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RESEARCH STATEMENT

Until recently, video games were considered primarily masculine forms of popular culture—created by and for men. But in recent years an influx of video games (such as *Wii Fit*, *Brain Age*, and *Diner Dash*) have been marketed to a demographic previously ignored by the gaming industry: adult women. In my dissertation *A License to Play: Women, Productivity, and Video Games,* I explore how video games broach discussions on larger issues about gender and play. By doing textual analysis of several video games and advertisements, I illustrate how games often reify older stereotypes of femininity. These games privilege productivity over leisure by using non-playful themes such as domestic chores, beauty, and family nurturing. I have already begun adapting my research findings into a book and, at the same time, I am working towards several other related book-length projects.

While researching my dissertation, I learned that there is a gap between how I understood video games aimed at women demographics, and how these games are actually perceived and played by their core audiences. My second book project will tackle many of the issues that exceed the boundaries of my dissertation research. This work will involve interviewing and observing specific game communities, as well as creating women's gaming circles. The gaming circles will be structured much like book clubs, constructing a space where women can talk about video games and their leisure activities comfortably. Similarly, I have begun working with games studies colleagues from several universities that are interested in doing larger-scale collaborative research on casual gaming communities. In January 2008 I submitted a proposal for a National Science Foundation grant that involved some of these research initiatives. While I did not get this grant, the project was well-received and got "excellent" reviews by the NSF committee, and I was strongly encouraged to reapply. After completing my dissertation, I plan to submit a more developed proposal to get a Faculty Career Development Grant through the NSF, as a means to fund some of these projects.

In addition to my academic book I am currently writing proposals for an industry book on women and video games. The research that I have done playfully involves both theory and practice, which can serve both academia and industry. My recent experience working as a game designer at 1st Playable Productions has added a new aspect to my research contributions. In understanding how games are made I am better able to contribute to the academic discussions about designs and processes that help to construct gender in video games. This industry perspective has enhanced my academic perspective, and I now have a better understanding of audiences, design, and game companies as a whole. By maintaining a holistic (and playful) view of how video games are designed and marketed, I will continue to contribute to academic research on play as it evolves in new media spaces.