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Me? A Gamer?

When I sat down to revisit, and virtually revamp, my first draft I found myself identifying much of it as a “shitty first draft”. Often times I do not construct a whole first draft and then go back and create a second from it. Many times I just work and work at the first draft until I consider it well done. I am thankful that this time I did. As Fieldwork said, I now know it is ok to have a not-so-great first draft, because that is all it is, a rough draft; it is an advantage to have this to work from and improve on, which results in a much better final draft than it otherwise would have been.

When thumbing through the different notes I have taken along with all the conclusions I have drawn from them, I found one of the most beneficial aspect of them to be the three questions Fieldwork suggested I ask myself after every field visit. “What surprised me?” “What intrigued me?” “What disturbed me?” Of course I did find that I had the same answers to these questions more than once, but that along with all the other different responses I gave each time were helpful in determining just what it is I have gained from this experience. Although many different aspects and documents help identify how my view, opinions, and ideas changed through every step of the way.

More than once I found myself responding to the three questions with the same answers. From the beginning to the end, or at least now, my overall opinion of this group of guys, and each of them individually, has not changed a great deal. This is very likely due to the fact that I knew most of them on a personal level before I started observing their gaming habits, and I do not feel like what I have learned so far this semester affects them overall as a person. However, there are a few things that have changed since the beginning of the semester such as my knowledge of not only the game they play, but also the whole concept, the system, and technology, as well as my respect

and acceptance how they play and how much they play. Because of my gain in knowledge I have become much more understanding.

When taking note of the different aspects of what surprised me in my field notes I found a few different responses that were most useful and helping to understand “so what”. The number one characteristic that surprised me first and foremost was the intensity. After the very first visit this is what I said I was most surprised by. The guys play so intensely and while there is laughing and joking going on throughout the process, it is a very serious situation. Obviously, all gamers play because they enjoy it and it is fun for them, but it is also extremely addicting and it is taken very seriously. I would compare the way these guys look at gaming to how an athlete looks at his sport. A person does it because they enjoy it, but to be successful, which is the main goal, it has to be worked at and taken seriously.

This intensity goes hand and hand with another detail that shocked me, but only a little. I know these gentlemen are college students who probably do not have the cleanest mouths, which I had previously witnessed first hand, but it is almost as if once they strap on that headset and put the controller in their hands they become a different person. I hear the most vulgar language, particularly from one player, Subject One, I have ever heard from him. Due to this intensity and how seriously he plays this game he becomes very excited and gets extremely worked up over every instance. If a spectacular kill is made that is beneficial for him it is very possible to find him jumping for joy, literally. On the other hand, if he or a teammate is killed his becomes almost unbelievably outraged and this is where the extremely obscene and vulgar comments pour out of his mouth like he cannot hold them back.

Another aspect that surprised me very much so was the technology. Of course I was aware that there is the capability to play games on the internet on a computer with someone around the world, but I had no idea that it could be hooked up to a system to the television and play with, or against someone half way around the world. Players can wear headsets and talk to one another.

They can communicate privately to their teammates to plot their next move against their opponents or they can talk to everyone and “trash talk” to the other players, while listening to their responses.

My final shocking aspect worth noting is one that I wrote about only one time. On a visit about a month and a half ago I encountered what has shocked me the most throughout this whole experience: cleanliness. Normally, Subject Two and Subject Three’s room has a disturbing odor with at least one old and stale food item, along with many pairs of shoes randomly lying on the floor. The room is clutter filled from Subject Three’s papers on his desk, to his the pile of clothes on his bed, to the open bag chips. The only detail that I can constantly count on to be clean and organized is Subject Two’s desk area. To my utter surprise when I entered the room on this particular day I was pleasantly surprised that a laundry fresh aroma was seeping from the room. I entered to find nothing but a pair of shoes neatly lying on the floor, like that is where they belong along with the rug. The closet doors were shut and every little thing finally had a place where it belonged, and it was there. This was a rare sighting, and a one time deal. I made a comment on how impressed I was by the neatness and they responded that when they returned from break they wanted to get a fresh start, and decided they better clean it before the semester started to get difficult. I came to the conclusion that Subject Two was responsible for most of the cleaning, although most of the mess was likely Subject Three’s. It is obvious that because I only made note of the cleanliness once it did not last long and the room was back to disaster mode on my next visit less than a week later. Noting how astonished I was at a clean room to me, portrays just what state this room is usually in and helps me to understand this culture a little more. I felt like this was a defining factor of understanding my once was subculture.

The second question I drew conclusions after every visit about was “What intrigued me?”. After the initial visit I said that the intensity surprised me. I also said the intensity intrigued me. The fact that they took this game so serious is what made the experience so interesting to me, and it even

became entertaining. I would find myself laughing at the crazy comments they would be making in their gaming lingo that I at that point had no understanding of. The second aspect I noted that intrigued me was the game itself. Not only do I now know I am not doing my project on simply gaming, but gaming in the world of Halo 2. This is the only game that is ever played while I observe, but I found myself intrigued by it, sadly. It was almost like watching a television show or a movie. I would be sitting on the edge of my seat waiting for what was about to happen next. I find myself anxiously waiting to see who will be killed or what the next level was. The game provides a plot line to follow, and even the boys admit the plot is rather impressive.

Finally, I felt as if there were a few aspects that I stated disturbed me to be most beneficial in understanding just what I have gained from this experience. As I said after my first visit the intensity was what shocked and intrigued me. The intensity was also what disturbed me after the first visit. The same aspect satisfied all three questions following visit number one. It was disturbing to me how intensely and serious these guys took this game. People tell athletes, "It is just a game," but this video game isn't even a competition people are watching. The amount of care these guys were putting into this one game is outrageous. I just could not understand just how they could be so serious about pushing buttons and why winning was so important. I now can understand and even respect why they are so intense about this game. Never could I or would I care so much about it, but throughout the semester their addiction has proved to me how and why it happens.

Another detail that I just had to mention that was disturbing to me was the constant, undying odor. Only was there one visit, when I noted that cleanliness that shocked me, has there not been an unpleasant aroma leaking from the room. Initially walking into the room I wonder how they can stand to live in there, but then what becomes even more disturbing is that by the time I leave I no longer notice the stench. It is one of those odors that reek when you first enter, but after spending enough time in the area become accustomed to it. I therefore understand how they have just gotten

used to it. The best way to describe the stench is like the combination of a dirty, sweaty gym shock with rotten food.

The final detail I responded to as disturbing was the investment these competitors has in this game. It is a video game....a video game. That is what I see it is, and so do these guys, but a video game is much more to them than it is me. If they would spend half the time they do playing working on homework I could guarantee A's and B's. They care about this game so much, utilize so much energy for it, and occupy an unbelievable amount of time. To me this was notably disturbing because it is occupying such a large sector of their life and it is only a video game. Yet, I know the three guys I observe most often, because they play the most, have good grades. This is not only baffling but disturbing to me that they are smart enough that they can spend twice as much time gaming as studying and still earn good grades. It frustrates me.

One final work that has greatly helped me in better understanding my subculture was the interview I conducted with Subject Two and Subject One. Although I usually carry on a conversation and get a few questions answered throughout every field visit, the interview was an opportunity to get a detailed response to all those questions I was not sure about. I had been able to draw conclusions about many different conceptions I originally had, but they informed me about the technology, the addiction, and the lingo, which was the hardest aspect for me to attempt to pick up on.

I feel as if I have become much more educated on gaming, and particularly Halo 2 gaming. I think the field notes have been most helpful for me to look back upon to realize just how my knowledge has grown since the beginning of the semester. I feel like I now see gaming as an acceptable and respectable pastime, whereas before I felt it was a waste of time, and the few times I have played I have even found myself enjoying it and doing some trash talking. If I spend enough time practicing I could possibly also become addicted and perhaps a gamer myself, which is scary!