

2018

The Social Aspects of the Gaming Community at Parkland College

Katherine Wennerdahl

Parkland College

Recommended Citation

Wennerdahl, Katherine, "The Social Aspects of the Gaming Community at Parkland College" (2018). *A with Honors Projects*. 222.
<https://spark.parkland.edu/ah/222>

Open access to this Essay is brought to you by Parkland College's institutional repository, [SPARK: Scholarship at Parkland](#). For more information, please contact spark@parkland.edu.

Ethnographic Paper: Gaming and Friend Groups at Parkland

Gaming can have the power to shape lives and relationships, even forming a creative outlet for players become someone they could never be in the real world. One group demonstrates this power of gaming and their social meetings take place right here at Parkland College. The ethnography project completed in my group dealt with the social aspects of the gaming community at Parkland College. Specifically, we observed, interviewed, and analyzed a group of friends that play games such as Dungeons and Dragons or Magic in the U Wing cafeteria. We initially desired to complete our project on how the student body of Parkland made friends on campus. However, we all noticed this one strong friend group that struck our interest. We changed our topic to them and began our research. We conducted observations and interviewed three members of the group. Additionally, we interviewed Deane Geiken, the Parkland Radio Director and self-proclaimed gaming geek who helps run the Board Game Club at Parkland.

Reflecting on my contribution to our findings and overall project, I can state that I participated in observations and creating a relationship between our findings' significance to Parkland and a broader perspective in the world. For my positionality on the topic, I was at first driven by my curiosity. The group was established even while my brother attended Parkland three years ago. I desired to know how they all became friends and the importance the group holds in their lives. However, I focused on taking bias out of the picture while conducting my observations. I learned from the unit one lecture in class that it is crucial to keep bias out of research in order to have accurate findings. Similarly, I am a gamer myself. While this helped me have a better understanding of how these friends may use their group and the games they play to

improve their social life, I did not want to make any assumptions or conclusions before we even gather our findings.

To collect our findings, we used the ethnographic method. From our observations, we noted that there were mostly boys in the group, but girls were still members. A group often played a certain game while other members would come and go. They all interact kindly with each other while still joking around like friends do. Compared to others in the cafeteria who were alone or talking quietly in a small group, the friend group we observed spoke louder. Everyone appeared to be highly engaged in the game, Munchkin, and laughed as they played. We interviewed three members of the friend group: Trevor and Greg (who are twins who attend Parkland) and Kenna (their older sister who drives them to school and does not attend Parkland anymore). From the interview with Greg, we discovered that he had other friends, but their interactions took place online through the Xbox gaming network. He has never met any of them in person, but values them as friends online. Trevor's interview revealed that when he was in high school, he struggled to make connections with his peers and make friends. Even, though he plays games online, he does not talk to others in the gaming network like his brother Greg. But, he has become a core member in the U Wing friend group. He told us that he now considers this group to be his core group of friends. During Kenna's interview, we found out that she has known the group for about a year now. While she has other friends, she considers this group to be her main friend group as well. Kenna always attends the group meetings, playing D&D every Friday, and she acknowledged that going to Parkland to play games has inspired her to possibly reenroll. From the interview with Deane Geiken, we found that the games they play in the club are ones that do not interest the friend group, so they decided to play on their own.

Overall, we found that the group felt as though gaming helps them de-stress. The group is open and is always willing to take in new members, making them very supportive and welcoming. While the group admitted being competitive, they still remain positive parts of each other's lives. We found that there were more males involved in the group than females. When thinking about part four of our lectures in class, we can relate common themes in gender to the bigger picture of our findings. Gender can play a major role in the way individuals interact and treat each other. When looking at the group, we found that the girls felt as though they were equal members. In my own experience in the gaming culture, we might assume that as females, we might be excluded from feeling equal. But, this is often not the case, as seen the in the group see observed. We can conclude that this gaming community can help people feel a sense of belonging and even help them overcome social anxieties. People from different backgrounds and cultures can come together in harmony with a shared goal: to play games and create stronger friendships.

Our topic explored how gaming can help facilitate the formation of friend groups and contributes to positive social behaviors. We ultimately found that the friend group is a supportive environment for its members and the games that they play allow them to be whoever they want to be, even further helping them overcome social barriers. If I were to continue my topic research, or encourage other anthropologists to take our topic into consideration, I would like to engage in video ethnography, specifically focusing on the digital age, virtual worlds, and visual anthropology as described in week 16 of our course. Greg discussed in his interview that he was able to make and maintain friendships online without ever interacting with them in person. I would be interested in researching the following questions: how does making friends online compare or contrast to making friends at Parkland, what are the benefits and issues with having

friendships online, and how does gaming in person compare to playing games online? By using a video ethnography, I think that we could create a way to incorporate crucial aspects of the interview in a very real way (Brondo, 472). In an interview on page 472 of our textbook, one anthropologist revealed that using “talk and text” methods do not necessarily enable the researcher to present sound and personal information. By using the video and media methods, I think that our research could and our possible future research could be enhanced by showing the games and the interactions the players/friends have with each other. All in all, I believe that our topic has the potential to explore other areas of friendship, how groups form, and how media plays a role in friendship. As I continue my education and social scene, I reflect upon my own friend group and participation in the gaming community to see how it relates to our findings and conclusions.

Katharine Wennerdahl
Cultural Anthropology
May 7, 2018

Bibliography

Brondo, Keri Vacanti. Cultural Anthropology: Contemporary, Public, and Critical Readings.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Katharine Wennerdahl
Cultural Anthropology
May 7, 2018

Link to our PowerPoint:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BKJKqQvImOKa6zWQ5W005w-VAS4kx_4mF4Ek-5vgSKY/edit?usp=sharing

Regarding Our Podcast: It has been or will be uploaded to Spark via Lauren Anaya.