Gender Issues in Games
Administrivia

- Noah will be back on Friday

- Multi-Game Analysis papers due in section
  - Questions? Ask your TA
Warning

Alert! Alert! Stereotypes Ahead!
Gender Issues

- Gender Bias
- Objectification
Gender Bias - Males

- Violence / Gore
- All male avatars
- Realistic graphics
- Fantastical setting
- Color scheme
- Game mastery
Gender Bias
Gender Bias

- Mini-games
- Cute graphics
- Real-life activity
- Color scheme
- Avatar is not identified as either gender
- Game mastery
Gender Bias
Gender Bias

- Levels
- Graphics
- Customization
- Color Scheme
- Avatar is not identified as either gender
Gender Bias

- **Chess for Girls!** - Saturday Night Live Skit
- Boys do play more chess than girls
  - Should we be worried that girls don’t play as often?
  - Chess teaches important cognitive skills

- Why don’t girls play more chess?
  - Corollary: How can we get them to play more often?

- Game designers making games for girls and women
  - Similar approach as video
Gender Differences

- Consequences of failure
  - Males: Harsh consequences
    - Die, restart, lose
  - Females: Softer consequences
    - cannot continue until pass challenge, no restarting

- Conflict
  - Males: Vanquish
    - Direct confrontation, killing, physical challenge
  - Females: Compromise
    - Puzzles, negotiation, mental challenge
Gender Bias

- **Competition**
  - **Males**: Direct competition
    - Versus each other, versus the game
  - **Females**: Indirect competition
    - Against previous best, achievements

- **Customization**
  - **Males**: Integrated
    - Better weapons, armor, better at the game
  - **Females**: Non-integrated
    - Individuality
Gender Similarities

- Challenge
  - Human nature
  - Feeling of achievement, progression
Objectification

- **Women**
  - Hyper-sexuality
    - Lara Croft - embossing
    - RPG armor
  - Boob physics
  - Gender Roles
    - Save the princess
Objectification
Objectification

- Men
  - It happens to them, too
Making gender-inclusive games

- Perform studies of your target audience
  - Do not assume you already know this audience
  - Correct skill set for this work is a sociology or anthropology background

- Test final game with target audience
  - Must build time into your schedule for this
Gender-Inclusive Game Design

- Do not alienate your audience
  - “Hyper-sexualization” of women

- Design with the expanded audience in mind
  - Multiple ways of solving a problem
  - Engaging story to make play worthwhile
  - Options for both direct and indirect conflict
Interested in more?

- *Gender-Inclusive Game Design*
  - Sheri Graner Ray. 2004

- *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*
  - Cassell and Jenkins. 2000

- *Beyond Barbie & Mortal Kombat*
  - Kafai, Heeter, Denner, and Sun. 2008