

the Escapist

the
truth about
little girls

by Bonnie Ruberg

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EDITOR'S NOTE

by Julianne Greer

When thinking about this issue's Editor's Note, I went poking around for numbers to help describe the landscape of women in games. I started with the usual suspects, the ESA:

"Thirty-eight percent of all game players are women. In fact, women over the age of 18 represent a significantly greater portion of the game-playing population (30%) than boys age 17 or younger (23%)."

Interesting. This seems like a rather significant portion of the population. So I checked internal sources ... *The Escapist* Staff page. I figured this would be a good location to find people who are really into games; certainly we must be if our careers center around them. I counted the total in-house staff, and then measured the number of women.

Know what the percentage of women is? 30%.

So, I expanded my digging to include *The Escapist's* parent company, Themis

Group, as a whole. Themis Group is the mother company for several businesses, from our media assets (of which *The Escapist* is one) to the marketing company to the community services division. The unifying factor of all these divisions is that they are all focused on supporting or covering games. Again, a good place to find people who are into games, ie. they likely play games.

Know what the percentage of women is? 30%.

I guess maybe there is something to all this talk about the number of women playing games is increasing. And from my (admittedly very limited) research, we're not just playing them, but we're making careers out of working with them. And that's pretty exciting.

And so, I feel pretty good about returning to the issue of women in games in this week's issue *Girl Power 2*. John Walker discusses some research suggesting a relatively unexplored barrier to women's entry to the gaming space: a need for permission. Bonnie Ruberg returns this week and wonders why she has never played a little girl in a game. And Justin McElroy chats with a

couple of the early members of one of gaming's most heavily women-influenced design studios, Sierra. Find these articles and more in this week's issue of *The Escapist*.

Cheers,



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor: Fantastic! I had just left Barnes and Noble with a few books on learning Mandarin Chinese and I was wondering what the implications for marketing (my MBA emphasis) and video games (my hobby) would be as China continues to advance in these areas. After reading your articles in this week's issue (# 49), I'm very excited for the possibilities. Great work, keep it up!

- **Benny**

To the Editor: I just recently discovered *The Escapist* ... and I have to say I'm hooked.

I was wondering though, what are the chances of an upcoming issue focusing on getting into gaming as a profession? With the industry's current growth trends more and more jobs are surely being created. Shining a little light on how people land those jobs seems like it should be an interesting topic.

- **Eli**

In Response to "电玩世间" from The Escapist Lounge: I'm actually quite glad that *Escapist* did a China issue. They're a bit overlooked in the videogame scene, but will have enormous pull in future decades (they already do in cellphone and PC games). That said, piracy didn't start with China, nor was it made popular there. You can find, back in the mid-80s, pirated Atari 2600 carts in Brazil and pirated NES in Hong Kong. I can't think of *any* country at China's level of development who strictly enforces IP law - it would be nonsense for their citizens! The markets of Kazakhstan and East Africa have as many pirated GBA carts and DVDs as China (to say nothing of countries like Malaysia and Russia, which are far richer). I'm all for articles discussing the

role of piracy in videogames, but we ought temper them with some background on how Western countries treated IP when they were (relatively) poor, and how the rest of the world outside China handles the piracy issue.

- **Kevin Bryan**

In Response to “电玩世间” from The Escapist Lounge: The essential philosophy of any pirate is ‘if it’s big enough to be pirated, it can afford to be pirated’.

Nobody pirates indie videogames, it’s always Madden sports, Metal Slug or some other junk. Your entire argument is moot, piracy hurts nobody. Never, in the history of commerce, has a business been shut down due to rampant piracy.

This fearmongering is baseless. Nobody loses a dime. Not one. Nobody has lost a job to piracy, the only people who care about piracy is the people who stand to lose a few shareholders.

There’s more to games than the CEOs at EA managing how they exploit the next big market overseas.

The industry has always been this fat and greedy. What would you rather have? The oppressive Chinese government imprisoning bootleggers for ludicrous periods of time? Or just letting it go?

Please, these types of articles are just as sickening and unreasonable as the ‘video games make kids violent’ ones.

- **Andrew**



In Response to “Chris Crawford Surfaces, Trolls” from the Escapist Lounge: I have to say I disagree with him on a key point. He states that the games industry doesn’t support upcoming talent like Hollywood does at all. I’d agree up to the ‘at all’ point. There are counter-examples - a big one being the annual mod competitions Epic sponsor. They’re not industry-wide or common, but there are examples of that sort of support emerging.

- **King Jackal**

In Response to “Chris Crawford Surfaces, Trolls” from The Escapist Lounge:

The revolution is coming, however, Storytron will probably not be the primary champion. I think Chris Crawford should be remembered as the first person to pursue the dream in earnest, even if his personal efforts don’t prove worthwhile.

- **Patrick**

In Response to “Self-Regulatory Generals” from The Escapist Lounge:

I have to disagree with you.

My problem is that in Oklahoma where I live, I could be put in jail for the same charge as someone who shows their child pornography. But mostly I am worried that legislation that is so clumsily executed as the farce that is Oklahoma’s “Games=Porn” law will dry up the local retailers.

My largest concern is the pressure exerted on all businesses to make a profit create games that can be sold to anyone. This will squeeze out the funding for games that I might enjoy in order to get a better return on their investment. Thus I am forced to play *Barbie Horse Party 5* instead of *Half-Life 4* or *Resident Evil 5* as they will have a harder time securing proper funding.

If you were worried about “carbon copy games” before just wait until developers are forced to work within the narrow guidelines of the “contemporary community standard” the Oklahoma law sets down.

- **GlennZilla**



the truth little girls

about

by Bonnie Ruberg

I have been a boy. I have been a man. I have been a voluptuous vixen with pistols poised on either swaying hip. I have been a zombie, a pokemon, a pants-less ninja. I have been a plump, pink, vacuum-mouthed ball.

But I have never been a little girl.

I was 10 years old when a game first swallowed me whole; still a real-life child, of sorts. On the screen of that megalithic Mac, the pixels huge as candy dots, I was an underground explorer, an Indiana Jones – my body a jumble of square, stumpy parts that together made something like a man.

Soon enough, I was a plumber, then the backside of a beauty on a bumping bike. The list, over time, went on. Still, it took years to realize I had never been me. And of course, by that time, me was someone different entirely: a little girl in sensibilities and candy preferences alone.

Now, all grown up, I can see eye-level with the quandaries of a grownup world - adult questions without adult answers.

Beauty, Puppet, Monster

How do you depict women in videogames? How do you do it **fairly**?

Let's consider the prototypes. The smiling skin-flaunter? She's the tool of "the man." Sure, she can search and destroy. But for her popularity, look to her generous curves and her "realistic physics" – without which she could never have worked her way into so many hearts, and so many wandering minds.

The subtly sexy female heroine? She walks the precarious line between radical role-model and mere predictable puppet. Be her, or simply watch her tempting tail wiggle under trip wires: For better or worse, the two are a package deal.

How about the female monster who sidesteps social expectations and harnesses her sexual powers to inspire fear in the unsuspecting heart? Unfortunately, the idea of a monster who's scary because she shatters gender preconceptions may be too controversial for many developers to successfully work into their game design. And besides, her potency is still dependent

on the perceptions of a boys' club society. If she wasn't "othered," she'd just be a chick with fangs.

Short of neutering our game characters and embarking into some gender-ambiguous brave new world (which might look surprisingly like an old "Pat" sketch) we seem to have exhausted our choices. If we let our characters stay gendered, will they always cause trouble? Is there a way to remove sex from gender?

The Peripheries of Gender

We seem to forget, sometimes, that women exist before and after their sexual potency.

Old women have always been forced out to the fringes of society. When they no longer became socially useful, we used to get rid of them by calling them witches and burning them at the stake. Today, we come to a strikingly similar end by marking them as comic, disgusting and essentially non-human – the octogenarian bundled up in her armchair in Florida, gumming at a bowl of pudding.

Old men, on the other hand, are allowed to retain their dignity (and, perhaps not

so coincidentally, their sexual potency) well into their later years. Still, there's no female equivalent of a "silver fox." The only elderly woman I've ever played in a videogame is the Granny bomb from *Worms*, who waddles along on a walker, signaling imminent death to my unlucky adversaries.

Personally, I've never been an old woman – not in real life or on screen – though I hope to be one someday. For me, at least, it's much easier to relate to life on the other end of the spectrum, to the world of little girls.

In the West, playable little girl characters are almost non-existent – especially in games with clear protagonists. Full-grown women get to battle flesh-eating dogs, wield semi-automatic weapons and work on their wicked tans while playing beach volleyball. Little girls, meanwhile, are nowhere to be seen.

Where have they gone? Are the little girls of the videogame world too busy hosting stuffed animal tea parties to make their presence known? "Excuse me, Mrs. Murphy, but I heard about this bitchin' new game. Couldn't little Susie please come out and play?"

Goodbye Pragmatics, Hello Barbie

Inevitably, someone is bound to make the argument that having little girls in videogames just wouldn't make sense. Duh, an 8-year-old couldn't lift a machine gun. A middle-schooler wouldn't have enlisted in an international Earth army assembled to fend off alien forces. And a child in a race car ... It's just not pragmatic.

But what is? Videogames may strive for graphical realism, but that's usually where the true-to-life card calls it quits. Most of the things you do in-game couldn't be done in real life, period. Pigtails and a set of training wheels aren't going to change that.

Besides, the let's-get-practical line of thinking shouldn't just apply to little girls, but to little boys, as well. Yet, little boys in videogames are a dime a dozen. Or, if not quite so cheap, many have been elevated to cultural symbols. Young Link alone overshadows the entire history of female children in games. He's identified with and adored by gamers across the world.

So, why have little girls been so consistently overlooked in the search for new and unique characters – a search



the *Escapist*



the *Escapist* lounge

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As complex and multifaceted human beings, we don't need mirror images of ourselves to identify with the characters we play.

Obviously, as complex and multifaceted human beings, we don't need mirror images of ourselves to identify with the characters we play.

Even so-called "girl games," which are designed specifically with young girls in mind, rarely feature children. Instead,

that has brought us everything from amorphous, gushy sacs to assassins with the ability to bleed through walls? Enter another likely argument: Because little girls just aren't any serious game's target audience. But honestly, are spandex-clad women the audience for *Perfect Dark*? Are hedgehogs super-psyched over *Sonic* on the Wii? And more importantly, will they be able to hold the new controller with such tiny hands?

their protagonists are Barbie, a tight-sweater-clad Nancy or the Bratz, those cool girls on the block who all seem to have had their noses surgically removed. Much like the women of adult-oriented games, girl-game characters are sexualized through dress and physical design. They prove that the issues surrounding the depiction of grown-up women extend far beyond the grown-up world.

A Non-Sexual Creature?

What a little girl could provide, what might just be revolutionary, is a wholly non-sexualized female character - a character free of the moral complications that plague her older counterparts, an answer to the dilemma of how to represent femininity without reducing it to eye candy. Thanks to her age, this girl would be entirely outside the realm of sex.

Or would she?

Uncomfortable as the question may be, it needs to be asked: Can there be such a thing as a completely non-sexualized little girl? Real life aside, young girls have never fared so well (or at least so platonically) in the arts. The surrealists lusted after *les femme-enfants*, and we all know how things turned out for auburn-haired preteen Dolores Haze.

An example perhaps more pertinent to the videogame industry is Lewis Carroll's Alice. She is, in many ways, the quintessential child: her blond ringlets, her troublesome curiosity, her forthright nature. To be sure, a careful reader will find hints at her sexualization in Carroll's

original text, but for the most part, her tale has been accepted as a classic for fellow children – a safe, if not wholly sterile, read.

But *Alice in Wonderland* fans may (or may not) be surprised to hear that Carroll himself is believed to have been pedophile. The small girls on whom he based Alice were also the subjects of his nude photography. The quintessential child was simultaneously the quintessential object of sexual desire.

Whether or not it was intentional, American McGee's *Alice* picked up on that sentiment perfectly. Outgrowing her shirt frills and Mary Janes girl-child image, she became a darkly sexy teen. By recreating Alice and avoiding the issue of a sexualized little girl, McGee reasserted the unspoken sexual associations we already bear.

Slipping on Those Mary Janes

Let's say, for argument's sake, that we could remove sex from the picture – that the designers of our groundbreaking game would avoid curvy hips and in-game romance and everything else that

draw our minds straight to the sack. Given all that, what would be it mean to play as a little girl?

It would mean, first of all, overcoming some of our stereotypes about masculinity and gaming. For many male gamers, playing as a woman is justifiable because it entails watching a buxomly female behind. Playing a little girl ... well, things would be different. It would never be macho - not in a traditional sense. Not only would you be identifying with a girl, but a child at that.

Beyond our cultural hang-ups about gender, the larger question remains: What does it mean for an adult to play as a child? For us, children represent many things – naivete, openness, a sense of adventure – and they bring all these traits to the table each time they walk on screen. Stepping into a child's shoes also means stepping into these attributes; it alters the experience.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of childhood is a sense of exploration. And that is exactly what it seems to me a little girl character could do best:




explore. Dropped into the scenery of an interactive world, she herself might be unique enough to stir things up and break other molds, like expectations for game logic and linear storytelling. The gamer, the game, the act of gaming: All might be changed with her help.

[COMMENTS](#)

Bonnie Ruberg is a sex and games writer, a MMOG researcher and an all around fun-loving dork. Check her out at Heroine Sheik.

What would it mean to play as a little girl?

A woman with long dark hair is looking over her shoulder at the camera while holding a white card. The card has the text 'Women at the PINNACLE' in large, bold, black letters. A yellow circle with the words 'at the' in black is positioned between 'Women' and 'PINNACLE'. Below the main title, it says 'by Justin McElroy' in a smaller, yellow font.

Women at the PINNACLE

by Justin McElroy

In the late '80s and '90s, Sierra Entertainment was practically synonymous with female designers, women who created some of the most beloved franchises in gaming history. With their vision, the company broke boundaries, reinventing several times over what a computer game could be.

Flash forward to 2006: One of the company's most recent press releases heralded the hiring of "five of Hollywood's sexiest actresses and models" to lend their ... talents ... to the upcoming *Scarface: The World is Yours*.

"Tony Montana said it best: 'You gotta make the money first. Then, when you get the money, you get the power. Then, when you get the power, then you get the women,'" said Cindy Cook, Chief Strategy and Marketing Officer for Vivendi Games. "*Scarface: The World Is Yours* will be a faithful recreation of living the life of Tony Montana, so we had to cast the hottest women in Hollywood."

Somewhere, even Leisure Suit Larry is weeping.

Ken and Roberta Williams had been married for seven years when Ken founded On-Line Systems (soon to become Sierra Entertainment) in their Los Angeles home. While tending to a new baby at home, Roberta found a game Ken had playing, called *Colossal Cave*. The game whetted her appetite for more adventure games, but she found there were few other titles that fit that description. Frustrated with her lack of choices, she began designing a game of her own at her kitchen table.

"I wanted something with a good story, but it also had to be a game," Roberta was quoted as saying in 2002's *High Score!*. "Stories tend to be linear – beginning, middle, climax – and I needed to expand into 'What if they want to do this? Or that?'"

Roberta said her husband was skeptical of the scheme at first, but at a candlelit dinner she arranged, she managed to sway Ken with her idea, spellbinding him as she would so often in the coming years.

"I still remember the moment when he actually started listening," Roberta said.

"I could see it in his eyes. I'll never forget it. It changed our lives."

In 1980, On-Line Systems released *Mystery House: Hi-Res Adventure #1*, considered the first graphical adventure game. Their kitchen table product sold 10,000 copies at local computer stores, and the Williamses soon expanded their operation to their den and spare bedroom.

Crafting the first graphic adventure would just be the first milestone in the company's illustrious history. In the coming years, they would be the first to use sound and video cards, first with a color-filled graphic adventure and the first to release a CD-ROM game. That's not even counting The Sierra Network, one of the world's first online gaming services.

Unlike the developers of today, who strive for record-setting gore or polygon counts just for the sake of flexing their technological muscles, Sierra's innovation was born from necessity. The company was pushed to the cutting edge by the creativity of a few women, some of the first real storytellers in the emerging medium of computer entertainment.

While Roberta Williams was creating *King's Quest*, Lori Ann and Corey Cole were falling in love to the rattle of a 20-sided-die.

As the couple came together at the birth of the digital age, it was only natural that their love of *D&D* would find its way onto computers. After Corey got a job as a programmer with Sierra, she got the chance to pitch them on *Hero's Quest* (later *Quest for Glory* when a *HeroQuest* board game beat them to the copyright.)

"I'm not a programmer, and it was very unlikely I could have gotten a design job anywhere else without experience. However, Sierra On-line was founded by a woman game designer who didn't program," Lori said. "Thus, the company was [structured] to work from non-programming designers."

Not only was her pitch accepted, the Coles would go on to create five *Quest for Glory* titles for Sierra.

Ken Williams insists that even though the company was founded by him and his wife, hiring women and couples wasn't necessarily intentional.

"It certainly wasn't my plan," Ken said. "I always just hired who seemed best for the job, regardless of whether they were male or female. A great writer is a great writer. I don't know that it's a sex-related issue."

If Sierra had a holy triumvirate of female designers, Jane Jensen was its third pillar. Originally working as a systems programmer for Hewlett-Packard, Jensen's affinity for storytelling and computers brought her to Sierra's by then well-established doors in 1991.

Two years later, Sierra released the first title in Jensen's *Gabriel Knight* series, which followed a New Orleans book store owner (voiced by Tim Curry) as he battled the forces of evil in this decidedly more gothic take on the adventure genre.

Over its six-year lifespan, the series would receive countless industry awards and engender the love of an online community still active today, seven years after the curtain fell on the series, which Jensen later novelized. The change in medium was appropriate, as the series had been one of the most story-intensive of its time.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a glowing yellow lightbulb. The lightbulb is the central focus, with a bright glow emanating from it. Inside the glass of the lightbulb, the text "Sierra's innovation was born from necessity." is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow, suggesting a warm, bright environment. The hand holding the bulb is visible at the bottom and right edges of the frame.

**Sierra's
innovation
was born from
necessity.**

"I think the bulk of games are made by guys, for guys," Jensen told *Adventure Classic Gaming* in 2003. "Most women (and I say most with full knowledge of the fact that there are exceptions) do not like to play shooters or RPG games. If you don't like to play something, you're not going to end up designing it. Adventure games have always been an exception in the industry."

Unfortunately for adventure game lovers everywhere, the end of the *Gabriel Knight* series would also herald the end of an era. In 1996, Ken Williams sold Sierra to a firm called CUC International, which would later be charged with billions in fraud.

In 1999, 135 Sierra employees were laid off on a single day, now known to many fans as "Black Monday." A few months later, 105 more employees were let go, as Sierra shifted its focus from developing computer games to publishing.

That final title, *Gabriel Knight 3: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned* would be the last adventure title released by Sierra. Sierra now exists in name only, while most of its major properties sit idle.

The women of Sierra are no longer under one roof, scattered by time and circumstance.

Lori and Corey Cole founded Transolar Games, mainly as a way to support fans of the *Quest for Glory* series. Lori said she and Corey have attempted to regain the license to their series over the years with little success.

While Lori admits she doesn't find much time for gaming, she does enjoy the occasional game of *World of Warcraft*, and still throws around the D20 now and then. Corey is now employed with game design company Visual Concepts.

Ken and Roberta have sworn off the industry completely, spending much of their time sailing. In 2005, Ken published *Crossing an Ocean Under Power*, the story of his and Roberta's journey across the Atlantic.

In addition to continuing to write, Jane Jensen is more directly involved with the industry, creating casual games like *Inspector Parker* and *BeTrapped* for Oberon Media. She suggested that changing demographics in games could

create a new audience for titles like the ones she, Cole and Williams created.

"I get a lot of letters from women and older people who want a great story, a beautiful environment to explore, and who hate shooters and 'twitch' games - this is the adventure game audience, and fortunately, the [size] of this demographic ... has been growing steadily," Jensen said.

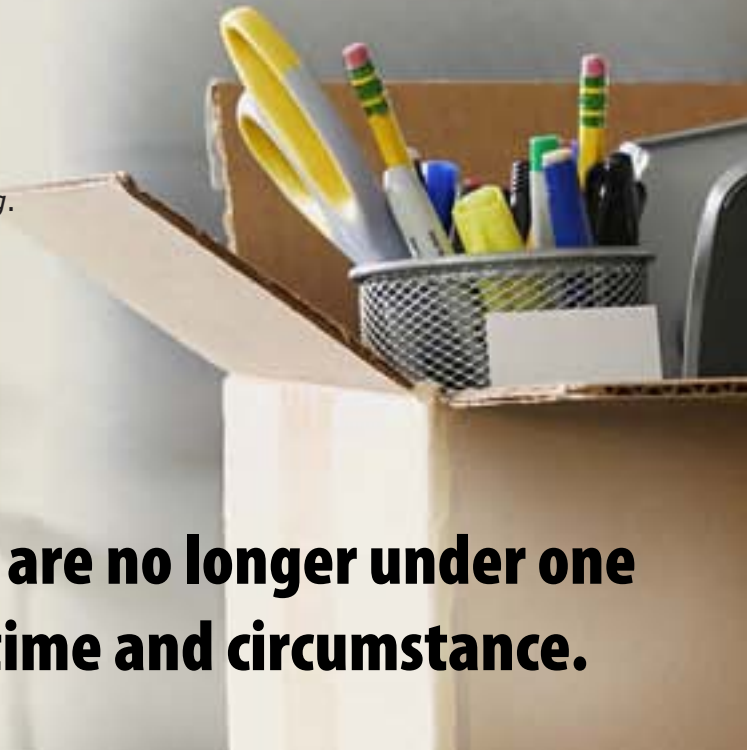
While Vivendi Universal Games (which now owns Sierra) and the developers may have moved away from the games connected to the company's former glory, the rabid Sierra fan base has not. Some are so desperate, they've begun creating their own unofficial entries into the series, like *Hero6* or *The Silver Lining*.

Few of the fan projects share the same aesthetic as their inspirations; many have even changed the name. What remains are the same things that drove Sierra at its inception: The desire to delight, to transport and to entertain.

That is the legacy of Sierra, one that's still synonymous with the name, no matter how the brand may be used. In the end, it's largely the legacy of a handful of women, willing to look beyond, willing to see not only what games were, but what they could be.

[COMMENTS](#)

Justin McElroy is the news editor of The Ironton Tribune and a freelance gaming writer. He lives in Huntington, W.Va. with his fiancée, Sydnee.



The women of Sierra are no longer under one roof, scattered by time and circumstance.



MEET Denise FULTON

by N. Evan Van Zelfden

She was in the *New York Times*. She keynoted a conference. She worked at Microsoft, Dreamworks, EA and Ion Storm. She is respected, responsible and riveting. And she develops videogames. Now, meet Denise Fulton ...

Just Something I Did

Fulton grew up playing games. "My dad taught computer science at the university. So, I grew up around computers, and playing games from the time I was tiny," Fulton says, listing games as one formative influence.

Fulton recalls her small-town Ohio upbringing. "I grew up playing *Adventure* on the Commodore; lying on the shag rug, playing the Atari. That was my background. I never thought it was strange. And I never thought it was notable. It was just something I did."

Though they were an influence, games didn't stand out, either. "I always took [gaming] for granted." Fulton says, "It was just one of the things I did. I've always been a book-worm, I always liked movies and I always listened to music. I never thought games were unusual."

Nor did she consider it a possible career. "I never thought I would end up in the videogame industry," Fulton recalls. "Never crossed my mind when I was growing up."

Defining Gender

Today Fulton is studio head at Midway Studios-Austin. She climbed the ladder, and now holds a position of power. And when you talk about the path to get there, there is an overwhelming temptation to focus on gender.

Tempting, except, for Fulton. "Don't let gender define you," she has stated more than once, and publicly. "The very best people don't think about their gender a whole lot - male or female - because it's beside the point."

Fulton believes strongly in achievement, and meritocracy. "Focus on the achievement, not the gender." Which is not to say she hasn't faced other challenges with gender, and the videogame industry.

Fulton tells one story of working at EA, and one of the women that worked for

Fulton says "Hey, I'm pregnant. I'm not sure how to go about this. Do I take maternity leave?"

Fulton replies, "Gee, I don't know, I'll go find out." After checking with HR, Fulton discovers that EA didn't have a maternity program in place. "You can take that two ways," Fulton recalls.

The reason wasn't because EA didn't want it. It wasn't that they didn't think it was important. It was that it hadn't yet come up. It was that simple.

Fulton instituted a maternity program, and notes that many things are like that. "It's not necessarily a bias where people are being malicious, or not wanting something to happen, it's just that it hasn't come up.

"And you, as a woman – or as anyone in this industry – can make these changes: if you just trust that it can happen." And given all this, Fulton still believes the best defense will be more women in the industry.

Seattle Sounds Really Cool

When Fulton studied graphic design at school, she thought of herself as an

artist, not a tech person. However, "computers weren't scary to me. And that made a big difference. When I took classes, I didn't have a problem getting in front of a computer and starting to work there, and I started to make a niche for myself, as a woman with computer skills, early on.

"When I finished school, I had a choice," Fulton recalls. "I could have gone to Hallmark to make wrapping-paper. Or I could have gone to Microsoft to do UI design. At the time, I'm 21, I'm thinking 'Seattle sounds really cool.'"

Fulton moved out to Seattle, and entered the game industry. "Once I got in Microsoft, I found that I really liked it. I liked the environment, I like the structure, I liked the opportunities."

From there, Fulton went on to work at Dreamworks Interactive, at EA for a number of years, and most recently at Ion Storm. "I worked on different types of games. I've worked on kids' games, sports games, mature titles," Fulton says, adding, "I like the industry more and more the longer I'm in it."

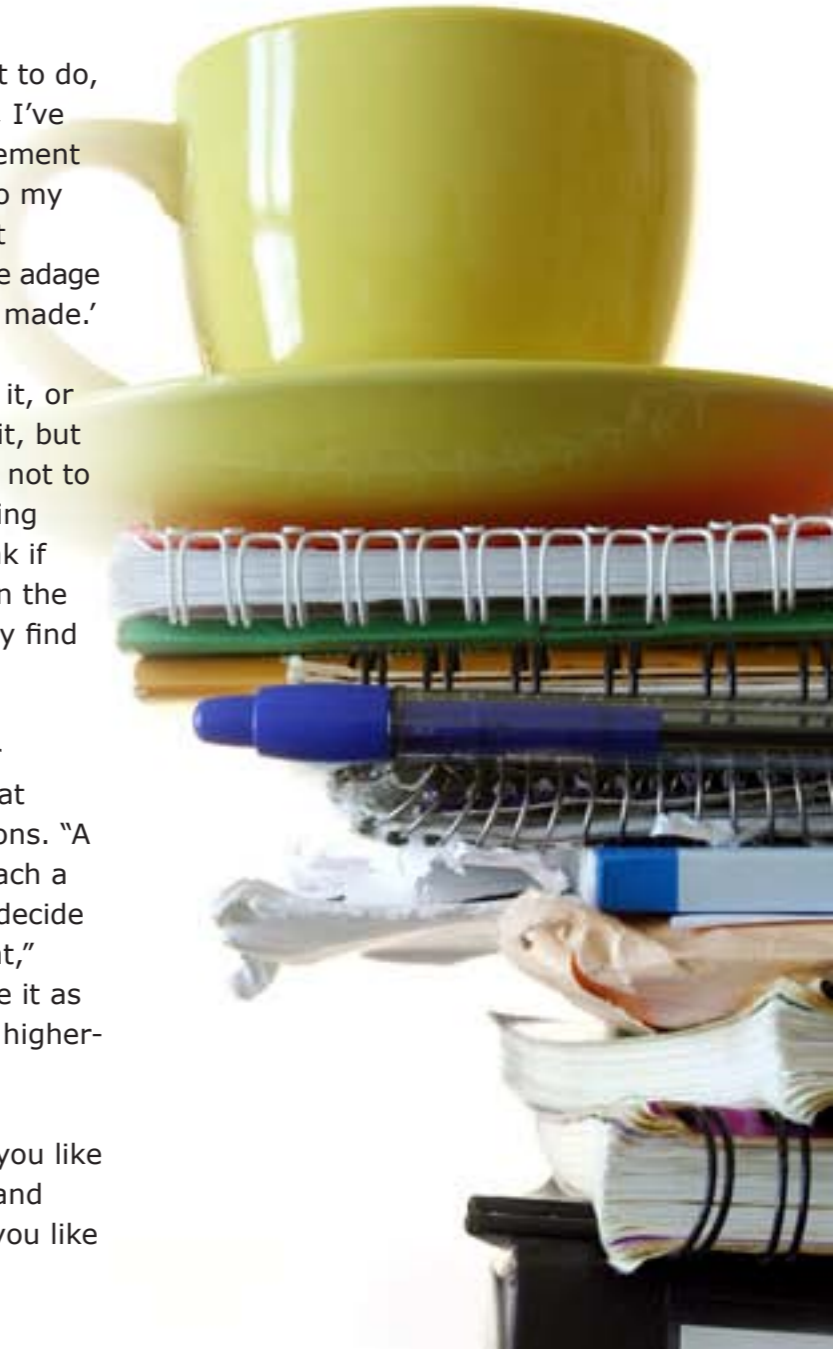
Doing Destiny

"I think you do what you're meant to do, ultimately," Fulton says. "Like me, I've always had a bent toward management and organization. And when left to my own devices, I just kind of do that instinctively. I'm a big believer in the adage that 'real managers are born, not made.'"

"I think you have the instincts for it, or you don't. You can learn some of it, but most of it is just innate." Which is not to say that people always end up doing what they're meant to, "But I think if people really look at themselves in the face, they can recognize what they find easy, and what they don't."

Fulton also uses this as a filter for others, particularly those looking at management or production positions. "A lot of programmers and artists reach a point in their careers where they decide they want to get into management," Fulton explains, "because they see it as a path into a more responsible or higher-paying position.

"I just look at them and ask, 'Do you like spending your days in meetings, and doing lots of documentation? Do you like



organization and budgets?’ Because if you don’t, you’re going to hate it.”

Stepping Up

Fulton’s previous experience was in production. Most recently, she functioned as Executive Producer at Ion Storm. Since joining Midway Studios-Austin as studio head, Fulton has had time to reflect on some of the differences between being a producer and being an executive.

“I have to be a lot more disciplined about trusting the people I work with to do their jobs, and not diving into the details too much and getting in their way,” Fulton explains. “I have to be careful to keep my perspective. It’s a matter of keeping that right balance - identifying problems, but not being the one to solve them all the time.

“As a producer,” Fulton recalls, “I had to get down in the trenches, roll up my sleeves, and do work on the project. If I did that here, it would actually be detrimental to the overall health of the studio.

“Now, I mostly sit in on reviews. I know what’s going on with the projects, because I’m kept up to date by the

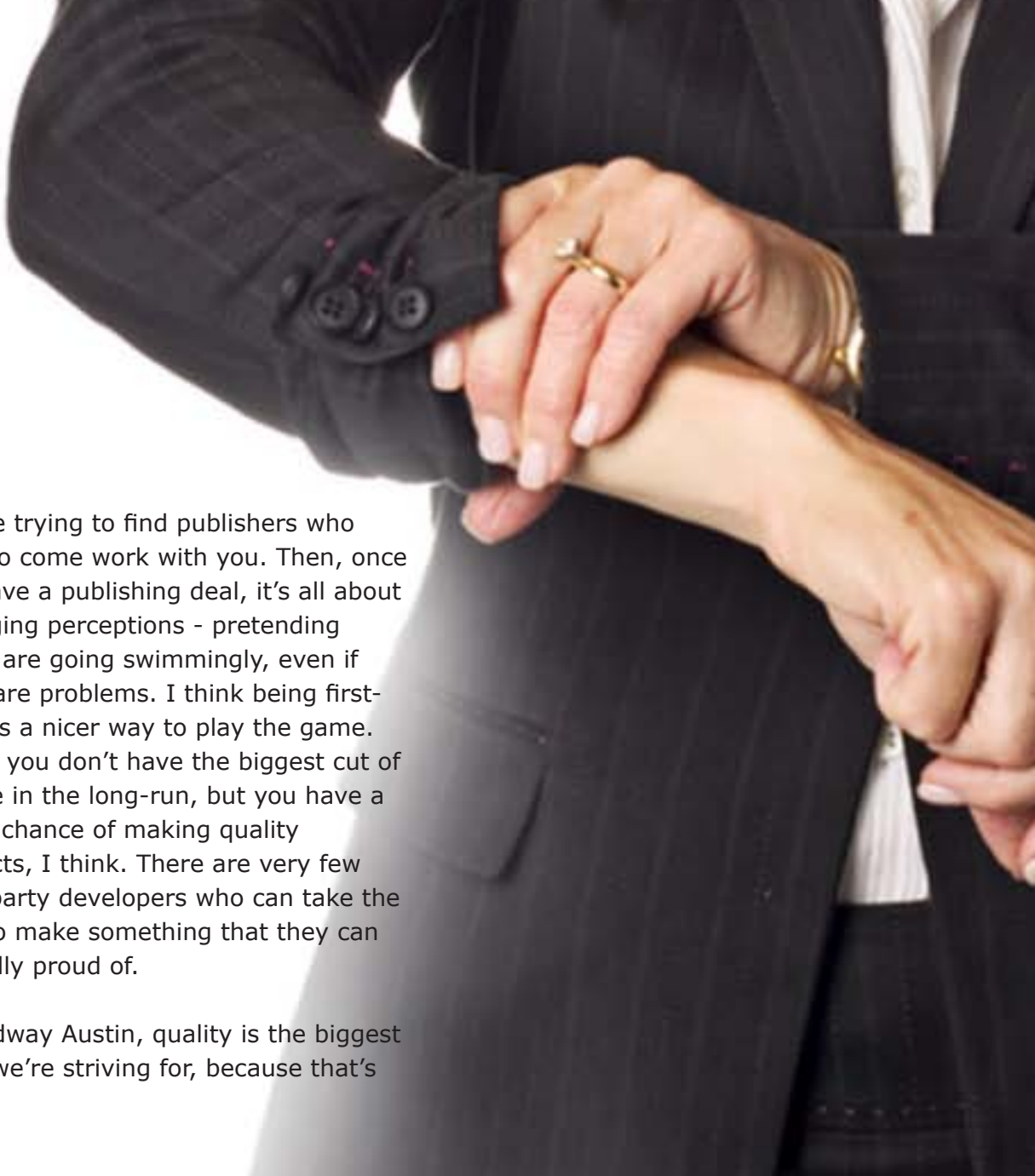
studio directors. But I have enough distance from the projects that I can ask meaningful questions.”

Fulton’s strength is in building teams. “What I’m best at is finding and coalescing groups of people so that they work together effectively,” she says. “And I learned early on, you can always find someone who’s way better at things than you are, in any single area. So, what I do is try to find those people and put them together so they interact in interesting ways. Because, you know, Harvey Smith is a better designer than I’ll ever be. Brett Close is a better producer than I’ll ever be. Tim Little knows the tech ... What I can do is identify them and help them work together more effectively. At the highest level, that’s what my job is about.”

What Can I Say?

“I’ve always been first-party,” Fulton admits. “I’m a publisher girl, what can I say?”

It’s not entrepreneurial, but it has its advantages. “If you’re first-party, you’re negotiating with a publisher who has a vested stake in your growth. As an independent developer, you spend a lot



of time trying to find publishers who want to come work with you. Then, once you have a publishing deal, it’s all about managing perceptions - pretending things are going swimmingly, even if there are problems. I think being first-party is a nicer way to play the game. Maybe you don’t have the biggest cut of the pie in the long-run, but you have a better chance of making quality products, I think. There are very few third-party developers who can take the time to make something that they can be really proud of.

“At Midway Austin, quality is the biggest thing we’re striving for, because that’s

what people take pride in. That's why they're here."

Playing to Win

As a company, Midway has told analysts they are betting on next-gen consoles, saying that during a console transition a publisher can leap from a lower tier to a higher one.

Midway has spoken widely about placing a bet on next-gen consoles, and the leap-frogging a publisher can do during a console transition. "I think Midway is

poised to do that. I genuinely do," Fulton says. "I've drunk the kool-aid. I buy it.

"And they're not skimping on quality," Fulton reports. "They mean it when they say, 'Look, the only way we're going to win is by making the right kind of games.'" That means giving developers the time, money and resources to make them great. Fulton adds, "And that's pretty cool. You don't see it very often."

With Great Power

"I've always felt responsible," Fulton says. "I tend to take ownership of things

just because it's my nature to do so." That tendency has increased since becoming a studio head. "It's this weird two-edged sword, because on the one hand, to succeed, I need to delegate really, really effectively.

"[But] ultimately, my head's on the line if everything goes wrong. So I have to keep an eye out, and make sure things don't go wrong. [But] I trust the people I work with. I really view it as a team effort," Fulton says. "Ultimately, it's the guys down the hall who are making the games happen."

Almost Famous

With all the attention Fulton receives, does she want to be a rockstar? "Not me, man." She says, explaining, "I recognize the need for rockstars, I just don't want to be one. I want to be the person behind-the-scenes; that's my ideal role. **I don't ever want to be famous.**"

Fulton explains that having to represent the studio in public is a new role. "I'll do what it takes to make our studio

succeed." But that doesn't mean she has to become a public figure, especially when others at the studio are better suited to that role.

For example, Harvey Smith, Midway Austin's Creative Director, recently appeared on an MTV special along side Will Wright, David Jaffe and Cliff Bleszinski.

"I'm excited about the games we're working on," Fulton segues. "And I enjoy the people I work with. You know, I've had great work relationships in my life ... and that's what matters in the long run."

Creativity by Numbers

"Very little that I do is creative, vis-à-vis the products," says Fulton. "When I'm in creative meetings, I tend to keep an eye towards how the execs, or our customers, are going to respond - rather than focusing on my own ideas. I'll offer a suggestion occasionally, but it can be dangerous.

"In my position, you have to be careful," Fulton explains, "Because people take you more seriously and more literally than they should. So I'm very cautious

"I recognize the need for rockstars,
I just don't want to be one."



about making suggestions. It's really important that the team knows they're **just** suggestions.

"There are other areas in which I can get more creative." Fulton finds that running a studio in itself is creative. "Figuring out SKU plans, budgets, personnel plans, that's fun to me - like puzzle solving"

Management: An Art Form

"I really think management is an art form," Fulton states. "I'm endlessly fascinated by the way people interact, and how they work together, and how personalities shape the culture, and how values shape the culture. I think all of that is fascinating."

A large part of Fulton's job is to convey directives from corporate, e.g. "we have to ship this product a quarter earlier," or "marketing thinks this feature is really important," etc.

"A lot of my job," Fulton says, "involves communicating information from outside of the studio in a way that people here can understand it and become invested in the outcome. That takes a lot of finesse."

Aesthetic Auditor

Whenever there is management in a creative industry, the question of artistic control arises. "There are a million people in this industry who think of themselves as creative executives," Fulton elaborates. "They always know what's right, creatively, and feel comfortable mandating changes. And I think that's dangerous."

"I'd much rather think of myself as a creative auditor, or creative coordinator. I have a genuine appreciation for games. I play them all the time, and I love all sorts of other media as well. This gives me the context to evaluate where we're going, and, hopefully, spot missteps. In the end however, it's more important that I trust the creative people I've brought in to make the right decisions."

Make Great Games

In the end, Fulton offers one defining statement: **"I don't want to be recognized for being one of the few women in the game industry. I want to be recognized for the great games we make."** And when you consider the skill and loyalty of those around Denise Fulton, there is every indication that is exactly what will happen. [COMMENTS](#)

N. Evan Van Zelfden expects great things for the future of games. Games are the greatest art form to date, he asserts. This is why he plays games, writes about them, and continues to work in the industry of games.

"I don't want to be recognized for being one of the few women in the game industry. I want to be recognized for the great games we make."



ASEXUALITY

by John Walker

actually

Here are a few questions: Is there really anything about current games that makes them inaccessible to women? Are they really sexist? Is the game industry really excluding women from their audience?

The notion of a male-dominated videogame culture continues to be widely accepted. Any report on the state of gaming, or any analysis of the latest figures of what each sex is playing, begins with the statement: "Games are predominantly aimed at men." It's the required preamble. But is it really true?

As an experiment, I'll name some games:

Worms, Roller Coaster Tycoon, Psychonauts, Zoo Keeper, The Settlers III, Darwinia, IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles, Day of the Tentacle, Ratchet & Crank, Meteos, City of Heroes, Civilization, Microsoft Flight Simulator, The Sims, EVE Online, Crazy Taxi, Myst III: Exile, Descent, Mario Power Tennis, Mutant Storm, Sonic the Hedgehog, Metroid Prime, Tetris, Links 2003 and Fallout 2.

A good mix there - old and new, good and bad - across a broad range of genres and platforms. Which of them is so horribly

biased toward men? I'm not trying to be clever. This is simply saying: Maybe the problem isn't as huge as we think.

True, that's a carefully selected list of games. Sure, it doesn't include *Postal 2* or *Soldier of Fortune*. But it also doesn't contain *No One Lives Forever* or *Dreamfall*. It's a list of games which couldn't care less which sex you are. Something that is fairly commonplace in gaming.

Yes, big, dumb action games are more often aimed at a male audience. There's no reason to deny this. Much as big, dumb action movies are more often aimed at a male audience. An offering from Vin Diesel is rarely met with derisory accusations that this latest film - probably about a retired cop who travels through time and fights the ghost of his twin or something - is preventing women from going to the cinema. It's preventing decent-minded **humans** from going to that particular theater at that particular time, certainly, but it's not causing all movies to be off-limits to those boasting a second X chromosome.

Of course, while games are being played by a reasonable proportion of women,



they are not being **made** by them. When recognizing the more wonderful games with female lead characters, from *Beyond Good & Evil* to *Metroid* to *The Longest Journey*, one must remember these are games made by men. However, it's interesting to note that there's no consensus on how this issue might be addressed.

Gareth R. Schott and Kirsty R. Horrell mention in their paper "Girl Gamers and their Relationship with the Gaming Culture," "Male designers who have developed games have traditionally preserved male dominance within the gaming industry based on their own tastes and cultural assumptions." To combat that, one would think girl game designers need to break into the boys' playground.

But Brunel University lecturer Tanya Krzywinska argues that it's not that simple. "I don't believe more women working in the industry would have more than [a] peripheral effect precisely because the game industry is market driven and, like the movie industry, has now established formal and generic patterns that will prove hard to break in an industrial sense."

OK, according to the experts, even if a girl **does** get into the industry, she's going to be making male-oriented games like everyone else. But both of these arguments fail to acknowledge the vast swathes of games that aren't condemned to the pit of sexist ill-repute.

So, if there are already innumerable games that in no way even suggest a gender bias, this leads me to think: There's something else keeping women from games rather than the way women are presented in them.

Well, there's a problem with that statement, too. With each and every study of who's playing games, the percentage of female players keeps going up. While some surveys skew the matter by including somewhat obscure qualifiers, such as a quick game of *Snake* on a Nokia phone, even the more carefully refined studies are regularly finding that around 38% of those playing videogames are women. Which is, you know, more than a third.

Obviously, the mainstream media can't cope with these figures, and all coverage tends to follow the same formula: A

reporter immediately rushes to the only female gamer he knows and gets a couple quotes, and then he interviews a Frag Doll and asks, "So, you actually **play** games, do you? All on your own?" And it's perhaps here that the perception is born. No matter how many girls are gaming, the media has yet to gain the sophistication or maturity to express this responsibly.

Even looking at the survey results, and then looking at the regular customers in a local branch of GameStop, it's hard to take claims of a burgeoning female gaming population seriously. It can't really be true, can it? Girls aren't really gaming, are they? But **all** my female friends play games. Well, they **confess** to playing games; they don't proudly announce it. But they **all** play videogames. And they're not playing *Snake*, they're playing *Metal Gear Solid*.

There are even studies indicating girls will delve into serious gaming in the right conditions. In 2003, Gareth Schott and Siobhan Thomas of the University of London decided to investigate how young people react to videogaming. They went into high school classrooms with GameBoy Advance SPs in hand and set

them in front of 14- and 15-year-old kids. The boys immediately identified them, rushed over and dominated. The girls sat back and let them.

They tried the same experiment in classes with only girls. Without the boys to push them out the way, and once the Schott and Thomas explained the devices weren't some sort of makeup case (no, really), the girls mostly recognized Mario onscreen, but would predominantly declare, "Oh, I can't do these things."

Prompted to continue, Schott and Thomas found that after a few minutes, they couldn't get the girls to stop playing. This transition led the researchers to conclude that there was some sort of "permission" barrier between girls and gaming.

This is a barrier that's being increasingly eroded. It's the continued focus on demanding that games be made more accessible to female gamers that's perpetuating the myth that there aren't any games for female gamers, which is only more frustrating when I look at the games around me now.

Half-Life 2: Episode 1 has me play the subservient man, following the

instructions of the more able, the more skilled, the more creative and the more intelligent woman. It is I that assists her, shining the flashlight so she may shoot, running and hiding while she fires the sniper rifle. She is specifically feminine, and she's specifically in charge. *Dreamfall* had me alternate between April Ryan and Zoë Castillo, encountering a world through two distinct female perspectives. *Metroid Prime: Hunters* has me playing super-hard action heroine Samus. And those are simply the games I've happened to play in the last few weeks.

Pretending this isn't the case is just plain weird. How is this a medium girls can't access? These are, like the majority of releases, videogames that in no way enforce or reinforce sexist stereotypes. And focusing on the few games that do perpetuate stereotypes is the very

It's the continued focus on demanding that games be made more accessible to female gamers that's perpetuating the myth that there aren't any games for female gamers.

device that alienates girls from gaming. It focuses the attention away from the real issue: a media that's writing to the boys, but writing **about** the girls - which I may well be guilty of now myself.

However, my cry remains: Can we all stop saying that this is a medium predominantly aimed at men, and maybe see if this is a refrain that has simply been reinforcing itself for a good number of years? If we recognize that the majority of games we play don't enforce sexual stereotypes, gender biases or sexist principles, we'll encourage and develop a vocabulary that speaks about games to everyone in a non-discriminatory tone. We are the instigators of our own confining delusion, and by maturing beyond this delusion, we will help to ensure games are acceptable pastimes for both sexes. [COMMENTS](#)

John Walker is now a bit nervous of getting yelled at. He's frequently nervous of getting yelled at for things he writes on his own site at <http://botherer.cream.org>, and in various U.K. gaming magazines, such as PC Gamer and PC Format. Yell nicely. He's a bit of a wimp.



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Selling POWER

by Ancil Anthropy

"Girl power" is a curious phrase. It's a contradiction when you apply it to adult women: "Power" clearly suggests mobility and capability, but "girl" is infantilizing. We're grownups - we work and hold jobs and handle money and manage relationships. We can take the bus by ourselves if we want to. I won't argue that the "power" part is appropriate, but the phrase is never "women power"; always "girl power."

Videogames and their surrounding culture are populated with images of girls — not women — wielding guns, swords or world-shattering magical forces. Adult weapons, girl power. It's a juxtaposition of formidability and cuteness.

Cuteness also entails prettiness — more often than not, a strong female videogame lead is a pretty one, or at least a stereotypically feminine one. As a child, I always liked to play Samus Aran in *Metroid* — her skin-covering metal exoskeleton allowed me to play a woman character without compromising my own notions of femininity. In Nintendo's upcoming *Smash Brothers Brawl*,

though, Samus strips off her armor to reveal a form-fitting body-suit, skinny curves and a body image I find much harder to identify with.

Outside of the polygonal landscape, the Frag Dolls inhabit the "capable and pretty" overlap. The Frag Dolls are a team of women sponsored by Ubisoft to attend videogame tournaments and blog about games. Their "About Us" page reads — beneath an illustration by a *Maxim* pin-up artist — "We're here to represent the ladies in gaming with the taste and talent for beating you at your own games." How many lady gamers resemble *Maxim* pin-ups?

The Frag Dolls are marketing disguised as empowerment, and they are by no means an isolated case. The "Girls of *Counter-Strike*" website hasn't launched yet (it's currently in invitation-only public beta), but their page on Myspace proclaims, "The site's purpose is to help rid negative stereotypes people often have about females who play internet games." How does Girls of *Counter-Strike* go about accomplishing this

admirable goal? "Girlsofcs.com is a nude pinup gallery for female gamers interested in playing and becoming active in a mature gaming environment."

But is the visibility of women gamers really as urgent a problem as these sites make it out to be? I know that sometimes it's alienating to be a woman in a sphere like videogaming, but I can't help thinking that the "issue" of "girls in games" has largely been manufactured (or at the very least exacerbated) by marketers. The boys themselves are part of this equation, too. When the Frag Dolls say they'll "beat you at your own games," men (the demographic of young-adult males that Ubisoft counts on to buy their games) are the "you" they're talking to.


Samus may take off her clothes for the benefit of the boys, but in the mean time, I still enjoy playing a strong videogame lead who isn't necessarily a man. That's important to marketers, who are trying desperately to understand how women buy and play games.

We are becoming a demographic, albeit a risky one, since publishers still aren't

sure how we think — which is why game marketers are crafting ways to target young women, while simultaneously appealing to their reliable old standby: young men. Publishers are conspiring to target women as consumers in order to consolidate us into a neat demographic that can be understood, predicted and marketed to. Simultaneously, publishers are trying to take advantage of and market this influx of women to men in order to get them to buy games women might be playing.

Selling female subjectification to women, while at the same time selling female objectification to men, is what produces these absurd hybrid images of lethal alien bounty hunters slinking around in skin-tight catsuits. The phrase "girl power" might be indicative of many broad trends in our larger culture, but in videogames, it only means one thing: money. [COMMENTS](#)

Ancil Anthropy takes the bus all by herself. She can be found at The Independent Gaming Source (tigsource.com) or her own site at dessgeega.com.



Publishers are conspiring to target women as consumers in order to consolidate us into a neat demographic that can be understood, predicted and marketed to.

Flippage

by Laura Genender



He was from Quebec, Canada; she was a thousand miles away in Fort Worth, Texas. Yet, in the world of *Lineage*, they were inseparable; best friends, hunting partners and more.

Septonian was new to *Lineage*. He had just joined a “blood pledge,” the *Lineage* equivalent of a guild, but still needed help finding his way around the game. This was where Flippage came in: the older and wiser player. Septonian told me, “I befriended Flip because she was a pretty high level comparatively, and seemed to know a lot about the game ... so, I thought she could be my mentor. We hung around a lot ... She was what I considered ‘leet’ back then ... and as you know ... we’re all attracted to people of power.”

Originally, Septonian hadn’t even known that his companion was female. But it wasn’t long into their friendship before he finally popped the question – “A/S/L?” – and found out that the male mage he was hunting with was a girl in real life.

“If we were a pair in-game,” Septonian decided, “we could try being one outside the game, too.” Septonian made the first

move: He started to flirt with Flippage. His attraction to Flippage grew when a popular *Lineage* fansite, *Lineage Compendium*, opened up a “real-life pictures” section. “[She] posted some pictures of herself on there and sent me some. The girl was pretty hot, you know.”

Flippage was a wonderful mentor to Septonian, sharing her wealth as well as her knowledge. “[Flippage] shared some of her wealth with someone in need ... no +7 weapons obviously, but when you’re a lowbie, every little bit helps! And it’s the thought that matters ... knowing that there are people out there who are ‘better’ than you, and would sacrifice some of their wealth to help you out, that’s cool.”

Yet, this wasn’t enough for Septonian. A month or two into the relationship, Septonian betrayed Flippage; with the help of a friend, Septonian logged into her account while she was offline and stripped the characters of all of their items.

A brutal hacking, a friendship and partnership betrayed. But let’s step back a second and review some missing pieces.

First off, there's Flippage's real story: Flippage, a male in the real world, had started his career in *Lineage* as a male mage. At the end of beta, he quit for about a year, and his friends and pledgemates counted him among the lost "beta hoppers." When Flippage reappeared a year later as a very convincing female, no one was really sure who was behind the avatar the second time around. He was such a good actor, everyone forgot about the Flippage-that-was.

In truth, Flippage never intended his ruse to become so large and intricate. When he came back to *Lineage* and decided to adopt a new persona, he never expected to become involved in a relationship.

To anyone who has ever witnessed an average male gamer's attempt at emulating female behavior, the fact that Flippage managed to keep up the ruse for months is amazing. Flippage was a high-profile player and consorted with numerous guys and gals who never saw through his disguise. I've always considered myself a fairly good judge of the fake vs. the female, but Flippage,

who was a member of my blood pledge and a close friend, had **me** fooled.

Ironically enough, Flippage didn't have the same malicious intent that the *Lineage* community had come to expect from "in-game cross dressers." Stereotypically, when a male pretended to be a female, it was an attempt to earn free items from potential suitors. This was probably one of Flippage's greatest camouflages: Here she was, helping out a low level character that had nothing to give her. What motivation could she have?

Indeed, Septonian couldn't imagine why Flippage **wouldn't** be a girl. "All along, I kept [asking] myself, 'Why would she be lying about it, if I'm the one gaining from it?' In these types of relationships, it's usually the person who's making a profit who's playing the girl-who-needs-stuff role ... but here [she was] spending time with a lowbie, even giving him money and items."

Most men playing women don't do it as a joke or for an interesting experience. They do it to exploit the different ways that males and females are treated on the 'net. Septonian was lucky: Newbie

Septonian couldn't imagine why Flippage wouldn't be a girl.



I remember my blood pressure rising around the time he admitted [he was a male in real life].



males don't often receive help in the game world, while those perceived as females are immediately mentored by higher level males. Naming yourself "xXCuteLoveXx" or playing a female avatar promotes kinder treatment, and taking on "feminine" mannerisms – lots of giggling, anime faces, emotional responses, etc. – can earn you free items or a spot in a prestigious blood pledge.

But why would women be treated differently than men in a videogame? Sexual favoritism in the real world is usually due to sexual undertones exhibited by either party, but online benefactors rarely meet those they help. With thousands of miles and the anonymity of the internet separating benefactors from their benefices, what drives guys to shower lower-level players with items?

Perhaps those real-world undertones still have an effect inside the game. Although not the dominant member of the give-receive pair, Septonian hoped to take his relationship with Flippage to the next level.

Though Flippage sent Septonian pictures and gave him her phone number, she

would never join him on live web-cam chat and never answered her phone. Septonian had plans to eventually visit Flippage, though nothing immediate; "Considering I had never seen 'her' on a live webcam, or even chatted with 'her' on phone or voice chat, I can say I was still pretty far from a visit.

"I guess he was waiting for a girl to be at his house [before he told] me to call him, so he'd have an accomplice," Septonian muses years later.

Flippage's ruse came to a close when an anonymous source remarked that "real-life Flippage" looked exactly like another high-profile 'net female, "cyberchiq." With the help of Google, it didn't take Septonian long before he found the real person in Flippage's pictures, whom he even contacted via email (and perhaps flirted with, just a little).

"I remember my blood pressure rising around the time he admitted [he was a male in real life]," Septonian told me. "We were walking around Giran and I was ... nervous waiting for the truth to come out." Once Flippage admitted it, Septonian waited for Flippage to log off

and then stripped his characters of all their possessions, putting the finishing touches on the destruction of a friendship.

Did Flippage owe Septonian knowledge of his true gender? If we can pretend to be wizards and knights and elves and royalty, why can't we cross such a mundane line as the male-female one? Flippage did no more than create a character in a game, and the progression of that character carried him down this road. Yet, while Flippage had some right to create his own persona and enjoy it in a fantasy world, the line between fantasy and reality was bridged, and a relationship was taken into the real realm. When did he owe Septonian a true explanation, if ever?

Flippage was simply using a roleplaying game to, well, roleplay. The surprise and anger directed at Flippage was, in part, because he broke the conventions of in-game roleplay: Instead of playing a female mage wandering the lands of Aden in the name of Einhasad, Flippage was playing a female playing a male mage. He was roleplaying a meta-character, something that traditionally is met with scorn in roleplaying communities.

Harmless roleplay turned lethal, though, when Flippage met Septonian. While the former did no more than continue to playact, suddenly there was another character that didn't realize he was part of a play. Septonian was dealing with real emotions in his real life. Even if Flippage didn't owe the world an explanation of his choice of play, he could have easily distanced himself from Septonian.

The fact that Flippage never intended to steal from Septonian was one of the wildest cards he played. When Flippage was outed, no one was sure of his motivation. Why did he fool Septonian? What did he gain? If Flippage had stripped Septonian of his gear, the answer would be obvious. But instead, Flippage left Septonian and his friends bewildered and angry.

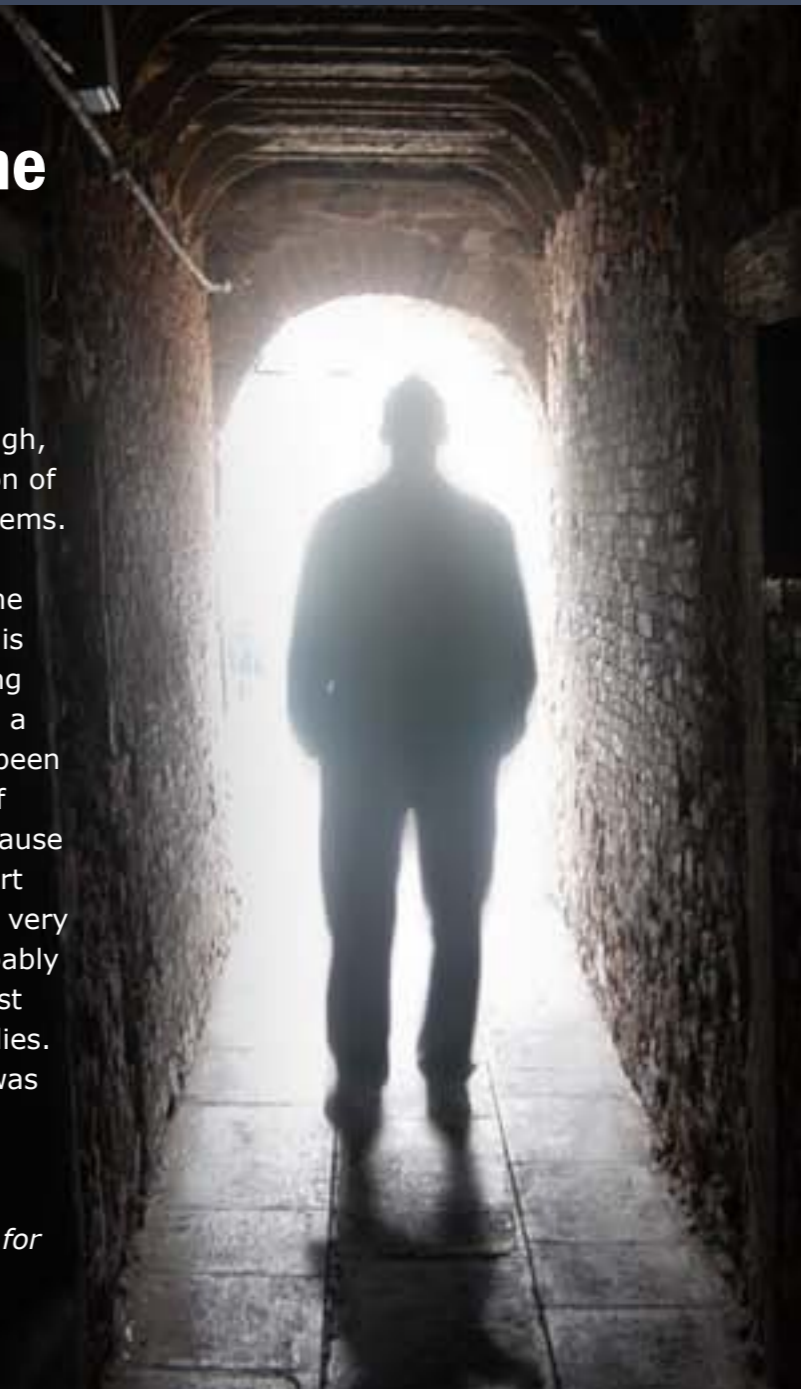
Flippage soon left *Lineage*. While he kept in contact with a few friends, the joke-gone-wild was a heavy blow for him, and even for the community left behind; in the small English-speaking roleplaying community, distrust for anyone claiming to be female ran rampant, and many who knew Septonian and Flippage took extra precautions in their personal

When Flippage was outed, no one was sure of his motivation.

dealings with others. Ironically enough, this had little effect on the population of guys who faked femininity to earn items.

Now that time has smoothed over the situation, Septonian looks back on his reaction with some regret. "[Breaking into Flippage's account] seemed like a good idea back then because I had been lied to for weeks, if not months ... Of course, I regret doing that now, because the guy probably never meant to hurt me, and my punishment to him was very harsh for something which was probably meant to be a one-time joke that just turned into a long unfolding web of lies. To think of it, I've never told him I was sorry." [COMMENTS](#)

Laura Genender is a Staff Writer for MMORPG.com, and is also an Editor for Prima Strategy Guides.



MEET THE TEAM

Each week we ask a question of our staff and featured writers to learn a little bit about them and gain some insight into where they are coming from. This week's question is:

"What's one thing the industry can do to become more female friendly?"

Bonnie Ruberg, "The Truth about Little Girls"

Buy me dinner.

John Walker, "Asexuality Actually"

Tie a pink bow to its head.

Ancil Anthropy, "Selling Power"

Stop patronizing us.

N. Evan Van Zelfden, "Meet Denise Fulton"

If you literally mean "become more

female friendly," the game industry should simply send them flowers. If you mean, "How can the industry hire more women?" then: Stop hiring based on experience. No one has it, no one needs it. And women are less likely make an *Unreal* mod to prove "experience." If a woman (or man) has the raw talent of an architect, why wouldn't you want them doing levels for you? Granted, games are hard to make, but so are many jobs in life.

Justin McElroy, "Women at the Pinnacle"

I think this one is a slam dunk:

More purses.

Russ Pitts, Associate Editor

Laugh nervously, refuse to engage them in conversation and stare at their breasts. Wait ... no, do the opposite of that. Yeah.

Joe Blancato, Associate Editor

Entertain the notion that statistics don't lie, and 38% of the people paying to play videogames are, in fact, female.

JR Sutich, Contributing Editor

Hire more females, and give their ideas serious consideration.

Jon Hayter, Producer

I think we need a more diverse array of designers making videogames. Thirty-something white males are going to produce a pretty predictable array of titles.

Julianne Greer, Executive Editor

Free tampons in the ladies' room? Yeah. I went there.

