. Would you describe yourself as: (check all that apply)
   ___ White
   ___ Black or African American
   ___ Latino or Hispanic
   ___ Asian or Pacific Islander
   ___ Native American or Alaska Native
   ___ Other
41. Do you have any questions or comments about the survey (referring to either individual questions or the survey format)?

42. Would you be willing to answer more in-depth questions about your video game habits at another time? If so, please provide your contact information below.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Meredith Hahn at msh49@cornell.edu. Feedback about survey questions and topics is welcome. If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or unsafely by this study, please contact the Cornell University Committee on Human Subjects. Thank you for your time and assistance. Your participation is greatly appreciated.
APPENDIX B

Interview Transcripts

Interview #1

Subject did original survey, also in COMM201
Communication Major: Sophomore AG (thinking about changing to psych. And human
development
Activities: Sorority, CALS Ambassador to incoming Freshmen, Campus Life Student
Advisory Cmte., Campus Insite (Student TV), Takon Center (new students center)
Hobbies: Shopping, Watching “The OC”, hanging out with boyfriend (long-distance)
Access to VG now?: Over the computer here, at home, bro had N64, boyfriend’s family
very much into video games. Not usually interested. “When I was younger I used to
love playing the car games just because I liked driving…prior to that, my father had
received Nintendo [as a gift] when I was like, 4 or 5 and I always thought that was
fun… the duck game or whatever and Mario Bros. My mom would get me like Little
Mermaid and Barbie games and like, stuff like that. So that was always fun like, when
they were really simple and nothing too complex. But then…[as I got older—through
elementary and middle school] I just really stopped being interested in it and like video
games got more I guess like, violent and everyone playing like Halo and whatnot… I
don’t care for that.”
So you don’t like violent video games in general?: “Not really.”
Do you like action video games (jumping, running, not necessarily violence): “I used to
like Golden Eye, that one was fun, ‘cause that one’s not like, blood and guts, like, you
could shoot a person, that one was fun ‘cause it was like, you know like, opening the
different doors, but mostly I was like, into the driving ones and the like, anything to do with like, Mario…like Diddy Kong… when I had time."

Siblings?: Younger brother—used to play more than he does now. He got a Playstation when she was older. Had an N64. Both had handheld games (Sega, Gameboy) for long car rides. “My brother was more into it that I was so he continued to play them once I kind of grew up.”

Did your brother grow out of it at the same age that you did?: yes. “Our town’s like, very social and like, all my brother’s friends have always been close so they’ll come together and play it sometimes but like, they’ll go out with the girls and like, hang out with them and go to the movies and do stuff like that which kind of took them away from sitting at home playing video games.”

So is video game play a social thing or more of a solo activity?: “With my brother and his friends like, they’ll do it like, in a social atmosphere it’s like, the boys are just like, hanging out ‘cause they’re still younger, they’re just becoming teenagers now…”

[boyfriend plays Halo, boyfriend’s little brother plays MMORPG]

Have you tried it?: “I think I like, played Halo once for like, five minutes… like, when I got older it’s like, ‘this is boring.’

What would have made it more interesting for you?: “Now I remember being like, when I was a … freshman or sophomore in high school, my … best friend had gotten into Playstation as a girl and she loved it and she always played Grand Theft Auto. So those games were always like, more interesting to watch…drive the cars… for a bit of time was like, a very social thing… but I never actually engaged in the playing ‘cause I would be too bad at it and they’d just laugh at me.”

So you liked watching GTA?: “Yeah.” [but not Halo].

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What was it that you liked or didn’t like?: “Maybe it was the graphics like, I’m not much for like, the gloomy like, doomsday kinda scenes so I think that was probably like, what played into it. Halo was very dark and … Grand Theft Auto [was] vibrant.”
Did you like playing because you could drive? Yes, it was interesting—more complex than Mariokart.
Do you still play Mariokart? Not since the summer “It never really caught on” [(she played it with her boyfriend but was never really hooked. Doesn’t really play video games much at all anymore.)]
Do any of your sorority sisters or friends ever get together to play games?: “Not that I know of… I mean, my best friend, when she got into it, would play with boys. Like, she’d have the boys over and they would play, my friend would always watch. So I really have never heard of girls coming together [and playing video games].
Why do you think that is?: “…if we’re coming together for something we’d much rather be like, going out to eat, like, talking, going shopping, doing like, other stuff like that. Maybe because we’re more like, stereotypically like, girly and feminine, but like there are other things we like to do [instead of playing video games].”
Would a video game about shopping appeal to your friends?: “I think being so far removed from video games now, but I feel like if it was something that might’ve been like, infiltrated in the past, like if you’re doing it with younger kids and you grab girls’ attention through the car games first and then like, ‘ooh, I can go shopping in the car’ like, that might change something about it but overall I think it’d be hard to like, bring it back, and like, like now if someone was like ‘oh, here, play this videogame’ I’d probably be like ‘I’d rather actually go shopping than play the game.’”
Do you think most boys would rather ‘actually go’ out or are video games somehow enough for them?: “I think… video games for boys supply enough to keep them right
where they are… I think that they totally can take their attention [boyfriend can play for
hours]… it diverts them and sometimes boys like, just don’t want to spend their money
[to go out when they could stay in and play]… it’s right here.”

You don’t have much access now?: “No, not really.”

What about computer games?: “I… have a busy schedule but I’m sure if I wanted
to… for awhile… we always [played snood] in high school… that was like, a lot of fun
and that was like, ‘take your time’ and like, it would just be like, a challenge and like,
who could beat the level… we didn’t have cars, we couldn’t drive, we couldn’t go out
and I think those… detracted you away from the computer.”

Who did you play with: “It was very popular among the girls… I did see my sorority
sister playing it the other day [to avoid homework].”

Is that one you can watch, or is it only fun to play?: “It’s more like, one on one.”

Is it interesting to watch?: “Sometimes, but I feel like while someone else is playing
you’re probably more engaging in multi-tasking, engaging in a conversation, watching
television, it’s something you can easily do like, while you’re online.”

Do you multitask?: “Actually I found last year… when I did have time… that I was
playing solitaire… I’d play a lot… while I was online, talking to other people,
multitasking.”

What do you like about solitaire?: “… I’ve always played it since I was little… fun…
simple… nothing really much to it.”

What other games to you play (non-digital)?: “I guess like, sometimes, especially in the
summer [at the pool or when the weather was bad]… a lot of Spit [(card game)]… last
winter my friends were trying to teach me… a form of poker… and I played for a little
while but they don’t really keep my interest… it’s not something I’m like, ‘oh, let’s
play a game!’ like, it’s not the first thing I would do and think of.”
Does that apply just to card games or any game?: “Pretty much games… just not my general level of interest…I remember being younger… you couldn’t go out, you couldn’t do other things, couldn’t go see your friends…[now] if it’s sitting right there and there’s nothing to do, but I won’t be like ‘oh, let’s go play!’.”

When you spend time with friends, do you generally like to go somewhere?: “Usually, like, when it’s during the day we’ll do a lot more like, moving around, if it’s going shopping… if it’s going out to eat, but like, at night we’ll typically um, like, conjugate in one area like, sitting at someone’s house or, we tend to meet in parking lots ‘cause there’s nothing else to do so like, we’ll all like, sit there and just hang out and talk, if we’re at someone’s house, get a movie or something and do like, those types of events.”

What’s a typical Saturday night?: [at home, see above. At school, it’s different:] “Get something to eat, get ready, and go out to a party.”

What would be an ideal Saturday night party?: dancing, being familiar with the other guests, enjoying the company, good music, no one’s overly drunk and sick, everyone’s having a nice time.

Have you ever played DDR?: “Yes.” Worked for a DJ company, they used to bring the game to parties. Played before guests arrived.

Were you good at it?: not really

Did you enjoy the game?: “I did… I love dancing and I love music… that would be a game that I could… see my friends getting and [playing] especially because of the exercise aspect… you’re moving and you’re dancing and you’re doing something.”

How important is that exercise aspect?: “I do enjoy working out… I don’t have a lot of time… it’s not extremely important, but it is more incentive.”

Fun: “I think that something that will take your mind off of your work… stuff that stresses you out um so like, to me, fun would be shopping because it takes my mind
away from what’s going on at school and really allows me to focus somewhere else and
do something that I really enjoy doing.”

Game: “A game to me would be like… anything that incorporates other people… not
doing something so serious… there might be a challenge involved, there might be a
goal involved.”

Play: “…play would be when you’re engaging in like, an activity with another
person…just having fun and enjoying your time that you’re spending with someone
else…engaging in something hands on”

Example?: playing with little kids, joking, engaging them in an activity. Sports is a
generic definition of play.

Do you feel guilty for your play time?: “I think it’s important…to take time and to do
something fun…taking your mind off stuff…it’s so nice having little kids around
sometimes to like, play with and enjoy your time with them.”

Games—how important is a challenge or a goal?: “I enjoy games that… come to a
closure…something that brings everything together at the end… not necessarily a
winner…but… an end.” It’s nice to receive a reward for winning, but it’s fine to just be
rewarded with a fun experience.

What would be the ideal reward in a game?: “Some kind of personal
satisfaction…rewarding experiences…with other people…you’ve accomplished
something…”

Do you find that kind of satisfaction from your other activities, like shopping?:
“Definitely, because I love [shopping for others]…rewarding…not for yourself.”

Do you ever shop online?: Sometimes-likes to look around, but nervous about sizes and
return policies.

Do any of your friends shop online?: Roommate does a lot. Sorority sisters too.
OK, so you’re a “stereotypical” girl, do you feel that your views on fun and games are “stereotypical”? “I feel like they would somehow fall into a general category that like, women might feel but at the same time I think I’m exposed around boys so much…I do try to see their view as much as I can… I kind of like understand… I did used to play… it just isn’t my interest right now…. There are degrees of feminine… Girls who didn’t play—were they different from you? –tape cut off-

Interview #2
Subject found in CS300 (Video Game Design Class)
Bio Engineering, minor Mechanical Engineering (Premed) Junior
WAS going to major in Computer sciences (wanted to be a game designer) but took a few classes and changed mind. Stopped playing video games, wasn’t interested in possible non-game related careers.
Would play more if had more time.
Jobs: research lab in vet school—cardiac research, TA for MATH192
Activities: Belly Dancing Troupe, used to be in DDR club—met game design group-mates there. But the club was too far away after freshman year…
Hobbies: playing sports—tennis, skiing; art—sketching, drawing (art design for current game is a little out of character for her style. Prefers realism, pencil drawings, etc.)
-Didn’t find it hard to figure out computer animation. DID take other comp sci classes.
Has done some programming. Would have liked to have done programming but the group needed an artist so she did that. Is going to take course again in order to program.
“Programming’s kind of always been like fun that’s what like kind of attracted me to like the CS major like I took some CS courses in high school and I dunno just like
coding stuff is fun like they have to like make up their own like physics system and stuff to like, for all the movement and stuff and I dunno. I think that’s just really cool.”

In school, enjoyed physics as a science in general. In school—liked science. Liked math. Didn’t like English as much, or history. Liked art.

Access: brought PS2 to apartment—doesn’t get used much. A lot of friends have consoles too. Used to play computer games, not that much now. Never really got into MMORPG. Used to play King’s Quest, old Adventure games—learned how to read and write from text-command computer games.


Played adventure games with dad—he taught her to read and write with them. Also liked Myst, The Dig (kind of like Myst), “I dunno, sort of the ‘girl’ video games”.

Didn’t like the shooter games “the main computer games”. Had a joystick, didn’t ever use it. Used keyboard and mouse. Didn’t have a console as a child. Parents discouraged it as a waste of time. Played at cousins’ houses—Sonic, Mario Bros., etc. (Approx. age—elementary—6-10 years, whenever they came out), played these perhaps once a month. Didn’t really play with friends. Most of the little girls preferred Barbies to video games. Lisa liked Barbies too. Didn’t play Barbie video game. Younger sister had the Barbie Makeover game—Lisa has tried it. No other siblings. Cousins—2 girls.

Childhood friends—no boys.

NOW: Preference for computer or console?: Depends on game, but probably more console—can play in a big group. Usually plays (if at all) with a group. Somewhat prefers playing in a group. Good at Halo. Also plays Karyoke Revolution and DDR. Likes games where you kill people like Mortal Kombat (3rd person fighter).

Prefer type of game? Really likes old adventure games like Myst—beautiful. Pretty much everything except MMORPGs.
WHY?: Never tried it. “It seems like, like it’s, it’s one big community of like weird video gaming boys” “I just liked the whole like, like immersiveness of the game [Myst, etc.] How it was like, like a big, world that someone created”

Compete/Challenge: against self

Are you Competitive?: “Not really…Not openly.”

Elements you like? All. “I like the puzzle-solving and jumping around…”

What don’t you like?: Can’t think of anything. Sure there is…

Would you be less likely to play something more drab, less pretty?: yes.

Why a gender gap?: Lots of reasons. Competition? Emphasis on competition. “I just think the online games now like I don’t know it’s kind of like um I don’t know I feel like maybe their deterred from playing? I mean, it seems like I don’t really, I wouldn’t really like connect with like, well I don’t know. It’s like, I don’t know, it seems like, like it’s kind of like, a community, like since there aren’t a lot of girls playing it kind of like deters more from joining and it’s like, like I don’t know they already have this like kind of like set community of like I don’t know, of gamers”

What started all of this? Online games deter women? How?: “Um, just that it’s kind of hard to like get into, like, it’s like, it’s kind of like culture, you know? Like, when I’m in like with my game design group and, you know, we have a group meeting like sometimes I’ll sit there and like I’ll have no idea what they’re talking about because it’s just like one big inside joke. They like make references to all these like weird things and I’m like I have no idea what they’re talking about… It’s like they’re talking a different language.”

You have trouble keeping up, even with your experience? Yeah.
Why is it that girls don’t get into gamer culture in the first place? (It IS hard to break in, but they aren’t adopting early…: That’s the way it is, it’s not an option for girls. It’s not expected. “Girls get the Barbies”

Do you ever feel strange playing with guys?: “Yeah. I don’t mind it though.”
What’s it like?: “Um… kind of like hanging out with my, my game design group. They kind of like they have like these inside jokes with each other and I’m kind of like ok I don’t really get what they’re talking about but, but it’s fun anyway.”
Is there much competition?: “No it’s pretty laid back It’s not like I’m challenging their, their I don’t know what.”
Pressure to play?: No.
Strange to hang out with non-gamers?: yes, female housemates don’t get it. They didn’t really have access as kids. Not interested. Lisa doesn’t understand why.
Other computer recreation?: Text twist online, Yahoo Games, word games. Nice because you can pick them up… plays while in research lab. Plays Yahoo games a lot in the summer while at lab full time, (A few hours a day), and now, not so much. Only play when there’s nothing else to do. Won’t go out of her way to play. Something to do while doing other things or when there’s nothing more fun to do (while writing papers.)
Playstation, CPU games, VG TIME: Not much alone, playing with others, Halo—a few hours on the weekend.
Lots of facebook but “It’s kind of a waste of time… I spend a lot of time checking people I don’t even know.”
Other games a waste of time?: “Not, not a waste of time. I guess, I guess maybe I do kind of think of video games as a waste of time. I could be doing something productive like making something or doing my homework but instead, yeah.
Good or bad use of time: VG: Pretty low on the not wasted time scale… you’re not like developing any real skills that you can use…”

Do you think you can learn anything about VG design from VG?: Oh yeah! I guess so.

Do you ever feel guilty for playing vg?: “yeah.”

When?: When I play them all day and then I haven’t gotten any work done and then I die anyway.”

“If you don’t die is it less guilt?”: “Yep.”

“If you just play for a few hours do you feel very guilty?”: “No, not really.”

How do you relax? What are the odds you’d play a vg? “Yeah. Probably pretty high.”

What else do you do with free time?: Art, facebook, watch TV.

Hanging out with friends, VG common?: Some friends—girls in apartment, no. Others?

Yes.

Have you convinced any friends to play? Convinced one roommate to take design class in order to take on a big project, though she didn’t convince her to play more v.g.

Costs and benefits: “Um, well, probably more on the ‘costs’ list! Well, there’s the lack of social life then you turn into um one of those video game boys, stereotypes that um don’t get out much and just play video games and they have video game jokes, which is not that bad of a thing I guess. Benefits—it’s fun.”

Anything else?: “I don’t know. I can’t think of anything right now.”

Play?: “Some activity that you do in your free time to have fun”

Games?: “Something that you play that like has an objective”

Video Games?: “Something like a game that’s played like on some system like a computer or a console.”

Other games? Board games, sports, etc.? “They’re fun too. They’re different, I guess. I guess, um I would not consider them so much of a waste of time as I said earlier.”
Why?: I guess ‘cause like it’s real. You’re not playing on a screen it’s actually you that’s being involved and you’re actually like developing some skills of some sort.”
Like what?: “Well like physical activity from like sports or um board games I guess not so much.”
What about DDR? Is that a VG or what?: Some people I suppose could consider it to be a sport too.”
What do you think?: “I guess kind of both [a sport and a video game]”
Time waste?: I don’t know.
When might it be a good use of time or bad?: It’s more like of an interactive game that you can like play with other people…so at least like there’s some social interaction going on. It’s not just you and a video game. And it’s exercise too.”
Better use of time than other VG?: I don’t know.
Board games?: Better use of time. Depends.
On what?: On what you feel like doing and who you’re hanging out with.
Party games?: Yes. Not that often. When there’s a big group of people.
Use of time?: I don’t know.

Interview #3
Subject from COMM201
Animal Science Sophomore
No jobs now, in summer—vet clinic as a volunteer, then as an employee, newspapers, lifeguard
Activities: Pre Vet society, A Capella group – Nothing but Treble
Hobbies: Riding, Cornell Companions (Animals in hospitals, w/ children, etc.)
Play VG?: No
Comp Games?: No
Accessory Games?: Used to in high school when there was more time
Online games?: Tried, but used to lose, didn’t like it
Cell phone, etc.: no
Access to games?: yes—once played with a friend, but that’s it (friend’s apartment had a playstation) Played “Mortal Kombat or something” but “I’m terrible at that so it’s not really fun for me”
Growing up, console?: 5 or 6 had the first Nintendo—describes it as a “fad” for her two older brothers—lasted for a couple years. “I never played, They would never let me” “I never really had access to it. I maybe played at friend’s house every once in a while”
The friends you played with, were there many: “maybe like 3 or 4 of my friends’ houses had video games, but not, usually they had older siblings that wouldn’t let us play them.”
Mostly boys or girls?: “I’d say most of my friends were girls but the reason there were Playstations or games in the house were because of boys.”
Did you ever play any learning computer games?: “Maybe while we were in school. I think sometimes during breaks we were allowed to play things like [Oregon Trail]. I remember playing that in school, through high school, no.”
What did you think of Oregon Trail?: “Now that I look back on it, it’s so simplistic but I think I really liked it when I was younger.”
What did you like about it?: “I think I liked it because it was like, on a trail, I’m really into horses. That’s probably why I liked it, not because you got to make decisions about life or death or anything, but just because you got to be in a wagon… that was cool. I’m a very nature-y person.”

Older bros had Nintendo—how did they get it: “They probably both asked for it as a Christmas present one year when they were like, I don’t know probably like 8 and 10 or something like that. And then they just, as soon as they like reached high school they totally forgot about it.”

So they don’t play anymore?: “Uh, no. Neither of them play.”

How did your parents feel about video games?: “Um, I think like we’ve just always grown up with nothing in excess so it was never an issue. I mean, my parents have never like, told us that we were doing something too much or prohibit us from doing something, it’s always just been like, ‘as long as you get the rest of your things done and you do well then we don’t care what you do’ so it was never a problem, my parents never cared how much we used it and just probably because we didn’t use it very much. I don’t think I was allowed to use it at all, ‘cause if I were just seen on it my brothers would have killed me.”

If you’d been allowed to play, do you think you would’ve been interested?: Yes. I mean, I think purely because of the fact that they didn’t want me to? So, I’m sure like, if I had a friend over and they weren’t there I’d say ‘Yes! Let’s go play video games!’ probably because of the fact that they wouldn’t have liked it had they known, but I’m sure that I liked playing them.”

Liked Mario and Duck Hunt (can’t quite remember if she played or watched. She thinks she played. She definitely watched.
When you weren’t allowed to play, did you often sit down and watch? “Yeah, I think I did. I would watch if my brothers friends came over and played.”

Were there any you liked to watch in particular: Only remembers Duck Hunt and Mario. “They were very simple”

What are the costs and benefits of playing video games?: “I’d say benefits, I know this from people is that they have great reaction time. I mean, I can’t play video games because I don’t have that kind of reaction time. I’m so interested in what’s going on in the background that I don’t really care like, who’s beating who, so that’s a benefit. Something that’s terrible is that it’s so time-consuming and it’s so easy to, to um procrastinate by doing something very unproductive such as playing video games. Um, another bad thing I see is that people tend to bet on who wins so it becomes like, a money issue and that’s not good either, I don’t think betting is a good thing um, let’s see. It’s just a distraction at school and I think also people become kind of reclusive if video games are in their life, or like a main priority like, the one thing they want to get away from work doing, they’re playing video games, it’s kind of a social-inhibitor, I think. I mean, it could also be, it-it could also be a good social thing to have friends over to play video games and you’re talking and laugh but I think if it comes to playing by yourself that is a, I think that’s very negative.”

Use of time?: “I think that as a social activity maybe, I mean, then it’s fine but um in excess it’s, I think it’s terrible that, especially for kids, um because I, since I’m a nature-y person I would much rather kids be outside playing and running around um and their use of, that use of time that could be spent like, with physical activity is just being on the couch and I think it leads to bad development and growth, everything else.”

What would it take to get you to play more if time and money weren’t an issue?: “If I didn’t have any other responsibilities, like work and responsibilities of friends and you
know, extracurricular activities. Um, I’d probably think I had time to play. Because to me, like, playing video games is like, wasted time, it’s like being on Facebook, it’s like, watching a TV show that doesn’t really matter to you because it’s on.

You mentioned the facebook is kind of a waste of time, are you ever drawn to that?:

“Yes, So I definitely waste my time in other ways but I, I like, um, I try to convince myself that it’s not that much a waste of time ‘cause I can just stop and then do something else but video games just kind of suck you in and you have to finish the game before you stop. But, yeah, I find myself wasting time that way um, I try not to but it’s easy.”

What do you like about the facebook?: “Um, I think it’s just, it’s a way of being connected socially which, especially if you meet someone and you don’t really know anything about them and it’s always awkward to ask a friend who they are or you know, you can just kind of casually browse their name or if you have friends who have pictures of you er, uh, pictures of you and your friends, it’s always nice to look at pictures and um, let’s see ,uh yeah, it sounds so trivial!”

Do you do any other recreational net activities? (blog, shop, etc.): IM “not that much”—only if there’s a particular person with whom she wants to speak. In boarding school, used it every day because cell phones were not allowed. I only online shop if I need something. I don’t browse. (paraphrased) Cites roommate as someone with a bit of an online shopping habit—a release from school stress.

How do you relax?: sing, ride, sitting and talking with friends, having fun with friends and laughing, taking a break from using brain so much.

Guilt while with friends?: Yes (more so in boarding school—has since relaxed) It’s still there a little bit when something is due. Much less pronounced now.
Guilt with facebook: “I try to justify it because I don’t really do it that much.. I feel guilty if I’m just surfing through people like, trying to find something to do and then I just realize ‘oh, this is bad’ so I stop.”

What do you do with friends?: eat out, eat in the sorority kitchen, getting ready to go out, watching a movie before going out

Do you ever feel pressure while doing homework to spend more time with friends?
“Probably even moreso [than feeling guilty for socializing when there’s work to do] especially in a sorority house.”

Other girls in sorority have video games?: “I don’t think they do” (not allowed to have TVs in room) but perhaps they play on computer. No group play. For together activity, TV watching is the norm.

Board games? Party games? in the Sorority house? “No, I wish we did, but we don’t”

Why is there a gender gap?: “I think because most of the video games are like Mortal Kombat and like um the, most of the games like, that I’ve seen—maybe it’s just with boys ‘cause I haven’t really seen any girlie games, but um, the games I’ve seen there’s like a man in like an army suit with a huge gun and he’s like, trying to like, shoot people and in Mortal Kombat they do have women but they’re like, like manly women who like kill people and um so I feel like girls are just like put not really their I don’t know maybe like maternal instincts just don’t really like killing things, so I feel like that’s, and guys are just like, you know, or fighting, and maybe it’s not even killing it can be just fighting but girls don’t really like fighting either.”

Is that true of you?: “Yes. I mean it’s it can, it’s ok, you know, to fight but then after awhile it just gets boring”

What would a girl game look like?: “For me, uh, I don’t know, I, when I was little I used to like to play with like, the horse figures um just ‘cause you know, I’m really into
horses or um so, and I used to make them like, um pretend that they were in a horse show and they would compete against each other and like, you know, certain horses would win the blue ribbon and I don’t know that would be a video game I would’ve really liked, um other than that I don’t know…or some kind of a storyline or something like uh well, I do know one game that my friends played last was that house game? Um”
“SIMS?”
“Yes. Yeah and I actually think that that’s not, I mean, it, I think it’s a waste of time but it’s still like, it’s a game that’s fun and I don’t think it’s harmful in any way except for time-consuming. Um, but, actually that’s a well-designed game, you know, a girlie game. But it’s still, it’s a, it’s a maternal instinct kind of thing too, I think, um geared more for that because you’re like, building a home and a family and you know, and I haven’t heard of too many guys playing that.”
What about YOU NOW. What would you play?: “Um, trying to design something like, some kind of like, life puzzle or something that, I mean that’s kind of why I like the SIMS because it’s like, you’re trying to construct a house that will work. I like, I mean I like those kind of things I think that’s um, intuitive trying er like, trying to make a business that will work or um, trying like, to model a house and see how it looks, I don’t know if that’s really a video game.”
“It’s all hypothetical”
“Or like, designing things like um, I’ve never really thought about it, designing either like, pictures or um, images and have the computer judge you on them or to help you improve on your, in your presentation or something like that.”
So offer feedback?: “Yeah. But in that very objective way.”
“What do you mean?” “Instead of you know, if you were to like, I-I really like playing, um, well, not playing, I actually do spend a lot of my time with a website um, so I spend a lot of time designing things and putting them on the web and like, trying to make it look really symmetrical, I’m like, a really symmetrical person and I—I think something that would be good, if I like were to make something on Adobe or Photoshop and then get the computer to, to feed, give me feedback of like what isn’t symmetrical and how I can fix it or whatever.”

Play: “To me, I would hope that play is something that is not, so, so work is for me is like, um, and my, like, mental work is like sitting down and focusing on one thing and play is just like, to me is that you don’t have to be focused on one thing, that your mind can kind of wander and take a break from being so focused and um your body can relax.”

Game: Can be more intense, it’s competition um, so your brain has to be focused”

Video Game: “And video games seems to be a, an electronic way of competition so you’re not exerting any physical strength, it’s just mental competition. So I think you also have to be focused for video games.

Is riding a game or play?: Game part is understanding the horse and competing. Play is bareback trail riding

Would you choose competition with others or competition with yourself (if you had to pick)? Competition with self

Do you generally prefer a personal challenge to a multi-person competition? “Yes.”

If you had to choose between the competitions and the trail-riding, what would you choose?: Now, prefer to compete, but someday, will just ride to relax.

Other?: I think that video games are comparable to um, TV shows in that they’re a waste of time but I think video games are a little more beneficial than TV shows just
because um, the child or whoever’s playing has to be focused on what they’re doing and it takes a lot of hand-eye coordination. With TV shows you just sit there, you don’t have to pay attention. Y-you could if you wanted to but you really don’t have to, um, you could just sit there. So I’ve, just in my own experience this past summer I lived with a family um, not my own and they had a little boy and he, he wasn’t allowed to play video games but yet he was allowed to watch 4, four and a half, 5 hours of TV shows um, and I just couldn’t believe how much he didn’t want to go outside. And I, the whole time I as growing up I only wanted to go outside. I didn’t come home until after dark, I wanted to be outside all hours of the day and I think that really helped me like, shape my feelings about nature which I think is really important, especially today, and I don’t think kids now have that connection and I think it’s really sad. Um, so, the benefits are that that it’s you know, a focusing activity that still keeps your brain going even after your school or after work um and it can be social with friends but the negative parts I think outweighs the positive.”

Interview #4
Subject from COMM201
Nat. Resources
At home—worked in law office
Activities—rugby
Hobbies—concerts/music
Do you play video games; “Not as much any more, but I used to a lot when I was younger”
What changed; “I don’t really have a TV anymore… it got too hard… growing up games were a lot easier to play… now they’re a lot more difficult.”
Had a Sega Genesis, lots of Disney games

Older bro, older sis

Bro played and still plays

Sis might’ve played when younger—not sure. Doesn’t play now.

Bro likes Grand Theft Auto, War Games—she’s tried them but they are “really hard”

Played with neighbors growing up—same age, boys and girls.

First experience: “When my brother and sister were little we had the original Nintendo and my dad was really good at that also so we used to play that a lot when I was really young, but it broke.”

How did the console come to be in the house: “I don’t know. It was just kind of, it was always there I guess, just because it was my brother and sister’s so they had it before I was really old enough to realize…”

Was it a shared toy: “We all shared it I guess”

Who played it the most: “My brother”

Second most? “Probably me.”

What did you like to play as a child: Lion King, (W/ neighbors Super Nintendo—Donkey Kong) “Every time a Disney movie came out on video game form, I got that.”

Didn’t like Madden—didn’t like football so didn’t understand what was going on. The others—liked movies, and liked getting to the next level—taking a long time, then getting to new parts—finally beating something. (Harry Potter game was engaging—spent an entire night on one level.) Likes levels more than learning tricks or skills.

Played with others AND alone. Prefers to play alone—doesn’t like waiting for her turn with someone else. Never really liked “party games” (Where everyone plays at once—MarioKart, etc.) Liked racing games less than other types.
Currently—not much access—used to play snake on cell game. No solitaire—though parents play that a lot.

If time and money weren’t an issue, would you play more? “I don’t know. I’d probably get into phases where I’d like to play more frequently but I think like I kind of would start to lose interest. I used to do that kind of.”

What usually made you lose interest?: “I dunno. Well, my parents would yell at me... I’d be inside but yeah, I’d probably just want to be outside more. And I remember just staring at the screen for hours and realizing it’s probably not a good thing.”

How good a use of time?: “I think my immediate reaction would be it’s not a good use of time but I dunno. It was, it kept me busy. That was fun. It was fun. It’s an alright use of time.”

What would it take to get you to play more now?: “Time, definitely. If I had a lot more time it might be more of an option. If I had access to it.”

Benefits of video games?: “meeting challenges…overcoming something you’re struggling with?”

Costs?: keeping kids from going outside more, staring at a screen too much.

As a kid, did you play more or less than your friends: about the same, though boys played more, girls were about the same.

Now: some friends have never played video games. Probably a gender difference now for the most part. Has a girl friend now who brought her Nintendo to college, but the other girls don’t play at all.

Video games in social situations: Rarely, unless for nostalgic purposes” (so the guys aren’t playing either in these cases. Except she mentioned at the frat one night, her friend passed a room where a bunch of guys were playing Madden.)

Socialize: Socials, parties, drink, dance, go to frats
Why do guys play video games more?: You could say it’s mindless [joking] Maybe girls just lose interest in them faster—though you’d think boys would lose interest faster… maybe women are just more likely to try different things [other activities].

Other games?: More likely to play board games than video games—like Cranium, or puzzles. Likes Tetris.

What makes a good game?: “Um… I dunno I mean because video games are so advanced now, they’re so real-looking but I don’t necessarily think that’s better. Like, I still really miss a lot of the old games I used to play. Maybe just more simple, probably. Because if I had the chance I would play Zelda on original Nintendo rather than anything else.”

What elements engage you: “I don’t really like playing with others so probably just more accomplishing levels… [and] a story.

Computer as a kid?: “Yes. Once in awhile, not a lot. I played Carmen San Diego and Oregon Trail.” Liked those.

How do your experiences compare to other girls: “Now that I’m thinking about it I think I played a lot more video games than a lot of other girls my age”

Why: “Probably because I had an older brother”

Did you play a lot with him?: “Yeah. I guess I did.”

Did you ever play with your sister?: “Yeah I did. Once in awhile. (She was 10 years older—in college when subject was young…)

Other activities? IM? Surfing? Online shopping? Facebook?: “Yeah, I use instant messenger and I do online shopping—too much! And I’m on the Facebook a lot. Which is bad. It wastes a lot of time.”

Do you have fun with facebook?: “Yeah.”
Then why do you call it a waste of time?: “Cause it’s, I dunno, it’s definitely, half of the people on there obviously you don’t know and so you’re just like finding things out about people not even like bad things… just information on people that’s weird. And I dunno I just know when I just like sitting there writing papers I’m like uuuhhhh I’ll go on the Facebook. It’s right here.”

How often do you do recreational things while you’re doing work?: fewer papers this semester so not as much of an issue.

Do you feel guilty for the amount of time you spend doing recreational things?: “Um, I don’t spend, well I don’t spend a lot of time doing those things when I’m supposed to be doing other things so I don’t feel that guilty but um yeah I probably should do less of it though.”

What makes something a game?: “There’s a goal you’re trying to reach or accomplish, and almost ev—like sports and um and most video games ‘cause even if, even if it’s like whether it’s like a level-oriented game you’re trying to beat that level or you’re stealing cars, you’re trying to steal those cars…”

What is play?: “It’s just whatever someone enjoys doing…” [sort of an individual thing.”

Do you have a favorite game?: “Rugby.”

Other: “Now that I reflect on it I realize that I played a lot more than I ever thought I did. I guess it was just something that kept progressing and I didn’t really progress with it. So by the time my brother had like Playstation or Playstation 2, I remember trying to play a lot of that stuff and just losing interest and like, ‘I can’t keep up with this’!”

Interview #5
NOTE: This interview was a little shorter than some because I had a migraine and had to rush to get through.

Subject from CS300

Biological Engineering, Junior

Drawn into CS300 by Interviewee #2

Prior experience with gaming? Not really. Has a brother who plays a lot of games, so has had “a decent exposure”. Some programming experience from Cornell class. Doing art for her CS group.

Jobs: AW facilitator—sort of like a tutor.

Activities: “not too much”, research in department, Society of Women Engineers, volunteer with Habitat for Humanity when there’s time.

Hobbies: art, drawing (“Engineers with no outlet” she called herself and subject #2. They like to sit around and draw together at home.) gymnastics, diving, learning to play guitar.

Play computer or video games: “I would say very rarely” Once in awhile subject #2

Preferences?: Liked Heroes of Might and Magic (played with brother)

Play alone at all?: Not really. In high school, sometimes. Monkey Island, Zoombinis. A lot of puzzles and logic problems—didn’t play daily. A couple of times per month.

As a child, access?: “Nope. Not really”

Board games?: Monopoly, mousetrap, Twister, Taboo

Define game: “Something you do, kind of like for your own enjoyment. Um, like in your totally like leisure time… Definitely challenges you in some way and it kind of imposes these sort of like make believe restrictions that, like, every game has like these rules and restrictions and you’re kind of—like when you want to play a game you’re
just like putting yourself into like this situation and you’re just kind of like ‘oh let’s see if I can, you know, get out of it or do whatever I can with the situation’”

Video game?: “I guess when I think of video games, I always think of like what people do when they want to like pass time if they’re like bored and they’re like, “oh we have nothing to do oh, we can play video games’. Um, I mean, I guess it’s a lot—there’s like a huge imagination factor it’s like video games kind of provide you with all these ideas and storylines that other people come up with and you’re kind of like running through it and just like seeing, exploring, like someone’s imagination.”

Play?: “I guess it’s kind of like a game where you’re just trying to have fun. Or maybe you’re not even trying you’re just doing something for yourself.”

You mentioned that you don’t play much now? What about online games or accessory games?: “Yeah! I do play free cell and mine sweeper.”

How much?: “I guess not so much recently but a lot of times I find myself, you know, if I like want to put off my work or don’t want to work, I’ll like go and be like ‘oh I’ll just play like a quick game of this’”

So it’s a procrastination tool?: Yes.

What about games on a cell or ipod?: No. Doesn’t have either one.

Rec. Internet Use?: Email to keep in touch with friends, kept a blog for awhile, searching for pictures and art.

How much each day?: 4 hours a day or less.

How important is rec time on internet?: Checks mail first thing—“the biggest thing”.

Will sometimes stop into the library just to check email. It’s the primary way for the family to keep in touch.

How much of the four hours is spent emailing?: “Not a whole lot, maybe like an hour I guess”
And the rest of the time?: “I guess most of the time when I’m on the internet there’s like, something I want to do, like something I want to look up or like something I want to find out about Um, I don’t really go online just to be like ‘oh I think I’ll check the Facebook now’, like I—not so much but occasionally I’ll do that”

Does rec stuff coincide with some other activity then?: “yes”

What would it take to cause you to play more or less than you do now?: Less work or more time. “If I had, I guess maybe if I had like, a less, a lower level of stress caused by like, the pressing issues like, that I always feel like I need to have done at some point, um, and so like, in my head I won’t be able to reason like, ‘oh I spend my time like playing a video game instead of working to get this done because I know it’s due or I know that it needs to be done’.”

VG: Use of time?: “Um, I don’t think it’s, I mean, for me, I don’t think it’s that valuable for me, but um definitely once in a while I, I think it’s really good to just like um, what I have in mind is like mine sweeper and like free cell but I think it’s really good, er, for me I like to like be able to stop thinking about it and actually—‘cause like free cell and mine sweeper it kind of like forces you, you have to like think about this, like ‘here’s another immediate goal that you can kind of like solve or work towards’ um, so I kind of like that ‘cause that’s like tearing you away from your work for awhile and being like ‘well, here’s another goal’ um and that’s like a good break from work.”

Use of time; surfing net, etc. Compare to VG?: “Um, I guess, I mean if you’re—surfing the web is um, I don’t know, it’s kind of like, I don’t know that I do it enough to be able to say much about it but when I do it’s kind of like, I always pick up bits of information, it’s like ‘Oh!’ you just see new things that you’ve like never seen before because there are all sorts of weird things online. Um, it’s kind of like you’re picking up information, bits of information from wherever, like whatever page you go to and it’s
sort of relevant to like the world or like, some aspect of culture or culture somewhere, so, um, I mean the difference between like surfing the web and like playing a game it’s like playing a game is very like, contained to what the game is and surfing the web isn’t, really, and yeah, I don’t know.”

The games you DO play, what elements are important to you, what do you like?: “Um I kind of like the fact that they’re like, they’re short, sort of, and you can play through it in one sitting. Um, kind of something that makes you think about it and like if you play it more and more then you’ll get better and better at it but not so much that it becomes boring. Like, each time is like, you’re good at it, but it’s still like, a challenge.”

What elements DON’T you like?: “Uh, well I know like, the games that like, my brother plays the ones where you like, the 3D ones where you like shoot a gun and they like give me a headache when I play those.”

What gives you a headache? The 3d aspect or the movement, or what?: “I think it’s, yeah, it’s like the movement of the whole screen it’s like, I don’t know and you’re kind of just like wandering around like waiting for something to happen or looking for something to happen and I don’t, I guess I don’t get into it as much to be like interested in like going to explore.”

How would you design a game just for you?: I don’t know. I think maybe like a, like a puzzle game. Actually, when I was little I used to really like playing like playing with the just like small puzzle—like, the metal things where you have to like, undo them and just like other, like, the rubik’s cube and stuff. I really liked Tetris and like, the other versions of Tetris that have come out over the years I guess, I guess something like that.

When did you play Tetris: “Actually I haven’t played in a really long time, um, but I used to play a lot. I think that was back in middle school, early high school”

Where did you play?: At home with sister. Liked competition mode on computer.
Any other computer games in middle school and high school?: Tried Warcraft? Not sure of title

Costs and benefits?: “Um, I know that I always, whenever I see my brother playing like, a lot of video games I always think it’s, like I always think in my head that it’s probably bad for him just because um, like he’ll come back from school and he’ll just like run to sit in front of the computer to do these, like to play these games and it just seems like, or maybe it’s like from my perspective, I’m like, ‘oh he has so much time, he could be like, doing all these other things’ um but that might just be like, a question of interests, I guess. Um, I guess, maybe the benefit is that he’s not always, like, I guess it’s good to get immersed in things that are, that are not related to like, academics or like, career goals, or stuff like that, then you’re not constantly thinking about it and not constantly stressing about it…”

Do you ever feel pressure if you’re playing games to get back to work and be more productive?: “Uh, I do, I do think that a lot. Um, but sometimes with like Free Cell like, I’ll play it and then if I win it says like, ‘oh, do you want to play another one’ and you just like, to like, get like, a good streak or something um, so I do, I mean, I’ll put off work for awhile if I if I’m like really not in the mood.”

Do you feel guilty for that?: I might at the time, but like, after the fact it’s kind of like, ‘oh, well, that’s how I spend my time’, then I’ll just adjust everything else.

Do you ever play video games with friends?: “Uh, not so much.”

Other?: “Uh, I do have to say that like, once I—like, in this class, this game design class has definitely given me like, a new perspective on like, people who play games.”

How so?: “Well, like, my, like, I always knew that my brother played like, a lot I never really realized like, how many people out there play like, a lot more than he does. And it’s kind-, like, a lot of them like, they—I’m almost like, impressed by, like, how
many hours they spend like, playing it and they know like, all the tiny details like, they spend so much effort to like, you know, find what hap—oh, what like, what happens when you press this or go here when it could be, you know, anything and um, like, it’s just kind of cool like they’re looking at so many games that they’re able to like, I guess, specific to the class [cs300] like, to draw conclusions about like, the design and like why they did that or like, how like, the structure of the game and stuff. I guess it never really occurred to me that like, the people who make the games are, I dunno, what they go through to do it.”

Think you’d want to do that?: “It could be cool. It could be, it could be fun like right now I’m having a lot of fun [tape stopped!]

At first didn’t want to take the class. Joined, then quit, then came back. Hasn’t taken any elective that demand a lot of time, no big projects, not required, thought it might be good. Likes art.

Interview #6
COMM201 student
AEM—Business, Junior
Jobs: Life Guard at Teagle
Activities: Sorority, Relay for Life Cmte.
Hobbies: Running
Access to games?: Computer games—accessories folder on desktop
Do you play: Spider solitaire
How much?: Twice a week
Any other games?: Occasionally suduko online (Numbers puzzle)
Childhood?: Computer games. Oregon Trail, Lemmings, Solitaire, driving games with steering wheel accessory
Handheld games?: No
Free time, how do you spend it?: Hanging out with friends, sit around and talk or watch TV, magazines—In Touch or Us mags, USA Today, Friends, Family Guy, On Demand Movies
Relax?: Nap, running
When do you play spider solitaire or suduko: Suduko played in finance class, spider solitaire while online doing other things (surfing, etc.)
So you usually play these games while doing something else?: Yes.
Exposure to VG with friends or parties?: “Not really. Um, my ex-boyfriend and his roommate always used to play, but other than that, not really.”
Did you ever play with them?: “Occasionally (rest of response to quiet to hear)”
Might’ve been Halo. “Violent” “kill” “Pretty fun”
Did you play with anyone else?: “No”
Play DDR?: No
Seen it?: Yes
Why is there a gender gap?: “Um, honestly girls just, I feel like, are more interested in spending time with each other and boys like, don’t, I don’t know, we always just sit around and talk about stupid things and whether it’s worth their time or not we, we think it’s exciting but boys never really sit and like, just chat so I feel like it’s something for them to do together sometimes, like, that’s what I find, with friends a lot. Um, I don’t know. I think that we’d just also rather watch TV shows or something like that than actually like play video games…”
TV vs. VG, why does one engage you and the other doesn’t?: “Um, you have to like care about being competitive or people getting you know, too into it, or getting frustrated at yourself I guess, and uh, TV there’s like a plot you get excited, you get into it, you know, something to look forward to, it’s kind of an escape from reality.”

Would you be more interested in VG if there were a story?: “Probably not.”

You mentioned Friends, The Family Guy earlier, do you prefer comedies?: “Yeah.”

Costs and benefits?: “Um, well I know that one of the biggest things is that everyone thinks it’s too violent, especially for like, little kids, a lot of the games.”

Do YOU think so?: “Um, I think some of them will probably take it too far but at the same time if everyone has their own right to decide you know, what their kids are watching and playing and stuff like that so you can’t blame the companies for making it if people are gonna by it, they’re gonna make it. And um, benefits is that it’s just another form of entertainment for people to enjoy and there’s, no one has the right to say that you know, TV’s better for you than video games or anything like that.”

What about board games and sports? How much time do you spend?: “Um, a lot more. Um, I watch football pretty much every Sunday, I used to, I grew up going to the Bill’s games, um, I always played sports every three seasons for my entire life until I got to college um, I go to, a lot of my friends on are the football team here so I go to the games all the time here.”

Do you play board games or party games?: “Sometimes Catchphrase at home, and occasionally Scrabble at home. My mom likes that game. But other than that, not really. Poker…I love poker”

Define Play: When you’re hanging out with people and you’re having a good time and goofing around, enjoying yourself.

Game: “Taboo, include like board games and sports games”
Video Game: “Um, well video games I probably think of as like um, the handheld uh, games on T—hook up to TVs and also uh, just regular like, Gameboys and stuff like that”

What do you do with your friends?: “Um we usually hang out during the day, hang out, watch TV um, talk, pretty much talk.”

Do you ever use computer for surfing, shopping, Facebook, IM, etc.?: Yeah, email, ebay, “I refuse to go on Facebook because I’ll probably do that too much”

Why do you think that?: “I just think that people sit there and waste so much of their time like, just Facebooking other people so I don’t wanna get on there.”

Any trouble with ebay and surfing—spending too much time?: Not really “It’s not like I’m obsessed with it” maybe 10 minutes a day, plus email, checking bills, searching for info., (about an hour total)

IM?: No… I used to use it when I was younger but I, that’s another thing I refuse to do…”

Is that very different from “hanging out”?: “Um, I just don’t, yeah I don’t feel like, I’d rather spend time with my friends hanging out than sit in front of a computer.”

How good or bad, use of time are VG: “I mean, personally I think it’s a waste of time just because I don’t really enjoy them that much but for people that do I think that it’s not a waste of time. Like, I mean, I sit in front of the TV and they might think that that’s a waste of time so it’s all relative to what you enjoy.”

Balancing day, do you feel like work doesn’t leave enough time for fun?: Yes. (but it comes in cycles, ex. Prelim period)

Do you ever feel pressured to give up fun activities?: Yes.

When you’re having fun, do you feel guilty?: “No. I mean, I’ll occasionally feel like, ‘oh, I should be doing something else’ but I don’t feel that guilty.”
Do you feel pressure or guilt to stop sooner: “Occasionally, when I do have work to do…”

Do you feel guilt for working too much?: No, doesn’t feel like she overworks herself—just crams occasionally.

As a child—how did you come to have computer games in the house—got computer in 3\(^{rd}\) grade. Had computer class in school, and played games there, then asked for games. (didn’t seem sure of this) Cousin used to get free stuff from work and give it to her. 2 sisters—both younger.

How do they feel about vg? Pretty much the same, they don’t really spend much time doing it.

Parents, do they play?: not really.

Do you ever feel pressure to play vg?: “No.”

Other: No.

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Interview #7

Design and Environmental Analysis—ergonomics (Human Ecology) Sophomore

(COMM201 student)

Jobs: Not right now, during summer, camp counselor

Activities: not yet

Hobbies: Design (photoshop—photos, graphic design), music, socialize

Interests: Architecture

Play VG?: Super Smash Bros. (At home: Super Nintendo like Donkey Kong 1-3, some N64, like MarioKart, occasionally Gameboy games like Zelda)
Console on campus? No
Computer?: No
Reg. Access to games?: Yes—friend’s house, only occasionally now (when on the same floor, played a lot)
What do you play together?: Mario Kart 64, Super Smash Bros., Grand Theft Auto
Favs?: Zelda games, RPGs—esp. old ones for Super Nintendo (Super Mario RPG, Zelda)
What about RPGs on computer?: “Uh would the SIMS count as an RPG?” [does she realize what an RPG is??] “I used to play the SIMS a lot, not so much since I’ve gotten to college” (Had three expansion packs)
First access: 1st grade
How access: Dad bought super Nintendo
Surprise or request?: Asked for it
Siblings?: Nope.
Play with others or alone as a kid?: Played with friends sometimes, alone sometimes.
Friends were twin girls.—they played Disney games together (Lion King), Super Tennis, Mario Kart and Mario. Played Zelda alone.
Prefer alone or with friends: “I like, preferred to play with my friends if I could beat them… If I was better at the game than they were I wanted to play with them but if I wasn’t then it wasn’t really appealing.”
“Otherwise would you prefer to play alone?” “Yeah”
When playing alone, what game elements did you like?: “Advancing levels”
Have you played consistently since childhood?: “uh, pretty much. A little less in like, high school, I mean, I sw-, it’s more like I switched like, which type of games like, cuz I played Super Nintendo until like, all through elementary school and I didn’t play that
much in middle school and then—although I like, dabbled with like, Gameboy games a little bit and then I played more like, computer games in high school and some 64.”

Other computer games: Roller coaster Tycoon, some trivia games (Who wants to be a Millionaire, played “You don’t know Jack” with dad

Did your dad like vg?: Used to play together (dad wasn’t that good at it so he didn’t want to play)

Did your mom play?: Never

Did a lot of your friends have vg growing up?: Yes

Now?: Not so much the girls, mostly the guys

Gender difference when you were a kid?: Depends on the system. [associates system with age group?] In 1st and 2nd grade, boys played more, but both genders played. In middle school and high school—fewer girls. At least girls wouldn’t admit it

What was that? “Um, I’m not sure it’s, I guess it’s kind of like associated with like dorkiness and like not having friends if you’re sitting around and playing video games but whatever, I don’t agree with that”

What forms of entertainment are more “accepted”? “In my high school, I went to like a specialized high school so a lot of the kids like, just sat around and played video games so the people who didn’t do that like, just were, went like, partied and were social and stuff like that instead of sitting around and playing like, any set sort of like, games.”

Were people who played vg looked down upon? “My high school was weird though ‘cause it was all like, kids who must’ve played them at one point or another ‘cause like, I don’t know, it was all like, uh, math and science kids so um, it was not looked down upon but, I mean, certain games were, like Dance Dance Revolution was… but, it depended. I mean, and also like, a bunch of kids at my high school were obsessed with
Counter Strike for awhile and oh, we also used to play Halo last year, I forgot about that.”

Were those pretty popular? Counter Strike and Halo?: “Yeah”

Did you play those two?: I didn’t play Counter Strike or Halo until I got to college but I, one of my friends was really into Halo last year so we used to play a lot.”

What about DDR, did you play that?: “Never. I’ll stay away from that one”

Why?: I don’t know. I played an old version of it like, for Playstation at my friend’s house in California but it was like, before they had like, the actual dancing pad and you just like, pressed the buttons and that was fun but I-I, like, the actual like, jumping on the foot pad thing doesn’t really appeal to me.”

Why not?: “I don’t know, it’s just like, weird. It just seems like a waste for some reason. Like, I don’t even know, I don’t even know what doesn’t appeal about it but—it’s, jumping around and I don’t know.”

What is it wasting?: “Time and energy, basically. Like, I feel like, ‘cause I-I usually think of video games as more of like when you sit around and relax doing, so you only use your hands and whatever, it’s fine, but if you’re jumping around you don’t get so much of that.”

Do you most use VG as a way to relax?: “Yeah, for the most part I mean, and competition with friends”

-TAPE CUT OUT-

“My guy friends absolutely hate to lose —well, some of them hate to lose to girls in games, so that’s fun.”

You like beating the guys?: “Oh yeah. Because they flip out like, there were a few times last year… where they’d actually like, turn the system off when I was about to win just so that I wouldn’t… They just can’t stand to lose to a girl.”
Do you play against any girls?: “Occasionally, but I don’t—this sounds terrible, I don’t really view them as much as competition, like, my girl friends, ‘cause they just haven’t played since they’ve been like, little so they’re—like, I’m actually competition to the guys, the other girls really … aren’t.”

How good/bad use of time are other (Non-DDR) games?: “It’s a procrastination tool like, a lot of the time. I mean, I know a lot of my friends didn’t get work done last year because they would sit around and play Counter Strike and stuff like that. So, I feel like, I don’t know, it’s, that’s why I don’t have any… games on my computer because I know I’ll, I would get distracted by—‘cause like, when I used to play the SIMS I’d sit there for like, entire days and play it because it’s addicting so, I don’t know, that’s kind of why I don’t play so much anymore but I don’t know, it depends on the game, I’ll sit there and like, beat—play like, the entire like, Zelda, like, game.”

Do you ever feel guilty for how much you play?: “Not anymore. I used to… when I was in high school, when I played the SIMS a lot, I felt like, I like, started to get rid of your games or turn them off?: “Not really”

Do any of your other activities make you feel guilty?: “No, not really.”

Do you feel guilty for school work time, responsible things: no

Why is there a gender gap? “Because guys are competitive and a lot of video games are geared towards guys I mean, a lot of them are very like, violent and ‘let’s blow stuff up’ and I feel like, more girls aren’t into that it’s like, the same reason why more guys prefer action movies than girls do. So, I don’t know it’s—girls just, when they’re younger they don’t really—there isn’t as much of like, ‘boys do this and girls’—it’s like, when it gets past—girls are more concerned about like, people making fun of them I think for like, playing video games and stuff like that.”

Has anyone ever made fun of you?: “No. They better not!”
Were you ever concerned about the possibility?: “Not really.”
Would you call yourself a gamer?: “No, I don’t play enough for that… I specialize, I’m a specialist so I have certain games that I’m very good at and I know very well but I feel like a gamer has to like, be more aware of like, everything… like, I hate sports games… those don’t appeal to me at all…I’m not a big sports fan… I don’t know the game well enough to be interested in playing”
Are video games a bonding experience when you play with guys?: “Oh yeah, definitely. It’s fun.”
Can it be a bonding tool for women?: “Yeah. I mean, there was one time when me and all my friends like, took over all the Counter Strike computers and stuff and played but it’s—I feel like girls get sick of it faster because they’re not used to playing and they’re kind of—they wouldn’t play it on their own so they don’t get good at it and then when they play against other people they’re not that good so they don’t want to play anymore. ‘Cause when you keep losing… it’s not as fun. ‘Cause half the fun of video games is beating other people.”
Why don’t they play much on their own?: “More important things to do? I don’t know.”
How would you design a game for women?: “I feel like an equal number of guys and girls play games like “The Sims” because I mean, “The Sims” appeals to girls because it has more of, it’s kind of like playing dollhouse on the screen, and not that I’m saying girls are like, ‘oh I wanna play like, with dolls’ or whatever and there’s a big difference but it’s just, it applies, I don’t know, it’s more like, realistic as opposed to like, running around and killing things like, in Grand Theft Auto and you also get to like, design their house…”
Why do you like “The Sims”? You mentioned you like competition…: It’s architecture. So I liked the fact that you could like, design their house and these people live in it, and
also it’s just fun to like, play with the Sims different relationships and try to like, build up like, their careers and their love lives and their friends and it’s just fun to see the progression through the game”
-Discussed SIMS some more…-
Play: “Play means to like, take action and participate in something and like, do stuff.”
Game: “An activity that people participate in either individually or in a group to like, cause enjoyment or sometimes for competi—if you’re in a group for competition purposes, um, just something that’ll, that causes interaction with other people or in the case of video games it’s causing interaction with a system and, for entertainment purposes.”
Video Game: “Interaction with a system to—for entertainment purposes, basically.”
What would it take for you to play more or less?: “Access to the games, also um, just if they came out with a game that was really appealing…”
If you could design a game for yourself, what would it be like?: “It’d probably be like, a long like, epic journey type thing like Zelda, it’d have like, a lot of levels and like,—it’d kind of have like, a story behind it and you like, go through different, like, there’s like, surprises and you have to find stuff and yeah… I also prefer games that look like kind of, I prefer games that aren’t like, robots and like, futuristic things… I like the ones that are more… fantasy-like…past fantasy”
Computer activities: approx. 2 hours. Shop online occasionally, “Facebook’s an unhealthy addiction, but yeah”
Why unhealthy?: “It’s just too, I don’t know. It’s—I can sit there and like, just like, mess around on Facebook for like, hours and it’s not like there’s even that much to do, it’s just like, I don’t even know It’s really weird.”
Why is it unhealthy, the time you spend?: “It’s just because it could be used like, a lot more productively. Like, I basically go on Facebook like, when I’m supposed to be doing work and I end up staying on it a lot longer than I always intend to…”

Do you feel guilty for Facebook: “Not guilty… just kind of like, um, I feel like, wasteful when I use Facebook. I feel like there’s no like, real like, long-term benefits in using Facebook it’s kind of like short-term… video games are sort of like that too…except when you play with other people”

Prefer to play alone or with others?: “…depends on the game…”

-tape cut out-

-Halo/Mariokart stories—playing with boys—they ganged up, got insulted when she won! Even took controller away to avoid losing.

Interview #8

COMM201 student

Communication Major, Sophomore

Jobs: no

Activities: Sorority, Intramural Soccer

Hobbies: Soccer, sing, snowboarding

VG Now?: No

Computer?: Snood once in awhile

Access to other games?: Access to accessory games, but doesn’t play

Access with friends?: Some friends have them in their apartments, but she doesn’t play much. Watches instead

Do you enjoy watching or does it just kind of happen?: Just happens

Anything interesting? “Not really”
Would you call yourself a non-gamer?: “yeah”

As a kid—access?: Grandparents had a Sega—used to play at their house (Super Mario [?!?!]). It was meant for all of the grandkids

Siblings?: One younger sister

Compared to sis and cousins: Played same as sister, less than cousins. Cousins also had vg at home. Access every few weeks at grandparents. Liked playing at the time.

What changed?: Parents never allowed it. Didn’t go to grandparents’ as much.

Computer recreation: Facebook, IM, My Space

Time spent?: 2 hours a day

Other net activities?: Shopping every couple of weeks

How do you spend free time?: go online or watch TV

Games on cell or ipod?: No

How good/bad use of time?: “I think they’re something fun to do if you don’t have anything better to do. It’s not any worse than like, watching TV or something.”

What about online shopping, facebook, etc.?: “They’re probably a waste of time but I mean, if I don’t have anything else to do…”

Hanging out with friends-how likely is it that vg will come up? More likely with guy friends

Why the gender difference?: Don’t know

Why the gender gap: “I don’t know. I feel like maybe they appeal to guys more, just like, the types of games…”

What do you suppose a game for girls would look like?: “I have no idea”

What would a game for YOU look like?: “Maybe like, a video game that has to do with shopping in a mall or something”
The games you used to like, what did you like about them?: “I don’t know. You just kind of get hooked and you can’t stop playing. It’s like, trying to beat your last score, I guess.”
Do you prefer to beat your own score, or to compete?: “I like to beat my own score”
Much competition among your cousins?: “Not too much”
Do you ever feel encouraged to play when others are playing?: “It depends on the game if it’s something that I think like, I would be ok at, then maybe.”
Are there any games that you do play with a group? Not in a long time.
Costs and Benefits?: “Maybe, you don’t get other stuff done because you’re spending a lot of time playing…. You don’t get exercise because you’re sitting in front of your TV all the time or spend money on it… waste your money…Benefits…hand-eye coordination… it’s something to do when you hang out with your friends, to pass the time.”
Video games as social interaction or bonding?: yes, if “you’re playing against your friends”
Would you play a video game as a social activity?: “I might if everyone else was there…”
Ever played DDR? Seen it, but hasn’t played. “Looks like fun”
Would you play?: “Yeah.”
Play: -too quiet to hear-
Game: “A game could be like, any type of game like a board game or …a game where you’re playing outside or a sport…”
Video Game: A video game, I feel like, is on your TV and you like, sit down and have like, a remote control and you play it.”
What does “play time” mean for you?: Hang out with friends, play around on the computer.

Do you play sports outside, board games, etc?: Board games, almost never. Sports, a lot. Played tag as a kid.

How did you feel about vg as a kid: I always used to beg my parents to get me video games but they never did… I used to play at friends houses… I thought they were fun.

So what changed?: “I don’t know. I feel like they’re sort of for younger people… I feel like they would appeal to me more when I was younger than they would now… now I’d rather talk to my friends online or do something more productive.”

What’s productive?: “I don’t know. If you’re sitting playing video games you’re not really getting anything else done you’re just sitting there but, I mean, if you’re talking online you can at least like, talk to people about stuff or like if you’re online shopping like, at least you bought something.”

Do you feel pressure to be productive most of the time?: “Here, sort of.”

Guilt when doing non-school things?: Only if there’s something due that needs to be done.

Would you feel guilty if you played vg more?: Not if it didn’t interfere with other things.

Guilt for shopping or facebook?: No, as long as it doesn’t interfere with “getting stuff done”

How much time spent a day not working?: “…an hour or two…”

Like/dislike vg: “I like, like I said before, like, beating your own score and like, having like, that competition or whatever um, there’s nothing that I really don’t like about them I’m just kind of like, ambivalent I guess.”

Other?: no
Interview #9

COMM201

Major: Nat. Resources
Jobs: RA
Activities: Cornell Ambassador, Cornell Democrats, Host for Red Carpet Society (Prefrosh)
Hobbies: Horseback riding, reading, going to the movies, hanging out with friends
Access? Yes—friends
Play? No
Kid Access: Gameboy
What games?: Tetris, Mario
Still have Gameboy?: At home
Did you play much as a kid?: “No. Maybe once a week.”
How did you come to have one?: Dad bought.
How much did you dad play: About the same amount
Siblings?: Older sister
Did she play?: A little bit
Does she play now?: No.
Did you all play the same games?: Sister played Tetris
Did you ever compete?: No.
General kid opinion of vg?: “I thought they were kind of stupid. Um, ‘cause I was very much a nerd when I was growing up ‘cause I read all the time…”
Has your opinion changed at all?: “If anything it’s gotten worse as I’ve gotten older um, I mean, with the new games out now like Grand Theft Auto and stuff I think they’re horrible.”

What’s horrible about them?: “Um, I know in the newer addition um, you get points for raping women. I mean it’s all about stealing cars and generally causing havoc on the streets. Um, I mean I just don’t see why that’s fun.”

Costs?: I don’t know about the effects that they might have like, I mean I don’t think that someone playing Grand Theft Auto is going to go out and start stealing cars as a career, I don’t think they’re that drastic, but I mean, even just the time that people spend I mean, I know, I have friends who will postpone homework until you know, midnight or after because they’re playing you know, um, computer games or video games for hours…. and also, they’re so solitary like, even if you’re playing with someone else it’s not like you’re really communicating with them so it just doesn’t seem like a very, it’s not a social activity…”

Benefits?: “Um, I think some of them can be educational. I know, my boyfriend actually has learned about um ancient history from some of them that have a historical context. Um, and he’s learned some things that were completely random that I never would’ve guessed you could have learned from video games.” [Rome Total War]

Does your boyfriend play much?: not as much as he used to but he’s very into computer games. Star Craft, Rome Total War.

Does he ever want you to play with him? “Not really.”

Any other costs or benefits?: “Um, the monetary costs. I mean for like X-box you know, 40 or 50 dollars a game I mean I don’t know that—I’m sure there are people who aren’t very responsible with money and will spend hundreds of dollars…[faded out]”

Any other Benefits?: “No.”
Why the gender gap?: “I think some of it has to do with the whole um, biological differences like, their testosterone, like, they’re more competitive and you know um games that involve fighting and violence and guns are just more appealing to men um I think because I mean I think the video game market directs their games towards men like, if you—there are some little kid games that are towards girls like, you know Barbie and stuff like that but um I mean, the majority of games are directed towards boys um so it’s sort of a Catch-22 in that the girls aren’t going to get into it unless there are games for them but there’s no market right now. Um I think it just—girls seem a little more social too, so they’re more likely to engage in activities where they’re interacting with other people and not just competing against them.”

What about other games? Solitaire, etc. without violence or competition? Do you play that? Would that appeal to other women more?: “I do play solitaire um, pretty frequently I guess um, maybe a few times a week um, and I do, I mean, most of my friends also do. My mom plays solitaire. Um, I guess, I guess it does um appeal to women more maybe because it’s more intellectual than, I don’t know, I mean I do have guy friends that also play solitaire…”

What do you like about solitaire that you don’t like about other games?: “Solitaire is very, I mean, you go at your own pace, it’s not um, you’re not racing against the clock, you’re not [faded out something about chasing things?] um, and it’s the strategy, that kind of thing, I like that um and it’s also, I don’t think it’s that addictive. Like, it’s easy to put away. I don’t feel compelled to finish a game… I think… a lot of video games it’s such like, an intense scenario that it sort of, you get very drawn into it and you can’t really break away easily.”

So you like something you can just pick up and put down and not get too involved in? “Yeah.”
What else do you use your computer for?: Surf the internet, email, celebrity gossip
(“Addicted” to it), facebook, IM
How much time?: Emailing and IMing every day, surfing the web maybe every other
day
Free time?: Watch movies, read, hang out with friends
Do most of your friends have similar hobbies to you?: Yes
Fav. movies/Books genres: romance, comedies, mystery, suspense
How important is a happy ending?: Depends. A fun book should have a happy ending.
A “significant book” doesn’t need a happy ending.
Could your fav. Genres be brought into video games?: “Maybe it could…”
Is there anything video game producers could do to engage your interest?: “I’m not
sure, ‘cause I don’t, I mean I don’t pay attention really, to the game industry so even if
they did, I’m don’t know that I would know about it. But I guess, I mean, violence
really doesn’t appeal to me so if they had a game that would you know you needed
intellectual strategy that didn’t include um violence then I guess that would be
interesting like more um, kind of like, puzzle kind of games. I mean that sounds simple
but…”
Do you ever go back to Tetris?: “Over the summer actually I rediscovered the
Gameboy, I played Tetris a lot. Um, I play, on Yahoo games they have some similar
[games].”
Do you play anything else on Yahoo games? Collapse (similar to Tetris)
Any other game sites?: No
Any other types of games besides puzzles?: Word games, (similar to boggle)
-TAPE CUT OUT—LOTS OF STATIC?!?!?--
Interview #10

COMM201 Student

Major: Communication—Sophomore

Jobs: Office of Multicultural Affairs Peer Advisor

Activities: Member of Multicultural Org. for Communication Affairs (MOCA), Sabor Latino Ensemble, Mass Choir

Hobbies: Dance, exercise, sing, tennis, soccer, volleyball, any sport

Do you play v.g.? Rarely.

Access?: None—sometimes at friends’ houses. Played Pac Man in College Town not too long ago.

Kid? Didn’t play a lot—parents encouraged to do school activities—no time. Drama, choir, sports, etc. Watched TV, but no console in the house. Didn’t play CPU games as a child. (Lived in El Salvador—not much computer access—very simple programs) In America, had minesweeper and solitaire, but didn’t play much—only when bored.)

What’d you play when bored?: Bust out [break out?]

Do you still play now?: yes (actually “made a point to transfer” it from her old computer to her new one)

How much do you play?: “Maybe once a year”

What about accessory games? Have you played lately?: No

Rec. Activities?: Facebook, IM (both a lot)—every day or nearly every day

What do you do on Facebook?: check messages, change photo, play with wall. Talk to high school friends and campus friends.

IM?: Talk to classmates re: assignments, talk to best friend, talk to family, occasionally random chat or talk to other friends.
How much time do you spend on the Facebook?: “Yesterday I spent an hour and a half… It tends to get very addicting. Like, at a time you won’t realize you’ve been on for like 30 minutes. Usually it’ll be that long. I TRY to limit it, I SWEAR!”

IM?: “An hour?”

So you try to limit your facebook time, do you do the same for IM?: yes. Uses invisible mode while working. Uses away messages. It’s “distracting”. “Usually when I’m “away” I’m on the computer but I’m doing something else.”

So you multitask a lot?: yes, a lot. Jumps back and forth frequently

Do you feel pressure to limit your use of IM and Facebook?: Yes.

Do you feel guilty for the amount of time you spend?: “I never actually stopped to think about it, but now that I do, kind of, because I could have been doing work.

Do you feel guilty for your other activities?: yes.

Do you feel guilty for your schoolwork time?: No.

Costs and benefits?: “People who are visual may be aided. I’m a visual person and I can see where people who need visual aids to kind of enhance their learning, they could be used that way. Um, I think everything in too much of an extreme, … too much of everything, of something is too bad. So, like, you have kind of balance it out. Not to be using video games all the time, because I remember video games, I used to play, when I was in elementary school, I used to play “Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego” and I learned a lot of things… with it because I’m not originally from here so those kinds of games really did help me learn English and they’re very helpful and like, once you’re into them, you don’t realize how much time you spend doing them. So once you realize that you’re spending too much time that’s when you should limit.”

For someone who plays them too much, what are the neg. effects?: “I think it would be… less sociable… a video game is a video game, the real world is totally different.”
Is it possible to learn real world skills in a video game?: “To a certain extent, yes, but very limited.”

Why is there a gender gap? (laughs) “I’m gonna tend to say that it has to do with something about society…I wouldn’t know because I don’t have any brothers but men kind of have a , I don’t know. I don’t know!

Venture a guess. Think about your friends.: Well, I know guys and guys tend to be more practical than women. Women tend to kind of like stress other things, stress like, the way they’re feeling, their feelings and emotions a lot more than guys and guys are just practical, they just do things automatically, I mean they, they do have their reasoning behind the things they do but they are definitely a lot more practical than girls. They are more hands-on, like they’re encouraged, generally, to do more hands-on tasks. I don’t know.”

What are girls encouraged to do?: “Girls are encouraged—it depends because where I come from is totally different. My culture, not the way I was raised particularly because my mom always encouraged us to do other things like to her, to the best of her ability. She didn’t push us to be doctors or lawyers because um, she did mention that she wanted us to be architects or someday, something like that. But uh, she had limited resources so she didn’t have a way to connect both, but generally in my culture, Hispanic, Latin people, they encourage women to like stay at home, kind of cook, kind of be like the wife, housekeeper, and also there’s this new notion that the woman should be professional…women are kind of taught to be submissive.”

Is there a way to link video games to that submissive teaching?: (subject mentioned violence—implied that girls don’t like it, mentioned Barbie, perhaps as a girl game, but then considered that that teaches submissiveness too. “There’s not really that many that target to girls”
There aren’t a lot of games designed for girls. If you were working in the industry, what would YOU make for girls?: didn’t know…

Which non-video games are effective at engaging girls? “I like “Life”. “Life” was pretty good.”

What did you like about it?: “It had a whole deal about planning a life—about having kids. I thought that was pretty good. Um, “Sorry” is not gender specific so I kind of like that too. I like “Monopoly”. I know I played “Monopoly” a lot. (liked making money, going to jail, building property)

What did you like about “Sorry”?: “Um it just doesn’t have anything to do with—like it’s, it’s nothing personal, or gender specific… it just teaches game dynamics… you either win or lose.”

(Subject mentioned earlier that she used to play “Tekken” with cousins occasionally.)

Did you usually choose female avatars?: “Yeah! I picked the female ones [based on descriptions, sounded like Nina and Xun Fa] I never actually picked a guy”

Were your cousins guys, girls, mixed?: “Tekken was all guys”

Did they ever pick female avatars: “Yeah, it was rare. They would pick these big, huge monsters to fight with. Yeah, I’ve seen guys pick a girl. They actually would give us advice of who the best fighters were to pick the girls, so that’s why they would pick the girls too, that’s what my cousins would do, they would tell me ‘oh, she’s good! She has this so-and-so move’ so then I would just pick between the girls like that.”

Did you play any other games regularly with your cousins?: Board games—Monopoly with older cousins. No other v.g.

Siblings?: Two sisters (subject is the middle child.)
What do they play?: Little sister likes computer solitaire “a lot”, older sister never really played—“not that into it”. Little sister also “spends hours” playing games online.

Have you tried those games?: “I tried it once. I’m kind of lazy with video games…[I don’t have much interest.]”

What would it take to gain your interest?: “I don’t know. It’s just, I find it hard to sit at a computer, I find it hard to sit at a computer playing games ‘cause eventually I get bored… and then you have like different levels to beat”

Do you not like levels?: “Yes, they challenge you but they’re kind of like a pain in the butt ‘cause if you lose then you have to go back again to the beginning. My sister loves the levels. She probably has beat all of them…[she] keeps playing”

Do you like competition with self? With computer? Hard, easier?: “I don’t like playing against some of my friends… -oh, I forgot DDR, is that a video game?”

Sure, why not?: “I played that last year with my roommate and I would play against her and we would face off each other, obviously she’s a lot better and even though we’re at totally different levels, she’s at advanced and I’m a beginner, it just felt wrong competing against another person…I don’t like to play next to somebody, competing against like, somebody… here it’s a very competitive environment so I don’t particularly like to beat people out in the open”

How long have you played DDR? An hour… “it was a good workout…” I did it once’

Play: “Playing for me means having fun kind of relaxing, letting everything go.”

Games: “A game implies competition. You either have to win or lose”

Video Games: “A video game is kind of like you just veg out in front of the sofa kind of thing. It’s a more passive kind of competition.”

What about when they bring board games or card games to the computer? How do you define that?: “In theory it’s the same thing… but it has totally different aspects because
all you’re doing is clicking and moving your mouse. You’re obviously using your head too and when you play a real board game you’re…competing against someone else in your own personal space…interactive.”
So interactivity is important to a game?: yes.
Anything to add?: No

Interview #11
COMM 201 student
Major: Design and Environmental Analysis (Human Ecology)
Jobs: internships in architecture and facilities management dept., job-babysitting
Activities: international facilities management-webmaster (building planning and design)
Interests: sports—field hockey, softball and computer (design, CAD, no programming, surf, shop ebay, email/IM), likes travel
Computer games or console games?: Sometimes on computer, played video games a lot as a child. No console now, therefore, plays less. Boyfriend has a console, but he’s in San Diego.
What do you play?: Boyfriend likes Madden—tried to teach her. She likes a race car game set in California, likes Grand Theft Auto—plays those with boyfriend.
Do you have a fav. Game among those?: Grand Theft Auto.
What else do you play?: As a kid, had Atari, NES, SNES—Mario, MarioKart, DK, Banjo and Kazooi—had a sister—played with her.
Was sister younger or older?: younger
Other siblings?: No.
Was the console yours? Hers? Shared?: Shared.
Did you ever play with friends?: Yes. When friends came over, they would play.
What’d you play with friends?: Usually multiplayer games like Mario Party or another Mario game.
What about computer games: “I used to be addicted to the SIMS for awhile” Likes ‘Smack the Pingu’, used to play Slingo online (sort of like Bingo) or solitaire too—just not much time right now for games.
What do you look for in a game? What motivates you to play one instead of another?: “I think beating my last score, like, I’m pretty competitive so, or like, getting to the next level or to like, the end… it was important for me to be able to save, I feel, because when I played games if I couldn’t save my progress I would get like, sick of ‘em because like, I don’t know, I wouldn’t want to bother going through the first level to get back to where I’d already like, gotten so being able to save I think was important…get a high score and try to beat the high score.”
Do you prefer to compete against yourself or against others?: “Compete against others but it gets a little nasty… Like, when I play with my boyfriend, I can’t handle that he can beat me, like when we play Mariokart… he knows all the tricks and all the secrets and it drives me crazy because he would always beat me and it’s not fair ‘cause I don’t know those tricks and secrets so it’s really frustrating.”
Have you tried learning the secrets? Playing the games more?: “Kind of. It was, it’s almost like, it’s a boy thing and I couldn’t, like, I wouldn’t expect myself to like, remember all the ones that he can remember so I just knew I’d never be able to beat him…”
Are there any games at which you can beat him?: “No, I don’t think so.”
Has he ever tried the computer games that you like?: “Um, I think so. I know like, he’ll sit around when we play SIMS and like, put in his input on how the house should look or something…”

When he offers his advice, do you listen?: “No! (laughs). Not really.”

Is his advice any good?: “Probably. But I don’t like listening to him. I’m strong-headed like that.’

The games you play—how often do you play?: “Maybe once a month. I don’t play very much anymore, especially since now he’s in San Diego. Like, he used to play a lot…but now that he isn’t around I don’t play as much.

Why did you stop playing when you were younger?: “I think…I was always busy but we always made time anyway—tape was too soft—had to rely on my paraphrased notes here!] the reason I stopped playing is ‘cause I just get sick of a particular game and we just didn’t have another game to fill its place…mostly that was it.”

The games you had—did you ask for them or just wait for them to come into the house?: “Yeah, we just kind of waited until they came in, yeah, until we got ‘em for a birthday present or something. We never really asked for a particular one.”

How many games did you have as a kid?: “Actually, not very many. The only problem we had, um, well the thing was my house got broken into so my Super Nintendo got stolen when I was younger and so we bought, like, we had a couple of games and then we lost all those, and so we only got a couple more—I don’t know we only probably had like… maybe [trailed off—can’t hear the number stated on tape! Sounded like 6?] I mean, it wasn’t that many… some people had boxes full, we didn’t have that many.”

How did you get the console?: “We originally got it as a surprise…and then we got it as a replacement.”
What do you like about video games? What makes you want to play one?: “Probably having seen like, a commercial for it or something before I don’t know like, I’m—I’m not inclined to play a game I have never heard of or like, seen, like, haven’t played before um or, actually I would say like, color of—when they’re usually like, dark and dreary looking I don’t, I’m not interested like, I don’t know, I’m not really into killing games, although Grand Theft Auto is a pretty exciting game but I—I like the more upbeat games that don’t have to do with killing.”
Except for Grand Theft Auto?: “(laughs) Except for Grand Theft Auto! But I don’t kill people when I play that one, I just steal the cars… I don’t—I don’t hurt anybody I just uh, I mean, I guess I pull them out of the car but I don’t beat them up I just pull them out and jump in the car and um, I like driving around and hitting things. (laughs)”
So damaging property, but not people?: (laughs) “Right!”
So what about a game would turn you off? You mentioned dreary colors, what else?: “I think, I think ones that like, guys are overly into and like, way good at… I get bored when obviously they starting beating me or they’re way too good at it… like Madden I never got into, I would play a little while but the guys would be there and play for hours and hours and almost gave me more of a hatred towards it… they played forever.”
If you had some free time, what are the odds that you’d be playing a video game?: “…I think I’d be most likely to read a book if I had a lot of free time or like, go outside… the only way I’d be playing a video game is if actually probably I was doing something like if I was writing a paper or something and I needed a distraction and just for a second to like, clear my mind then that’s when I’d probably play a game … ‘I can’t work on this paper anymore! OK, back to Pingu!’ so um, yeah, really not, I mean, not when I have free time unless I’m with somebody I would say then I would think about playing.”
Do video games ever appear at the parties you go to?: No.
If they were there would you play?: “yeah, if they came up.” Played PGA with friends over the summer—got together, drank beer, played PGA. It wasn’t too complicated to learn. As long as the others aren’t a LOT better than her, it’s fun for her.

If you had the time, would you be willing to learn tricks in a game?: “If I was figuring it out on my own, I’d be more willing to figure out the tricks and things like that.”

What’s the most complicated game that you’ve played?: Roller Coaster Tycoon “That one can take a lot of time to set up the entire… place and earn enough money to be able to like, buy—and I don’t know any of the tricks in that game so it takes… a long time to build everything… I think SIMS could be a, not a complicated game, but a time consuming game to get everything set up but I know the tricks to get enough money like, just to like cheat and get a lot of money.”

How long did you play Roller Coaster Tycoon: “Only when I was in high school [trailed off]”

Where did you learn the cheats in SIMS?: “From my sister, I don’t know how she learned them, probably online.”

Does your sister still play much?: “No, actually I just uninstalled it when I was home for fall break.”

Why did you uninstalled it?: “My mom’s computer wasn’t working well so I decided to give away some of our SIMS games to my boyfriend’s niece [who was interested in SIMS—she’s eleven]”

Why do you think males play more females?: “I think that typically boys are more competitive than girls and I think that the marketing is more towards boys and I think that, I don’t know, I’ve always been more of a like, to boy than a girl… I think that’s why I played. A lot of my girl friends don’t like video games… they don’t want to take the time to figure them out… there are other things they’d rather be doing.”
Would you say you’re atypical?: yes.
How do you play? How do you relax? What does ‘play’ mean to you?”: “getting down on the floor and getting comfortable and getting a… drink and talking to people… I don’t know.”
Is socializing ‘play’ for you?: yes.
If there was more socializing in video games, would you play more?: “Yeah… I think it if it’s around and people are like, sitting around playing it and there’s an extra controller, I would sit down and play.”
So if it’s available and it’s not going to take you away from the rest of the group…:
“Right.”
Is it common to hang out with friends and play games?: Not common. Video games might be played during the day, but night is for talking.
When you played PGA with your friends, did you talk about the game, or non-game related things? non-game things.
The friends you played PGA with, do they play more than you do?: “Yes.”
When was your first experience with computer or video games? About how old were you?: 3rd grade? 4th grade? Not sure. Dad already had an Atari. Started with that.
Does your dad still play video games?: No
Other?: No

Interview #12
DDR Club
Major: Animal Science, Minor in Education
Jobs?: In the summer—worked in a factory, currently—CIT helpdesk-info. consultant, some volunteering with the Cayuga Nature Center, Raptor Center and an after-school nature education program for children. TA for spider biology

Activities?: CU Japanese Animation Society, Raptor Center, Kung Fu
Hobbies?: drawing, writing (poetry, fantasy), video games, computer games (mostly computer games because she doesn’t have a console), read, hang out with friends.

What computer games do you play?: Raiman I and II (solve puzzles to complete quest), Tomb Raider, Knights of the Old Republic (Star Wars Role-playing), Dojin Fighers (3rd person kombat games in the anime style)

What’s your favorite type of game?: Role playing mostly, but also 1st person shooters and 3rd person fighters—prefers puzzles and strategies.

Do you mostly play with others or alone?: It depends—likes playing alone to unwind at the end of the day, but also likes playing Smash Bros. and Star Fox at club with friends—it’s about even in terms of preference. It also depends on the game—some are more fun alone, others are better with friends.

How much did you play as a kid?: “Video games, not at all. I never had a console system or anything like that… Computer games, I played a lot of games like Chip’s Challenge and uh, uh, Jill of the Jungle and … Jazz Jackrabbit. I loved Jazz Jackrabbit. So, they were mostly like, uh, basic action games. I didn’t play them a lot.”

Are there any similarities between those games and the games you play now?: Well, uh Jazz Jack Rabbit and Raiman are very close to each other, um, Chip’s Challenge… it’s a challenge—you have to find Chips um, so that’s got a lot of similarities to like, [can’t hear which game she compared it to] and stuff like that… similarities are definitely there.”
How did you first get into computer games?: “I’m a computer person. I like being on
the computer and I like, um, when I was younger I used to read a lot of fantasy so it just
it—natural kind of progression I guess into playing like, fantasy-based games
and my dad’s a really big computer person, he used to play Doom all the time and
Wolfenstein 3D and stuff like that. So I grew up with computer games and with a
computer in my house. Um, I used to play Myst and Amber’s Journeys Beyond, those
were both very much puzzle games.
So was your dad the one who first introduced you to these?: “He introduced me to the
concept of, you know, computer games as a whole. Um, he’s not a big gamer himself.
He likes—he just does it occasionally for recreation and if we’re playing a video game
like, uh we recently got a Playstation 2 at my house um because my sisters love DDR, I
kinda got them hooked on DDR and so um if we’re playing DDR or Katamari Damacy
or Lord of the Rings or anything like that you know, he’s inclined to come over, see
what it’s about, you know, maybe try it.”
How many siblings do you have?: “I have two younger sisters, I have Crystal who is
two years younger than me and Jen who is three years younger than me.”
Were you the one who got them into video games? Is it just DDR or other things too?:
“…Crystal doesn’t play video games at all really, she just, they don’t interest her very
much at all. Um, Jen Marie, I definitely got her hooked on DDR. I definitely got her
hooked on Lord of the Rings and on Katamari Damacy so, yeah, I would say I definitely
got her into video games.”
Growing up, before your sisters were old enough to play, did you usually play with
friends? Play alone Play with other relatives?: “Um I never had many friends growing
up. I was kind of from this small town and I was seen as like, the odd ball. So, like,
even from an early age I just, I kind of just didn’t click with other kids my age and there
weren’t many you know, gamers in my school ‘cause it was really small. So I did play video games on my own. Sometimes, sometimes with my sister uh, Crystal and I, before she grew out of video games, we used to play Jazz Jackrabbit uh, double player mode.” Does your other sister still play video games now?: “She plays more now. Like, I think because I’m out of the house so she has more access to the computer and more access to the Playstation. She plays them a lot more. And like, um I have money now so I’m more inclined to buy her you know, more expensive stuff like, uh Lord of the Rings and like, I got her Katamari Damacy for her birthday… [goal is to pick up lots of things, roll them into a ball, and make the ball bigger and bigger] it’s very simple controls, all you do is use these [gestures] and you just steer using the two basic controls which is why she really likes it.”

Is it a level game?: “You start like, the first…level you have three minutes to pick—to make it uh, 10 cm big, it starts off 1 cm big and you wanna make uh, a cumulatively a ball that’s 10 cm big and the next time you might start off at 10 cm and you’ve gotta get it uh 50 cm big and then you might start off at 25 cm and have to get it 2 meters big or something like that with a certain uh time limit.”

Do you have any preference—personal challenge or interpersonal competition?: “I personally like the experience of seeing like, Knights of the Old Republic—I love it so much because you’re like, a Jedi and I get to go you know, chop things up with a light saber—that’s awesome! I’m not so much into the competition, I mean it’s fun to come play you know, Star Fox Assault or uh, Smash Bros. or you know, even DDR is kinda competitive but mostly what I play for is because I love the worlds and I love you know, experiencing this like, alternate fantasy-type reality and having it be interactive ‘cause I grew up on fantasy books and so like, when I get into Myst, Myst is basically, you’re in this… world and you wake up and you don’t know what’s gone on and so you
have to figure out what happened and you uncover the fact that there was this one inventor who invented all these portals to different worlds and he had two sons and one was really uh, really liked things of high class but he was a drug user and the other one was like, pretty barbaric but he was honorable. So you—you find out more about these two people and like, it’s, it’s a very rich fantasy world and um that was the one game that really got me hooked on like, RPGs and stuff like that ‘cause it was just—it was so, it was so you know, different from what I was used to and so that’s, that’s mainly what I play for, is that experience of you know, being in this world that’s completely unlike our own.”

How important is customization for you?: “I like customization. The more customization the better, I think. Like, I love in KOTOR [(Knights of the Old Republic)] that you can, like, you can’t choose, it’s not endlessly customizable, you have a mold of like, 5 er, 5-12 different female characters you can be and you can choose them, and then you choose like, your powers and your skills and your [? Can’t hear this word!!!] and stuff like that. So I love having that option of customization that’s really awesome. If it makes me feel like you know, I’m the one directing the story I’m not just you know, the passenger in the story I’m really you know, directing it, stuff like that.”

When you customize, are there any trends among the characters you choose?: “I like uh, melee weapons, I like close-range weapons, I like—my favorite is double-ended sword, like double-ended weapons. Um, I like uh, I generally go for speed attacks like, um, attack really a lot in one turn, um, like in KOTOR, you get three characters um, in your party at one time, you have a total of 9 characters to choose from to be the other 2 supporting characters and generally what I do is, my character specializes in close-range melee combat and then I have another Jedi who I use as support, um, using Jedi powers
and like, kind of you know, kind of close range but you know, further back than in the midst of the fray and then I usually use um, a person, one of my characters that’s a long-range or a shooter to stand back away from the other enemies and shoot. So um, like, I definitely have developed my own strategy and it kind of hinges on the fact that my character is usually the one running in and you know like, getting into trouble and dying the most but you know, doing the most cool, you know, action sequences and stuff.”

Do you have any particular personalities or appearances that you typically choose?: “I like strong female characters. I’m sort of a feminist I guess. Um, I like—like, that’s why I like Tomb Raider ‘cause she’s a kick-ass female character. I generally go for um, characters that somewhat resemble me but not always. Like, I tend to go for characters that have like, um shorter hair because I have shorter hair and generally like, um, like, either black or dark brown hair. [subject has brown hair.] So, I guess it’s you know, feeds into the whole illusion of you know, me immersing myself in that world you know, ‘I’m that character right there!’ so I – I want it to look as much like me as possible.”

That’s interesting because earlier you said that you like to direct, you like to be in control, but you also like to be inside the game, is that right?: “Yeah. I like the—I think it’s like the interactive, like, I like the control where I’m directing it because I’m the one involved in it—it’s my actions that are dictating how it is.”

“So, sort of controlling your own destiny?”: “Yes! Yes, very much.”

Play: “I think play is anything you do for pleasure, even if it’s like, doing homework—if that’s your idea of something fun, then you’re playing. Generally, for me, play doesn’t have a specific end goal, like, um it’s just—it’s something that may not be applicable to what I’m doing right now—like, you know, being good at Dance Dance Revolution, that has nothing to do with my major, that’s not gonna to get me into vet
school, but at the same time, it’s something I enjoy, something that’s separate from my
uh, routine, so I think play is anything you do for pleasure or for stress-relief.”

Game: “[continued from above] and I think a game is anything that you play. It’s the
embodiment of play. Play might—I mean a game might be as simple as you know, you
know, smacking your friend and trying not to get smacked back, you know, I think
games—I—I think people get too hung up on you know, what exactly is a game you
know, a game is a game it—it’s something that you do for fun, it’s got an end goal.
Sometimes it doesn’t have an end goal, sometimes the end goal is just to play but it’s—
it’s got some direction.”

Video Game: “[continued from above] “A video game is basically anything you put on
the TV through a console or, usually console games are referred to as video games and
anything that needs a computer is a computer game but I’ve been known to use them
interchangeably so I don’t think that, I don’t know, I’m pretty lax about it, I mean if-if
you think it’s a video game I mean, I’m not gonna debate about it because you know, as
long as you’re having fun, whatever!”

How important is narrative to you?: I like games with story, like, I mean  Doom is fun
and all, just randomly running around shooting things um I like sometimes senseless
violence, you know, that’s great, but I like to feel like I’m accomplishing something at
the end of the day whether it’s saving the universe or maybe just rescuing a princess
from a castle. I like to feel like you know, I have some, there’s some reason I’m actually
immersing myself in this world because it makes it that much more believable. You
know, people—people do stuff but they always have reasons for why they’re doing
something even if it’s just ‘I feel like it’ you know? … But I think, I think it’s the fact
that you know it’s, if there’s a believable plot if there’s a believable motivation it makes
it that much more enjoyable and interesting not only in like, mentally challenging and
interesting but also like, inspirationally. Like, you really get into the story, you’re thinking ‘oh well, what if the game designers had done this?’ or ‘oh, but what if my character had died here?’ or you know, you really, you know kind of get involved in the game, you’re like ‘this world is cool’.

Do you prefer something that requires your full attention or something that doesn’t require as much thought—more reflex, like Tetris.: “I get bored with Tetris and like, things like that, like the mind-numbing, I like—I like things with stories and a narrative and I’ve gotta figure it out. Like, that’s why I like KOTOR…”

How good a use of time are video games?: “Well um, if you wanna do something productive —[tape “blipped” here, I have no idea how much I lost!] like an hour and a half playing KOTOR, it’s usually because I want to do it, and you know what? Sometimes you just have to do stuff that doesn’t make a difference in the long run. Sometimes you just have to live in the moment.” [TAPE BREAKS OFF HERE! AH!]

[my notes tell me that Amber said that video games are good for stress-relief, then I realized the tape wasn’t working and I switched it out and began recording again.]

“I personally think that people need to escape a little bit, I mean, if you get stuck down in this life you kinda—it’s really easy to get burned out and if—you know what, if you waste a little time playing a video game, I don’t really think it’s that much of a waste. I think you know, you’ve just done something for yourself. It’s like going out and getting a spa treatment I guess, like, I don’t see any point in getting your finger nails done when you’re just going to you know, like, chip ‘em up or whatever later so like, if you ask me, that’s a waste of time, but you know what, for th-those women who do that, they enjoy it. You know, it’s something they do for themselves and this is just what I do for myself… I play video games. I escape into this other worlds and I have fun.”
What are some possible costs of video games?: “They cost a lot. Playstation 3s are coming out and they’re like, several hundred dollars. Um, there’s uh, my dear friend EverQuest which is henceforth referred to as EverCrack. There is a cost where sometimes video games get addicted [sic] and you don’t get anything done. I know I personally would love EverQuest but I know if I bought it I’d never get any school work done because all I’d do is sit and play it. I know that. That’s why I don’t play Massively Online Role-Playing Games.”
What makes them so addictive?: For me it’s just, I get caught up in my character and leveling it up-leveling up and the fact that it’s—like KOTOR, I can go through and I know like, once I’ve gone through it I know what’s going on—what’s going to happen. The first time I played it I literally played it for 3 days straight because I just could not put it down. I couldn’t wait to find out what was going to happen, I couldn’t wait to see what the next world was going to be like and like, now that I’ve played it through, I’ve gotten over that initial euphoria, I can just you know, do it in you know, 45 minute, hour doses but with like…EverQuest and everything, they don’t have an end point so you just keep playing and playing and playing and they’re always changing and there’s always someone better than you, someone stronger than you, which is very hard I guess, I guess that’s a little bit of a competitive edge showing through—it’s hard not—it’s hard to say ‘ok this is as far as I go’ when you have so much further you can go.”
If you meet someone who’s much more experienced/a better player than you, are you more inclined to compete, or more inclined to play something else?: “Well, interestingly enough, this is what has just happened with Smash Bros. We just started playing Smash Bros.—I’d never played before we started having it here [in the DDR club]. One of my best friends, Ashley, is really, really good… and so um, last year I wouldn’t play Smash Bros. very much because I would be the first person out and you know, like, I’d be at
like, you know, negative 20 and everyone else was at like, plus 12 and I’d be the first person out in like, 20 seconds and I just didn’t really want to play because I mean, it was fun and I’d come over and play once or twice but after that the fact that I was losing so much—like, I’m not a sore loser but I’d like to know that I at least you know, had some effect, and I don’t—even like, if you’re not a sore loser, losing all the time just you know, it’s not fun, it just, it doesn’t make the game enjoyable. But um, recently, she’s like ‘you know what? Why don’t I teach you what I know? Why don’t we have some practice sessions one-on-one?’ and so we’ve been practicing and um, I enjoy it a lot more now ‘cause I kind of know what I’m doing. I’m not as good as her, I probably won’t be as good as her ever but you know, I enjoy it because I stand a chance so, I guess I am inclined to play something else if someone’s like really, really, really, good.”

Compared to your friends, do you play more, less or the same amount of video games?: “In my little circle, I have two best friends. One never plays video games and one plays video games constantly. In my larger circle of friends, a majority of them play video games a lot more than I do, and I probably wouldn’t play video games as much except that they play video games more. Um, so they’re always like, ‘Hey, I’ve got this new video game’ and I’m like, ‘ok, I’ll come try it out.’”

So other people influence you a lot to play more?: “Yup. Yup and it like, other people like, influence the games I want to choose too. Like, Ed is the one who introduced me to Katamari Damacy you know, ‘cause I played it and I was like, ‘ooh, this is fun’ so friends do have a big effect.”

For you, is video game play a social activity? Is that common among you and your friends?: “Yeah. Yeah. I’ll like, when I wanna hang out with my one friend, I’ll be like, ‘Yo! You wanna go play Smash Bros.’ and you know, we sit and make fun of each
other and laugh at the silly things we do and stuff like that, so it is a good social activity. That and watching movies and making fun of them.”

Interview #13
DDR Club member
Animal Sciences, Junior
Jobs—none
Activities—anime club, DDR, Raptor Center, EMS
Hobbies—anime, art, EMS, wild life education
How long have you been with the DDR Club?: “Since I was a freshman”
And you joined because of Amber, you said?: [Amber is the president of the club, and Rina’s good friend] “Um, well she started dragging me here and I made friends with everyone here—it was mostly ‘cause of the people. I mean I play DDR but it was more ‘cause the people were cool…. All the losers (laughs), ‘cause you know, I’m a loser too so we all get along.
Do you play any other games?: “Sometimes play Smash Bros. More frequently on my own than here.”
What other video games do you play?: “I more prefer to watch other people play video games than actually play them myself.”
Why is that?: “I find them really interesting to watch, especially like, the role-playing ones like, Amber plays KOTOR and Tomb Raider and stuff. I love watching it ‘cause it’s a story but I don’t like when things start attacking me and I have to kill them and I always die. I never had video games as a kid.”
Really?: “Yeah. All I had was Tiger Toy”
‘Tiger Toy”? The handheld games? Which one?: “Lion King….I loved Lion King! …
My sister had a GameBoy, she never let me play it though.”
Was she older or younger?: “Older.”
What did your sister play on her GameBoy?: “She was never really into it that much
either. She had like, Mario. I think she wound up getting it for her Bat Mitzvah, she
never did much with it. We were never video gamers in the family that much. We
played some computer games but even that was minimum.”
What computer games did you play?: “[hard to hear here but according to my notes,
subject said she used to play “Lemmings” and other demo games that a relative got for
free.] “Most of them were demo games… we didn’t have very much in the way of
technology and like, —we didn’t have internet until my senior year in high school.”
Currently, do you play any video games, hand held, cell phone, Ipod games? Computer
games? “Um, I do uh, Smash Bros. definitely…DDR as well, obviously. Um… Para
Para here, [PC Game]…”
Do you ever play any accessory games on your computer?: “All the time. Although my
Mac doesn’t have them. I have to steal other people’s PCs… I do Minesweeper,
Solitaire, um, Free Cell, Spider Solitaire, Hearts. All of it. I love that stuff.”
How often do you play?: “Well, since it’s not actually on my computer, it’s only when
I’m on someone else’s um, I do it when I’m on shift for EMS.”
Do you have a favorite?: “Um, I really like Spider Solitaire right now. Although in my
game I play uh, Mah Jong—on my computer I’ve got Mah Jong and it’s, it’s not exactly
like the actual game, it’s just matching tiles and I do that all the time.”
That’s on your computer?: “Yes, well, it’s on the internet.”
Do you ever play online games like Yahoo games, etc.?: “Um, I do online role-playing
games.”
What do you play?: “Just Age of Mythos. That’s time-consuming enough as-is.”
Any puzzles?: “I like those kinds of things, I haven’t found any that I like on the computer… but if I found ‘em I probably would.”
Video Games: “Um, well I guess I would typically wind up distinguishing video games as something that requires either you know, PS2, Game Cube, Xbox, that requires TV console. Um, ones that can be either multi-player or single-player, uh, role-playing games, 2 person fighters, shooters, whatever they’re called, racing ones, I don’t know… Handheld ones too I guess, Game Boys Sega, things like that…”
Games: “Well ‘game’ is just anything that—typically with a game I would involve another person which is why it’s kinda hard with video games because it can just be you versus the computer but a game is not something that could ever be entirely by yourself. It requires either inanimate objects that act as a second person, or playing it with other people, um, some sort of interaction where there’s a clearly defined—well, it’s not always clearly defined, but theoretically a winner and a loser or potentially a draw I guess um, something that is going to have an outcome based on how you play it, it normally requires some sort of strategy… to be able to play.”
Play: “And play is more general, that’s any kind of interaction um, I would be loathe to say that that would actually be considered between you and a computer because that sounds very sad to be playing with the computer.”
Why’s that?: “Because playing is something that’s typically, I feel, defined as interaction with something more tangible than what’s on a computer, something that actually involves some form of activity. Not necessarily running around and playing tag, but you know, even a board game or you know, pretending with like, little toys or something is still something physical whereas on a computer, you’re sitting and just looking at a screen and it seems like it wouldn’t be giving you much feedback.”
How do you categorize DDR?: “I would definitely call it a video game um, and would classify it as a game as well and theoretically you do play it although normally the way we play it is with another person as well but it could be played alone.”

For you, how often does gaming become a social activity?: “Well if you do count role-playing games as something that’s being done with someone else… I’d say… 1-4 hours a day.”

And how often do you play alone?: “Not very often. I mean if it’s—my mahjong game I guess maybe one hour a day. It’s such a grandmother’s game, honestly. It’s matching but…”

Do you generally prefer competing with other people or teaming up with them?: “Teaming up with them. I don’t like competitive things. I never did competitive sports because I don’t like that aspect of it.”

Do you prefer beating the computer or challenging yourself?: “Um, competing against myself.”

How good/bad a use of time?: “Um, not the best use of my time but I feel at least with the role-playing games at least I’m doing something somewhat creative because I’m creating stories and I actually wind up logging them so I feel like that’s at least a creative outlet for me, whereas if I’m spending all my time doing something like Smash Bros or DDR I think it would feel like less of a good time usage.”

You say you log your stories?: “Yeah, I actually have like, just complete like, files of my stories that I’ve written up with other people um, and then I go back and read them later ‘cause you know, I had fun with them.

Costs: “Costs? My GPA. ‘Cause it’s very distracting and so it’s easy to get drawn in to that—it’s almost like, addictive in that you wind up putting off other things you could or would be doing if you weren’t.”

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Benefits: “Well there is somewhat of a sad sort of social aspect to role-playing games um, ‘cause I mean, you are being social with other people, but people you’ll probably never meet and they’re virtual friends theoretically, not like, actual friends um, I suppose you could say other ones are reaction times, maybe, but I don’t see much of a benefit with doing it other than the fact that it’s fun and that is something to be said.”
You seem guilty about playing games, but you play them 1-4 hours a day, do you really feel that guilty about that?: “I’m very hard on myself about working and feel that I’m struggling this semester more so than usual and that if I probably wasn’t as into this role-playing game as I am that maybe I would actually be willing to focus a little bit more on doing work. [laughs] But that’s just ‘cause I’m very hard on myself.”
Do you feel guilty with other activities like any of your other hobbies?: “Not with EMS.”
OK, what about anime?: “Not CJAS [Cornell Japanese Animation Society] but if I were randomly watching anime I probably would.”
Why? what’s the difference?: “CJAS is very contained and the time in which I go to them I wouldn’t be doing work anyway—I’m not going to be doing work from 8-midnight on a Saturday…but if I’m watching it at home it’s more likely that I could actually be working at that point in time.”
Generally speaking, what do you like/dislike about video games?: “Um, well[hard to hear] video games are all so different. You know, um, personally I mean, like, the role-playing games I watch Amber play like Tomb Raider and stuff, I enjoy like, the story and how you have so many choices about what you can do and stuff like that, and so much freedom to go wherever you want and I think a lot of it is pretty actually like, some of them are really well done and they pay so much attention to detail. I don’t like some of the more [can’t hear here]…you get attacked from like, every direction and
you’re like ‘oh my gosh! We’ve gotta kill everything’ [according to my notes, she described sort of, stressful games as the ones she doesn’t like…]

If you could design a game for yourself, what would it be like?: “…a role-playing type game where you can essentially create characters, have them make up their own lives, get into different kinds of situations, certainly some sort of action, but not really big shooter-type things…You would have a lot of free choice.”

What challenges would it have?: “Um… the ability to wind up getting other characters to interact with you and um… some sort of quest where you have to go and find this thing or activate that or… some kind of goal like that.”

Why the gender gap?: “Well, personally I think it was kind of more socially accepted that of course, you know, guys are gonna be playing with that but girls are going to be doing something else with their time and so people kind of fell into that social norm um, so a lot of people I think it’s just uh, strange in that—we’re probably starting to see a little bit of a change in that, I don’t know um, where people are starting to realize you know, ‘hey, it’s cool to do [??], no matter what gender you are’ but I think a lot of it’s just the games are being designed… violent shooters-type games …and things like that… associated specifically with a man’s thing so they didn’t have much more, but they’ve come out with so many different types, you know, and girls will like to play the war ones, and then there’ll be ones like racing or RPGs or things like that that may be more appealing to girls and so um, it’s starting to become more mainstream for both genders.”

What would it take to make you play video games more or less than you do now?: “Less school work, probably. [less work = more play, more work=less play]”

What other recreational activities do you use your computer for?: “I do instant messaging, sometimes I’ll shop for things online but normally I’ll specifically be
looking for something, I’m not just surfing around, I’ll look for images, um, and then
I’ll wind up you know, reading stories and things um, online comics, things like that.
Email…”
How often do you do these things?: “Regularly, as soon as I get home from school, the
computer goes on and it’ll be on [all day], I may not be on it the whole time but
normally I’ll be at least checking it for IM…”
Do you participate in Facebook or Friendster?: “I’m on Friendster, I haven’t figured out
how to use it…”
Do you do any blogging? Programming?: “No. I can use excel… I have very minimal
computer skills.”
So who introduced you to video games?: “Um, beyond just you know, playing once or
twice, or—playing on a regular basis? College. I didn’t have much access to it at home
and there were—none of my friends did it so I really had minimal previous experience.
Other?: no

Interview #14
Major: AEM Junior
Jobs: Intermural referee
Activities: WVBR radio
Hobbies: softball, hiking, backpacking, canoeing
Do you have access to video games currently: “Yes, I own a GameCube.”
How often do you play with it?: Um, once every few months”
Do you have any computer games?: “Um, no.”
Do you ever play games on a cell phone or an ipod?: “Um, like, I play online games on
the computer like Eucre.
Anything else?: “Um, solitaire. My cell phone has poker”
Do you have any handheld games?: no
How often do you play the other games?: “Um, probably a couple times a week.”
And when do you usually play?: “Usually when I’m done with my homework. To unwind.”
What else do you do to unwind?: music, beer, hang out with friends
What do you usually do with your friends?: “Usually go out like, to like, a bar and drink, or we stay at home a lot and play poker.”
Do you have any preference for live poker or digital poker?: “Um, I prefer like, playing real with friends.”
Do you ever play video games with your friends?: “Uh, occasionally.”
Like, when?: “When I do play it once every few months. When I first got it I played it a little more but-”
When did you first get it?: “Probably about a year ago.”
And when did you play then?: “Um, probably once every couple weeks.”
What games were you playing?: “Uh, Mario Tennis, Mario Golf, Mario Racing…”
With your friends, what do you usually play now?: “Those games.”
Do any of your friends have a game console?: “Yeah, one of my guy friends has an X-box. None of my girl friends have games, er, any consoles.”
And your friend who has the X-box, do you ever play that with him?: “No.”
When you were a kid, did you have any games in the house?: “We had some computer games.”
Which ones?: “Carmen Sandiego, I don’t know the names of them. Some like, racing games. Like, a game pack with all these little mini games on it.”
How often did you play any of those?: “Probably, maybe once a week or something.”
How did you come to have these games?: “My brothers and I usually bought them ourselves.”

How many brothers do you have?: “Two.”

Older or younger?: “Older.”

Any sisters?: no

How often did your brothers play?: “Probably almost every day.”

Did you usually play together or separately?: “Separately….” [all solo games]. [brother had a Playstation (she thinks it was a play station anyway) and they used to play with that together—difficult to hear voice on the tape here, but my notes confirm this info.]

What games?: “South Park racing and James Bond.”

“Was that GoldenEye?”: “Couldn’t tell ya.”

“OK.” Now, how often do your brothers play video games?: “Probably never.”

Why?: “’Cause they’re married, with jobs and kids.”

Why did you decrease your amount of GameCube play in the time since you got it?:

“Time.”

Have your feelings about video games changed at all since you were a child?

Preferences? Opinions? Anything?: “Um, no. Not really. ‘Cause like, um, now, and as a child I was never like, really into them but I don’t mind playing them.”

What do you like/dislike about video games?: “Um, I like—it’s you know, competition, especially with my brothers. That’s fun. Um, like, I like the Mario games a lot ‘cause they’re a lot easier than um, all those other like, in-depth games where you have to go around the whole board and collect all this stuff and then, that’s what I don’t like… some of them are way too complex.

Would you play games more if you had more games to choose from? More games with the features you like?: “ Probably not.”
What would it take to make you play more?: “I guess it would take me to like them more than other things that are alternatives ‘cause… I’d rather do other things than video games.”

Like what?: “Like, my hobbies and stuff, being outdoors in general, just hanging out with my friends.”

If you could design a game meant just for you, what would it be like?: “Um, I like the, actually I like the driving games… it would be kind of cool to have actually like a driving steering wheel instead of the controllers ‘cause the controllers are hard to use.”

Is that true of most video games? Do you find the controllers hard to use?: “Yeah…”

Do you ever play DDR?: familiar, but never played it.

Would you play it?: “Um, probably not in a public atmosphere ‘cause I’d be too afraid of embarrassing myself but I would like, just around my friends and stuff.”

The parties you go to, is there ever a game system set up? No, just when she goes over to a guy friend’s house with a few people. The guys sometimes play then.

Do you ever feel pressure to play with the guys? No, other people aren’t playing either so she hangs out with them.

Do the girls play at all?: “No… my one best friend she’ll play—she likes the Mario games—with me.

Why the gender gap (in general)?: “Um, I’d say probably ‘cause the games are more guy-oriented. Um, if they wanted to get girls involved more they should focus them more on general girl interests like shopping or something.”

Would you play that?: “Um, probably not.”

What do you think other girls who don’t like shopping would play?: “Um, I’m not sure.”
How good/bad a use of time are video games?: “Compared to like, doing something productive?”
“Whatever it means to you.”: “Um, I’d probably consider them not such a good use of time because there’s lots of other things I could be doing.”
“Such as?”: “Um, homework or exercising or socializing with people. They’re ok though in moderation.”
Do you ever feel guilty for playing?: “Um, if I’m like, playing a card game for awhile [instead of doing homework]”
By card games, do you mean poker with your friends on computer card games like solitaire?: “By myself. It’s a waste of time.”
“Is it different if you play with friends?”: “Yes.”
What about games you play with a group, like Super Smash Bros. Melee, or a game that involves exercise like DDR… are those different?: “Um, yeah, if you’re playing with other people it’s not so bad…and Dance Dance Revolution, I have heard that people have lost weight doing that, so”
Costs/Benefits?: “Um, cost of play is that you could be, you know, expanding your knowledge by doing homework or reading um, video games, besides Dance Revolution—you could be exercising. Um, benefits are if you’ve like been studying too much it gets your mind off that… you can play with some people, it’s something to do besides going out and drinking…”
Do you spend anytime emailing, shopping online, blogging, Facebook, etc.—recreation stuff?: “Um, not much. I pretty much just email my professors and my close family…”
Any reason why you don’t do those other things much?: “Um, Iming I did a lot when I was like, in Jr. High and High School, now I usually talk to people on the phone or in person”
What about Facebook? Do you ever use that to keep in touch with people?: never used it, knows about it, not interested. “It’s just like the whole internet age… people feel more comfortable talking behind the screen…it impedes uh, social skills.”
You mentioned some issues about games and social skills, what about electronic education/electronic exercise —do you have any faith that these things can be accomplished digitally?: “Um, with the educational, they can do a lot with it, ‘cause I’ve seen a lot actually for kids—played a lot of that when I was younger, um, social skills—unless you’re like, in physical contact with people, I don’t know how they could develop that… and…they could do it with exercise, I’m sure if they came up with more games like Dance Dance Revolution.”
Who was the first person to bring home a computer game?: older brother
Did you want to play right away or did you watch for awhile first?: “I think I wanted to play right away just to hang out with my brothers.”
What games did YOU bring home? Were they different from your brothers’ choices?: “The only ones I ever bought when I was little were big multi-packs—CDs with a whole bunch of games on ‘em, so they were pretty much the same.”
Any other reasons why you play games when you do?: bored, kill time, a procrastination tool.
Other?: no

Interview #15
Major: Food Science Junior
Jobs: Co-chair for red carpet society
Activities: orientation steering committee, Food science club, Concert Commission, Undergrad Research work (microbes and food)

Hobbies: run, spin class, scrapbook, take pictures, travel

Do you have access to video games?: “We have an X-Box in our apartment. I don’t necessarily play often but when I do, usually we just play Halo which I’m still learning.”

How often do you play?: “Maybe like, once a week. If that.”

Do you play any other games?: “Um, when I’m home I play Mortal Kombat, I play Sega Genesis, Mario Bros., Mario Kart, um, pretty much anything my brother’s playing, I’ll just join in and play with him”

Is that an older or younger brother?: “I’m the youngest of six siblings so he’s older.”

Do you play with your other siblings?: “Um, we did when we were younger, obviously, not as much now ‘cause a lot of them are out of the house…”

When you’re at home, how much do you play?: “Probably the same—once a week.”

Do you have any computer games?: “Not on my computer at school, no.”

Any accessory games?: yes

Do you ever play those?: “Uh, yeah. I also play [brickles]”

How often do you play that?: “Maybe like, once a month now. I played it a lot more freshman year.”

Why do you play less now?: “I just don’t have time, and I don’t really think to put it up on my computer—usually I’m using my computer for other things.”

Do you play any online games?: “I used to play Slingo [sort of like Bingo] but not anymore”

A time issue?: “Just don’t—kinda lost interest in it.”

Cell phone or iPod games?: No
Do you ever play any board games? “Yes… I play Scrabble with my mom a lot. Um, big on Boggle, pretty much word games…”

Do you ever play any digital versions of these? “Uh, I never have.”

What games did you play the most when you were younger: Super Marios 3, Sonic the Hedgehog, Mortal Kombat

How did you come to have a console at home? “My older brother somehow got it and I just started playing with him when I as little and I guess at first I was an annoyance but then he started realizing I could play too just as well so I started playing with him…”

Did you play as a team or did you compete? “Usually we competed”

Do you like competition? “Yeah.”

Did you have any computer games as a child? “Actually we had a version of Super Mario Bros on our computer so I used to play it on there too. That could explain why I beat it like, 7 times by the time I was like, 12”

Did you prefer to play Mario on the computer or on the console? “I actually enjoy playing on the computer.”

Why’s that? “I was less likely to be disturbed because if I’m playing like, on the actual game apparatus then like, my brother would come like, and take it away or something like, so, the computer gave me more control of it.”

Did you share the console or was it mostly his? “We mostly shared it.”

Who played the most? “My brother.”

Do you have any sisters? “Yes, I have two older sisters.”

Did they play with any computer or video games? “No.”

Not at all? “No.”

What about your other brothers, did they play much? “Yeah, we all pretty much played together at some point or another.”
Why do you suppose that you played but your sisters didn’t?: “Um, I think because I was the youngest, I was more of like a—not necessarily a tomboy, but I was like, more like a little brother to all of ‘em, more than I was a sister because they already had two sisters.”

As a child, what was your general feeling about video games?: “I enjoyed them every once in a while. Sometimes I got bored with them very quickly but for the most part they were fun.”

When would you usually lose interest?: “Um, probably about after a half an hour, or if I was losing terribly.”

What about the games did you like?: “Usually when I stopped playing I would leave off at a point where like, I either didn’t know like, a secret code for it or I just couldn’t make it past that point so I guess the motivation to get past certain points in like, a level of the game got me to come back.”

So, did you generally like games that had levels?: “Yes. Yeah.”

What other elements of video games did you like?: “Well, especially with MarioKart I liked the face that it was like, go-carting through like, the screen ‘cause I-I like to go-cart for real—in real life.”

Have your tastes in video games changed at all over time?: “Um, I don’t really play them anymore…I’m a bigger fan of like, the old school video games than I am like, the newer ones like, I just think they’re too complicated and I don’t know, I like the simple video games.”

What don’t you like about the complicated ones?: “It’s just, I think I get more distracted by the graphics of it and like, all the different things you need to know like, when to do what like, for me, Super Mario Bros. was just like, the simplest game and that made it more fun because it wasn’t something that was challenging for a little kid to learn.”
So what is it about Halo that you like?: “I think it’s kinda funny that you can talk to people through the screen as you’re playing with them—that’s kind of amusing. Um, I don’t like that—I don’t like the way the way the graphics are set up ‘cause for some reason when I’m looking at the screen, like, I guess my depth perception with the television is off because like, I tend to fall off like, cliffs in the game a lot… it’s harder to control.”

Is it the 3D aspect or is it the style of the game that cause this?: “I think it’s the 3D…”

Who do you usually play Halo with?: “Um, my apartment-mates. There’s 3 guys that play and a couple—there’s 2 girls, they don’t really play…”

You’ve mentioned a gender difference among your family and apartment-mates. Would you say there is a gender gap in the larger population?: “Um, yeah. I do have one other friend that’s a girl that plays usually but I think it’s more or less the fact that she’s a very competitive person so it’s not so much that she enjoys the game as much as she like, wants to win the game um, but it’s definitely more of a male-dominant thing.”

Why do you think that is?: “I really honestly don’t know.”

Looking at the people you know, what do you think it is that either draws them to, or repels them from video games?: “Um, well for my brothers, specifically, they’re just very stubborn I guess and for them like, playing video games and seeing who can win is a way of like, I don’t know, kind of releasing that—that stubbornness vibe and, I don’t know. My brother that played the most—he’s a computer science major so I think it had a lot to do with the fact that he was really into like, the graphics of it and just like, learning all the technicalities of it so I think it has a lot to do with that.”

You said that your friend plays because she is competitive. Do you think girls who don’t play video games are generally less competitive?: “Yes.”
Would you call yourself competitive?: “Not really, no. I think I’m more—I see video games more from a males perspective than I would like, a competitor’s perspective…”

What do you mean?: “For me, like, I, ‘cause I said like, the girl that plays and like most of the guys I know that play like, it’s just more of a competitive thing. Um, I think it’s just, for me—it’s just something that’s like a —it’s more of a bonding thing because when I grew up like, that’s how I bonded with my brothers. Like, I played like boys’ sports like, I did boy things and I think that’s the reason why I’m closer to my brothers than my sisters are now but—and most of my friends at home are guys and they also play X-Box all the time.”

What do they usually play?: “Halo.”

When you’re hanging out with friends, how likely is it that video games will be a part of your time together?: “Um, probably a 50% chance depending on where we are I guess, if we’re like, at somebody’s apartment it’s probably a little higher but if we’re just like out and about and, chances are probably about 50-50 that we’ll end up going back and playing. Um, I think for me it’s more of like, I enjoy sitting around and watching the guys play because they get so into it so that to me is a little amusing.”

Do you ever feel pressure to play video games to socialize?: no

Do you ever see video games at parties you go to? No

Costs/Benefits?: “Um, benefit-wise, coming from a personal standpoint, um, I think if you have like, siblings like, obviously you have sons and daughters like, it’s a chance for them to bond together because I know especially like, when you’re younger it’s easier to do. Um, as far as like, when you’re older I honestly, for me I don’t see that much of a benefit. I think it’s just um, it’s just a time when everybody can get together and just kind of like, laugh about like, you know, whatever’s going on in the video game or like, you know, who’s getting upset about what but, for the most part like, it’s
just kind of like, I’ve noticed, at least in my apartment they—they play a lot I guess when they have to release stress or if they just need like, a time away from their work or something so, I think it gives you a chance to like, do something that’s not like, harmful to anybody as a way to release stress...I would never go out and buy myself an X-box.”

Why’s that?: “It’s just, it’s too expensive and I can’t afford it and it wouldn’t be worth my time personally ‘cause I don’t play enough.”

What are some possible costs of video games?: “Um, it’s distracting um, I mean it can take you away from getting like, outside of your I guess your house or your apartment or whatever, like just keeping you away from socializing with other people. I’ve never seen that happen first hand, but it’s definitely a distraction in our apartment I mean, I can tell that the guys in my apartment definitely play more than they probably should.”

How much do you feel is acceptable?: “Um, I feel like maybe like, ½ an hour to an hour every day like, I mean, as long as you can balance your time, like, your work and stuff like that.”

Generally speaking, how good a use of time are games?: “For me, it’s not time well-spent anymore, as much as it was when I was little.”

What’s changed?: “Um, I just have a lot more to do, a lot more priorities that I need to put first and a lot more responsibilities that need to be taken care of. And I’m just not really into it as much as I was before.”

Why do you think that is?: “Um, I don’t know. I think it’s just my attention’s elsewhere. My attention’s not really focused as much on getting into it as it would’ve been when I was younger I guess because as you get older, you know, your attention shifts from one thing to another.”

How much time do you spend on your computer doing non-school things?: “I’d say like, 2 hours a day.”
And is that time well-spent?: “Um, I—part of it just because emailing is a way for me to keep in touch with like, friends and family that I can’t normally talk to every day. Um, I’d say about 75% of it’s probably not well-spent.”

What is that 75%?: “It’s like instant messaging people, and I don’t know, going on the Facebook, checking my email repeatedly when it’s not necessary. Um, it’s just—random searching on Google and stuff like that just because—I personally get distracted very easily so, I look for any way to get out of studying… but it’s definitely not well-spent.”

Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time you spend playing video games or using Facebook, etc.?: “Yes.”

Do you ever feel guilty for the time you spend on other recreational activities?: “No, no I think everybody needs some time away from their books, I think it’s good to just relax and—for me, personally, being a part of extracurricular activities like, it helps me keep my time more balanced and managed so it helps me, personally. The busier I am, the better off I am.”

What about the opposite? Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time you spend on “responsible” things?: “No.”

If you had 2 hours free, how would you spend it?: “I’d probably take a nap”

And after that?: “Um, I don’t know, I’d—I mean I’d probably just go on my computer and write some emails or just probably catch up on some of my extracurricular activities stuff… I’m one of those people that if I have free time like, and I don’t feel the need to take a nap—which is very rare—um, I’ll try to catch up on like, my extracurricular activities stuff, even if I don’t have anything due… I just try to keep ahead of it ‘cause, I know that’s not my priority as much as academics are so if I don’t get that done [while I can, it’ll be difficult later when things pile up].”
What was your favorite subject in school?: Math, American Indian studies
What are your skills now: verbal, numerical, scientific, etc.?: “I’m definitely more on the science end um, I think as far as my actual forte, it’s probably people, and like, communication and stuff like that but um, I really enjoy science the most.”
Any particular type of science?: “Food science.” [“chemistry and microbiology, mixed”]
Thinking about your interests, can you see any way in which video games could represent the things you’re interested in?: “Um, not really.”
Why not?: “Um, I just don’t see it really becoming a big part of my life at any point, unless I mean, I have kids someday and like, my kids get into it but I mean, I don’t really see myself honestly going out of my way and trying to like, make it a big part of my extracurricular activity in the future.”
You mentioned kids, what else would entice you to play video games more than you do now?: if kids were interested and there was time….
What would it take to get you to play less?: “Um, I guess, honestly, I can see it just going down from here, just as the busier I get and the more into like, real life that I get like, trying to find like, internships and jobs and stuff like that, it just doesn’t really pique my interest anymore, and I can see that decreasing more and more every year.”
Anything to add?: “Um, I guess if you come from a big family it’s really hard to not be biased um, I think that they’re actually a very good way not only for like, siblings to bond with each other but for parents to keep their kids busy—I know that sounds horrible, but it’s like, when you have a big family, it’s just really hard to keep track of all of the kids and it’s just—it’s easy to know that your kids are playing safely in the living room you know, with each other and it’s not really—depending on what games that you’re playing, it’s—usually it’s not really a violent thing, I mean, obviously
Mortal Kombat’s a little violent but it’s not you know, it’s not the end of the world to let your kid sit around for half an hour a day and play video games with their siblings.”

Interview #16
COMM201 student
Major: Communication, Sophomore
Jobs: none
Activities: PRSSA, sorority
Hobbies: arts and crafts, scrapbooking, making things, reading (romance novels), shopping, chat online, exercise, singing, music
Do you play any video games currently?: “No.”
Do you have access to any?: “Not at school.”
What about computer games?: “Yes, I do have access and I play but I play very rarely.”
What do you play when you do play computer games?: [Pong online]
Do you ever play accessory games?: “No.”
When you were a child at home, did you have access to video games then?: “Um, I would say, n—maybe when—I have a brother who’s 6 years younger than me, so when he got to the age of getting into video games, then I had access so as a younger child myself, I didn’t ‘cause I never had them until my brother started getting them and like, now if I’m home I’ll still like, play with him a little bit.”
Do you ever play alone at home?: “Um, sometimes, ‘cause there’s a game called Karyoke Revolution and Dance Dance Revolution, so sometimes you’ll hear me singing out of Karyoke Revolution. I’ve beat every level so, I’m pretty proud of that. (laughs).”
Do you play much DDR or is it mostly KR?: “Mostly Karyoke ‘cause Dance Dance you really need a bunch of people.”
Do you play those with your brother? With friends? Others?: “Um, either family—sometimes we’ll all do it ‘cause it’s funny… and sometimes [my brother’s] friends.”
So your brother brought video games into the house?: “Yeah. Or, he was interested in them and then my parents would buy more for him. So when I was more of his age like, 10 you know… I was more into like, playing with dolls and stuff than video games...”
Did you play any computer games at that age?: “Um, no, but in my early teens I really got into SIMS.”
How long did you play that?: “Um, I’d say maybe a year before it got really boring ‘cause I think I just played it way too much...”
What did you like about SIMS?: “I liked that you—I like decorating things so I liked how you could build a house and then decorate and move up—it just simulated life…but that’s the type of game that I’d rather play than maybe a combat game or... one of those games.”
Anything you disliked about SIMS?: “Um, not really, I mean, at the end you sort of found out all the cheats so it wasn’t as fun anymore ‘cause you just cheat and get all your money to build your house so you didn’t have to work for it anymore, and then it just sort of got boring because I played it too much.”
You mentioned that you’d prefer SIMS to combat games. What other kinds of games DON’T you like?: “Um, I don’t know, I just never—I find it so boring, like, those Lara Croft games or like, I don’t know, any of the other ones where you’re like, beating people up or—I don’t really like—my brother plays [racing games]—I don’t like those games”
Any other games that you do like?: “I’d say that’s it.”
With Karyoke Revolution, do you usually play alone or with others?: “Maybe a little bit more alone than with others but I wouldn’t say ‘mostly/most of the time’, it’s pretty much even.”

What do you like about KR?: “Um, I really like about Karyoke Revolution—I love singing—it makes me feel good when I win, and I love the songs ‘cause they’re like, a little bit of older songs…and I don’t know, I like how you have the little microphone and you—I really get into it—it’s really funny, and I’m a better singer than dancer so that’s why I like that one better. And I’m very competitive with singing so we’ll get—me and my brother we’ll actually [compete]”

Are you and your brother equally competitive?: “Um, he is, but he can’t beat me.”

Can he beat you at any of the other games?: “Yes, most of the other ones, like the racing ones…and he can beat me in Dance Dance, and sometimes he beats me in the singing one actually, since I’ve been in school I haven’t really got to play it…”

Do you have access to video games with friends/parties?: “Just last week I was at a party and I saw a bunch of guys playing…video games but I didn’t like, feel the need or desire to join in and it wasn’t like they were asking me to join in, they were like, pretty much into it—I probably—even if I had wanted to I probably wouldn’t have felt comfortable being like, ‘can I join?’ but I really didn’t think much about it. But that was the first time I’ve seen someone play actually here at all.”

So none of your friends have video games or anything?: “No.”

What would it take to make you play more/less than you do now?: “To play more? If there was one in my house—‘cause I live in a sorority house and no one has one. We don’t really have TVs in our rooms, so we have a main TV upstairs but we don’t have like, any video game hooked up to it but I could see if someone definitely, if someone
hooked it up I would bring Karyoke Revolution up here and play it with everyone but I
couldn’t see playing any other games and I don’t really watch TV so”
Anything that would make you play less?: “Um, I don’t think so, I mean I can’t even
remember the last time I played so it’s pretty—it’s really like, low right now so—living
away from home really does that.”
What about Pong—what would make you play that less?: “Um, probably if I was away
from my computer ‘cause if I’m just sitting at my-my desk and like, not doing anything
I’m either online or like, playing that or talking or on Facebook so”
So you play games while you’re doing other things?: “No, but I live in a quad with three
other girls so a lot of times they’re sitting at their desks and we’re all talking and like,
playing around with the computer… when I take my computer out of my room to do
work then… I won’t play or go online, it’s mostly like, when I’m in my room and
there’s other people in the room too.”
How often do you do recreational things on the computer?: “Um, a lot. Like, hours a
day… it is a lot of time.”
What are you usually doing?: “Usually online or on Facebook, I’d say Facebook is
almost like, taking over, I mean, we all are…it’s so addictive.”
What about it is addictive for you?: “Um, it’s just, you can look up everyone or if you
meet someone or at a party or you see someone in your class…that’s what takes a lot of
time, when you’re like, looking through everyone. [finding connections between
people]”
How much time in a day would you say you spend on the Facebook?: “2-3 hours”
Do you feel that this is time well-spent?: “No. (laughs)”
Why?: “I mean, I really don’t think much is time well-spent sitting in my room on the
computer unless I’m doing work, so a lot of times I’ll feel guilty… ‘Oh! I spent 3 hours
just sitting here on Facebook instead of you know, going outside and exercising, going
to the gym or um, you know, doing my work…”

Would you feel guilty if you spent more time playing Pong?: “Yeah, I’d feel more
guilty.”

More guilty? Why?: “Um, I don’t know, ‘cause at least I feel like I’m doing something
for my social—going to the Facebook and like, meeting new friends or something.”

Could video games ever teach social skills?: “I mean, maybe. There are some video
games that you can even—I know guys… back in high school would play video games
online that were connected… to someone else so they’re actually playing someone
else… so maybe it helps your communication on—your like, online communication.”

Can video games be a social activity, generally-speaking?: “Oh yeah, definitely,
because as I said like, with Dance Dance and Karyoke it’s something that like, a bunch
of us do.”

Would you feel less guilty if Pong connected you to other people?: “No, I’d probably
still feel guilty.”

Why?: “I don’t know, it’s just Pong—it’s not really, I don’t know. It’s not really doing
anything. I’m not learning, my mind’s not really working, it’s like, going back and
forth. If Karyoke Revolution connected me with other people, I’d probably feel less
guilty if I was playing that a lot. That would be more of a competition.”

Do you know many other people who play KR or DDR?: “Not besides like, me and my
brother, not really for Karyoke, but I know of people that play DDR.”

Why the gender gap?: “I mean, I totally agree with that—that’s really true, but why? It
might be something with how you’re brought up when you’re really young like, just
right away how girls are given dolls and you know, dressed up in cute little outfits
where they’re like, instilling these things like, ‘this is what it means to be a girl or
feminine, or this is what you do’ whereas guys are given maybe like, a GI Joe doll, or more like, fighting things and like, that’s why maybe they’re more interested in this—a lot of the video games are definitely aimed more at guys first of all, like the cars, like the fighting games—yeah, you give a boy a c—a race car instead of giving them like, something more like, you’d give a girl a doll, so I think that’s why they’re drawn to more of the games.”

What do you think a game aimed at girls/women would look like?: “Well, I mean they do have… Barbie games…Disney…[SIMS seems like a good game for women]”.

If someone were trying to make a game just for you, what would it be like?: “I don’t know. I mean for a while there, SIMS was like, up there with my hobbies, it just happens that I don’t have it in college and it took up so much time that I sort of like—and I got bored of it, that I just sort of like, put it away. But a game like SIMS probably would again. Something like that or along the lines of something more creative. Like, SIMS did make you think a little bit ‘cause you had to you know, plan out how you were gonna situate your house, and how big the rooms are gonna be, the sort of things you put in the house to like, make them feel better about themselves that the room looked nicer, like, stuff like that, more creative things.”

When you were growing up, what was your favorite subject?: Writing

Is that still your strongest subject?: yeah

Would you say you’re a verbal person?: “No, I think I’m an auditory learner and I’m more—I’m better at like, showing something—I don’t know, I’m not as good at verbally speaking something than I am writing something down.”

Do you feel more comfortable with word problems or number problems?: “…I’d say generally word.”
Do you prefer logic and reasoning or hand/eye challenges?: “I’d like the analytical one better.”

Have your tastes in games changed at all since you were a kid?: “No.”

Play: “interacting with other people. To do something for enjoyment purposes, for fun.”

Game: “I’d probably define it as what you would do, like, what you would be playing… I still wouldn’t be thinking of a video game…like, I’d think of other things…interacting with people…”

Video Game: “But then when I think of video games I don’t think I’d include in the definition ‘interaction with people’ even though you do a lot of the times, and I have but I wouldn’t include that in the definition, I’d say more of like… simulated reality played through a television or computer…”

What about board games? Sports games? How do you feel about those now?: “Um, I really don’t play those at all. I know sometimes, I play Monopoly and stuff I know when I was younger, I definitely played board games when I didn’t play video games, like… when my brother wasn’t even born yet, we definitely played Candyland Lotto, um, I think that was my favorite. Trouble—(trailed off)”

How do you interact with your friends now?: go out to dinner, eat—not cook

Are any of your friends gamers?: “No.”

How good/bad a use of time are video games?: “I’d say they’re a bad use of time, but asking a Cor—like, someone from Cornell that, I think we’re like, we’re programmed to think that the only good use of time there is is doing work. Like, I know me and a lot of my friends like, any time we’re doing anything really we feel guilty like, we should be doing work or studying ‘cause there’s always something due, there’s always something to read, there’s always something you probably should be doing… even with television
like, we won’t—I never watch TV…my roommates at least, are like that… we don’t watch TV.”

Do you ever feel guilty for hanging out with your friends?: “Yeah.”

Do you ever feel guilty for doing your homework?: “Yeah. Less so, but yeah.”

Why the change in the gender gap with age?: “I think women mature a lot faster than men, so like, right now I do know a lot of guys that play video games but I think they’re pretty immature.”

Among the women you know, would you say your opinions are typical or atypical?:

“Yeah, I think I’m pretty typical. Really, I’ve never even heard any girls at Cornell talk about playing video games but I’ve definitely heard guys, or seen guys play.”

Is it more typical for guys your age to play video games or more typical for them not to play?: “Uh, I think it’s typical for them to play games.”

Among your peers, are guys who play video games looked down upon or is it commonplace?: “No it seems… commonplace.”

Do you think there’d be any difference for a girl who plays video games?: “No.”

Other?: “I was just thinking, it’s really weird ‘cause when I was younger I mean, we didn’t play video games at all. My girl friends I had in elementary or preschool didn’t play video games like, at all and um now I’m thinking of my younger cousins who I mean really young already have like, some form of whether its like, LeapFrog like, games with the little handheld thing or now they’re getting GameBoys and I mean they’re like, 3rd grade maybe even younger… I have a little cousin who I think he’s 3 and he’s a boy and he has one… but I really do think kids are getting them a lot younger now than they were before and they’re more convenient because when I was younger they were always like, that huge box and now they have the little ones…all my little cousins, the girls and the boys have GameBoys and they’ll play together…”
Interview #17

COMM201 student

Major: Natural Resources Junior

Jobs: Wetlands Lab

Activities: None

Hobbies: work out, swim, making jewelry

Do you play any computer games or video games?: “No.”

Do you play any accessory games: “I have played solitaire.”

Do you play it regularly? Or currently?: “No.”

Do you play any online games?: “I don’t.”

Any games on cell phones, etc.: “No.”

Do you have any access to video or computer games?: “Um, sometimes. The majority of my friends all have video games or Playstation but I don’t usually [play].”

Have you played any games with your friends recently?: “No. I don’t really have to like, go over and play video games.”

When you were living at home/growing up, did you have a video game console?: “We had the very basic Nintendo with just Duck Hunting and Super Mario Bros.”

Did you play that much?: “I did when I was littler with my brothers.”

How many brothers do you have?: “Three.”

Are they older or younger than you?: “They’re all younger.”

Any sisters?: “Nope.”

How much did you play growing up?: “Um, oh, not that much, maybe like, a couple hours a week.”
Did you usually play with your brothers? With friends? Alone? Who?: “Usually with my brothers.”

How did you come to have an NES in the house?: “I don’t remember, I just always remember having it, I guess my parents probably bought it for a Christmas present or something when we were really little.”

How did your parents feel about you playing video games?: “Um, my dad doesn’t mind as much, my mom is very opposed to it.”

Why?: “Um, well my brothers um, spend like, all the money they earn on like, these new games now. I don’t even know the um, Game Cube and they have all kinds of things now but a lot of it is all just like, fighting and killing and my mom just thinks that if you sit in front of there killing people you know, how do you um, just—kind of like, that it just promotes violence and that, how can a kid differentiate between um, [a video game and real life].”

What do you think?: “Um, I agree with her. Um, I’m n— I mean I’m not a big fan of sitting in front of the thing and like, blowing people’s brains out like, I just don’t think—if you’re playing something else like Mario Bros or PacMan or something but I mean, when it’s like Man Hunt I just don’t think that it’s good ‘cause you know, ‘cause they’re so impressionable I just don’t think that they should be exposed to that.”

Did you ever want to try any games like that either when you were younger, or now?:

“No.”

What games did you like when you were younger?: “Um, I liked uh Mario Bros. and um Solitaire…”

You had solitaire on the NES?: “No, we had it on our computer. But other than that, I haven’t really played any other games.”
Did you ever have any learning games when you were younger?: “We didn’t. Er, we had to do Oregon Trail in school but I didn’t have that at home.”

What did you think of that game?: “Um, when I was little I thought it was really boring. I used to hate when they made us do that in computer class but now I think it’s practical.”

How so?: “Um, I guess it’s a good interaction tool to get kids to learn um, like, even when you have to buy your supplies and [can’t understand speaker here—I think she was talking about using your supplies wisely—budgeting resources.] and try to keep everyone in your thing alive but I feel like at the time when I was doing it, I didn’t really understand all those things…”

So do you think that kids can learn something from this game?: “Um, some kids maybe, I guess it depends.”

What do you think they might be able to learn?: “Um, I guess if um, how to maintain like, a basic budget and get by with the necessities you need and be resourceful…”

When you were younger did any of your friends have video games?: “Everyone did.”

Did you play with friends much?: “Um, usually if they were playing it would just be like, me sitting watching because it’s just something that doesn’t—doesn’t really entertain me. It wasn’t really one of my main interests. So, we would usually—you know, I’d say ‘oh, let’s do something else.’”

What would you prefer to do?: “Uh, we used to play house and school and um I liked board games. I would play outside and we used to play like, hide and seek and stuff. Usually I’d prefer being outside rather than sitting in front of a screen.”

What board games did you play?: “Uh, Clue, um, Mousetrap, Monopoly”

Do you still play any of those now?: “I do. When I go home.”
Do you play any other board games now?: “Um, usually we play Trivial Pursuit or Cranium—kind of fun if you have a big group of people.

Now, Cranium and Trivial Pursuit, are those games that you play here or at home?:
“Um, both.”

Is it common when you have a big group getting together that board games or video games will come out?: “I would say so.”

What do you usually play with a group?: “Um, I haven’t really played—like, I just transferred here this semester and like, um—at my other school we would always play Trivial Pursuit like, if we had a whole group of friends over but um, I haven’t really gotten together and actually like, played a game with kids at Cornell.”

How do you relax and have fun—either alone or with friends?: “Um, usually um—I usually just work out and listen to music when I’m not doing work or I like to go outside a lot like, go on hikes.”

What about when you’re with friends?: “Um, usually go shopping, drive to Syracuse and go to the mall or sometimes we’ll get in the car and just start driving, go out to lunch somewhere.”

Do you use your computer recreationally in your free time?: “Yeah.”

What do you use it for?: “Um, I use AIM everyday um, I check my email a lot um, I use a lot of browsers on the internet um, both for just recreational purposes and research, um, I get a lot of music off the internet and um, I don’t do Facebook or blogging.”

How much time do you spend on AIM each day?: “Um, gosh, well, when I’m not actually typing like, if I’m doing homework I’m still on with an away message so probably like, um, 2 hours—3 hours actually.
And what are you usually doing with AIM?: “A lot of it is all my friends from my other school…. I have contact that way through a few kids in my classes this semester so if I have a question or something—”

About how many hours a day are you on the computer—including work time and fun time?: “Um, 4-5?”

How much of that is work?: “Probably 3 and a half.”

When you’re using the computer, how frequently do you multi-task?: “Usually, the whole time.”

How does that work for you?: “Um, if I’m being really distracted and not um, getting my work done then usually I’ll just log off in between like, two users so that um, I can keep my work in one and AIM in the other but um, usually like, if I’m typing something up, I’ll like, think of a question and I’ll ask someone or else I’ll have to look up something to find more information so uh I think it’s—it’s kind of an efficient resource like, I definitely rely on it.”

So do you feel with the different tasks you’re performing that everything is balanced?: “… for the most part, yeah.”

Hypothetically, if you’re working on a paper and you’re on AIM at the same time, either discussing something work related or not—would this work for you? Do you ever do this?: “I do, and it doesn’t [work] because I totally lose my train of thought and then um, kind of lose your motivation to write the paper ‘cause you talk to your friends and they’re watching a movie or something.”

Do you lose significant amounts of time to AIM or anything like that?: “Um, probably some days but, AIM more than email, email isn’t that much time but usually if I have a lot of work I just try not to sign on at all.”
Do you ever feel guilty when you’re torn between AIM and your work? Do you ever feel guilty that you’re ignoring one or the other?: “Um, usually I would um, just not talk to my friends and just do the work and um, I kind of just ignore them if they get like, annoyed or mad because you have to do what you have to do.”

You mentioned that you played some video games as a child, what’s the biggest factor in your not playing them now?: “Um, At Cornell I feel like I only have time to like, sleep and do my homework and it’s just I—I don’t know, I guess I don’t think it’s fun, like, even um, when I’m home and I’m babysitting kids and stuff and you know, they’ll be like ‘oh, play this with me’ I um, I don’t know, I just don’t find it entertaining at all.”

What specifically don’t you care for?: “Um, I guess—I mean, no matter what it is, I don’t know, I just don’t find it very stimulating like, whether you’re like racing cars or trying to find a treasure, I don’t know, I guess I would rather—I—I can’t really point out like, exactly—I’m not sure—I guess I just find it boring.”

What if someone were trying to design a video game just for you. What would it look like? Would that be possible?: “Um, I’m not sure, because I really don’t, um—well I suppose, I’m—I’m not sure, I mean, what the difference would be essentially between like, look-staring at a computer or talking on AIM and talking on a video game, I guess that kind of makes me sound hypocritical but-“

“What do you mean?”: “I just don’t like sitting there like, looking at the screen and doing the remote control like, I—I don’t know, um, I don’t find that like, beneficial to myself in any way and I think—I’m trying to think of like,—some things that I have utilized it’s not like a game but um, I know there is this one thing called Sim City and it’s kind of like Legos on a computer where you can like, build like, the entire thing—I think that’s pretty cool. I think um, I guess if it’s—and I’ve also seen like, ecological models on there where… you have—like, they give you a mission to sustain this
environment and they tell you ‘well there’s this pollution coming in and there’s—and it affects this bio-dome’ and you have to come up with a plan—I think things that are more um, more creative and um, engage your mind a little more because it actually helps you as you’re doing it um, rather than uh, being completely mindless.”

How good/bad a use of time are video games?: “Um, honestly, I think it’s a pretty bad use of time. Um, I mean if you think of the amount of—I think even if you weren’t doing something mind-stimulating, if you’re just outside running around or playing or getting fresh air rather than sitting inside in front of a screen it would be much more beneficial to you?”

Costs/Benefits?: “Um, probably if children were to sit there for um, unlimited hours staring at the screen I think it would take a toll on your eyesight um, before you get to college and actually you know, you have to sit at the computer and type so many things but at a time earlier than needed, I guess. And also um, the games that contain a lot of violence um, I think it just—it provides—like, the kids are like ‘wow, this is really cool’ you know, and it provides like, a model for how other people are behaving and even though it’s in a game, I don’t think kids realize that ‘cause even when it’s like, people in the video games um, and you know, you kill someone there’s no consequences in the game but I just think that um—especially if there’s not a lot of rules or it’s not like a strict upbringing by your parents I think when you grow up like, you’ll have a harder time separating, I guess, reality from um, acts that have great consequences.”

Benefits?: “Um, I guess there’s some games in grade school that are—that—I think you said like, the Math Blaster or things like that which would be good because they actually like, working through problems but probably has little characters and it’s colorful so it inspires the kids to—to do it but um—and I think Sim City is cool like, um, actually thinking through and building different things and you actually see the
consequences of what you’re building there ‘cause if you do something wrong like, there’ll be like a fire or a natural disaster so it’s kind of cool, but um, a lot of the games, not really. I suppose it’ll help develop social skills and also like when you’re little like, you know, if you have the coolest things like, it helps, you know what I mean? Like, it um, it’s an aid to getting friends I suppose to some extent.”

Do you think video game play in and of itself can be a social activity?: “Um… I guess sometimes it can because I know you can hook up through the—I think through the internet or something and you can have a headset on and be talking to the other person you’re playing with even though you can’t see them so I guess in some way that a interaction and if you have—I guess if you were gonna have um, people over and you were all gonna sit and um, take turns playing, between that and the interaction between the people when you weren’t playing um, that’s social.”

Why the gender gap?: “Maybe in part of the stereotype of toys that little boys vs. little girls play with as they’re growing up um, and also probably because of advertising like, with all the Barbie dolls and baby dolls and um, little make up kits and things that little girls are quote ‘supposed to be doing’ and I guess the stereotypes that action figures and GI Joes and Legos and Erector sets are more generally played with by little boys.”

What about the adult gender gap?: “…I wish I knew exactly like, specifically to how the brain works because I know there is a lot of differences in my house like, between my mom and my dad, like, my dad doesn’t see—like, my mom gets really upset when my brothers are playing Man Hunt and my dad doesn’t see a problem, he’s like ‘oh, it’s just a game. It’s just a game like, what are you talk—you know, relax a little bit.’” But um, I mean, it’s kind of a sick game…it’s basically like ‘hide and seek’ in order to kill…I just don’t think it promotes anything of value…” [men are more physical, women are more emotional—men fight, women either hold it in or talk it out.]
Is that true of you?: “Maybe. A little bit… I guess that would be why, why I don’t play
the majority of them, because I don’t agree with the fighting or killing…” [kids
impressionable—not good to promote problem-solving through violence]

Play: “To play I guess would mean to engage yourself in something whether
individually or between other people and I think it would have to involve interactions
both mental and visual… between yourself and the game that you’re pla—that you’re
partaking in or yourself and another individual that is also um, partaking in the same
activity.

Game: “Game would be um, there’s some object or goal you’re trying to figure out or
get to and I suppose there would be winners and losers and there’s conflicts or obstacles
along the way that you are faced with and that um, you have to try to overcome and I
guess there’d be a sense of competition involved because there’s usually more than one
player.”

Video Game: “And so then a video game I guess would be limited to a computer or TV
or some mode of uh, electronic—some kind of electronic device… and so I guess there’s
gonna be obstacles along the way and um, you’re trying to reach a certain point or um,
beat your components [sic]”

Is it possible to play without a game?: “Yes.”

How?: “Um, I think that you can play without having a distinct um, goal or something
you’re trying to achieve or um, outsmart the other person with.”

So, no competition?: “No, I don’t think playing always has to include competition I
think um, anything that is entertaining yourself in some way but with positive benefits I
think.”

Other?: “…I remember I heard this one story on NPR um, post-9/11 about…—someone
created a video game of um, —modeled after like, terrorists and the cells and the main
warlord and um, —and the characters in the game um, looked like human beings but um, and so it was released into the public and there was a lot of controversy over it and I guess the main public’s counter argument was ‘what’s the difference between this game and what’s going on in real life’ and the makers of the game said ‘well, these are actually alien beings that are terrorists’ and everyone else said ‘well, they look like human beings’ and he’s like ‘well, on the inside they’re aliens—they can peel their skin off.” And I guess, I mean—it’s pretty—I just think it’s um, —I think there’s a fine line that perhaps some um, game creators have crossed between um, the realm of—of fantasy inside the game and what’s going on in the real world and when you create games based on um, current news and events, especially that are so… I guess controversial and um, very um, I guess, upsetting to people that it’s just, I mean I think that goes beyond—it’s not a game anymore like, it’s a representation of reality whether—I mean, no matter what you call the characters in essence it still conveys the same thing and I think in that situation there’s no way that kids can differentiate between what’s real and what’s not.”

Do you think this is an appropriate game for adults?: “Um, even for adults … I would say ‘no’, I feel like it shouldn’t even exist at all for anyone.”

What’s the main problems with a game like that?: “I guess um, publicity and attention to um, making light perhaps of something that is real, is happening um, as a result people are dying and perhaps like, the um, all the factors playing into the controversy is a lot more complex than can be conveyed through uh, any kind of like, electronic stimulation [sic] and uh, I just think it’s something too—I just don’t think it should be made into a game.”

What about a movie or TV show?: “Movie? I think movie is different because there are movies about everything. You know, there probably are a lot of terrorist movies. Um, I
guess maybe the difference between that would be that perhaps it would be more adults watching it rather than kids especially if it um, if it was rated and the kids weren’t allowed to get in the movie theater or um, or if it was on a channel that doesn’t normally show shows that kids would be interested in.”

Interview #18
CS300 TA
Major: Film, Senior (plus lots of work in Computer Sciences)
Jobs: David’s class, specializes in computer graphics. Also TA’s in computer animation class
Activities: Asian American Theater, Association of Computer Machinery (tried to start an undergrad chapter)
Hobbies: watch movie, video games, games, art, learning art technique, web page design.
How much time do you usually spend playing video games?: “It definitely changes—over the summer I was playing World of Warcraft… a lot… it was like 20 hours in a week. When I get a new video game… I think there was this one spring break where I got like, Final Fantasy X or something like that and I must’ve been playing like, 50 hours… a week. And then most of the other times I really—it’s just like… a couple hours [with friends on weekends]. But yeah, definitely it’s like, on/off.”
What about currently?: “Well, currently I think if I have friends over we typically play… like two hours, um, but it’s definitely a social thing now.”
Do you ever play alone?: “Yeah. I play—I used to play the SIMS… Final Fantasy…”
Do you play those now?: “Not at the moment.”
When was the last time you played those?: “Um, let’s see—I got the SIMS in April so I played that for awhile, that was last time.”
Do you play any accessory games?: “Oh yeah, I don’t play those quite as often anymore…I recently got a laptop so before class I’ll maybe play a game or something.”
Is that the most common time for you to play that kind of game?: “Um, right now. I mean, I just, I’ve had the laptop for like, less than a month.”
Do you play any online games like Yahoo Games or Grab.com?: “I used to play that, I haven’t done it in about a year.”
How come?: “I haven’t really—I don’t know I mean, it’s mostly like when people ask me to play or when I ask them to play um, typically I play Yahoo Graffiti… that one’s like… pictionary. Oh, and I play Othello too.”
So what’s changed between last year and this year that has you playing a little bit less?: “Um, World of Warcraft. That’s a big change um, that’s like, the world’s most time-consuming game.”
Are you still playing that now?: “No. If I played that now I think I’d be failing school.”
Do you prefer to play with a group or alone?: “It depends on the game um, completely on the game…[plays Final Fantasy, SIMS, World of Warcraft alone, plays some games in order to unlock group options—like Tekken and Burnout 3. Lots of strategies and RPGs]”
What do you usually play with your friends?: “Um, well, after I came to Cornell a lot—I discovered that a lot of my friends played Blizzard games so they first got me started on Star Craft. Um, I did not hop on a wagon when they started Diablo 2 but I rejoined when they started World of Warcraft um, and on other games it’s like, party games um,
and that’s more recent just ‘cause I got like, an apartment… the game that we’ve been playing since the beginning of the school year a lot is the Karyoke Revolution series um, and Burnout and my friend and I… we play Super Smash Bros.”

Any favorites among those?: “Karyoke Revolution, definitely. That just an awesome game.”

How good/bad a use of time?: “… I guess it’s not a very good use of time but I—I use—my excuse is that… I consider it research [to get into the video game industry]… but I mean, looking back to World of Warcraft… I feel like I know a lot more about the game world based on that and who the people are and you know, a little about the interaction but um, for the like, 14 days of game play that I put in there for like, over the period of like, 3 or 4 months, that’s not really—not the best use of time um, and I had friends like,—I had this one friend who played for about 3 months over the summer and his game play time was something around 30 days so basically he spent like, 1/3 of every waking moment, er—you know, every single day on that and you know it’s just—he could be doing better things but you know, I mean, there’s extremes. I think that it’s—I mean it’s certainly not as good of a time as say, doing sports… but it’s certainly better than vegetating… watching TV, I feel.”

Does your research justify your time spent playing World of Warcraft?: “Possibly it was just ‘cause like, I had a whole lot of friends that I hadn’t seen in a really long time and it was kind of like—it was, just kind of getting to know them… I played almost exclusively with people I knew.”

What kept you playing? Was it the social aspect or was it something in the game that intrigued you?: “Um, it was—I wanna say talent points or whatever and it—it’s kind of the goal of leveling up that a lot—like… I’m sure keeps a lot of people going.”
How important is leveling to you?: “Depends on the video game. Um, in-in more story-driven games I tend to like to level up…I don’t go out of my way to level up…I always wanna know what happens next but… just go with the flow.”

Do you participate in any online rec activities? Facebook? Instant messenger?: “Both of those.”

What about blogging, online shopping, surfing?: Uh, I surf the web a lot, I um, I contribute to some forums, um… I have my own web page that I don’t update um… I instant message a lot.”

About how much?: “Um, I’m on there like 24/7 but I’m not always at my computer but if I’m at my computer then I will be on instant messenger.”

What about Facebook? How often do you do that?: “Whenever somebody sends me an invite.”

How many hours a day would you say you surf the web?: “Um, it depends on how much homework I have and how much I’m procrastinating. Um, definitely an hour or two every day of just pure surfing um, could be a lot more… especially if I find something that I’m all of a sudden interested in.”

How good/bad a use of time are those?: “Well Facebook isn’t very useful it just tells you—you know, things that you already know um, let’s see, uh, surfing the web could be useful um, I think I find surfing the web is like, an inspiration for a lot of my ideas um, you know, uh both artistic—like… ways of developing artistic techniques and just looking at things that are out there.”

What about Iming?: “Well that’s just—that’s like talking on the phone so I don’t, I mean—usually when I’m instant messaging, I’m not just instant messaging anyway.”

What else are you doing?: “Surfing the web. A lot of times I’m doing homework as well.”
Does surfing ever get in the way of your homework?: “Yeah.”
Often?: “A lot.”
How’s that?: “…first of all, you know, I’m doing my homework on the computer and it’s just there and if the homework’s boring then it’s very easy to get distracted but also ‘cause I—I use Google a lot when I do my homework—I like to look things up…and then that sometimes leads to other interesting things that’s either relevant or not and then I get distracted.”
Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time you spend surfing? Play video games?: “I used to but I think I got over it.”
How’s that?: “Well, after several years of doing that…I think I’m a lot more relaxed, it’s like senioritis or something. I also think my senioritis started like, junior year…”
Do you ever feel guilt for the amount of time you spend on homework?: “No. I mean sometimes—sometimes when I’m like, really on a roll…then like, I would neglect a lot of other things but that hasn’t happened for awhile.”
Growing up, did you have access to video or computer games?: “I had a console when I was like 9.”
Which one?: “The original Nintendo um, owned the original game that came with it um, and I didn’t really play it all that much.”
Why’s that?: “Well, I got tired of it. You know, once you hit the threshold and can’t get to the next level yeah, it started to get boring, plus my parents never bought me any other games. Um, I got my second console when I was in grade 9.”
Which one was it?: “That was a Playstation.”
Was that something you bought yourself?: “No, that one was given to me by my uncle.”
Did you ask for it?: “No. No but uh, I hadn’t seen my uncle for a really long time and his son plays a lot of video games and so maybe it was a recommendation, I don’t know.”

How did you come to have the NES?: “I think I asked for it, I don’t really recall anymore.”

Do you have any siblings?: “No.”

How did your parents feel about video games?: “Um, well, at first they thought it was like, productive entertainment I guess, but then they started—… I guess especially for my mom, she thought I was spending too much time on it um, it’s now—more or less, it’s justified [for career goals].”

Do you still like the Playstation? Did you like it when you first got it?: “I liked it um, but I think I liked it more after I played um, a wider range of games… I started off with the games it came with—one of the Crash Bandicoot games and uh, [can’t hear the second game] so it was basically your typical racing game, your typical… pick-up-and-go games… and then I played Final Fantasy 8 and I think that’s what really changed my mind about video games and like, kind of the potential that it had um, really as kind of like, interactive storytelling and I’m kind of miffed that the game industry doesn’t agree with me.”

So if you were to design a game for yourself, would it mostly involve interactive storytelling?: “Yeah, I mean, I’m really interested in sort of, um—I’m definitely interested in RPGs and I’m actually really interested in the potential of—that a linear story can carry through…a nonlinear track… I think um, the Final Fantasy’s did a really great job of it…[regarding story games that fail:] If I have to save the princess, I would like to know why!”
Why the gender gap?: “Um, just because of the way that games have been progressing uh, I think for awhile… after the whole Pong era I think the next big set of games that came out of it was a lot of first person shooters… you kind of alienate women there, I mean it’s not very fun to shoot people… I guess it’s just ‘cause a lot of games kind of took off from there um, I mean you still have your SIM City’s and your SIMS and I think women still play those um, but then you have all the other ones like, the games that are not pick-up-and-play those are—those are a big problem and… I think 1st person games as a whole genre is a little bit difficult to deal with just because um, like, typically you’re put in place—put into a character that’s a male and you’re forced to do a lot of things without really knowing why and that’s always really bothered me. And the other thing is just because um, I guess with the new technology—with 3D environments, 1st person um, for people who don’t play video games a lot—it’s just—it’s a little difficult for your visual system to like, uh, adapt initially, I know that like, this summer I was at a game company um, and I—we had to you know, play-test a game and I could not stand it just because it was a 1st person game and I’m just not used to 1st person perspectives. I got extremely motion sick just from this game. And I think a lot of women would say that… just because they haven’t been used to it.”

Costs and Benefits of digital play: “Um, just well, costs would be ‘time’ and benefits would be ‘fun’. Um, I think that uh, well that’s the easy of putting it I mean, I think it’s productive in the sense that it really gets your mind going and it really um, you know, it—I think there was a study that showed that people, while they were playing video games they used their mind a lot—they used their brain a lot more than if they were taking a math exam or something like that… I guess it’s a good way of exercising your… hand-eye coordination as well…I guess I don’t really think a whole lot about that.”
Play: “Um, play, I would say is um, uh,—I guess it’s a process in which—it’s a fun process and I think—I think it’s just doing anything that’s fun, leisurely and does not really attach itself necessarily to anything that’s defined to be um, productive like, you don’t have—in play, you don’t have to have to have a product—it’s not like art—you have the product at the end of doing art but in play it’s…reward without having an actual product.”

Game: “A game, I’d say is something, possibly uh, scenarios that are make-believe…it’s basically a scenario that doesn’t really have to be attached to reality um, or make sense for that matter. Um, and it should be something that’s fun.”

Video Game: “Video games I think are interactive processes on… an interactive system um, I mean, a console, pretty much.”

So how would you categorize something like DDR?: “That’s a video game.”

And what about Monopoly on the computer. Is it still a game or does it become a video game?: “Well, I think it’s both. I mean, I think—I think video games are a sub-category of games in general.”

Other?: “No.”

Interview #19

COMM201 student

Major: Natural Resources (Ag)

Jobs: Service center in Ecology House

Activities: Society for Natural Resources Conservation, Kyoto Now, Community Service (for JA)

Hobbies: cooking, movies

Do you play any video games currently?: “No.”
Computer games?: “No.”
Accessory games?: “No.”
Ipod cell, handheld?: “No.”
Access to any of those things?: “Yeah… my computer—it has the minimum amount of games, I pretty much took everything else off it. My calculator has Tetris I think, I never play it. Um, I think my cell phone has a game, maybe and I think that’s about—my friends have games an like, Ecology House has a giant TV with like, Playstation 2 on it, an X-box on it.”
Do you ever use any of these things?: “No.”
How do you spend your free time?: “Um, I either sleep, cook, or just sit around and talk to my friends or watch movies.”
Any particular kinds of movies?: “Um, everything. Mainly classics and action movies.”
Growing up, did you have access to any video games or computer games?: “Um, yes.”
What did you have?: “Um, both. Um, we had computer games like, You Don’t Know Jack and things of that sort and then we had video games: Playstation, Nintendo 64 and then like, the old school Nintendo with like, Duck Hunt and stuff like that but that was mainly my brother. And Gameboys. I had a Gameboy once.”
The Game boy was yours?: “Yes.”
And the others—the Playstation, the N64, the NES, those were all your brother’s?:
“Yes.”
Is he older or younger?: “Younger.”
Do you have any other siblings?: “No.”
How did your brother come to have all of this equipment?: “Um, they were both gifts and things he purchased um, like, birthday money and stuff.”
And how did you come to have the GameBoy?: “Um, it was actually my brother’s old Gameboy so when he got a color Gameboy, I got his pocket Gameboy and that was like, 8th grade or something.”

Did you play it much?: “Um, no, just in like, boring classes when I didn’t do anything.”

You were allowed to have a GameBoy in class?: “No, well, yeah and no. Um… some of the regular classes were required and I’d get bored and play them.”

What did you usually play?: “Um, Tetris and that’s pretty much it.”

Did you ever try playing with the consoles?: “Yes, I did a couple of times and I’ve played Tony Hawk”

What did you think of it?: “Um, it was ok. I wouldn’t—I’d much rather like, watch someone skateboard though than like, play with it. I don’t know, like, the only reason I really played Tetris because it like, made you think and I didn’t think like, the other video games really made you think as opposed to giving you a headache.”

How did they give you a headache?: “Like, going back and then doing it again and like, my brother would spend forever trying to accomplish one trick. He could do it in real life but he couldn’t do it on the game.”

Were there any games you liked other than Tetris?: “Not really. Well no, when I was like, six, I played Duck Hunt that was about it. And Pac Man.”

Where did you play Pac Man?: “I played [at a pizza place. Not sure]

When did you stop playing?: “Maybe when I was like, 8 or 9.”

Why did you stop playing?: “Um, well my cousins had the Duck Hunt so I stopped playing it and my brother got Duck Hunt when I was maybe like, 16 and I wasn’t interested by then. And um, Pac Man—I don’t know, I just didn’t spend money on like, arcade games when I was at like, one of those pizza places or something that had the arcade games.”
Did you ever have access to computer games in school?: “Yes.”
What did you have access to?: “Um, when I was like, ten we played Carmen Sandiego and uh, Oregon Trail in this class…”
What did you think of those games?: “They were fun.”
What did you like about them?: “Um, well I watched Carmen Sandiego like, the TV show when I was little and liked the idea of like, going around the world and stuff like that so it was more of like, you had to use your knowledge of like, geography and stuff to be able to catch her and so, I liked that a lot. And Oregon Trail, I used to kill the people… I wasn’t one of those people who tried to make it to the end. Like, if someone was dying I would just be like, ‘OK you’re dying. It’s alright’”
Did you try to speed the deaths along?: “Yeah. Yeah… it was very slow.”
In junior high did you play any digital games?: “Mm, I played You Don’t Know Jack.”
Did you like that game?: “Yeah.”
What did you like about that one?: “Um, you learn a lot of random things and um, he’s really rude and sarcastic and it was funny—it wasn’t just like, a trivia game.”
Did you stop playing that one?: “I stopped playing it because I took it off my computer—I think ‘cause we had like, too much stuff on our computer and I was trying to clean it up and I was like, ‘I don’t need a game! I’ll take this off.’ That’s when I stopped playing it.”
Do you ever feel inclined to pick it up again?: “Well, it’s like, at home, which is really far away so, um, I wanna say maybe I did last year one day with my friend who I used to play with when I was little and we played it but it’s on her computer. Um, it’s fun but.”
What are your thoughts on digital games in general?: “I think they’re a waste of time and money and like, I know how much my brother’s spent on it and like, this summer, I
lived with my friends in Ithaca and there was 6 of us on one floor and it was me and my roommate and then 4 boys who stayed up till like, 4:00 in the morning playing video games and then would spend all afternoon playing video games like, after they woke up and it was just very—I’d rather be outside or reading or like, talking to someone or—than staring at —like, they would completely ignore everything and just play video games and I think—and my brother was the same way.”

Costs and benefits?: “I think the costs would be like, it takes up a lot of your time and you could be out like, experiencing the real world and it’s also expensive ‘cause a lot of times you have to have like, the newest and the best. Some benefits would be—some of the video games make you think and I know I heard that like, people who play video games now are—would be better to become—I don’t even remember what it was, it might’ve been like, a pilot or um, just some other things, ‘cause it makes you like think about—and you use like, your hands a lot or things like that, I don’t remember what it was—it was an article that I read that um, people who play video games have like, the upper hand over like, people who don’t. I don’t remember what it was for.”

Any other costs/benefits?: “Um, I guess it passes the time.”

Why do you feel that this activity is a waste of time and money?: “Um, one ‘cause it’s not new—like, when… you spend money to watch a movie…it’s like, something you experience and it’s new…but like, with video games like, my friends who played video games this summer they would just try to win but they would go back…and then they’d choose [a different outcome]…you’ve already seen everything before that and they just repeated, repeated, repeated…”

What elements to you like/dislike in digital games?: “Um, I really like ones that make you think and I really [dislike] video games that make you go through um, a series of—you’re trying to reach the end—like on Mario Bros. where you have to like, go through
each little kingdom before you reach the end and then you win and—but when you win, it’s over—so then like, what’s the point of playing it ever again? But then, it takes you so long to—like, you end up playing like, one kingdom like, a thousand times… it really bothers me. But like, Tetris, it’s never really over and like, Carmen Sandiego that was never really over because you learn something new like, each time… but each time it’s like, a different situation and each time it’s like, you have to apply your knowledge for some like, -something completely different then what you had to apply your knowledge before as opposed to like, Mario Bros. where you’re—it’s like a repetitive thing. Can you remember that you—to jump here each time? Things like that.”

What about Tetris? How does that fit in?: “Tetris was—I like how it gets progressively harder and like, Tetris like, level one is not the same every time you turn it on… so you can’t remember like ‘oh, the next one’s gonna be square, the next one’s gonna be this’… it goes progressively faster.. it makes you like, think more on where you need to put it and it’s not like you can remember where it was which is like cheating…”

So if someone were trying to design a game just for you, what would it be like?: “Um, I’d have to be able to like, learn something for it and it can’t be repetitive. Like, it can have like, an overlying like, repetitive scheme, you know, like Tetris—they don’t always fall the same way but you know that [the shapes never change] and Carmen Sandiego [follows the same storyline] that can be the same but like, it cannot repeat itself and there’s no like, back button where you can just be like, ‘oh, I changed my mind on that!’ … the ultimate goal is not trying to win.”

What would the ultimate goal be?: “…I think it’s a good thing to like, not be able to win every single thing because it’s more realistic and the ultimate goal is not to like, just beat the game…” [described getting higher scores, advancing, learning, but not necessarily ending anything.]
Then, is it fair to say that you prefer to beat yourself rather than beating the game?:
“Yeah.”

Generally speaking, do you prefer a challenge or a competition: “I would do either as long as it didn’t have to do with like, how well you memorized whatever to get there…”

Generally speaking, would you call yourself a competitive person?: “Um, yeah, maybe….maybe like, at heart [athletics—but due to injury, no more competitions]

At this point, what would it take you to play more or less?: “I don’t really play them so that wouldn’t count for less, but more? If I was bored enough and I had absolutely nothing to do and—that I’d play like, You Don’t Know Jack or if there was another type game that we just described um, then I would probably play that with my friends or hanging out by myself.”

Would you prefer to play alone or with someone else?: “I’d rather play with someone else.”

And if you were playing with someone else, would you prefer to play as a team or against each other?: “Against each other.”

Do any of your friends play video games?: “Um, my guy friends do.”

None of the girls?: “I don’t think so. They might play like, solitaire or something.”

What about when you were growing up?: “Um, the only like, pretty much my guy friends did and my girl friends didn’t. I had a girl cousin who played video games she was like, obsessed with them like my brother was.”

Did you ever play with her?: “No.”

With all these guy friends playing video games, do you ever feel pressure to play too?:
“No. Not so much….I don’t play video games to begin with. and all the video games that they play are very like, you know…. what’s going on in the video game and so like, if I came in and played it would like, waste their time and they would be frustrated
because I don’t know what’s going on and that’s what they’ve been doing like, all their spare time. They kind of just keep it to themselves.”

Why the gender gap?: “Girls like to do other things. Um, I feel like boys are usually more competitive that way than girls are I mean like, they play sports against each other and when they’re not like, outside playing sports they’ll like, play video games against each other or against the computer or whatever and like, girls, we like to sit around and talk and like, granted, like, I do like to play sports and I was really competitive when I did play sports um, when you get home, you’re not necessarily wanting to play more and be competitive again, you wanna just hang out and talk about boys or something, you know? Watch a movie. Do nothing. Um, I feel like guys are always trying to prove themselves.”

Why do you think that is? Why the difference?: “I have no idea. I feel like, I don’t know, most of the time also, guys are—like, when they sit around, they don’t really like, talk to each other like, sometimes they do, um, like, definitely when I as growing up I was real tomboy so like, all my closer friends were like, guys and they’d all sit around and—guys don’t really talk a lot and girls like to tell everything to each other and guys… don’t really do that so I think like, their whole bonding thing is like, playing sports or like, competing against each other like, that is their bonding thing. It’s kinda weird.”

Do you spend any time using your computer for recreational activities?: “Yup.”

What do you do?: I get on AIM and I shop and I get on Facebook a lot—a lot and that’s pretty much it.

How much time each day do you spend on those things?: “Maybe like, two hours.”

What do you usually use these things for?: “AIM, I usually have it on my computer and I’m just away and then if I see—like if my brother gets online or my dad gets online or
my mom gets online I talk to them and I have a couple friends from back home that whenever they get online I talk to them. I don’t really talk to—like, I have like, lots of friends from Cornell like, on my AIM, but I don’t really talk to them because I can very well like, just call them up and um, like, if I’m seeing if they want to hang out tonight then I can just do it over AIM but I don’t just sit there and talk to them. And then, shopping, a lot of times it’s—I have like, a couple of sites that I just like to go to and like, browse because I know that I already like um, what they have and um, and then other times I’m on a lot of the sites email lists so then it’ll be like ‘we’re having a sale’ and then I’ll go to the sale and then like, there’s a couple things that I’m looking for, like, camping gear and things that I’ve been look—checking up a couple different sites and then like, Facebook, I mainly like, I check it pretty much every day and there’s this part on it that’s like, friends and you click it and then it shows recently updated profiles so if anyone’s been recently updated I see like, what they updated…and sometimes that takes like, 2 minutes and sometimes I end up on it for like, an hour.”

Looking at these activities, how good/bad a use of time are they?: “I think it’s pretty bad, um, but at the same time sometimes I have to stop studying or you just can’t do it anymore… or like, sometimes I’ll like, go downstairs and make something or see what my friends are doing next door. Others times I’m just like, ‘ooh! I’ll check my email!’…and then I’ll be like, ‘oh! I’ll check Facebook’ and then ‘oh! I wonder if so-and-so is on’… and I end up spending an hour and then I’m like ‘oh, I should go back to studying’.

What is it that you like about these activities?: “Um, I don’t like going shopping at the mall because there’s only like, a couple of stores there that I like and if you see things that you like then you end up like, buying them and when you’re doing it online you can just put it in your basket and then if you like it like, tomorrow… then you—like, I’ll
buy it as opposed to like, random purchases that you end up getting at the mall and um, I like Facebook and AIM because I like to know what’s going on with my friends and I want to feel like I’m still like, connected to some of them even though I only see them for like, 4 days out of every year…”

Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time that you spend doing these things?:

“Yes.”

Why’s that?: “Because I could definitely be um, studying or doing homework”

Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time that you spend socializing?: “Um, sometimes. Um, yeah. Sometimes it does.”

Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time that you spend doing homework?: “Um, no, not so much. I mean, I get like, bored with it but I don’t feel guilty doing it.”


Game: “Um, ‘game’ I think would be either like, a board game or like, an athletic event or um, there’s like a couple of games that our house plays like Assassins and things like that where—it’s like a week or two or three weeks long just house thing that we do.”

Video Game: “’Video game’, I think of ones with consoles uh, like computer game would be like a computer game.”

Do you play many sports games or board games?: “I don’t play any sports anymore and…[board games] not really. Every once in awhile I do though like, Cranium and Pictionary and things like that.”

Other?: “nope”

Interview #20:

COMM201 student
Major: Human Development, Junior
Jobs: Assistant in the Entymology Library
Activities: Sorority VP
Hobbies: sleep, read, watch baseball, play tennis, arts and crafts, cross-stitch
Do you have access to any video games?: “Yes.”
What do you have?: “I have an original Nintendo.”
Do you play it frequently?: “Um, over the summer I play it more um, I’ve only played it a few times since I brought it up this year ‘cause I really haven’t had the time. At home I also have a Super Nintendo and a Nintendo 64… but those I don’t play up here.”
Why did you bring the NES to school rather than the SNES or the N64?: “Because I like it the best. My boyfriend gave it to me and so I decided to bring it up ‘cause it’s the most fun.”
What do you usually play on the NES?: “Um, a lot of the time I like to play Mario like, all kinds of the Mario games um, nothing too like, advance. Paperboy, I don’t know… just pretty much things that are very basic um, nothing too you know, intense, nothing too violent—happy games!”
Do you ever play any computer games?: “Um, occasionally, not with any regularity.”
What do you play?: “The last one I played was Maniac Mansion… I was playing that a lot over the summer but then I got really mad at it so I stopped… it’s so hard…. It’s such a good game. Also Day of the Tentacle was also good… it’s like, the sequel. It’s so good. I haven’t played that in like, a million years… it’s really fun.”
Do you play any other computer games?: “…Snood and like, Free Cell, those kinds of things once in a while um, sometimes I’ll go to addictinggames.com and find something addicting to play like Helicopter… it’s not that intense but it’s very, very good for procrastination.”
How often do you use video games as a procrastination tool?: “Um, I dunno, maybe like, once every couple of weeks, especially when my internet doesn’t work, then I have to resort to the Nintendo.”

Do you play any games on cell phones? Ipods? Etc.?: “Um, I think I’ve played ipod solitaire like, maybe four times ever so, not really that much.

What’s your favorite game format (online, computer, console…)?: “The Nintendo.”

You said your boyfriend gave you your NES? How long have you had it?: “Um, well I had one um, for a long time um, like, my brother had it when we were growing up and then it broke um, and then my boyfriend gave it to me um, in June actually for our one year anniversary… so I’ve had it since then…”

Your brother had one when you were little? How old were you?: “Um, I think I was about 3 or 4 so he was um, 6 or 7—I don’t remember the exact year… he got it for Christmas, that I remember.”

Did he ask for it or was it a surprise?: “Um, I think—he might’ve asked for it, I don’t remember, but I remember—I’ve seen pictures where just like, the look on his face was just of absolute shock so he was definitely really surprised, I’m not sure if he had asked for it or not though.”

Do you have any other siblings?: “No, just my older brother.”

Growing up, did you ever use the original Nintendo before it broke?: “Um, yeah. I used it a lot—I didn’t use it in the beginning ‘cause I was really little but then you know, when I was about maybe 5 or 6 I started to use it. I used to really like to watch him play but then I started you know, learning how to play on my own. I liked to play it a lot.”

What did you usually play?: “Um, pretty much what I play now. Super Mario, all the you know, happy like, Disney games, things like that.”

Did you have a favorite game then?: “Um, probably Paperboy. Nothing changes.”
Did you get the other Nintendo systems when the original one broke?: “Um, no, we got those—the original just broke mostly with age—um, we got the Super Nintendo maybe 4 or 5 years after the original Nintendo and then the Nintendo 64 probably like, another 4 or 5 years after that”

And how did you come to have those?: “My brother actually got both of those for—one for Christmas and one for his birthday.”

Were they meant to be mostly his, or were you meant to share them?: “Um, it was—I mean, there was never like,… it was his system so that I wasn’t allowed to play it but, you know, I guess my parents felt that it was more something that he would probably use more so that it wasn’t you know, worth like, giving it to both of us or whatever ‘cause I mean, he was the one that always got games and stuff. I only probably got like, 3 or 4 games ever like, as presents um, to play with it.”

Which games were given to you?: “Paperboy—also for Gameboy, we had Gameboy too—and um, Mario Tennis for Nintendo 64…a couple Nintendo games from my boyfriend ‘cause he really is excited by the whole Nintendo system thing. I also got a PowerPad from him too…”

What is it that you like about the games that you play?: “Um, I think that like, I like to—I like to play Nintendo like, when I’m—like, wanna relax or just like, need to like, clear my head for a little while and I don’t really—I’m not really looking for something that you know, is gonna like,—be really like, thought-provoking or you know, like you have to like, figure out like, a jillion little tricks in order to accomplish it—I’m just kind of like, looking I think, for things that like, are familiar to me and that I enjoy and I know that aren’t like, super-difficult, I mean although there is a certain measure of difficulty—you know, I’ve never actually beaten Mario or anything like that but… I’m
definitely just looking for something that’s like, pretty relaxing but not like,— if I die,
it’s not the end of the world.”

How long do you usually play at a time?: “Um, maybe, probably at most like, an hour
but usually… only twenty minutes or so.”

What about when you were younger?: “Um, well my parents…always said like, we
could only play an hour a day.”

Did you play every day?: “Um, I would say it depended like, on if there was a game that
I was really interested in… you know, like, there would be stretches where I wasn’t
really interested in any of the games that we had… and I wouldn’t really play it but if
there was a game I probably would play every day.”

How often do you play now?: “Um, I don’t know, maybe 2 or 3 times a week and that’s
like, a you know, a Free Cell game like, here and there—that includes.”

At what points during a given week do you usually play? Are there different games for
different times?: “Um, I think when well, I like to play like, Free Cell and Spider
Solitaire and that kind of stuff… especially when I’m writing a paper and I get stuck
and I just need like, a couple minutes to just like, think about what I’m writing…and
then if I have you know, maybe 15, 20 minutes where I like, I really don’t have
anything that pressing to do—I don’t have to run off to a meeting or something, I-I do
like to sit down and you know, play like, a little Mario or something like that.”

How likely is it when you find yourself with free time that you will use it to play video
games?: “Um, I guess it would depend on um, like, if there was a movie that I wanted to
watch or some like, TV show that I was gonna catch up on so, I don’t know… if I was
feeling really ambitious, read a book but I mean, I’d probably play it for a little bit.”

Do you use your computer for recreational activities?: “Yeah, definitely.”
What do you do?: “…AIM um, a lot and I’m kind of like, an obsessive away message-checker—always a good—always a good procrastination tool. Um, I do like, Facebook um, sometimes I look at like, Live Journal and My Space but they kind of scare me so I try not to be on them too much.”

Scare you how?: “Um, in the sense that like, -in like, Facebook I feel like it’s one thing like, you know, you’re just like, putting up—it’s like, you know, I have this happy comment thing with all the people that go to Cornell but like, My Space I think is like, really, really hardcore like, people who are into it…. You can also date off of it which I think is what kind of weirds me out ‘cause… online dating is like, something that I like, I’m not necessarily sure how I feel about… but I know people that have had like, successful relationships off of it, so I don’t know.”

What makes you the most uncomfortable about My Space as opposed to The Facebook?: “Um, I think it’s just like, almost too much for me to handle ‘cause there’s like, so much that you can do with it… I also think that I probably haven’t spent enough time on it to become really comfortable with it…I don’t really I think understand how it completely works… I think it’s not as interactive or as like, user-friendly as Facebook is…[I appreciate user-friendliness]”

Do you prefer a game that you can jump into or would you be ok with a game that takes a little time to get into?: “…I’ve like, tried to play like, role-playing games…like, if I had the time to do it, I feel like I’d probably be more into it but sometimes I just like, I’m kind of like, really frustrated and I don’t know how much, you know, I’d be willing to… sacrifice [to go on long quests] and I feel like there’s also the chance of like, wasting even more time…”

What about these games that require more of an investment of time and learning—what about them is most frustrating to you?: “Um, well, in my general experience I’m not
very good at them which I think is partially upsetting…if I try to play another one I’m like, ‘Well, I was really bad at the first one, why would I be good at the second one?’ so there’s that, but also I guess just the overall time-investment I feel like it’s something that I’m really not interested in…”

Generally—how good or bad a use of time?: “I think… if it’s something that I did to relax then I feel like it would be a really good use of time because it was something that would allow me to like, clear my head… but…if you know, there was like, about 40 other things I could be doing, I’d more feel like it was a bad use of time because there were so many other things I could have been doing with my time rather than you know, smashing the goombas or something.”

How good/bad a use of time are AIM and Facebook, etc.??: “I think pretty much the same thing—if you have the free time then you know, by all means you should—I think it’s definitely like, a good way to like, relax and you know, catch up with old friends, that kind of stuff—like a social kind of a thing—but um, you know, if there’s more pressing things that you should be doing then it’s a much worse use of time.”

Costs/Benefits?: “Um, well I think um, video games … like most other things, if you, you know, do them in excess you know, there’s problems… I suppose like, your academics could suffer, I know people sit in dorms and like, just play video games all day like, obsessively and they don’t do anything else so obviously, that could happen um, to a certain extent I think it can have social problems but also at the same time it can increase social interactions so it’s kind of like a give or take like, depending on how you play games you know, do you play with other people? Do you play alone in your room with the door shut?… also I guess economic costs in the sense that like, especially now, games are really expensive you know, so if you buy one or two games that’s over a hundred dollars and then you have to buy the little rumble pack and the saving cards
and all that other stuff so… it seems like some game systems… bank on that… whereas you used to get two controllers now you only get one and you have to buy the second one and it’s like, $30 so stuff like that—it’s not like, a cheap habit to have and, depending on how into it you are it can get very expensive.”

Any other costs or benefits?: “I think it’s good for fine motor coordination…

MarioKart is you know—I always feel it’s my first drivers ed class.”

Do you like racing games or was it just MarioKart? Did you even like MarioKart?: “I did like MarioKart, that’s one of my favorites. Um, I like those—I think the ones that are you know, not like, like, race and then like, you know, kill the other person but you know, just kind of like, things that are more like, friendly I guess. I like those… those I don’t mind.”

When you play video games now, do you usually play alone or with others?: “Um, I play with my boyfriend—we like video games…occasionally like, I’ll play by myself but usually you know, if like, we’re with people and we’re like, ‘hey we don’t have anything to do’ we’ll be like, ‘hey, like, you know, let’s play this in the meantime.’ So it’s probably more of a social thing than it is like, an alone thing.”

Do you prefer to play alone or with others?: “Um, I think it depends on the game. If you’re like, just kind of like, mindlessly playing and you don’t really need to concentrate then it’s really fun to play with other people because you know, you can make fun of them when they do bad and they can make fun of you and like, that kind of stuff but I guess if you need to concentrate, playing alone might be a better thing.”

What about when you were growing up. Did you play with others or play alone more?: “Um, probably I would play by myself a little more… I didn’t actually like to play with [my brother]. He’s mean and competitive… we would play but then you know, we always used to play against each other, we could never be on the same team so you
know, I always lost and it was really frustrating so I didn’t really like to play with him and there was like, not a lot of kids in my neighborhood…”

Did you know many kids your own age growing up who had video games?: “Yeah.”
Why the gender gap?: “…I guess for men vs. women… the whole idea that men never really grow up and they’re just big kids and… they like to have lots of toys and I mean, I can definitely understand that but at the same time like, watching my brother… like, now he’s definitely not interested in video games he’s like, you know, too cool for those…I think it also—one of the biggest problems now is that there’s like, a lot of games that—that, I mean back in like, Nintendo’s and Super Nintendo that kind of era there was more—there were more games that girls might have been more interested in playing I mean like, personally, the game system that I was the least interested in was Nintendo 64 and… like, I find Nintendo and Super Nintendo to be much more fun… I mean, maybe it’s just because they’re games that I’m more familiar with but I feel like there was a lot more of like, combative games and like, the role-playing type games which I personally wasn’t interested in so I feel like there was a lot more like, unisex games that you know, appeal to a lot of different people, or to everyone in general with earlier game systems so that you know, now there’s not much of an opportunity—I mean, I don’t know that many girls that have like, a Playstation 2 or something like that.”

How do you explain yourself?: “I think that I like to play video games in—that are like, not difficult because like, I try to use them as like, a way to relax and a way to have fun rather than like, a way to accomplish something like, I think that I don’t need like, you know to beat whatever… as a way to like, feel good about myself or like, you know, brag to my friends like, ‘hey I beat this!’… which is like, something that I think guys are more prone to do… I don’t really go for that.”
Would you call yourself a competitive person?: “I don’t think I’m especially competitive…”

Given the choice, would you prefer to compete with others? With yourself? With the computer?: “I think I would like to compete against myself.”

What kinds of challenges do you like?: “Um, I think maybe like, more like, mental like, puzzles like ‘can you figure this out?’…I’ve played those a lot…more like, mental rather than just like, ‘how fast can you push the button?’ and so I think it’s more like, I’m not gonna say it’s more like, advanced but it’s more—it’s definitely a different type of challenge than I think a lot of like, Playstation 2 and Xbox games offer.”

Where does Mario fit in?: “[fine motor coordination]”

Do you have any graphics preferences? 3D? Scrolling?: “Sometimes I don’t mind… the 3D but sometimes I find it to be very confusing and hard to like, orient myself whereas I think like, the Mario games are—like, the scrolling types are um, a little easier for me to handle…”

What don’t you like in video games? (elements): violence, lots of blood and gore, shooting, “blatant violence”, realistic violence (not like Mario where you shoot fireballs at fictitious creatures)

Do you prefer realism or cartoony?: “Probably more animated.”

Play: “… I guess play would just be um, doing some sort of activity I mean, it doesn’t need to be with other people it doesn’t even need to be like, with anything like, physical or concrete—it can just be like, you know like, you’re playing a game—you’re playing like, an imaginary game in your head like, so it’s just very unspecific, it can really just be anything and it’s I guess, something that is fun for whoever is engaging in it and um, is not necessarily stressful or you know, has consequences if like, you don’t do it right or something like that.”
Game: “Um, I think game is more of like, a type of play that has some sort of rules associated with it I mean, it can be like, really like, loose rules [created by anyone]”

Video Game: “Video game I would say is um, —I wouldn’t call like, Solitaire and Free Cell and things like that really video games—those are more like something else—I don’t know what to call those—but I guess video game is something where you have a character or um, something and you’re just trying to achieve a goal through um, like, through television media or through your computer game…things that are more complex than just like simple puzzle games but that might have like, a little bit of a plot.”

Other?: “Um, I don’t know, I kind of enjoy them but I think sometimes that people get a little too hard-core into them and it’s kind of scary when you know, the first person in line for like, the new X-box at Toys-R-Us is like, some 45 year old guy…I think it’s like, something like anything else [moderation is best] … I feel like you can be a video game addict…it’s important to like, be careful and not like, get sucked in.”

Would you say that that’s a great danger for children? Adults? Or is it equal?: [more for adults because children’s play is often limited by their parents.]

How do video games lead to addiction?: [more interactive—levels—incentive to advance by playing for long periods]

Can this principle apply to any other activities?: [perhaps—example—not leaving the tennis court until you can hit 10 in a row, etc.]

Interview #21

Art TA for CS300 (also took it for 2 semesters previously)

Major: Fine Arts Senior

Jobs: TA for CS300, working at CL3 (computer station—helps people with programs)

Activities: Korean drumming club, library advisory counsel, translator program
Hobbies: making/watching animation, movies “I don’t really play games that much. I used to but now—after I came here I didn’t have enough time…”

When you did play, what did you play?: “… Princess Maker” [you are the father of a girl who you want to raise to be a princess—can be a teacher or a cook, or anything else—depends on experiences you give her. Sort of like the SIMS or digi-pets.]

Is that for the computer or a console?: “Computer.”

Do you play any other games?: “RPG games—Warcraft, Rayman [a fighting game]…Tekken, and Wave [racing game], A Need for Speed [racing] I love it!”

Do you play any games now?: “Right now? No. During the vacation.”

When you play, about how much time do you spend?: “When I do, 3 hours…”

How often (When you have time)?: “Twice, three times a week. I can’t play it every day. That would be crazy.”

What do you mean?: “Like, I can’t sit in front of a computer like, playing games for more than… 3 hours every day ‘cause my eyes get really tired and also like, most of the work I do is in front of a computer…so I prefer not to be in front of a computer when I’m taking a break.”

What about consoles? Do you have access to any console games?: “Playstation, yeah.”

Where is that?: “At home.”

Do you ever play any games on a cell, ipod, etc.??: “I play ipod ones.”

Often?: “Not really.”

What about online games?: “No, I don’t play online.”

What about accessory games?: “Uh… I was really addicted to—after I play for awhile, I don’t go back to the games but I was really crazy about those games… like, simple games are more addictive, like Snood.”
Is that true of all games? That you play for awhile and then never return?: “Yeah. Even Super Mario—I played a lot but then I don’t go back…”

What computer skills do you possess?: “Um, mostly movie—I mean, animation [programs]…premier…slash photoshop…dreamweaver…stuff like that.”

Any programming? HTML?: “No, not programming…I’m planning to take one programming course next semester.”

Do you use your computer for any recreational activities?: “Yes, a lot.”

What do you do?: “I use MSN a lot, instant messenger and [blogging]”

Do you do any online shopping? Web surfing?: “Yeah, online shopping.”

Do you use facebook or anything like that?: “No.”

Any other activities online—not work-related?: “Downloading lots of animation, I visit many random like, websites that relate to graphic art or like, advertisements…to know about what they do with the graphics…those are fascinating.”

How much time do you spend each doing all of these things?: “About like, 5 hours.”

Play: “Play is an activity that you do for um, your interests, fun, enjoyment.”

Game: “Game is a product that um, helps you to achieve your play…”

Video Game: “Video game—I don’t see the difference between video game and game. Maybe it’s more the digital…production. Like games, it can be like, a board game or it doesn’t have to be in computers or digital form. A game you can just do with your hands, with your friends or something. Video game is more like, you go into specific…worlds that was created by someone for making you addicted to the world.”

Can you get addicted to a non-video game?: “Yes!”

Do you play any non-digital games like board games or sports games?: “I did before.”

Before what?: “Um, there’s a board game—[Go].”
When do you play that? Do you play it now?: “I played that um, as a video game. And card games with friends at parties.”

How often would you say you play non-digital games?: “These days? Very, very rarely. Like, once, twice a year.”

When you’re at parties, how often do games come up?: “It’s more non-digital games—like, something that like, a lot of people can play with… a lot of games in Korean… party games.”

Do you prefer to play video games alone or with others?: “Alone.”

Any particular reason?: “Cause you have to find time with the other person if you want to team up or play with a different person and having a time—I mean, scheduling a time is hard these days. Like, if I play it alone I can just play it whenever I have time like, between work or something.”

If time weren’t an issue, would you have the same preference?: yes

Growing up, did you have access to video or computer games?: “Yeah. I had more than here.”

What did you have at home?: “I had [an old] console… at the time I played Super Mario Land, Ninja, Pac Man, those kinds of games, Tetris.”

Did you have a favorite?: “Super Mario Land.”

Why did you like that one?: “So addictive.”

What’s addictive?: “It’s really simple. It has um—it’s really simple mechanics like, jumping, shooting, stepping on the mushroom thing. But with those few mechanics you can really um, defeat the levels and go to the other levels and that makes you feel like you achieved something as you finish the levels. It makes me keep playing it.”

Do you generally prefer games that have levels?: “Yeah.”
What kinds of challenges do you like?: “Um, trying to beat the boss of the game…I didn’t care about the score [or timer], I just need to defeat the levels so that I can go to
the higher levels.”

Was this your preference growing up as well?: yes

How did you come to have this console in your house?: “My father got it for me.”

And did you share it with any siblings? Do you have any siblings: “Yeah. I have three
younger sisters and it’s so funny—nobody asked um, Dad to get any—get Playstation or
anything. They don’t have really interesting games but then my father got one and he
wanted us to play and I’m the only one who plays.”

Did your sisters try it?: “They tried but they gave up pretty fast.”

Did you play with your dad?: “Um, no, it’s mostly a one person… game.”

Growing up, did many of your friends have video games?: yes

Did you ever play with them?: “I saw them playing Final Fantasy.”

Did you watch or play with them?: “I just watched.”

Were most of these friends boys? Girls? A mixture?: “Um, mixed. Boys are more up to
online games.”

Do you have a preference for computer or console games?: “Um, computer.”

Why?: “Easy to access. You don’t have to set up anything. It’s quick.”

Costs/Benefits?: “Um, benefits—for some people you can… have a break from work
and get real excited, but some people on the other hand they get frustrated for not
defeating the levels… takes too much time playing it.”

Anything else?: “Socialization. Socializing—for socializing like, when like, people talk
about games and if you don’t know anything you can’t be involved in that conversation.
So there [are] social benefits.”
Do many of your friends talk about video games?: “Yeah and like, when guys talk about their RPG games I can’t really get involved…”

How good/bad use of time are video games?: “I think pretty good.”

Why’s that?: “I don’t spend like, humongous time being crazy about the game. I think three hours is pretty um, good time.”

What about for others?: Are video games a good/bad use of time for most other people?: “I think more negatively.”

Why’s that?: “‘Cause I see so many people um, get really tired during the day because they played a game all night. They couldn’t stop it. It happens a lot for many people. They can’t really manage time.”

How do you prevent that? (spending too much time)?: “Well… my personality. Like, I’m not really into the games so I don’t have that much problems. Or I don’t play like, role—no like, um, like, online games you play with other people… I don’t [play] … those kinds of games so I don’t have that much problem …but people who really enjoy…team games online…although they want to stop it they can’t because other people [need them] that’s why I’m not really a fan of online games.”

Why the gender gap?: “‘Cause…there are more fighting games… video games tends to be really violent. I think that’s why there are more [male players].”

So, are you more comfortable with violence than most women? Is that why you play?: “The thing is, I don’t really… play a lot of violent games. Like, the games that I play are like, mostly racing games or like, simple Snood or Tetris, those games… I play Tekken…”

What do you think it would take to get more females playing video games?: “More challenges…[less fighting]”
If you were going to design a game just for yourself, what would it be like?: simulation game, not like, fighting game…maybe some racing. Simple instructions—easy to play. Something related to an individual’s personal interests."

What would it take to make you play video games more or less than you do now?: “I’m an art student and I also have a great interest in game industry um, but I know if I wanna know more about what kind of games are in the world and what kind of games people will enjoy playing I should probably spend more time playing the games…for my career, I think, it will make me spend more time playing games, also with a personal interest.”

Do you ever feel guilty for the amount of time you spend playing games?: “That depends on the time period—when I have a lot of work and I procrastinate…I feel guilty about playing games, otherwise I don’t.”

Do you ever play any interactive games like DDR?: “Yes.”

How often?: “Um, like, several years ago, I played 3,4 times a day—I had the pad…computer based.”

Did you play that alone or with your sisters or friends?: “My sisters.”

Do they still play?: “Yes.”

Other?: no

Interview #22
COMM201 student
NOTE: The tape failed for the first half of this interview so I’m going by notes!!!!!!

Major: Natural Resources, Sophomore

Jobs: Women’s Center—rental services

Activities: Softball, Tradition Program (volunteer)

Hobbies: Ski, hike, soccer, softball, read, be outside

Do you currently play any video games?: no

Do you have access to any video games?: no

Do you play any computer games?: no

Accessory games?: no

Ipod or cell, etc. games?: no

Console or handheld games?: no

Growing up, did you have access to any games?: Computer—Oregon Trail, SIM Farm, Carmen Sandiego.

How often did you play those?: weekly—1-2 hours per week perhaps.

Siblings?: 2 sisters

What was your opinion of games?: fun—no video games allowed in house so computer games were a novelty. Thought Gameboys were “cool”.

Did you usually play alone or with others?: in high school, played with friends.

Boyfriend tried to teach Tiger Woods Gold, but subject was bad at it and didn’t enjoy it.

Do you use your computer for any recreational activities?: email, photos (upload, organize, edit and email digital photos), Facebook, shop, IM. IM is on all the time with away messages. Spends only about 2 minutes every other day on Facebook because it’s “stupid” and she doesn’t want to be obsessive. Computer is primarily for word-processing. Housemates don’t play games.
What do you think of video games?: Subject doesn’t like them, calls them a “waste of time”—prefers to go outside.

Costs and Benefits?: Costs: don’t get active/outside, violence, not social. Benefits: the computer is a nice reward

-Tape comes back in here-

Why the gender gap?: A lot of video games are probably catered more to men… to what they think guys would like, more than women um, you have golf, you have hockey, basketball, sports um, all the killing games, the car games, the car racing… those are all just kind of guy things. They might be encouraged more—I mean, not—girls could enjoy that I guess—I mean, I like cars, I like sports—but I think that maybe parents encourage it more—I think it’s more natural for little boys to get video games…”

What would a game for girls look like?: “It would be lame!”

Why’s that?: “I don’t know, ‘cause they try to make it girly, which is lame…”

What would a game for you look like?: “…I really like, like, the Oregon Trail, Yukon Trail kind of stuff ‘cause it was like, you’re on an adventure and…you were trying to keep… people alive. You don’t want them to drown in the river or something um, so I guess that’s different from killing people in the game. I don’t know. I think an adventure kind of game like Yukon Trail or Oregon trail—or, well SIM Farm was fun ‘cause you had control over—and you were trying to make your farm be profitable. I don’t know, something where you have to think more about it I guess. An adventure.”

What would cause you to play more or less than you do now?: “Well, we don’t have one in the house right now so I guess having one in the house would probably be the first step um, I know actually one of my roommates is really—she’s a girl and she’s
like, incredibly good at some game, I don’t remember what, I think Halo—something like that. Incredibly good! Her boyfriend taught her when she was in high school and she’s crazy. So she could probably end up teaching me something…but I think having it in the house would be the first step.”

What else?: “Um, giving me a rainy, cloudy day when I don’t feel like I should be outside.”

Anything else?: “Giving me no work to do. Free time. Free time and a rainy day—that’s when I usually watch a movie or something.”

How much do you like movies? Do you watch often?: “Um, not incredibly often. I usually don’t have time during the day and at night I’m usually too tired to stay awake and watch one but I like watching movies, I like going to the movies.”

Do you generally prefer movies to some of the computer games you like?: “Yeah.”

Why is that?: “I don’t know. Um, I like—I don’t know, I just have favorite movies that I usually watch. Um, I like going out to the movies…I go to the movies with friends, we all watch a movie upstairs in the living room together. Even though movies, you’re not talking or anything I guess it’s kind of more of a social thing than if you’re just sitting in your room playing some game. And you can talk about movies together.”

Have you ever played any group games like Super Smash Bros.?: “No.”

Would you be interested in a game like that?: “Maybe? I don’t know. Probably not. I mean I guess I’ve gotten to the point—I think if you don’t get sucked in by video games by a certain age you’re probably not really likely to ever. I guess I kind of have a stigma against them a little bit. I probably would never—I like reading so if I have free time I’d probably either read, watch a movie, or do something else.”

How good/bad a use of time are video games?: “I think they’re a horrible use of time.”
Can you elaborate?: “…You could just be doing so many different things—something that’s more worthwhile. I don’t know… when I was little I read all the time…I think kids should definitely be encouraged to read. I think you should go outside and be active and go run around and be in the woods, something like that instead.”

Did you feel that way when you were a kid?: “Yeah, I did. Once I got beyond the ‘I’m a loser for not having a Gameboy’ I think I definitely did.”

At what age was the Gameboy really big?: “…Probably like 4th or 5th grade”

Your childhood friends who had Gameboys, are they still playing or did they grow out of it?: “I think they grew out of it. I’m thinking specifically of two of my close girlfriends and I know they don’t…”

Play: “…Interact with something else…get your mind thinking and actively interacting with something else—could be an object, people.”

Game: “Something that a person…I have no idea…something that has set rules—something with rules that you—rules and guidelines that you do to play.”

Video Game: “…An on-screen game that you—a player manipulates with a handheld controller…”

Other?: “Overall, I just don’t like video games.”

Interview #23

DDR Club member

Jobs: IT
Activities: DDR Club, Society of Women Engineers, Association of Computer Science Undergraduates
Hobbies: Computer games, Music, hang out, DDR, driving
What video/computer games do you play?: “DDR, Age of Empires 3, Guild Wars, Counter Strike, Star Craft, other Playstation games, Super Smash Bros., some N64 games—but not as often as computer games.
You prefer computer to console?: “Yeah, it’s a lot easier.”
Easier how?: “Uh, I use my computer very often so I—if I’m on my computer there’s a very high possibility that I’ll end up playing a game if I’m on my computer.”
So it’s more convenient?: “Yeah.”
Is there any difference in the games you play on the console versus the games you play on the computer?: “Um, the computer games are usually online and multiplayer. That’s why I kind of enjoy it ‘cause I can play with my friends.”
“Do you ever play alone and just meet people online?”: “Um, rarely. Unless—if—whenever I play an online game, I usually end up playing with friends or I get the game with friends so like, we all always end up playing together…. but yeah, I do sometimes play by myself online.”
About what percentage of the time would you say you play alone? With others?: “25 alone, and 75 with others.”
Do you have any favorite games?: “Right now, it’s Age of Empires 3, and my favorite will always—my favorite console game would be uh, DDR.”
What is it that you like about each of these?: “Um, DDR is a form of exercise and I think it’s a really fun game. Like, it’s completely different from other games available
for the Playstation. And uh, for Age of Empires 3, it’s um—I guess ‘cause it’s a strategy game, I really like it.”

What kinds of strategies do you usually use?: “Um, I’m not a rusher, I’m kinda like, half rusher-half development. So, half rusher/half [developer]”

What do you mean by that?: “Um, rusher would be someone who builds up a lot of units really quickly to take out the enemy and just go all-out-army, and the other people—the other half, the developers would like, try to build up their economy, get resources quickly, and stuff like that.”

Do you have access to a console where you live?: “Yes… Playstation 2 [and N64].”

Do you play more alone or more with others when you are playing console games?: “With others, usually.”

Do any of your friends have video game consoles?: “Yes. Most of them, I think.”

Do most of them play computer games as well?: “Yes.”

How did you come to own a PS2 and an N64?: “Um, I guess I’ve always been like, a gamer person since I was little. Like, I started with the Super Nintendo and I guess my love for Super Nintendo took me to N64 and then I found Playstation around that same time and then I wanted to get the Playstation2.”

So, how did you come to have a Super Nintendo in the house?: “Um, my mom—I encouraged my mom to buy it for me ‘cause I always liked playing games but uh, I don’t actually remember how I got into SNES. It might’ve been because of my cousins who had the SNES and I wanted one too.”

Did you play with them much?: “Yeah.”

What did you usually play when you were a kid?: “I played um, Yoshi’s World, um, all the Mario games and uh, some random Disney titles, I don’t remember which.”

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Do you have any siblings?: “Yeah. Younger brother, he’s 16.”

Does your brother play video games much?: “Not as much as I do.”

What about when you were both younger?: “Um, when we were younger it was mostly me playing games. He would play whenever I wasn’t playing, which is rare, but um, he would play video games as much as I would.”

“Now, when you got the SNES was that something that you both wanted or did you get it and then he sort of played with it?: “..the latter.”

“So it was more yours?”: “Yeah.”

How did your parents feel about video games when you were a child?: “Um, I think it was fine ‘cause I was pretty active otherwise. I did a lot of sports outside of video games so I don’t think they were that worried.”

What games did you play other than SNES when you were a child?: “Oh, most common was soccer.”

Do you still play soccer?: “Nope, nope.”

How come?: “Um, I dropped it in high school because uh—I dropped it sophomore high school because it like, it started interfering with my music. I played clarinet uh, pretty seriously so I had to drop …soccer to make time.”

Do you still play clarinet?: “Um, no, sadly.”

What other games did you play as a kid?: “Er, a lot of board games.”

Like what?: “Scrabble, all your typical ones. Sorry, um, Life, um, cards—loved cards.”

Do you still play board games now?: “Maybe Speed Scrabble here and there…it’s basically Scrabble but it’s a lot faster…it’s like a really quick version of Scrabble.”

Anything else?: “That’s it, I think.”

Do you ever play any accessory games?: “Minesweeper. I play a lot of Minesweeper now um, I didn’t understand it when I was little, but uh, Minesweeper now.”
How often do you play Minesweeper?: “Um, 10% of the time I’m on my computer.”
How much time would that be?: “Oh, at least 20-30 minutes a day.”

Do you play any other accessory games?: “Not really.”

Do you ever play any online games?: “No, not really.”

Do you play any games on an ipod? Cell? Etc.? “No.”

Do you use your computer for recreational activities?: “Yeah… Facebook, IM, um, a lot more IM than Facebook though. Uh, email—lots of email…”

You mentioned that you use IM more than Facebook, why is that?: “Um, Facebook is more—not very interactive I guess ‘cause like, you don’t get to talk to the other person but IM you actually get to have a conversation. So I like IM a lot better.”

Play: “Play is anything—any kind of activity that you would do um, that uh is aside from any kind of work and it’s kind of a thing you enjoy doing, uh, besides work, if you enjoy working.”

Game: “A game is anything that involves you trying to I guess, have fun or get better or-“

What do you mean by getting better?: “I mean like, um, say you’re playing an online game and you wanna level up, something like—you actually wanna get experience—I’m not sure.”

Video Game: “Then, video game would be anything that involves a console or a computer game or any kind of program uh, that you run in order to play a game.”

How do you define something like Scrabble online—when they take a non-digital game and they put it on the computer?: “I’d just call that an online game.”

Not a video game?: “No, it’s not a video game, it’s an online game.”
What about poker? CD-Rom or online?: “Oh, I consider that online gaming… it’s not a video game… ‘video game means video, meaning graphics-intensive while online gaming can just be like, text…”

How much time do you spend playing any sort of digital game?: “A day? Maybe one to two hours. At maximum when I really have nothing—like, I have no homework…maximum of like, 4-5.”

How good/bad a use of time are digital games?: “Um, they’re a great tool for procrastination so I think it’s like, not very productive or—or anything helpful to you.”

Then do you feel that when you play these games your time is wasted?: “No, it’s not wasted. Um, because I guess you do kind of—when you play the games you get better at it when you level up or get experience um, but—it’s not wasted, but I do feel a little bit guilty.”

You do?: “I could’ve been doing homework or something.”

Do you feel guilty when you use IM, email, etc.: “Um, sometimes, but not most of the time.”

Why’s that?: “Uh, email is something I guess, I require for classes and stuff ‘cause I guess it’s how I send uh, documents to professors and friends. Um, IM like, if I’m having a conversation with someone on IM—I think to be in touch with other people is more important than doing homework. I guess I don’t feel as guilty ‘cause I like talking to people um, but email is also required ‘cause I need it. But yeah, I feel less guilty.”

What about when you used to play soccer. Would you feel guilty now if you played soccer instead of working?: Um, possibly, yeah… yeah… I’d feel guilty.”

Do you ever feel guilty when you’re working because you’re not playing video games, talking to friends, etc.: “No.”
Costs/benefits?: “Costs and benefits um, cost would be time ‘cause video games eat up a lot of your time um, benefits would be like, if you use video games to communicate with people and keep in touch and say, you and your friends all have this one game and you all play together—you can have like, a guild. So, it’s not like you’re detracting from your time with other people—it’s not like you’re alone in your room. So I think the benefit would be you get to hang out with people more. You get a closer bond, and like, more common ground, I guess. Um, but cost would be ‘time consuming’.”

Any other costs and benefits you can think of?: “Um, not that I can think of, unless they’re really expensive.”

Do you feel less guilty if you’re playing with a group rather than playing alone?: “Yes.”

What would make you play more or less than you do now?: “…my grades. If my grades are relatively high then I’ll play video games more ‘cause I’ll be less worried about my grades. But if my grades were low um, then I’d probably take time off of my video games to try to boost up my grades. Um, that’s all I can think of now—but… if there are a lot of social activities happening that’d probably decrease the amount of time I played video games.”

Would you prefer video gaming with friends or doing other things with friends?: “Uh, other things.”

Like what?: “Um, any kind of sport, ‘cause I realize that we all need exercise so I—if anyone offered to play a video game with me or like, go play tennis, I’d be like, ‘tennis!’”

When you get together with friends, what do you usually do?: “Um, with the circle of friends here at college, I’d probably end up playing uh, a computer game of some sort. But when I’m back home we’d probably um, play some kind of, more physical activity
I guess, maybe like, I dunno, play ping pong or like, choose some kind of other video—
not video game activity.”

How are your friends at home different from your friends here?: “Um, most of my
friends here are guys uh, and they are video gamers as well and they play a lot of video
games uh, friends back home are less video game types…most of them are girls back
home.”

Growing up, did you play video games with many friends?: “Um, I started off a lot with
my um, guy cousins and yeah, I think at some point, at the end of elementary school or
something like, video games only took over my life when I was with my cousins but
when like, the rest of my life was like, consumed by the extra curriculars I did—so
video games didn’t really pop up again until now.”

Did you miss the games when you weren’t playing them?: “Not as much.”

Now if you don’t play for awhile, for example, if you’ve got a big exam to study for—do
you miss them?: “Um, yeah, I guess so, ‘cause I would much rather be playing a video
game than studying for my exams but I know that I can’t do that.”

Why the gender gap?: “I don’t know—I think it’s a competition factor. Um, I’ve
noticed a lot—in a lot of my guy friends and my cousins—between boys there is a lot of
competition just—just between guys and other people in general and so this video
game—these video games help them to prove themselves. I just feel that girls have a
less of a desire to compete against other people um, so I guess that’s why they didn’t
really play video games as much because I see video games as another arena to compete
against other people. I guess I’m kind of a social gamer so I don’t know how that goes.”

Would you call yourself competitive?: “Um, I am competitive. Uh, yeah, relatively, I’m
pretty competitive but um, not to like an overbearing extent, I guess.”
So among the girls you know, are you very different from them in terms of your tastes?:
“Um, I’m pretty different ‘cause I guess, playing video games a lot gives me a different
perspective on things. Um, but there’s still—like, when I’m with my other friends I kind
of push my video games background to the-to a minimum so it doesn’t interfere with
anything.”
When you play Starcraft or Halo with the guys, do you beat them much?: “Um, no,
actually. I’m not. I’m probably one of the worser [sic] players…’cause I’m not nearly as
competitive as they are and they play a lot more than I do so I’m not as good a player as
they are.”
Does that ever discourage you from playing?: “Not really.”
What keeps you playing?: “Um, just being with people. Hanging out. I like leveling
up—it’s a good feeling and the more—I figure the more you play a game the better
you’ll get so with time I’ll get better even if I suck now.”
Do you ever beat the guys at DDR?: “Yes. I always beat them at DDR.”
How does that make you feel?: “Very—I don’t know, it makes me feel good that I can
beat them at something but it’s ‘cause I played DDR a lot when I was younger so I
don’t know whether that’s a valid reason. I’m sure if they had played DDR for as long
as I have um, they would probably be better than me or as good as me.”
Have your opinions about video games changed since childhood?: “Um, video games
are a pretty big part of my life now than when it was when I was a child. I guess
because when I was a child I did a lot more extra curriculars but here at college it’s
usually just grades and—grades and playtime so I guess they’re a bigger factor now.”
What’s your earliest memory of video games?: “When I was young I used to like—
before I ever started playing video games my uncle would play first-person shooters uh,
like Doom, Doom 2 or Quake and I’d always like—I wouldn’t actually play it, I’d just
kind of watch him like, sit in a chair next to him watching him play these games and like, I got interested—I think that’s how I got interested when I just hung out with my uncle when he played video games. So, I think that’s how I started.”

Do either of your parents play video games?: “My dad doesn’t. My mom occasionally plays this online game called Bejeweled, but that’s rare.”

About how often would you say?: “Um, maybe once a week and it’s usually not for a long period of time.”

Looking over everything you’ve played/skipped, what do you generally like/dislike in a video game?: “Uh, I like… the graphics, the whole theme of it—like, DDR is like—DDR, I really like it because it involves more than just reflexes—it actually involves coordination and stuff like that. And I used to play soccer and then I got into clarinet so I’m thinking that like, maybe my foot-eye coordination kind of mixed with like, my music background—that’s how I got into DDR, I think. But um, video games in general? Um, I don’t like really long, drawn-out games. I kind of like—I kind of like the quick, short games. I used to play a lot of um, long, drawn-out games but I found that they really ate up my time so I kind of spread myself away from that like, and I just play a lot of online games ‘cause they’re quicker…”

By ‘online games’, do you mean MMORPGs or Yahoo Games-type online games?: “[MMORPGs]

What would a game designed just for you be like?: “Um, a game for the—for a console game you can make like, a virtual reality shooting game um, if you were like a computer game, an MMORPG um, you could make that virtual reality too.”

What kind of graphics would you have?: “Um, good ones, I guess.”

What makes them good?: “Um, clear, really… detailed—um, when buildings blow up, it has to be accurate. Not like ‘BOOM!’ and then it just kind of fades out I mean like,
when buildings blow up, like pieces of wood fall off or something like that—something really like real-life.”

So would you say that you like things pretty realistic? Do you like cartoony? Dark? Fantasy?: “Oh, I like—I think I like more real life but I also kind of like cartoony. Um, I don’t know, DDR itself is kind of cartoony so I like cartoony and I like real life…not really gritty.”

Interview #24
COMM201 student

NOTE: This tape was eaten in the machine. I’m going strictly from notes here…

Major: Communication, Sophomore

Hobbies: swimmer, roller hockey, trumpet

Interests: Birds of Prey

Do you have access to video games?: yes—older brother has an X-Box

How many siblings do you have?: 2 brothers

Do you play?: No

Growing up did you have video games in the house?: a Nintendo, computer games—all shared toys

What did you play?: Played Duck Hunt about once a week, but that only lasted about 3 months—it lost its appeal. Also played X-Men, Super Mario Bros. Found X-Men frustrating and boring—couldn’t beat levels. Duck Hunt, on the other hand, was too easy and repetitive. On the computer, subject played Oregon Trail and SIM City—played daily: “Not for hours at a time!” but then more advanced things came out and she didn’t keep up. Also, swimming and school were taking up more time.
Like/Dislike?: Like—to get farther, Dislike—get to a point and not be able to go on, also—some people spend too much on games.

How good/bad a use of time?: depends on game, not worthwhile—“addictive”—don’t get much out of them.

Costs and Benefits?: pros: entertain, play with others. Cons: waste of time, no benefit, addictive

Do you engage in recreational computer use?: 2.5-3 hours daily—IM, email, Facebook, shopping, surfing, computer solitaire. How good/bad a use of time is this? Email is time well-spent (for school), IM—not sure, Facebook—a waste of time—see into the lives of random people, it’s addictive; computer solitaire—no pressure not to play—only plays once every couple of weeks when waiting for something.

How do you have fun with your friends?: shop, go out to eat, movies, parties—about 3 times a week—more time would be nice, but there’s guilt afterwards

Play: something you do to entertain yourself and occupy time

Game: interact with people, something you do to play

Video Game: interact with electronic characters for a goal

Why the gender gap?: men are more competitive, most games appeal to men more—fighting, cars. Women prefer shopping. Subject knows one girl who plays video games—played with brothers growing up—got bored until X-Box and Halo came along

Subject doesn’t like competing, losing all the time. Prefers to play against self, but it still gets boring after awhile. “Staring at the TV”

Wouldn’t play alone unless really bored. Wants a definite end point to games—hates it when they go on forever.

Free time?: go out with friends, eat, shop, read, run with dogs, sleep, music, go driving, talk. How did you come to have a Nintendo as a child?: Christmas surprise for
everyone. She would watch (too young), later played Duck Hunt. Says video games are fine for small children, but not for adults. Had a Tamagochie as a child—reasons: fad aspect, nurturing aspect. But when the batteries died, she didn’t replace them.

Play cell games?: Yes, while doing other things/when bored.

Interview #25
DDR Club
Major: Psychology junior—Ithaca College
Summer internship: BAE systems—military communication devices—Human Resources work
Activities—Student Psychology Association, DDR Club, LGBT volunteer, community service, sorority
Hobbies: video games, art, music, writing, computer
Do you play any video games? RPGs—Kingdom Hearts (Likes fantasy—loves the fact that the characters are all familiar, loves the graphics, music, game control, and storyline), recently, 1st-person shooters—Perfect Dark, other games—SIMS, Harvest Moon, Roller Coaster Tycoon, SOME sports games (not crazy about these), sci-fi games—Star Wars, some TV-based games—Simpsons, Futurama (loves the shows)
Are there any common elements among the games you play?: Not a lot of violence, some relevance to interests
How do you find new games?: SIMS, IGN, chat, word-of-mouth
What other kinds of games do you play?: Spider solitaire, Literati on Yahoo—play with friends, Jewels, alchemy, puzzle games online, Cell phone Tetris
Did you have access to a video game as a child?: 5 years old, Dad got an NES as a gift—played Mario, Duck Hunt, Tetris, Wheel of Fortune
Did you play any computer games?: Paint, solitaire, educational games, DOS games
What did you think about digital games then?: Never liked TV—loved video games.
Like board games too—still plays Scrabble and Monopoly
Do you have any siblings?: 2 younger brothers—they liked games too, but not the same games. Subject wasn’t good at her brothers’ games and didn’t like losing. They also had a Gameboy and a D.S.
Costs/Benefits of gaming?: Depends on the game. Costs: lose brain cells?
Procrastination tool, potentially bad as TV, possible effects? Benefits: hand-eye coordination, reflexes? Educational, logic, fun, social—meet people
Do you feel like you’ve lost brain cells?: Yes, but not many—perhaps attention span is lessened.
Do you use games as a procrastination tool?: Yes, tries to limit time
Do you feel your reflexes and hand-eye coordination have improved as a result of gaming?: a little bit
Are you a competitive person?: yes “When I beat a guy it boosts my self esteem like you wouldn’t believe!”
Do you generally play alone or with others?: Alone, though not always. With DDR, subject likes the people even more than the game
Did you play alone or with others as a child?: Played with dad, mom didn’t get it.
What do you like about video games?: competition—against self and others
What don’t you like about video games?: when you can’t beat the last level. Violence.
Why do you play?: to relax in downtime, to socialize—but not for too long. Likes to read, draw, or play video games.
How good/bad a use of time?: They don’t accomplish much—maybe burn calories.
Good use if you want to have fun and you have nothing else to do.
What percentage of your friends would you guess have video games?: 60%
And your friends growing up?: 20%
Why the gender gap?: marketing—“You notice, there’s no pink Nintendo!”, most have violence, associated with “nerds and dorks”—more common for guys.
How do explain your own “breaking of the mold”?: always gotten along better with guys. Dislikes female ‘drama’. Played games with dad
Play: action or activity that is more pleasurable than not
Game: a tool of that activity or a way by which people play
Video game: electronic game where there is user interaction
Do you use your computer for recreational purposes?: on average, 6 hours per day playing on computer (sometimes working too)—IM, Facebook (not much), shop (a lot—subject doesn’t have a car so this is more convenient), message boards
Subject is handy with computers—programming, building computers, de-bugging, repairing
Why did you seem embarrassed when you mentioned that you play and work at the same time sometimes?: Subject multitasks constantly—surfing + IM or DVD + surf + IM or music + DVD+surf+IM or paper+breaks with other things.
What would make you play more or less than you do now?: less= cost, if subject had a job (i.e. was busier) – less. More=less coursework.
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