"I Am Shocked, Shocked!":
Breaking taboos in digital gameplay

Elena Bertozzi
University of Wisconsin Whitewater
bertozze@uww.edu

Abstract

This paper examines some examples of what the media have described as outrageous, dangerous or otherwise troubling content in videogames. The author suggests that allowing players to engage in taboo behavior within games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, *Manhunt*, and *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* actually reinforces pro-social cultural norms. All cultures establish norms and also provide occasional opportunities for transgression of these norms. The author argues that breaking the rules, and understanding that rules are being broken, is necessary to test and reinforce the boundaries of acceptable behavior. Games provide players with arenas within which such transgressions can take place safely. Current videogames, however, provide these transgressive opportunities primarily for white males.

Author Keywords

Computer games, video games, taboos, transgression, gender, race, deviance

Introduction

The 1999 film *Fight Club* depicts a world where men can separate themselves from the meaningless, feminized, sanitized world of Western civilization and beat each other bloody with their bare hands. Films in the horror genre routinely explore a gamut of violence, perversion, and extreme anti-social behavior. Although extremely violent and troubling films are common, the public's response to video game content is quite different. Video games are blamed for inciting school shootings (Anderson, 2004), destroying the fabric of society, and permanently harming the psyches of those who play them (Slevin, 2004). The city of Los Angeles and the State of Nevada have gone so far as to file lawsuits against video game companies (Jenkins, 2006; Sinclair, 2006). Australia will not allow *Grand Theft Auto* to be sold anywhere in the country and Britain recently and reluctantly lifted restriction on *Manhunt 2*.

Though many are quick to blame video games for the ills afflicting society, this paper argues that play has an important function in culture – it provides players with arenas in which social norms operating outside the game world can be violated. As Freud points out in many of his writings, but particularly in "Totem and Taboo", cultures render taboo those activities which members of that culture acutely desire, but that are destructive. Thus the desire to engage in such activities is associated with intense pleasure and intense shame if these cultural norms have been internalized by the individual (Freud & Brill, 1946). Games which provide opportunities to engage in such transgressions provide pleasure based on the principal that they are allowing the player to violate the rules, which implicitly entails recognition and reinforcement of the rules. I

argue that such play reinforces the validity and strength of social norms *outside* the game world. In his seminal work on games and play, Huizinga emphasizes the importance of boundaries in play (1955). Within the lines of a football field, for example, Americans encourage and respect extremely violent behavior towards other players that often results in permanent damage and sometimes death. The most violent moments in the game and often the injuries inflicted are the frequent subject of replay reels and advertisements for the sport, and are an important part of establishing that a 'real man' can take the pain (Messner et al, 2000). Off the football field, players are no longer allowed to behave in this way. A necessary condition of being able to play a game is understanding where the boundary is: where, and under what circumstances, is it permissible to do something? Recognizing the border reinforces understanding what is acceptable on each side of it.[i]

This paper argues that part of the pleasure of some forms of play is precisely drawn from the fact that the game allows the player – sometimes actually *forces* the player – to engage in behavior considered taboo. Such games allows players to engage in a very limited form of social deviance with few or no consequences (Ben-Yehuda, 2006; Redmon, 2003). It is interesting to examine the kinds of social deviance that games make available to players. The following sections examine what kinds of taboos are transgressed, and which players are likely to enjoy these transgressions. Given that the vast majority of video games for adults are designed and constructed by males for a primarily male audience (IGDA, 2005), it is no surprise that the opportunities for breaking taboos in digitally mediated play are primarily male-oriented; that is, to say, that the taboos being broken are taboos for males and not for females. If we accept that the pleasure of breaking taboos is one of the things that attracts players to video game play, exploring and enabling transgressive opportunities for female players might facilitate increased female participation in digitally mediated play.

Play has traditionally been an important part of constructing culturally and socially acceptable behaviors (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennett, 1971; Huizinga, 1955). Human games teach children concepts of fairness, justice, collaboration, keeping score, and the accumulation of points/goods (Elias et al, 2000). We come to understand concepts of the self and others, the importance of rules for keeping order, how to balance group versus individual benefits, and many other important concepts through the games we play as children (Gadamer, 1989). In non-digital play it is uncommon to find games that encourage and reward transgressive behavior as explicitly as some video games do. Many modern American children spend much of their lives being ferried to a variety of different play venues sanctioned, supported, and funded by their parents (Henig, 2008). Adult analog play also generally models, rewards, and encourages pro-social behavior.

This is not to say that transgression is not part of analog culture. As Elias documents in his book "The Civilizing Process", humans are only able to form groups and live together cooperatively by suppressing those behaviors that are detrimental to the social good and encouraging those that are (Elias et al, 2000). For thousands of years, human cultures have devised ways of channeling the human need to break the rules periodically by inserting certain time periods in which it was understood that the normal order of things was suspended (Bauman, 1992). Events such as the celebrations of Dionysus and Bacchus, Halloween, May Day, and Carnival often involved mind-altering substances, dancing, unconstrained sexual behavior,

violence, rioting, and even death (Griffiths, 2002). As our society has become more technological, science-based, and controlled, however, some of the principal means through which citizens were able to rebel against social order have lost their potency and transgressive charge. In Western society in particular, these moments of rebellion against civilizing order have lost their power. Festivals such as Halloween and Carnival, events that used to have very strong transgressive functions, are now almost completely commercialized and therefore rendered banal (Rogers, 2003).

Opportunities for transgression are extremely important. By allowing periods of anti-social behavior, the norm is reestablished and re-enforced once the period is over. The excesses of Mardi Gras precede Lent, a period of stricter-than-usual personal self-control. This kind of contained transgression[ii] thus serves an important socializing function (Elias et al, 2000). It allows members of society to experience moments of release from prevailing cultural norms, while at the same time defining them by their opposites. One of the functions of transgressive digital game play is to provide an outlet for behavior (for example, random, unmotivated violence) that is not available in analog culture without significant consequences. Students in this author's classes report that they would very much like to have the opportunity to be violent in the way that football players/police/soldiers are; however, they know that they would be mashed to pulp if they attempted to actually play football or assault someone. The thrill associated with breaking taboos can be a way of attracting participants to any given activity, and digital game worlds offer the enticing possibility of transgression without penalty (Gee, 2003; Nakamura, 1995). Some game companies capitalize on this feature of game play to attract more customers to their products, and these are the ones most likely to incite public outcry.

In the following sections, types of transgressions enabled by specific games are examined in detail.

Cross Gender Play

Digital play often allows the player to play as any avatar they choose – male or female. Males, particularly those who self-identify as heterosexual, take a risk if they choose to engage in cross gender play in real life. In contemporary United States life, a male can still be killed for being overtly homosexual (Cathcart, 2008). It is unusual to find males who adopt stereotypically 'female' characteristics for play in non-digital activities because the social penalties are high for males who cross the boundaries of socially sanctioned gender roles (McGuffey & Rich, 1999; Thorne, 1993). Although it is now quite common for males to play using a female avatar in digital environments (Yee, 2006), it is more transgressive for a male to play as a female than for a female to adopt a male avatar. This is, in part, due to the fact that digital game play in the West is culturally gendered as male to begin with (Nakamura, 1995; Kaiser Foundation, 2002). In the U.S. the default video game player is a young white male. For women, adopting the male player persona is often not transgressive; it is simply a necessity in order to successfully engage in game worlds. Most early video games and many current ones which do not feature avatar selection only present male avatars as player options.

Cultural norms are very powerful, and violating them may be impossible or extremely problematic. Some digital game environments enable players to engage in taboo behavior by

creating a situation where it is necessary to engage in this behavior in order to succeed in the game. In other words, the game forces the player to behave in certain ways in order to win the game. Players can thusly give themselves permission to do things that would be unacceptable in the non-play/non-digital world: the digital play world demands it of the player. The game *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* (DOA) is an excellent example of this. DOA bills itself as a game for the macho male. The back story is that the player represents a playboy who arrives on a desert island in his private jet. The island is populated only by delectably shaped women in the tiniest of bikinis who play beach volleyball. The eye of the camera is focused intently on the breasts and buttocks of these women, and the computer animations of these body parts is one of the big selling points of the game. The actual game play is curious, however, given the apparent nature of the game. In order to succeed, the player has to select a female, bikini-clad avatar. S/he then has to make friends with one of the computer-controlled girls so that she will agree to be on the player's team (volleyball teams are two per side). In order to create this friendship, the player has to go to the bikini store and purchase bathing suits, bags, and other accessories for their potential teammate. The intended recipient of these gifts may or may not choose to accept them, and her decision is based in part on whether or not the items match each other or are aesthetically pleasing to her. Thus the player of the game, although initially cast in the role of voyeuristic male surrounded by a harem of attractive females, must actually engage in a number of traditionally female activities in order to win, or even play, the game. The player has to be 'nice' to female characters, go shopping, plan gifts, choose items based on aesthetic appeal, and dress up their own female avatar body so that other females will be willing to play volleyball with them. The game thus enables several kinds of transgressive behaviors at the same time. A male player gets to be a non-politically correct playboy with a bevy of women at his disposal, and he also can play dress-up, play with dolls, and go shopping for bikinis – all without exposing himself to any of the penalties that he would almost certainly accrue if he attempted to engage in these behaviors in his 'real' life.

Another excuse for taboo breaking in digital game environments is strategic advantage. In the massively multiplayer online game *Everquest*, for example, Nick Yee found that 84% of players are male, but 48% of them play as female avatars (Yee, 2001). This is not necessarily because the male player wishes to embody the female in a game world, but rather because there are significant strategic advantages to being female in many game worlds under certain circumstances (Castronova, 2003). Online multiplayer worlds such as *Everquest* and *Lineage*, for example, are complicated to enter and learn. These game environments are populated principally by other characters that are controlled by human beings as opposed to computer-generated characters. A newly spawned character may be prey for malicious players who enjoy tricking and/or killing 'newbies', or can be treated kindly by members of guilds who are looking for new members to fill their ranks (Steinkuehler, 2004). Newbies often have to ask others for help in order to survive. Males will often play female avatars because they know that they are more likely to be helped as a female avatar than as a male (Brathwaite, 2006). It can be easier to make friends, form attachments, and explore complex worlds as a female than as a male. Experienced players capitalize on this as a strategic ploy. They may operate several avatars at a time, constituting both sexes, so as to reap the perceived benefits of certain social configurations under different conditions (Slagle, 2006). This is interesting because those who are helping female avatars are aware of the fact that there is no guarantee that the 'real' human behind the avatar is female, but they tend to treat the female avatar differently anyway (Yee, 2004). Females

routinely use male avatars/names as a way of protecting themselves from unwanted sexual advances online, but this is not transgressive role-play. It is often a strategic necessity (Slimmer, 2007).

Gender Relationships

The representations of females in digitally mediated worlds tend, in general, to be representations of stereotypical male fantasies of women (Miller & Summers, 2007). In many games, female characters are prizes, accessories, or victims to be rescued (Heintz-Knowles, 2001). This representation of women is – in and of itself – transgressive to some degree, in that these digital simulations of the female bear little resemblance to actual women in 'real' life. Fantasy females in game worlds can be manipulated without complaint or charges of sexual harassment. Players manipulate these representations in ways that are specifically about establishing power relationships between genders.[iii] Lara Croft was touted as an example of a depiction of a powerful female character when *Tomb Raider* was first released, although this impression was tempered by the fact that she had physical measurements unattainable by any human female, and the game's camera angles tend to depict her sexually. Players quickly devised modifications or patches which allowed them to play the game with Lara wearing transparent clothing or nothing at all (Schleiner, 1998). This very effectively strips her of any authority and renders her as a sexual object of the male gaze. With the exception of Super Mario 2, early Mario games, depicted the only female character as a princess who must be rescued. In more recent spin-offs of the Mario series it is possible to play as a female avatar, Princess Peach. She exhibits all the stereotypes of a blond, helpless princess and visibly pouts when she loses. When a male player chooses to play as the Princess, he is engaging in cross gender play and reinforcing female gender stereotypes at the same time.

In *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, almost all of the women depicted in the game world are either prostitutes or strippers. When Tommy has sex with a prostitute, his health points go up and his money points go down. He can beat the prostitute to death or shoot her after the sexual act, and retrieve all of his money in addition to any money that she had in her purse. He can also get money from strippers this way. The game thus specifically rewards violence against women in ways that it doesn't reward violence against men. Although male characters in the game can be killed or run over or harmed in numerous other ways, they are never subjugated to any 'pre-designed' sexual violence. This gender dominance is also scripted into the random conversations that occur when Tommy interacts with women during game play. If he hits a woman, for example, she may reply, "I like it rough". It is not legal or sanctioned by cultural norms for males to behave in this way outside of a game world. These scenarios provide the player with the thrill of engaging in taboo behavior, which permits them to overtly physically and emotionally dominate females. It allows male players to occupy a position of power in gender relationships.

Simulated Heterosexual Sex

Over the past few years, more sexual content has appeared in commercial game play, and more game companies are seeking to capitalize on the commercial possibilities of sex games (Adams, 2000). In the past, this was usually made possible via non-authorized intervention. Some players have hacked *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* so the game can be played with the girls

completely naked, for example, but overt-sexuality has become part of official game play. The use of game worlds to create and reproduce beautiful, passive, and materialistic female stereotypes approaches interactive pornography in some recent games. In these games the avatar is always male and he succeeds in the game by tricking or convincing the computer-controlled female characters in the game into having sex with him. In *Ganguro Girl*, the player has to earn money, accumulate 'charm' points (by going to a bar and drinking), and visit a girl repeatedly before she will agree to spend time with him. After the player has devoted a lot of time and energy towards expressing interest in her, she allows him to buy her expensive gifts (with his hard-earned game currency), take her dancing and to bars, and then finally to the 'Love Hotel'. The culmination of the game is a simulated sex act in which the player controls the depth of penetration by how hard the player manipulates particular analog controls (Kobashikawa, 2004).

Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude allows the player to embody Larry, a small, dorky, socially inept male avatar who finds himself on a college campus and has to convince a large number of tall, beautiful, incredibly well-endowed female avatars to have sex with him. Playboy's game (*Playboy: The Mansion*) is essentially the same idea, but the avatar resides in a simulation of Hugh Hefner's mansion. A technologically simpler Flash game, *Orgasm Girl*, appears to have a slightly pro-female twist in that the stated goal of the game is to bring the female avatar to orgasm. Strangely though, the goal is to accomplish this without waking her up. Given that sleeping orgasms are not something many females pursue, we can only assume that the real pleasure this game provides is the voyeuristic pleasure of a male playing with an utterly passive female doll. Perhaps the most infamous example of simulated heterosexual sex in a video game is the 'Hot Coffee' mod that was hidden in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. One example of the mod's 'revealed' acts include a woman on her hands and knees being penetrated from behind by a black male.

These games are transgressive in that they allow the male player to depict and treat women exclusively as sex objects. Playing the game allows the player to experience a world in which he can get the girl at any time, over and over again, as long as the conditions (which often emphasize female passivity, materialism, and stupidity) of the game are met. Games such as these do offer some opportunities for transgressive female play, in that a female player could play as a male and manipulate passive females. As far as I know there are no publicly available games which allow female avatars to manipulate male characters in sexual simulations.

In "Ways of Seeing", Berger suggests that the manipulative quality of a representation can be illustrated by imagining it with the gender roles reversed (1972). The sole female avatar in *Ninja Gaiden (Xbox)*, for example, has to fight in armor that exposes very vulnerable parts of female anatomy, including enormous breasts. Reversing the representation onto a male avatar would require him to fight with an enormous, semi-exposed erection that he would have to protect from attackers. Such a game has yet to appear.

Racial 'Passing'

Another choice that players can make when defining an avatar is that of race. Race is an extremely sensitive topic in Western culture. In most games, race is presented simply as an option, like hair color, which can be used by the player to personalize and render unique a given avatar. The act of reducing race to simply one of many options is itself transgressive. In doing so, the designer willfully ignores the enormous implications of racial disparity in the 'real' world. Each race has its own limitations, but these do not reflect the realities of race outside of the game. The player selects a racial avatar and then tries to 'pass' as that race. As Nakamura, among others, has pointed out, this is a kind of identity tourism which renders banal an issue which is extremely politically charged (Nakamura, 1995). Playing at being a member of another race outside of digital games is an extremely politically charged activity. When white men really do appear in blackface, the backlash is enormous (Ted Danson at the Friar's Club in 1993 and Prince Harry in 2005, for example). Digital games allow players to experience this taboo activity and enjoy it.

The *Grand Theft Auto* games play very deftly with the transgressive nature of violating 'politically correct' racial interactions. In *Vice City*, the protagonist Tommy is a white male in an urban ghetto full of gangs of different ethnicities. Tommy has access to an enormous range of weapons, and he struts through this environment with his weapons and vehicles. The game constructs a fantasy in which a white man is extremely powerful in a simulated world full of dangerous coloured people. The avatar engages in activities which the player would not, in 'real' life, and much of the game involves rewarding the player for breaking the 'real' world rules (stealing cars, running over pedestrians, breaking things, and so forth). The game has a very powerful racially transgressive charge because of the racial history of the United States, in which the game environment is situated. Given the history of slavery, racist mobs lynching and burning blacks following emancipation, and well-documented cases of racial profiling and hate crimes in the present, the representation of violence by whites against darker-skinned people is extremely provocative.[iv]

Race is also a factor in several sex-based games. In the *Ganguro Girl* game, for example, the females are all Asian and the player can only play as a white male. In *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* and *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude,* the only avatar choice for the player is a white male while represented females are diverse in race and skin color.

Killing

Most human cultures have strong cultural taboos against killing other humans. In 'real' life, killing is sanctioned only under certain conditions and with specific stipulations. The police, members of the armed forces, and execution teams in U.S. prisons are allowed to kill others in very carefully defined and structured situations. The transgressing of this taboo is certainly part of the appeal of many digitally mediated game worlds. Many analog games that involve simulated killing have rules similar to those governing the police and the military. It is permitted and desirable to kill the enemy, but those on one's own side are not to be killed. They are rather to be defended to the death. Rules of engagement are established and must be followed by all parties involved. Digital killing games started out with strictures of this kind, but have evolved in

many different directions. A big problem in online *Counterstrike*, for example, is friendly fire. Some players enjoy killing members of their own team. Over time, the game has evolved to make it difficult for players to do this ('kick vote' protocols that boot rogue players off the server), but it is still possible to play in this way for a while.

Shooting is so normative in many games that they are defined by genre as 'first-person shooters' or 'third-person shooters', depending on the game's camera perspective. A good strategy in many computer games is simply to fire at anything that moves. Shooting things is, in fact, the only way to proceed in many games (although not necessarily a standard designed interaction across FPSs). Shooting open doors eliminates annoyances and allows for movement through levels. Frequently players must spend time determining which weapons are available to them, and how to best utilize them. The complexity of playing the game lies in mastering the technology and the complexities of the game reward structure. Shooting is simply a means of achieving these goals.

Assassination: JFK and *Manhunt*

Games must push boundaries to make killing feel transgressive. The JFK assassination game touts itself as a simulation more than a game. The stated goal is to 'prove' that the assassin acted alone and that the three shots were, in fact, fired by one man.[v] Since the designers have constructed the simulation so that this is possible, the player has the task of reproducing the successful assassination within the constructs of the game. Of course, the stated logic of the game is ridiculous. Computer technology makes it possible to create any kind of scenario; thus it is very simple to create a simulation in which it is possible to kill JFK with three shots. It would be equally easy to create a simulation in which it were *not* possible, but this would not prove that JFK was not shot by one man. Actually hitting JFK in the moving vehicle turns out to be very difficult to do, but the setup of the game promises that the goal is, in fact, attainable. The transgressive charge in this game comes from the link between the game and the 'real' referent point. The act of imagining the assassination of a respected figure within play is taboo, which both attracts and repels players and critics. There are other games which provide a much more immersive experience of assassination.

Rockstar Games released the game *Manhunt* in 2003. *Manhunt* manipulates several taboo boundaries on several different levels to ratchet up players' feelings of stress and immersion. The back story of *Manhunt* is that a reality TV show producer wants to film a series of actual murders. The player's role in the game is to find people and kill them. The avatar is male. He has to do this rather differently from killings in most shooter games. While the goal is still to find and kill another person, the player has to do so with the consciousness that he is being watched by the producer at all times. The producer's disembodied voice gives suggestions as the player navigates the environment. The game's environments and interface are designed to create intense feelings of stress and fear. The scenes include dark, deserted warehouses, urban ghettos, and slaughterhouses. When a potential victim appears in the world, the player can hear his heartbeat, his breathing, and his movements. The overall experience is one of heightened physical intimacy with an invisible person. As soon as the potential victim appears in the player's visual field, he must be killed. Choices have to be made about which killing technique to use. The producer wants the player to kill in a maximally dramatic way to heighten the experience for the viewing

public. Thus the weapons are typically not those which kill from a distance. The player can choose between putting a plastic bag over the victim's head, stabbing him with a shard of glass, or throttling him (among many other options). Each of these methods is enhanced by extremely realistic graphics (lips stretched in a grimace under the plastic, blood, damaged body parts), sounds (groans, gasps, the snapping of bones) and verbal expressions of panic and dismay. After each kill, the player has the option of re-living the experience through the film that the producer made of the event from different perspectives, and with the producer's feedback.

The game thus defies cultural norms in many ways. Unlike the relatively impersonal means of representing simulated killing in most games – the player's weapon firing away at featureless attacking hordes—the killing in *Manhunt* is individual, specific, and disturbingly intimate. The hunt sequences eerily evoke film sex scenes due to the dim lighting, the emphasis on finding and grasping the other, and the extreme realism of the bodily noises of the victim. The player is simultaneously doing a bad thing and watching it through the eyes of the producer, so there is an added element of voyeurism as well as the knowledge that the misdeed has been 'captured' on film. The character of the producer adds yet another layer to the transgressive nature of the game. He embodies a kind of authority who is telling the player what to do. He forces the player to transgress because that is the only way to succeed in the game. He also functions as a witness to the transgression, and is himself a transgressor because he is responsible for the entire scenario. On one level this exculpates the player – he can blame authority – but the player is always aware of the fact that he has chosen to play the game, thus re-placing the blame (and the pleasure) for the transgression solidly upon himself. Part of the genius of Rockstar Games is their sophisticated parodic representations of 'real' life and the ways that they integrate these parodies into compelling game play. *Manhunt* parodies the tawdriness of reality TV in general, and the way that it incites participants into performing ever more dramatic forms of misbehavior so that the audience can enjoy its disapproval of them to the same degree. The game pushes the concept to its farthest limit and allows the player to take on all the roles (participant, appreciative audience, critical audience, and inciter) at the same time. This game is an example of the complex nature of the games produced by Rockstar and one reason why they are so enormously successful.

Conclusions

Many of the games discussed in this paper enable players to simulate behavior that violates cultural norms. They allow players to be 'bad' in many ways that are severely punished in the real world. Such play provides players with feelings of agency and power which may be in stark contrast to the feelings they experience outside of game worlds.

The types of transgression that appear in the computer games cited above are transgressions which serve to re-establish social order (Redmon, 2003; Williams, 2007). As one of my students pointed out, "*Grand Theft Auto* is only fun because you know that everything Tommy is doing is *bad*. If you have no sense of morality, the game is meaningless". By permitting players to engage in a range of fantasy worlds in which women are beautiful, sexually available, passive and powerless, people of color are coarse, aggressive, and dangerous, and players can become adept at any and every form of weaponry and violence, computer games re-establish a 'real' world in which these things are *not* true (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). This is

not to say that many of these representations are not profoundly troubling. Misogynist, racist, and anti-social behaviors are represented in extremely raw and crude immersive scenarios. Allowing players to work through these fantasies may be a healthy form of engagement with them. Or it may serve to reinforce them. What is perhaps most problematic is that the kinds of transgressions available in these worlds appear to be of limited interest to female game players because they are almost entirely based on behaviors that are cultural taboos for males. Many of the explicitly 'girl games' (for example, *Barbie* games, *Purple Moon* games, or *Cosmopolitan Makeover*) currently on the market simply perpetuate existing hetero-normative cultural stereotypes of what it means to be female.

Alternatives have been proposed. Authors such as de Castell and Bryson have suggested games that offer different sorts of play experiences (1998), and Shelley and Pamela Jackson encourage players to do unusual things with totems of female normalcy.[vi] It would be interesting to see the game industry elicit more of such scenarios and make them playable in fully developed games.

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[i] Whether or not the player chooses to respect the boundary is a question fruitfully explored in Consalvo's book (2007).

[ii] This is, of course, not true for uncontained transgression such as rioting or revolution, which are aimed at complete destruction of the social order.

[iii] There are exceptions to these examples, in particular where the female character is the protagonist and not depicted as a highly sexualized being. Samus in *Metroid Prime*, Jade in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and

the female warriors in the *Final Fantasy* series are good examples.

[iv] There have been formal protests about the content in the game from specific groups. A group of Haitians filed a lawsuit in response to the line, "Kill all the Haitians!" uttered during a gang war in the game (Pappas, 2003).

[v] More information on the JFK game can be found at http://www.jfk-reloaded.com/start/

[vi] http://www.ineradicablestain.com/dollgames