Chapter 70

Gaming Before E–Sports:
Playing With Gender in Early Gaming Communities, 1993–2001

Marley-Vincent Lindsey
Brown University, USA

ABSTRACT

Discussions of competitive gaming often begin and end with the development of professional E-Sports. However, competitive gaming has a history that stretches back to the first days of networked play with first generation games like Doom, Warcraft II and Multi-User Dungeons (Henceforth MUDs). Within these games, digital communities became a prominent means of discourse and discussion, heavily reliant on gender as a habit of thought to describe inequality and disparities between players. Using an archive of Warcraft II histories, and forum threads for the game, this chapter describes a social history of this digital community with specific emphasis on the ways that gender was used.

INTRODUCTION

February 9, 2001 was an infamous day for a popular *Warcraft II* Forum called the Warcraft Occult. ~Summoner, a notorious trash-talker on the forum, was caught hacking in a game of *Warcraft II*[1]. The game was saved, and then posted on the forum for all other posters to view and download on a thread entitled "SUMMONER IS CAUGHT HACKING" with a description:

Ender-Wiggin: *A dear friend sent me a save game in which it shows Summoner with 3 weapon upgrades, and 1 shield upgrade. Thanks to DK's wonderful program, we should have one less hacker in the "community" (Ender-Wiggin, 2000, [msg 1]).* [2]

 Response was fast and furious: in a forum where most threads only garnered three or four responses, this initial thread had four pages in response, filled with anger, frustration, and even threats of physical

violence. Over the course of the next week, numerous other threads were created to gleefully discuss the allegations against ~Summoner, many of which took similar tones. Posts on the initial thread included the following:

sfg: *in the names summoner posted as hackers they all do hahah and i know u hacked every single game and not once in a while so stfu fag but u suck anyway so it doesn't matter. (Ender-Wiggin, 2000 [msg 39])*

PCSPEAKER: *[to another poster in the thread] Get a fucking clue you fucking scrub. Justify the rest of your heterosexual allegations before trying to impress with the horseshit you think is insight. (Ender-Wiggin, 2000, [msg 76])*

SloBz: *You faggots who accused paper/cinder/myst/nail are moronic. None of them hack. They love the game and wouldn't cheapen it with Summoner's B.S. and Summoner ur posts are fucking stupid. (Ender-Wiggin, 2000, [msg 94])*

7VIesSiah: *I can't beleive Summoner (aka GenMike, JenMike, GayMike, there are a lot of names for this fag) is still playing this game. It isn't surprising that he cheats. This guy has always sucked. (Ender-Wiggin, 2000, [msg 97])*

Ash-: *Our conflict ends here. I was right about you hacking, and all your bullshit now sees the light. I am the better player and the better man. In the end I will always be the better man. Thank you for the satisfaction of victory. (Ender-Wiggin, 2001, [msg 41])*

Ash-: *[responding to someone asking Summoner if he will attend an offline event, as people could try to hurt him after this] I won't hesitate to deal out punishment as is necessary. Don't worry though sum; you will survive. (Ender-Wiggin, 2001, [msg 48])*

The following was posted on another a thread started by ~summoner, entitled "get a life please":

Ash-: *WS and SLAM [two other players accused of hacking] used to be pretty good on kali. When they came back to war2 on bnet, they got raped. They got raped all the time that I played on bnet. (~summoner, 2001, [msg 5])*

Another thread entitled "SUMMONER IS FUCKING GAY" contained this description:

cancer: *POST HERE ABOUT HOW GAY SUMMONER IS. P.S. SUM UR A FUCKING FAG.. HACKING PIECE OF SHIT. (cancer, 2001, [msg 1])*

One of the most common themes in these threads is also one of the most confusing: What about being a good or honest video game player necessitates a discourse that invokes gender, sexual orientation, and physical violence? Meta-level discussions of trash talking on the same forum, within the same time period yield unsatisfactory answers, such as this post from a thread entitled "Trash talking":

korpo: *It's only fair to say that no one is the greatest trash talker of all time. There are so many people who talk trash (including myself), that they cannot be counted on a calculator. It only adds flavor to the game and it's pretty cool after you talk trash, and then you rape them fairly hard. You get the satisfaction of feeling "I told you so." (reaverlisk, 2000, [msg 2])*

Related Content

Technodiversity: Lessons Learned From Diversity Exchanges
Kimberely Fletcher Nettletonand Lesia C. Lennex (2016). *Handbook of Research on Race, Gender, and the Fight for Equality (pp. 49-67).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/technodiversity/148761

Describing Undergraduate Students' Intercultural Learning through Study Abroad in Terms of Their 'Cultural Responsiveness'
Susan Oguroand Angela Giovanangeli (2016). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education (pp. 29-38).*
www.irma-international.org/article/describing-undergraduate-students-intercultural-learning-through-study-abroad-in-terms-of-their-cultural-responsiveness/156496

Questioning Questions in Autobiographies of Intercultural Encounters
Paola Rivieccio (2021). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education (pp. 47-59).*
www.irma-international.org/article/questioning-questions-in-autobiographies-of-intercultural-encounters/281661

Proven African Inclusive Education Strategies for Educators to Build a Safe and Diverse Learner Community
Tawanda Makuyana (2024). *Handbook of Research on Inclusive and Accessible Education (pp. 140-156).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/proven-african-inclusive-education-strategies-for-educators-to-build-a-safe-and-diverse-learner-community/339586

Racial Discrimination and TESOL: A Qualitative Study on the Experiences EFL Teachers at a University Preparatory Year Programme in Saudi Arabia
Ismael Louber (2017). *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education (pp. 29-41).*
www.irma-international.org/article/racial-discrimination-and-tesol/182851