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Samantha Blackmon

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POLICIES, WOMEN, AND PROCEDURAL ETHICS: OBSCURED PRESENCES IN

MERITOCRATIC TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

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by

Alexandra M Layne

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For my husband, Mike, who believed in me, supported me, and loved me without

hesitation. I would be degreeless and likely have starred on an episode of *Hoarders* by

now without you. You are the most incredible man I have ever known.

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ABSTRACT

Layne, Alexandra M. Ph.D., Purdue University, May 2014. Policies, Women, and Procedural Ethics: Obscured Presences in Meritocratic Technological Environments. Major Professor: Samantha Blackmon.

This dissertation proposes "Procedural Ethics" as a methodology for studying video games, the video game industry, and other technology-producing fields. It utilizes principles of feminist research methodology, game studies, and professional and technical writing to provide a more ethical way to study games that focuses on material conditions and contexts from which games emerge. An in-depth analysis of company policies at five different video game companies is provided as an example of how a procedural ethics approach might look like.

CHAPTER 1. THE LACK OF WOMEN IN MERITOCRATIC TECHNOLOGY-
PRODUCING INDUSTRIES

Women's lack of technical self-confidence is a product
of workplace dynamics. Change is possible, but this
change is not only the responsibility of the women themselves,
but involves their relations with managers, colleagues and clients
--Helen Peterson

1.1   The Landscape

In 2005, game designer Sheri Graner Ray founded a group that would create

massive ripples in the gaming industry. Her group, called Women in Games

International (WIGI), responded to "a growing demand around the world for the

inclusion and advancement of women in the games industry" ("About"). Working in the

gaming industry since 1989, Graner Ray recalls, in a 2012 interview, the culture in which

she has chosen to spend her life: "Oh I was told over and over at the time that women

don't play computer games. So why should I care? You know, why should I care about

female players that don't play our games? So yeah, I was told flat out, not just by people

I worked with, but by people in the industry, 'well girls don't play games. So why should

we care?'"[1] The invisibility of female gamers is pervasive, and it is indicative of many

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[1] Not Your Mama's Gamer, "Episode 30: An NYMG Interview with Game Designer Sheri Graner Ray"
February 28 2012

other serious issues happening within the gaming industry and other STEM fields. Graner Ray's organization works to make women more visible, as well as to increase the numbers of women within computing fields.

The lack of women in the gaming industry, whether they really aren't there or whether their presence is obscured, is not surprising, considering the difficultly women have found in entering most science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. A 2009 US Department of Labor report shows that "nine of the 10 fastest-growing occupations that require at least a bachelor's degree will require significant scientific or mathematical training" (AAUW 2). In this report, technology-related fields (including games and the game industry) are predicted to show the largest increase. As of 2009, women represented about 22% of the workforce overall in computer programming fields, including both the academy and the industry. This report further shows that salary, prestige, quality, and other desirable job qualities will be increasingly found in highly technical positions. Essentially, this report suggests that in the near future, if you want a well-paid, prestigious, and high-quality job, you will likely have to be well trained in technology and science.[2] This statistic may not surprise anyone, as it is often incorporated into popular lore that all jobs will revolve around the computer one day (Selfe). It is, however, troubling that women represent only 22% of the workforce in these positions.

The video game industry is certainly no exception to this trend. However, because of the complex interaction of many factors over the past 30 years, the video game

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[2] According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), STEM disciplines include mathematics; natural sciences (including physical sciences and biological/agricultural sciences); engineering/engineering technologies; and computer/information sciences. Per the NCTE crosswalk, this dissertation defines technology-specific disciplines as disciplines such as computer programming and electrical engineering. Science disciplines usually refer to the physical, natural, and biological sciences, like agriculture and forestry (Department of Education 24).

industry has become an exaggerated source of this type of underrepresentation. Far below the meager 22% of women in computer programming fields overall, women represent around 11% of all jobs in the gaming industry, falling to under 5% when looking at programming positions. In the UK, women's representation is falling by around 2% per year, down to only 6% of the overall workforce in games as of 2013 (Dudley 7). The video game industry has since 2004 made more money than Hollywood and the music industry combined (Yi), with games regularly making double or triple big screen blockbuster movies (Chatfield). Of music, movies, and games, the veritable trifecta in big-buck entertainment industries, games is the largest growing by a wide margin. And in this fast growing industry, in the fastest growing (technical) positions, women are abysmally underrepresented.

In addition to these statistics that make the video game industry an ideal spot to carryout the kind of analysis that can be useful when examining gender issues in all STEM disciplines, the games industry also has a unique capacity for long-lasting yet rapid change. In academic game studies, we are not writing armchair essays and ungrounded theory that will likely have no tangible impact outside of our departments; rather, the pervasive crossover and hybridity in the field has created an environment where academic voices are heard in the industry and industry voices are heard in the academy. In fact, many of the most well known professors studying video games are also game designers, and many of the top-selling books on video games are written by practitioners. If we as academics want to do work that will create change, this is an ideal field.

To again examine the question put to Graner Ray over and over in her 20-year career in video games, why should we care? Or even closer to home, what stake does rhetoric have in video games, in the video games industry, and in the lack of women in technology-producing fields? I would answer that rhetoric has been forced to have a stake in this field whether we want to or not. Ian Bogost, probably the most well known and widely read scholar in the academic study of games and in the games industry has put rhetoric at the center of what it means to study games: visual rhetoric, digital rhetoric, and procedural rhetoric are the terms often (mis)used in the field. Bogost situates the study of video games within the history of how we have studied paintings, film, photography and other forms of art. He writes, "Following these traditions, this book suggests that videogames open a new domain for persuasion, thanks to their core representational mode, procedurality" (68). Video games are taking us beyond other forms of art through a new kind of rhetoric.

Bogost writes "I believe that this power [of using video games to create long-term social change] is not equivalent to the content of videogames, as the serious games community claims. Rather, this power lies in the very way videogames mount claims through procedural rhetorics" (95). For Bogost, who does not have a background in rhetorical history, rhetoric is the simple act of convincing someone to do or think something. He roots rhetoric and the persuasion that happens in games in the rhetorical tradition, using rhetorical principles as defined by Aristotle. Because of this, rhetoric has now become inseparably tied to video games: those trained in serious games, programming, education, sociology, psychology, and the many other disciplines studying the power of video games are learning via Bogost that rhetoric acts in a simplistic and

mechanistic way. What is lacking, however, is a nuanced understanding of how rhetoric

works in these games, which, as I will explore at length, is inextricably tied to the

question of gender in the games industry. That is why rhetoric should care about what is

happening in the video games industry.

1.2   The Multifaceted Problem

> *The sexual harassment is part of the culture.*
> *If you remove that from the fighting game*
> *community, it's not the fighting game community…*
> *it doesn't make sense to have that attitude.*
> *These things have been established for years.*
> --Aris Bahktinian

The problem of the lack of women in the games industry goes beyond simple

numbers. These issues are embedded in every part of the industry from the policy, to the

games themselves, to the community discourse, and so on. Sheri Graner Ray's work to

get women involved in the industry comes at a crucial time for women in games, as

women have started to represent a significant portion of the gaming market. According

to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), 42% of video game players are women

("Game"). Further, women 37 and older are the largest growing demographic of gamers.

But perhaps most interesting to game development companies, is that women spend 76

cents of every dollar spent on games. Despite these encouraging statistics, the number of

women who work behind the scenes is increasing at a much slower rate (and decreasing

in some areas).

As of 2010, less than 10% of the gaming industry overall was female ("GDC" and "It Pays"). Women occupy about 25% of the positions in the business/legal sector, 18% of production positions, and 5% of programmers. Essentially, the more technical the position, the fewer women hold positions. Graner Ray says, "There's no question we are seeing more women coming into the field. We're still, I think the last number I read was around 11% female, which is not near what I would like it to be, but I do think we are going to see it continue to improve with the schools now offering programs and things like that. We're going to continue to see it improve, and that's… well you can't go fast enough for me, but hey." But there are many diverse perspectives on why there is this lack of women.

The women that are working within the industry often are perceived as falling into one of two roles: "booth babes" or "bitches" (Blackmon and Layne, forthcoming). Booth babes, typically women dressed in bikinis or other revealing outfits who stand near booths to promote sales, are often present at trade shows, conferences, and other professional and entertainment events in the gaming industry. For example, at a 2009 comic con, EA sports sponsored an event called "Sin to Win" where visitors were tasked to perform an "act of lust" on one of the booth babes at the conference (Chalk). Contestants then submitted their proof (photos), and winners received a "SINful night with two hot girls" (Chalk). By creating an environment that make it ok to treat women like objects and encouraging people to touch women without their permission, companies like EA feed into the sexual harassment, sexual assault, and underrepresentation found throughout the industry.

Treating and portraying women as objects is pervasive in the gaming industry, as can be evidenced in games like Aspyr and 2K Games's *Duke Nukem Forever* (2011), which features a "capture the babe" mode where players attempt to catch women in bikinis and carry them over their shoulder, slapping their butts if they squirm too much (Gilbert). In a 2013 interview with Meagan Marie, community manager at the development company Crystal Dynamics, she reports that local strip clubs regularly have strippers engage in cosplay (dressing up as characters from video games, tv, or comics) and flood gaming conferences.

On the other hand, women who don't fall into the highly ingrained, culturally dominant "booth babe" role are often classified as "bitches." Articles about the workplace dynamics of gender have long covered this occurrence, usually referring to it as the "double bind." For example, Jeanne Weiland Herrik writes, "women's language ties them to a speech style that inevitably shuts them off from having power in the workplace because it forces them into the double bind of being perceived as either likable and weak but ineffective [booth babe] or as unlikable but competent and professional [bitch]" (274). Evidence being archived on gamer-run sites like fatuglyorslutty.com chronicles the reaction women receive upon refusing to fit in to a "booth babe" persona (ie. "go back to the kitchen slut" ("Stepford")).

Despite the pervasiveness of this double bind faced by women, many men in the industry are still baffled by the lack of women. In August 2010, noted technology writer Michael Arrington published an article "Too Few Women in Tech? Stop Blaming the Men," in *TechCrunch* Magazine. He starts out by saying,

Success in Silicon Valley, most would agree, is more merit driven than
almost any other place in the world. It doesn't matter how old you are,
what sex you are, what politics you support or what color you are. If your
idea rocks and you can execute, you can change the world and/or get
really, stinking rich.

Despite his claim that the tech industry is a meritocracy, which would suggest that
diversity of gender, class, and race would not be a problem, it clearly is. He goes on to
say,

Every damn time we have a conference we fret over how we can find
women to fill speaking slots. We ask our friends and contacts for
suggestions. We beg women to come and speak. Where do we end up?
With about 10% of our speakers as women.

We won't put women on stage just because they're women – that's not
fair to the audience who've paid thousands of dollars each to be there. But
we do spend an extraordinary amount of time finding those qualified
women and asking them to speak.

And you know what? A lot of the time they say no. Because they are
literally hounded to speak at every single tech event in the world because
they are all trying so hard to find qualified women to speak at their
conference.

Perhaps tech conferences do spend time and money trying to find women to speak
at their conference; perhaps companies do work hard to recruit women to the field;

maybe techies themselves even strive to include women in their geek communities. The problem, however, is so much bigger (yet so much more invisible) than that.

Caroline Simard writes that "in environments that are designed to be meritocratic, women and minorities receive less compensation for equal performance." She writes that women face "isolation, a lack of access to influential social networks and mentors, lack of role models, stereotyping, unwelcoming cultures, and organizational practices that are not adapted to a diverse workforce"—all laden with that subtly that makes it very difficult to be taken seriously when discussing these issues. MIT Professor Emilio Castilla's impressive 2008 study, "Gender, Race, and Meritocracy in Organizational Careers" finds that a lack of accountability and transparency create a biased and discriminatory environment in merit-based organizational structures (1491). In fact, some research he points to argues that merit-based systems serve to further obscure discriminatory practices, suggesting that merit-based environments allows for even more discrimination than traditional hierarchical structures.

Sometimes, though, the discrimination is far from discrete. We only need to look back to the brilliant developer and tech writer Kathy Sierra. Sierra is a notably brilliant coder and the co-creator of the *Head First* book series on technical issues. After becoming arguably the most well known female programmer, Kathy Sierra was threatened into seclusion. Before going to speak at the 2007 O'Reilly ETech conference, Sierra started receiving death threats. The threats continued, and escalated. Trolls posted her social security number online, as well as her address and false accounts of her career. The BBC reported that she believes, "the campaign against her is more likely to be because she is a woman in the male-dominated technology world." Many of the threats

were reportedly sexual in nature. Sierra said, "I have cancelled all speaking engagements. I am afraid to leave my yard, I will never feel the same. I will never be the same."

What happened to Sierra was by no means an isolated incident. Recently a similar situation arose when Google employee Noirin Shirley was (allegedly) sexually assaulted by a Twitter employee at the ApacheTech conference. Shirley outed her attacker on the Internet and was lambasted by the tech community for the so-called trial by Internet. Shirley writes of her assault,

> He brought me in to the snug, and sat up on a stool. He grabbed me, pulled me in to him, and kissed me. I tried to push him off, and told him I wasn't interested (I may have been less eloquent, but I don't think I was less clear). He responded by jamming his hand into my underwear and fumbling.

Geek Feminism Wiki author Valerie Aurora argues that this is far from an isolated incident. She writes, "here it is, the year 2010, and my female friends and I are still being insulted, harassed, and groped at open source conferences." Further, the response to Shirley was much less than sympathetic. She was maligned across multiple prominent game blogs and websites, as well as attacked on social media like Twitter for speaking out. While some (very few) organizations, like the ADA Initiative, which works to get technology-focused conferences to implement a sexual harassment policy, did come out in support of Shirley, the vast majority expressed sympathy for her attacker for being silenced by Shirley's public blog post.

It would be much easier to put blame on the conference attendees rather than the conference organizers if the organizers took reasonable steps to protect their conference-

goers. At this particular conference, no sexual harassment policy was in place. In fact, most tech conferences, particularly open source conferences, have no sexual harassment policy of any kind. This calls into question Arrington's suggestion that it is a lack of skill and will that keep women away from tech fields. Aurora reports that "three of the ten women reported being physically assaulted at a [technology-based] conference." In light of this, Arrington's complaint that "Every damn time we have a conference we fret over how we can find women to fill speaking slots" seems to obscure a far greater problem than a lack of interest. Rather, it suggests that the culture of hostility against women and lack of women in the industry stem from much deeper, institutional problems.

It is out of this environment that my dissertation emerges. On one hand, I am committed to keeping my work firmly entrenched in these oft-ignored material conditions of the gaming industry. On the other, I believe that academia can have a significant voice in the reshaping of this industry. Those of us in rhetoric and professional writing often study the way institutional discourse shapes the practice of individuals, material conditions, and the way knowledge is validated within a culture (Feenberg, Faber, De Certeau, Siri-Johnson). My hope is to find a means to expose and explore the discourse and materiality behind the lack of women and the treatment of women in the gaming industry. Through this community-based work, I will attempt to establish a new way of thinking about technological environments that refuses to ignore the issues of gender and race that I call Procedural Ethics. Procedural Ethics is an amalgamation of feminist methodology, workplace research, and procedural rhetoric. In the end, I hope my contribution will be twofold: 1) In accordance with feminist research methodology, I want to find some way to positively impact the community I'm studying and 2) I want to

establish a theory of technology, or rather a way of studying technological environments, that is more ethical in terms of what it studies and how it studies.

1.3   The Plan

In Chapter Two, I discuss the literature relevant to my project. I start with a review of feminist research methodology. Feminist research methodology has shaped every part of this project. It taught me how to ask better questions and how to look at phenomena more totally than any other methodology I have encountered. My project rests on the major principles of this methodology and thus readers may encounter what could be seen as inconsistencies. For example, feminist research methodology suggests that the research can never (and shouldn't) be separate from the research. In addition, this research methodology supports researcher intervention. Whereas previous schools of thought insisted that the researcher must not taint the environment, feminist research methodologists believe that impacting the environment is unavoidable, and thus can be embraced (as ethically as possible). Tenets of feminist research methodology are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

I also examine predominant theories in Game Studies. Primarily I focus on Ian Bogost's concept of Procedural Rhetoric. This theory is one of the cornerstones of how we study games and Bogost is probably the most well known games scholar (see his interview on *The Colbert Report*). I explore the lenses that Procedural Rhetoric affords researchers and I discuss what I see as crucial things that Procedural Rhetoric does not allow to surface. Procedural Rhetoric relies on a simplified version of rhetoric, treating it

as synonymous with persuasion. Because of this, the role of rhetoric in games has been limited.

I end Chapter Two by discussing workplace studies, professional writing scholarship, and other foundations that I rely on throughout my project. This section pays particular attention to studies of supposed meritocratic workplaces. One theorist I focus on, Emilio Castilla, writes, "Although these policies [meritocratic ones) are often adopted in the hope of motivating employees and ensuring meritocracy, policies with limited transparency and accountability can actually increase ascriptive bias and reduce equity in the workplace" (1479). This notion undergirds much of my argument in chapter four where I analyze claims of meritocracy in company policies, paying particular attention to how claims of meritocracy are used to circumvent official policies on harassment and discrimination.

I also discuss studies done by Deloitte Women's Initiative, The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative, Norfond, the Association for Women's Rights in Development, World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the United Nations Fund for Women, and Women's Learning Partnership, Gender at Work, the George Washington University. Each of these studies uses a primarily holistic approach to analyzing gender issues. From them, I am able to draw out methods I use in Chapter 4 to analyze video game company policies. These also play heavily into Chapter 3, where I lay out my theory of procedural ethics.

Chapter Three defines and exemplifies Procedural Ethics, the theory I am coining as a more ethical way to study video games (and other STEM disciplines in general). Procedural ethics draws heavily from the studies discussed above, on studies of ethics

being done in the field of game studies, and also on feminist research methodology as defined by scholars like Pat Sullivan. As ethics is currently growing in popularity in game studies, and feminist research methodology offers one of the most sensible and comprehensive strategies available, a hybrid methodology based in both areas is both useful and timely.

Procedural ethics is contextual at its very foundation, so the way it shows up in my study on video games is specific to the problems in video games. In fact, I point to other game theories that are not contextual, and thus provide a limited scope through which to work. In this iteration, procedural ethics highlights three primary components: it suggests that it is unethical to exclude cultural factors from any investigation of the technological, it sees the researcher (and her values and beliefs) as inseparable from the research, and it is interdisciplinary. This, of course, is a reductive view of how one can use procedural ethics as a methodology, but it is essentially what I am up to. Procedural ethics highlights the intermingling of procedures and cultures without privileging one over the other, as studies of games in most disciplines do.

In chapter 4 I conduct my data analysis. This chapter is influenced significantly by the work of Brenton Faber, who argues that stories are the key to creating long lasting change (or as he calls it, "true change"). Further, he finds that the stories he is after are told in the documents of the industries he encounters. In other words, documents tell stories, and stories shape how people act. To create lasting change in a company, you must look to the formal documents or (as he finds) the lack of documents. He writes, "Change is inherently a discursive project. This means that change is restricted by the structures of language and by the conventions of language use. Change will be a product

of what can be legitimately said (or written) in a specific context at a specific moment in time" (25). This view of change is one that I adopt completely in my project. In order to create change in the video game industry and community to make it better, safer, and diverse, I believe we need to start discursively, by analyzing and then altering the documents of those creating the games: the video game companies.

As I discuss in chapter 4, I operate under three major assumptions:

1. Company policies reflect the ways "the company" (whether this means the CEO, the Board of Directors, or some unseen entity is up for debate) desires its employees to act.

2. Company policies are a major part of the narratives that institutions shape about themselves.

3. Formal, documented policies are often the last refuge for those who are discriminated against, harassed, ignored, or otherwise abused.

While these assumptions are flawed, I believe that it is necessary to posit some temporary stability[3] in order to take action. To move forward, rather than being caught up in a cycle where I am unable to speak until my logic is flawless, I believe that (in accordance with Procedural Ethics), these assumptions, as well as my methods, are as ethical as they can be for the context in which I am working and with the goals I hope to accomplish.

With this in mind, I analyze the Code of Conduct or Employee Handbooks of five companies: Blizzard, EA, Riot Games, Valve, and Zynga. Blizzard and EA are both in the top three grossing video game companies as of 2013. Blizzard has been increasing in

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[3] A phrase created by Jeremy Cushman and myself during a collaborative paper.

size and becoming more profitable over the last several years. EA, on the other hand, has had significant PR issues and has been oscillating between growing slightly and losing profits. Riot Games and Valve both represent medium size, more independent companies that do not yet have the status of a mega-corporation. Zynga was a small, independent company that grew fast on the front of the social gaming revolution, and because of this, represents a fairly large portion of the social gaming industry. These are companies who often hit big with one game and grow almost instantaneously. I believe these five companies are a fair representation of the kinds of policies that exist in the video game industry.

The sample size has been limited by many factors, but primarily by the near-obsessive propriety video game companies have over their inner workings. Further, many companies are legally bound to control player information. Thus, I had to work solely from publicly available documents, which means that my data is subject to being out of date and incomplete. I do, however, believe that publicly available documents may hold the most distilled language through which the company wishes to be seen. In other words, if the document makes it into the public sphere, it has likely been vetted and will reflect the basic feelings of the company executives. Further, I was unable to gain access to consistent documents across all companies. I was able to procure Codes of Conduct for Blizzard, EA, Valve, and Zynga. I found Employee Handbooks for Riot Games and Valve. By comparing my findings on Valve's documents, I am able to discuss the variances in context and results between the groups.

I provide both a visual analysis and a textual analysis of the documents. The visual analysis focuses exclusively on what is in the text by representing the text using

word frequency and word count by section. The textual analysis uses holistic guidelines for equitable workplaces put in place by a number of different organizations and research groups. In the textual analysis I focus on areas such as harassment, discrimination, negotiating a position between work and family life, appropriate workplace and non-workplace behavior, and so forth. Four of the five companies I study have little to no components of an equitable workplace in their policies. One company falls in the middle, offering many more components, though still not nearly enough to be considered equitable.

The final chapter draws out conclusions from my research and lays out a detailed path for how game studies scholarship should continue in light of these findings and in light of procedural ethics. In an attempt to move away from the rigid and decontextualized model of procedural rhetoric posited by Ian Bogost, Chapter 5 attempts to clearly detail how theorists in game studies or any STEM or technology-based field can use procedural ethics to ethically conduct research that involves both humans and machines.

In the end, I hope research on games can be taken with the seriousness of other topics so that we can begin to improve the environment for those in the industry, those playing the games, and those who want to study games. This is a rich site for workplace studies and for theorizing about the relationship between people and code, though it has been dismissed because of the view that games are not fit for academic research.

CHAPTER 2. WHERE FEMINISM AND POSTHUMANISM MEET: FINDING A
METHODOLOGY BETWEEN CODE, PROCEDURES, AND ETHICS

A literature review tells a story. It linearizes ideas that aren't linear; it juxtaposes the disparate; it is an attempt to show readers the impossibly messy process that the writer has undergone to come to a particular idea. It is at once both a looking backward to see the progression of the project at hand and looking forward to show how this project will ultimately fit into extant literature. This is not meant as an idle meditation on what a literature review is. It is my justification for what follows: my attempt to cobble together ideas, authors, movements, and words that often are not even aware of each others' existence. Feminist research methodology, which is the cornerstone of my project and of my proposed theory Procedural Ethics, is a field that stretches over many years and even more disciplines. Game Studies proper, Professional Writing theory, feminist theories of technology, rhetorical theory, feminism and game studies, workplace research, new media theory, discourse analysis, and so on are only some of the fields that I touch on or pull from at some point in my project. Any story I tell that has these already in conversation would be a fabrication. What I hope, though, is that in the end, the lack of the story becomes the story. Putting a word like "feminist" at the beginning of many terms (like technology or games studies) precludes it from being included in the mainstream field of research. Likewise, putting "video games" into a project excludes it from being considered in most workplace studies or PW theory, because games aren't

perceived as work. The story here is how something that is so important, so revolutionary, and so revealing has slipped through our fingers because of preconceived notions about our own borders. We[4] neglect games in workplace research without realizing that the video game industry is the largest entertainment industry in the United States (bigger than Hollywood, DVD sales, and TV put together). We think we can study games (nearly 50% of players being women yet only holding about 10% of jobs in the industry) without talking about gender. In this sense, what is at stake in "Procedural Ethics" is the acknowledgement that because our inquiries have had sometimes hidden allegiances that are biased against particular ideas, it has hurt our work in terms of what we are able to do, to say, and how we are able to affect others with our work.

That said, my goal in this literature review is not to leave an idle trail of thought. Rather, in a lot of ways, my argument grows out of this review. The gaps, overlaps, and insights are crucial to my project. Thus I begin with a review of feminist research methodology because feminist research methodology underpins all of my thinking. It is my approach to this project. Second, I look at video game studies to give an overview of the field and to show the gap that this research fills. Then I explore relevant PW theory and workplace studies, looking at rich ways these fields have conducted similar inquiries, though never on something so silly as the video game industry. I end by looking at the very few overlaps between these: feminist game studies, feminist workplace research, and feminist theories of technology.

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[4] Throughout this project, "we" refers in general to those doing academic studies; the specific group of researchers is dependant on context. I use "we" to highlight the many hats one who studies women and technology must wear, the many hats she must don, the many "we's" she must be accepted by. To study women in games, the researcher must be an expert (and prove that expertise) in many, many fields.

2.1   Feminist Research Methodologies

As an emergent field, feminist research methodology has few books and articles that overview the field. Many of the central texts were written before feminist research methodology was a defined term and were mostly written for different purposes. In *Opening Spaces*, Patricia Sullivan writes that "all methodology is rhetorical, an explicit or implicit theory of human relations which guides the operation of methods" (11). This is how I am thinking about methodology. When I suggest we discuss and perhaps change our methodology in game studies, I'm not talking about explicit, definable things that can be checked off of a checklist. Rather, I'm talking about the more subtle things that ground our work. I'm talking about the things that guide us to ask the questions we ask, to value the things we value, and write the things we write.

What is groundbreaking in Sullivan's work is the exploration of just how much our research is shaped by our own beliefs. She writes, "We see critical actions taken by researchers, then, as manifestations of the ability to act in the production of knowledge at the same time as they are vigilant about the ways in which our circumstances, abilities, values, and beliefs encourage us to act in certain ways"(16). As far as I can tell, this view of methodology, this revelation, has not been acknowledged by those doing game studies. Rather, games studies scholarship has been mostly situated in either philosophy or computational study. The former does not interrogate researcher bias because—and this is an overly general statement that will be interrogated in depth later on—the philosophers in game studies have to some extent conducted their research with 1) The

belief in researcher objectivity and seperateness from the research and 2) The belief in the possibility of finding abstract universals that are context independent.

For example, game scholars have been all but obsessed with finding a transcendent definition of play. Sullivan, using feminist research methodology, may say that finding that transcendent definition is impossible (and perhaps even worthless). What's more important is mapping the situation at hand. Using postmodern mapping, Sullivan argues that researchers should look at themselves and their research through the lens of ideology, practice, and method. A researcher using feminist research methodology, then, would be constantly reflective about why s/he talked about particular things, why s/he asks particular questions, how s/he asks those questions, and so on. It is my belief, and of crucial importance to this project, that good researchers must do this. It is also my belief that video game scholars have, with few exceptions, not done this.

The exact methods of a feminist research are for the most part undefined. In her groundbreaking work on feminist research methods, Shulamit Reinharz writes "Locating unabashedly misogynist research and gynopic mainstream texts was a liberating experience, but defining alternative practices was more difficult. Attempts to outline new "feminist" ways of doing research were often vague or unsuccessful"(5). Instead, what a specifically feminist methodology brings to the table is the ability to see patterns, ask questions, and discover interrelationships that are hidden while using masculine methodologies (12). Another important part of doing feminist research is not coming from a position of "intellectual curiosity," but rather from outrage and passion.

In their recent book, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch propose a

new (or, rather newly defined) theory called Feminist Rhetorical Practices (slightly

different that Sullivan's feminist research methodology, but with some similar aims).

This is the culmination of a "search for a more generative paradigm for research and

practice [which] began with the recognition that broadening the scope of our scholarly

agenda, by whatever dimensions, requires the frameworks that support those agendas to

be dynamic rather than static and versatile enough to accommodate vibrancy and

expansion" (Kindle Locations 217-218). Through *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Royster

and Kirsch hope to redefine how we do rhetorical inquiry, resituating ourselves on the

disciplinary landscape. They attempt to move beyond what they call the basic approaches

to feminist intervention in rhetoric such as revising the major narrative of the field to

include women. Their work focuses on looking at the more implicit and subtle changes to

language, knowledge-making practices, and inquiry frameworks as a result.

By establishing feminist research methods as essential to the study of rhetoric,

Royster and Kirsch accomplish something similar to my goal with this project: to make

feminist research methodology (or a variation of it, as they are using) central to how we

do rhetoric. In a sense, Royster and Kirsch are not positing a "feminist" way of doing

research. Rather, they are proposing a way everyone should be approaching research that

is based on feminist principles. Doing this would in theory ensure that all research

practices are ethical, reflective, self-interrogating, and ethical (if we believe that feminist

research methodology holds these values). The authors write, "Imbedded in these

suppositions are values, with a key value being the importance of paying attention to the

ethical self in the texts we study, the texts we produce, and the pedagogical frames that

we use to instruct and train our students" (Kindle Locations 301-303). It may seem

obvious to always consider oneself (the researcher) as ethically relevant to the study. However, because of the myth of the "objective" researcher, the researcher's ethical role in the study has been unfortunately understated. One of the primary tenets of feminist research methodology is to always consider the researcher, and her ethics, as part of the findings.

Approaching the researcher and ethics from another perspective, Donna Haraway, Distinguished Professor Emerita of the History of Consciousness, wrote a book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, where she called into question the whole notion of scientific objectivity. Contextually, this work was part a conversation among feminist researchers and theorists that began to reclaim some tenets of science and philosophy that had been used to oppress women and control women's bodies in the eighties and nineties. This allowed for a flood of researchers and theorists to begin to unravel hidden methodologies surrounding embodiment that promoted particular assumptions about science and truth that was built on supposed objectivity.

So, via Haraway, embodied or situated knowledge becomes a foundational principle for feminist research methodology (a principle that is still contested, and one that has certainly not been adopted by video game theorists). Because video game worlds seem so defined (ie. the game is coded and mostly static),[5] there has been a rush of theorists who rely on these outdated notions of objectivity unraveled by theorists like Haraway through work on situated and embodied knowledge, practice, and situated knowledge. However, even though video games are made of numbers and algorithms that

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[5] I recognize that things like DLC and constant updates and patches mean that almost no game is static. Even games that were once static can now be modded. However, there is a level of temporary stability of a game when you play. Further, not every code is changing at every moment, so players will perceive the game as somewhat static.

define much of their behavior, there is still always human interaction. Further, even if a game could somehow be analyzed separate from the human, there is always the possibility of the unknown: power failure, technological breakdown, viruses, and so on. Games are living—even "static" games are living because of the play emerges between player and game (simplistically) and that means that it's always situated, always embodied, and always rhetorical.

Through Haraway, or rather through the breakthroughs that Haraway incites, I am able to ground feminist research methodology, and thus my critique of current game studies theory, in the body and in the emergent situation. This calls into question much of the research that has been done by popular game studies theorists like Ian Bogost, discussed in the next section.

While Haraway was a pioneer in the dismantling of "objectivity" through research methodology, theorists like Karen Barad have shown that feminist research methodology is a better methodology than extant scientific theories for the increasing complexity we are discovering underlies much of the physical world. Karen Barad holds a PhD in theoretical particle physics and quantum field theory. Thus, she may seem like an unlikely candidate to be heading up a movement among feminist epistemologists, scientists, and social scientists that redefine many of the ways we think about the world. Her theory, Agential Realism, is

an epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human and nonhuman, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices, thereby moving such considerations beyond the well-worn debates that pit constructivism against realism,

agency against structure, and idealism against materialism. Indeed, the new philosophical framework that I propose entails a rethinking of fundamental concepts that support such binary thinking, including the notions of matter, discourse, causality, agency, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space, and time (Barad, *Meeting*, 2007).

In other words, her work calls into question the assumptions on which much of science has historically been based. But her theories, or more specifically her approach to research is very much in the vein of feminist research methodologists.

Barad writes, "our ability to understand the world hinges on our taking account of the fact that our knowledge-making practices are social-material enactments that contribute to, and are a part of, the phenomena we describe" (Barad, *Meeting*, 2007). Through the juxtaposition of these foundational thinkers, we can see how there is a growing uneasiness with the legacy left by modernist (and some postmodernist) thinkers across both the sciences and the humanities. While there may be a wide range and many differing factors that led to this kind of questioning, the move is clear: we are moving away from static, definitional, and objective ways of thinking and are beginning to acknowledge how knowledge is contextual and emergent.

One manifestation of feminist research methodology is the shift away from description to practice. Barad writes, "The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/ doings/actions" ("Posthuman," 802). This is different from a social constructivist standpoint, as Barad says, because while social constructivists are interested in how things are reflected in each other, she is interested in how things are diffracted in each

other. Diffraction focuses on materiality, science, and the social and the ways that each illuminate the others in different ways. Thus the terms are never defined, the meanings are never static, and nothing is reflected "as is."

Barad's critiques of representationalism call into question much of the ontological basis of video game scholarship. She writes, "That is, there are assumed to be two distinct and independent kinds of entities—representations and entities to be represented… When this happens it becomes clear that representations serve a mediating function between independently existing entities. This taken-for-granted ontological gap generates questions of the accuracy of representations" (Barad, "Posthuman," 804). As I discuss in section 2, ethics in game research, procedural rhetoric, and most other theories of video games are dependant on this separation of representations and entities to be represented. What this means is that the theories we use are based on the false assumption that the way we represent something is static and correlative to how it "really" is. In other words, we are wasting are time trying to create the most accurate representations possible (or representing games and meaning as accurately as possible).

Theorist Anne Balsamo is probably best known for her work in the mid nineties on the technological gendered body. Recently, she published a groundbreaking book that blurs the lines between culture and technology, studying the ways innovative practices manifest in the social/technological environment. She argues that "We need new ways of thinking about technology, culture, education, and the multidisciplinary practices of cultural reproduction that take form as a media rich documentaries, public interactive, creative pedagogy's, digital scholarship, and new technologies of imagination" (197). She destroys the notion that culture can any longer be thought of from separate from

technology and vice versa. She defines culture as "a socially shared symbolic system of signs and meanings" (5). In this sense, she is quite right that little of our culture remains isolated from the technological influence, and certainly every technological innovation has been steeped with cultural meaning and cultural consequences.

Balsamo may not be considered a traditional methodologist, but her work coincides with feminist research methodology in important ways. She argues that ethics, social identity, class, gender, race, ethnicity, community, and other social factors are inextricable from technology--that you cannot study technology without considering these cultural factors. Any picture you draw of technology without considering these is incomplete at best and irresponsible at worst.

From this, Balsamo wants people to "design for culture." Designing for culture "directs technological innovators to consider such non-technological factors as a social values held by various classes, genders, races, and ethnic communities, as well as the levels of literacy parentheses technological, visual, and traditional) among intended users" (15). Because design both is shaped by and shapes the cultural, good design—according to Balsamo—is always situated at these messy intersections. It is but a dream of the modernist that we can study a program, an algorithm, a computer without considering these social factors.

Besides the authors I've named, there have been several theorists that have influenced feminist research methodology and this project. Along with Barad, Sue Rosser and Sandra Harding both study feminist epistemology and science. Rosser wrote a breakthrough book about gender in the sciences called *Teaching the Majority: Breaking the Gender Barrier in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering*. This is often a

cornerstone for those doing feminist research in the sciences. Likewise, Sandra Harding, publishing around the same time as Donna Haraway, wrote *The Science Question in Feminism*, was one of the first to ask whether science, which is based on primarily masculine assumptions and principles, can ever be used for emancipatory purposes.

Jane Bennet, working from political theory, is one of the major authors in the new materialisms movement, which is a feminist take on how objects show up for us. In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things,* she writes human agency is always an assemblage of microbes, animals, plants, metals, chemicals, word-sounds, and the like - indeed, that insofar as anything 'acts' at all, it has already entered an agentic assemblage" (Kindle Locations 1697-1698). This new materialisms movement, in which Karen Barad is also a prime theorist, worries about objects like Object Oriented Ontology (OOO), it just also worries about humans.

In rhetoric and composition, or a variation of it, Heidi McKee, Debra Hawhee, Lynn Worsham, Susan Jarrott, and Cindy Selfe have all written about ways research is impacted by ethics, technology, and/or gender. While perhaps not writing with the aim of creating a feminist research methodology or even a research methodology in general, these authors exhibit key ways that the question of feminism and the question of ethics are never separate from questions of rhetoric.

2.2   Predominant Theories of Game Studies

Attempting to provide an overview of game studies scholarship presents a unique set of problems. The research is interdisciplinary, which is not in itself a problem, but it is also used for such a variety of purposes that collecting all research on games would be

impossible. There are few authors that talk about Game Studies as a field, such as Ian Bogost, Espen Aarseth, and Jesper Juul. These authors are the ones attempting a body of knowledge and systematic way for approaching the study of games. Disciplines have historically had different ways of becoming a discipline. For example, there is a debate in technical communication right now about whether a "tech comm. writer" exam is necessary to legitimize the field. Some form around one paramount essay, such as how composition studies as an intellectual discipline began forming around Janice Lauer's "Dappled Discipline." This may stem from a desire to legitimize the field or from a desire to unify it. Regardless, Ian Bogost, Espen Aarseth, and Jesper Juul have a major role in how others learn about and do game studies.

Beyond these authors, however, the scholarship becomes so diverse it is difficult to review. Game Studies scholars write about games and education, and education specialists write about the use of games in the classroom. Some, like James Paul Gee, traverse that boundary. Many popular-themed books have been published by scholars in game studies, like Raph Koster and Matt Barton. These types of book are made for a non-academic audience and deal with things like the history of games and the role of games in our lives. Few authors, such as Samantha Blackmon, Mia Consalvo, and T.L. Taylor focus on gender and race in games, who all attempt to find new ways to study games that acknowledge the importance of recognizing these issues every time we study a game. Some authors, like Bonnie Nardi, focus on the game as a virtual world and ask question about what that means for things like identity.

For example, Samantha Blackmon writes of the connections between race and technology, arguing that you can't ignore the importance and historical relationship

between the two. She writes, "For these students, the use of computer technology in the classroom (the same technology that historically few racial and socioeconomic minorities have had access to because of its prohibitive cost) adds another layer to the oppression that they have already experienced in higher education and society in general" (969). Thus one can never approach a computer tabula rasa, nor is the computer a blank slate that harbors none of the ways it has been used to oppress. The very presence of the technology, and Blackmon puts it, is a violence that has to be recognized.

It would take many dissertations to cover this rich body of scholarship. Instead, I will be focusing on those authors who attempt to posit a theory or method for the study of games. These are authors who have come to dominate the questions we ask and what shows up for us as important. They would likely be on a syllabus for a game studies class, and they are slowly becoming canonized. I am referring to them not because I think they're the most important, quite the contrary. Just as in the study of rhetoric, many scholars would cringe at the idea that books like Bizzell and Herzog's *Rhetorical Tradition* or Brereton's *Origins of Composition Studies* define or even depict the important things in our field, rhetoricians who study game would likely cringe at the idea that Ian Bogost understands the complexity of rhetoric. However, it is these books and authors that are taught to non-specialists, and they are, unfortunately, the theorists positing theories that are widely accepted and implemented.

I will start by overviewing the theories of procedural rhetoric and object oriented philosophy and how they have been used and are being used as the predominant ways to study and analyze video game artifacts. In addition to these scholarly sources, I will be relying heavily on documents from the video game community itself, as a way to give the

community a voice in what it thinks is important. By contrasting what our theories say is important about video games with what the community thinks is important, I think some interesting insights will be exposed.

In rhetoric, the way we study new media seems not have a standard methodology or epistemology. We cross many disciplinary boundaries. As rhetoricians, we are influenced by art (Hansen, Manovich), technology and culture (Jenkins, Wark), composition and writing (Selfe, Blackmon), studies of play (Salen and Zimmerman), psychology (Murray, Turkle), development (McGonigal), posthumanism (Hayles, Haraway) and game studies (Aarseth, Bogost), among others. Since this body of scholarship is already so rich and diverse, it may be obscured to some why it is crucial that rhetoric has a hand in shaping this emergent discipline and what game studies can bring to rhetoric.

Currently, procedural rhetoric has a lot of cache in how we talk about new media environments, particularly in regards to cultural artifacts like games. Procedural rhetoric, via Bogost argues that, "processes define the way things work: the methods, techniques, and logics that drive the operation of systems, from mechanical systems like engines to organizational systems like high schools to conceptual systems like religious faith. Rhetoric refers to effective and persuasive expression. Procedural rhetoric, then, is a practice of using processes persuasively. More specifically, procedural rhetoric is the practice of persuading through processes in general and computational processes in particular" (180)

This is my visual of how Bogost's model of Procedural Rhetoric may look visualized:
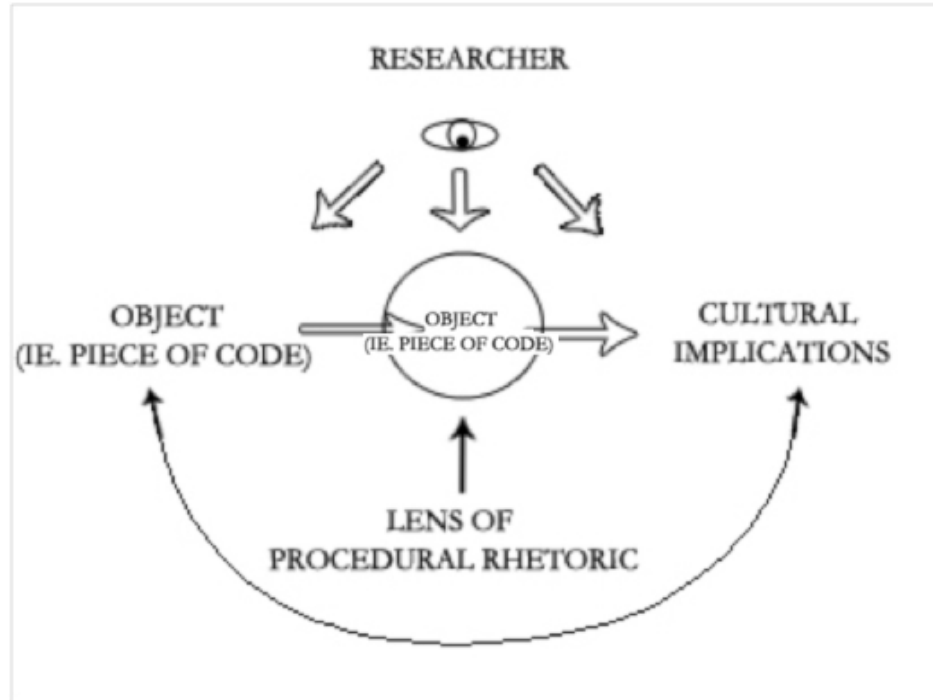
Figure 1. Visualization of Bogost's model of Procedural Rhetoric.

This model affords us several interesting methods of analysis, though it does contain some blindspots. Procedural rhetoric allows us to ask questions of digital artifacts that reveal cultural assumptions on the part of the player. When examining a website, for example, procedural rhetoric lets us look at not only the language on the screen, but the language behind the screens forcing users to navigate and experience the site in particular ways. This model is also reflexive. It assumes that cultural implications are both (broadly) influenced by and influence the object/artifact being analyzed. A lens of procedural rhetoric also forefronts the persuasion that takes place in the margins of many digital environments. In video games, for example, substantive arguments about reality are rarely made explicitly. Rather, it is the things that are assumed in the game, the things the player never really notices, that are making the strongest argument. The

Call of Duty series franchise (Activision, 2003), makes implicit arguments about who can be a soldier (men), about how camaraderie works, and even all the way down to the mundane details about what an assault rifle should do or what a soldier in Africa wears versus what a US soldier wears.

This framework does, however, create some blindspots that need to be interrogated. First, what the researcher believes to be culturally significant (ie. it is significant that a game exploits the lower class, but unimportant that all the laborers are men and all prostitutes were women). Second, this model does not allow us to question anything that exists prior to the code except for large-scale and specific cultural assumptions. This assumes that code and objects are independent of the contexts that made them—or rather that there is an uninterrupted line between culture and code. For example, it seems important that if a piece of code is written by a video game company that employs less than 1% women; the lack of female soldiers will mean something different than if it was produced by a company with more equal gender distribution, but procedural rhetoric doesn't allow for that kind of interrogation. Third, this also assumes that a piece of code can have cultural implications and rhetoric that is independent of the context in which the code is used. In other words, it abstracts the code or object from its larger context. This gives us a much less rich view of the full implications of the code.

In complicating this model, my theory of procedural ethics (chapter 3) argues that the researcher is actually always in conversation with each part of the analysis. Further, while difficult to depict visually, the categories aren't as discrete as they may seem. For example, the conditions around the release of Aspyr and 2K Games's *Duke Nukem Forever* (2011) can not be separated from the fact that it took 3D software, Triptych

Games, Gearbox, and Piranga Games (the developers) over 11 years to make the game.

This gave the game near vaporware status.[6] In turn, this cannot be separated from the

launch party of the game, which took place at a strip club in Las Vegas. If reporters,

male or female, wanted to cover the release, s/he had to go to the launch party at the strip

club. In turn this cannot be separated from the game itself, which features countless

sexist and derogatory scenes. For example, the mini game "Capture the Babe[7]" is like

normal capture the flag available in many games. However, in this game you capture

women, put them over your shoulder, and spank them to keep them from getting away.

The "Capture the Babe" mode of the game, then, does not only reflect cultural

assumptions, but an entire industry and company(ies) at work behind the game. Every

line of code as you hit the captured woman is laden, with both larger cultural assumptions

about the role of women in society, the role of men in society, and for what counts as

violence against women, which procedural rhetoric allows for, and it is laden with many

specific cultural assumptions and has direct implications for the gaming industry, which

procedural ethics allows for.

Finally, the way Bogost defines "procedure," "rhetoric," and "procedural rhetoric"

shows a limited understanding of the nuances of persuasion as well as obscure any

emotional or non-mechanical intervention in the persuasive process. His model does not

allow us to ask about who is doing the persuading, which is a critical part of any

rhetorical analysis. He does seem to acknowledge the undefinable nature of some types of

persuasion when he writes, "Unlike verbal discourse, which relies on deeply ingrained

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[6] A product that is announced but never actually released
[7] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMc5hGAiiX4

metaphors that most people take for granted, videogames deploy more abstract representations about the way the world does or should function" (100). However, procedural rhetoric does not afford us the metaphors necessary to expose these abstract representations.

Another theory that is gaining ground in the study of New Media is Object Oriented Ontology (OOO), among other names. Bogost himself is deeply connected to this movement, and his recent publication *Alien Phenomonology* marries the study of video games with this increasingly popular philosophical perspective. In Graham Harman's book *Prince of Networks*, he introduces his own twist of Latour's Actor Network Theory, called Object-Oriented Philosophy. In a section aptly titled 'The Brotherhood of Matter and Relations," Harman explores Heideggerian philosophy of presencing and present-at-hand. He writes, "the physical realm seems to be uniquely independent of human beings" (141). Harman's answer to this is "ready-at-hand," something that he claims is purely non-relational (141). OOO argues that humans can never really know an object. When we use an object, there is always something obscured from us. One unique addition of OOO is that what is obscured and what is presenced does not stop at the human, but rather objects create their own web of relations that are sometimes beyond the perception of the human (Taylor "Object").

Like Bogost, Harman creates some blindspots with OOO. Harman writes, "Material bodies cannot possibly do justice to the reality of things themselves. Matter can only be relational, and hence it lacks the autonomy that real things demand" (Harman 155). For Latour, everything is relational, and there is no essence. This gives us a way to think about the complex relationships at play behind objects that otherwise appear to just

"be there" as "the way things are." Through Latour (and Harman), we can interrogate things that a human-centered perspective allows to fall into the background. At the same time, networks—on their own—don't allow for an interrogation of things like race, sex, and class. In the network, things aren't seen as privileged or unprivileged, repressed, oppressed, or excluded. Rather, actants simply have more connections, more allies than other actants. This is overly simplistic, and it ignores conditions and lived experiences that don't fit into an actant framework. It treats actants as essentially faceless actors— going further than denying essence, but it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to examine the roles uniqueness and chaos may play in phenomenon that impact our world. This is where a posthuman theory that does not necessarily equate the human with the object — via authors like Haraway who take feminist theory and women's experiences into consideration—can be helpful to look at with OOO to see things productively.

Looking to the history around treating women like objects, women's body parts as abstractable, and women's bodily functions (ie. a vessel for the fetus or penis) as more important than the body itself calls into question assertions like Andy Clark's that an increasingly complex technological environment has changed anything. In this sense, the OOO is more about allowing the bodies who have always been treated as autonomous, powerful bodies to play at what it is like to be unprivileged and treated like objects without needing the historical baggage of exclusion, repression, and violence that is the reality for many of us. As such, the sudden rise and surprising popularity of this theory among new media theorists in general and video game theorists in particular is troubling.

2.3   Professional Writing and Workplace Studies

In his book, *Community Action and Organizational Change*, Brenton Faber lays out what he calls a prescriptive model for changing the culture in an organization. My goal in this project, in line with the aims of feminist research methodology, is to create change. Faber writes, "change is inherently a discursive project. This means that change is restricted by the structures of language and by the conventions of language use. Change will be a product of what can be legitimately said (or written) in a specific context at a specific moment in time" (25). This is the guiding principle behind the works I've chosen to use in my project: they assume that change happens discursively and is ultimately about legitimacy.

If women will even be able to overcome the staggering statistics of sexual assault[8] in the gaming community and the utter lack of women working behind the scenes,[9] the discourse needs to change. And while it is possible to create small change from a grass roots perspective, the industry needs to take steps toward changing what is legitimate and what is not, what it accepts as normal, and what it will not accept. As the ultimate expression of what is deemed acceptable, leader of a competitive fighting team Aris Bakhtanian, defending his constant sexual harassment of a female team member: "This is a community that's, you know, 15 or 20 years old, and the sexual harassment is part of a culture, and if you remove that from the fighting game community, it's not the fighting game community" (Hamilton). So not only is sexual harassment a foundational part of

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[8] 3 in 10 women are sexually assaulted at tech-based conferences
[9] ranging from 6-11% of the workforce

the community, according to Bakhtanian, but if you take away a player's right to harass women, it's no longer gaming.

As Faber discusses in his book, *Community Action and Organizational Change,* organizations change through their identities, narratives, and images. They create stories they want to control their companies, and they do this through documentation. He writes that employee behavior is "presented through symbolic behavior" and that these behaviors reflect the story of the organization. Hanging porn in one's cubicle, for example, is perfectly acceptable in some game companies because of the need to "study the female form."[10] The fact that these images regularly are found in the bathroom apparently doesn't seem to bother management. What one is allowed to wear, say, how they are allowed to act are all part of the company's perceived image and identity. To get these behaviors to change, the organization needs to change. They need to cultivate new symbolic behaviors that reflect a different set of values.

What is at the core of his approach, then, is the idea that "language [is] an active, complex, and strategic system of privilege, responsibility, power, and tradition" (87). While obviously the codes of conduct and employee handbooks will not say that they condone discrimination or sexual assault, they may (as will be seen in chapter 4) choose to spend pages on things like compliance and confidentiality without once mentioning harassment. At every level, then, the language used in the creation of the company's identity is shown to privilege those who are already on the inside (typically white males). It is also possible that no one thought that it would be necessary to include what to do in the case of sexual assault or to tell their employees that it is unacceptable to harass your

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[10] Not Your Mama's Gamer Interview, February 28, 2012

coworkers because they see their employee population as homogenous. It would never even come up that a maternity policy is needed (which is not included in any documents I found and analyze in this project), because they don't see mothers (or women) as part of their community. Perhaps this tells the loudest story of all.

While Faber has provided a theoretical framework through which to view video game companies using policies, there are many documents I consulted to complete my analysis. Groups, particularly in the STEM disciplines have been working for years to overturn the gender imbalances that exists in their fields. The NSF has funded many grants to try and raise the number of women in engineering and the sciences, and these studies form a natural path for me to follow. While my approach is rooted specifically in the problems faced by the video game industry, the video game is a technology-based industry and is almost an extreme example of the discrimination against women that happens in many STEM fields.

Thus, I have used sources from human resource departments and various research groups as the basis for my analysis. This literature will show the levels of nuance and connections that exist within the workplace: formal policy, informal policy, workplace culture, workplace stories, company narratives, company identity, and so on. These sources will help me articulate why the documents I am examining are so closely tied to the workplace culture I am hoping to change, and they will also show how important a diverse and gender balanced workplace is for every aspect of business.

There are two major studies founded by the NSF to interrogate the lack of women in STEM fields that I have chosen to include in this literature review because they are both extremely comprehensive, high profile, and interrogate slightly different angles. The

first is a report called "Center Self-assessment for a Women-Friendly Workplace" written by the Consultive Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). CGIAR has a program called "The Gender and Diversity Program" that focuses on the "recruitment and promotion of under-represented groups" (2). This particular project worked to "establish an initial benchmark and monitor progress in creating the conditions that support a woman-friendly work environment. It seeks to qualitatively assess the organizational climate for gender equity" (2). As such, it is the perfect site from which I am able to draw inspiration for the specifics and methods of my study. Like CGIAR, I want to ensure these things in the video game industry. Further, the methods utilized by CGIAR, which I will discuss below, are reflective of the values I have extracted from Fabers work that also underlie my project.

Another benefit to CGIAR's study is that they thoroughly explore *why* they are undertaking such a longitudinal (over 9 years) and geographically broad (over 11 countries) project. They write,

> Research has shown that the proportional representation of women influences gender-related organizational dynamics. In situations where women are a significant minority (below 15...), and in occupations traditionally thought of as male (such as the agricultural sciences), systemic organizational dynamics operate that are prejudicial to women's job satisfaction, productivity and career development. (6)

Rather than assume that the lack of women is the problem, they spend several pages going over statistics that prove their point above. Further, the connects between agriculture and video games is strong because video games, and many technology-based

fields in general, are thought of as a male discipline. Thus, many of the problems discussed in this report mirror problems in the games industry.

They show that there are three primary areas that need to be examined when attempting to improve the number of women in an organization: recruitment, parity in career development, and retention. Each of these has a unique set of challenges. For example, recruitment procedures are often laden with implicit and unintentional bias. In the video game industry, this can be things like requiring ten years or more experience for a position, when there was literally only a handful of women in the field then. Parity in career development is highly affected by the visibility of female employees, particularly in management position. If there are no women in upper level positions, this sets a particular tone and precedent about who is the boss, and who is the receptionist (9). Retention is perhaps the biggest area of concern for the video game industry. CGIAR reports that companies must provide a positive work environment to retain high quality staff. This is related to several areas, but one of the most important is allowing for a satisfactory personal life. In the video game industry, however, there is a culture of requiring programmers to work for 20 hours without sleep, making accommodations so workers never leave the facility, and demanding deadlines that don't allow for the workers to have free time. This particularly affects women because they are still responsible for a majority of the household and familial duties. A career that doesn't allow for this, then, will not have high retention rates.

CGIAR finds that the first thing a company has to do is raise the percentage of female employees to 35% (6). This is the threshold for giving an underrepresented group

the feeling of voice and belonging. This is accomplished through intervention areas, the most important of which is "Formal Policies and Procedures." They report that

> Woman-friendly policies and management systems play a critical role in recruiting and retaining high-quality women professionals and promoting their full effectiveness at work. Policies including grade placement, pay and promotion, maternity and paternity benefits, unbiased performance evaluation, and protection from sexual harassment and discrimination, ensure gender equity. The workplace should recognize the dual role of work and family life, and family-related policies should address issues such as maternity and paternity leave, support for spousal employment, and marriage between staff members. (10)

As will be seen in chapter four of this project, almost none of these are discussed in the workplace policies of the five companies I study.

To correct bias and under-representation through policies and procedures, CGIAR lays out several steps to follow which I will discuss further in Chapter Five. At the heart of each, though, is the notion that management in the company must recognize that a lack of diversity adversely affects the workplace for all employees, stifles innovation, and will require the negotiating of bias notions that will be difficult to confront.

The second workplace study that I use in my project is called "Why so Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics" done by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) for an NSF grant. This study is more general than CGIAR's study, focusing on women's underrepresentation in all STEM fields. They report eight factors that they believe are the primary contributors to a lack of

representation of women. I have chosen to focus on this study because I am unable to do a workplace study for this project, primary due to research that states where women are drastically underrepresented (less than 15%), conducted research on them directly can be unethical (CITE). Calling them out through surveys or interviews risks taking away important survival strategies. However, this does not mean that environmental factors are any less of a contributor to a hostile environment than formal policies. Another entire dissertation could be written about these more unprovable qualities of the workplace. However, as I argued above, formal policies and procedures is the most logical place to start because 1) it will not actively call women out as minorities 2) policies that are public affect a large audience 3) the company's stories about itself through policies directly impact employee behavior and 4) women, and all employees, need the very basic assurances of safety when at work, and the policies in the game industry (as will be seen in chapter 4) do not provide even the most simple policies of protection against things like sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination. Thus, this particular study is useful for examining the environmental and cultural factors that can be examined and future studies and that work in tandem with policies in creating a work environment.

The AAUW writes that "believing in the potential for intellectual growth, in and of itself, improves outcomes" for girls' achievements in STEM fields. The same could be said of the video game industry, which has been touted as a boy's club almost since its inception (though, this depends on whether you think gaming started with computer solitaire, as Jesper Juul contends). Likewise, "The issue of self-assessment, or how we view our own abilities, is another area where cultural factors have been found to limit girls' interest in mathematics and mathematically challenging

Careers" (xv). This is why the AAUW contends that little changes to policy and perception can make a huge difference in improving the representation of women in STEM fields.

The AAUW also reports that the largest growing, most prestigious, and highest paying jobs will continue to be computer-dependant fields like programming and computer science. If women are so drastically underrepresented in these fields, it will devastated their hard-won place in the market. To improve women's recruitment number into math and science fields at all levels, the AAUW has an extensive list of recommendations, not dissimilar from CGIAR. Things like mentoring, encouraging a work-life balance, and acknowledging the need to explore and assess gender issues are among the core recommendations.

Another interesting contribution that the AAUW makes in this study is to study the effects of the double-bind in STEM workplaces. In their study, they found that if one group were given male and female resumes, and other group given the same resumes but with the names reversed, that the groups consistently rated the female name as less competent (83). Further, when given additional information such as that the resumes were from very successful individuals, the groups rated the successful male as more likable than the successful female. In other studies of implicit bias, individuals consistently attach male names to STEM-sounding words and jobs, and female names to factors that are not linked to success or to STEM fields.

These findings are crucial for an examination of the video game industry, because several of the documents analyzed in chapter four claim to be meritocratic. MIT professor Emilio Castilla reports that "Although these policies [meritocratic ones) are often adopted

in the hope of motivating employees and ensuring meritocracy, policies with limited transparency and accountability can actually increase ascriptive bias and reduce equity in the workplace" (1479). Thus, meritocratic workplaces like video game companies actually are more susceptible to the kind of implicit bias discussed in the AAUW study. Castilla's report of meritocratic workplaces is of central importance to this project, because many companies sidestep issues of gender by claiming meritocratic status. This undoes the work of groups like the AAUW who have worked hard to uncover implicit bias. Rather than acknowledging bias and actively seeking equity, meritocratic environments are able to essentially blame the victims. If women aren't here, it's because they aren't good enough or they just don't want to be. Even the chief talent officer at Electronic Arts (EA), Gabrielle Toledano, has said that "If we want more women to work in games, we have to recognize that the problem isn't sexism." Rather, she says its women's bias against games and unwillingness to work in the industry that's the problem. This is directly the result of how bias works in a meritocratic environment. By separating culture and environment from participation, we can ignore any complexity behind the problem of representation.

Section 4: Tie them together; wrap up; conclusion

As I said in the beginning, much of the story of this literature review is the lack of story. I did not report on studies of the video game industry from academic fields like rhetoric and composition because they don't exist. I didn't cite things from game studies that deals directly with the industry, because none exist. I didn't reference methodological investigations of how we conduct studies of video games because there are none. Investigations of gender issues in STEM fields, from the academic side to the

industry side has been rigorous. And the results from this shows, as each year more women are getting STEM degrees and there are powerful organizations solely dedicated to increasing the representation of women in STEM fields. Despite being a major player in the technological sector, despite being the biggest entertainment industry, video games has not been considered a site for workplace research. As such, companies continue to blindly hinder women from becoming part of the industry through workplace practices and policies that would be deemed unacceptable in almost any other field. But it's all just games, right?

CHAPTER 3. BUILDING A PROCEDURAL ETHICS METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I articulate a research methodology that is based on work being done ethics and feminist research methodology. As ethics is currently growing in popularity in game studies, and feminist research methodology offers one of the most sensible and comprehensive strategies available, a hybrid methodology based in both areas will be both useful and timely. Likewise, professional writing as a field has in recent years begun to focus on minority and feminist rhetoric as central, rather than peripheral, to its studies. It is my hope that through Procedural Ethics, the field of video game studies will begin to redefine its primary goals of investigation. While much of video game scholarship has focused on poor representations of women and minorities, behind this representation is a series of very real people being harassed, assaulted, and excluded. Procedural Ethics works to connect the code to these human and ethical problems. As I discuss in this chapter, Procedural Ethics calls into question any theory of video games that does not consider social/cultural factors, even when studying things like algorithms. Likewise, Procedural Ethics asks researchers to consider non-human factors and their influence and agency in a particular situation, even when studying seemingly non-technological factors.

Defining Procedural Ethics, as with defining any term, is necessarily reductive, particularly because it is a key component of Procedural Ethics that it is emergent and

context-dependant. However, it does have what I consider to be fundamental

characteristics dependant on the context, history, and emergence of game studies. In other

STEM fields, these characteristics may emerge in a slightly different way. First,

Procedural Ethics contends that it is unethical to exclude cultural factors from any

investigation of the technological. In discussing a concept she calls Designing Culture,

Anne Balsamo writes, "technological innovations have cultural consequences" (4). The

inseparability of culture and technology is a primary component both of Balsamo's work

and Procedural Ethics, though they evolve out of different bodies of scholarship with

different concerns. It is also a requirement of Procedural Ethics to include the researcher

as a component of the research. As found in feminist research methodology, via Patricia

Sullivan, the beliefs of the researcher have a direct impact on a study's findings: "We see

critical actions taken by researchers, then, as manifestations of the ability to act in the

production of knowledge at the same time as they are vigilant about the ways in which

our circumstances, abilities, values, and beliefs encourage us to act in certain ways"

(Sullivan 16). Cynthia Selfe makes a similar argument in her 1999 book *Technology and*

Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Paying Attention. In it she

explores case after case of technology being inextricably linked to socio-cultural issues

such as literacy, ideology, and change.

   Another component of Procedural Ethics is its interdisciplinarity. Like game

studies, Procedural Ethics is an amalgam of theories and ideas trying to find a way to

make sense of a complex, networked, and ever-changing environment. To connect the

fields I'm working in with this project (game studies, professional writing, ethics, and

feminist research methodology), I start by discussing the way ethics has been talked

about in games studies, beginning with a recent *Games Studies* article by Miguel Sicart arguing for the inclusion of creative play when studying games as rhetorical artifacts. I then move into an extended definition of Procedural Ethics and argue for its usefulness in conducting research in game studies, professional writing, and other technology-dependant fields. I conclude with some extended examples of how we can enrich our work in through using contextual, emergent, and rhetorical lenses afforded by Procedural Ethics gleaned from materialism, feminist methodology, and other science-based fields rather than abstracted philosophies. Procedural ethics, at its core, highlights the intermingling of procedures and cultures without privileging one over the other and always forces the researcher to reflect on her own research practices.

Because crossover between the games industry and the academy is extremely common, we in academia are well positioned to deliver research that urges the ethical changes that we desire both in our ivory towers and in mainstream culture. This, coupled with the incredible speed at which the video game industry evolves and with how relatively new the field is, has provided the academy with a compelling possibility: for our theories to create change in the environment we study. In game studies, we are not writing armchair studies and ungrounded theory that will likely have no tangible impact outside of our departments; rather, the pervasive crossover and hybridity in the field has created an environment where academic voices are heard in the industry and industry voices are heard in the academy. This, if nothing else, demands that we approach game studies with a strong code of ethics, for our words may have real, physical, psychological, and tangible effects on others.

3.1   Research on Ethics in Games Studies

Miguel Sicart, an Assistant Professor at the Center for Computer Game Research,

writes about the ethics of playing and designing games in his 2009 MIT Press book *The*

Ethics of Computer Games. Sicart's book is an indication of the rising interest in video

game ethics as an analytical model. Sicart calls his work "an academic exploration of

ethical gameplay, ethical game design, and the presence of computer games in our moral

universe" (2). Sicart situates his work between the field of applied computer ethics and

the few articles and books that have been written about ethics in the field of video game

studies. What Sicart adds to the literature is a focus on the relationship of the player and

the game as a designed system. Whereas previous theorists focused either primarily on

the game's ethics (Reynolds, 2002) or on the player's ethics (McCormick, 2001), Sicart

attempts to uncover some of the complexity of the way these interact and the way each

component interacts with outside components (like the video game designers or the video

game community). When we separate out the components of this complex relationship, as

Sicart does, we can begin see multiple layers of ethics interacting with each other.

The primary interaction Sicart sees as being ethically interesting is the

relationship between the rules of the game and the player. It is at this juncture that the

other elements of gameplay (developer intention, gameworld, player, and community)

converge. By rules, Sicart means the ways the game forces or allows a player to act. His

example is a game where the player is not allowed to shoot NPCs. This rule argues for a

specific ethic that exists in the gameworld, and thus begins to seep outside of the

gameworld. Players then in turn impose their own implicit rules, rules that may not

change the code or algorithms behind the game, but that can change the way players interact with the game and with each other (p. 35). This can be a type of subversion, creative play, or even cheating. This type of argument is reminiscent of arguments long made by psychologist Lev Vygotsy who popularized the idea that the environment heavily influences the way we learn. In his seminal work, *Thought and Language*, he explores in depth the relationship between children and tools and how this relationship influences the learning processes. Language, he theorized, was one such external tool children use to learn as well.

On a related bend, Sicart's work, as it is grounded in value ethics, constantly questions and attempts to expose the way players are forced through the game to examine their own values. He concludes by revealing how he believes we can build interesting, ethically rich games. He splits the possibilities into two major categories—open ethical game design and closed ethical game design. MMOs are the premiere example of an open ethics system. Sicart also includes the Sims in this, as "a player can choose to be abusive toward her Sims" (p. 214). In an open system, a player's ethics can be dynamically reflected in the game world. A closed system does not allow players to implement their own ethics, but rather they simply react to pre-designed choices that have been weighted according to an internal and purposeful ethical rating system. These two systems, and his far more nuanced description in the book, are what he leaves for other game designers who are interested in creating ethically complex games.

Sicart writes "My arguments placing computer game players as the central element of any analysis of computer game ethics justify my choice of virtue ethics and information ethics as the philosophical theories informing my analytical framework" (17).

Value ethics serves a useful role for Sicart, as it allows him to interrogate the "interior" workings of the player when encountering a game. But the lens of value ethics, in which he grounds his entire interrogation of ethics, ends up stilting Sicart's interrogation. Value ethics privileges particular types of questions while obscuring others, as most decontextualized philosophical concepts do. Value ethics retains a split long called into question by philosophers and rhetoricians between the interior and the exterior of a human being. This false dichotomy has been the basis for many theories which, for the most part, are now unused. As I will discuss shortly, research has almost completely disproven the separation between the body and knowledge—and in fact many researchers (Kahneman, Barad, Hekman, Bennet) are beginning to argue that what we "know" is based far more on bodily reaction and intuition than we have ever before thought. But value ethics leaves us trapped in the old paradigm of abstracted philosophies that uphold the Cartesian split, limiting the kind of interrogation Sicart is able to do. Further, without interrogating the theories being siphoned from other fields, we risk positing our research or that theory as *the* way rather than as *one* way to study video games.

However, for the purposes of his essay, choosing virtue ethics and information ethics makes a lot of sense (a human-centered approach works well when your analysis puts putting humans at the center). But the fact that they will provide one particular view, a skewed view, needs to be acknowledged. If he, for example, chose to use the lenses of feminism and disability studies, his research would change drastically. Everything from his research questions, to what he deems important, to how he analyzes player interaction, to where he looks for information, everything, would look different. He would likely come to different conclusions about the way players interact with games and the way

video games function as designed objects. If he decided to do a mixed-methods study or an ethnography of games, rather than a self-reflection and philosophical piece, his conclusions would look different. He consciously chose Philosophy in which to ground his work. Philosophy is probably the most prominent field that deals with ethics, but it is by no means the only one, and these philosophies will have a particular history that influence the way they are able to be used.

While Sicart's discussion of games is rich and thoughtful, his actual discussion of ethics falls somewhat flat. An analysis using value ethics and information ethics struggles with a conception of an ethics that goes beyond death or life, beyond the direct choices that the player makes inside the game to the more nuanced and hidden places that the most interesting ethical questions typically dwell. This lens of "choice" is afforded by the theories in which Sicart grounds his work, as I previously discussed. On the other hand, Matt McCormick, author of "Is It Wrong to Play Violent Video Games" on which Sicart bases much of his work, continually discusses the possible affordances and obscurances his lenses of utilitarianism, deontological, and value ethics frameworks provide. "Value Ethics," a similar lens to the virtue ethics that Sicart uses, is discussed by McCormick as being egotistical, privileging the interior of a person over all other external factors. Given this, it makes sense that Sicart's analysis of ethics often can not go beyond the ethical decisions a player faces because 1) that is as far as his chosen framework allows him to go and 2) perhaps far more telling, this theory unabashedly posits a distinct separation of the player from all over elements. Indeed, the absolute separation of the player and the game, the interior and exterior, rationality and intuition is what characterizes value ethics. Again while this serves Sicart well for examining what had been an overlooked area of

ethics and games (the player-game relationship), it in no way encompasses how video games act as rhetorical artifacts.

If we were to use, for example, standpoint theory (loosely defined as the idea that people's ideas are shaped by their environment and experiences) to analyze the exact same scenarios that Sicart does, we would complicate and problemetize the same discussions of ethics. Exploring context and experience as the basis for ethics, rather than an objective abstraction, we could more fully interrogate the player as a moral being, which Sicart attempts to do several times in his work, because the player wouldn't be as separate and decontextualized from his environment. We would be able to look at the video game company that produced the game; we could see if they use ethical work practices or if they employ the type of programming that encourages workers to deny their needs and program for 18+ hours per day. The "norms" of the workplace in many sectors of technology are atrocious. We could easily look to the online game community or the history of the genre or gender relations at video game conferences or the player's own experiences and so on as part of the interrogation. Particular elements surface based on the lens, the questions, and the goals of the researcher. Because elements of the player-game relationship that are more hidden can have just as much influence if not more influence on the way ethics functions in these complex environments, theories that are more situated and less abstracted only make sense.

Just as with virtue ethics and information ethics, standpoint theory has facets that do not lend itself well to analyzing particular things. Standpoint theory typically assumes that the situation exists prior to researcher—and often actant—interaction. Whereas theories I discuss later in this chapter posit that situations are always emergent, and

contextually dependent on things like researcher intervention, standpoint theory treats

situations as self-contained and (when done poorly) as independent of any context that

doesn't show up in that particular moment. Virtue ethics, as used by McCormick, is

useful because of its consistency and universality, whereas standpoint theory is so rooted

in context that it would need to be articulated how exactly some analyses could be useful

in other situations.

In another example of how ethics have been incorporated into video game

research, ethnographers of games often question ethical issues players encounter during

play. Bonnie Nardi, author of *My Life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account

of* World of Warcraft (2010) explores the many ethical issues she must face as she

investigates the "peculiarities of human play" (7) inside the MMORPG *World of

Warcraft* (Blizzard, 2003). One aim of her work is to help others understand how video

games impact our culture, and this is where ethical concerns about race, gender, and

addiction begin to surface. She also explores the morals and stigma that follow someone

dedicating large amounts of time to something that isn't "real" (131). Nardi primarily

focuses on this player-virtual world relationship. She then works on situating the player

in the world outside of the game to examine the ethical issues that cross the virtual/real[11]

world divide such as violence and stereotypes. Of course there are limitations to such an

approach, discussed in Ethnography of Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method by Tom

Beollstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T.L. Taylor. The authors discuss how

ethnography, while it has numerous advantages, is ultimately unscientific (3.1).

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[11] I recognize that there are many things "real" about virtual worlds. But I suffer from a lack of words to describe what I am getting at. I would like to use "meat space" instead of "real," but that's is a bit distracting. Hopefully readers can look passed this deficiency in my language.

Mia Consalvo, professor of at Concordia University in Canada, was one of the first game theorists to directly engage in the question of ethics through cheating. In her groundbreaking article, "Rule Sets, Cheating, and Magic Circles: Studying Games and Ethics" (2005), she discusses the importance of studying the ethics of games and of the players interacting with the games. She writes, "Clearly, we need a better understanding of how ethics might be expressed in gameplay situations, and how we can study the ethical frameworks that games offer to players. Research in this area is beginning (Reynolds, 2002), but many interesting questions remain to be asked" (8). She expands this in her 2007 book, *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Video Games*, further discussing ethics, cheating, and systems. She also uses active audience theory, which loosely argues that media are never closed and that authorial intent is never complete, in order to ask new questions about the nature of play and games.

Here Consalvo begins to get at what is the heart of my article, the need to consider the ethics of how we consider: "We cannot say that there are 'no ethics' in games or that players bring no ethical frameworks to their gameplay—instead we leave the question unexamined, which is itself a choice" (10). Leaving some things unexamined is *a choice*. This phrasing is crucial. As Consalvo is one of the pioneers, and certainly a highly respected theorist in the gaming community, her acknowledgement that when we research, when we ask questions, and more importantly when we don't ask questions, it's a choice. Our choice as researchers that paints a particular picture for a particular purpose. Feminist research methodologists (Sullivan, Kirsch, Fonow and Cook) and feminist epistemologists (Haraway, Hekman, Bennet, Harding, Bordo, Butler) have been arguing in a similar vein since at least the 1980s. Often, however, because its labeled "feminist"

it's assumed that it cannot be used outside of specifically feminist projects. But as we can see in this statement from Consalvo, and perhaps more tellingly in the lack of this kind of rigor from other games researchers, games studies could be utterly enriched by the incorporation of some of these feminist research and epistemological strategies.

Consalvo goes on to say, "What we need to do instead is actively involve ourselves with the questions, seeking to determine how ethics fit, how we see them informing games and gameplay, and how we choose to integrate games into our lives (or not)" (10). While this stops slightly short of the reflections I would like to see from games researchers, Consalvo is saying that we—the researchers—are part of our research. She uses this to argue that researchers need to include how they interact with games on a personal level (a suggestion which Sicart fully adopts). But taking this researcher involvement one step further, the researcher's life outside of games should be, in a sense, fair game as well. Consalvo's background, her philosophical allegiances, those who have used active audience theory and for what purposes, all of those also influence the results of her ethical inquiries, not just her experience with games. In this particular article Consalvo focuses on the crossover between the ethics players encounter in games and the ethics they encounter in their lives outside of games. The player is her focus because of the theory she chose (active audience theory). Had she chosen applied computer ethics, some theorists do, the player would not be her sole focus, if the player even showed up for her at all.

Similar to Consalvo, Matt McCormick sets out to pick through the problematic relationship between players, violence, and video games. He picks three lenses to explore the question of whether or not violent video games are ethically questionable:

utilitarianism, deontology, and value ethics. Unlike many game researchers, McCormick launches a detailed investigation of the theories he uses to conduct his research. He examines what each theory obscures and what it foregrounds, and he talks about the questions the theories can ask and what they cannot ask. This allows him to situate his findings as *a* conclusion, not *the* conclusion.

Despite this, McCormick still relies on philosophical theories that privilege a particular kind of knowledge. Specifically, he uses theories that treat "reason" as an indisputable ideal that is both universal and always desirable. However, this ignores research done in neuroscience and evolutionary or cognitive psychology that posits that the decision making process, and how we think in general, is not ruled by reason. Rather, we react intuitively and affectively to stimuli first. We employ reason, then, when we try to articulate why we made a particular decision not in the actual decision making process. In his Nobel Prize speech, Daniel Kahnemann writes, "Most behavior is intuitive, skilled, unproblematic and successful (Klein). In some fraction of cases, a need to correct the intuitive judgments and preferences will be acknowledged, but the intuitive impression will be the anchor for the judgment" (482). Many psychologists and scientists (Klein, Haidt, Damasio) would call into question philosophies that privilege reason in the decision making process, particularly when it comes to ethical decisions. However, the prevalence of philosophical and reason-based theories, rather than embodied, intuitive theories based in quantum physics, psychology, and neuroscience, have painted an alarmingly arhetorical and unethical view of ethics in video games. Rather, these philosophies have shown us how reason and algorithims work in this environment, not necessarily how actual ethical decision-making gets made. Even McCormick goes back

to classical philosophers who thought of reason as separate and universal, something we should strive for. Ethics rarely work this way.

The other landmark article on ethics and gaming comes from Ren Reynolds in 2002, titled "Playing a "Good" Game: A Philosophical Approach to Understanding the Morality of Games." Reynolds fully grounds his study in Philosophy and logic: "But can a mere game be bad in a moral sense? I believe that they can. And I believe that there is a solid philosophical argument to back this view. However I think that the current debate over games is hopelessly confused and owes more to rhetoric than logic" (1). In a sense, Reynolds is making an important (and in my opinion, correct) delineation here: studying games rhetorically is not the same as studying games logically—a distinction not made by many who study games as rhetorical artifacts from an ethical perspective. In fact, acknowledging that games are rhetorical artifacts is acknowledging that they are not solely ruled by logic, and thus our theories need to be self-reflexive and not based solely in philosophy. Reynolds work shows how video games may stand up to principles of ethics that philosophers have abstracted and perfect over hundreds of years. This type of ethical research promotes a particular view of ethics that is not personal, but rather universal and timeless.

However, I'd like to suggest that this may not be the most useful method of conducting research into the ethics of video games. They work in some respects, as we have seen in the above discussions, but fall hopelessly flat in others. The video game industry, the games themselves, the players, the community, and many other factors aren't operating in a world that previous philosophers could have imagined. This is the important distinction between studying video games and studying video games as

emergent, as Sicart calls for. Our world is emergent. And we need theories and philosophies that are emergent as well.

3.2   Procedural Ethics

The term procedural ethics has been used, usually loosely, in a number of different fields. In Media and Communication Studies it's used as a synonym for IRB (Internal Review Board). Here it primarily functions as a way of looking step by step at a researcher's process to make sure her actions are ethical. In philosophy, procedural ethics has been discussed by philosophers such as Kant and Habermas, though the actual discussion of what procedural ethics are is very limited, usually envisioning "procedural ethics" as an ethics concerned with procedures. Empiricists have taken procedural ethics to mean either the steps one has to go through to get approval for research or "ethics in practice" (Guillemin 262).

But in game studies, we have a very different relationship to the term "procedure" because of the prevalence of research, theories, and other work typically referencing Bogost's chapter on procedural rhetoric in his 2007 book, *Persuasive Games*. Procedures are important to us, not because they are a stepping-stone to our research, but because of the way games really are, in a sense, all about procedures. This has been a fruitful tension in many works in games studies: the human vs. the computer; the mind vs. the algorithm. A procedural rhetoric is helpful for seeing how persuasion can happen not only through words and images, but through procedures, a concept which is somewhat unique to an interactive media like video games. Video games force us to make choices. Developers

put particular choices into games, which dictate and guide our experience. Procedural rhetoric allows us to see this interaction more clearly.

Procedural rhetoric has been heavily critiqued since its publication, but it remains to be replaced with a more useful term. Despite problems with procedural rhetoric pointed out even by ethics theorists like Sicart, it does remain as one of the most useful terms through which to examine how games work and particularly how persuasion works in games. Sicart sums up what I think to be the most useful critique of procedural rhetoric to date. He writes,

> The main argument of the critique against procedurality has to do with its lack of interest in the player and play. Many of the games produced and analyzed under the proceduralist domain are visually playful, thematic parodies of the mundane and absurd, from airport security to oil economics. But these games are seldom playful in a mechanical, procedural sense: these are single player, puzzle or resource management games, with only few "operations" available to players, and a very limited space of possibility in which players can express themselves. (13)

This is an articulation that any instructor who has attempted to teach procedural rhetoric will tell you: sure, it is useful with boring games, but it falls apart in more complex games, particularly COTs games. Games like *Civilization V* (Firaxis Games, 2010) are interesting, and they are procedurally interesting, but not in the way that procedural rhetoric as it is currently conceived allows us to see. It doesn't have enough complexity to it because of its weddedness to algorithms rather than to people (of course, this makes sense as Bogost is a designer and programmer, not a rhetorician).

Ethics, on the other hand, is not wedded to algorithms, but—when it's done well—to people. What a procedural ethics can do that procedural rhetoric fails to do (for a number of reasons) is to highlight the ethical implications inherent in our refusal to so easily separate the technology from the person. Utter separation between people and objects has been called into question by Object-Oriented Ontology, a movement in philosophy that seeks to show how when we push an environment it pushes back.[12] Their idea is that things around us are not always subject to our will. This movement, however, is problematic in its own sense. Treating humans as objects is fun to think about when you have never been treated as an object and your humanity is at no risk of being taken away. What this movement lacks, then, is a discussion of ethics.

Procedural ethics is a productive method that involves taking the parts of procedures that are crucial to a study of games such as mechanical procedures, player procedures, algorithms, etc, and entangling them, inextricably, from the question of the human. We may not learn much about ethics from articulating what happens when we decide to shoot the cows with antibiotics in *The McDonalds Game* (MolleIndustria, 2006) but we get a lot of ethical nuance from talking about what happens when a bandit in *Red Dead Redemption* (Rockstar Games, 2010) tells a prostitute, "shut up bitch before I cut you a new hole" and you fail to save her. Every step in that situation, from the player's experience, to the game mechanics, to the writing, to the work practices of a company, show up in that instance—some obviously more forefronted than others. Because that game is interactive, procedurality is one of the most useful ways of thinking about the situation, rather than something that is purely representationalist. It's not just about a

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[12] See Harman's 2009 work *Prince of Networks* for a fuller articulation of this movement

prostitute getting brutalized, but that the game requires you to save her and after a certain amount of time elapses, she in fact dies. This is not a mechanics problem; it's a human problem.

What this also allows for is a more of a breadth of questions that may otherwise remain obscure. When three in ten women are sexually assaulted at FLOSS conferences (Free License and Open Source Software), sexual assault in a game means something different from an ethical standpoint. Lara Croft's near rapes in the newest version of *Tomb Raider* (Crystal Dynamics, 2013) means something different because of the lack of women in the industry and the prevalence of sexual assault and the way it was described by Crystal Dynamics as being a crucial step in a women "coming of age." Do we have an ethical obligation to acknowledge the real, physical, human side to our procedures, our representations, our games? I certainly think so. And procedural ethics allows us the flexibility to do so.

Procedural ethics has recently been considered widely (without direct recognition of the term, of course) by a myriad of theorists from posthumanism to psychology to neuroscience. These sources help articulate how we can approach a situation, an environment, or an object with a situated perspective. These theorists, though they use different terms for what they're doing, all are dealing with essentially the same problem: how do we articulate the complexity of a situation as fully and helpfully as possible without having to consider *everything*, without resorting to the dichotomy of an abstract, universal system -or- being bogged down in an unhelpful level of detail.

Recent research in posthuman studies and quantum physics provides a scientifically based but humanistic model through which we can start to ground a

conception of procedural ethics that embraces rather than obfuscates video game's complexity. Physicist Karen Barad, in her revolutionary book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007)*,* posits a theory she calls agential realism. Agential Realism is

> an epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human and nonhuman, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices, thereby moving such considerations beyond the well-worn debates that pit constructivism against realism, agency against structure, and idealism against materialism (26).

This framework incorporates value ethics' emphasis on ontology while making ethics a primary component of how we come to know. It incorporates the human-nonhuman relationships interrogated in procedural rhetoric, material-discursive practices seen in ethnographic work, social-material practices emphasized by authors like Sicart, and leaves room for work like McCormick's on morality. All of this is tied together by one thing: ethics. And it is not ethics for ethics sake, but as I will discuss shortly, it's ethics for the sake of better research.

One thing agential realism emphasizes is the move away from binary thinking. Binary thinking has been far too pervasive in games research to date: ludology vs. narratology, human vs. machine, code vs. culture, and so on. The treatment of entities in games studies as separate and self-contained is problematic, and it ignores theoretical work being done by feminist epistemology and methodology scholars like Donna Haraway (situated knowledges), Susan Hekman (material of knowledge), Jacqueline

Jones Royster (critical imagination), and Jane Bennett (vibrant matter) among many, many others. Rather, the primary theories being used to talk about ethics and about rhetoric in games studies are being imported directly from classic Greek philosophers like Aristotle, as if ethics and rhetoric has not evolved in 2500 years. Game studies, it seems, is being balanced between contemporary computational theories that privilege the machine and classical theoretical concepts that privilege the human, which creates an entire philosophical foundation that is based on dichotomies. What we can see in any of the more recent work on ontology, epistemology, ethics, and rhetoric is that people have been complicating, erasing, and re-writing the way we think about and the way we think about how we think.

For example, agential realism would productively explode the notion of ethics currently being used in games studies—breaking away from any idea that we can follow causality (as explored in McCormick's work, for example) or study the player-game relationship as a self-contained entity. Barad writes, "ethics is not simply about the subsequent consequences of our ways of interacting with the world, as if effect followed cause in a linear chain of events. Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are a part, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities" (2007, p. 384). In this way, ethics seems to be far more nuanced than has been discussed to date in games studies. What is does mean is that we have been reductive when we think about ethics, in part, I believe, because of the theories we have chosen to privilege and make central to the field (particularly making theories that privilege binary thinking and objective logic foundational).

A primary contribution of Barad, as far as this paper is concerned, is the emphasis that we are never separate from the research we conduct: "our ability to understand the world hinges on our taking account of the fact that our knowledge-making practices are social-material enactments that contribute to, and are a part of, the phenomena we describe" (26). Acknowledgement of this has been spotty, at best, from games studies theorists, often only being foregrounded when it is advantageous to the theorists' ethos (ie. you can trust me because I play/make games too). There is a pervasive lack of acknowledgement of the intertwinededness of the researcher, game and player, and that stunts our ability to understand ethics. However, there is room (as suggested by Mia Consalvo) for theories that allow us to acknowledge our choices we make as researchers.

Feminist researchers have been dealing with these kinds of tensions for years. In her 1999 book *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication*, Gesa Kirsch writes,

> We must, then, disclose to readers our balancing act: they need to be able to see how we have allowed research participants to define issues in their own terms and to represent their individual interests, while simultaneously showing how such issues are affected by the social, cultural, and economic forces that shape participants' life experience (101).

Research trends in many other fields are beginning to abandon the old, disproven illusions of researcher objectivity, and game studies should not be the exception. Fields in the sciences, as we can see in Barad's work in quantum physics, the social sciences as witnessed in the work of the famous social scientist Sandra Harding, and in research methodology as seen in Kirsch are all questioning and abandoning the tenets that

unfortunately underlie many of the popular theories, philosophies, and lenses being used in game studies. Procedural ethics, grounded in feminist research methodologies, quantum physics, feminist epistemology, philosophy of science, and neuroscience, allows for a coherent yet emergent research methodology that can, as I will show in the next section, greatly increase the tools available to games researchers.

3.3   Extended Example

Game studies, as a field of research, has been all but obsessed with definition. From Johann Huizinga's attempt to define games and play through metaphors of religion, exoticism of other cultures, and the magic circle, to Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman's 688 page delineation and near exhaustive critical terms book *Rules of Play* (2003), the field has continually defined and redefined the terms that we encounter. The philosophical influence on the field is particularly strong when it comes to definition, as we see scholars attempt to abstract and universalize particulars of play and games, placing it in relation to broad concepts like culture and ontology (a crucial step for most fields in becoming an academically recognized endeavor). Recently, Chris Bateman's book *Imaginary Games* (2011) offers this more philosophical definition of play and games after discussing the thorough effort by the field to create manageable definitions: "Play is thus an attitude we adopt towards uncertainty, and games processes that may make use of this disposition, contriving, simulating or even suppressing contingency so that we might interpret what results. Paradoxically, games on this reading need not be undertaken in a playful spirit, even though the notion of a game may depend upon an understanding of play" (p. 54). Bateman's work shows the field's attempt to

philosophically ground games as something endemic to culture—perhaps a reaction to a mainstream dismissal of games and gamers as wasting time on fantasy.

If considering this definitional, philosophical move from an ethical perspective, we must ask what or whom our definitions exclude and disenfranchise and what we are invoking when we use past (and decidedly not neutral) philosophical theories. Definitions and categories are helpful—they help us make sense of the world and allow us to see things that may otherwise be obscured by chaos. But they also necessarily reduce, often mischaracterize, and sometimes can do harm.

One of the most interesting debates that has yet to be looked through an ethical lens is the use of the terms "casual" and "hardcore" in the larger gaming community and in our own scholarship and research. This seemingly innocuous distinction between casual and hardcore is anything but. Because we often use these terms as if they are harmless, and because they have such clear ethical implications, complicating our use of these terms is in important step in creating more ethical research practices. Without recognizing the heirarchicalization and disenfranchisement that accompany such terms, we risk perpetuating implicit bias in games studies.

Of course the idea that one term could disenchfranchise anyone is laughable to some. At a recent conference where I presented on the division between hardcore and casual, the owner of an indie game company responded that "hardcore" and "casual" have no gender, political, or social meaning; their meaning is strictly economical: "hardcore" means you can get $60 for your game and "casual" means you can get $.99. Despite the extremely negative reaction the audience had to his comment, he does have a point. In fact, his point is not incompatible with mine, and perhaps even supports it. What

his comment shows is that 1) game developers are using these terms 2) game developers are not interrogating these terms 3) the terms have an active role in dictating how the company operates (ie. are we a "hardcore" company that makes $60 games, or, like him, are we a "casual" company that produces $.99 games—not idle questions by any means).

And I believe this commenter is being genuine: the people actually making these games may not be purposefully excluding people. The problem, however, is that whether they (we?) want to acknowledge it or not, these terms have come to signify particular things when used in the gaming community. He may be right that casual simply means $.99, but it means many other things to many other people who spend their time writing in, reading in, and participating in gaming blogs, podcasts, and forums. And without ethics, we have a hard time looking at the gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic, and other disparities that exist behind terms like this because of the desire of our theories to be less humanistic and more mechanistic. This situation may not show up for someone working from a procedural rhetoric standpoint, but it certainly could show up from a procedural ethics standpoint. In fact, it is seemingly minor, innocuous, harmless things like labeling that can be the focus of ethical investigations—particularly when it comes to economic exploitation (ie. how do we get the most money out of the most people).

For example, in a 2009 G4TV blog post, Joe Paulding writes, "Ask most girls in their mid twenties, and they'll tell you they loved Super Mario Brothers 3 or Bubble Bobble [sic]. It was a simpler time, when games were primarily marketed to children, and they were easy enough that your sister could jump in for a few hours and not be intimidated." This quote exposes several of the problems with claiming "casual" games somehow have less evolved forms of play. First, it equates casual games with children

(or even with idiots). This creates a subtle bias against adults who play these games, because they're made for kids (imagine if professors carried blankies and teddy bears to teach their classes). Second, it is just not true. Games in the late 80s were incredibly difficult, in part because of the lack of Internet access and mediums to circulate things like game guides. Finally, and what I find most ethically disturbing, are the implications of this attitude for women. Paulding suggests that women have less of an ability to play games, as they would likely be intimidated by anything difficult. It also equates women's abilities with children, putting men and men's games in one category, and women and children and women and children's game in another.

This gets at the heart of the casual v. hardcore game debate: casual games are seen as games for women and children; hardcore games are seen as games for men between 13-35. Left uninterrogated, this may seem like a harmless distinction. But this creates a damaging cycle. Less visibility means fewer developers, fewer advertising dollars, plummeting game quality (except by the few non-mainstream companies going against the mainstream perspectives), which leads to fewer consumers, which leads to fewer games, and so on. Definitions whose only purpose is to delineate between who is in the club and who is not is not fair to players, hurts innovation, stifles growth, and, in this case, disenfranchises women. Game studies scholars should not ignore this.

In Bogost's recent book *How to Do Things with Video Games* (2012), he uses the word "casual" 93 times. He pairs it with phrases like, "small" (p. 22, p. 65), "less interesting" (p. 73), "crappy" (p. 74)," "glut" (p. 84), "simple" (p. 84), "abstract" (p. 92), "throwaway" (p. 96), and so on. The definition he argues for in his chapter centered around casual games, *Throwaways,* is "casual games are games that players use and toss

aside, one-play stands, serendipitous encounters never to be seen again" (96). This is indeed unfortunate if women are seen as the casual gamers. He writes further, "Because casual gamers don't play many games or don't play them very often, they're unfamiliar with the complex conventions that might be second nature to hardcore gamers. These games attempt to minimize complexity and investment in player time, money, and control mastery" (97). This definition is reminiscent of Paulding's definition above without the explicit connection of casual games to women and children.

I don't think Bogost is connecting casual games with women here, but rather he is attempting to create a useful delineation between "crappy" casual games and other casual games that for him have more meaning. In fact, the entire *Throwaways* chapter is attempting to defend casual games, to create a division of casual games that should be respected by the mainstream game community. However, even when he writes things like "If casual games (as in Friday) focus on simplicity and short individual play sessions that contribute to long-term mastery and repetition, then casual games (as in sex) focus on simplicity and short play that might not ever be repeated—or even remembered" (100), he doesn't talk about the sexual implications already existing in the casual/hardcore debate. Because he ignores the questions around the ethics of definition, his conception of casual games is less robust, and it does nothing to critique (or challenge, or change) the damage the term does.

The procedures involved in how we present information, how we are, and how we research are as ethically complex and interesting as the process players go through when encountering a video game, and these procedures help to define how we play. The procedures involved in how we label, organize, define, categorize, and fund games are

likewise fraught with ethical issues that could be interrogated to enhance our understand of just how video games work (and why they work) to shape our understanding of the world.

Definition is one very small example of where we can go with a procedural ethics lens. An area that is in desperate need of some scholarly attention is the video game industry itself. Work practices, hiring and termination procedures, gender issues, sexual harassment issues, intellectual property and authorship, and so many more areas remain uninterogated. But the procedures in this environment dictate everything from the type of video game, to the play, to the procedures, to how the player interacts with the game, and so on. It seems unethical to continue to talk about the effect of games on culture or how players interact with games without acknowledging the work practices behind the games. Further, we would be better able to articulate our theories and critiques of games if we had a fuller understanding of the world (and in many cases it very much is a different world) they came from. So while definition is just one example of how a lens of procedural ethics could enrich scholarship, it is indicative of the richness and complexity we can tease out of often overlooked aspects of game studies.

3.4   Opportunities For Further Research: Games as Rhetorical Artifacts

The question then becomes, how to we ethically study games as rhetorical artifacts. In a recent article, Sicart argues that studying games rhetorically should include both Bogost and others' concept of procedural rhetoric (which affords a more mechanistic lens) and creative play (which afford a more humanist lens). But actual rhetorical study demands that we don't look just to the artifacts or to the people involved,

but to ourselves as well. We do an injustice to a study of ethics if we don't hold ourselves accountable to ethical research practices as well.

Procedural ethics can be an incredibly rich avenue for further research, theorizing, and writing in video game studies. What I hope to have accomplished in this article is beginning to form a conversation that will guide further research—a conversation that asks scholars to hold themselves to an ethical standard in their research that always strives to uncover a little more of the picture, to think about people and things that are too often marginal to our inquiries, and to constantly examine how our own ethics and paradigms may influence our research.

In the next chapter, I use the grounding of procedural ethics to begin to uncover come of the hidden ethical problems behind the shiny box of a new video game. Behind the cover, behind the scantily clad heroine, behind the code, there is an overwhelming tide of abuse, harassment, and discrimination. In this industry, no one is protected, and those who are harassed and abused are blamed for their own abuse because they simply aren't good enough. My hope is that with procedural ethics, this environment will be exposed and then improved so that the women, and all employees, in this environment can be successful.

CHAPTER 4. WORKPLACE POLICIES: THE LACK OF WOMEN IN THE GAMING
INDUSTRY'S EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS

Change is inherently a discursive project.
This means that change is restricted by the
structures of language and by the conventions
of language use. Change will be a product of what can
be legitimately said (or written) in a specific
context at a specific moment in time.
--Brenton Faber, Community Action and Organization Change

The quote that begins this chapter encapsulates a critical idea for the foundation

of this chapter. In his book, Faber undertakes a project that is similar to my own, though

he is using storytelling as his primary method of research and to report his findings. I, on

the other hand, am attempting to extract the stories that exist, and sometimes even more

tellingly don't exist, within corporate documents. I, like Faber, believe that stories are the

key to change, the most powerful element that determines the behavior of those who

believe in the story and the element that must be altered to create lasting change. As

Faber writes, "True change reconciles that difference and reforms it, making it part of our

everyday lives" (26). It is this change that I am after, and being able to find the stories

that dominate the video game industry is the first step.

Video game companies are notoriously proprietous about their company

information. Of the twenty-five companies I contacted about this research project, none

of them responded. When I finally did connect with the CEO, no less, of a large video game company who had been publicly lamenting about the difficulties his company faces in recruiting female employees, he promised full access to anything I needed. He got me in contact with his HR manager, who was communicative at first, but in the end did not get me the necessary documents.

With this in mind, my argument that we must account for the companies and people behind the games when we conduct scholarship in this area becomes more complex. The lack of this in the extant scholarship may not be a matter of lazy scholars, or shortsighted ones, or sexist ones, but rather about scholars being realistic about what kind of information they can feasibly gain access to. Beyond this, it is reasonable to question just how much we can learn about a company from their public documents. This begs the question of just how much something like a code of conduct, replete with legalese and hedges, can really tell us about what happens behind closed doors.

I move forward with my analysis of company policy documents under three primary assumptions:

1. Company policies reflect the way "the company" (whether this means the CEO, the Board of Directors, or some unseen entity is up for debate) desires its employees to act.

2. Company policies are a major part of the narratives that institutions shape about themselves.

3. Formal, documented policies are often the last refuge for those who are discriminated against, harassed, ignored, or otherwise abused.

Readers may disagree with some of these assumptions, but they nevertheless ground my analysis. This may indeed be only a first step, but it is an important one in the move to encourage scholars of technology to intervene in communities that foster exclusion and mistreatment of those who are not in power. We have much precedence for this type of intervention, through the Marxists, Frankfurt Philosophers, Continental Philosophers, and so on that ground much of the tradition of cultural studies. In fact, rarely has work dealing with cultures remained armchair, dealing with only hypotheticals. Work and theory on gender likewise has a tradition of intervention, from Judith Butler's work with bodies to Barad's work with quantum mechanics. This study follows in those traditions by asserting that it is our place question the treatment of disenfranchised within the technoculture and strive to make it better. Finding my way in through public policy documents has turned out to be both productive and useful, though it is by no means complete.

4.1   Analysis

My analysis of the company policies will take two forms: first, I will conduct a visual analysis based on word frequency and section word count, then I will provide a more hermeneutic analysis. I believe a hermeneutic analysis is necessary here because the legalese in which many of these documents are written is often unintelligible without careful investigation for most readers. The nuances are often what tell the story. Further, sometimes the most important information is what is not said, what is glossed over, or what is merely mentioned. I will also provide a visual analysis because, as will be clear by the end of the chapter, a textual analysis paints a different—though not competing—

picture. The visual analysis will be in the vein of postmodern mapping, a la Sullivan's technique of postmodern mapping discussed in *Opening Spaces*, though since I am working primarily with documents rather than situations or environments, these maps will be far less complex than the ones Sullivan works with. However, the maps are done with the same idea: that mapping allows you to see gaps, overlaps, and invisibilities that are otherwise missed. In the end, it is my hopes that the differences and similarities between the two analyses will provide a rich landscape from which I can launch a practical discussion of how video game scholars can use this type of analysis and procedural ethics to create positive change.

For my textual analysis, I have combined methods from two different areas. I rely on discourse analysis, which has long underpinned much composition research. I also take much from foundations or groups that have received grants or other funds to conduct research projects about gender in the workplace. Groups like Deloitte Women's Initiative, The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative, Norfond, the Association for Women's Rights in Development, World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the United Nations Fund for Women, and Women's Learning Partnership, Gender at Work, the George Washington University, and so on have all conducted or funded research projects to get at gender inequity in the workplace through company policy. What I believe is unique and exciting is the way composition research, which specializes in finding nuanced meaning, and non-academic government funded research, which bring industry expertise, can be combined here productively.

I will focus on three of these studies as the basis for my analysis. I have chosen these based on the perspicacity and clarity with which findings and implementation

suggestions are presented. While other studies do have important and in-depth findings, for the purposes of this project, in which my focus is not on the methods of workplace document analysis, I have chosen to pursue methods that would be fairly easily implementable by a variety of scholars. As one study reports, "No one gender equality policy blueprint will fit all companies and projects; the size of the company and the sector in which it operates will determine to a large extent what kinds of gender equality considerations would be applicable" (Rao, Frugte, and Wiik 4). Likewise, no collection of methods is appropriate in every situation. What can be applicable across contexts is a methodology, such as procedural ethics, that is based in situational and contextual flexibility.

For this chapter, I borrow the definition of an equitable workplace from The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research's (CGIAR) diversity program report. They broadly define an equitable workplace as one that

- Includes and supports both women and men of diverse backgrounds;
- Stimulates staff members to do their best and find satisfaction in both their professional and personal lives;
- Engages women and men in making decisions that shape the work environment;
- Employs diverse skills, perspectives, and knowledge of women and men; and
- Values diverse contributions and ways of working.

These conditions are somewhat broad and subjective, perhaps even un-provable. However, through a more specific analysis, visually and textually, a picture begins to

emerge of the landscape of the workplaces in the video game industry. And the picture that emerges could not be further away from these values.

4.2 Policy Visualizations

While a frequency map doesn't give much context to the usage of the terms represented, it does show a snapshot of the language used to describe how employees should behave. They give a glimpse into the meaning of words hiding just below the surface. In this section I will be using no outside sources to contrast the visualizations, but attempt to let them speak for themselves. I do, necessarily, draw some conclusions about what is important to the companies based on how much real estate particular words take up on the page. I begin with analyzing Blizzard, creator of one of the most popular games of all time, *World of Warcraft*. I then move to Electronic Arts, one of the three largest video game companies in the industry. Third I examine Riot Games, creator of the most popular MMO currently based on number of active players, far surpassing *World of Warcraft* and any other online game. I then analyze Zynga, a pioneer in the social game revolution. I finish with Valve, a company that has publicly stated equality is a crucial factor in all of their game development.

4.3   Blizzard's Employee Code of Conduct

Figure 2. Wordle of Blizzard's Employee Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on
word frequency. It has been adjusted to remove numbers.

The words most used in Blizzard's Employee Code of Conduct are "company,"

"information," "code," "employees," and "must." While this does only show the

frequency of words used, not necessarily what the company values, it seems reasonable

to argue that this does suggest that Blizzard's lexicon favors a kind of corporate speak,

where individual employees are not featured as prominently as the company overall.

Considering that Blizzard is one of the top three largest video game companies,

competing with Sony Online Entertainment and Electronic Arts.[13] They made 4.86 billion

dollars in 2012, growing by just over 2%, and boast over 6,700 employees. Much

different than a company like Riot games, analyzed below, Blizzard is an enormous

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[13] http://www.hoovers.com/company-information/cs/company-profile.
Blizzard_Entertainment_Inc.ec357f030f07ce72.html

company and this is reflected in the employee code of conduct.[14]

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[14] http://www.marketwatch.com/investing/stock/atvi/profile

Figure 3. Bubble chart of Blizzard's Employee Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word count and section title. It has not been adjusted in any way.

Note: Equal Employment and Working Conditions is the only section that discusses gender, race, or discrimination. Harassment is not mentioned in the Code of Conduct.

As word frequency visualization does not take things like running heads into account, it is likely that the picture this portrays is somewhat skewed. However, in the next diagram I have highlighted the mid-level words. I believe that focusing on the words on the second tier of popularity really start to get at the identity and stories the company wishes to tell through their documents.

Figure 4. Wordle of Blizzard's Employee Code of Conduct, medium level frequency analysis.

As can be seen with the medium frequency words highlighted, this document portrays a sense of formality, danger, and proper procedures for employees. It's heavy emphasis on law and compliance suggest that this document was created as both a document to legally protect the company as well as to inform employees about the minimal level of acceptable behavior according to the law.

It is certainly possible, perhaps even likely, that the details of employee conduct when it comes to things like sexual harassment, behavior at conferences, and public social media interactions are detailed in other, internal documents. However, the documents provided to the public are still a rich source for ascertaining the image or story that Blizzard wishes to portray about itself. Only one sentence is provided that discusses the company's policy on gender, race, and sexual orientation:

> "Each of us has a fundamental responsibility to show respect and consideration to our fellow employees. The diversity of the Company's employees is a tremendous asset. We are firmly committed to providing

equal opportunity in all aspects of employment and will not tolerate any

illegal discrimination or harassment of any kind. It is the policy of the

Company to provide equal opportunity in employment (including in

recruiting, hiring, transfers, promotions, compensation, benefits, discipline

and termination) to qualified individuals regardless of race, color, age,

religion, gender, national origin, pregnancy, marital status, sexual

orientation, physical or mental disability, military status, and all other

grounds of discrimination provided by local legislation" (3).

Clearly, this is a stock line of legalese, not a heartfelt defense of diversity. The

next line states that if an employee has further questions regarding this policy to contact

their local HR rep. This is typical in many companies, which suggests a number of

possibilities with regards to the company's view of diversity and harassment.

1. The company does not anticipate that harassment and discrimination will
   not likely be a problem.

2. The company has chosen to only provide the bare minimum protection
   required by law for their employees.

3. A severe lack of diversity in the current workforce obscures policies about
   diversity and discrimination from even showing up as a topic of
   importance.

4. The company truly believes that this is all that is required to adequately
   protect their employees.

I do not know which one, if any, of these are the impetus for the lack of policy.

However, when 1/8 of the policy is dedicated to conflicts of interest, 1/8 is dedicated to

confidentiality, and an entire section is dedicated to proper use of company assets, it is telling that only one paragraph even mentions harassment, gender, discrimination, or procedure to follow when one feels harassed, abused, or discriminated against.

The lack of sexual harassment policies, and the lack of acknowledgment that it is a problem, is fairly pervasive. Several organizations, such as the ADA Initiative, are dedicated solely to promoting the inclusion of sexual harassment policies at industry conferences. While it may seem bizarre that policies like this aren't already present, conferences in our own field, such and Computers and Writing, didn't have a sexual harassment policy until this year. This is telling of who is thought to exist in these tech-heavy environments.

That said, 1:1 correlation between documents and human behavior is simply impossible to prove. However, the lack of consideration when it comes to nontraditional gamers has been a major problem for Blizzard's public image. As I will discuss shortly, there have been numerous incidents in which Blizzard has been spotlighted for sexist and homophobic behavior. Again, I cannot say that this attitude is *caused* by their corporate policies on behavior. However, a strong correlation, that I believe goes beyond coincidence, is apparent.

4.4 EA's Employee Code of Conduct

EA (9,000 employees) is comparable in size to Blizzard (4,700 employees), and

like Blizzard, EA has a fairly "stock" section on harassment.

> Harassment has no place at EA. We do not tolerate sexual harassment or
>
> harassment based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry,
>
> pregnancy, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family
>
> status, veteran status, medical condition, disability or political belief,
>
> whether it's verbal, physical or visual harassment, or a form of retaliation

Figure 5. Wordle of EA's Employee Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word frequency. It has been adjusted to remove numbers.

> for any complaint of harassment. (1)

They distinguish between equal opportunity and harassment, which shows an awareness that these things are separate issues.
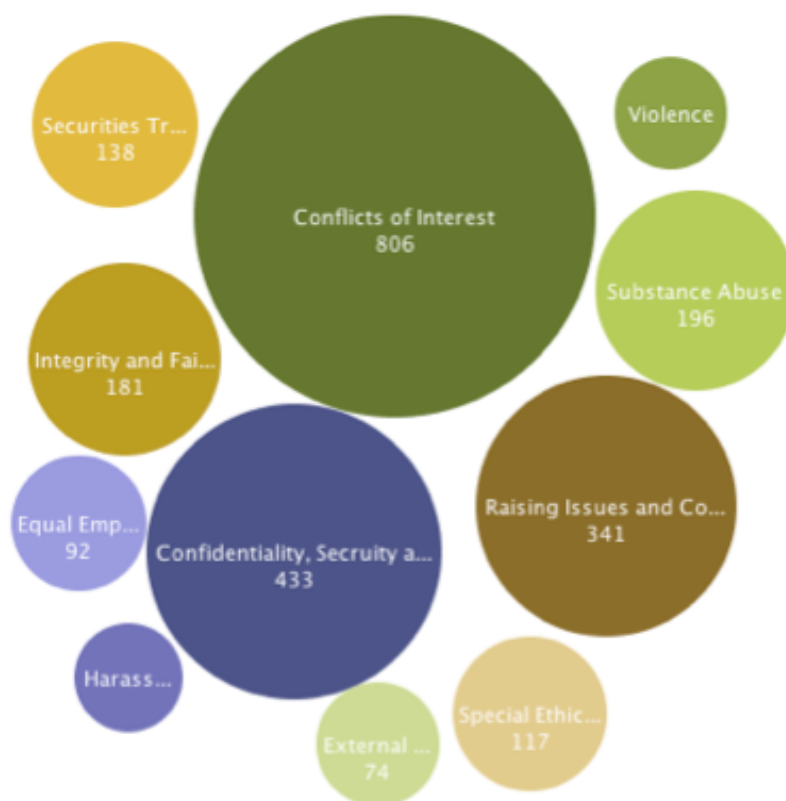
Figure 6. Bubble chart of EA's Employee Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word count and section title. It has not been adjusted in any way.

However, this awareness is misguided. In their equal opportunity section, EA writes, "Electronic Arts values equality and meritocracy" (1). Emilio Castilla has shown that it is in environments that claim to be meritocratic where women and minorities face the most discrimination. He finds that "Although these policies [meritocratic ones) are often adopted in the hope of motivating employees and ensuring meritocracy, policies with limited transparency and accountability can actually increase ascriptive bias and reduce equity in the workplace" (1479). In this sense, we can expect there to be even more problems with the discrimination and harassment of women and minorities in

environments that claim to be meritocratic towards them than a company who does not even acknowledge their existence.

This holds up somewhat when analyzing the word frequency visualization. Like Blizzard, the most frequent words used are corporate words like EA, employees, business, and company. The medium level frequency analysis, however, shows a slightly different picture. In the figure below, the human is almost erased completely. Words like property, policy, financial, committee, code, and must dominate the middle level, showing a hyper-focus on policy and legal protection. So, while a hermeneutic analysis may suggest that EA is further advanced in terms of equality than Blizzard, we can see the opposite is likely. Instead, EA seems to hide behind buzzwords without actually showing any more care for women and minorities than a company who does not mention them at all.

The bubble visualization paints a picture of EA that is similar to Blizzard. The largest section is the Conflict of Interest section, which focuses primarily on corporate espionage, soliciting EA employees, and contract work. The second largest section is

confidentiality and security, which again deals with keeping corporate knowledge out of the public eye and out of the hands of rival companies. The third largest section, promisingly, is about how to go about raising issues with the code. While EA does say that it will provide waivers to the code if necessary (let's hope they don't wave the harassment section), they also provide a vaguely menacing threat about termination if the code is violated. To report this violation, however, the employee is supposed to find the "appropriate individual" to which the report should be made. As Castilla argues in his work, this type of lack of transparency is one of the biggest contributors to inequality in the workplace. It suggests that the code is really meant to protect those who are already on the inside of the community, not those attempting to break in.

EA's reputation, and its growth, has been somewhat tumultuous in recent years. Despite growing by 15% in 2012, it grew -.55% in the past 3 years total. Their performance in the marketplace mimics this, with falling stocks and profits. EA was also voted the "Worst Company in America,"[15] with Forbes reporting that PR was the biggest reason for the company's less than stellar performance. Of course, EA itself has spoken publicly that they do not believe sexism is the reason for the lack of women in the industry.[16] In fact, EA VP Gabrielle Toledano reports that "It's easy to blame men for not creating an attractive work environment - but I think that's a cop-out. If we want more women to work in games, we have to recognize that the problem isn't sexism." She does not seem to see a connection between the staggering rates of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and discrimination and the industry not being attractive to women.

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[15] http://www.forbes.com/sites/insertcoin/2012/04/04/ea-is-the-worst-company-in-america-now-what/
[16] http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/185122/

This may be an easy example of the connection between the view put forward by the company documents (ie. that if you are good enough, you will succeed) and the VP (we only don't have more women because they aren't here). However, I believe these two things are integrally related. Changing one may not directly change the other, but when a company decides that it wants to value and protect its diversity, then I have to imagine that positive change will follow.

4.5   Riot Games' Employee Handbook

One of the things that makes Riot's handbook look so different from EA and

Blizzard is that they have organized it into a guide rather than a traditional policy. As can

be seen in the word frequency chart above, the most used words don't look all that

different on the surface, but the content is significantly different. Riot opens it's

handbook by saying, "These guidelines are here to better understand the privileges and

obligations that are allowed during employment with Riot Gaming Company" (8). They

go on to specify that their behavior guidelines are in effect while at work, during

company travel, at gaming events, and in meetings. This is significant, because much of

the harassment and assault issues in the industry occur at cons. The cons often do not

have a code of conduct for participants, and thus even if acting as an ambassador of a

particular company, employees are in a kind of ephemeral zone between being on the

clock and being off. Riot, quite uniquely, defines up front, on the first page of content,
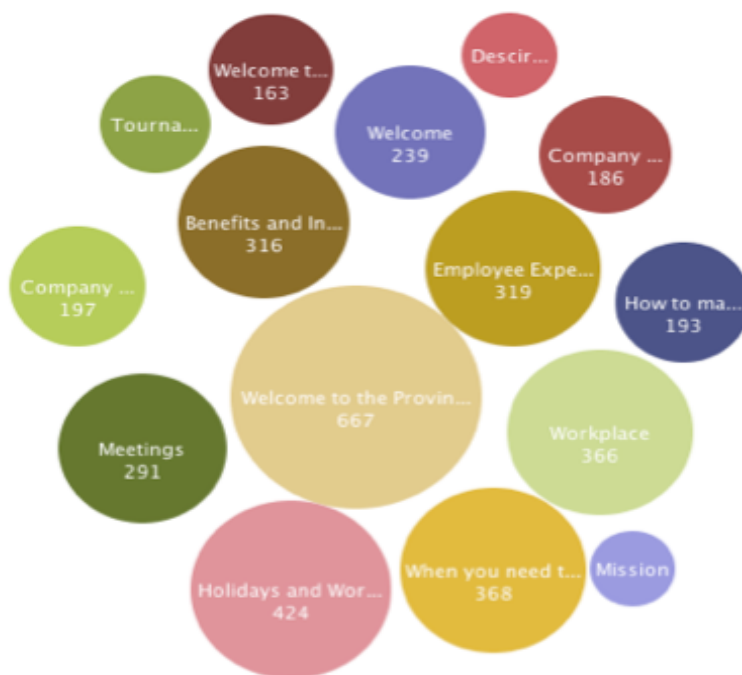
Figure 9. Bubble chart of Riot Games' Employee Handbook. This is a visualization based on word count and section title. It has not been adjusted in any way.

that while employed at Riot you are always bound by their policies: "Tourneys are fun and exciting but are still considered the workplace. Workplace etiquette and professionalism is expected and remembering the image of Riot is to be exemplified through our employees" (12). (On a personal note, that's pretty damn cool.)

A cursory analysis of the language they employ to protect their workers seems disappointing. They do not talk about harassment or sexual offensive. Upon a deeper analysis, however, the handbook does cover these issues but in a more specific way. Among their list of inappropriate behavior, they list "bothering others," "excessive/unnecessary noises," "screaming foul languages," "disrespecting employees,"

"degrading customers and/or your coworkers," "inappropriate behavior," and so on. Rather than use the typical legalese, they narrate what is and is not appropriate. They even talk about how shy people or new employees can boost their confidence and talk to others at cons.

Another crucial element that Riot includes in their policy, that is missing in both EA's and Blizzard's policies, is a concrete path to follow when you feel someone has violated the code of conduct. Bliazzard and EA both say to contact the "appropriate person" in the event there has been a violation. Riot, on the other hand, cites the name and contact of the "Employee Advising Associate" that should be contact in case of questions or violations. When new to a company, it can be difficult if even possible to figure out whom to contact for things like harassment. Further, it can be dangerous to ask a fellow employee whom to contact if you're being harassed (as simply asking the question can raise a flag and compromise confidentiality). As Emillio Castilla points out in his study of meritocratic workplaces, transparency is one of the only ways to ensure an equitable workplace.

An analysis of the mid-level words in the wordle also paints a different picture than EA or Blizzard.

Words that didn't show up on other companies' charts at all, like "know" and "feel," feature fairly prominently in Riot's frequency visual. Other words, like "policy," "property," and "compliance" are markedly absent. Of course, it is possible that Riot provides a different document that is more traditional to its employees, however this is what is publicly available.

League of Legends crushes the most popular online multiplayer games *like Call of Duty (CoD)* and *World of Warcraft (WoW)*,[17] boasting over 12 million daily log ons, whereas *CoD* and *WoW* are about 3 million. Finding finances statistics are difficult, but I did find one article that puts the per quarter revenue for the company who bought Riot in 2011 around 1.7 billion. This infographic, via Cody Reimer, discusses just how enormous *League of Legends* has become and goes into more statistical depth about the uniqueness of the game itself and Riot Games:

http://majorleagueoflegends.s3.amazonaws.com/lol_infographic.png

The section word count visual for Riot's handbook is slightly less impactful, as they have esoteric names for their sections. Rather than having sections on conflicts of interest and confidentiality, they focus on how meetings work and on valuing your and your coworkers expertise. It is somewhat difficult to analyze this visually, as it is so unique.

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[17] http://www.dailyfinance.com/2012/10/19/the-secret-champion-of-video-gaming-stocks/

The connection between their company policy and public persona is perhaps the most important culmination of these analyses. In other words, do company policies seem to be reflected in the company's public persona? Cody Reimer at Games and Academia follows Riot Games and their most popular game, League of Legends. He reports:

> Riot excels at both transparency and community outreach. The studio interacts with their players through their official forums, but also through Reddit, where designers pop in to address concerns and host AMAs (Ask Me Anything). Riot releases patch notes like many other developers of living games, but the patch notes are often accompanied by a video featuring prominent designers who explain their rationale for the upcoming changes.

This approach to design in the game, with iterative discussion, design, and decision-making is mimicked in their organizational structure. They continually do outreach to the game community, but even more interesting, is their commitment to improving the community. They have banned high profile players for violating their code of conduct (yes, they even have a code of conduct for their players). They also hire PhD students each year to improve the gaming community around and in the game, leading to the creation of things like the "Tribunal and Honor system to gamify good sportsmanship."[18]

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[18] http://codyreimer.wordpress.com/2013/04/16/on-league-of-legends/

4.6   Zynga's Code of Conduct

Zynga is a particularly interesting company to study because they pioneered a new type of gaming company. Founded in 2007, Zynga led the social game revolution that continues to take in astonishing profits. As of 2013, Zynga has three of the top five games on Facebook and has 265 million active monthly users. After releasing Farmville in 2009, Zynga quickly became the largest social gaming company, trading at well over $14 a share. They began acquiring numerous smaller social gaming companies, such as omgpop, until they were eventually likened to a "federation of city-states." Evelyn Rusli of the *New York Times* reported in 2011 that "Several former employees describe

Figure 11. Wordle of Zynga's Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word frequency. It has been adjusted to remove numbers.

emotionally charged encounters, including loud outbursts from Mr. Pincus, threats from senior leaders and moments when colleagues broke down into tears."[19] Today, April 22 2013, Zynga trades at barely over $3 a share.

In response to claims of fear and emotional distress Zynga's employees face, the chief executive, Mark Pincas, has asserted that Zynga is a meritocracy, and thus weaker employees will necessarily feel overwhelmed: "Those who do not perform can perish." Rusli goes on to report, "Mr. Pincus, a graduate of Harvard Business School and a former Wall Street hand, sees Zynga in a different mold, aiming to build a more perfect meritocracy, according to people close to him." This claim of meritocracy is not uncommon in the games industry by any means, however usually companies don't implement meritocratic systems to foster competition (or at least they don't claim to).

For the purposes of this project, I'm particularly interested in how these companies foster, or don't foster, diversity, particularly when it comes to female employees. MIT professor Emilio Castilla, in his landmark study, finds that "the formalization of this performance system [aka a meritocracy] created additional opportunities for discretion and biases to emerge, ultimately resulting in compensation differentials for women and minorities over time. Future research should take steps toward studying whether the patterns discovered" (1519). In other words, a meritocratic environment equals more discrimination that traditional hiring, retention, promotional, and termination systems because it systematizes bias at the same time that it obscures bias.

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[19] http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2011/11/27/zyngas-tough-culture-risks-a-talent-drain/

Figure 12. Bubble chart of Zynga's Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word count and section title. It has not been adjusted in any way.

The word frequency image above suggests such a corporate atmosphere as well. With an eleven page code of conduct (compared to EA's four pages and Blizzard's eight pages), Zynga does not mention discrimination, abuse, bias, inequity, or any other synonyms. They mention harassment once, but not with the purpose of protecting employees. Rather, their only mention of harassment is in the section titled "Protection and Proper Use of Company Assets" and reads: "You may not, while acting on behalf of Zynga or while using our computing or communications equipment or facilities…

commit any unlawful or illegal act, including harassment, libel, fraud, sending of

unsolicited bulk email (also known as "spam") in violation of applicable law, trafficking

in contraband of any kind or espionage." There are no sections in this eleven-page,

single-spaced document that is intended to protect employees.

Figure 13. Wordle of Riot Games' Employee Handbook, medium level frequency analysis.

In the word frequency chart above, which highlights the medium-frequent words,

we can see things like "compliance," "must," "laws," "confidential," "violation," and

"supervisor." This code of conduct is more focused on protecting the company, an

attitude that is reflected in their dismal reputation in the gaming world. While EA does

have the title of worst company in America, many major news outlets have published

numerous articles about the way Zynga treats its employees and its reputation.

As can be seen in the section importance visual, based on word count, each

section is tied to corporate standards and codes. Compliance and Conflicts of Interest are

the two biggest sections, with not a single section that relates personally to employees: nothing about employee behavior day-to-day, or behavior at conferences, or paths to follow when you feel your rights have been violated (though, since no rights are given to employees, not even the right to not be harassed, that isn't surprising). It may be entirely possible that Zynga has a comprehensive code of conduct that deals with the gaps here, but 1) I doubt it and 2) this is what is publicly available. As I have discussed, the stories that companies tell about themselves through their approved, public discourse says much about how the atmosphere of the company is supposed to work.

As Zynga continues to decline in popularity, I can only imagine that it is not independent of these corporate policies. When companies like Zynga treats their workers as commodities without providing them with the most basic standards of protection from harassment, discrimination, and bias, diversity suffers. And innovation comes from diversity, not from, as Mark Pincas believes, competition.

4.7   Valve's Employee Handbook

Figure 14. Wordle of Valve's Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word frequency. It has been adjusted to remove numbers.

Unlike many of the companies I've discussed so far, Valve has a fairly positive reputation in the gaming community. They have been celebrated for making groundbreaking games like *Portal* and *Portal 2*, and have nearly zero bad press for abuse against women or minorities. In fact, one of Valve's female game developers became known for an article she wrote defending the game industry against claims of sexism based on her positive experience at Valve. She writes, "I have never, however, been treated as anything but a team member and an equal by my coworkers, and it's a major disservice to them that folks automatically assume they will treat me differently because I am a woman."[20] Further, their games are not known for depicting women in a sexually demeaning way.

Given this positive view in the community, and with the correlations we have seen between policy and reputation at other companies like Zynga, one may expect Valve's policies to be full of statements and codes that protect their employees. This, however, is not the case. In fact, in neither the employee handbook nor the code of conduct is harassment mentioned even once. There is no discussion of equality, harassment, discrimination, or anything that one would expect to find. There is nothing about employee behavior, beyond how to communicate your ideas and work on projects and so forth. They even have a section covering how to make donations to charities with company money. But they never discuss how one should proceed in the event that s/he is being harassed or discriminated against.

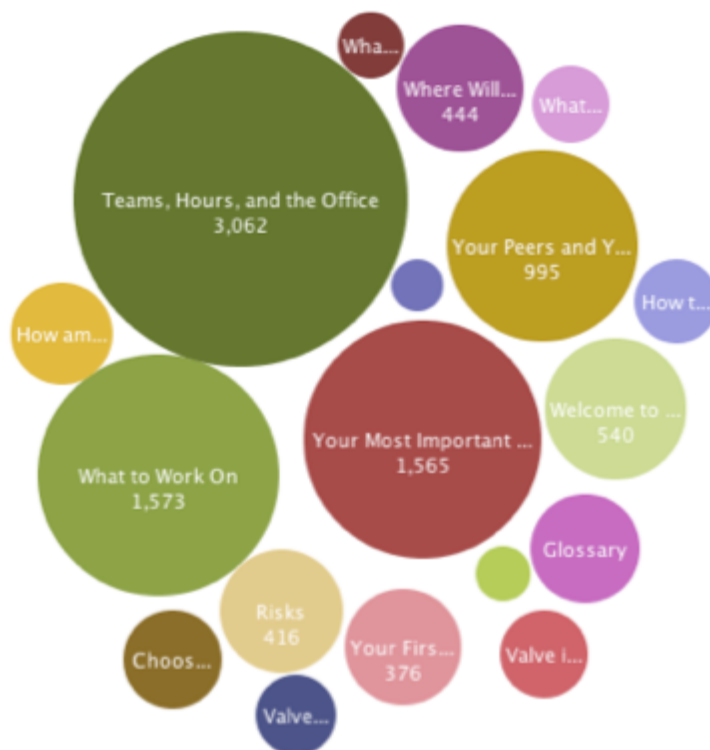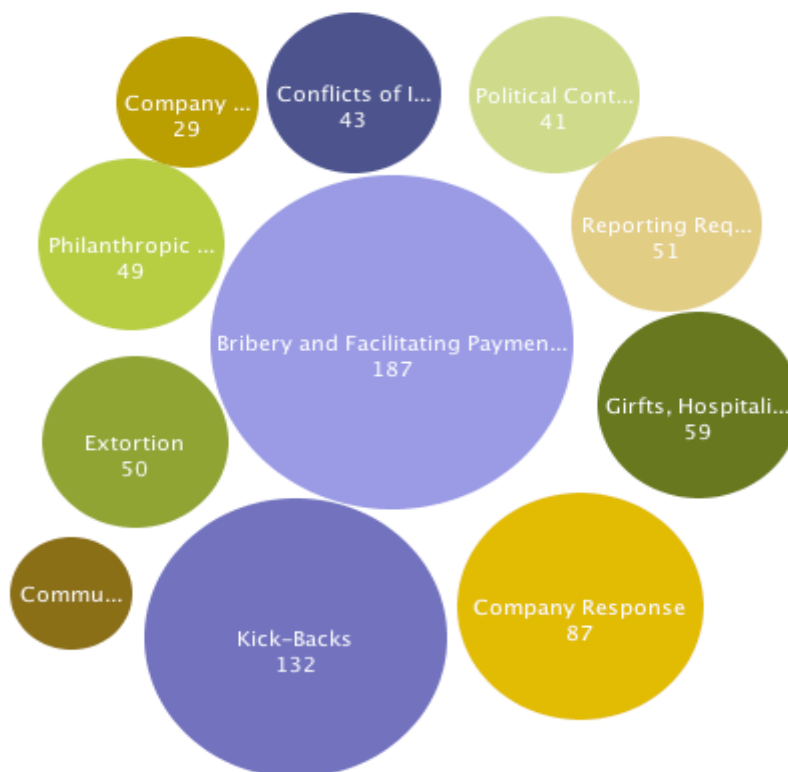[20] http://www.fmvmagazine.com/?p=13391

Figure 16. Bubble chart of Valve's Employee Handbook. This is a visualization based on word count and section title. It has not been adjusted in any way.

In each of the two word frequency charts, we can see a somewhat difference emphasis. In the handbook, people, Valve, work, and the company are emphasized. In the code of conduct, technology, engineering, and Valve are emphasized. These seem consistent with the documents I analyzed above from other companies. Despite it being similar on the surface, however, Valve is the only company that does not mention harassment even once. What this means is unclear, and complicated, as there is little evidence that things like harassment and discrimination are a problem at Valve. This could indicate that the culture is so bad that people are afraid to speak out, that things go

unreported because there are no clear lines to follow for reporting, that there is not

Figure 17. Bubble chart of Valve's Code of Conduct. This is a visualization based on word count and section title. It has not been adjusted in any way.

enough diversity for problems to surface, or perhaps there simply are no problems.

One interesting this Valve does include in their employee handbook is a chart of how employees see the organization being organized.

As we can see in Valve's sanctioned organizational chart below, Valve has attempted a virtually flat hierarchy. There are no managers or project leads, and no one is the boss. Gabe Newell, the managing director and co-founder, seems to be the only one with a little extra say. In addition to being flat, employees also visualized the structure as a complex web. This could mean a lot of different things. Perhaps this is meant to be a

meritocratic organization, though valve never states that. Perhaps this structure makes

decisions more visible. Without doing an institutional study, it is not clear how this
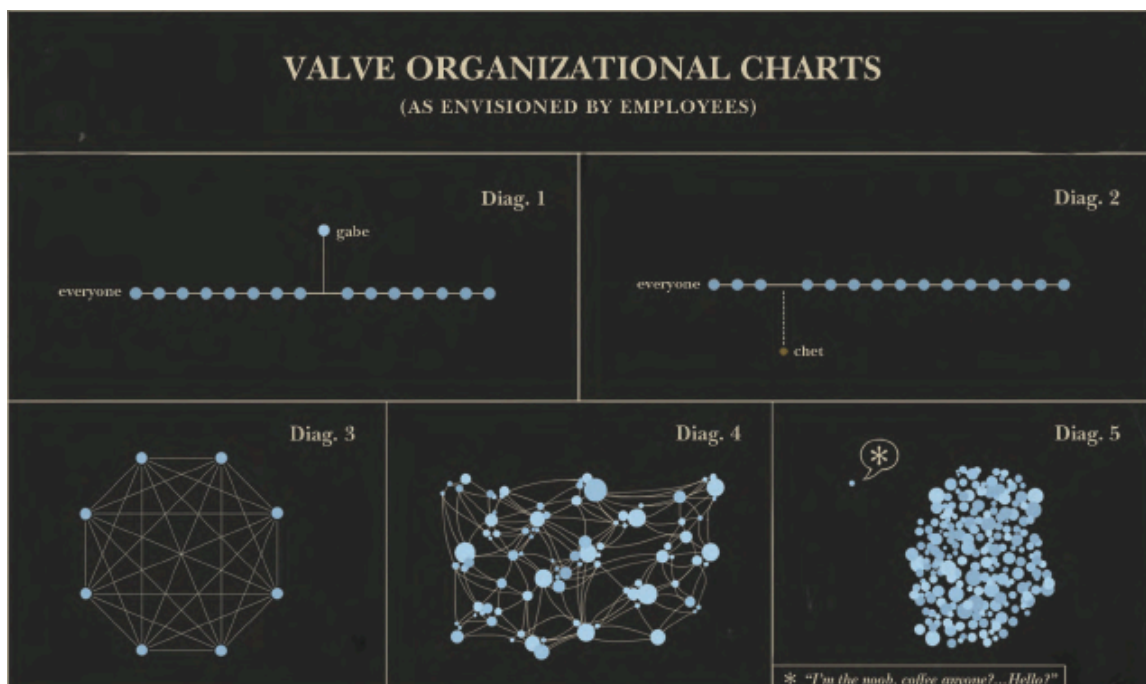
Figure 18. Valve's sanctioned organizational chart.

structure is connected to the company's reputation or policies. It does, however, raise

some interesting and problematic questions.

For example, Emiliio Castilla reports that transparency is one of the most

important attributes to have in a company in order to have productive diversity. It seems

that this organizational structure could have high transparency, since no one person is

allowed to make decisions, but rather they emerge from group consensus. However, it is

also possible that a lack of structure contributes to implicit bias, group formation based

on exclusive affinities, and perhaps even unintentional intimidation. Likewise, as Castilla

points out in his study of meritocratic environments, when pathways are hidden, such as

how to join workgroups or how promotion works, women and minorities are significantly

adversely affected. At the very least, then, this structure could use more clarity, particularly in their public documents, to be more amenable to the needs of employees. And they need a harassment, discrimination, and equity policy.

4.8   Textual Analysis

> *Businesses restrict their own growth potential*
> *when women are unintentionally excluded from*
> *key training and advancement opportunities.*
> *Whether the economy is up or down, who*
> *gets promoted — and who gets left behind —*
> *has substantial consequences for business success.*

Ilene H. Lang, President & Chief Executive Officer, Catalyst

The visual analysis is key to this project because it allows viewers to see things that can be obscured. The textual analysis that follows approaches the policies from a different angle. I gather together components from several studies that have been conducted on gender equity in the workplace, particularly in relation to company policy, and use these components to see whether the codes of conduct and employee handbooks comply with the principles of an equitable workplace. The visual analysis allows us to see meaning that is embedded. As a textual analysis, this section should focus on what is said. However, as will be seen shortly, there is such a shocking lack of policies that ensure an equitable workplace, that this analysis really focuses on what is not said. The AAUW argues that the single most important factor in improving the retention and recruitment of women is (programmatic and cultural) environmental improvements (62). Brenton Faber argues that companies can improve, change, and even shape the culture of

their organization through their programmatic policies. Policies, then, are a critical place to examine and improve in order to improve the representation of women in the video game industry.

The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative conducted a "groundbreaking project undertaken to help businesses achieve greater gender equality and build more productive workplaces" (1). In it, they outline specifics of how workplaces can improve the conditions for women and other under-represented groups. This covers seven things that companies need to have in their public policies to ensure an equitable workplace:

1. Equitable and transparent employee compensation

2. An acknowledgement of the importance of a private life (through the support of things like flexible work hours, re-entry opportunities, and parental leave)

3. The assurance of a workplace free from violence (this includes action in the workplace, in company travel, and outreach about domestic violence)

4. Policies that pro-actively promote women to managerial positions

5. Goals of concrete ways to reach out to underrepresented groups, ethical marketing practices (this would include products that don't demean women)

6. Avenues for employees to participate in civic engagement and communities

7. Leadership, accountability, and transparency

The initiative created these for companies to utilize them to increase participation of women and equity for women. They are more of a productive matrix than an analytic one.

That said, I think it is telling that three of the five companies do not meet even one of these standards (Blizzard, EA, and Zynga). Valve only meets requirement number 6. Riot meets 3 and 5 and partially meets numbers 1 and 7. EA and Blizzard both provide completely stock statements about harassment, and that does not show that the company is truly trying to ensure a violence free workplace, but rather that they are more interested in covering themselves in a lawsuit. In fact, I would argue that only including the bare minimum suggests that you are aware of the need for a harassment policy but don't value it enough to go beyond the minimum. This borders on an active desire to not protect women, rather than a passive overlooking of their needs. Valve, on the other hand, has zero policies that discuss harassment. Their policy is clever, and funny, and even inviting. But it provides its employees no protection from things like harassment and discrimination.

Compensation is an area that is not discussed much in these policies, though it is not surprising considering that the documents I analyze are public documents. However, making your pay-scale transparent is one important step to recruiting women, because it allows for the possibility of women being able to demand equal pay to their male counterparts, which, unfortunately, is still not the norm. One thing that is entirely absent from all companies is the acknowledgement that the recruitment and retention of diverse populations is crucial to the success of the company. Further, all of the studies suggest that concrete policies ensuring the retention, promotion, and recruitment of these groups

is necessary. Informal discussion about hiring more women is not effective, according to the research (The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative, Deliotte Women's Initiative, and the AAUW). It is necessary to have concrete policies that reflect these values, and these policies are lacking in the documents available publicly.

There are also several topics lacking from these policies that overwhelmingly impact women. For example, none of the policies available discuss family leave, part-time work, working from home, and flexible work schedules. While discussing those things would undoubtedly positively impact all employees, these particular issues impact women more than men. For example Slone reports that "Women are somewhat more likely (79%) than men (68%) to use flextime when it is available" (Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 6). Similarly, ""Women are much more likely (24%) to have part-time positions in their main (or only) job as defined by their employers than men (9%)" (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 9). Allowing for part-time employment, then, will likely attract more women, who are still responsible for a majority of the household obligations, particularly when there are children in the household. Since 68% of women who work part time do so voluntarily, organizations that lack a critical mass of women (defined by CGAIR as 35% of the overall workforce), this would be one way to improve those numbers. However, in the policies available online, there is no mention of flexible work time in any of the 5 companies' policies.

Maternity and paternity leave are policies that also seem to be absent from the publicly available codes of conducts and employee handbooks. This could be a major deterrent to anyone with a family looking for a job in the video games industry. A lack of these policies, however, do impact women more than men (while this may seem obvious,

there are many statistics to back this up). For example, Hill, Hawkins, Martinson, & Ferris report that "Within the IBM organization, "58% of all parents reported that mothers were mostly responsible for childcare and only 6% reported that fathers were mostly responsible" (249). Since women still seem to be the primary provider of child care, an industry-wide silence on maternity and family leave policies may be a major contributor to the dismal numbers of women in the industry. The five companies analyzed here are certainly no exception. In fact, the companies analyzed here comply with nearly 0% of the equitable workplace policies outlined by the AAUW, CGAIR, Slone, and The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative.

Faced with these statistics, it is a wonder that any women have been able to be successful in this industry.

Gender at Work, an organization dedicated to equality in the workplace, discusses their approach to workplace change in their report, "What is Gender at Work's Approach to Gender Equality and Institutional Change." They use a holistic approach to creating gender equality in the workplace, and they use a holistic approach when both analyzing extant workplaces and when actively pursuing change. For them, change is laid on two continuums that feature informal v. formal changes and individual change v. systemic change. The quadrant between formal and systemic change is workplace policies. In order to create change in this quadrant, Gender at Work reports that companies must at the very least have three things:

1. "Mission includes gender equality"

2. "Policies for antiharassment, work family arrangements, fair employment, etc"

3. "Accountability mechanisms that hold the organization accountable to women clients" (3)

First, companies need to explicitly address gender equality. If there is no mention of gender equality in the formal documents, the possibility for equality in the other quadrants (access, consciousness, and internal culture) is severely limited. Then policies that represent issues that particularly affect women like maternity leave and harassment need to be explicit. Finally, formal systems of accountability need to be in place for when employee or customer rights are violated.

As we have seen in the workplace policies of the five video game companies analyzed above, these three items are rarely enacted. Riot is the only company that lays out a formal system of accountability for when an employee's rights are violated. Policies about harassment and family concerns are varied from company to company, though Gender at Work's holistic approach would likely find these all lacking. If the only harassment policy in the company is the bare minimum legal statement, it does not show that the company is truly devoted to equality or protecting female employees.

None of the five companies include gender equality in their mission statements. Zynga's Mission Statement reads "At Zynga our mission is connecting the world through games." Blizzard, on the other hand, has a more extensive mission statement that reflects eight core principles: 1) Gameplay first 2) Commit to quality 3) Play nice, play fair 4) Embrace your inner geek 5) Every voice matters 6) Think globally 7) Lead responsibly and 8) Learn and grow. This mission statement is interesting, at least in that several of these items could be seen as encompassing gender equality. However, gender is never mentioned explicitly. EA's mission statement is much like Zynga: "We are an

association of electronic artists who share a common goal. We want to fulfill the potential of personal computing." EA, it seems, has no mission for the people of their organization or for their customers, but rather their obligation is to "personal computing." Riot has five components to their mission statement: player experience first, challenge conventions, focus on talent and team, take play seriously, and stay hungry, stay humble. Like Blizzard, their mission is certainly interesting and leaves room for gender and equality to be important components, but it falls short of Gender at Work's call for explicitness. Valve does not have a traditional mission statement, but it seems that "We're always creating" is their key phrase found on their website and other company documents. None of these mission statements meet the first requirement laid out by Gender at Work for equitable workplace policies.

The lack of equitable policies is in and of itself a problem, but it is a larger problem for what it exposes about the deep culture of an organization. Gender at Work is interested at getting at the "deep structure" that they believe is responsible for much of the gender inequality in the workplace. This deep structure consists of four parts: political access, accountability systems, cultural systems, and cognitive structures. Examining policies is one way to expose and change the deep structure of a company.

4.9   Summary of Analyses

What I hope to show through this analysis are trends in these five companies that are representative of trends in the larger gaming industry. By choosing a variety of companies, with different sizes, histories, types of games, and company goals, I believe that they are for the most part indicative of the culture. Most of the trends I see emerging

through this analysis is disturbing, though there are moments that show that the industry can change. The three trends I find most prominent and problematic are 1) a lack of formal policies outlining the company's view of harassment and discrimination 2) a lack of transparency about the steps to follow when you feel that your rights have been violated 3) a lack of policies that go beyond the legal minimum to show that the company values diversity.

These three things may seem like they should be assumed in the workplace, particularly that sexual harassment is inappropriate. However, in an industry creating games out of slapping women's asses, an industry that feels depicting the rape of a girl is the best way to tell a coming of age story, an industry where porn publicly hanging in the office is part of the creative process, the lack of policies take on a much more sinister meaning.

While theories of game studies to date allow for interesting and useful and needed analyses of games, whether it be the code or the cultural implications, none focus on the ties between the code of the game and the policies, procedures, and cultures at work behind the scenes. As we saw over and over in this analysis, the public behavior of a company, its policies, and ultimately its games tend to show a unified narrative. This is not to say that Riot Games is perfect because it attempts to make the community a better place or that EA is terrible because they treat their employees bad and could win awards for most offensive games. What this means is that any analysis of a game must consider what happens before that first line of code is written—whether the code is dictating the jiggle physics of Lara Croft's chest or a random number generator deciding who Tinkmaster Overspark turns into a devilsaur.

That said, of course correlation does not necessarily equal causality. Just because EA doesn't protect it's female workers against harassment and assault doesn't preclude them from making socially progressive games. However, going back to the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, there is evidence that suggests that official discourse does shape the environment: "Change is inherently a discursive project. This means that change is restricted by the structures of language and by the conventions of language use. Change will be a product of what can be legitimately said (or written) in a specific context at a specific moment in time." What is allowed to be said, what is officially said, and how people are able to use language in an environment are ways that corporations control, or less maliciously shape, the way people act.

Having a thoughtful, respectful workforce will never guarantee a thoughtful, respectful game. However, using a procedural ethics model will force us to recognize that the culture of those playing the games is not the only culture of importance in the video game field or industry. The impact of the game cannot and should not be separated from the context that created it if we are to write thoughtful, ethical scholarship. In other words, worrying solely about the impact of a rape depicted in a video game without acknowledging and examining the rapes, sexual assaults, and harassments that happened to women working on the game while it was in production is not an ethical way to practice scholarship. The procedures of the game are not the only ones that matter, as some popular ways of interrogating video games assume.

In accordance with feminist research methodology, it is difficult to abstract a set of rules that companies can follow to be equitable. Because the theory guiding this analysis, Procedural Ethics, is so grounded in the specific environment of video games,

only really being able to be abstracted to the level of STEM fields, it is counteractive to even attempt to create a universal list. However, Deloitte Women's Initiative, The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative, Norfond, the Association for Women's Rights in Development, World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the United Nations Fund for Women, and Women's Learning Partnership, Gender at Work, and the George Washington University have all supported the type of holistic research I have attempted to undertake in this chapter.

Procedural Ethics argues that in order to conduct ethical research, scholars must ground their analyses of games in this kind of work. We cannot do a rhetorical analysis of *Tomb Raider* without mapping and discussing the environment from which it emerges. When Blizzard takes center stage to release its next-gen MMO, it is unethical to spend too much scholarly time on it without mentioning the lack of sexual harassment and discrimination policies from which that game emerged. Despite what some theorists may wish to believe, video games to do not emerge as tabulsa rasa cultural artifacts to be analyzed. The emerge with trails of exclusion, tears, blood, and assault which forever tethers them to the environment from which they emerge.

In the next section I will discuss where I hope we can go from here. I will outline tenets of Procedural Ethics that should be able to be easily incorporated into any analysis of a video game as well as how we can reasonably do ethical scholarship on games through the use of feminist research methodology and professional writing scholarship.

CHAPTER 5. PUTTING PROCEDURAL ETHICS INTO PRACTICE

> *Statistics are people with the tears washed off*
> --Ruth Sidel

In the beginning of this dissertation, I set out to find a means to "expose and explore the discourse and materiality behind the lack of women and the treatment of women in the gaming industry" (Chapter 1). This was and is my goal for several reasons. First, I believe the field of Rhetoric is perfectly positioned to both influence the games industry and influence academia through finding new ways of reading, making, and interacting with technologies. Second, as STEM fields are the foundation for the fastest growing, most respected, and best-paid jobs, we must examine why so much inequity exists in these workplaces. Lastly, the video game industry is by and large the biggest and most lucrative entertainment industry in the world. As Professional Writing is a cornerstone of Rhetoric, investigating the games industry as a professional workplace is not only useful, but valuable to the legitimacy of our work as scholars.

Those are my scholarly reasons for writing this dissertation on women in the games industry. However, as someone committed to feminist research methodology, my personal reasons for doing this project have just as much, if not more influence on my writing and methods. I believe Rhetoric is being used simplistically, reductively, and harmfully in video game scholarship. Those using it equate rhetoric with persuasion, and because of that, the role of rhetorical scholarship has had limited influence. This matters

because of the material conditions of those in the video game industry as well as the way games influence everything from education to marketing is not being fully and ethically studied. If those who understand the complexity and influence of rhetoric can begin to take back the term in game studies, I believe video games can be a rich site for scholarship and for change.

In addition to this, I am a gamer. I've always loved games, and they've been a part of my development as a scholar at every level. They represent a culmination of text, technology, programming, visuals, sound, immersion, and interaction. I believe games are a unique medium. In this medium, no detached theory or philosophy can even begin to break into just how games affect us. The studies done on ethics have been incomplete and reductive, work on gamificaiton has continually failed to grasp the essence of why we play, and even ethnographies of games fall short of encapsulating the experience of gaming. Through a rhetoric-based approach, I have been able to side-step the impossible goals of ever defining play, explaining why we are motivated to play, or just how games influence players. Rather, I have been able to examine the context of how games emerge, which I believe greatly influences all parts of the gaming experience.

I also care deeply about feminist research and women in science. The working conditions producing the material we study *has* to be part of our work as rhetoricians. We understand just how entwined *things*, in all their thingness, are with people, events, and *kairos*. Stuff just doesn't drop out of the sky. Lines of code in a video game that determine how big Lara Croft's breasts are do not drop out of the sky. People wrote those codes that influenced generations of games and people. In this environment, women are

continually harassed, sexually assaulted, surrounded with naked and inappropriate images and booth babes, and excluded. This history, this context, is a part of every game.

In order to do a study that really accounted for this context, I needed to make a new methodology that made these conditions a central part of what we study when we study technology. I needed a theory that said representations of women as well as the working conditions behind the game were central, not peripheral. I needed a theory that showed how studying the impact of a game without considering the people who made it was an unethical study because of the deplorable conditions. Of course nothing did that. Thus, I cobbled together pieces of game theory, feminist research methodology, and professional writing scholarship. From each I gained a crucial piece of my theory. Through game theory I was able to incorporate the complexity of games, through feminist research methodology I was able to include a focus on women as well as on researcher values, and through professional writing I pulled ideas about how workplace policies influence employee behavior, which in turn influences how the company is seen and the things it produces. These together make procedural ethics, which forces the researcher to consider ethics during every step of a project, from the procedures making the game to the procedures creating the workplace environment.

To test out procedural ethics, I conducted a study of five video game companies: Blizzard, EA, Riot, Zynga, and Valve. I studied their company policies, like handbooks and codes of conduct, using methods outlined by groups like the Deliotte Initiative and CIGAR that study gender (in)equity in STEM fields. I did a visual analysis, to show where the policies focused the most, extrapolating that employees would see those areas as being the most important. Then I did a textual analysis, which focused on those things

missing from the policies, such as sexual harassment and family sick leave policies. From this I also learned that many of these companies claim to be a meritocracy, where those with the skills necessary will undoubtedly succeed. Through research conducted at MIT by Emilio Castilla, however, it has been proven that meritocracies create a disadvantage for women and minorities, even more so than traditional hierarchical workplaces, because of a lack of transparency and accountability.

In the end, I am ultimately unsatisfied with this project. Any articulation I attempt to make to pin down a clear ethics for procedural ethics fails because it is so entrenched in the context being studied. Further, no matter how many horror stories I report of women being sexually assaulted and harassed, those in the industry will not believe it or take action until they personally see it happen, likely multiple times. No matter how clearly I show that the workplace policies do not protect women in their workplace, let alone show women are valued team members, CEO's and board members may only change out of legal necessity. Even though the only thing we really know about innovation is that it stems from diversity (Johansson), these companies who did enjoy relative success courting a limited market, and are now going out of business, may never see their own practices regarding women and minorities as being the central problem. However, the more people who adopt an ethical position toward studying games, writing about games, and talking about games, the more likely companies will be to listen and change. And luckily, there are many, many areas in the games industry, and in how we study technology, that are begging for change.

5.1 Women and Technology and the Future of Games

The AAUW labels environmental improvements (programmatic and cultural) as the single most important factor in improving the recruitment and retention of women (62). Getting a company to adopt a comprehensive sexual harassment policy or to examine hiring practices may not seem like big changes, or even meet much resistance. However, they are a start to much deeper, systematic changes that can have enormous repercussions. Further, policies like the ones I've examined in this dissertation are certainly not the sole source of the gender inequities in the video game industry, though they are also not free from having significant influence on employee behavior. The policies function as a discursive manifestation of and perpetuation of deeply ingrained attitudes about technology and gender.

In *Mothers and Daughters of Invention: Notes for a Revised History of Technology*, author Autumn Stanley writes, "…including women's contributions [to the applied history of technology] will not merely revise but transform the history, and especially the prehistory, of technology. When technology is no longer just what men do, but what people do, both the definition of *technology* and the definition of *significant technology* must inevitably change" (xvii). In her work, Stanley takes a similar approach to a similar problem: she recognizes that the entire technological industry is built upon a skewed perspective of who and what counts, and she is arguing here that the only way to change it is to completely redefine the key assumptions the history of technology is built upon.

Similarly, I hope that Procedural Ethics serves this function to redefine what is and is not important when it comes to studying video games. While most popular methods of game scholarship starts and the procedures (ie. the video game) and moves forward, tracing player reaction (Sicart) and cultural implications (Bogost), Procedural Ethics argues that ethical research practices must also start at the procedure and move backward. Video games did not program themselves. They are the result of an enormous industry filled with ideologies, opinions, policies, norms, and so on. Can we really make an argument about how one of the most sexist games in recent memory, *Duke Nukem Forever* (Gearbox Software 2012), has impacted society without also talking about the fact that roughly 5.8% of Gearbox's workforce is female? I certainly don't think so. And while critiquing, engaging with, and discussing the representation of women in games is crucial, it should not be done while ignoring the *actual* women in the industry.

The underrepresentation of women in the video game industry is in no way unique to that industry. It is a problem across many technology-based and technology-producing fields. Stanley reports that "most historians of technology and most anthropologists, particularly males, before the 1970s seemed to define technology as what men do" (xxxi). In support of this she looks as multiple cross-cultural studies of sexual division of labor as well as publications. For example, women were primarily responsible for inventing almost all early agricultural technologies. Over time, these were redefined as horticulture and male inventions were connected to agriculture. In patent offices, then, horticultural patents were filed under "hobbies" while agricultural patents were filed under "technology." This type of silencing and redefinition partly contributes to the lack of women in technological fields. The fields are first defined by men

according to what men do, so are already exclusive of women, and then women who do attempt to work in the field are ousted as not adhering to the "way things are done."

In order to include women's contributions to the history of technology, we must redefine what counts as technology. To do this we need to provide alternatives, or rather provide more accurate, accounts of technology's history to include women's contributions as well as technologies surrounding things like women's reproduction as central, rather than tangentially related, to core definitions of technology. Stanley's work begins to do this, but she also opens the door for others to do this as well. Her work is not about recounting every contribution women have made, but to be an example of how we can go about creating the kind of change that's needed. Taking Stanley's approach, the work in this dissertation is the kind of work I believe needs to be done in order to remake the games industry and game scholarship.

It is not just academia that will benefit from redefining how we study games and how the games industry operates. People in the industry didn't see the social games revolution coming because they had not considered small, microtransaction, java, Facebook type games as games. A lack of diversity stifled innovation and new companies were then able to take enormous profits away from larger companies as well as open up new (or rather, newly recognized) revenue streams. Redefining the industry by recognizing how the myopic view of gamers is hurting profits and hurting innovation can serve to also redefine the industry to be more inclusive.

5.2   Endings and Beginnings

As with any institution, change isn't always easy, and it certainly isn't solely the responsibility of academia to make that change happen. Stanley writes that "Women invent, but are not, until now, recognized as inventors" (513). Similarly, women game, but are not, until now, recognized as gamers. I have focused, until this point, on how and why women have been excluded from the gaming industry, hopefully in a way that can be easily replicated.

Before I began work on this dissertation, I contacted the CEO of a large, international video game company who had been loudly lamenting on Twitter about the lack of women in his company. After exchanging a few tweets, we switched emails and began talking about the work I was starting to undertake about how to improve the retention and promotion of women in the games industry. He said if I could provide him with help on how to do that, I could have any documents I wanted. A year later and around 50 emails, the head of HR finally told me he had been instructed not to actually give me anything. I wondered why the CEO would take the time to complain about the problem, sign the IRB documents to give me access to his information, and then pull back at the last second. Perhaps he was afraid I would find something incriminating. Or perhaps he realized that the answer to the problems of women in the game industry would in some part entail the destruction of the foundation of the industry.

This group of gamers and computer programmers and cosplayers has long been a counter-culture that suddenly finds itself as trendsetters and famous esports athletes and cultural icons. Many people worked hard to grow the industry, and it's reasonable to

have some immediate rejection of criticism or calls for change to the thing you love. We don't want to see the something we have dedicated our lives to is hurting people. We certainly don't want to acknowledge that we helped build something that is detrimental to huge numbers of people. Whether through maliciousness or negligence, the CEO of the company I talked about in the previous paragraph is actively working to perpetuate the exclusion and abuse of women in his company and in companies throughout the world. He recognized the problem and could have become a voice for change. Instead, he decided that his boat didn't need rocking.

Besides the obvious ethical problems with how businesses like his are choosing to ignore the causes of and solutions to the abuse of women in their companies, it is also stifling innovation. As with the argument Stanley makes in *Mothers of Invention*, narrowing the pool from which you consider ideas, and narrowing the idea of who consumes your products, has often torpedoed the profitability of companies. In the games industry—where $ .70 of every $1 is spent by a woman—using the overly specific view of a male, teenage gamer as the primary audience for games seems completely nonsensical. Whether or not this group ever really was the majority of games' consumers is debatable. But they certainly aren't now, and with the number of older gamers and women already having taken over the majority, they likely will never be again. If companies want to stay competitive, they must change with the consumer. This means hiring, retaining, and promoting from a significantly diverse pool. This can only be accomplished if companies start taking reasonable steps to change the culture of their workplaces through discursive and serious methods.

It is not a mystery *how* to create a workplace that is respectful and inviting to a diverse audience. The Consultive Group on International Agricultural Research, who spearheads much of the research on gender-equitable workplaces, reports:

Woman-friendly policies and management systems play a critical role in recruiting and retaining high-quality women professionals and promoting their full effectiveness at work. Policies including grade placement, pay and promotion, maternity and paternity benefits, unbiased performance evaluation, and protection from sexual harassment and discrimination, ensure gender equity. The workplace should recognize the dual role of work and family life, and family-related policies should address issues such as maternity and paternity leave, support for spousal employment, and marriage between staff members. (CGIAR 10)

None of these should be surprising. If it's not the *how* that's stopping companies in the gaming industry from making better work environments, then it must be the *why*.

As seen in the EA policies analyzed in Chapter 4, many companies have a meritocratic-based system. Emilio Castilla has shown that it is in environments that claim to be meritocratic where women and minorities face the most discrimination. He finds that "Although these policies [meritocratic ones) are often adopted in the hope of motivating employees and ensuring meritocracy, policies with limited transparency and accountability can actually increase ascriptive bias and reduce equity in the workplace" (1479). What this means is that when workplaces like EA are built as a meritocracy, there will likely always be significant bias against women and minorities. This is the case with almost all STEM fields. They're built as meritocracies because it seems like the most

ethical and reasonable way to build a successful workforce. If you're good, you get promoted. Seems simple.

Of course, as we see the Castilla and others' research, it is not even close to that simple. Basing hiring, pay, and promotion on merit, in an industry that is already forcing women out through sexual assault and harassment, all but guarantees a continued exodus of women from the field. We see the numbers of women in computer fields dropping in both the US and the EU over the last several years, as discussed in Chapter 1. This will continue. When women are responsible for the majority of money spent in the games industry, then, this will likely result in a dramatic shift in the landscape of the field. We got the first look at such a shift during the social games revolution. If nothing changes behind the scenes, this will slowly continue to happen and another tipping point is reached. Companies like Blizzard, EA, Zynga, Valve, and perhaps even Riot will lose profitability as funds start being spent at companies that do recognize where the money comes from and what their audience wants.

This may seem bleak. Or rather, if not regarded as important by the industry, this may seem revolutionary. By actively redefining key concepts in the industry, however, I believe companies can begin to create new and innovative products for a diverse marketplace, thus avoiding their fall from relevance, so to speak. For academia, this is extremely promising as well. The problems inside the industry can be exposed, explained, and influenced by the work people do in game studies and in professional writing. What is needed, however, is the insistence that ethics is at the center of any research we conduct. Theories like Procedural Rhetoric (a la Bogost) are fine, and they are useful for doing many things with games as representations. However, Procedural Ethics, with its

insistence on linking computer procedures to workplace procedures, holds immense

potential for both exposing institutional problems in tech industries and creating

systematic change within them.

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Research

Dissertation
Policies, Women, and Procedural Ethics: Obscured Presences in Meritocratic Technological Environments
Chair: Dr. Samantha Blackmon

Committee: Dr. Patricia Sullivan, Dr. Michael Salvo, and Dr. Jennifer Bay

My research combines three of my primary research interests: professional writing, technology, and feminist research methodology. Because video games are seen as just that, games, research into the industry of games has been absent from most academic fields, despite it being a prime place to study issues in both popular culture and STEM disciplines. In my research, I critique existing theories through which we study video games. I engage with the video games industry, conducting primary research to explore the severe gender inequities, sexual assault issues, and production problems that currently exist in the video games industry (and in many STEM fields). I examine why our current theories of technology not only ignore these problems of gender, but often mask them from the purview of what academics "should" be studying. Finally, I propose we move beyond current theories, and I propose a new way of conducting ethical technology-focused research that incorporates ethics, feminist methodology, professional and technical writing theory, and workplace research.

Other Projects

After having been awarded the 2013-2014 Purdue Research Foundation Research Grant, I have been able to focus almost exclusively on research. My dissertation primarily focuses on gender, emerging media, and professional and public documents. However, other collaborative research projects reflect an important range in my goals as a scholar. In addition to my dissertation work, I am co-writing an empirical research article on research on gamification in the classroom that uses longitudinal data collected from multiple universities and journals to examine the usefulness of gamification. I am also in the data collection and analysis stage of a collaborative project with Dr. Patricia Sullivan on a pedagogical case for the Professional and Technical Writing classroom. These project combine my research interest in doing public work in technological environments with my ability to collect, analyze, and present empirical data.

Publications

Layne, Alex. "Procedural Ethics." *First-Person Scholar.* Forthcoming.

Layne, Alex and Samantha Blackmon. "(Pod)Cast Your Buckets Where You Are: Feminisms, Counterpublics, and Building a Room of One's Own in Online Gaming Communities." *The Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, and Culture Online.* (Book chapter, forthcoming)

Layne, Alex and Samantha Blackmon. "Self-Saving Princess: Feminism and Post-Play Narrative Modding." *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology.* 1.2 (June 1, 2013)

Layne, Alex. "Tomato, Tom(ah)to, Let's Call the Whole Thing 'Core': Moving Beyond Theories and Practices of Hardcore and Casual Games and Gamers." *GLS 8.0 Conference Proceedings.* (Spring 2010)

Layne, Alex and Jeremy Cushman. "Gregory Ulmer's Electracy: An Archive." *Kairos Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy.* 16.2 (Spring 2012)

Pickens, Alex. "From Tutoring to Teaching: How to Survive as a TA After the Writing Center." *The Dangling Modifier*. 15.1 (Winter 2008)

Book Reviews

Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times by Patrick W. Berry, Gail E. Hawisher, and Cynthia L. Selfe. *Computers and Composition Online*. (Forthcoming)

Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Edited by Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly. *Programmatic Perspectives*. 4.1 (March 2012)

Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other by Sherry Turkle. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. 41.4 (Winter 2011)

Other Publications:
> *Not Your Mama's Gamer* (Bi-Weekly Podcast), Co-Founder and Co-Host, Spring 2010-Current (Winner of the 2012 Michelle Kendrick Award from Computers and Composition for Outstanding Digital Scholarship)
> *Not Your Mama's Gamer* (Weekly Blog), Spring 2010-Current
> *Armchair Arcade* (Podcast), "Female Video Game Protagonists," guest spot, Spring 2010
> Itunes U Podcast, "J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis," Fall 2008
> *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook*, Contributor and Editor, Spring 2007-Fall 2008

Teaching Experience

Graduate Courses and Mentoring

| *Professional Writing Practicum* | Purdue University | Instructor |
| English 505m | Fall 2012-Current | Mentor |

English 505m prepares graduate students in English for teaching within the professional writing program and focuses on pedagogy development, technology instruction, and professional writing research. All students are observed several times throughout their first year of teaching. We then cover teaching the other courses in the program such as Business Writing online, Technical Writing online, and Professional Writing major courses.

| *Teaching with Technology* | Purdue University | Instructor |
| English 505t | Fall 2011-Spring 2013 | Mentor |

When new instructors are hired to teach in the Composition Program, they are required to take a year-long mentoring course. As part of that course, they also take a supplementary course that focuses specifically on technology and pedagogy. In this course, I taught both how to use specific technologies and how to think about how technology is a part of our teaching and our classrooms. I led classes on all components of the Adobe Suite, collaborative online texts, game theory, visual rhetoric production and analysis, microcomposition, teaching in an online environment, using the computer lab, audio software and podcasting, social media in the classroom, and movie making software and theory.

Computer-Aided Publishing	Purdue University	Instructor
English 309	Fall 2012, Spring 2013	

Production and user-centered design are key components of this course. Students are introduced to the design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity, and are expected to implement these principles in the creation and revision of several documents and projects through a user-experience design lens. The use of emerging technologies as they apply to digital publishing is pursued and students will learn to use various software applications, such as Adobe InDesign and Photoshop, to develop content and design.

Technical Writing	Purdue University	Instructor
English 421y (online)	Summer 2012	

In this online course, students learn to develop technical documentation about and with technology. Students research and analyze the concept of user-centered design and its implication in the development of technical documentation. Content in the form of manuals, white paper documents and multi-media visuals are then be created to emphasize audience awareness and understanding of the information. Students need to decide the appropriate amount of information required of a piece of documentation in order to properly inform the targeted audience as well as describe the piece of technology.

Introduction to Professional Writing	Purdue University	Instructor
	Spring 2012	
English 306		

In this class, students learn to analyze and effectively respond to rhetorical situations by planning, writing, revising, and editing a variety of workplace documents. Students explore the range of careers open to professional writers and develop a strategy for shaping their individual programs to position themselves to enter the field after graduation.

Business Writing for Entrepreneurs	Purdue University	Instructor
	Fall 2011	
English 420e		

Business Writing for Entrepreneurs endeavors to teach students the rhetorical principles and writing practices useful for launching and nurturing successful entrepreneurial ventures. It teaches the rhetorical practices that help students shape their business communication ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional and entrepreneurial situations.

Business Writing	Purdue University	Instructor
English 420	Spring 2011, Fall 2011	

This course teaches the rhetorical principles that help students shape their business writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations. This course focuses on social media, emerging media, research skills, usability and user-centered design, presentation skills, and employment documents.

Professional Business Commu- *nication* English 332	St. Cloud State University Summer 2008	Co-Instructor

In this course, students study rhetorical situations, purposes, audience, and ethical issues in work-place writing genres. Collaboration processes, layout/format conventions, clarity and correctness are stressed. This course also includes oral presentations, usability testing, and portfolios.

Rhetoric and Composition

First-Year Composition English 106	Purdue University Fall 2009-Fall 2010	Instructor

This course emphasizes the multiple contexts and modes in which we communicate with each other, and we will collaborate together as a learning community. In this class, students learn how to communicate effectively in an academic or other professional settings.

Intro. to Analytical Writing English 191	St. Cloud State University Fall 2008-Spring 2009	Instructor

In this course, students learn analytical reading, writing, and critical reasoning for a variety of rhetorical purposes, including argumentation (broadly conceived). Students gain practice in developing ideas, insights, and claims through use of both personal observation/experience and external texts and perspectives.

Presentations

Professional and Technical Writing

> "How Technology Urges New Genre to Emerge: Traversing Zones of Ambiguity," Computers and Writing, Summer 2013 at Frostburg University
> "Muted Groups, Muted Writing: Feminist Discourses in the Professional Writing Classroom," Watson Conference, Fall 2012 at University of Louisville
> "Blurring Boundaries: What PW and ESL Can Learn From Each Other," Symposium on Second Language Writing, Fall 2012 at Purdue University
> "Expertise and Expectation: Feminist Pedagogies in Technical Spaces," FemRhet, Fall 2011 at the University of Minnesota Mankato
> Teaching Students How to Effectively Use Facebook and Youtube for Business Writing," Computers and Writing, Spring 2010 at Purdue University

Games, Rhetoric, and Writing

> "Press X to Teach Workshop," Computers and Writing, Summer 2013 at Frostburg University
> "PDAs; or, Public Displays of Affiliation: Composing at the Intersections of the Academy, the Games Industry, and the Gaming Community," CCCC, Spring 2013 in Las Vegas, NV
> "Tomato, Tom(ah)to; Let's Call the Whole Thing 'Core': Moving Beyond Theories and Practices of Hardcore and Casual Games and Gamers," Games, Learning, and Society. Summer 2012 at the University of Wisconsin

"Gaming the System in a System of Games: The Inherent Nature of Games in Pedagogy," CCCC, Spring 2011 in Atlanta, GA

"Writing Privately in Public: Digital Machines, Portability, and the Writing Space," Computers and Writing, Spring 2011 at the University of Michigan

"SNS in SNS: Keeping up with the Farmer Joneses," Great Plains Alliance for Computers and Writing, Fall 2009 at St. Cloud State University

Gender, Race, and Culture

"Gender, Technology, Power." Feminism and Rhetorics, Fall 2013 at Stanford University

"Reframing Slavery: Rhetoric and the Move From Labor Systems to Civil Policy in Sid Meier's *Civilization*," RSA, Spring 2012 in Philadelphia, PA

"Feminisms, Counterpublics, and Building a Room of One's Own in Online Gaming Communities," CCCC, Spring 2012 in St. Louis, MO

Composition and Pedagogy

"Learning the Teaching Persona: Negotiating the Subject Position of the Teacher in the Composition Class," MEGAA Symposium, Spring 2011 at Miami University

"Learning the Teaching Persona: Negotiating the Subject Position of the Teacher in the Composition Class," Composing Ourselves, Spring 2010 at University of Cincinnati

"Magic Realism as Alternative Rhetoric," American Comparative Literature Association, Spring 2009 at Harvard University

"The Multimodal Classroom: Old Lesson Plans in New Ways," Minnesota Colleges & Universities English and Writing Conference," Spring 2009 at the University of Minnesota

"The Impact of Media in the Writing Classroom," Great Plains Alliance for Computers and Writing, Fall 2008 at Iowa State

"Tutoring Strategies for Developmental Writers," Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, Spring 2008

Other Presentations

PW Club, Photoshop, Fall 2012 at Purdue

Writing Center Workshop, Grant Proposal Writing, Fall 2010 at Purdue

Guest Speaker, Owning Your Online Identity, Spring 2009 at St. Cloud State University

Faculty Forum Colloquium Guest Speaker, Tutoring Strategies for Developmental Writers, Spring 2008

Writing Center Workshop, The Literature Review, Spring 2008

Student Research Colloquium, Tutoring Strategies for Developmental Writers, Spring 2008

Student Research Colloquium, Magic Realism, Spring 2007

Writing Center Workshop, Punctuation, Fall 2007

Service to Profession

Co-leader for the 2013 Computers & Writing Gender Caucus

Co-leader for the 2013 ATTW Women's Luncheon

Creator WPTC (Women in Professional and Technical Communication) Listerv, Spring 2012

Guest Lecturer, Electronic and Time-Based Art, Fall 2011 at Purdue University

TA Advisory Committee for Bedford St. Martin, 2011-2012

Textbook Review: Making Multimodal Projects by Kristen Arola, Jennifer Sheppard, and
Cheryl Ball

PGSG Rep, English Department Purdue University, Fall 2010-Fall 2011

University Library Committee Member, Fall 2010-Fall 2011

Digital Rhetorics Syllabus Approach Founding Member, Fall 2010

Technology

Introduced Teachers to New Technologies Through Conducting the Following Workshops:

Making the Most of Your Lab Days
Plagiarism Concerns and Technology
Electronic Research and Documentation
Exploring the Deeper Power of Word and PowerPoint
Visual Rhetoric and Visual Literacy Terminology
Visual Rhetoric and Visual Literacy
Introduction to Adobe InDesign
Copyright, Fair Use, and Creative Commons
Working with Photoshop
Designing Websites: Dreamweaver
Designing Websites: CSS and HTML
Designing Websites: Wordpress and Drupal
Making Videos: Windows Movie Maker
Making Videos: iMovie
Collaborative Online Texts
Exploring Adobe Acrobat Pro
Recording Audio: Audactiy
Recording Audio: GarageBand
Creating and Assessing Multimedia Assignments
Tour of Web 2.0 Tools and Resources
Composing 140 Characters at a Time
ESL and Teaching with Technology
Game Theory and Persuasive Gaming
Electronic Teaching Portfolios

Proficiencies

Adobe Design CS4/5/6 design suite: Illustrator, Fireworks, Photoshop, InDesign, Acrobat Pro,
Dreamweaver

Microsoft Office Suite: Word, Excel, Publisher, Powerpoint

FLOSS: Drupal, Audacity, Open Office

Other Software: Prezi, Blackboard, WebCT, iMovie, PB Wiki, TikiWiki, and GarageBand

Relevant Workplace Experience

Gamification Consultant, Gates Grant for the Purdue OWL, Spring 2011-Current
Grant Writer, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Summer 2009-Summer 2011

Freelance Dissertation Editing, Summer 2008
Online Tutoring Trainer, St. Cloud State University, Fall 2007-Summer 2008

Academic Appointments

Purdue Research Foundation Research Grant, Year-Long Fellow 2013-2014
Graduate TA, Purdue University, Fall 2009-Current
Writing Consultant, Purdue University Writing Lab, Fall 2010-Summer 2011
Assistant Director of the Writing Center, St. Cloud State University, Summer 2008
Writing Consultant, St. Cloud State University Writing Center, Fall 2007-Spring 2008
Graduate TA, St. Cloud State University, Fall 2007-Spring 2009

Selected Grants Funded

2010 Student Grant Program for Community Service/Service Learning Projects from
    Purdue University, worth $1,400.00 (co-writer)
2009 Tribal Transit Grant for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, worth $285,530 (lead writer)
NAHASDA Indian Housing Block Grant for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, worth
    $1,489,776 (co-writer)
HRSA Community-Based Doula Program for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, worth
    $195,411 (editor)

Graduate Coursework

Composition, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy
Introduction to Composition Theory
Teaching First Year Composition
Issues in Composition: Classical Period to the Renaissance
Issues in Composition: Modern Period
Postmodernism and Issues in Composition Studies
Empirical Research in Writing
Issues in Second Language Writing
Hutton Lectures in Rhetoric and Composition
Writing Lab Practicum
Professional Writing
Professional Writing Theory
Professional Writing Practicum
New Media
New Media Beyond (Re)Mediation
Computers in Language and Rhetoric
Archives and Digital Humanities
New Media Studio
Cultural Rhetoric
Writing in Virtual Worlds
Gender, Rhetoric, and the Body
Rhetoric and Posthumanism

Professional Affiliations

Women in Professional and Technical Communication
Association of Teachers of Technical Writing
Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication
Rhetoric Society of America
National Council of Teachers of English
Conference on College Composition Communication

References

Dr. Samantha Blackmon; blackmos@purdue.edu; 765-430-8131
Dr. Patricia Sullivan; sullivanatpurdue@gmail.com; 765-427-5978
Dr. Michael Salvo; salvo@purdue.edu; 765-337-3203
Dr. Jennifer Bay; jbay@purdue.edu; 765-494-3730