THE GENDERED IDENTITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN VIDEO ARCADES, GAMES AND THEIR USERS

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the gendered nature of video arcades and video games, in relation to the perceptions and attitudes of the users to them. Video arcades are relatively recent sites of leisure and engagement with electronic games. Very little research (if any) in this area has been done in South Africa.

This research is concerned with both media and gender and draws on a theoretical framework informed by poststructural understandings of gender construction and discourse.

The research also examines users' habits and attitudes to and perceptions of the video arcades, the games and their narrative scenarios, in relation to gendered behaviours.

As a Media Educator, these findings reinforce the researcher's belief in an urgent need for Media Education in South African schools.

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Introduction

Video games and arcades are part of the culture industry and operate as cultural commodities in a competitive market. They form part of the business of entertaining people in the public domain, and are informed by particular aesthetics. They are cultural artifacts in their own right, and reflect and contribute to the shifting cultural values and identities of today's youth. The sociocultural context of these sites and games shapes discourse practices in important ways, and is itself cumulatively shaped by them. As a feminist educator who is involved in Media Education, and as a grandparent of three grandsons, I am interested and concerned in this growing area of entertainment, as I am very aware of the intense fascination which it holds for young people, especially males.

Video arcades and games have been argued to have a gendered identity, and research has been conducted to investigate this (Alloway and Gilbert 1998: 95). Within patriarchal societies, many institutions and practices serve to reinforce patriarchal power relations. These power relations tend to be 'invisible' because they are naturalised. Leisure spaces appear neutral, yet engage masculine desires and pleasures. One such site is the video arcade. Observation and literature indicate that video arcades, video games and their users reflect hegemonic masculinities. The characters in the games are predominantly males (out of twenty in the game *Mortal Kombat 4*, only two are females), and the users of these facilities are mostly males (it is difficult to find one female player to interview). It is therefore my intention to examine the gendered nature of the South African sites

This research and methodology is indebted to that of Alloway and Gilbert who describe their research and findings in their article *Video game culture: Playing with masculinity, violence and pleasure* (Alloway and Gilbert 1998), discussed at some length in the literature survey of this dissertation.

Alloway and Gilbert find that the video game culture in Australia is intensely male-focused, masculinist, competitive, aggressive and violent. The sites are male-dominated, and are sites of hegemonic masculinity. They consider the video gaming culture as 'another contemporary media form that feeds into the culture of violence' (Alloway and Gilbert 1998: 98). They conclude that it is essential to prepare our students for 'critical and reflective analysis of cultural practice' (ibid: 113) by media education, so that they can resist and contest these messages. Conducting similar research in a South African

location enables comparison and contrast, identification and discussion of commonalities and differences between these and Australian contexts, (the latter being the subject of Alloway and Gilbert's research), and first- and third-world countries.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first is theoretically constructed, and also covers a literature review of the video game industry and game users. The second chapter is methodological while the third chapter analyses the findings before reaching conclusions.

In Chapter One, the researcher investigates theories of gender construction and discourse. This is followed by a literature review of the video game industry and its economic implications, positive and negative attitudes to video games, the arcades, games and users, and gender constructions within the video game industry.

In Chapter Two the research methodology is discussed. The researcher first examines media theory and conducts a critical discourse analysis of a typical video game, namely *Mortal Kombat 4*. The methodology and procedure used to investigate video arcades, games and their users is then discussed. This includes a survey of the video game site and the games. Lastly a questionnaire is devised to be administered to a random selection of twelve video game players.

Chapter Three contains the findings made by means of analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, and conclusions reached by the researcher.

Chapter One

Theories of gender construction and discourse, and literature review of the video game industry and users

The intention of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework that will enable a gendered investigation of video sites. In the first instance, I present a theoretical position of gender as a social construction, drawing on theorists such as Connell and Mac an Ghaill, as well as poststructuralist feminist theorists e.g. Weedon, which insist upon the interrelationship of language, subjectivity and discourse in their attempts to understand existing power relations. I also examine discourse theory, particularly that of Foucault and Fairclough. I do this to propose the video arcade as a discursive site that inscribes particular gendered subjects. I then turn to literature on the video game industry, to establish work already done which informs this research. Finally I consider the video game industry in relation to gender construction.

Theories of gender construction

In order to present an argument around the gendered identity of video arcades, I first consider the construction of gender. This research assumes the position of gender as a social construct related to power relations (Connell 1987: 106), which proposes and privileges particular masculine and feminine identities. This position proposes that femininity and masculinity are historically and socially constructed. They are inscribed in social institutions and do not necessarily pre-exist. Children actively develop their sense of self as gendered people by the many messages and practices they encounter. Accordingly, individuals are not passively socialised into a gendered identity, but their choices are constrained by potentially limiting gender boundaries which work at conscious and unconscious levels (Connell 1987: 120).

To understand how the dominant cultures exercise domination over subordinate cultures, the concept of hegemony is used. Hegemony (from the Greek word *hegemonia* meaning leadership), was coined by the Italian Marxist activist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), and refers to the way dominant value systems change through struggle. It describes the process by which consent is obtained, not by force, but as 'a struggle in which the

powerful win the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their own oppression' through 'consensual social practices, social forms and social structures' (McLaren 1989: 171). The subsequent power is secured through a discourse of persuasion. Connell (1987: 99) talks about 'the gender order', meaning the power relations between men and women which have been historically constructed. Connell (1987: 183) identifies power relations in 'hegemonic masculinities' and 'emphasised femininities', centred on 'the global dominance of men over women', as well as over subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is heterosexual and is characterised by power, authority, aggression and technical competence (Connell 1987: 187).

Hegemonic masculinity manifests itself in a patriarchal society such as contemporary western, usually capitalist, societies where patriarchal discourses circulate within institutions and social relationships, reproducing gender ideologies. It is also found in patriarchal African cultures. Patriarchy is described by Arnot and Weiner as 'a single overarching structure of domination between men and women' (1987, cited in Mac an Ghaill 1994: 10). The common exposure or discursive site of all our youth who inhabit video arcades is schooling, therefore it is important to recognise the important role played by schools in establishing, (or reinforcing, depending on the home influence), hegemonic masculinities. School is a microcosm of society, and schools perpetuate male hegemony concomitant with a patriarchal society (Robinson 1992). Mac an Ghaill (1994: 44) describes how management, discipline, rituals and curriculum in schools 'actively produce teacher and student masculine identities'. 'Schools in particular perpetuate the authority structures and discursive practices through which binary patterns of knowing oneself and the world are held intact' (Davies 1995: 9). Connell (1989: 191) also argues that the institutionalised structure of schooling is central to the production of masculine subjectivities, saying that 'indirect effects of streaming and failure, authority pattern, the academic curriculum, and definitions of knowledge' have a stronger influence than direct effects of equity programmes.

The youth found within video arcades have also been influenced by the discourse and discursive practices of the hidden curriculum, not only found in school and classroom systems, but also in the family, the workplace, the state and the media. These are all argued to be agents of hegemonic masculinity, constructing particular forms of gender. Prinsloo (1996: 1) defines the hidden curriculum as 'tacit ways in which knowledge.

identities and behaviours get constructed. Particular knowledges, attitudes and behaviours are actively constructed and naturalised, obscuring the interests vested in them`. These subtle forces result in hegemonic masculinities and emphasised femininities being internalised until they become common-sense beliefs or 'the norm'. According to Connell (1989: 300), the hidden curriculum is more powerful than the explicit curriculum in promoting hegemonic masculinities.

Poststructuralist feminist theories (e.g. Weedon: 1987) emphasise the interrelationship of language, subjectivity and discourse in their attempts to understand existing power relations. This interrelationship can be found in power relations existing within video arcades, games and their users.

Post-structuralist forms of feminism, which draw on post-structuralist theory, argue that neither gender nor race has naturally fixed meaning. Instead, masculinities and femininities are culturally constructed. Our culture offers us a broad spectrum of possible modes of femininities and masculinities. From this range of available modes of subjectivity, individuals combine various elements. Jordan and Weedon (1995) are concerned with showing how all social practices and modes of representation construct gendered subject positions and modes of subjectivity which involve power relations and have material effects. Post-structuralist modern theory highlights ways in which subjectivity is fractured, contradictory and produced within social practices. In a patriarchal society; 'there is no one true reality to which women can have access in order to guarantee feminist politics - 'reality' is only ever accessible in competing versions' (Jordan and Weedon 1995: 203). 'Everything we do signifies compliance or resistance to dominant norms of what it is to be a woman' (Weedon 1987: 87).

Discourse theory

To better understand the gendered nature of video game sites, games and users, I need to analyse video game users, texts and sites in terms of gender discourse. The notion of discourse adopted here is drawn from the work of Michel Foucault. He defined discourse as a group of statements which provide a language for talking about, or a way of representing the knowledge about, a particular topic at a particular historical moment in a particular social situation. In his concept of discourse, Foucault was

concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse as a system of representation. He said that nothing which is meaningful exists outside discourse - things can exist but only take on meaning within discourse. Things are true only within a specific historical context. Knowledge is therefore always historically and culturally specific (Foucault 1972. cited in Hall 1997: 44-47).

Fairclough, a British critical linguist, draws on Foucault's work. Fairclough (1997: 54) defines discourse as a social practice involving all spoken and written language, and including visual images and non-verbal communication. He emphasises that, firstly, language is a mode of action and, secondly, that it is socially and historically situated. socially shaped and shaping. Accordingly, to obtain a balanced view of the two sides of language use, the socially shaped and the socially shaping, we need to explore the tension between these two by using critical discourse analysis.

Discourse is seen as working through language (here conceived of broadly as sets of sign systems, inclusive of electronic games) and social practices in its production of historically situated subjects. The role of language is important in the process of gender construction. Post-structuralist theory (Weedon 1987: 21-27) states that language shapes reality , limits the available ideas and concepts and gives meaning to every aspect of our lives. It is through language that our subjectivity is constructed. 'Ideas and understandings available through language shape our practice in a variety of ways in everyday interactions' (Clarke, M. and C. Page 1997: 25).

The subjectivities of the gendered arcade, games and users are examined in this research. Subjectivity refers to 'conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (Weedon 1987: 32). Janks (1997b: 1) argues that all discourse is positioned to represent (re-present) different versions of the world as legitimate, and describes the power of discourse to construct subjectivity.

Foucault (cited in Hall 1997: 44-51) focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power. and how power operates within an institutional apparatus and its technologies. This approach sees knowledge enmeshed in power relations because this knowledge is used to regulate social conduct. This involves constraint, regulation and disciplining of

practices. He insists that knowledge linked to power not only assumes the authority of the truth, but has the power to make itself true. Therefore, 'There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations' (ibid: 49). He sees the discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth, as, when people believe something to be so, the effects of that belief become 'true'. In this way, Foucault gave representation a historical, practical and worldly context of operation. Foucault has a new concept of power, seeing it as circulating, permeating all levels of social existence, and being not only negative but also productive of subjects. He states that discourse produces the subject and defines the subject-positions to make sense, from which knowledge proceeds.

Video arcades and games are frequently examples of popular cultural sites and texts which reinforce hegemonic gender ideologies by their discursive practices. These connections are analysed in critical discourse analysis.

Literature review of the video game industry, video arcades, games and users

In this review, I shall first cover literature about the video game industry, its arcades and games. I shall then consider literature on the attitudes and concerns related to the industry, and its possible negative and positive effects. I shall then review literature on the subjects and gender within the industry. This literature provides a further motivation for the importance of this research.

The video game industry and its economic implications

Steve Russell, who created the first video game *Space Wars,* did this in order to 'use computers for fun'. Little did he realise the profound impact this would have on the culture of youth around the world! This recent 'entertainment experience has changed the way youth spend their leisure time' (von Feilitzen, 2000: 18). The video and computer game industry has become the fastest growing and most profitable children's entertainment business. In 1998 the corporations that manufacture, design and sell

console game systems, domestic computers, Internet play sites, and gaming arcades earned an estimated $18 billion world-wide (von Feilitzen 2000: 13) [1].

Video games need to be contextualised in relation to the industry. The industry's principal aim is profit-making - to attain the highest possible playing of the games for the lowest possible financial outlay. These sites usually belong to conglomerates with capitalist interests. The Japanese company Nintendo leads the world's video game market. In 1999, the Japanese industry sold over ten million machines for about $2 billion, and one hundred million copies of software for about $5 billion (Sakamoto 2000: 62), including home video games and play stations. This has now been exploited into the marketing of related wallpaper, stickers, posters, magazines, lunchboxes, dolls, cereal boxes and other commercial products. Some games are also linked to other media such as movies e.g. Mortal Kombat, and Internet websites.

Attitudes to video games

Attitudes to video games represent the spectrum of media reception theory, and include both negative and positive responses. The 'moral panic' shown towards video games has been identified as similar to that shown towards television during its early days. I shall first consider literature on negative concerns, then the opinions of advocates of these games.

There has been much publicity about the negative effects of video games. 'In North America, the video game has arrived as the adolescent witch-hunt of the next century' (Kline 2000: 56). Certain recent violent crimes committed by children have been blamed on the playing of violent video games (Sakamoto 2000: 65). Sakamoto, who has done extensive research into the controversy about links between video games and violence in Japan, argues that in these games, players' *own* violence is rewarded (by direct reinforcement), players see violence as an available option, and there is 'ambiguity of borders between reality and fiction'.

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[1] Cecilia von Feilitzen, is an editor for the UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen, situated in Sweden. The Clearinghouse's publication for the year 2000 is titled *Children in the New Media Landscape*, and is concerned with games, pornography and perceptions.

Possible harmful effects listed by von Feilitzen (2000: 17) are acceptance of violence to solve conflicts (e.g. the school shootings in Paducah, Jonesboro and Littleton, USA, in Tabart Alberta, Canada, and as recently as March 2001 in San Diego, USA), desensitisation to violence, increased aggression, addiction, isolation, certain cognitive-emotional effects, and some health issues e.g. epileptic fits, poor posture. Some researchers have suggested that aggression increases with competition. Ask (1996), after experiments with male high school students and the aggressive game *Mortal Kombat III*, concluded that participants 'had an inclination to produce violent moves when there was more competition'. Sakamoto (2000: 65) adds worsening eyesight, social maladjustment and declining academic achievement to the list. The amount of violent content of games, in particular in the action genre, is Christofferson's concern (2000: 27).

There has been concern voiced about the easy access to age-restricted computer games, which have even been tested on under-age children. Carvajal (2000) says the studio tried to justify recruiting children as young as nine to evaluate R-rated movies (for over seventeen-year-olds) by saying, 'Children of today are more sophisticated'. She cites the age-restricted video game Turok as barred from sale to under-seventeen-year-olds, although the marketers admit that their target audience is males from nine to thirty-four. In addition, children as young as four are exposed to this game's toy tie-ins and television advertising.

The American educational theorist Henri Giroux (1995) is concerned that violence is not merely a function of power, but is deeply related to how forms of self and social agency are produced within a variety of cultural sites. He too argues that cinematic violence and racist stereotypes portrayed by television, videos, film and video games are inextricably linked to what has been called the rising culture of violence in the United States, and are too pervasive to be ignored or dismissed. This aggression and violence are often imitated by impressionable youth as a display of power. Giroux argues that this culture of violence has become 'increasingly a source of pleasure, either as a site of voyeuristic titillation and gory spectacle or as an aesthetic principle in all the major mediums of information and entertainment'. He emphasises that educators and cultural workers must scrutinise this culture and its implications to protect the youth.

Alloway and Gilbert (1998) discuss the time spent on these games, the violence and aggression legitimated in these games and the possible links between these games and

increasing violence and lawlessness in society. However, there is no conclusive evidence of these harmful effects.

Other researchers identify mainly beneficial effects of video games. Rushkoff (1996: 31) refers to computer games' importance as 'equal to that of the Gutenberg printing press'. Parents may condemn games as 'mindless and masturbatory', but children who have mastered video gaming early will have a definite advantage in a digital future of mediated interactivity.

The vast majority of game players are aged 12-17. 'Extraordinary semiotic skills of young game-players', suggests that 'such competencies and their associated mindsets contribute towards a distinctive 'culture'' (Wark, cited in Green, 1998: 24). He describes the players as hunched over consoles, their attention simultaneously split between hand-held control and screen. This is not work but play, not education but entertainment, not information but experience and pleasure. It is a new view of learning involving construction of body-subjects - hand-eye coordination as well as the physical concentration of the players. These games prepare youth for multimodal experiences where 'daily existence demands the ability to parse sixteen kinds of information being fired at you simultaneously' (Herz 1997: 2).

Durkin (1995: 71) defends video games, saying that by the age of eight, children's aggressive behaviours enacted in video games are playful, and that players report that the experience leaves them happy and relaxed. This view suggests that these children are not duped into being adversely affected by exposure to violent video games, but are instead able to benefit from them. One video-store manager (quoted by Elmer-DeWitt 1993), when interviewed about the violence in video games, said they serve as a harmless way to let off steam. "You had a bad day, so you can go in there and rip a couple of heads off and feel better" (Time Magazine).

Arcades, games and users

Video arcades serve asocial as well as social purposes, as Seymour Papert, (cited in Green 1998: 20), expresses when he writes that children of the computer generation have a 'passionate and enduring love affair with the computer, use it to establish social ties, to isolate themselves and for addiction'.

One opinion is that solitary video game play is especially appealing to young high school males because of their 'great graphics, cool characters and exciting distractions' (Kline 2000: 53). Kinder (1991: 5) refers to the masturbatory fantasy of the joystick. The penis-shaped joystick, the intensity with which players hold and use it, their exclusive attention riveted on the game, suggest this comparison.

Video games are an extension of film and television moving images. They are also an interactive medium, 'in the sense that players in several respects can steer the course and outcome of the game' (von Feilitzen 2000: 15). The player has physical control of the joystick, and in paired play is interacting competitively against a partner. Video games appeal to children for many reasons, one of them being that children enjoy being active participants. 'Video games are the first medium to combine visual dynamism with an active participatory role for the child' (Greenfield 1984: 128).

Besides offering individual or paired entertainment, the video arcade constitutes a meeting place for youth with similar interests. The video game culture is described as having a collective nature (Haddon 1993: 138). Michael Montgomery (1997), president of GameWorks, calls the arcades 'gathering places' and asserts that they are part of the street culture.

Some parents see video arcades as distracting from more constructive activities, but this is an assumption open to contention, as there is no guarantee that any other activity entered into would be any more constructive than those occurring in video arcades.

Video game arcades are generally off limits to parents and adults, as young players prefer to frequent them alone or as places to meet with their friends (Panelas 1983: 58). It is very seldom that one sees a young user accompanied by an adult. This privacy could possibly add to the appeal of the arcade, as a place where young people can assert their independence.

Video games appear to have intense fascination for many young people. 'The holding power of video games, their almost hypnotic fascination', and how these games enter into the development of personality, of identity, and even of sexuality, are the themes discussed by Greene (1998: 70). Some of the attractions of video games, described by

Haddon (1993: 133), are the mix of strategy, speed, physical coordination, excitement of fast action (which allows almost instant gratification for the players), and the brevity of games which maximises earnings for the owners. Haddon acknowledges there is some, albeit thin, narrative content to the video games. To attain high audience appeal, there is emphasis on dramatic movement, action and violence. The illusion of liveness and immediacy results from rapid cutting.

The price of playing the games is generally reasonable so that, as Greenfield (1984: 98) says, even the marginalised can afford them. Players are actively hailed, or, in Althusser's terms, interpellated, as members of a highly socialised commercial network - they are integrated as consuming subjects. The allure and excitement of the busy, bright, noisy arcades and games prove too strong for youth to resist. The following reasons why children prefer violent games are proposed by Cantor (1998: 88):- to look for arousal, to feel empowered, they are more interesting when forbidden, to witness their own aggressive behaviour, and to cope with fears in their own lives.

Gender construction within the video game industry

Video games as a site for the construction of gender (Cassell and Jenkins 1998: 28), are modelled on only one half of the population, and reflect the values and views of only one gender (ibid: 59). Games are the key entry point into the world of computers for most children, and may contribute to the gendering of computers (Greenfield, 1984: 10).

Gender is seen as a social construct related to power relations (Connell 1987: 106), which proposes and privileges particular masculine and feminine identities. Historically and socially constructed identities are clearly inscribed in video arcades. Here children actively develop their sense of self as gendered people by the many messages and practices they encounter. They are not passively socialised into a gendered identity, but their choices are constrained by potentially limiting gender boundaries which work at conscious and unconscious levels (Connell 1987: 120).

There is a strong male orientation in arcades and home games. Playing digital games seems to be a male occupation - boys own more or have access to more games than girls, and use them more frequently. A large discrepancy was found between girls' and boys' video game playing time in Australia (Ask et al, 2000: 84). Nikken (2000: 94) had the

same findings in the Netherlands, explaining that the games represent an aggressive and competitive male culture. boys prefer violent games, there are more male characters with whom the boys can identify and the game characters fulfil social expectations for boys. As early as kindergarten, boys and girls viewed video games as more appropriate to boys (Wilder et al 1985: 102). The video-gaming magazines are also gender-exclusive and often belittle, sexualise, eroticise or patronise women, as well as subordinate them (Alloway and Gilbert 1998: 99-103).

Boys' preference for aggressive toys and games, related to arousal levels and chronic aggressiveness, is noted by Goldstein and Jukes (1993: 81). Giroux (1995: 302) distinguishes between ritualistic and symbolic violence in order to examine the impact of violence on discourses of masculinity and gendered subjectivity, particularly in film. He identifies ritualistic violence as superficial, pleasure-seeking, enjoying destruction, failing to pose moral questions concerning masculinity and violence. Symbolic violence, however, he defines as 'attempting to connect the visceral and reflective' (Giroux 1995: 303), demanding more complex, critical and intellectual engagement. Video game violence would be categorised as ritualistic violence. An example of ritualistic and gendered violence is the controversial video game described in Krisjan Lemmer's column (Mail and Guardian 2000) under the heading Cyber Yugh![2]

Haddon (1993: 124) says that the vast majority of game designers are male, and the frequent science-fiction settings are male-orientated. Statistics quoted on CNN in November 2000 indicated that 73% of computer programmers in the United States are male.

Luke (1997: 26) talks about computer mediated communication (CMC). She quotes Cherny & Weise (1996), saying that

> despite widespread claims that CMC democratises access to and participation in the information revolution by eliminating the visibility of and social values

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[2] 'The *Get a Life* student website has developed a rather graphic game, *Racists' Kombat*, based on the computer game *Mortal Kombat*, in which players can choose to be either Thabo Mbeki (the president of South Africa and leader of the ruling party, the African National Congress), or Tony Leon (the leader of the chief opposition party, the Democratic Alliance), in a fight.
Both characters have powerful weapons, says John Kuhn, representative for gal.co.za. "Mbeki has a syringe full of the Aids virus with which he can prick Leon. Leon's major weapon is to 'fart back' which literally blows Mbeki away."
Anyone getting into the site is told: "Tony Leon and Thabo Mbeki think the game is in bad taste."'

attributed to differences of gender, race, ethnicity, dialect, and other embodied features, the discourse of CMC is unmistakably masculine. The gendered register, style, imagery and content of much of on-line communications, computer software language, CD-ROM entertainment, and the adjunct print discourse on cyberculture, computing, and net surfing gear, is decidedly male.

Although estimates vary, it is obvious that the electronic frontier is overwhelmingly a male society and that cyberspace remains a realm that women navigate with caution (Spender cited in Luke 1997: 26).

Women appear to use the Internet differently from the way men do. Jon Snow (cited in Yates, 1996: 135), describes the Internet as 'a male world, a lone male world. It is self-seeking, self-serving and self-fulfilling. Surfing shuts out all other physical and environmental contact and takes the user deeper into a world of 'me', 'my choice' and 'fuck you''. Statistics show that the Net, which is peppered with porn, is surfed mostly by men and holds less attraction for women (who use it for the more practical purposes of gaining information and for communication). The content of the gendered and aggressive video games bears a strong correlation to the Internet.

A specific gender link in types of video games chosen has been found. Five distinct types of standards for video games were listed by Nikken (2000: 98), namely, challenge (arousing curiosity), aggression, control, technique and instructiveness. Boys preferred games of challenge and aggression, while girls chose instructiveness and control. Children, particularly boys, are fascinated by computer games for competition, challenge and achievement, as well as for the social aspect (Sorenson et al 2000: 119).

Provenzo (1991: 99) denigrates the portrayal of women in video games. They are usually portrayed as victims or the weaker sex. He says that video games provide important insights into the values we hold as a culture. He describes video games as instruments of a larger social, political and cultural hegemony (ibid: 15). These games reflect attitudes concerning violence and the social status we assign to minority groups and women. Women are socialised to be dependent, and men conditioned to assume dominant gender roles. Provenzo argues that gender bias, stereotyping and discrimination are perpetuated by video games.

Provenzo (1991: 140) argues that we need to recognise the importance of Nintendo as a powerful symbolic and cultural form, to recognize video games as 'objects endowed with special and symbolic meanings', as phenomena of tremendous import and significance to our culture and its future. We need to eliminate the violence, destruction, xenophobia, racism and sexism that are so much a part of the world of Nintendo.

Alloway and Gilbert's (1998: 97) concern is mainly with the highly gendered representational field of these games. They describe the video game culture as "just part of a network of discourses and social practices that similarly construct violence, aggression, gender relations, ethnicity and power". Because of this easy dove-tailing, these discourses and practices of hegemonic masculinity become naturalised in cultural practice. Young people are socially positioned by the semiotic differences and oppositions emphasised in these games e.g. male or female, privileged or silenced, dominant or subservient. Young people take up positions within their social worlds, according to how they are situated and constructed as gendered, classed and ethnic identities. Video games work on gendered discourses, many texts align masculinity with power, aggression, victory and winning, superiority and strength, and with violent action. The video game arcade is a social arena within which hegemonic masculinity can be experienced and practised, and the video game culture peddles particular messages to the young as gendered beings. Video gaming produces and markets a politics of gender.

Earlier in this chapter, poststructuralist feminism was discussed in relation to the interrelationship of language, subjectivity and discourse in existing power relations (Weedon 1987). This interrelationship can be found in power relations existing within video arcades, games and their users. Jordan and Weedon (1995) show how all social practices and modes of representation construct gendered subject positions and modes of subjectivity which involve power relations and have material effects. Poststructuralist feminist theories (e.g.Weedon 1987) explore specific ways in which the gendered subject and his/her representations of reality are constructed within a social field. The common-sense statements that video arcades, games and users represent the aggressive and competitive male culture (Braun and Giroux 1989, cited in Alloway and Gilbert 1998: 95), and that the study of computers is more suited to the male scientific mind (Spender 1995) have already been mentioned. Video games and their sites do appear to attract particularly male youth, and produce and market a politics of gender.

Chapter Two.

The research methodology

In this chapter, I examine media theory and the role of media in constructing possible identities and subject positions. In line with these theoretical positions, this research also draws on critical linguistic insights. Theory relating to media discourse and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough: 1997) informs the analytic and audience research elements to be undertaken. In order to inform my line of research, I critically analyse the discourse of a video game played within a video arcade. I then describe the methodology and procedure used in investigating video arcades, games and their users, before devising a questionnaire to be administered to players.

Media theory and critical discourse analysis of the video game *Mortal Kombat 4*

Video arcades are the sites of contemporary and popular electronic media and social practices. It is therefore necessary to consider theory relating to media when considering the discourses and social practices of video gaming. Video games are just one aspect of the wider socio-cultural context of mass media communication. Fairclough, drawing on Foucault, says that 'the media are shaped by wider society, but also play a vital role in the diffusion of social and cultural changes' (Fairclough 1997: 51). These changes include gender. class and race relations, the first being particularly prevalent in video games. He argues that we must recognise that our social practice in general and our language usage in particular are bound up with causes and effects of which we may not be aware. There are connections between the use of language and the exercise of power. We need to closely examine common-sense assumptions which may reveal the invisibility of ideological assumptions and underlying power relations. Fairclough (1997: 55) says that language use simultaneously constitutes social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief. It can be conventionally or creatively used. Present discursive heterogeneity, creativity and hybridity in the media reflect the current period of rapid continuous change in our society and culture.

A key way to construct meaning in the media is through narrative. 'A narrative is a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time...Usually the agents of cause and effect are characters' (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985: 83). Narrative theory suggests that all stories share certain features e.g. Propp's eight character roles and thirty-one functions, Todorov's narrative model consisting of an equilibrium, disruption, and new different equilibrium, and Levi-Strauss's binary oppositions. The narrative in a video game will be examined in the video game analysis in order to consider the meaning construction encoded.

Related to narrative is the concept of genre. Genre refers to the category or frame to which a discourse belongs, involving repetition and difference which build up a system of expectation. Genres are 'manifestations of particular variations of the greater narrative structure' (Prinsloo 1991: 139). Genre in relation to video games will also be examined.

In order to understand the nature of the games and video arcades, as a researcher I need to investigate the nature of the games themselves. This understanding is essential in order to formulate questions to which the research participants can respond. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the video game *Mortal Kombat 4* enables me to establish the gendered nature of the game, the degree of masculinity and violence and gendered aggression, and informs the questions I ask of users later in this chapter. I have chosen this particular game as it is so popular amongst video game users, and is typical in the hegemonic masculinities evident in these games.

Critical discourse analysis can be a useful approach to research. Janks, who bases her work on that of Fairclough, says that 'critical discourse analysis stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice' (1997b: 329). All social practices occur in specific historical contexts, reproduce or contest existing social relations, and serve different interests. It is important to ask questions pertaining to these interests in order to relate discourse to relations of power, e.g. How is the text positioned or positioning? Whose interests are served? Whose interests are negated? What are the consequences of this positioning? Critical discourse analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power.

To critically analyse the video game text of *Mortal Kombat 4*, I adopt the model proposed by Fairclough (1997: 59). He proposes examining the discursive practices of a community

(in this case the video arcade, games and users), as networks or 'orders of discourse'. The discourse analysis involves focussing alternatively between communicative events and the order of discourse, both of which are complementary. Fairclough's 1997 model for critical discourse analysis (Appendix A) has three interrelated processes of analysis, tied to three interrelated dimensions of discourse. The first dimension, the object of analysis, includes verbal and visual texts, and requires text analysis and description. The second dimension, the processes by which the object is produced and received by human subjects (by writing/ speaking/ designing and reading/ listening/ viewing), requires processing analysis or interpretation. Discourse practice includes text production and text consumption, and is the link between the textual and the social and cultural. The third dimension, the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes, requires social analysis or explanation. Contexts of the socio-cultural practice may be immediate or wider, situational, institutional or societal. Aspects may be economic or political (concerned with issues of power and ideology), or cultural (concerned with issues of value and identity). In the model, the three kinds of analysis are embedded to show the simultaneity and interdependence of the three dimensions. Fairclough's model allows for multiple points of analytic entry. Interconnections between the three dimensions will be described, interpreted and explained.

Intertextuality study within the video game text provides further insight into the gendered nature of sites, games and users. Fairclough (1997: 75) describes intertextuality as the bridge between 'text' and 'discourse practice', and having dimensions in the CDA framework. Fiske (1987: 108) says it is the space *between* texts, both taken for granted relations as well as those which readers bring to the reading. Intertextual analysis is an interpretative art which depends on the analyst's judgement, experience and particular culture. The creative processes are substantially constrained by the sociocultural practice (by relations of power) within which the discourse is embedded.

For the critical discourse analysis of the video game *Mortal Kombat 4*, I focus on the fact that 'texts are instantiations of socially regulated discourses and the processes of production and reception are socially restrained' (Janks 1997a: 329). Critical discourse analysis involves reading against the text to counterbalance reading with the text. Because discourses constitute our identities and our constructions of the world, the ultimate aim of critical discourse analysis is to establish hypotheses about discourses at work in society. By this particular critical discourse analysis, I hope to

better understand how the gendered nature of video arcades, games and their users is constituted.

Mortal Kombat 4 is the fourth game in a series of martial arts simulations where the player pits his skills against a choice of twenty fighters. Of these, only two, Tanya and Sonya, are female. Both females are portrayed as voluptuous and eroticised. The ratio of male and female characters is about the same as that of users of these games.

Mortal Kombat 3 is classified by the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification for mature audiences (M), saying that it 'contained elements likely to disturb, harm or offend those under 15 years' (quoted in Ask, A. et al. 2000). *Mortal Kombat 4*, seen as an advance on its predecessors of the same title, differs from them as it is three-dimensional - the advertisement invites one to 'enter the 3D realm of *Mortal Kombat 4*'. This, according to the accompanying advertising pamphlet of the home video game, means that there is 'real weapon kombat - the characters can pull out weapons that can be thrown, dropped or even picked up by your opponent and used against you'. It also entails interactive backgrounds - the objects in the background can be picked up and thrown at your opponents. 3D fatalities means that there are 'brand new and classic fatalities', while 3D gameplay indicates that 'the characters can move in 3 dimension to dodge projectiles and pick up weapons'.

The first dimension of the model includes textual analysis – drawing on semiotics and narrative.

The narrative of *Mortal Kombat 4* is extremely repetitive and conforms to the predictable stages identified by Vladimir Propp (1895-1970), the Russian critic and folklorist, in his examination of the Russian folktale. I therefore apply the thirty-one functions which Propp defines within a narrative (Appendix B). In the narrative of *Mortal Kombat 4*, we see the six broad groups of preparation, complication, transference, struggle, return and recognition within the game. Under preparation, a prohibition or rule might be imposed on the hero or player (function 2) in that the player is confronted by the villain. The complication (function 9) could be that the hero is sent on a mission to defeat the villain - the conventional narrative of the quest. The transference occurs when the hero is then challenged, tested and attacked (function 12), receiving and using the magical agent

(consisting of his dexterity to play the game and the series of weapons at hand). The struggle comprises direct conflict between hero and villain, the villain being defeated (functions 16 and 18). In the return, the hero returns to the game, and another difficult task is set for him, in the form of the next attacker or villain, often in a more challenging context (functions 20, 25 and 26). In this way, the Proppian trajectory is repeated in a series of attacks. At the end of the game, the hero or player is finally recognised, and is rewarded by his victory, or a chance to play another game (under recognition, functions 27 and 31). Hence the conservative quest and conquest plot is repeated in a formulaic way.

One can apply some of Propp's eight possible character roles to the narrative of the video game *Mortal Kombat 4*. The eight roles consist of the villain, the donor (provider), the helper, the princess (or sought-for person) and her father, the dispatcher, the hero or victim, and the false hero. In *Mortal Kombat 4* there appears to be a series of villains - the characters in the game against whom a player pits his skills in order to eliminate them one after the other. The hero (or victim if he loses) is the game user, an occasional background buxom princess in need of saving (and more rarely a buxom villain), and many magical agents. The weapons provide the Proppian magical agents used in this game by both heroes and villains. These include a cross bow, sword, knife, mace, spiked club, war hammer, battle axe, battle staff, wind blade. ice sabre, scythe and boomerang. There are also fire-throwing skulls used as projectiles, and green acid containing a special power which is thrown at the opponent. The hero is the player who plays on until he himself is annihilated by a villain, or until the game comes to an end. The gendered construction of characters in the game is thus reinforced.

The Proppian engagement in conflict is signalled by simply one word "Fight". spoken in an eerie inhuman voice. The signal to eliminate the opponent when he is finally exhausted, is given in the same inhuman voice – "Finish him". The language used in the game is simple, terse, competitive and violent. The characters are represented as animated cartoon figures, removing them from reality. Exorbitantly eye-catching background colours and those of the characters are so bright that they appear almost surreal. The karate movements, exaggerated sound effects, shouting, and gory sprays of blood add to this effect. The commanding discourse indicates that the player must unquestioningly obey. The fast action gives the player little time to consider; he must be totally absorbed into the action in order to survive. The narrative of the game is simple, lacking in any

depth. The genre used is sensationalist, aggressive and of short duration, requiring short intense concentration, and using a mixture of entertainment and persuasion.

Violence permeates the game. Violence in the form of fatalities of the game include heart rip, head smash, arm rip, toss and burn, lightning impale, shock of exploding, face chew, acid spit, head rip, deep freeze, spike fatality, neck twist and the last eroticised violence, the kiss of death - from one of the two villainous female characters. These violent forms of death reflect a hegemonic discourse in relation to gender. Masculinity and power become synonymous with aggression and violence. By the constant repetition of these violent acts, the violent discourse is legitimated. A life bar at the top of the console screen records lives lost in red, and lives not lost in blue. The percentage of damage caused is also often recorded on the screen. The emphasis is again on violence.

The second dimension of Fairclough's model concerns the processes by which the text is produced and received by audiences. The agency responsible for production is the large video game industry, mainly in the U S A and Japan, motivated to maximise profits. These games are made more sensationalist for mass appeal on the world-wide market, in order to increase sales. Although the narrative of *Mortal Kombat 4* is conventional, in the present 21st century setting use is made of sophisticated technology. Players are therefore limited to mostly urban and 'first-world' areas. Video games are intertextual as they are linked to other games, movies and other commercial money-spinning games, toys and activities. On the Internet, there are presently one hundred and twenty three sites linked to the game *Mortal Kombat*! Here one can enter into a *Mortal Kombat Mythologies* chat network to voice one's opinions, and enrol to receive the electronic newsletter. The Internet website for Nintendo: *Mortal Kombat 4* [3] refers to this game as 'a crimson-coloured free-for-all that well deserves its M rating', thus giving approval to the aggression and violence in the game. Should one cancel without 'signing one's soul', the player is scornfully referred to as a 'weak pathetic fool'. The discourse used in this text serves the interests of the audience, consisting mainly of young, adolescent, impressionable male users. Assumptions are made about what the reader knows and values, in the case of this video game the assumption that the violent and aggressive acts depicted are the norm. The reader who matches these assumptions is the ideal reader. These assumptions become naturalised by repetition.

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[3] http://www.nintendo.com/n64/mk4/

Fairclough's third dimension is concerned with the socio-historical conditions that govern the video games. The political aspect (concerned with issues of power and ideology), reflects power relations where common-sense assumptions of hegemonic masculinities and emphasised femininities are sustained. The cultural aspect (concerned with issues of value and identity) reflects reinforcement of issues of power and domination by males, serving their interests and negating those of women. The extreme competitiveness required to succeed in these games reflect hegemonic masculinities. When critically analysing *Mortal Kombat 4* and other video games, one discovers that gendered attitudes and behaviours within hegemonic positions are reinforced to become naturalised and part of everyday common-sense. Representation, which includes what is shown and what ideas and attitudes it conveys, includes legitimated violence and aggression. As Janks (1997a: 341) states, 'Ideology is at its most powerful when invisible'.

The hegemonic gendered positions become more obvious when considering the many pairs of binary oppositions[4] offered in the *Mortal Kombat 4* narrative. Male characters are represented as strong, brave, active, dominant, privileged, superior, muscular protectors, while females in the background are generally weak, passive, oppressed, silenced, inferior, sexual objects in need of protection and control. The two female fighters show emphasised sexuality, with large, over-emphasised and well-exposed breasts and buttocks, offset by tiny waists. Even the names of the two female characters, Tanya and Sonya, are soft and alluring, especially compared to those of the males, e.g. Jarek, Reiko, Reptile, Scorpion, Jax, Chinnok, which sound hard and aggressive. According to Alloway and Gilbert (1998: 106), the texts of these games 'combine powerfully to produce and sell a sexual politics founded in asymmetries of power that hold men in ascendent, and women in subordinate, relations to one another'. Through constant repetition in fiction 'our understanding of gender is constantly made and remade and acquires factual status' (Gilbert 1994: 10). The hegemonic masculinity constructed in these games marginalises and inferiorises the 'other' - women and subordinated and non-violent masculinities (Connell 1987: 183).

This critical discourse analysis is important in my own understanding of what the games involve, in what I am dealing with and therefore is crucial in informing and assisting me in devising the questionnaire found later in this chapter.

Methodology and procedure used in investigating video arcades, games and their users

I wish to investigate the gendered nature of video arcades and video games, in relation to the perceptions and attitudes of the users of them. I use the information derived from the critical discourse theory of the video game *Mortal Kombat 4*, the research and literature in Chapter One, and the following survey of the site and games to devise a questionnaire to apply to twelve video arcade users. As players attend the arcades erratically and unpredictably, the twelve players are selected randomly. A further factor influencing selection of interviewees is their ability to communicate in English. This investigation is followed, in Chapter Three, by an analysis of the responses.

Survey of site and games

This survey, like the *Mortal Kombat 4* analysis, is undertaken in order to gain a better understanding of the gendered nature of the site and games.

The main site chosen to interview users is situated near the paddling pools at the beachfront in Durban (KZN). This is a combination of an amusement park, (featuring Dodgem cars, funfair type games such as throwing or shooting at a target, and model soccer ga positive and mes) and a video game arcade. Part of it is underground, with a children's funfair on top. This particular arcade is mundanely named Newton's Funworld, this rather old-fashioned English holiday resort type named after the original proprietor when the place was a popular funfair. Nearby newer video arcades have more glamorous names such as the Joyclub and Las Vegas.

There is a heavy security presence at the entrance to the amusement park, and around the activities themselves. One of the security guards explained that in the past there had been incidents of drug-peddling, as the presence of many young people offered an easy market. There continue to be incidents of petty pilfering from users and machines, and large overhead notices stating 'Beware of pickpockets' are in evidence. However, now that security measures have been increased, this is on the decline.

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[4] Levi-Strauss

The accompanying sound and sight effects in the arcade are constant and sharply pitched - abrasive to the researcher's ear. The area is well lit, and has many flashing lights. There is loud brash music, interspersed with electronic bells, whistles and crashes. There is little ventilation in this dungeon-like arcade, which is stifling even on a cool evening.

At the entrance to the amusement park, there are more innocuous-sounding game consoles e.g. *The Simpsons*, and the pinball machines. Further into the arcade, the titles become increasingly more aggressive and violent e.g. *Street Fighter, Killer Instinct, Fear Effect, Heart of Darkness*. There is a similar arrangement in other video arcades e.g. the Joyclub at the Pavilion shopping mall in Westville, KZN.

As reflected in their names and anchors, the games fall predominantly into three themes. The first theme is frightening and mythical beings (*Magician Lord, Fear Effect, Heart of Darkness*), and the second is war (*Path of the Warrior, Street Fighter II, The Getaway, Metal Slug X, Global Domination, Weapons of Justice, Invasion*). The third theme is death (*Mortal Kombat 1, 2, 3, and 4, Terminator 2, Judgement Day, Wipe Out, Killer Instinct, The House of the Dead* [it feeds on your fear- game over when all life torches are out], *Stealth Assassins, Dead or Alive,* and *Lethal Enforcers*). *Mortal Kombat 4* is the game that appears to be most popular in the arcades.

Costs of games range from fifty cents to two rand, allowing for a reasonably priced evening of entertainment, and thereby attracting young people with fairly limited access to money. There were many out-of-order games, some not marked, which resulted in players losing their money and becoming annoyed.

Users fall into two categories, experienced players or novices. Potential players or novices watch the more experienced players. There is little or no conversation between them, as the players concentrate intensely on their game and resent or ignore any interruption. There is a mixture of regular users and visitors from rural or up-country areas who inhabit the video game arcade. The latter are found particularly in the school holiday season, when the site is overcrowded. Many of the young adolescent players appear to be street children, and they refused to speak to me as they seemed to understand very little English. I could not speak enough Zulu to communicate either. Even when I attempted to work through a Zulu research assistant, these children were very shy, possibly suspecting that we were social workers. I also had difficulty communicating with

some youth from rural areas who were eager to help but spoke and understood limited English. Consequently, the users interviewed were generally urban youth able to communicate relatively effectively in English.

Questionnaire administered to players

The data I wish to obtain is categorised under headings with the relevant questions beneath. Questions A 1-4 investigate the users' level of interest and effort in the games in relation to their backgrounds. To give me an indication of effort made, as well as the socio-economic status of the user, I ascertain the distance and mode of travel in questions 1 and 2. Question 3 gives me an indication of communication with the family, and the family's approval/disapproval of the video game activity. Question 4 enables me to gain insight into the players' other interests and the priority given to the games. Questions B 5-8 investigate the users' social habits and what motivates them to return to the site. Question 7 gives insight into whether the player is solitary or more social. Questions C 9-11 investigate the economics of players and the games, the source of the money and how else it is spent at the site. These three questions, along with numbers 1 and 2, will enlighten me to some extent as to the economic and social background of the players. Questions D 12-13 ascertain how perceptive and critical the users are, by examining users' views about other players and the arcade.

Sections E, F and G examine the users' views about the sites, games and game characters in relation to hegemonic masculinities and subordinated femininities. Questions E 14-15 investigate the games and their narratives, and the cognitive elements of the players in relation to a game e.g. *Mortal Kombat 4*. Questions F 16-20 examine the extent to which the users are aware of gender issues, the gendered nature of the sites and games, and their views about these issues. Questions G 21-24 investigate the extent to which players relate to and identify with the characters in the games, of players' awareness of aggression and violence within the games, and the way the players experience the site in relation to masculinities.

A. Questions to establish level of interest and effort in the games

1. Where do you live?
2. How do you get here?
3. Does your family know you spend time here? If so, what do they think about it?
4. If you were not at this video arcade, how would you spend this time?

B. Questions about users' habits

5. Who do you usually come with?
6. How often in a month do you come here?
7. Do you prefer to play a game for one or two people? Why?
8. Why do you come here?

C. Economic questions

9. How much do you spend here in a month?
10. Where do you get the money?
11. What other activities do you spend money on here?

D. Questions about the players and the arcade

12. What do you like/dislike about the players in the video arcade?
13. How would you change/improve the video arcade and games?

E,F,G- Questions on users' views about sites. games, game characters in relation to hegemonic masculinities and subordinated femininities

E. Questions about the games

14. What is your favourite game and character? Why do you particularly like this game and character?
15. Is there a story to your favourite game? If there is, can you briefly describe it?

F. Gender questions

16. What are the men like in the games? Is this realistic?
17. What are the women like in the games? Is this realistic?
18. Why do you think there are more males than females here?
19. Why do you think there are many more male than female characters?
20. Would more female characters make a difference? If so, how?

G. Questions on awareness of aggression and violence

21. Do you think of the heroes as role models- someone you would copy?
22. Do you find the content of the games aggressive or violent?
23. If so, what do you think about this?
24. Do you enjoy this aggression and violence, and how does it affect your life?

Chapter Three

Findings and conclusions

In this chapter the findings obtained from the questionnaire are analysed, before reaching the conclusions of this dissertation.

Findings obtained from the questionnaire

Twelve young players were interviewed in the first arcade, two females and ten males. The players were aged from eleven to twenty-three. I wanted to include both male and female players, but it was difficult to find even one female player. Then I was fortunate to find a second female player who worked part-time at the arcade. The findings obtained from the questionnaire are charted in Appendix C.

Users' level of interest and effort in the games - Questions A 1-4.

These questions were concerned to establish the users' interest and effort in the games, and to some extent their socio-economic status.

In answer to questions (1 and 2) about their transport, it was clear that most (eight of the twelve players) lived in the vicinity of the beachfront, within walking distance of the arcade. One came from Umlazi township by train, and another from Inanda township by taxi - both distances of at least 30 kilometres. A 15-year-old youth (who was too young to drive) got a lift with his sister in her car from Glenwood[5], and one of the two women came in her boyfriend's van. Both women were accompanied by their boyfriends.

The response to the question about the players' families' knowledge of and views of their attendance at the arcade (3), established that all the players' families knew they frequented the arcades. Most families were compliant, with only one mother objecting on the grounds of cost. In response to the question about how they would spend the time if not at the arcade (4), most males were aimlessly vague e.g. "just messing around", "nothing else to do", "can't think of anything else", or they would be engaged in passive

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[5] Umlazi and Inanda are townships situated outside Durban, inhabited mainly by a black, predominantly lower socio-economic group. Glenwood is a middle-class suburb nearer the centre of Durban.

activities e.g. watching TV or sleeping. The two exceptions would swim or drum in a band. The two women would be more active, ice-skating, 10-pin bowling, cooking or playing with a child.

By ascertaining the distance and mode of travel (questions 1 and 2), I learned that the video game mode of entertainment was conveniently situated near to most players' homes - they could walk there, thus requiring little effort or cost to reach. The area they live in, around the Point harbour and South Beach, is a high-rise, lower socio-economic area. The two players from a higher socio-economic area (North Beach and Glenwood) travelled a further distance by car (either with a boyfriend or a sister). All the players communicated with their families regarding their attendance at the arcade, and the family's general acceptance of the video game activity (question 3). Question 4 enabled me to gain insight into the players' other interests compared to the video games. Males showed comparatively little imagination and initiative compared to the females, and were generally less active. The two women were influenced by boyfriends to attend the site, and travelled with them. In following the boyfriends to the site, they assumed a subordinate and dependent role, thus fulfilling traditional gendered expectations. Otherwise they would probably not be here, as they had other interests.

Users' social habits - Questions B 5-8

In reply to the question (5) asking with whom each player came to the arcade, four players always came alone, two came with a relative, three came with friends or alone, one came with his class and the two women came with their boyfriends, the one bringing her son by her boyfriend. In response to the question about how often a player attended the arcade in a month (6), players attended the arcade an average of ten times monthly. This attendance ranged from once in two months to every single day. In response to the question about whether a player preferred to play alone or with a partner (7), seven players preferred playing with a friend, finding this "more interesting", or "more fun", or "more competition", or "to beat people and win". The two women played only with their male partners. They were influenced to come by these men, although the one woman also did part-time work at the arcade (only after being introduced to it by her male partner). The five lone players cited reasons such as "learning more", "being able to play more" and "the game lasting longer". Two had no choice, one being "always alone" and the other being rejected by his friends. Reasons offered for coming to the arcade (question 8)

were "enjoyment of games" (nine players), "to meet friends" (two), "to relax" (one). One said he felt "so happy- on heaven", another (a 21-year-old) "wanted to feel like a kid again", and a third said, "I was born to play- it's my talent!" These responses indicated a passion for the games – shown, however, only by male users. One 15-year-old male with wider interests was now getting bored. The two women came mainly for practical reasons, the first to accompany her boyfriend and the second because she worked here part-time. The women indicated that, if it were not for their male partners, they would probably not attend the site, as they had other, more compelling interests. In this exclusively male social site, they were simply tolerated as outsiders and visitors, their boyfriends even attempting to dominate and answer for them during the interviews.

Although a frenetic and noisy venue, some players indicated that they felt very isolated. Comments like "I'm always alone", "I don't know the other players" and "My friends don't want to play" contributed to an overwhelming sense of loneliness and sadness which I sensed from some players. A desire to overcome this loneliness may motivate them to return to the site.

Economic questions - Questions C 9-11

These three questions were included, along with numbers 1 and 2, to offer information as to the economic and social background of the players.

The amounts of money spent on the games in a month (question 9) varied greatly, from R2 to R150. In response to the question about the source of their money (10), the younger six players obtained the money from their parents, while the older six players worked for it. In answer to the question about other activities money is spent on at the site (11), five players spent money only on the games, two also bought food, one paid for pool games and four paid for rides on the Dodgem cars.

No pattern was established in relation to the players and their spending.

Users' views about other players, the arcade and the games - Questions D 12-13

These questions ascertained how perceptive and critical the users are in respect to other players, the arcade and the games.

When questioned about opinions about other players (12), three players said they liked the other players because they were friendly and were enjoying themselves. Two did not know the other players, and seven had negative opinions. These included "the noise", "the drug addicts", "the thieves", "better players who beat him", and "too many children, especially street children".

When asked opinions about the video arcade and games (13), three players would not change anything in the arcade. Sbone said, "It's more than better now!" while Johan said, "The place is great!". Sihle only wanted to extend the hours - to "24 hours so people can come when they like". (It is open from 11 a.m. till midnight). Here again, some players' enthusiasm and passion for the site were clear. The majority of nine wanted "more and newer video games", "more 3-D games", "more 'virtual reality'", "more wrestling games", "games with more fighting", and "out of order machines to be repaired or got rid of". Some said the arcade "should be cleaned up", "have air-conditioning", and "games sounds should be louder" (this from the player who found the players noisy and who may have had over-sensitive ears).

It was strange that, while the majority of players had no opinion, or a low opinion, of the other players, they persisted in attending the site regularly. The attendance of three-quarters of the players was therefore certainly not for social reasons.

There were many requests for more realistic and violent games, indicating that the more they were exposed to these types of games, the more the players craved them. By this constant exposure to aggressive and violent content, players become immune to it, seeing it as 'the norm', as the discourse and practice of hegemonic masculinities become naturalised in social practice. The voyeuristic and gory titillation provide a source of pleasure for the players, while the texts of the games align masculinity with power, aggression, victory, winning, superiority and strength.

Gendered identities - Sections E, F and G

The games and their narratives - Questions E 14-15

Questions 14 and 15 examined the cognitive elements of the players in relation to a favourite game.

Four people's favourite game (question 14) was *Mortal Kombat*, two liked *Tekken* best while two chose *Street Fighter*. *Hit man, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*, a racing game and a soccer game were each chosen by one person. Reasons for preferences were "the fighting", "the swearing", "winning", "the action", "the tactics", a "need for speed" (in the racing game), and "the unique fighting style - like break-dancing" of Eddie Gordo in *Tekken*. Five people were totally unaware of any story to the game (question 15), but just spoke about the fighting and killing. Others spoke about "fighting", "beating", "conquering", "killing" and "shooting" as the story. Two vaguely mentioned a simple narrative involving a tournament and a character who wanted to come back to earth to kill others.

The choice of favourite games and the reasons for these choices were again indicative of the users' craving for more aggression and violence. They appeared obsessed with fighting, killing, domination, power and competitiveness – the players' preferences reflected that they were steeped in hegemonic masculinities. These games peddle particular messages to the young as gendered beings. Their uncritical acceptance of the gendered discourses of the games was alarming, and provides important insights into the values we hold as a culture. The players' limited knowledge or interest in the narratives of the games indicated that the story was not a priority in game playing.

Gender questions - Questions F 16-20

Male characters in the games (question 16) were described as "good at fighting", "brave and in charge", "having lovely bodies like weightlifters", "strong and invincible", "quick and full of skills", "big and strong", "cool heroes", "the best", "full of muscles", "powerful", "always winning" and "larger than life". Seven players saw this as realistic, while the other five were doubtful but not adamant.

Three people, when questioned about the female characters in the games (question 17), answered that they ignored them. Most felt negatively about them, saying, "they are usually weak", "need lots of saving", "are useless with the exception of the odd strong one", and "have too many unrealistic muscles". Three were more positive, saying "they're

okay", "not so bad", "look nice", "look beautiful", and "are glamorous but don't show much action". Three commented on the occasional physically strong female character.

These responses to questions about the game characters reflected admiration for stereotypically male attributes. The players expressed scorn for female stereotypes, only appreciating their decorative appearances. These responses reflect the highly gendered representational field of the games, and how the hegemonic masculinities constructed in the games marginalises and inferiorises the 'other'. Responses clearly indicate how the young take up positions according to how they are situated and constructed as gendered identities.

When asked about the predominance of male players (question 18), the players gave the following reasons for this:- "males like games", "boys like entertainment", "machines and fun are better than females", "men are braver and enjoy punching and hitting" (this from one of the two women), "men have more energy to play", and "it's something to keep men busy". One more sensitive and better educated youth commented that "it's a concept developed by society that males play these games". Two (males) commented that "females have shopping which they would rather do". Two male players said that "the site is too dangerous for females - they are scared about getting robbed or raped, even though the security guards are tough and beat up anyone causing trouble".

Players believed there were many more male characters (question 19), because "that's what men want", "the way we're created, men are stronger than ladies" (from a woman), "boys are more powerful", "boys can fight better", "boys are stronger", "men like violence", "men like to play with men". Three, however, answered, "girls don't like playing machines", "girls are weak", "women worry too much and are not made to fight". Even soccer games were for "skilled men". Two commented that "the female is weak and not made to fight".

Responses to questions 18 and 19 reflected admiration and tolerance for boys and their hegemonic interests, and condescending, derogatory and belittling attitudes to girls and their interests. Thus gender bias, stereotyping and discrimination operate to reinforce a gendered discourse that proposes males and females as so unequal.

Eight players said that more female characters would be superfluous and spoil the game (question 20), citing the following reasons:- "they would get in the way", "it doesn't look nice for females to have muscles" (these two from the two women), they "don't like girls", "the game wouldn't be fun any more", "it would be more people to save". Three players said more female characters would make a difference by "making a change with different skills", "being beautiful", "being glamorous" and "showing new dresses". One player was indecisive.

Responses indicate the general acceptance of a gendered discourse that proposes men's physical superiority, while the deprecating remarks about women's interests and vulnerability, made with scorn and impatience, indicate a belief in women's inferiority. There is reinforcement of issues of dominance and power by males, serving their interests, and conditioning them to assume dominant gender roles, while negating women. The above responses indicate the limited extent to which the users are aware of gender issues, the gendered nature of the sites and games, and their views about these issues. One can deduce from the above information that discourses create subjects who have naturalised beliefs about men's physical and other superiority and women's decorative and inferior role in society.

Players' awareness of aggression and violence within the games - Questions G 21-24

Responses regarding awareness of aggression and violence within the games were equally divided. Half the players did not think of the heroes of the games as role models (21) - they regarded the heroes as simply characters or actors in a game. The 11-year-old said helplessly, "I don't want anyone to see me - I'm not so big and can't fight like them", another said, "I wouldn't like to get beaten - no, I like myself as I am". The other six players wanted to emulate the heroes in the games, citing as reasons – "loving to fight", "having nice clothes, muscles, good looks and good hairstyles", "beating up other guys", "saving others", "getting famous", "wanting to be a soccer hero and win", and "people would love me". One woman wanted to "be Brett Hart, a wrestler, but not look like him with muscles".

Only one person felt strongly about the contents of the games being aggressive or violent (question 22). Interestingly, this response came from one of the two women, and she answered, "Yes, especially the virtual reality games". The other affirmative seven were

quite non-committal and accepting of the aggression and violence, saying "The violence is bad, but it's only a game", "Sometimes", "I suppose they are, but I don't think much about it", "Yes, but I can take it", "Yes, but not enough for me", and "Yes. I suppose they are, but that's life". Four players disagreed that the content of the games is aggressive and violent, saying, "It's only fighting for fun", "Not too much", "Not really, but I'm tough", "Not really, it's a game".

Again responses indicate alarmingly unquestioning acceptance of naturalised beliefs as 'the norm'. By constant repetition, the violent discourse is legitimated, thus feeding into a culture of violence.

When asked what they thought about the aggression and violence (23), seven people condoned it, saying "It depends on a person's upbringing", "It's just for fun", "Just get on with it", "I don't let it worry me", "If they don't like it, they don't have to come", and "You can't get away from violence- it's everywhere". The seventh said, "Maybe have more violence, but not let kids in". Of the five who objected to aggression and violence, three did so on the grounds of harmful effects on children. Of the other two, one simply said, "I don't like violence", while the 11-year-old admitted that he gets scared sometimes and dreams about it. However, he does not tell his mother, for fear of her not letting him come to the site.

In this way, more than half the players denied responsibility, thus reproducing assumptions which naturalise aggression and violence.

When asked if they enjoy the aggression and violence (24), two players admitted to enjoying the violence, saying "I love playing these games, and wish they were even more violent", and "Yes, I like action, but wish there was more in my life". Seven enjoyed the violence but denied it had any effect on them personally, saying, "Some people get wound up- the violence becomes almost reality, but I don't notice it", "I don't even think about it, I just enjoy it", "Yes, but it doesn't affect my life", "I enjoy the games, and the violence doesn't worry me at all", "Violence is all over, but it doesn't worry me", "It has no effect on me". "I don't take any notice of it", and "Sometimes, but I don't tell my mother or she won't let me come". Only two players expressed concern, one woman saying, "I try not to be part of it, but you can't always avoid it", and one twenty-one year

old man (the oldest) saying, "It doesn't affect me personally, but I do wonder about the kids who come here and if their parents know".

Buckingham (1997: 38) describes how there is a discourse of effects whereby parents deny that harmful effects affect their own children, but always affect *other people's* children. In the same way, older children will deny these effects on themselves, but admit there may be harmful effects on younger children (what Buckingham terms 'infinite regression'). In the same way, denial takes place among the above players.

From the above responses, one can conclude that video arcades and games reinforce hegemonic gender ideologies by their discursive practices. They propose and privilege particular masculine and feminine identities. Players see violence and aggression legitimated within the games and therefore collude in accepting it as part of life. They accept as the norm the naturalised roles which society has allocated men and women.

Conclusions

This research investigated the gendered nature of video arcades, games and users. I could find only commonalities with, and no differences from, the findings of research in Australia by Alloway and Gilbert (1998). In South Africa, as in Australia, the video game culture is extremely male-focused, masculinist, competitive, aggressive and violent. The sites are male-dominated, and are sites of hegemonic masculinities.

Video games are just one of a host of influential entertainment media used by our youth. The language of the media is not natural or neutral, but is 'socially and historically produced' (Buckingham 1991: 26). Media contains ideological, often hegemonic, positions. McLaren (1989: 173) refers to this hegemony as 'natural, commonsensical and inviolable'. Ferguson (1991: 21) describes how the media perpetuate relations of power and subordination, and how media work to make relations, which are socially and politically motivated, appear natural.

These findings reinforce the researcher's belief in an urgent need for Media Education in South African schools[6]. Learners should realise that certain discourses are privileged, and that the text positions both reader and subject. We cannot avoid, or

constantly protect learners from, the media. Instead we must 'prepare students to function effectively in a rapidly changing world that demands new multiple literacies' (Hobbs cited in Prinsloo 1999: 163). The best way we can empower learners to deal effectively with aggression, violence and hegemonic masculinity within video games is to provide Media Education in our schools. Media Education should be 'regarded as an essential guarantee of an informed and critical audience' (Buckingham 1997: 44). Learners who have learned to question texts, ideologies and institutions which have a vested interest in maintaining silence, form a critical and informed audience who can contribute to a reinvigorated democracy.

With Media Education, we can empower our learners by teaching them that messages are constructed to make meaning, and that this construction process is shaped by assumptions about culture, gender, race, social class and age. There is a need to 'develop strategies to contest hegemonic assumptions of power and authority and the social practices which they guarantee. We need to understand the intricate network of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimised forms of knowledge to which they look for their justification' (Weedon 1987: 126).

As Ferguson (1991: 21) advocates, all texts, especially those of popular culture (which are of particular interest to and active involvement by learners), can be addressed. Certain possible ways of approaching Media Education could make effective use of popular comics and certain films e.g. *Mortal Kombat* which display the same hegemonic masculinities as video games.

A critical approach in Media Education, based on critical pedagogy, constructivism and action research, underwritten by Freire, Giroux and Mc Laren, could help to empower individuals to become critical thinkers, competent communicators and active citizens. They will take responsibility for their own learning and join in the struggle for social justice and a better quality of life for all.

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Appendix B- Propp's thirty-one narratival functions

Preparation
1. A member of a family leaves home.
2. A prohibition or rule is imposed on the hero.
3. The prohibition is broken.
4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.
5. The villain learns something about his victim.
6. The villain tries to deceive the victim to get possession of him or his belongings.
7. The victim unknowingly helps the villain by being deceived or influenced by the villain.

Complication
8. The villain harms a member of the family.
8a. A member of the family lacks or desires something.
9. This lack or misfortune is made known; the hero is given a request or command and he goes or is sent on a mission/ quest.
10. The seeker (or the hero) plans action against the villain.

Transference
11. The hero leaves home.
12. The hero is tested, attacked, interrogated, and, as a result, receives either a magical agent or a helper.
13. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor.
14. The hero uses the magical agent.
15. The hero is transferred to the general location of the object of his mission/ quest.

Struggle
16. The hero and villain join in direct combat.
17. The hero is branded.
18. The villain is defeated.
19. The initial misfortune or lack is set right.

Return
20. The hero returns.
21. The hero is pursued.
22. The hero is rescued from pursuit.
23. The hero arrives home or elsewhere and is not recognised.
24. A false hero makes false claims.
25. A difficult task is set for the hero.
26. The task is accomplished.

Recognition
27. The hero is recognised.
28. The false hero/ villain is exposed.
29. The false hero is transformed.
30. The villain is punished.
31. The hero is married and crowned.

Appendix C. Chart of findings obtained from the questionnaire administered to players (Ch. 3.2)

	1. Where do you live?	2. How do you get here?	3. Does your family know you come here? Their opinion?	4. If not here, how would you spend this time?	5. Who do you usually come with?
A. Reena (18) female	In town	Boyfriend's van	Yes, it's fine with my mom	Ice-skating or 10-pin bowling	boyfriend
B. Toughs (23) female	South Beach, Durban	walk	Yes, they come with me, know I work here too	Probably playing with my son or cooking	My small son and his father
C. Martin (11) male	Smith St, Durban	walk	Yes, say I must be back in an hour or they worry	Playing with my Jax model (Mortal Kombat character)	My mother
D. Neelan (15) male	Glenwood, Durban	Sister's car	Yes, they don't mind	Drumming in friends' band	friends
E. S'bone (15) male	Umlazi- township near Durban	train	Yes, they know I like games and the beach	Swimming in the sea	Sometimes friends, or alone
F. Lunga (16) male	South Beach, Durban	walk	Yes, they don't say anything	Just messing around	alone
G. Johan (17) male	Point Road, Durban	walk	Yes, my mom says it's a waste of money	Nothing else to do	alone or with friends
H. Sheldon (18) male	South Beach, Durban	walk	Yes, they say it's okay	Can't think of anything else	alone
I. Sihle (18) male	Inanda- township near Durban	taxi	Yes, they know I'll get some fun	I like watching TV	My class
J. Willem (18) male	North Beach, Durban	walk	Yes, father sometimes comes with	Watching others play, or playing video games at home	alone
K. Sean (20) male	Winder Rd, South Beach, Durban	walk	Yes, sister I live with doesn't mind	Probably watch TV or sleep	alone
L. Noel (21) male	South Beach, Durban	walk	Yes, they say it's okay if I look after my brother	Don't know, maybe looking after my brother	Younger brother

6. How often in a month do you come here?	7. Do you prefer to play a game for one or two people? Why?	8. Why do you come here?	9. How much do you spend here in a month?	10. Where do you get the money?
A. four	2- like playing with my boyfriend	My boyfriend comes here	R30	work
B. sixteen	2- play with my son's father	Work here sometimes, like meeting people, it's full of fun	R60	My son's father, and working at the arcade
C. once	2- more interesting to play against someone	I like the games	R2	mother
D. About every second month	2- more fun	Used to enjoy it, now getting bored	About R15	Pocket money from parents
E. twice	1- I want to learn more	I love games	R10	parents
F. Every day	1- because I'm always alone	I like playing games	R150	My parents
G. four	1- can play more	Nothing else to do	R20	Mother
H. twenty	2- more competition	Meet friends, good atmosphere, I was born to play- it's my talent!	R80	father
I. twice	1- friends don't want to play	Makes me feel so happy- 'on heaven'	R60	Doing jobs at and near home
J. twelve	2- it's more interesting	Just to enjoy myself	R40	Work as a waiter
K. thirty	1- it takes longer	To relax	R100	work
L. four	2- I like to beat people and win	I want to feel like a kid	R40	work

11. What other activities do you spend money on here?	12. What do you like/dislike about the other players in the arcade?	13. How would you change/ improve the video arcade and games?	14. What is your favourite game and character? Why?	15. Is there a story to your favourite game? If so, can you describe it?
A. rides	They enjoy the place, the kids run around	I wouldn't change anything	Street fighter- I'm good at this game	I don't notice the story, just look at the fighting
B. food	Enjoy being with people who have different interests	More wrestling games, get rid of out-of-order games	Hit man. Brett Hart- has more experienced tactics and always wins	You have to try to beat the characters
C. nothing	Don't like it when they're better players than me	Have more games with more fighting	Cadillacs and dinosaurs- like the fighting and swearing	Just fighting- no story
D. Pool games	Dislike some drug addicts	Get rid of out-dated games, up-date games	Tekken. Eddie Gordo. Has a unique fighting style- like break-dancing. No killing	Yes, best fighters gather for a tournament to gain trophy
E. none	They steal your money	They're okay, more than better	Mortal Kombat. I know it best	You have to conquer Sub-Zero and the others
F. nothing	Some of them steal, from people and machines	Have more new games	Mortal Kombat- I'm good at fighting. Jax- has lots of tricks	You fight them one after the other until you get beaten
G. nothing	Don't know other players	The place is great	Soccer games- I want to finish the game and win	No, just play to score goals. David Packham is my hero
H. Dodgem cars	Too much noise	More virtual reality, more security	Mortal Kombat 4- looks real. Liu Kang- fights like Bruce Lee	Shinnok wants to come back to earth and kill the others. You have to fight him
I. eating	Like them- they're friendly	Wouldn't change anything-just open 24 hours so people can come when they like	Street fighters-we can fight and play. Ken- best fighter	You try to kill as many as you can
J. nothing else	I don't know them	Take old games out, repair out-of-order games, have more 3-D games (look real)	Mortal Kombat- I'm good at it, I like fighting and shooting	You shoot them to win the game
K. Bumper cars	Make too much noise	Make louder to hear, have air-conditioning	Tekken 3- lots of action	No, it's lots of noise and killing
L. Rides e.g. dodgems	There are a lot of children, especially street children. I wonder about the money	Clean up the arcade, have newer games	Any good racing game-I have a need for speed	There's no story- you just have to beat the other drivers

16. What are the men like in the game? Is this realistic?	17. What are the women like in the game? Is this realistic?	18. Why do you think there are more males than females here?	19. Why do you think there are more male than female characters?	20. Would more female characters make a difference? If so, How?
A. They're good at fighting- in real life also enjoy fighting	I have never chosen a woman fighter, and don't notice women in games	All I know is that I enjoy the games- don't know about other women	Guess that's what men want	No, they'd get in the way though
B. brave and in charge- sometimes they're like that but not always	The women players have too many muscles- not real	Men are braver, enjoy punching and hitting	The way we're created, men are stronger than ladies	No, it doesn't look nice for women to have muscles
C. they have lovely bodies like weightlifters	I don't know because I don't like them	Boys like games more	Boys can fight better than girls	No- I don't like girls
D. Strong, invincible. Not realistic, we're all human	Usually weak. Fighters sometimes better than men- depends on YOU	It's a concept society had developed- that males play these games	They are fighting games	Yes, women are breaking free of society's norms now
E. quick and full of skills- mostly men are like that	Some are good fighters, but most just look nice	Boys like games, entertainment, fun better	They've copied the Mortal Kombat film	Yes, they would have different skills. It would be a change
F. big and strong- not all men are like that	Not strong but sexy	Girls can't play games like boys	Boys are more powerful than girls	No, they just get in the way
G. Cool heroes. Not really real	Okay, not so bad	It's something to keep men busy; women have shopping to do. Games are for boys	Soccer is for more skilled men	If more females, game wouldn't be fun any more
H. the best- good and strong- yes, like reality	Glamorous, but not much action- like reality	Males have more energy to play games, females would rather shop	Man is strongest, female is weak and not made to fight	Yes, females are beautiful, can show new dresses, are glamorous
I. Full of muscles, like I want to be	Weak and need saving lots	Boys like to play machines	Girls don't like to play machines	Maybe, don't know
J. strong, powerful- some men are weak in real-life	Not so strong but they look beautiful	Too dangerous for females-things get stolen even with security	They make it like that as men are much stronger than women	No, you play for the game and not the character
K. always winning- yes, mostly realistic	Don't really notice them as I don't choose girl characters	Girls are scared to come, too many guys, scared of getting raped	Guys like to play with men	No, we'll still play the game. Some bad women do beat up the guys
L. they're larger than life, but I wish I could be like them	They're useless except sometimes there's a strong one	Boys normally like games more than girls	Most games are violent- aimed at males	No- just more to save

21. Do you think of the heroes as role models, someone you would copy?	22. Do you find the contents of the games aggressive or violent?	23. If so, what do you think about this?	24. Do you enjoy this aggression and violence, and how does it affect your life?
A. No, I don't notice the women	It's only fighting for fun	Smaller kids might want to get like that	It has no effect on me
B. Would like to be Brett Hart, a wrestler, but not look like him with muscles	Yes, especially the virtual reality games	Don't want my son to play these when he's bigger	I try not to be part of it, but you can't always avoid it
C. No, I don't want anyone to see me. I'm not so big and can't fight like them	yes	I get scared sometimes and dream about it	Sometimes, but I don't tell my mother or she won't let me come
D. No- just a game	Not too much	Depends on a person's upbringing	Some people get wound up- the violence becomes almost reality. I don't notice it
E. Yes, I'd like to fight like them- it would be exciting	Not really, but I'm tough	Suppose it worries some people, especially the younger ones and their parents	I love playing these games, and wish they were even more violent
F. I wouldn't like to get beaten. No, I like myself as I am	Not really, it's a game	It's just for fun	I don't even think about it, I just enjoy it
G. Yes, I want to be a soccer hero and win	The violence is bad, but it's only a game	I don't like violence	I don't take any notice of it
H. Yes, I love to fight, would like to have nice clothes, muscles, good looks and good hairstyles	I suppose they are, but I don't think about it much	just get on with it	I enjoy the games, and the violence doesn't worry me at all
I. Yes, I'd like to save others, get famous, people would love me	sometimes	I don't let it worry me	Violence is all over, but it doesn't worry me
J. No, they're only actors, but it would be fun!	Yes, but I can take it	If they don't like it, they don't have to come	Yes, I like action, but wish there was more in my life
K. Yes, I'd like to beat up other guys	Yes, but not enough for me	Maybe have more violence, but not let kids in	Yes, but it doesn't affect my life
L. No, they're just characters in a game	Yes, I suppose they are, but that's life	You can't get away from violence- it's everywhere	It doesn't affect me personally, but I do wonder about the kids who come here and if their parents know