Executive Summary

—Understanding 'Everquest'—

I. Situating our Issue: The Unbelievable & 'Everquest'

This paper will use as its starting point various press releases regarding cases of

murder, suicide, and the generally hard-to-believe around 'Everquest'—in this sense,

it will approach the issue through the venue(s) through which we always first

encounter the issues the game raises.   The particular goals of this section are to: (1)

provide an accessible point of entry into the topic, (2) ground what will otherwise be

a more theoretical or disembodied discussion, and (3) establish useful points of

reference / anecdotes that make it perfectly clear what personal troubles – addictions

(?) – and concerns are stemming from the game. These cases are meant to be

foundational and their review will be followed by a (1) more general introduction to

the topic, (2) a summary of where the discussion will be headed / a review of sections

II-V, and (3) our thesis statement (*the sort of problems and discussions we see*

surfacing around 'Everquest' are one borne of a distinctly on-line phenomenon, one

*which holds numerous theoretical, cultural, and legal implication*s). Works cited

here will include: Becker D (2002), Brown J (2000), Miller SA (2002), Karp D

(2001), as well as potentially excerpts from other works below.

II. Approaching 'Everquest' after 'Columbine'—the Visibility of Digital Violence

In establishing what we see revolving around 'Everquest' (and similar games, though

we restrict ourselves to 'Everquest')—such as particular social-psychological

problems, deaths, widespread social concern, and a specific academic discourse—as

distinct in nature from what we see emerging from other types of games (ones which

are single-player or even online but non-persistent), it is naturally necessary to **briefly** review these other types of games. This section will thus (1) detail how most discussion of such 'other' games—much of it brought to the fore by the Columbine school shooting—is caught up in questions of child/developmental psychological and desensitization. This section then (2) describes how what we are looking at in 'Everquest' is rather different: it is much more of an adult problem, and what we are dealing with is more specifically a kind of addition, one which is clearly descendant from the fact that the title has certain peculiarities—to be detailed here briefly and more fully in the later section—that are enabled by online networking. Works to be cited here will include: Anderson CA & Bushman BJ (2001), Dill KE & Dill JC (1998), United States Senate (2000), Griffiths MD, Davies MNO & Chappell D (2003), Spouses Against EverQuest "It's a Name" (2000), On-Line Gamers Anonymous [On-line].

III. Communal Interaction

This section looks to develop more fully just how 'Everquest' is thought to be addictive. Expressly, however, it aims to understand just what sort of community is persistent within the game space. This section will be the focus of the paper and it will detail primarily the sense and type of community the game constructs (through its rules, presentation, structures). This section will also discuss questions of masquerade or 'gender-bending,' temporality (*What does it mean to play a game whose time mirrors our own? What role does time play in the game?*), and narration / expression (*What political, racial, national stories do the game or its structures narrate? How are these participated in? To what end(s)?*). This discussion will end

suggesting the various ways in which (1) narration, (2) temporality, (3) masquerade, and –primarily – (4) community may incite dependency. This section will draw equally from psychological, sociological, and critical / theoretical texts – potentially using charts and surveys from Yee N (2006). Works cited here will include: Yee N (2006), Kogutt T, Jones S & Wu E (2001), Klastrup L (2002), Hines MJ, Jr (2003), Hayot E & Wesp E (2004).

IV. Theoretical and Legal Implications

This last full section will look at the ways in which the particularities of 'Everquest' and the sorts of interaction / imagination it allow for may participate in creating new subjectivities. The potentials such subject(ivites) hold for global and social interaction will be discussed, as will legal problems associated with the game – *How is the law supposed to interpret 'Everquest?' Is there viability in class-action lawsuits?* Works cited here will include: Nebolsky C, Yee NK, Petrushin VA & Gershman AV (2003), jkdove & Thompson J (2005), Jesper J (2002), Jenkins H (2002), Hayot E & Wesp E (2004), Au WJ. (2002).

V. Review & Conclusion

This last section will review or summarize what has been reviewed / achieved during the course of the discussion. It will also make more critical moves, though precisely what these will be are difficult to say at this point. Still, it is safe to say this section will attempt to (1) integrate strains of understanding that have been compartmentalized, (2) place certain understandings into a productive crisis, and (3) present certain areas as particularly demanding of further elaboration.

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