

# Gaming Sexism

## Gender & Identity in the Era of Casual Video Games

BY AMANDA C. COTE

### Instructor's Guide

Interviews with female gamers about structural sexism across the gaming landscape

When the Nintendo Wii was released in 2006, it ushered forward a new era of casual gaming in which video games appealed to not just the stereotypical hardcore male gamer, but also to a much broader, more diverse audience. However, the GamerGate controversy six years later, and other similar public incidents since, laid bare the internalized misogyny and gender stereotypes in the gaming community. Today, even as women make up nearly half of all gamers, sexist assumptions about the what and how of women's gaming are more actively enforced.

In *Gaming Sexism*, Amanda C. Cote explores the video game industry and its players to explain this contradiction, how it affects female gamers, and what it means in terms of power and gender equality. Across in-depth interviews with women-identified gamers, Cote delves into the conflict between diversification and resistance to understand their impact on gaming, both casual and "core" alike. From video game magazines to male reactions to female opponents, she explores the shifting expectations about who gamers are, perceived changes in gaming spaces, and the experiences of female gamers amidst this gendered turmoil. While Cote reveals extensive, persistent problems in gaming spaces, she also emphasizes the power of this motivated, marginalized audience, and draws on their experiences to explore how structural inequalities in gaming spaces can be overcome. *Gaming Sexism* is a well-timed investigation of equality, power, and control over the future of technology.



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

### *More about this book and how to use it in your course*

In 2012, video gaming culture saw an interesting, paradoxical divergence. On one hand, game journalists and trade organizations testified that gaming had significantly diversified from its masculine roots, with women comprising nearly half of all gamers. On the other hand, gaming spaces witnessed increasing, public incidents of sexism and misogyny. *Gaming Sexism* analyzes the video game industry and its players to explain the roots of these contradictory narratives, how they coexist, and what their divergence means in terms of power and gender equality.

In this book, I first turn to video game magazines to assess how longstanding expectations for “gamers” are shifting, how this provokes anxiety in traditional audiences, and how these players resist change, at times employing harassment and sexism to drive out new audience members. I follow this analysis by interviewing female players, to see how their experiences have been affected by games’ changing environment. Interviewees reveal many persistent barriers to full participation in gaming, including overtly and inferentially sexist elements within texts, gaming audiences, and the industry. At the same time, participants have developed nuanced strategies for managing their exclusion, pursuing positive gaming experiences, and competing with men on their own turf.

Thus, *Gaming Sexism* reveals extensive, persistent problems in achieving gender equality in gaming. However, it also demonstrates the power of a motivated, marginalized audience, and draws on their experiences to explore how structural inequalities in gaming spaces—and culture more broadly—can themselves be gamed and overcome.

### HOW TO TEACH GAMING SEXISM

This book is designed to be appropriate for upper-level undergraduate courses and/or graduate seminars in a variety of areas, including women’s and gender studies, communication and media studies, digital studies, game studies, and cultural studies. It could also be of use in game design programs, to provide a critical perspective on developing games for diverse audiences, and in research methods classes, to explore qualitative methods.

The book can be taught as a whole or in parts. Some suggested divisions/topics include:

- Critical Perspectives on the Video Game Industry—Chapter 1
- The Role of Games Journalism—Chapter 1
- Gender, Sexism, and Video Gaming—Chapters 2 & 3

- Games and Representation—Chapter 2
- Media and Virtual Communities—Chapter 4
- Social Justice and Interventions into Digital Culture—Chapter 5
- Active Audience Theories—Chapter 4 and/or Chapter 5
- Longitudinal Qualitative Research—Chapter 6
- Media and Social Contexts—Introduction, Chapter 6 and/or Conclusion
- Qualitative Research Methods—Appendix and relevant other chapters for case studies (e.g. Chapter 1 for magazine analysis, chapters 2-5 for interview analysis, chapter 6 for longitudinal work)

## INTRODUCTION

### *Diversification and Resistance in Gaming's Casualized Era*

Video games in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century face a deep contradiction. On the one hand, the spread of casual, social, and mobile games has led researchers, journalists, and players to believe that video gaming is opening up to previously marginalized audiences, especially women. At the same time, game culture has seen significant incidents of sexism and misogyny. The introduction outlines this contradiction and lays out the book's key questions. First, how and why do these contradictory narratives coexist? Second, what impact does this have on marginalized game audiences, specifically women, as they try to enter game culture and spaces? And finally, what are the impacts of this struggle and what can be learned from women's strategies for managing their presence in a masculinized, often exclusionary space? The introduction also addresses the main theoretical concepts that undergird the book's argument, including gender, hegemony, and feminism/post-feminism.

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What are some of the factors that have historically defined games and gaming as masculinized?
- Define the "casualized era". How has it affected gaming culture and communities?
- What are "hegemony" and the "crisis of authority"? How do these concepts apply to gaming in the casualized era?
- How does this book approach and understand gender? Outline the key theories the author draws on.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Consider your past experiences with or knowledge of gaming. In what ways have you seen gaming as masculinized or not?
- The title of this chapter frames the casualized era as in conflict (diversification vs. resistance). Considering your own experiences with gaming, in what ways do you think games are reaching out to new audiences? In what ways are they still focusing on traditional audiences? Support your ideas with specific examples (e.g. games, characters, advertising campaigns, etc.).

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Core and the Video Game Industry: Changing Perceptions of Power*

This chapter elaborates on the book's underlying theoretical framework. Specifically, it draws on discourses about “core” and “casual” games to show how “core” describes a hegemonic set of ideologies that frames games in specific, masculinized ways. The chapter also argues, however, that recent industrial changes, from the rise of casual games to the diversification of funding and distribution platforms, serve as counter-hegemonic forces, challenging many “core” assumptions about games and audiences. Using a critical analysis of gaming news, the chapter lays out these changes and addresses both their real impact on the games industry and their felt impact on audiences and power structures. Through this, it shows that gaming is in the midst of a crisis of authority, where previously powerful members of the community fear losing control of it. As a result, they are exerting extra force to maintain their privileged position, accounting for the divergent narratives about games that dominate the casualized era.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What are some of the expected characteristics of “core” games and players? And of “casual” games and players?
- How do core and casual connect to gender?
- What are some of the challenges to the core/casual binary?
- List and define the key themes that journalists used to discuss the rise of casual games, according to Cote’s magazine analysis.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What types of games do you usually play? How do you think these “count” in game culture? Why do you think that?
- Do you consider yourself a gamer? Why or why not? Draw on the arguments of the chapter to explain your stance.
- What are some of the forces challenging core’s hegemonic position, beyond the rise of casual games?
- Drawing on a magazine analysis, this chapter argues that early journalistic coverage of casual games tended to treat casual as a potential threat to core games and players. First, outline the key themes this analysis uncovered. Then, compare these themes to more recent coverage of video games. In what ways are anxieties about casual games vs. core games still present, and in what ways

have they changed?

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan A

Have students brainstorm answers to questions 1-4 as a class or in small groups. Discuss their ideas collectively, then draw out greater critical depth using question #5.

1. What makes a game casual? List characteristics that you think it has. Consider game play, characters/appearance, imagined audience, music, aesthetics, and more.
2. Who are casual gamers? What are their characteristics?
3. What makes casual different from its traditional counterpart “core”? Why might this matter (or not)?
4. How precise are these terms? To what extent do you think what we imagine as “casual” actually matches up to players’ lived experiences?
5. Consider these questions in the context of this chapter. How do the notions of core/casual shape game culture and communities? What types of games, play styles, and players are empowered by these categories? How is this changing?

### Lesson Plan B

Game Design Activity: Sort students into small groups and have them follow the prompts below. Once they have finished their design, bring the class together and discuss 1) the games they developed, 2) how their planned designs fit into the existing expectations of core/casual, and 3) what they are doing that is new or different. Again, try to end by connecting their designs to the arguments and conclusions of this chapter; how do conceptions of core and casual relate to power and access?

1. In small groups, you will outline plans to design a casual video game. Obviously, we won’t be coding, drawing art, or writing a soundtrack, but I do want you to consider what these elements would look like using the following questions as a guide.
  - a. What is your game about? How would you sum it up in 1-2 sentences?
  - b. What type of play style do you want? Consider:
    - i. Platform
    - ii. Existing game genres
    - iii. How much time players will need to invest each time they play

- iv. How often you'll want them to return to the game and how you'll encourage that
  - v. How a player can advance within your game
  - vi. The types of obstacles you'll put in their way
  - vii. Other thoughts?
- c. What is your aesthetic? Consider:
- i. The kinds of characters you'll offer and what they will look like
  - ii. Color palette and artistic style
  - iii. Soundtrack
  - iv. Other thoughts?
- d. Who are your players? What type of audience do you want to attract, and how will you do that?



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Tits, Tokenism, and Trash-Talk: Overt Sexism in Game Culture*

Chapters two and three collectively focus on the forces female gamers encounter that work to maintain “core” as a definable, masculine sphere. This chapter explores instances of overt sexism, where the sexist nature of a behavior or trend is obvious. Drawing on interviews with female gamers, the chapter argues women’s experiences rarely reflect the diversification narrative—that games are becoming more welcoming. Rather, women continue to struggle with hypersexualized female characters, games that lack playable female characters or offer only underdeveloped “token” women, and interpersonal harassment from other players. These behaviors and themes work to relegate women to the margins of gaming rather than allowing them to enter the cultural “core”. Further, the fact that games’ masculinized hegemony has been normalized over time often encourages female gamers to buy into and accept their own exclusion. At the same time, the obvious nature of overt sexism perhaps offers more opportunities for intervention than the less obvious moments of inferential sexism addressed in chapter three.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is “overt sexism”? How does it differ from inferential sexism?
- What are interviewees’ main issues with character design?
- Define “trash talk”. How has this been normalized in game spaces? Why is it of particular concern to female gamers?
- What types of games or trends were interviewees optimistic about and why did they feel this way?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Consider your experiences gaming. Where have you noticed instances of overt sexism in game content and communities? How do your experiences compare to those participants discuss in this chapter?
- What are potential strategies for overcoming the issues of overt sexism in gaming? Consider both individual and structural changes or approaches.
- This chapter primarily discusses how women are negatively affected by game content or community behaviors, such as trash talk. What broader impacts might these trends have 1) for other audiences and 2) beyond gaming alone?

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan A

Divide students into small groups, assign each group a year, and have them analyze representation in video games using the prompts below. Then either discuss results as a class or sort students into new groups using a “jigsaw” technique, where students teach their initial findings to the new group and compare results.

1. Split into small groups. Each of you will be assigned a year between 2000-2020.
2. Google “best-selling games” for your year.
3. Analyze:
  - a. How is your list structured? (E.g. by sales or revenue, overall or by platform)
  - b. What formats of games are on your list? (E.g. PC, console, mobile, etc.)
  - c. What genres of games are on your list? (E.g. party games, first-person shooters, etc.)
  - d. What types of games are NOT covered on this list?
4. Then delve deeper into the specific games. Considering the top ten games for your year:
  - a. Who do you play as? Are there options, or just one protagonist?
  - b. What does the game’s protagonist(s) look like? Assess aspects like gender, race, and physical appearance.
5. Consider your protagonists with regards to the arguments from today’s chapter. Are there any trends in what you’re seeing? Why do you think that’s the case (or not)? How does this relate to interviewees’ perceptions of game characters?
6. Be prepared to discuss with the class.

### Lesson Plan B

Alongside this reading, assign students to play at least 30 minutes of a game with a playable female character (their choice). While playing, they should take notes on their character’s representation (appearance, voice, behavior, reactions of other characters to her presence, etc.). Have students bring those notes to class to guide discussion of the following questions.

1. How was the process of finding a female-led game? Were you able to find a game you were happy with?

2. How was your experience playing a female character?
  - a. What did you like about your character? What did you dislike?
  - b. What was the play experience like? Was anything particularly fun or particularly frustrating?
  - c. What do you think the potential impacts of your character may be? What kind of messages did she send?
3. Consider the arguments interviewees put forth in this chapter regarding female characters' representations. How did your female character fit into or counter these arguments?

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Girly Games and Girl Gamers: Inferential Sexism and Its Impacts*

Where Chapter Two focused on overt sexism, this chapter explores the subtler, but equally damaging, impacts of inferential sexism, or factors which appear to be non-discriminatory but rest on limiting assumptions about gender and gender relations. The chapter finds that participants feel misunderstood by the gaming industry, which offers women infantilizing or stereotypical “girly games”. Women also often face surprised reactions to their presence in gaming spaces or assumptions that they game to meet men. Like overt harassment, this makes female gamers feel abnormal or out of place and serves to preserve gaming’s existing hegemony. Furthermore, this chapter reveals that the rise of casual games has complicated this situation rather than improved it. In this way, this chapter both addresses new aspects of women’s experiences in masculinized spaces and provides insight into the casualized era’s ongoing trials.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Define and give an example of inferential sexism.
- Why do participants argue “girly games” are an example of inferential sexism? Explain their stance.
- Participants said other gamers are frequently surprised to find out that they are female. What did they find off-putting about this trend?
- What are the assumptions of the “girl gamer” stereotype? How did it affect players?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it difficult to assess and address inferential sexism? What challenges emerge when one is trying to pay attention to these forces, rather than overtly sexist ones?
- How has the casualized era addressed some concerns about inferential sexism? How has it worsened others? What do you think the overall impact of casual’s rise has been for female gamers?
- Have you experienced the “girl gamer” stereotype? Where have you seen this emerge and what impacts do you think it has? Why does this stereotype persist?
- What are some potential strategies for combatting inferential sexism? What do you think would help?

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan A

Have students read this chapter alongside Tracey Lien's Polygon article, "[No Girls Allowed.](#)" and material on the [#WheresBlackWidow](#) campaign. Discuss the history of gendered toys and games. What do companies get out of clearly demarcating girls' toys/games vs. boys' toys/games? What kind of power disparities emerge from this practice? Which areas of pop culture are marked as "for boys" and why? What would more equitable practices look like?

### Lesson Plan B

Choose two Twitch streamers who play the same game, one male and one female. View one video per streamer and have students assess the differences they see in chat. How do viewers react to the male streamer in comparison to the female streamer? What types of overt or inferential sexism, if any, appear in this analysis? Ask students to look beyond the obvious to assess inferential sexism. How do students' findings affirm or counter the results of this and the previous chapter? Try to find videos that are similar in length, style, etc. to minimize differences other than gender.

This activity can be done in class or as homework. For more advanced classes, students can read this chapter and conduct their Twitch analysis alongside Nakandala et al. (2017), *Gendered Conversation in a Social Game-Streaming Platform*, or Ruvalcaba et al. (2018), *Women's Experience in eSports*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Already Core: Women's Entry into Gaming*

This chapter focuses on the ways in which women embody a gamer identity, laying out how their preferences in gaming are personal, contextual, and rarely specifically gendered. It provides an update to existing research regarding the pleasures women get from gaming, then draws on theories of community and identity to address how women envision the gaming community and their place within it. Through this, the chapter demonstrates how women are a diverse, rather than essentialized, group and how both gender and gamer identity can be embodied in multiple ways. It further argues that, because female gamers already embody many “core” characteristics, they have a foundation from which to build networks of affinity with their fellow male gamers, which could help address inequality in game spaces. However, this chapter also continues to show that female gamers' interactions with games in the casualized era are conflicted, with interviewees struggling to embody both their gender identity and their gamer identity without being singled out for this seemingly contradictory combination.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is an interpretive community? How does it apply to gaming and gender?
- List the key pleasures women found in gaming. Why did they play games?
- Define “imagined community”. What were some of the ways in which interviewees imagined the gaming community?
- Review the concept of identification. How do participants identify in fluid or multiple ways? Give examples from the reading.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When does women's gameplay relate to their gender, and when does it not?
- How do female gamers support or subvert gender norms? How do their choices relate to feminism or not?
- What are some of the ways in which participants disagreed with each other regarding why they played games? Why is it important to recognize these differences?
- Consider the concept of the “imagined community”. In what ways did interviewees see themselves as part of an imagined community of gamers? How did they emphasize their connections to the game community, and what were some challenges they faced in this process? How does this relate to your own experiences?

- How do women's flexible identifications and joint female/gamer identity challenge the expectations of core? What impact might this have on gaming and on gender norms more broadly?

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan A

Personal reflection: Give students 10-15 minutes of silence at the start of class to write short reflections on the following questions. Then ask students to pair with a classmate who has a different level of gaming experience (e.g. pair a non-gamer with someone who plays frequently). Have them compare their answers and discuss how their similarities and differences relate to the findings of the chapter. End by sharing as a class.

1. What types of games do you usually play? Consider factors like platform, genre, single- vs. multi-player, etc.
2. What do you get out of these games? Why do you choose these types of texts?
3. How does context matter? When do you choose one type of game over another?
4. How do your choices relate to your gender or other identities?

### Lesson Plan B

A key part of this chapter outlines different types of gaming communities and how participants position themselves with regards to these shared spaces. Sort students into small groups and have each group research a different online gaming community. You can assign communities or allow students to choose their own; potential options include massively-multiplayer games like *World of Warcraft*, Reddit pages, game-related forums such as GameSpot or GameFAQs, Facebook pages devoted to games, and/or Twitch or Discord channels related to games in general or to specific titles. Have each group answer the following questions:

1. Community name:
2. What makes this a community? Outline the specific characteristics that you think qualify this as a community. Draw on the reading, your own experiences, and other class discussions as needed.
3. What does it take to join this community at the most basic level?
4. What is expected of community members? How do they display their involvement and build social capital and experience in this space?
5. What else do you think is meaningful or important about your community? What stands out to you?

Once student groups have conducted their initial assessment, remix the groups in a “jigsaw” format, where one person from each original group is assigned to each new group. Have students present their communities to one another and then answer the following questions together.

6. List all the communities you discussed:
7. Which communities were most alike? Which were most unique or different?
8. Name at least TWO characteristics shared by several communities:
9. List at least THREE things you learned from other groups members:
10. How did your different findings compare to interviewees’ varied stances about “community” in today’s reading?



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Strategies for Play: Finding Space and Exercising Active Audience Power*

While the previous chapter discusses women's engagement with game communities in general terms, this chapter lays out some of the specific strategies women employ to cope with the conflict between core and margins, demonstrating that they are capable managers of their media environment. From choosing an appropriate game to responding to harassment, women are willing and able to fight for equality in an unequal space. Their experiences also show that managing a conflicted identity involves a significant amount of work and that, within gaming, systems of power that valorize masculinity over femininity still exist. From women's existing strategies, however, it is possible to see where developers or activists could make useful intercessions. In the casualized era, when counter-hegemonic forces have started to undermine long-standing associations of gamers with specific, male audiences, these interventions could be particularly significant, starting the process of increasing gender equality in gaming.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Name some of the strategies female gamers use to choose a new game.
- Define and explain interviewees' main strategies for avoiding and managing online harassment.
- What are some of the limitations on these strategies?
- How have developers failed to address community issues in the past?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- This chapter advances the idea that female gamers are an active audience, with agency over how they choose to play. However, it also recognizes that there are limitations on this agency. What are some of these limitations and how do they matter to broader gendered power structures as well as to games?
- What strategies do you think are most effective for avoiding or managing online game harassment? Why?
- In what ways does online gaming's tendency to trash-talk affect some players more than others? How does this reflect sociocultural disparities?
- The end of this chapter assesses how game companies have tried to manage their communities in the past, reflects on moments of failure, and suggests potential improvements. Can you think of other strategies that companies could institute to improve their community management? Why do you think your ideas

would be effective? Provide specific connections to players' experiences.

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan A

Pair this chapter with an article that deals with trash-talk and harassment from the perspective of race or sexuality, as well as gender. Possible articles include Gray (2018), *Gaming out Online*; Ortiz (2019), *The Meanings of Racist and Sexist Trash Talk For Men of Color*; or Richard & Gray (2018), *Gendered Play, Racialized Reality*. Have students discuss the following:

1. How do marginalized players interpret and understand trash-talk and online harassment?
2. What interpretive strategies are shared across identity groups? What are some differences?
3. How do players respond to harassment and negativity?
4. Which of the strategies outlined in *Gaming Sexism* could benefit marginalized players in general? Which are likely to be beneficial only in terms of gender? Why?
5. Based on these various readings, why is it important to build more positive gaming communities and spaces? What are some of the broader sociocultural impacts that could result from change?

### Lesson Plan B

Game companies are becoming increasingly invested in community management strategies, as discussed in the "Past Approaches to Community Management" section of this chapter. Given how quickly game culture and digital media can change, have students research and update this section of the chapter. What has happened with movements like the Fair Play Alliance? What initiatives are game companies, as well as other online platforms like Twitch or Discord, introducing? How effective are these approaches likely to be? For which players? Ask students to defend their stances by referring to the chapter, personal experiences, and/or other class readings or discussions.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *In the Aftermath: Women's Changing Views on Gaming and Sexism Following #GamerGate*

This chapter reconnects with interviewees five years after their first interviews to address two main questions. First, it assesses how participants interpret events like the 2014 online harassment campaign GamerGate. Surprisingly, interviewees revealed that GamerGate was not particularly significant to them; this situates the event in context, revealing it to be merely a symptom of gaming's deeper structures of sexism and backlash. At the same time, women's split identity as female/gamer also played out in diverse ways when confronted with this event, again emphasizing the casualized era's struggle between hegemonic and counterhegemonic forces. Second, this chapter analyzes how players' gaming habits have changed over time and what factors account for these changes, furthering our understanding of player lifecycle and providing a perspective on whether female gamers' strategies for managing game environments are sustainable. Thus, this chapter serves as a relevant update to the conclusions put forth in the preceding chapters.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is GamerGate? How does it connect to sexism in gaming more generally?
- How did participants' gaming habits change over time? What were some of the reasons for this?
- Why did many players turn to analog games like Dungeons and Dragons between their first and second interviews?
- Give some examples of how female gamers engaged in gatekeeping; why did a few participants want "gamer" to be defined narrowly?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Place GamerGate in a larger cultural trajectory; what incidents of sexism occurred in gaming before GamerGate and which have occurred after? How do these connect other areas of culture or politics?
- What specific contexts affected interviewees' responses to GamerGate?
- Consider how participants' gaming habits changed over time. In what ways are these changes a normal response to getting older and in what ways are they specifically gendered?
- How (if at all) have analog games been gendered differently than video games? What types of analog games are most open to broad audiences?

- The division between perceived insiders and perceived outsiders is a theme throughout this book. What were some of the benefits female gamers found in emphasizing their gamer identity and their gaming capital to appear as “insiders”? What were some of the challenges of this? How do in-group/out-group divides relate to power and access to gaming communities and spaces?

## LESSON PLANS

### Lesson Plan A

This chapter argues that movements like GamerGate are symptoms of a larger issue, rather than stand-alone events. Have students search recent news stories for articles on sexism in gaming or other online spaces, then compare these to articles about GamerGate. How are the discourses around sexism the same or different over time? In what ways has gaming culture improved in terms of its openness to different players? In what ways are marginalized gamers still facing barriers? What does this mean in terms of power?

### Lesson Plan B

Read this chapter alongside Bergstrom (2019), *Barriers to Play*. Ask students to reflect on and discuss the following.

1. Who is not represented when we discuss “gamers”? Consider both individual and structural differences between gamers and non-gamers.
2. How do play habits change over time? What types of factors affect one’s likelihood to play? Draw on examples from your own experiences as well as today’s readings, and be sure to consider the role of gender norms, specifically.
3. What can non-participation in gaming tell us about gender and leisure?
4. How does the concept of the “second shift” apply to women’s gaming habits?

### Lesson Plan C

Have students play Dungeons and Dragons or watch a recorded or streamed D&D game. While playing/viewing, they should analyze the game with regards to the arguments of this chapter. Who is shown as a D&D player? What types of in-game identities do players take on? What about D&D is potentially off-putting to female players, and what about it is welcoming? What kind of investment do players need to make in order to play games like D&D? Students should support their points with specific examples from the game or video and from the reading.

More advanced classes can consider identities other than gender (e.g. race, sexuality, ability, etc.) and/or read additional material to support this activity, such as Chalk (2018), *A Chronology of Dungeons & Dragons in Popular Media*; Garcia (2017),

*Privilege, Power, and Dungeons & Dragons*; or Jones (2018), *Blinded by the Roll*. The *Analog Game Studies* journal, <http://analoggamestudies.org/>, offers many potential readings on this topic.

## CONCLUSION

### *The Battle Continues*

Collectively, the chapters of this book demonstrate that despite gaming's perceived diversification, many barriers to true equality between different types of gamers persist. Therefore, the conclusion of this book invites readers to consider what is lost when sexism and misogyny are allowed to persist within a significant subsection of popular culture, demonstrating how inequality in this area can affect broader power structures as well. However, the conclusion also affirms women's continuing efforts to achieve equality and calls for greater support as they continue to navigate gender and gamer identities on their own terms. The conclusion wraps up discussing the book's limitations, calling for future work, and assessing the potential outcomes of a crisis of authority.

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Define "hegemony". How does the example of *Diablo: Immortal* relate to hegemony in gaming?
- What are some of the strategies this conclusion suggests for addressing sexism in game spaces?
- List some of the limitations of this book. How could future research address these gaps?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some of the ways in which gaming's longstanding hegemony persists? Give examples from your recent media experiences.
- This book has focused throughout on how marginalized players carve out space in a media environment that is marked as not "for" them. Building on the ideas presented here, how do you think majority gamers could help? What can players who fit a stereotypical "gamer" identity do to help gaming become more open to others?
- Despite the many challenges interviewees related facing as they took on a gamer identity, female gamers remained deeply invested in gaming's future and positive about what games could become. What makes you optimistic about the future of games and gaming? What do you see as its biggest remaining challenges?

## APPENDIX

### *Research Methods*

This appendix provides an in-depth view into *Gaming Sexism*'s research methods. It is meant for the casual reader who wants to understand the research process, for undergraduate or graduate students of qualitative research methods, or for researchers who wish to replicate this study or employ similar approaches in their own work. The appendix begins by explaining the underlying paradigm and assumptions of the study. It then explains the steps and rationale behind the magazine analysis that undergirds chapter one and the in-depth interviews that provide primary source data throughout the book. Finally, the appendix provides information on participant characteristics and the steps the author took to ensure rigor, trustworthiness, and authenticity.

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is social constructivism? What are its basic assumptions?
- Why are moments of disagreement or fracture important in constructivist work?
- What is grounded theory? Why did Cote employ it in her magazine and interview analyses?
- Explain how the criteria of “trustworthiness” compare to similar metrics for quantitative research.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Given the research methods employed in this study, what are some strengths and weaknesses of the resulting work? What types of conclusions can or can't it draw?
- Consider a topic you're interested in. How could you use a thematic discourse analysis to address an aspect of your topic? What types of texts would you analyze and what information would they provide you?
- Thinking through the same topic, or another area of interest, how could you use in-depth interviews? Who would you speak with, and what information would they provide you?
- Define and explain the criteria for trustworthiness and authenticity, then discuss when a researcher should strive for these criteria and when they should not. How do these criteria apply in constructivist work compared to work that follows different paradigms? Which do you hope to prioritize in your own research and why?

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