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**An Exploratory Study of Video Games on Higher
Education Students Managing Institutional Based
Anxiety**

Richard Peralta

February 2019
University of Huddersfield

Abstract

This exploratory study delves into video game (VG) habits and personal histories of students managing anxiety from their respective courses and institutions of higher education. Whilst the expanse of video game research is limited, the recent increase in research is presumably reactive, thus resulting in literature focused on the phenomenon of aggression caused by gaming. Approaches in these studies typically include questionnaires, observations in induced situations, physiological tests, or meta-analysis, regardless of previous researcher bias. As such are clearly quantitative and reductionist in nature, this study endeavours to demonstrate an inclusive approach that fills a gap within literature. *Phenomenology of Perception*, by philosopher Merleau-Ponty in 1945, frames phenomenology as the study of essence of perception and consciousness through direct description of human experience. The present qualitative study engages this principal notion in its approach to unearth evocative themes of the VG player experience neglected by prior research. The liberation of participant experiences through interviews calls for a more necessary, apt approach of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The aim of this research was to establish themes in which higher education students make sense of their VG habits to relieve anxiety, and to what extent it relates to identity development and metacognition. To gain knowledge of the eight participants in college and/or university within the United Kingdom and the United States of America, 34 semi-structured IPA interviews were conducted and analysed. The multiple trends uncovered include the use of video games to relax and fulfil social needs; anxiety related to academic deadlines and finances; and participant histories impacting identity formation and metacognition.

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Chapter one: Introduction

Evaluating the reported statistics, the VG industry continues to grow and change. Newzoo, VG marketing intelligence provider, reported that UK total game revenues reached \$4.2Bn (USD) whilst the number of game players increased from 31.6m in 2016, approximately 50% of the total population, to 32.4m in 2017 (Newzoo, 2016; Newzoo, 2017). UK based international innovation charity foundation Nesta (formerly National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) reported that “women are more likely to play games than men,” albeit at lower frequencies, yet half the gamer population is at least in their 40s; a quarter of which are age 56 years or above (Nesta, 2017). In the US, representing a population over 4,000 surveyed households, the Entertainment Software Association reported that VG industry revenue increased from \$30.4Bn in 2016 to \$36Bn in 2017, with 67% of US households owning a device used to play VGs; and the average gamer age at 35 years, with “adult women representing a greater portion of the VG-playing population (33%) than boys under 18 (17%)” (Entertainment Software Association, 2018). Considering the relative sizes of the populations captured in these statistics, it’s important to consider the constant evolution of gaming public and increasing global impact. In an attempt to investigate only a tiny sample of the gaming community, the aim of this research was to explore students’ awareness of higher education-based anxiety in conjunction with VG habits and identities formation. Whilst this research will address the need for phenomenological qualitative data regarding VG usage in general, chapter one will discuss research topic rationale including background context.

1.1 Research topic rationale

A 2010 study concluded that methods of study were inherently flawed, and that other studies featured misleading conclusions and implication (Ferguson, 2010). Despite an already limited volume of VG research at large, some studies centre on the phenomenon that gaming instigates aggression amongst players. Since the 1970s, researchers have continued to debate the negative impact of violence in media despite its theoretical rationale being proven feeble (Zendle, et al. 2018; Geen, 1975). However, in a National Public Radio (NPR) interview reacting to the rise of American school gun violence, psychology professor Douglas Gentile of Iowa State University explains, “when we’ve had a school shooting, we usually ask the wrong question. We ask what was the cause? And then we point around at different things such as mental health or violent VGs or poverty or whatever” (NPR, 2018). Whilst the demonisation of gaming stands consistent since Dominick’s (1984) VGs and teenage aggression study, critics have since challenged the methodologies, which were limited to frequent quantitative apparatus; surveys, tests, questionnaires, physiological tests, observation tracking, or commingled data from multiple aforementioned methods. In acknowledging the scarcity in VG research in tandem with faulty methods, deceptive conclusions, and blatantly false implications (Ferguson, 2010; Ferguson, 2015; Kutner and Olson, 2008; Consortium of Scholars, 2013; Wofford, 2015; Ferguson, et al., 2017), researchers are left seeking more competent methodologies when exploring themes within the VG experience to not simply seek a definitive answer but develop an understanding.

Having noted previous reductionist methods, it is important to contribute more comprehensive psychological literature by investigating inclusive approaches that study how VG experiences come to influence one’s own consciousness and how the individual understands the world around them. *Phenomenology of Perception*, by philosopher Merleau-Ponty in 1945 (Merleau-Ponty, et al., 2010), frames phenomenology as the study of essence of perception and consciousness through direct description of the human experience. The present phenomenological qualitative study engages this principal notion in its approach to unearth evocative themes of the VG player experience neglected by prior research. The liberation of participant experiences through interviews calls for a more necessary, apt approach of IPA. In the way that metacognition and phenomenology are psychological concepts, both can be explicated and are rooted within consciousness.

Whilst VGs become more prevalent and the industry flourishes, as does the magnitude of studying the experience and phenomena within psychology. To enhance VG research, it's necessary to move beyond inefficient methods focusing on aggression into examining phenomena related to the gamer's mind, therefore justifying such research as a psychologically relevant subject matter. In this work, concepts surrounding anxiety and identity development will be considered, as they have a meaningful relationship to the metacognition within the present study.

The aim of this research was to establish how higher education students make sense of their VG habits to relieve anxiety, and to what extent it relates to identity development and metacognition. To gain knowledge of the eight participants in college and/or university within the United Kingdom and the United States of America, 34 semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed. Quantitative data were also collected utilizing the State/Trait Anxiety Inventory and Metacognition Questionnaire-30 at the opening and conclusion of participation. The multiple trends uncovered include the use of VGs to relax and fulfil social needs; anxiety related to academic deadlines and finances; and participant histories impacting identity formation and metacognition. Thus, providing a basis of understanding to create proactive efforts and research.

Chapter two: Literature review

A significant amount of psychological literature exists respectively on the topics of anxiety, student identity formation, and metacognition, though two may overlies in particular studies. However, phenomenological methods permit the exploration of all three subject matters in the context of VGs. This chapter highlights literature relevant to the present study.

2.1 Violent video games

Despite its popularity since the 1970s, being the newest of entertainment mediums, VGs have been debated and criticised to be linked to violence (e.g. Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson & Bushman 2007). Violent video game (VVG) debates continue simultaneously with real-world violence, resulting in scapegoating of VGs (Cumberbatch, 2004). Given that younger generations tend toward the medium, older adults, including academics and clinicians, tend to have negative beliefs about VGs (Ferguson, et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2015; Ferguson & Colwell, 2015; Przybylski, 2014). This allows press and politicians to target young players when attempting to make sense of mass homicides and societal violence, despite the US Secret Service and US Department of Education (2002) reporting low amounts of violent media consumption by school shooters.

Scholarly debate is consistently contentious, specifically between research in the theoretical contexts of both General Aggression Model (GAM) and Catalyst Model (CM). In the framework of CM, research suggests VVGs have limited to no effect on player aggression, only impacting forms of aggressive expression to those already biologically and environmentally inclined (Ferguson, et al., 2008). However, GAM suggests that exposure to VVG causes player aggression directly (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson & Dill, 2000) and desensitises them to violent content, resulting in decreased empathy (Anderson & Murphy, 2003; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Sparks & Sparks, 2002). Scholars noted issues with GAM, including publication bias and reporting of selected significant data (Elson & Ferguson, 2014; Ferguson, 2015). Further problems include questionable meta-analyses, small effect sizes, and prediction to statistical discrepancies (Ferguson, 2010; Ferguson, 2015; Kutner and Olson, 2008). Even the American Psychological Association's (APA) controversial Task Force on Violent Media has been found questionable due to lack of transparency, avoidance of response to 238 open letters from scholars, and evident public bias of its members (Consortium of Scholars, 2013; Wofford, 2015; Ferguson, et al., 2017). In opposition, APA's Division 46: Society for Media Psychology and Technology released "Societal Violence and Video Games: Public Statements of a Link are Problematic" (Division 46, 2016). It states, "Criminologists who study mass homicides, in their analyses of such crimes, have either excluded the issue of VGs (Lankford, 2013), or explicitly referred to links between VVGs and mass homicides as a 'myth' (Fox & DeLateur, 2014)."

Investigation reports in the cases of the Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook shooters determined little involvement with VVGs (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007; State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Danbury, 2013). Despite APA's task force claim of linked aggression, evidence of a direct correlation to real-world violence is lacking and actually suggests a decrease in violent crime in response to violent VGs (Ferguson, et al., 2017; Markey, Markey, & French, 2015). One study reported that both control and excessive VVGs users groups exhibit no difference in fMRI brain responses, suggesting evidence against desensitisation hypothesis of GAM (Szyck, et al., 2016). Regardless of continuing debates, evidence linking VVG to aggression or real-world violence is deficient, therefore, to separate discussion of the impact of VVGs from other types of VGs, much less any other gaming preferences, in an effort to address positive and negative outcomes is arbitrary in this study.

2.2 Anxiety in higher education and gaming

With a rise in mental health issues of college and university students in both the United Kingdom (Coughlan, 2015; Gurney-Read 2016) and United States (Sabatke, 2016), counselling services in higher education institutions have become strained due to the growing demand for support (Hoffman, 2015; Navotney, 2014; Yeung, et al., 2016). Anxiety is recognised to be one of the most common mental health issues among university students (Reetz, et al., 2016; Brown, 2016; Gurney-Read, 2016), leaving some with rising apprehensions about how younger generations cope (Bret cher, et al., 2016; Singal, 2016). With concern for suicide amongst university students (Coughlan, 2015), the UK’s Office for National Statistics’ 2017 report states that the male completion rate is still approximately three times more likely than that of the female completion rate, with the latter being of its highest rate in a decade (Withers, 2015). The United States’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) 2015 statistics reported that males completed at nearly four times the rate of females, while noting that 8.7% of college aged adult men have made completion plans. Neither reported statistics of transgender or gender variant completion, despite the CDC’s acknowledgement of youth LGBT completion (CDC, 2017). Increased anxiety and mental health issues that aren’t being managed in education are a cause for concern, especially among male and Queer students.

One 2015 study found “after 30 days of being coached to approach their daily challenges like a game, clinically depressed individuals were significantly less depressed and anxious” (McGonigal, 2015; Roepke, et al., 2015). However, most anxiety research surrounds VGs as prevention, intervention, or distraction to anxiety, yet none are based in qualitative methods nor IPA (Schuurmans, et al., 2017; Schoneveld, et al., 2016; Wijnhoven, et al., 2015; Patel, et al., 2006). Research exists reviewing an anxiety experienced by game-studies scholars racing to publish on ludic scholarship, which focuses on differentiating VGs from other media (Anderson, 2013). An example may be how VVGs impact consumers differently than violent film or television. Due to this rush in ludology publishing, narratology, or more communicative scholarship, is neglected with less committed to exploring broader questions of how VGs impact (Anderson, 2013), which would likely call for IPA. There is need for research focusing on proactive VG use in mental health management, as well as scholars dedicated to narratology.

2.3 Mental health maintenance

As anxiety continues to intensify in college and university settings, research continues to show that stress or anxiety can be managed in numerous ways, including the following. Anxiety reduction via leisure activities has been shown to be an effective strategy for college students to manage stress (Misra & McKean, 2000; Iwasaki, et al., 2010). Successful leisure participation has led students to better grades and positive adjustment (Patry, et al., 2007; Tangney, et al., 2004). Whether utilised as a leisure activity or a part of therapy, activities such as art (Morris, 2014), music (Guti rrez & Camarena, 2015), athletics (Molina-Carc , et al., 2011; Kanters, 2000), and even baking (Thomson, 2017; Whalen, 2014) have proven to result in positive psychological benefits including mindfulness and overall wellbeing. This confirms that taking time from stress to recover from anxiety and stress is beneficial (Korpela & Kinnunen, 2011) and that prioritising psychological recovery positively affects mental health maintenance (Qian, et al., 2014). As a leisure activity, VGs should be included in such research when managing anxiety and mental health.

2.4 Student identity development

Within educational psychology, Student Development Theory theorises the student advancement of knowledge and self in higher education settings. Amongst a plethora of theories, Arthur Chickering’s theory of identity development endures as one of the staple theories within the industry of student affairs. Whilst it focuses primarily on identity, it examines seven vectors of development, all of which are relevant to the present study (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, et al., 1998). Participants are observed

within the vector of developing competence, where intellectual and interpersonal competence is built within goal accomplishment and the ability to fare with adverse experiences. The vector of managing emotions directly addresses anxiety experienced by participants, as well as depression, guilt, anger, shame, and optimism. Participants note their cognition regarding problem solving abilities, initiative, and self-direction, placing them in the vector titled moving through autonomy toward interdependence. The next vector of developing mature interpersonal relationships stands as paths participants are navigating in long-term intimate relationships, including, but not limited to friendships and romantic love. Whilst most participants can be placed within the establishing identity vector, many disclose anxiety related to physical appearance, gender, sexual identity, social roles, and self-esteem. Metacognition observed amongst participants display their placement in the developing purpose vector though commitment to future endeavours, establishing a sense of vocation. As the final vector of developing integrity includes three successive stages, most participants firmly hold a set of core personal values whilst respecting others with those in contrast. As vectors can stack in one's development, they are not strictly progressive, as the flexibility allows students to develop in multiple areas and operate with improved stability and intellectual complexity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, et al., 1998).

Whilst literature regarding identity development through VGs exists, none primarily take an IPA approach despite mentioning gaming phenomena, however a 2017 study employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis in utilising questionnaires (Martí-Parreño, et al., 2018). Despite this, such studies have proven to be informative in understanding the gaming experience, including cognition pertaining to identity construction. Within higher education, VGs were found to "have a positive effect on communication ability, adaptability and resourcefulness in adult learners," (Barr, 2017). In the context of VGs aiding one's narrative assessment, the experience is considered a "tool of the mind able to create meanings" as players learn to take meaning from first-hand experiences (Gallelli & Fanelli, 2010). The same study expounds on the concept of VGs and narrative, in that pretending develops reflective skills along with the ability to mentalise and de-contextualise (Gallelli & Fanelli, 2010). Armed with student development theories and the knowledge that VGs can be beneficial to one's growth, student affairs practitioners and mental health staff within higher education can positively utilise VGs as one of many tools to combat student mental health issues.

With regards to gender identity, several studies address gaming's positive influence. Ecenbarger (2014) concluded that VGs offer a safe space to experiment with identity in resisting societal norms and expectations regarding appearance and behaviour, resulting in a greater sense of self whilst navigating their world through a new lens, especially if the act harbours positive emotions (Sanford & Madill, 2006). Another study lists specific abilities necessary when in gameplay enabling gender fluidity. Whilst not limited to the following, this includes the ability to:

- *recognise the various aspects of the self, brought into play through the roles one acts out*
- *keep open the lines of communication between the different aspects of the self...*
- *an ability to recognise one's self as "incomplete" and constantly "changing"...*
- *an ability to identify and discuss the cultural models underlying the games in which one takes part*
(Gallelli & Fanelli, 2010)

When building identity within gaming communities, "complementary exhibition of shared knowledge" urges communal participation (Norrick, 1989; Sierra, 2016). A 2014 study established that recurrent interpersonal communication in virtual spaces not only fulfils social needs, but offers comfort and reassurance resulting in identity construction (Flook, 2006; Ecenbarger, 2014). Belonging to both strong

digital communities and a supportive educational setting may decrease anxiety and mental health issues for students in higher education.

2.5 Metacognition and gaming

Metacognition within developmental psychology is defined as comprehension and awareness of one's own thought processes (Flavell, 1979; van Velzen, 2016; Metcalfe & Shimamura, 1994). Literature regarding the gaming experience and metacognition exist yet lack IPA methodologies despite referencing few gaming phenomena. However, a 2018 study utilising a meta-analytic approach, departing from qualitative descriptions of previous studies, determined that even just 10 to 30 hours of gameplay throughout the study improved test performance on spatial cognition and cognitive flexibility (Bediou, et al, 2018). Further, studies across multiple generations prove positive effects of gaming. In a study examining young children, higher intellectual functioning and academic achievement along with fewer mental health challenges were observed in those who played VGs for five or more hours a week (Kovess, et al., 2016). Whereas training older adults with VGs not only enhanced aspects of cognition but suggests that cognitive and neural plasticity is maintained (Toril & Ballesteros, 2014). Such research display proof of beneficial aspects of VGs.

Some studies have proven the use of VGs as teaching tools, “for helping people navigate out of depression, serving as groundwork for general well-being, mental health, and even cognitive ability in old age” (Hale, 2017; Primack, et al., 2012). Several studies established that “playing VGs can provide cognitive training transferrable to the real world” (Adachi, Willoughby, 2013; Basak, et al., 2008; Ferguson, 2010), and that “repeatability aspect of VGs, as compared with other media forms, is useful in delivering manual-based interventions such as those involved in cognitive– behavioural therapy” (Ceranoglu, 2010; USAB, et al., 2007). Even within athletics, meta-cognitive development can be stimulated through the use of digital VG design (Price, et al., 2017). With a commitment to more metacognitive VG studies and positive examples of such research, future findings may yield anxiety fighting practices utilising VGs.

2.6 Global gaming impact

Despite still being considered novel to some, the VG industry has grown to a global entertainment and media market value of \$1.81 trillion with a revenue of \$106.62 billion (Statista, 2016). The success of video gaming has made a place for itself within popular culture due to its use by millions (Ceranoglu, 2010; Gettler, 2008; Poole, 2000). It has been proven that one of the most popular ways men manage stress is through VG use (Cheong, 2017). Unfortunately, most VG research historically focuses on its negative impacts, including addiction and aggression, however a recent study found no enduring effects on empathy from playing violent VGs (O’Callaghan, 2017). Other research has found positive usage for educational and therapeutic practise, such as improving user coordination, special training visualisation, or distraction for children after chemotherapy sessions (Griffiths, 2014; Griffiths, 2004). A positive bearing on the hobby may be that the modern VG experience has become more social as an activity, especially in the realm of online gaming (Steadman, et al., 2014; Granic, et al., 2014). With this information, well-developed game designs can influence feelings of instinctive control (Inchanman & Wyeth, 2013). The engagement of games through moderate use can be utilised for learning, goal setting, behavioural change, and teaching skills (Griffiths, 2014). As a medium for projecting one’s emotional life (Gaetan 2016), VGs can be utilised toward positive user interventions in conduct-change, including goal setting and skills development (Duncan, 2014; Steadman, et al., 2014).

Patterns in research thus far are mostly quantitative and have widely varying methods (e.g. Bediou, et al., 2018; Anderson & Bushman, 2001). Some cognitive behavioural therapy approaches utilise VGs specifically developed for participants, especially if managing acute instances of eating disorders or

cancer. Per previous sections of this chapter, there is limited qualitative data on the psychological behaviour and impact of VGs. This exploratory IPA study directly investigates the trends, habits, and impact of VGs on its participants to contribute to the lack of literature.

Chapter three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to rationalise the methodology in which this study is taking to gather information regarding participants' gaming experiences and anxiety as higher education students. Beginning with aims and objectives of the study, this chapter also describes the present study's qualitative approach of IPA. Further information included in this chapter regard study design and procedure, aim of research, recruitment strategy, participants, ethical considerations, and best practices.

3.2 Phenomenology

As the gaming industry swells, as do ideologies surrounding its impact. Similar to how availability heuristic, emotional reasoning, and confirmatory bias can impact racism or homophobia (Feldman, 2017), attitudes toward the VGs bear no immunity. Seen through the US White House blaming VGs in response to mass shootings, the World Health Organisation's provocative classification of gaming addiction as a disorder, and flawed methodologies of gaming research (e.g. Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson & Bushman, 2007; Carnagey, et al., 2007; Anderson, et al., 2010), society's biased interpretations of VGs are pushed by politics as reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (BBC, 2018). A phenomenological approach would lift people from within negative societal milieu and place them in a context where we explore tangible thoughts of participants amidst gameplay.

In the founding of Phenomenology, Edmund Husserl defined the philosophy as the reflective study of how things appear to our conscious awareness (Husserl, 1931). This concept of how the world appears to us in the context of our subjective experiences spawned later thinkers of existential phenomenology such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, who instead subscribed to the notion of an embodied experience. Merleau-Ponty's 1945 work goes further in stating that phenomenology is a method of articulating the very nature of our perceived interaction with the world. This process in turn aids one's understanding of order, structure, and coherence. This position within phenomenology exists as the heart to the present study (Merleau-Ponty, et al., 2010).

When considering whether to utilise a Cartesian or Phenomenological approach, another form of entertainment can be used as an example. In attending the theatre, one's current emotions going into a live experience may impact how they decipher that live performance's meaning. Husserl articulates that a Cartesian approach to such experiences implies there is a correct meaning in the performance, which may be distracted by current emotion, information, and varying preconceived ideologies (Husserl, 1931). Whereas phenomenology suggests that such additional elements are in fact part of the meaning when experienced by a person, in so that examining awareness of our own consciousness comes to influence the way we comprehend the world around us. This knowledge of one's own cognitive systems is in turn metacognition (Wells, 1995; Spada, et al., 2008). The cognitive ability to articulate representations about world experiences is understood as intentionality, which, within phenomenology, is a vital theme also essential to metacognition processes (McIntyre & Smith, 1989; Husserl & Peucker, 2012). It is in these progressions of experiencing, processing, and acknowledging that this present study only begins to break ground in the context of psychology and VGs, which can best be accomplished through IPA. Through this approach, the study aspires to understand participants' experiences in their daily life as a human being navigating their world, ultimately allowing for a conscious attempt at uncovering the essence of the VG experience (Kleiman, 2004; van Manen, 2007). It is through the existential importing of how a participant makes sense and finds meaning (Smith, et al., 2009) in their VG experience that benefits such collective research.

Initial research intent was to comprehend simply how students facing anxiety played VGs. Interest expanded into their thought process whilst gaming, as well as what is taken away from the experience impacting players' identity and its construction. Equally to the theatre example, individuals playing VGs enter the gaming experience with a plethora of one's own emotions and preconceptions. These can be toward life, the act of gaming in itself, gameplay style, genre, storytelling, music, or art. This study observed participants moving further in realising they're thinking about their environment in more constructive ways than anticipated. In relation to the game, this level of cognisance could only be confronted through the most congruous IPA qualitative research approach. Such data and direction could not have been achieved simply with qualitative t-test methods, which discerns differences in data, whereas phenomenology formulates themes based on similarities.

In the context of VGs, literature referencing phenomenological studies are limited to theoretical and philosophical reviews, mostly restricted to examining realism, immersion, and embodiment (Crick, 2011; Bogost, 2008). A more recent study conducted group discussions surrounding Internet Gaming Disorder (King, et al., 2017). Of the few literary examples, none were centred in qualitative approaches focusing on metacognition, nor were they IPA-based in methodology. As prior investigations are narrow, the aforementioned phenomenological concepts presented reinforce the need for qualitative phenomenological investigation of VGs and provide solid theoretical grounds for the methodology.

Whilst psychoanalysis may seem a likely approach, Freudian methods aim to decode the nature of experiences through the unconscious via researcher, whereas phenomenology analyses the ways in which individual participants comprehend their personal experiences. Further, critics of the method claim a sense of bias within the process due to the frequency of influence via financial interest (Mitchell & Black, 1995; BBC, 2018). Narrative research also seems a probable approach, however this method focuses solely on the individual, omitting themes of multiple individuals' lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Other qualitative methods such as grounded theory or case study multiple-exploratory may also appear relevant, however the lack of subsequent studies prevents such research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Yin, 1993). Due to the focus on themes explored through individual experiences, IPA serves as the most suitable approach. In examining the existence of gamers and their gaming histories, this present study endeavours to examine how individuals create meaning from their video experiences, with specific attention to how these interpretations correlate with anxiety, identity development, and metacognition. It is through ideographic explanation of one's life-worlds in which we can access the meaning of these experiences (Connelly, 2015). Whilst this gives way to more experience through understanding others' (Hultgren, 1990), it also provides a foundational framework for the VG experience. In this double hermeneutical process we clarify to what extent gaming phenomena manifests. It is through interaction with games that participants' metacognition, awareness, and sense of identity increase, thus, through this medium, their meaning emerges through gameplay. Whilst qualitative research is informative and has its benefits, the phenomenological approach will provide far better insight into this phenomenon. As this study tends to the need for VG literature, it will allow for further phenomenological research whilst standing out as a unifying study of anxiety, identity development, and metacognition in relation to VGs.

3.3 Interpretive phenomenological analysis

The primary qualitative research method chosen for this study is that of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis utilising Hermeneutic Phenomenology and a supplemental quantitative element supporting principal data. Phenomenological data collection allows for a more in-depth study of participant experiences, in that rapport built between researcher and participant encourages an openness to expand on anecdotes. The IPA approach permits the researcher to explore themes, multiple causes for anxiety, and various coping mechanisms whilst gauging participants' awareness and levels of development.

Initially a means of inquiry by Husserl (Husserl & Peucker, 2012), Jonathan Smith (1997) refined the transcendental phenomenology philosophy and founded IPA as a qualitative research approach in “an attempt to unravel the meanings contained in [...] accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts.” Three elements of phenomenology include “the study of the lived experiences of persons,” recognition that an experience is a conscious process, and the development, or interpretation, of essences based on these experiences (Creswell, 2007). The essence of the experience is defined as the combination of both textural and structural descriptions shared by participants, respectively, what and how was experienced (Creswell, 2007).

The IPA approach focuses on the essence of phenomena cognitively experienced during engagement in the surrounding world (Willig, 2013), in that intentionality is the awareness and ability to articulate said experiences (McIntyre & Smith, 1989; Husserl & Peucker, 2012). In this process of analysis, once a shared experience has been identified, phenomenological research attempts to pinpoint the universal nature of said experience before attempting to distinguish and interpret shared experiences amongst various participants witnessing the same phenomena (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis can be in the form of horizontalisation, which attempts to comprehend the participant experience, or in clusters of meaning, instead of a unification of interpretations into themes, which was implemented in this present study (Willig, 2013).

3.4 Study design and procedure

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, an inductive research approach was chosen. Beginning with observations of the VG experiences, new theories may develop from exploring the new phenomena. As such an approach refrains from beginning with a hypothesis, it provides a less structured method compared to a deductive approach and is most appropriate for a project of small sample size. The methodological qualitative approach will collect data through participant interviews. Intending to understand the social reality of participants within their natural settings and VG culture, data will be explored to determine themes. Study design will abide by that of Smith & Osborn’s (2009) procedure in the following steps. Further details for earlier steps follow.

- Research question construction and sample determination
- Data collection
 - Interview schedule development
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Transcription
- Analysis
 - Looking for themes
 - Clustering themes
- Writing

3.5 Research question and sample determination

Aware of the rise in mental health issues for students in higher education, the researcher questioned which issues were most common and how they were managed. Anxiety being the most common (Reetz, et al., 2016; Brown, 2016; Gurney-Read, 2016), the researcher then questioned the causes of anxiety and the use of VGs to manage.

3.5.1 Research question and aims

The intent of this study is to explore the following aims and objectives in discovering themes and the essence of the VG experience. The research question being, “How do higher education students manage anxiety through the use of VGs?”

- Aim 1: This study aims to establish the extent to which university students are utilising VGs to relieve anxiety.
 - Objective 1: Highlight participant patterns of relation between anxiety management and gameplay
 - Objective 2: Establish an understanding of self-awareness in said practices
- Aim 2: To explore university students’ awareness of psychological impact of VG usage on their anxiety through IPA
 - Objective 3: Gather qualitative evidence of the participant perceived benefits of VGs to cultivate thematic phenomena
 - Objective 4: Process influences of gaming on student identity development and metacognition

3.5.2 Sample determination and recruitment strategy

Due to time and financial restrictions, a small sample of eight to twelve participants was deemed to be achievable and fitting for IPA (Willig, 2013; Howitt & Cramer, 2010), given the nature of the research question and timing of research approval. Due to the researcher’s timeline being delayed by multiple factors out of their control, windows to interview students were limited which also limited the sample size. Further, the small sample size best fits the case-by-case ideographic approach to research analysis.

Participants were recruited through analogue and digital advertising. Flyers were posted around the University of Huddersfield campus as well as shared on private Facebook groups home to VG player communities. The researcher recruited in first- and second-year psychology classes at the University of Huddersfield, who were given the additional incentive of SONA points for research participation. Interested participants were asked to voluntarily complete an interest/recruitment form (see appendix p50) then were contacted by the researcher to arrange an initial meeting before scheduling further interviews.

Criterion establishing inclusion in the study required that participants be currently enrolled in some degree of higher education in the United Kingdom or United States during participation, ranging anywhere from two-year colleges to four-year universities. Participants could be registered for courses levelling from an associates degree to doctorate, including bachelors and masters. In terms of anxiety, participants could range from those claiming normal every day anxiety caused by their respective academic settings to those previously diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 Interview schedule development

To foster rapport and an open dialogue between researcher and participant, semi-structured interviews were completed. Considered the ideal method for IPA (Creswell, 2007), this allows for opportunities to further explain or prompt additional questions, following participants’ interests or concerns. Being that the ordering of questions is flexible, the researcher is free to probe interesting concepts that arise. In the context of VGs, the qualitative approach through interviews helps the researcher understand more about the framework in which participants live and function, whilst possibly promoting their well-being (Bauer,

et al., 2010). Data collected from interviews could provide a basis which highlights patterns of participants' personal history with gaming, as well as personal constructions, or constructive alternativism, of VG habits in society (Burr, et al., 2012; Kelly, 1955).

The frequency of four 30-60-minute interviews was once a week over four consecutive weeks. This provided the researcher opportunities to not only build rapport and trust with participants but connect with students at different times with varying levels of anxiety. Multiple interviews allowed participants opportunities to revisit previous ideas, further elaborate, and reflect on their use of gameplay during the week when managing anxiety. Four interviews proved to be a reasonable commitment for all participants.

Participants agreed to engage in a minimum of thirty minutes VG play prior to each interview. This provided the researcher new material to investigate with participants along with their history and preferences prior to the study. The VGs must be of their choosing and in the comfort of their own space. In processing earlier iterations of the study, having participants enter a lab to engage in a pre-determined game could create a compound variable. Extraneous variables that cannot be controlled can be avoided by simply not creating stress in a new environment, such as gaming within a time limit. There is ecological validity without creating additional environmental or contextual cues that could cause more anxiety and affect metacognitive awareness, further reinforcing the need for IPA methodology, therefore these methods were deemed unnecessary.

Semi-structured IPA interview questions were developed and organised into four primary categories, including gameplay, anxiety, identity, and metacognition. Gameplay data informs the researcher of VG habits and preferences, with anxiety-based questions exploring institutional causality and impact. Identity-based questions are intended to determine if VGs have contributed to self-development. Questions built upon attention and metacognition were asked to observe instances of participant intentionality in VG usage to increase personal awareness. This could be in reference to self, anxiety, or their problems. Initial questions and anticipated probing questions are as follows.

Gameplay:

- How often do/did you play?
- How long do/did you play?
 - In one session or over time?
- What game(s) do/did you play?
 - Are there certain parts of the game you play the most and how often?

Anxiety:

- Are there problems as a student? And as a person?
- What are they? How have you managed to solve them? How do you manage?

Identity:

- Do you see yourself as a capable student?
- Do you fear failure?
- How do you plan and organise to achieve something in your work?
- Do you see yourself as a capable person with family, friends, colleagues?
- How do you plan and organise at home?

Metacognition

- What in the game draws your attention?
- Do you feel that scene or gameplay helps you understand/solve/manage/analyse problems in the real world?
- Do you feel you can play that scene or game again and it may help you develop or increase your awareness of the problems in the real world?

3.6.2 Participants

Initially seeking five to twelve participants, a total of 24 showed interest. Eight participants were eligible and able to fully commit to the research, which falls within the recommended range of 5-25 participants for IPA (Polkinghorne, 1989). Others either neglected to follow through, were not eligible, or became ineligible due to research approval occurring after the potential participant's degree completion.

Table 1 below shows basic respondent information, including participant number, age, level of study, country, institutional classification, gender identity, and ethnicity and/or race. Participant names were replaced by numbers (i.e. Participant 1 as P1) to ensure anonymity. Note P1, P3, and P4 identified as being previously diagnosed with some form of anxiety disorder, whereas the others were not. See appendix p46 for a more detailed table of demographics, including gameplay habits.

Table 1.

Participant demographics

Participant	Age	Level of Study	Country	Institution(s) Classifications	Anxiety Diagnosis	Gender Identity	Ethnicity and/or Race
P1	27	Bachelors	US	community college, public research university	Yes	Man	Arab, White, American
P2	20	Masters	UK	public university	No	Man	White, British, English
P3	31	Bachelors	US	public research university	Yes	Man	Latino/a/x, Cuban, Dominican, Hispanic
P4	19	Bachelors	UK	public university	Yes	Man	White, British
P5	36	Doctoral	US	public research university	No	Woman	Asian
P6	30	Bachelors	US	online for-profit university	No	Man	White
P7	20	Bachelors	UK	public university	No	Man	White, British
P8	30	Masters	US	public research university	No	Transgender, Transwoman or Transfeminine, Woman	White

3.7 Data collection and analysis

In this study, responses were reviewed to develop clusters of meaning in the process toward invariant structure and essence. The eight participants volunteered to partake in this study over a consecutive four-week period occurring between August 2017 through December 2017. Ranging from thirty-minute to sixty-minute interviews, participants agreed to being recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. After contacting the researcher with interest, all participants were initially contacted through email to organise an intake meeting, four semi-structured IPA interviews occurring once each week, and a

debrief meeting. Overall thirty-four interviews were conducted, including two pilot interviews completed by two participants who continued with the study and preferred their initial collected data be included with the formal research data. The interview schedule comprised of questions surrounding gameplay and themes of anxiety, identity, and metacognition. Implementing Jonathan Smith's (Smith, et al., 2009) IPA, the analytical procedure included the transcribed data from the thirty-four interviews being manually coded, analysed, and interpreted into three primary superordinate themes, including newly discovered subordinate themes. Applied in similar research and widely recognised, IPA serves as the most fitting qualitative research approach to the present study (Willig, 2013; Howitt & Cramer, 2010). Further analysis is available in the respective section.

3.8 Ethical considerations

All ethical considerations are in conjunction with The British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics, including confidentiality, anonymity, right to withdraw, data storage, psychological participant report, and researcher safety/support.

Participants will be made clear, in the participant information sheet and consent form, that they are able to withdraw their participation in this study at any time without penalty. Additionally, they will be made aware that they will be able to withdraw their data from the study up to two weeks after participation. Participants will also be given an informative debrief, which will inform them of their right to withdraw their results from the study without any disadvantage or penalty.

Only researchers have access to the research data, which will be securely stored on password-protected computers at the University of Huddersfield for a holding maximum of 10 years to maintain transparency and integrity of research. Upon conclusion of research, data will be stored on password-protected computers by main researcher, main supervisor and second supervisor at the University of Huddersfield. If all parties were to leave the University of Huddersfield, data will be destroyed.

Whilst this study focuses on a non-clinical sample, it is in regard to anxiety in university students' experiences. If a participant were to confess high feelings of anxiety to the researcher and believe they may be unwell, they will be supplied with information immediately and within debrief towards suitable help in the form of 1. Information about the university's counselling service, and 2. Anxiety free telephone, online, local support service information.

For the University of Huddersfield School of Human and Health Sciences School Research Ethics Panel Application form and amendments, see appendix p61-p87.

3.9 Best practices: Researcher bracketing

In the effort to adhere to the best practice of bracketing, this section acknowledges that the researcher's world views impact the study and analysis process is important (Smith & Osborne, 2008). Within the context of phenomenology types, the primary researcher can only approach the study through hermeneutic phenomenology (Zimmerman, 2015) due to their shared history of VG experiences with the participants. Further, the concept of 'double hermeneutics' applies in that the researcher also made sense of their shared experience (Smith, et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Bracketed moments in the process include personal gaming experiences, ideas surrounding negative societal stigma with gaming, politically charged research, and disdain toward hate speech and toxic masculinity within gaming communities. Such biases impact the lens in which the researcher writes and analyses and cannot be avoided.

Chapter four: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Rather than note the frequency of thematic content, the IPA research method focuses on comprehending the essence and intricacy of said data. To respect and explore inherent content meanings from participant experiences is central to IPA. Noting the aforementioned researcher bracketing and double hermeneutics, their own history provided a platform during both research steps of question and interview schedule construction. Whilst understanding that thematic patterns may develop of their own accord, questions were formed in anticipation of congruence with the researcher’s prior VG experiences. As such bias can be presumed, anticipated themes have proven researcher forecasting to be accurate.

In the initial analysis process, transcripts of P1 and P3 pilot study interviews were reviewed. As both have been diagnosed with anxiety disorders previously and were current students, the connection between VGs and anxiety management was confirmed as a superordinate theme. As were themes of identity and metacognition in the context of VGs. Despite positively ascertaining the superordinate themes, the relationships to some subordinate themes was less expected by the researcher. After examining the pilot study and coding the remaining interviews, the subordinate themes were identified in congruence with the IPA process. Subtheme clustering fit the anticipated primary themes in that each subordinate theme directly impacts the superordinate theme through the VG experience. Table 2 below presents the list of superordinate and subordinate themes formulated from the pilot studies.

Table 2.

Superordinate and subordinate themes

Superordinate Theme	Anxiety	Identify development	Metacognition
Subordinate Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues within academia • Managing disabilities in the academia • Social needs • Finances • Issues as a person • Managing anxiety through gaming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social needs met ○ Complementary activities ○ Family history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct impact of gaming • Relationship confidence through gaming • Gaming communities • Self-identifying through gaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escaping through gaming • Problem solving parallels • Accomplishments through lists • Emotional cognisance through gaming

As this chapter is structured by theme, as opposed to respondent answers, each section will explore superordinate then subordinate themes. Whilst some IPA research offers analysis after each quote, “it should be recognised that, as is generally the case with qualitative research, there is no single, definitive way to do IPA... [The researcher] may find yourself adapting the method to your own particular way of working and the particular topic you are investigating” (Smith & Osborn 2009). Due to the straightforward nature of many excerpts, this analysis will offer insight between both quotes and themes, based on the topic, to connect ideas and multiple coherent stories of participants.

4.2 Anxiety

Themes surrounding anxiety will be drawn upon from qualitative data in this section. Along with articulating problems participants experience as a student and as a person, it is observed how participants manage anxiety and the issues associated with it. Common themes include typical student behaviour of procrastination or feeling overwhelmed before deadlines. However, one of the most universal issues observed was grounded in finances, being one of the few themes mentioned as a stressor by every participant. Further, it is evident that the matters initiating anxiety are as varied and diverse as the participants themselves and how they manage each topic. Participants' personal history also plays a vital role in this section, as the presence of VGs impacted early gameplay in each participants' lives, how they coped with stress in their past, as well as how they manage in the present. Sections 4.2.1 through 4.2.3 will highlight primary issues and patterns of anxiety observed amongst participants. Whilst participants will allude to their gaming habits relieving anxiety, section 4.2.4 will inspect specific gaming behaviours.

4.2.1 Issues within academia

Whilst not out of place for students to stress about exams, deadlines, or social needs, many find themselves overwhelmed, at times becoming listless, choosing to withdraw, becoming withdrawn, or having negative physiological symptoms. P5 in their first interview (i1) begins with the impact of American standardised tests and the need for academic support (see Appendix for Data Analysis Quotes: DAQ-1).

P3 (i4) debates balancing and meeting deadlines that they depend on others' contributions for completion. The impact here exists in being overwhelmed and sacrificing quality to simply pass their courses (see DAQ-2).

P4 (i1) explains in the following how anxiety can compound in their university experience (see DAQ-3).

Already feeling out of place and unsupported, the participant adds the pressure to live up to their performance from the previous year (see DAQ-4).

Even further, they acknowledge their lack of motivation or debilitation in anticipation of more anxiety due to deadlines (see DAQ-5).

However, P3 (i3) shares their new outlook on managing the consuming anxiety whilst owning their past behaviour (see DAQ-6).

The participant continues to explain the physiological effect on their body and the impact on others they engage with, which furthers their anxiety (see DAQ-7).

As P3 (i3) continues in their anecdote, the complexity deepens with further anxiety from deadlines and a lack of time to study. Whilst the guilt for sacrificing quality is again evident, the participant ends with a statement of frustration (see DAQ-8).

Albeit the aforementioned cases may seem typical of students managing stress, the amassing of challenges clearly incites additional anxiety. P5 feels pressure to not only succeed at standardised testing but concern for their future in general, as there's a need for applications completion. The need for connection and affirmation from faculty is also important to P5. P3 manages multiple stressors both externally, such as peers, and internally through self-imposed expectations. They acknowledge their

anxiety brought on from academia and personal flaws, diligently working at tasks, even through planned breaks. P3 shares about growing overwhelmed to the point of apathy and impacted functionality. Their lack of connectedness and focus has resulted in an almost animatronic state where subpar work is submitted last minute for the sake of any grade. P4's academic anxiety is associated with unsettled feelings. These seem based on concern for not receiving necessary academic attention as a second year student, pressure to perform as well as the past, a perceived unrealistic sense of timeline, and potential anxiety as a result of this.

4.2.1.1 Managing disabilities in academia

Five of eight participants stated they were persons living with disabilities, including but not limited to physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health disabilities, such as depression and anxiety disorders. In processing their anxieties, participants with disabilities were able to reflect upon themselves and their relations (Goodley, et al., 2014). In addition to issues representative of students in higher education, some students bear added stressors causing extra anxiety. When asked what specifically caused anxiety in the past week, P2 (i4) shared that they were called into a meeting regarding absences that affected their attendance (see DAQ-9).

The need to have a meeting initially caused stress for the student, which became confusion, and ultimately frustration for an unnecessary meeting after travelling into university. However, for some students, getting out their front door can occasionally be a struggle. P4 (i2) discloses how their diagnosed anxiety disorder can hinder their ability to attend university (see DAQ-10).

The internal conflict P4 (i2) was experiencing resulted in more anxiety, which led to their overanalysing, a habit they have explained occurs when in such a state. Note the following realisation (see DAQ-11).

The continued conflict led the participant into a debilitating state for days. Whilst aware of the situation, the participant discloses a history of this behaviour below (see DAQ-12).

On top of anxiety from managing a disability that impacts their functionality as a student, P2 must navigate annoyances with incompetent university administrators and systems initially intended to support students with disabilities. P4's anxiety and disability has rendered them nearly debilitated as a student, struggling to attend university, yet is aware of resources and previous history. P2 and P4 explain their layered issues not only as typical students, but as individuals who also happen to have disabilities.

4.2.1.2 Social needs

As students, participants undoubtedly communicated issues with motivation in academia. This becomes applicable in the context of Maslow's theoretical hierarchy of needs, specifically within the hierarchy of needs pyramid. Social needs exist within the "belonging and loving" layer, the third most fundamental layer of the pyramid (Maslow, 1943). Social needs have been expressed as a concern for some participants as loneliness or a lack of connection within their respective educational communities or personal circles, some of which are impacted by technical limitations of gaming. When asked what game they'd like to be playing, P2 (i1) responded as follows (see DAQ-13).

When asked what causes the participant anxiety at university, they revealed a lack of confidence in initiating engagement with new people as well as establishing a social circle at university (see DAQ-14).

Following up shortly after with what they envisioned their ideal situation to be, their response confirmed their isolation (see DAQ-15).

In terms of whether they see themselves as a capable person, P2 (i2) elaborates on their inability to enter social circles (see DAQ-16).

Beyond the academic setting, social need exists within other circles. P1 (i2) explains anxiety from within a group project, then their preferred form of social support (see DAQ-17).

After being asked if managing anxiety was preferred through verbal processing, P1 (i2) provided validation, however with further roadblocks that induced more anxiety (see DAQ-18).

The challenge of differentiating time zones frustrated the participant, as does their inability to find support in their partner. (See DAQ-19).

Here we see P2's need for friends digitally as well as at university. And whilst P1 feels it burdensome to vent, there's a preference for verbal application when managing anxiety, which is negatively impacted by the lack of support within closer proximity. The loneliness and lack of communal connection for P2 within a friend community, as well as for P1 with their family community and partner when needing to vent, are only two examples of social needs not met by participants that cause anxiety.

4.2.2 Finances

Although social need and managing disabilities have been highlighted as themes found in this study to have compounded anxiety for some participants, the most common and concerning cause of anxiety voiced by all participants was that of financial strain. Financial security falls into Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid within the second most fundamental need of "safety." Extending across a vast spectrum of needs, participants claimed they require funds to afford anything from a new gaming console (which would fulfil their social need), or access to a social physical activity to manage anxiety, to food and rent, which fall into Maslow's most fundamental need of "physiological" necessities (MASLOW, 1943). This section bears accounts, current and past, impacting participant anxiety concerning finances. See DAQ-20-22.

Beyond consoles and memberships, participants expressed concerns for access to grants, scholarships, stipends, application fees, student loans, and tuition on top of anxiety from other aspects of their educational experience. When asked what has caused anxiety outside of university, P5 (i2) began with their attempt to acquire funds on top of their stressful job search (see DAQ-23).

P3 (i1) also began their response with financial concern (see DAQ-24).

After failing to gain access to financial aid and learning they had to complete two semester's worth of work in one, despite enjoying their research topics, P3 (i1) acknowledged the experienced stress with their workload, eventually compounding their anxiety as they progressed through the study (see DAQ-25).

When asked if a lot of time is spent feeling anxiety, P8 (i2) confirmed and expressed concerns for their future financial needs (see DAQ-26).

P1 (i1) shared their first attempt in accessing higher education and struggle gaining access to financial aid without parental support (see DAQ-27).

For some participants financial anxiety has historically been family based, whether living in a lower tax bracket as a family or in isolation from extended family (see DAQ-28-29).

After sharing that their partner was away for a family illness, and whilst managing anxiety from their three children and university, P5 (i1) disclosed deep financial concerns (see DAQ-30).

Multiple systems have put each participant in some sort of financial stress. P2's lack of money not only limits them to managing anxiety through VGs but through sport. The lack of work, concern to pay for current or upcoming academic dues impact P7, P5, P3, and P8. Yet P4, P1, and P5 acknowledge their limitations and anxiety from being classified as being in lower income families. Anxiety due to financial strain proves to be the most prevalent theme amongst participants, whether in the context of academia or their personal lives. However, for some participants their anxiety isn't only compounded but cyclical, in that anxiety from academia and other challenges as a person not only co-exist but influence the other.

4.2.3 Issues as a person

Outside the academic setting, participants carry the burden of additional difficulties which cause anxiety. The following exemplifies these stressors in the forms of fear of future endeavours, starting new career chapters, struggle around constructions regarding age and normalcy, raising a family, and grief surrounding cancer and possible family death (see DAQ-31).

Above, P3 (i1) processes anxiety from two transitional periods occurring simultaneously regarding their future plans and the state of their relationship. They are unsure how to move forward after graduation due to aforementioned limitations in section 4.2.2, added relationship stress (see DAQ-32).

P5 (i1) elaborated on their partner being away, as mentioned in section 4.2.2. They shared the impact their partner's absence had on them as well as their children, ultimately leading the participant to play VGs, which will be discussed in section 4.2.4. At university, P3 explores their struggle with age as a non-traditional student. Despite their lifelong love of Pokémon, P3 (i2) explains why they think it's weird (see DAQ-33).

Although they recognise that their experience as a commuter student influences their social behaviour, P3 (i2) continues to struggle with the societal construct of age expectations they were raised to subscribe to (see DAQ-34).

Despite ownership of self-inflicted pressure, P3 continues to grapple with this in their personal life. Also a non-traditional student, P6 (i1) juggles school and a full-time career. They share how academic stress overflows into their work setting, blurring the lines between hours of learning (see DAQ-35).

When asked of their gaming habits for the week, P5 (i4) admitted to an increase from previous weeks due to illness and an unfortunate amount of grief (see DAQ-36).

As opposed to the younger participants, P3, P5, and P6 shared additional issues as a person causing anxiety. P3 worries about their future, what's considered acceptable or "normal," and admits to gaming when sick or managing grief. Also in times of grief, P5 manages anxiety through grief whilst raising a

family despite limited resources and support from their partner, leading to daily gaming. Outside of academia, P6 juggles training for a full-time job on top of school, leading to many hours of learning each day and the mental capacity it requires. From academic based anxiety to managing family, finances, grief, and loss, it is evident students manage quite a bit of anxiety in and out of the classroom. As some participants alluded to turning to VGs for relief, section 4.2.4 will delve deeper into how they play VGs to manage their anxieties.

4.2.4 Managing anxiety through gaming

Each participant admitted to their use of VGs to curb or manage anxiety. While some anecdotes illustrate the immediate need to play VGs, others discuss their awareness of them needing to game as relief. Note where participants acknowledge the benefits, which will be revisited in section 4.4 regarding metacognition data analysis (see DAQ-37).

Here P1 (pi) explains how they fared specifically with their diagnosed social anxiety by readily having access to handheld VGs over a period of years. They continue below, justifying the behaviour as a form of meditation whilst walking their character in a Zelda VG (see DAQ-38).

Despite P1 in their pilot interview (pi) describing handheld gaming as procrastination above, they hesitate to admit the positive, calming effect they describe as meditative. P6 (i1) also utilises handheld gaming to manage whilst in the work setting (see DAQ-39).

Not only does P3 (pi) recognise the comforting effect of graphics in gaming, but they share their partner's acknowledgement and encouragement to play (see DAQ-40).

P2 (i4) provided an example of immediate VG play when in a state of anxiety due to a family incident out of their control (see DAQ-41).

Participants directly addressed escaping the anxiety of academic work through VGs and their calming effect (see DAQ-42-43).

P6(i3) likened the success of defeating a VG boss to that of release from using a punching bag (see DAQ-44).

Some participants acknowledged their awareness of preference to play VGs after work whilst others are proactive in scheduling gaming time into their diary (see DAQ-45).

P8 (i1) shared their reactive response to play a VG they find fulfilling when they're stressed in the workplace, whereas P6 (i2) takes a proactive approach to anticipated anxiety (see DAQ-46).

P6 (i3) elaborated more on their planning process in a later interview when asked of their new classes (see DAQ-47).

In these examples, along with those on previous sections, we see P1, P6, P3, and P6 use VGs proactively and reactively to manage moments of anxiety. The intentional use is comparable to someone bringing a sports bag to work in anticipation of a challenging day hoping to exercise after or choosing to watch television or listen to music after coming home from a difficult work day.

4.2.4.1 Social needs met

As participants' social needs were exemplified in section 4.2.2, participants seek support through social outlets. P6 (i2) shares who they choose to wind down with, including their partner, with whom they play VGs (see DAQ-48).

Despite unsuccessfully forming a social base at university, as seen earlier in section 4.2.2, P4 (i1) connects with friends from home via online multiplayer games (see DAQ-49).

In a follow up question, when asked if P7 (i1) discusses strategy during online multiplayer, they explained their need for casual dialogue and laid-back friends online despite being weak in Player Versus Player settings (see DAQ-50).

Through a busy post-graduate course, P8 (i1) uses online gaming as their time to catch up with fellow student company (see DAQ-51).

When asked how they manage their disability mentioned in section 4.2.1, P4 (i2) shared connecting with their significant other and with friends online (see DAQ-52).

4.2.4.2 Complementary activities

Most participants shared complementary activities to gaming that aid in their anxiety relief practices. Section 4.4 will discuss participants' metacognition in the context of gaming in more detail. P7 (i3) shared their pride in a vast music collection and was asked why they choose to invest a significant amount of time in getting lost in their music (see DAQ-53).

Some participants play VGs that emulate other hobbies. When asked if P8 (i2) utilises VGs to manage anxiety, they disclosed their practise of Rock Band to de-stress, playing the most physical of instruments (see DAQ-54).

Physical hobbies have shown to have positive benefits for mental health. When asked how P5 (i1) managed their anxiety after a particularly difficult day, they confirmed their choice to play VGs and discussed their plan to supplement stress-relief in various forms the following week (see DAQ-55).

Aside from P2's (pi) involvement in dance, which will be explored more in section 4.4 regarding metacognition, P6 (i2) supplements their anxiety management simply with walking (see DAQ-56).

Beyond P7 (i1) listening to music, it was shared that they are also a musician of multiple instruments since the age of six. With multiple outlets for relief and social opportunities, including playing hockey, they still choose to play VGs, sometimes changing genres and difficulty levels for a slackened gaming experience (see DAQ-57).

P3 (i1) reflects on how VGs and dance are both outlets for relief (see DAQ-58).

It is evident that despite participant's preference to engage in VGs, other activities complement their anxiety management. Also proactive or reactive to the anxiety experienced, participants walk, play music, listen to music, play sport, or dance. It is important to note participant recognition that other activities curb anxiety beyond VGs.

4.2.4.3 Family history

Whilst the aforementioned were current issues at the time of the study, participants contributed subject matters from their personal history that have impacted how they manage anxiety with VGs. This pattern exists with most participants yet note that all participants grew up with VGs present in the home. Cognisant or not, whilst coping with anxiety from challenging family situations participants chose to play VGs, at times intentionally to escape. P6 (i3) learned surprising news about their family which they then associated with a favourite childhood VG, using it to self-soothe (see DAQ-59).

P7 (i2) and their father established a common interest in VGs at an early age despite a separation. No longer being able to game with their father and feeling lonely without an older brother, they played games alone pressing random buttons without understanding games (see DAQ-60).

When asked of the relationship, P7 (i2) elaborated on the impact of their father on their gaming habits, yet still maintaining this common interest (see DAQ- 61).

The separation of parents was unfortunately a less amicable experience for P2 (i3), who escaped through their childhood console and handheld over a period of years (see DAQ-62).

Playing VGs to escape was a direct coping mechanism for participants managing family-based anxiety. P4 (i2) discloses a shared home experience with their best friend, whom they played VGs online with and continue to do so through university (see DAQ-63).

Whilst recognising their best friend's usage of VGs to cognitively escape family and poverty, P4 (i2) owns their paralleled behaviour, however with an appreciation for its positive impact (see DAQ-64).

Delving into reasons for to escape, P4 (i2) also managed separation of parents at an early age, resulting in counselling and further anxiety in the home (see DAQ-65).

P1 (i1), who found gaming meditative earlier in this section, also shared a history of familial discord. When processing their management of anxiety caused by said strife through VGs, the participant was asked if they've needed validation for much of their life (see DAQ-66).

When asked to elaborate on their reference to escaping, P8 (i1) explained their connection to storytelling, intricate narratives, and character development whilst in a state of being closed off before their coming out process (see DAQ-67).

They continued to explain how VGs were present in emotionless times and when also managing a challenging home life (see DAQ-68).

In terms of what pulls them into gaming, P3 (pi) recalls how family stress around citizenship and abuse prompted them to escape through gaming and dance as well as how this continues today (see DAQ-69).

Aside from present day usage, participants historically used VGs to manage issues within the home. Whether to avoid uncomfortable situations or escape parental conflict, such VG play is a common theme amongst all participants.

4.2.5 Conclusion

Whilst common threads of familial and financial challenges are woven through the various patterns and themes of anxiety portrayed by participants, whether at home or academia, it is evident that VGs have played an integral part in participants managing stress and anxiety. As VGs have been an influence on participant identities, there has also been an awareness, subtle or overt, of gaming's positive impact and benefits. This will be explored in following sections. In terms of theme description regarding this section, texturally, participants experienced relief from anxiety, whilst structurally through gameplay.

4.3 Identity development data analysis

Curious as to whether VG players are using virtual worlds to develop themselves psychologically, identity themed questions per section 3.5.1 were formed regarding topics of failure, planning, organisation, and capability, whether as a student, friend, partner, colleague, or family member. This section studies examples of direct gaming influences on development, as well as the social impact and self-awareness in the context of identity development.

4.3.1 Direct impact of gaming

With intent of determining whether games or scenes directly help construct and develop participants' identities, we learn of several instances where this is the case. When asked if P1 (pi) would say their self-confidence has grown to an extent because of gaming, they replied with how a virtual world prepared them for the real world (see DAQ-70).

In describing whether they felt gaming helped them develop who they are as a person, P2 (i2) shared how motivation in the games they choose also motivate them in reality (see DAQ-71).

P6's (i1) loneliness and lack of access to exploration as a child was comforted through VGs and their imagination (see DAQ-72).

As P1 utilised VGs to explore identity, P2 connects life and VGs with being objective driven. P6 learned how to cope as an only child. Such experiences directly impacted participant identity formation.

4.3.2 Relationship confidence through gaming

Conversation surrounding identity development as a friend, partner, colleague, and family member organically evolved as a subject matter during most interviews. When forming the aforementioned interview questions, it was thought participants would share solutions in their virtual worlds that solved their real-world problems concerning their identity development. However, participants explained that solutions were not necessarily found within the games themselves, but through its shared usage. Anecdotes of relationships and memories with a VG component prove to be another common thread amongst participants, fulfilling their social needs whilst supporting confidence and capability within those relations. P1 (i4) expresses an appreciation for their flatmate's company whilst gaming (see DAQ-73).

In section 4.2.1 P1 (i4) expressed need for support from social outlets. They continue by stating a shared appreciation for their siblings (see DAQ-74).

When revisiting the matter of familial conflict in section 4.2.4, P2 (i1) mentioned his sister's Game Boy and their relationship (see DAQ-75).

Whilst cooperative gameplay, or co-op, was clearly team building for the siblings, competitive gameplay also benefited the relationship. P5 (i1) also shares the sentiment with their older sibling into their adulthood (see DAQ-76).

P6's (i4) partner's recent VG purchase left them ecstatic for the opportunity to share quality time together gaming. They've established a solidarity that seems to enhance their identity as a couple (see DAQ-77).

As both P6 and their partner shared awareness, the dynamic relationships allowed the two to challenge and support one another when problem solving (Sanford, 1962).

P8's (i4) relational identity development through gaming has grown in multiple roles, as a partner, sibling, and within social circles (see DAQ-78).

Beyond family, establishing identity through friend interactions surrounding VGs has shown to be effective for multiple participants. P3 (i3) prides in having multiple arcades machines in their home and enjoys hosting game nights with their partner. They start with listing games they enjoy playing co-operatively locally at home (see DAQ-79).

P7 (i3) actually favours local co-op and will venture online for online co-op for a particular game, however preferably not competitively lest it's in teams (see DAQ-80).

P3 (i3) only recently braved online co-op, finding it pleasing and odd, yet they also appreciated the social gaming within their subcultural Queer community, supporting their level of Queer identity synthesis (Cass, 1979) (see DAQ-81).

In these examples, participants shared experiences of building relationships through VGs. Such positive connections show not only the strengthening of bonds but the building of individual relationship confidence. These benefits can increase within gaming communities, which is covered in the following section.

4.3.3 Gaming communities

In the previous section, interpersonal experiences with partners, siblings, and friends prove to build participant identity within those relationships. Whilst this meets social needs of participants, as does communities based around VGs, especially groups for those who share personal identities within a subculture. When asked specifically if gaming had any impact on their identity, P7 (i2) spoke of their friend group at home, who are also gamers. They continue about how their relationships and conversations include VGs, whilst validating their use of gaming to relax (see DAQ-82).

When asked what keeps their attention in VGs, P7 (i1) confirms the use of multiplayer online game as a solution to keeping their friend group connected (see DAQ-83).

For P3 (i3), a gamer identity and gaming community has been essential since their teenage years (see DAQ-84).

Whilst P3 (i3) articulated their appreciation for a Queer gaming circle in section 4.3.2, P6 shares their discovery of Queer gaming communities online as well as their role within one (see DAQ-85).

Safety within this community is very important to P6 (i3) (see DAQ-86).

A sense of belonging contributes to P6's (i4) identity development as a homosexual male and a gamer (see DAQ-87).

P8 (i1) utilises online Transgender and Queer gaming communities as a safe space to avoid or recover from toxic people online. Further, they actively create physical safe spaces and events for LGBTQ gamers on their university campus, where they happened to have met one of their closest friends (see DAQ-88).

When P3 (pi) felt detached from family, they found community through gaming despite their disability (see DAQ-89).

As their social circle grew, they saw VGs as a solution to work through social anxiety (see DAQ-90).

These examples show how VGs not only manage anxiety but keep people connected to friends and family. Such gaming communities also provide a digital safe space and sense of belonging for marginalised gamers while offering opportunities to make new connections with others.

4.3.4 Self-identifying through gaming

Intrigued as to whether participants sought development through games and virtual worlds, it is evident that whilst some anecdotes exemplify this participant's in section 4.3.1, participants principally don't seek answers or solutions within the games themselves, but introspectively and externally from their gaming experiences. P7 (i1) explains the importance and role of VGs in their life as a gamer (see DAQ-91).

P8 (i1) describes the relevance of VGs in their life as a transgender woman whilst acknowledging the dualistic noxiousness yet lure for the Queer community (see DAQ-92).

Four of eight study participants identify as part of the LGBT+ community. Beyond their Queer identity, P1 (pi) shares how playing VGs impacted their size identity (see DAQ-93).

4.3.5 Conclusion

Questions themed in failure, organisation, and self-perceived capability were anticipated to highlight patterns of confidence in participants as well as insight into their identity development. Whilst VGs themselves have had a direct impact on one's identity development and relational benefits, the participant responses in this section exhibit true value in intentional usage of VGs to examine their self-imposed identities. The textural description regarding this section is that participants' identities continued to develop, structurally due to gaming within their relationships and social circles.

4.4 Metacognition data analysis

Observations of participant metacognition are based on data collected through phenomenological qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods. As all qualitative data collected can be categorised as metacognitive knowledge due to participant awareness of cognitive systems (Wells, 1995; Spada, et al., 2008), this section will simply focus on experiences of awareness whilst highlighting patterns of subject matter in relation to anxiety and VGs. Participants discuss epiphanies in which they observe themselves playing games that actively engage their awareness of how gaming impacts their mental processes surrounding anxiety. In some instances, below, this progression transforms anxiety into motivation, which in turn develops into empowerment.

4.4.1 Escaping through gaming

The act of compartmentalising anxiety by playing VGs stands as a common, intentional, and cognisant practice, even at a young age. Similar to examples from section 4.2.4 and 4.3.2, the following participants reference escape, however not to the scientific extent of escapism. The language of “escaping” is intended for consistency purposes. P6 (i1) notes their mindset toward gaming and its benefits as a child (see DAQ-94).

P3 (i4) explains specifically how coping with diagnosed anxiety is eased with VGs (see DAQ-95).

The overwhelming effects of their anxiety can be set aside when investing focus in demanding gameplay. The success within the game transcribes into real world empowerment for P3 (i4) (see DAQ-96).

Also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, P1 (pi) controls worrying through Tetris and the need to concentrate on gameplay (see DAQ-97).

P1’s (i1) metacognition regarding the relaxing impact of Tetris gameplay delays the pressures of life in a more passive outlook on escaping (see DAQ-98).

Returning to their horror game, P3 (i1) equates escaping through VGs to that of other forms of media consumption and entertainment. Whilst recognising they won’t carry the game into real life, they find themselves processing how to carry appropriate thinking into real life (see DAQ-99).

As P3 attempts to process their gratification in horror games, their perception and success in coping with anticipated fright becomes a “source of cognitive euphoria lending to enjoyment” (Lin, Wu, 2017).

4.4.2 Problem solving parallels

Participants shared an awareness of similarities when confronting challenges in both reality and VGs. When asked if their gaming strategy parallels that of managing things in real life, P2 (i3) shares their consciousness of problem solving (see DAQ-100).

When asked if managing stressful problems is different between the real world and gaming, P6 (i2) confirms their use of online resources for both (see DAQ-101).

Despite initial states of fear, when asked what they were taking away from a horror VG, P3 (i1) happened upon a profound realisation regarding particular problems in life (see DAQ-102).

4.4.3 Accomplishments through lists

Participants observed an awareness for task lists and side quests relieving anxiety. In the following examples participants articulate a need for control resulting in a sense of accomplishment in both reality and VGs. Doing so can provide participants with feelings of pride, encouragement, even hope. When asked how they feel certain gameplay helps them manage things in everyday life, P6 (i1) explains as such (see DAQ-103).

In managing their diagnosed anxiety, P3 (pi) describes the satisfaction of completing lists (see DAQ-104).

When asked to elaborate, they confirm feelings of liberation (see DAQ-105).

P3 (pi) continues by making a connection to academic-based anxiety, which is eased with the support of a mobile application (see DAQ-106).

Expounding on the concept, the participant conveys how tackling lists in gaming prepares and inspires their motivation for completing academic work (see DAQ-107).

4.4.4 Emotional cognisance through gaming

As referenced in section 4.3.1, people choose to escape through multiple forms of media. Within these VGs, books, films, music, television programmes, art, and theatre, consumers become invested in characters, settings, and stories they may personally relate with. This investment comes in a form of empathy that elicits emotions, triggering spurs of cognition. In this section, participants observe an awareness of feelings in that stimulation of thought whilst engaging in VGs.

P6 (i3) recalls an experience of calming whilst gaming after a difficult day in the previous week (see DAQ-108).

P3 (i3), mindful of the effects of gaming, and in the fashion of conditional metacognitive knowledge, chose to play a horror VG with intent to provoke a reaction (see DAQ-109).

P8 (i1) recalls their initial recognition of VGs as an influential mode of storytelling. This event initiated their earliest waking of emotions associated with gender identity (see DAQ-110).

During the unfolding of their coming out process later in life, P8 (i3) recollects their awareness of previous life decisions and inevitabilities whilst binge gaming (see DAQ-111).

Playing nostalgic VGs such as Mass Effect during a trying period provided P8 an opportunity to sort through profound realisations in their development as a Transgender woman. In the context of reminiscence and sentimentality, nostalgia was observed to be a common emotion not only expressed but sincerely appreciated by all who contributed to this study. When asked why they were also drawn to the Mass Effect franchise, P3 (pi) excitedly elaborated with the comparison to 1990s literature they enjoyed as a child (see DAQ-112).

P6's (i1) exuberant explanation for their love of a specific horror game reboot stood out amongst participants (see DAQ-113).

As each participant alluded to feelings of nostalgia either from a particular game, franchise, console, or fond memory, P6 (i1) consistently pinpointed throughout their interviews how the emotion impacted them (see DAQ-114).

An amalgamation of anxiety relief, escape, familiarity, and idyllic time travel provided a reliable outlet for P6. In the same way that art, music, sport, literature, and film bring consumers to a state of flow, P6's complete absorption into gaming results in happiness (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990)

4.4.5 Conclusion

Metacognition in the context of VGs is undoubtedly linked to aforementioned themes within the anxiety and identity development chapters through experiences articulated in this chapter. Participant accounts revisiting escaping support references in the previous section, whilst enhancing the understanding of metacognition and VGs in terms of problem solving, accomplishment through task lists, and emotional cognisance. Furthermore, the emotion of

nostalgia experienced by participants verifies another common, but positive and uplifting thread amongst participants. The relevance of these clusters of meaning are not only validated throughout the chapter, but those associated with nostalgia are regarded similarly to the state of flow experience within positive psychology (Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). In terms of theme description regarding this chapter, texturally, participants experienced increased metacognition through the structural experience of gameplay.

Chapter five: Discussion and conclusion

Data analysis confirmed superordinate themes surrounding anxiety, identity development and metacognition. The discovery of multiple subordinate themes within the primary three helped the researcher understand complexities of the VG experience. The following discussion of results attempts to visualise the researcher’s identified themes. This chapter will include discussion of results through the progression of emergent thematic analysis from forecasting to fruition, followed by study recommendations and conclusion.

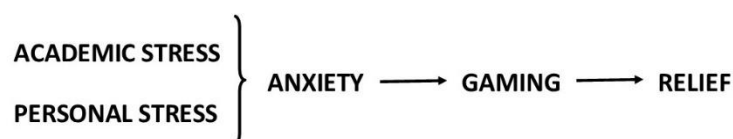
5.1 Discussion of results

Primary objectives of this study surrounded the exploration of VG impact on higher education students in relation to anxiety, identity development, and metacognition. Findings of this IPA study are founded on interpretation and analysis of qualitative data of participants’ VG experiences obtained through semi-structured interviews. This chapter will provide an interpretation of findings, illustrating common themes and research relevancy through applicable theory and preceding research.

IPA has been verified as the most congruous qualitative approach for the present study. The phenomenological approach allowed for the collection of data not found in previous literature, lending the opportunity to observe what is transpiring in the minds of gamers and what is not. Whilst participants reported violent gameplay in shooting and survival games, participants were able to compartmentalise reality from VG. Mentions of killing within gameplay did not transpire to participants killing in the real world for the duration and writing of the present study. Relatedly to this research and anxiety relief, a 2011 study “found that playing violent VGs led to a decrease in frustration and aggression” (Ferguson & Valadez, 2011). The phenomenological approach demonstrated through this study what is materialising from the VG experience, consequently securing IPA’s importance and requirement in scientific gaming literature.

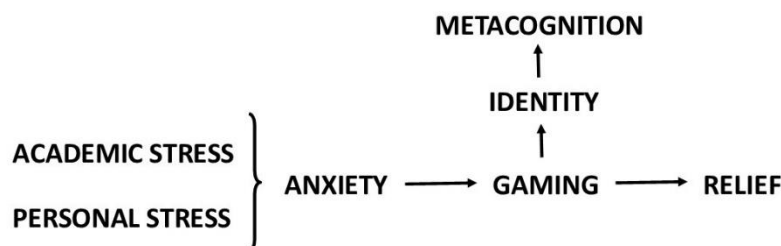
To put into context visually, initial expectations predicted data would indicate a linear progression of events. Beginning with emotions of anxiety stemming from academic and personal stress, participants would actively partake in VG experiences, eventually resulting in a sense of relief from earlier anxiety (McGonigal, 2015). (See Figure 1)

Figure 1.



In the development of this study, identity was added to the visual with anticipation of a connection with student development theories (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, et al., 1998). Metacognition was also added with the possibility that participants became self-aware of identity development or moments of relief from the VG experience (Flavell, 1979; van Velzen, 2016; Metcalfe & Shimamura, 1994). Supporting both themes, data from interviews show that “purposeful gameplay builds self-confidence and real-world problem-solving skills (McGonigal, 2015; Przybylski, et. al, 2010). Therefore, instead of participants solely experiencing relief, additional results may include development of their identity, and perhaps metacognition of such growth. (See Figure 2)

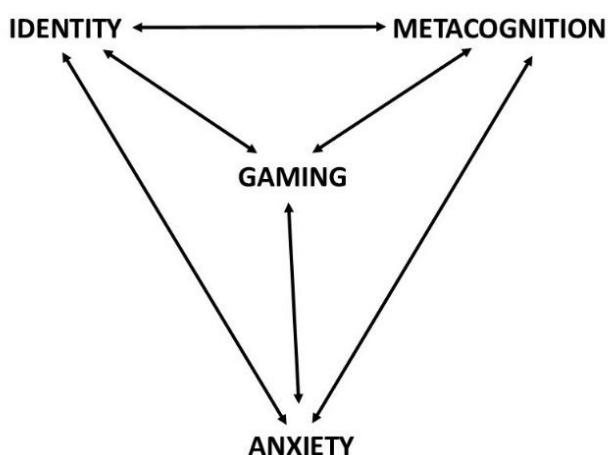
Figure 2.



As expected, per the analysis of this study, participants experienced anxiety due to academic and personal stressors, causing them to utilise gaming in seeking relief. Further, noted metacognitive moments revealed participant awareness of identity development as students in the theoretical sense, as individuals within partner, familial, and platonic relationships. Participants also associated with those of shared knowledge (Sierra & Botti, 2014; Sierra, 2016) as members within social circles or persons of subcultural membership, including gamers or the Queer community. It was then interpreted that the shared gaming experience of participants proved capable of stimulating personal improvement and self-awareness, subsequently increasing metacognition whilst maintaining a component of satisfaction.

However, this initial visual interpretation was proven incomplete due to more compound anecdotes articulated by participants. Themes of anxiety, identity, and metacognition were not linear in conjunction with the gaming experience, but more complex. It is clear from interviews that the phenomenon of “gaming relieves anxiety” was actually multifaceted. In the process of navigating Chickering’s vectors of identity development, participants wavered between multiple levels of metacognition and anxiety simultaneously depending on the topic at hand. Moments of awareness also added a layer of intricacy based on when metacognitive events occurred in participants’ lifetime. The unavoidable presence of time overtly called for a reinterpretation of themes, causing the acknowledgement of themes becoming mutually influential through the gaming experience. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3.



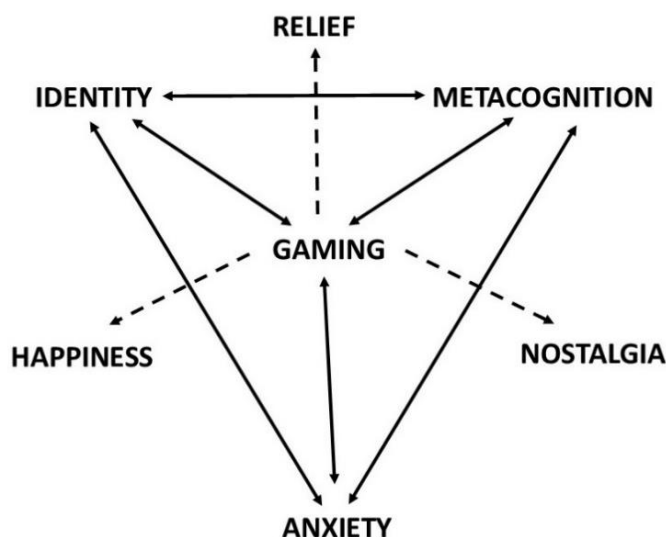
Whilst often misquoted, philosopher Bertrand Russell is associated with the adage “Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted.” To non-gamers, the VG experience can be construed as a waste of time. In justifying their gaming experience, P1 shared a frustrating moment with their grandmother.

A lot of people don't realise it, but games and play time is just part of the human experience. We've played games forever. Yesterday was my brother-in-law's birthday, and I was at my grandma's for dinner, and I was like "Hey I have to go grab a present. I'm gonna go grab a game or something." And she's like "A game? He [is an adult] man!" And I was like "Yeah, but I'm gonna get a card game." And she's like "Oh, okay." For some reason, she was okay with a grown man playing a card game, but not a grown man playing a VG.

The non-gamer may subscribe to the initial phenomenon interpretation; however, the present study implies that the actual phenomenon potentially has more application to cope with the lived human existence. Participants are experiencing more than a simple digital game or story. When they spoke of gaming before homework or between classes, whilst this may be presumed to be procrastination, they could indeed be taking a moment to allow their academic creative energies to rest before picking up on their coursework. P1 timidly referenced it as meditation, in which simultaneously during gameplay, their mind could be preparing itself for next steps. For those who become so immersed in gameplay, they may find themselves in positive psychology theorist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's, state of flow. As the secret to happiness, he explains it as "Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away, time flies, every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one. Like playing jazz, your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost" (Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). This additional subordinate theme of happiness in the gaming experience may be recognised by observing non-gamers, but not personally empathised.

Comparable to happiness, the emotion of nostalgia as a subordinate theme was referenced by all participants. P6 discussed this most, for instance through 8-bit graphics whilst longingly exploring digital worlds with their imagination. The gaming experience opens portals of imagination for participants. For P6's isolated childhood, whilst they may have had trouble imagining things in their life, they could through the use of VGs. And once imagined, could begin to apply such things to life, even into adulthood. The updated visual now includes happiness and nostalgia in addition to relief as a result of the VG experience. (See figure 4)

Figure 4.



As subordinate themes of happiness and nostalgia can be additional responses to gaming beyond anxiety relief, another interpreted theme has proven to augment the VG experience. Whilst an individual can benefit from the VG experience and its corresponding themes, the present study highlights the impact of gaming with others, as all participants have articulated benefits of the shared lived human relation, or relationality (van Manen, 2007). Benefits of cooperative gameplay include boosting moods, increasing pro-social behaviours, building stronger relationships, and developing trust (McGonigal, 2012; Ewoldsen,

2015). Due to the in-depth nature of IPA's qualitative process, the present study can verify the importance of how one chooses to engage in gameplay with others, in turn bearing more meaning than the game content itself. Finally supporting the essence of gaming, whilst the gamer can benefit with an increase in identity development and metacognition, the way one plays collectively can enhance the VG experience through empowering connections, and thus showing that influence lies in that of the player and not the game, regardless of it's violence level. This study and following research may allow for the use of VGs to combat higher education based anxiety in more intentional processes, and possibly maintenance toward better student mental health in general.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations to improve this present study include an additional number of participants, preferably twelve in total. Any more would exceed the recommended amount for IPA, which is best for smaller samples of participants. This would allow for more data but may be more cumbersome in the steps of transcription and coding. This being said, omitting any quantitative aspect would also be beneficial for the study, as IPA is committed to small sample sizes, therefore deeming any quantitative data moot (see collected quantitative data in appendix p109). A refining of interview questions would allow for more flexibility and a stronger focus on description by participants. This would also allow for language to seem less biased, considering the bracketing of this particular researcher. While the participant set is inclusive, increased representation of oppressed and marginalised communities would further diversify perspectives and voices, especially that of women and People of Colour. A balance in UK and US students would also have been ideal to reflect any additional differences or similarities between the VG experience between nations. Finally, adherence to the initial researcher proposed timeline would have provided a more enriched data set. The delay in researcher induction to the university, administrative approval of research proposal, and SREP approval, further limited the initial window of access to currently enrolled student participants.

Further research could include IPA structured research focused on particular communities of identity, such as People of Colour, the Queer community, persons living with disabilities, elderly gamers, women and female identifying gamers, and lower income communities. Such attention would provide thorough insight into marginalised communities within the overall gaming community. Due to the increase of awareness of bias and hate speech in public areas, understanding of gamers and their experiences with toxic masculinity would provide a foundation for understanding and combating unsafe digital spaces online. Gaming clans, a generally new aspect of gaming due to the increase in online multiplayer, would be beneficial to also conduct research. In the context of education, studies considering the need for educational VGs designed for higher education institutions would contribute to more proactive efforts in building student development. Research concerning gaming within university campuses could lead to more proactive education and programming by university staff and counselling services, which could positively affect student success, student mental health, and in turn student retention and any financial implications per student. Beyond the realm of academia, VG developers cognisant of their impact on users could consider intentionality within their game content and player goals. And ultimately, gamers and families with young gamers could be more intentional with healthy, positive VG usage as a form of stress relief and therapy comparable to other forms of leisure. Any mental health studies would benefit the growing concern for depression and life completion, especially in the context of the male gamer experience.

Ultimately, an IPA approach would best serve such research opportunities within education, and especially the VG industry, which necessitates further literature. However, limitation to this methodology is that of a small sample size, primarily due to restricted time and availability of participants. Also, critics of IPA have expressed concern for adequate validity as criticism, given the subjective nature of qualitative

research. Further concern exists in that such research cannot be replicated exactly, especially due to varying conditions, contexts, events, participants, and researcher bracketing.

5.3 Conclusion

This study provided psychological insight into participants' lived experiences of VGs, an ever-growing technological industry. Through IPA, the allowance of liberated participant experiences permitted detailed accounts of the student gaming experience. Establishing a foundation of understanding regarding the relationship between student anxiety, identity development, and metacognition proved to be valuable in the overall body of scientific videogame literature. Whilst easy to confirm that anticipated emergent themes surround anxiety, identity development, and metacognition, the researcher identified the highly complex relationships between those three superordinate themes and their respective subordinate themes. The experience of stress, then anxiety, to VGs, resulting in relief is not linear as expected. The phenomenon of the VG experience is ultimately multifaceted, in which anxiety, identity, and metacognition can all impact each other and/or gaming, resulting in not only relief but possibly happiness and nostalgia. As some research is expected to explain phenomena and find answers, the purpose of IPA is to build a better understanding and contribute to research, which has been met by this study for the general VG experience. Not only did this study highlight VGs as an equally reputable medium comparable to music, film, theatre, literature, and television, but it demonstrates its capabilities toward creating an increasingly interactive and social opportunity for storytelling, education, and community development. The gaming experience stands as an experience that impacts beyond identity and metacognitive development in that it serves as a limitless instrument to include, educate, and empower.

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Appendix**Participant Demographics**

This data is collected from the initial participant recruitment form, located in the appendix on p50.

Participant #	P1
Age	27
Level of Study	Bachelor's degree
Country	United States
Insitution(s) Classification	community college, public research university
How often do you play video games?	I play 3DS and Switch between classes and after family dinners. I play PS4 late at night when I don't have school in the morning. I play mobile games with friends and family when I don't have WiFi.
How do you typically manage anxiety?	Sleep and smoke cigarettes. Watching TV while eating is an excuse to not do work.
Gender Identity	Man
Gender Pronouns	he; him; his; his; himself
Ethnicity and/or Race	Arab, White, American
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities	Mental Health (including mood, anxiety, eating, personality, & organic brain disorders)
Sexual Orientation	Homosexual/Gay

Participant #	P2
Age	20
Level of Study	Master's degree
Country	United Kingdom
Insitution(s) Classification	public university
How often do you play video games?	I play Xbox 4-5 times a week for at least an hour and a half most times. I play solitaire at least once a week and a game called "ride" on my phone daily. I enjoy spending more time gaming on days off and weekends
How do you typically manage anxiety?	I distract myself with walks, or spend time on my phone/xbox
Gender Identity	Man
Gender Pronouns	he; him; his; his; himself
Ethnicity and/or Race	White, British, English
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities	Mental Health (including mood, anxiety, eating, personality, & organic brain disorders) ADDED: My medical condition (irlen's syndrome) causes me to suffer migraines regularly. But I'm on preventative medication so this shouldn't be an issue
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual/Straight

Participant #	P3
Age	31
Level of Study	Bachelor's degree
Country	United States
Institution(s) Classification	public research university
How often do you play video games?	At least an hour daily
How do you typically manage anxiety?	Medicine, gaming, dancing, working out, or writing.
Gender Identity	Man
Gender Pronouns	he; him; his; his; himself
Ethnicity and/or Race	Latino/a/x, Cuban, Dominican, Hispanic
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities	Mental Health (including mood, anxiety, eating, personality, & organic brain disorders)
Sexual Orientation	Homosexual/Gay

Participant #	P4
Age	19
Level of Study	Bachelor's degree
Country	United Kingdom
Institution(s) Classification	public university
How often do you play video games?	I play Xbox one for around 3 hours a day and longer on weekends, I play on my phone at once every couple of days
How do you typically manage anxiety?	Talk to my friends/girlfriend/support tutor and do things that I enjoy such as gaming, going out/meeting friends and eating
Gender Identity	Man
Gender Pronouns	he; him; his; his; himself
Ethnicity and/or Race	White, British
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities	Mental Health (including mood, anxiety, eating, personality, & organic brain disorders), Learning
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual/Straight

Participant #		P5
Age	36	
Level of Study	Doctoral degree	
Country	United States	
Institution(s) Classification	public research university	
How often do you play video games?	I spend most of my time on my Mac or phone for at least 1 hour or more each day on gaming.	
How do you typically manage anxiety?	Walking, Facebook, anything to distract myself	
Gender Identity	Woman	
Gender Pronouns	she; her; her; hers; herself	
Ethnicity and/or Race	Asian	
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities	Learning	
Sexual Orientation	Preference for no labels, Preference for no labels	

Participant #		P6
Age	30	
Level of Study	Bachelor's degree	
Country	United States	
Institution(s) Classification	online for-profit university	
How often do you play video games?	I play PC gaming every day, I have a game boy emulator on my phone which I play at night. I usually play games in the morning and evening.	
How do you typically manage anxiety?	I watch a movie, it I take a walk outside and play Pokemon Go	
Gender Identity	Man	
Gender Pronouns	he; him; his; his; himself	
Ethnicity and/or Race	White	
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities	Not living with disabilities	
Sexual Orientation	Homosexual/Gay	

Participant #		P7
Age		20
Level of Study		Bachelor's degree
Country		United Kingdom
Institution(s) Classification		public university
How often do you play video games?		I play ps4 daily, usually for a couple of hours at a time.
How do you typically manage anxiety?		Just take my time and try to see things from other people's point of view, though im rarely anxious
Gender Identity		Man
Gender Pronouns		he; him; his; his; himself
Ethnicity and/or Race		White, British
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities		Not living with disabilities
Sexual Orientation		Heterosexual/Straight

Participant #		P8
Age		30
Level of Study		Master's degree
Country		United States
Institution(s) Classification		public urban research university
How often do you play video games?		Play PC anywhere from weekly to daily based on my schedule. Xbox One in chunks when a console game comes out that I want to play. Silly mobile games frequently in small chunks.
How do you typically manage anxiety?		Pretend it doesn't exist until I'm forced to take a mental health day.
Gender Identity		Transgender, Transwoman or Transfeminine, Woman
Gender Pronouns		she; her; her; hers; herself
Ethnicity and/or Race		White
Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities		Not living with disabilities
Sexual Orientation		Lesbian, Queer, Questioning

Participation recruitment form

6/20/2018

Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

* Required

1. Email address *



Participant Recruitment

You are being invited to take part in a study about the "Psychological Impact of video games on university students managing everyday university anxiety." Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If you wish to discuss it with a researcher, contact Richard Peralta (richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk) from University of Huddersfield, School of Human and Health Sciences, Department of Psychology. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like additional information.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study aims to establish the extent to which university students are utilizing video games to relieve anxiety caused by their university experiences. The study aims to explore university students' awareness of psychological impact of video game usage on their anxiety through cognitive behavioural interviewing, Metacognition Questionnaire-30, and State/Trait Anxiety Inventory. The study reported here will address the need for qualitative data regarding student usage of gaming as anxiety relief.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE AND WHAT IS MY RIGHT TO WITHDRAW?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw up to two weeks after completion of your participation, without penalty, and without giving a reason.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to complete the following:

1. Participate in one short informational meeting before the study and one short debrief meeting after the study.
2. Complete the State/Trait Anxiety Inventory and Metacognition Questionnaire-30 (MCQ-30) at the beginning and end of your participation.
3. Play video games of your choice and preference in the comfort of your home for a minimum of 30 minutes at least once a week when you're feeling pressure from anxiety.
4. Meet with your researcher to discuss your video game habits over five meetings (the first four being 30-45 minutes each including intake, the fifth being a short 15 minute debrief meeting), via Skype during academic term when you are actively enrolled. These meetings will be recorded, yet times will be generally flexible and are preferred to be scheduled a minimum of 24 hours in advance. It is preferred that one appointment be scheduled during an anticipated high anxiety week (i.e. examinations, thesis deadline, etc.).

NOTE:

-You do not need to be currently in classes to submit this form. Meetings will commence with the start of

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1OQY9CQbc1nBDCDd64NMv1AA_MNzHr-xW6Jh26fkCk/edit

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Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

your course.

-Make sure you have an active Skype account before the start of meetings.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Complete the following form, at which a researcher will contact you at your provided university email with the next steps. They will send you an in depth Participant Information document and Consent Form. This will need to be signed before your meetings begin.

Untitled Section

2. Full Name *

First/Given Name Last/Family/Surname [i.e. John Smith]

3. Preferred Name

If different from above, how you would prefer the researcher to refer to you as?

4. Age *

5. Current Level of University Study *

Mark only one oval.

- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

6. I'm currently attending university in the *

Mark only one oval.

- United Kingdom (UK)
- United States of America (USA)

7. University in attendance *

Please enter the college/university/institution of which you are enrolled or will be enrolling during the study. (i.e. University of Huddersfield)

8. University email *

This must be an active email address associated with the institution with which you are registered. If you are not yet enrolled, provide a personal email address until you receive your university email address.

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Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

9. Mobile number *

Include country code. For the UK +44, and the US +1. (i.e. +44 1234 123 123, or +1 123 123 1234). This is strictly for technological connection issues. We may call to help troubleshoot technology issues.

10. Skype name

(Optional until participation in the study begins)

11. How often do you play video games? *

Please describe your frequency of gaming and for how long. This includes console, PC, handheld, tablets, mobile/phone apps. (i.e. I play PS4 twice a week for at least an hour and a half each time. I play solitaire on my mobile almost daily. I enjoy spending more time on gaming on weekends.)

12. How do you typically manage anxiety? *

Please share how you typically manage anxiety in your daily life

Participant Demographics

Almost done!

Diversity in participants is not only beneficial to the study, but will aid your researcher in getting to know you and supporting you throughout the process. It could also lead to further studies in psychology, wellness, and mental health, which may help in developing more inclusive resources for others who share your identities.

Note that questions in this final section are optional. To bypass a question, please choose "Prefer not to answer."

13. Gender Identity

(Not including gender expression)
Check all that apply.

- Agender
- Genderqueer or Non-Binary
- Intersex
- Man
- Transgender
- Transman or Transmasculine
- Transwoman or Transfeminine
- Woman
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

14. Gender Pronouns

Check all that apply.

- e/ey; em; eir; eirs; eirself
- he; him; his; his; himself
- [name]; [name]; [name]'s; [name]'s; [name]'s self
- per; per; pers; pers; perself
- she; her; her; hers; herself
- sie; sir; hir; hirs; hirself
- they; them; their; theirs; themself
- ve; ver; vis; vers; verself
- zie; zim; zir; zirs; zirself
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

15. Ethnicity and/or Race

Please choose as many as you prefer to.

Check all that apply.

- Multiracial/Mixed/Coloured (by South African context)
- Arab
- Asian
- Black
- Latino/a/x
- Pacific Islander
- White
- American
- British
- African
- African American
- Alaska Native
- Argentinian
- Australian
- Bangladeshi
- Cambodian
- Canadian
- Caribbean
- Chicano/a/x
- Chinese
- Colombian
- Cornish
- Cuban
- Dominican
- English
- Filipino/a/x
- Gypsy/Traveller (UK context)
- Hispanic
- Hmong
- Indian
- Indigenous
- Japanese
- Korean
- Laotian
- Laotian
- Mexican
- Native American

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Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

- Native Hawaiian
- Nicaraguan
- Northern Irish
- Pacific Islander
- Pakistani
- Polish
- Puerto Rican
- Salvadorian
- Samoan
- Scottish
- Taiwanese
- Thai
- Vietnamese
- Welsh
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

16. Accommodations and Persons with Disabilities

You and your researcher may identify as persons with disabilities, thus needing to plan ahead for appropriate accommodations. Please note any disabilities you may need accommodations for and/or choose to identify as. Details may be provided in the following question.

Check all that apply.

- Hearing (including Deaf and Hard of Hearing)
- Visual (including limited/low vision and partially sighted)
- Physical (including physiological, functional and/or mobility)
- Mental Health (including mood, anxiety, eating, personality, & organic brain disorders)
- Intellectual
- Learning
- Not living with disabilities
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

17. Additional information or requests regarding accommodation, disabilities, or self-identification:

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Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

18. Sexual Orientation

(Not including gender expression)
Check all that apply.

- Aromantic
- Asexual
- Bisexual/Bi
- Demisexual
- Heterosexual/Straight
- Homosexual/Gay
- Lesbian
- Pansexual/Omnisexual
- Polysexual
- Preference for no labels
- Queer
- Questioning
- Preference for no labels
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

19. Additional information

While we try to be as inclusive as possible, we recognize our lists above may not be exhaustive, for which we apologize and are open to learning from. If you would like, please share any other aspects of you or your identities that may impact how you process anxiety and gaming habits in your everyday life.

Send me a copy of my responses.

Powered by
 Google Forms

Consent form

6/22/2018

Participant Information Form

Participant Information Form

Please read thoroughly and sign before your first meeting with a researcher.

* Required

1. Email address *



Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

You are being invited to take part in a study about the psychological impact of video games on university students managing everyday university anxiety. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

This study aims to establish the extent to which university students are utilizing video games to relieve anxiety caused by their university experiences. The study aims to explore university students' awareness of psychological impact of video game usage on their anxiety through cognitive behavioural interviewing, Metacognition Questionnaire-30, and State/Trait Anxiety Inventory. The study reported here will address the need for qualitative data regarding student usage of gaming as anxiety relief.

WHY HAVE I BEEN APPROACHED?

You have been asked to participate because you identify as a current university student and completed a form indicating that you've utilized video games as a form of entertainment to manage anxiety.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART AND WHAT RIGHT DO I HAVE TO WITHDRAW?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw up to two weeks after completion, without penalty, and without giving a reason.

HOW DO I WITHDRAW? AND IS THIS CONFIDENTIAL?

Should you wish to withdraw your results upon completion of this study, you can do so up to two weeks after your last meeting and inventory completion. To withdraw your results, please email Richard Peralta at richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk. You must include your participation number. Confidentiality of participants is maintained at all times through the write up and any publications. Only researchers have access to the data, which will be securely stored and password-protected until completion of research.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to complete the following:

1. Complete the inventory and questionnaire at the beginning and end of your participation. These are

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1yPJCxgPGiv07jzinykqvMMT9q7xhhLINOKrGI2BPAE/edit>

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Participant Information Form

the State/Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1984) and the Metacognition Questionnaire-30 (Wells & Cartwright-Hatton, 2004), or MCQ-30. In your State/Trait Inventory results, half of the scales' 40 items will measure state anxiety (comprised of descriptive statements allowing you to indicate how they feel at that moment and the intensity of that feeling), and the other half measure trait anxiety (consisting of statements allowing you to indicate how you generally feel). The MCQ-30 will help gauge any cognitive patterns for participants.

2. Play video games of your choice and preference in the comfort of your home for a minimum of 30 minutes at least once a week when you're feeling pressure from anxiety.
3. Meet regularly with your researcher to discuss your video game habits since your last meeting. During academic term, when you are actively enrolled, you'll meet with your researcher remotely online via Skype a total of four times for 30-45 minutes each meeting, preferably not more than once a week. These meetings will be recorded, yet times will be generally flexible and are preferred to be scheduled a minimum of 24 hours in advance. It is preferred that one appointment be scheduled during an anticipated high anxiety week (i.e. examinations, thesis deadline, etc.).

WILL MY IDENTITY BE DISCLOSED?

You will also receive a participant number from your researcher to reference your contributions. Further, all information disclosed during the study will be kept confidential, lest you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, in which case I would need to pass this information to university wellness staff.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION?

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you require any further information about this study at any time, please do not hesitate to email your researcher, Richard Peralta at richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk

Should you wish, you may opt to receive a summary about the project and it's results upon completion of the paper. If you decide to take part in the study and you would like to receive a summary of the findings from this research project, again, please email your researcher at: richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk.

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Everyday University Anxiety

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

2. **By entering the date and time below, I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research as outlined in the previous Participant Information page ***

Example: December 15, 2012 11:03 AM

3. **I consent to taking part in this study ***

Check all that apply.

I agree

4. **I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research without giving any reason up to two weeks after completion of participation ***

Check all that apply.

I agree

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Participant Information Form

5. I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym) *

Check all that apply.

I agree

6. I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of 10 years at the University of Huddersfield *

Check all that apply.

I agree

7. I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided. *

Check all that apply.

I agree

8. I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report. *

Check all that apply.

I agree

9. By checking below and entering your name in the box below, you are effectively providing your signature, indicating that all the information on this form is true and accurate, to the best of your knowledge. *

Check all that apply.

I agree

10. Full Name *

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided

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 Google Forms

Signed consent

Participant #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Timestamp	9-5-2017 11:32:31	10-12-2017 22:28:05	9-30-2017 5:17:52	10-15-2017 22:28:08	11-23-2017 21:37:29	9-1-2017 20:52:33	10-8-2017 20:02:21	9-1-2017 17:41:29
By entering the date and time below, I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research as outlined in the previous Participant Information page	9-5-2017 5:31:00	10-12-2017 22:27:00	9-30-2017 0:17:00	10-15-2017 22:27:00	11-23-2017 13:36:00	9-1-2017 15:52:00	10-8-2017 20:01:00	9-1-2017 11:40:00
I consent to taking part in this study	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research without giving any reason up to two weeks after completion of participation	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym)	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of 10 years at the University of Huddersfield	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided.	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report.	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
By checking below and entering your name in the box below, you are effectively providing your signature, indicating that all the information on this form is true and accurate, to the best of your knowledge.	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree	I agree
Full Name								
Email Address								

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

School of Human and Health Sciences – School Research Ethics Panel

APPLICATION FORM

**Please complete and return via email to:
Kirsty Thomson SREP Administrator: hhs_srep@hud.ac.uk**

Name of applicant: Richard Peralta

Title of study: Psychological impact of video games on university students managing anxiety with counselling

Department: School of Human health and Sciences

Date: 9.6.17

Please provide sufficient detail below for SREP to assess the ethical conduct of your research. You should consult the guidance on filling out this form and applying to SREP at <http://www.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/srep/>.

Researcher(s) details	Richard Peralta, M.Ed.
Supervisor(s) details	Dr. Simon Goodson Dr. Gurjog Bagri
All documentation has been read by supervisor (where applicable)	YES

<p>Aim / objectives</p>	<p>Aim 1: This study aims to establish the extent to which university students are utilizing video games to relieve anxiety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Objective 1: Establish a baseline measure of the number of hours participants play video games ○ Objective 2: Establish how many times gaming is used specifically for anxiety relief <p>Aim 2: To explore university students' awareness of psychological impact of video game usage on their anxiety through cognitive behavioural interviewing while counselling participants' development of anxiety management skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Objective 3: Gather qualitative information regarding each participants' anxiety profile at the beginning and end of each participants' time ○ Objective 4: Process qualitative, personal information with each participant <p>Aim 3: The project will address the need for qualitative data regarding student usage of gaming as anxiety relief.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Objective 5: Collect qualitative data regarding each participants' experience in interviews ○ Objective 6: Organize and assess the aforementioned data for patterns
<p>Brief overview of research methods</p>	<p>Participants in the following project would develop an awareness of their use of video games in anxiety and stress relief through their contribution of quantitative and qualitative data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants will complete the metacognitive State/Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1968) at the open and close of their participation in the study. ● Participants will engage in a minimum of 30 minutes of videogames of their before engaging in a cognitive behavioural interview of 45 minutes with the researcher to process their gaming habits, causes of anxiety, and awareness of anxiety. ● Participants will complete four distance interviews with their researcher providing qualitative data.
<p>Project start date</p>	<p>June</p>

Project completion date	December
Permissions for study	Dr Gurjog Bagri offered permission to recruit participants via University of Huddersfield's SONA system (Psychology division scheme for student participation in research) and student technology paraprofessionals.
Access to participants	<p>Opportunity Sampling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Huddersfield's SONA system • Enrolled university technology paraprofessional recruitment • Call for university enrolled participants within videogame communities
Confidentiality	<p>The identity of the individuals volunteering to participate in this study will be kept confidential. Individuals' participation in this study will not be disclosed to anyone other than the researchers involved. Moreover, participants will participate only in a private sessions with researchers.</p>
Anonymity	<p>Participants will be notified of confidentiality and anonymity beyond interactions with the researcher, including any writing and publishing. Participants will be provided with a participation number of which both the researcher, and they themselves can refer.</p>
Right to withdraw	<p>Participants will be made clear, in the participant information sheet and consent form, that they are able to withdraw their participation in this study at any time without penalty. Additionally, they will be made aware that they will be able to withdraw their data from the study up to two weeks after participation (again, in the participant information sheet and consent form). Participants will also be given an informative debrief, which again, will inform them of their right to withdraw their results from the study without any disadvantage or penalty. In order to withdraw their results, they have been informed on all three forms that they must provide their participation number. All participant sheets have been provided with an email and phone number contact for both the main researcher and main supervisor.</p>

<p>Data Storage</p>	<p>Only researchers have access to the data, which will be securely stored on password-protected computers at the University of Huddersfield for a holding a maximum of 10 years to maintain transparency and integrity of research. Upon conclusion of research, data will be stored on password-protected computers by main researcher, main supervisor and second supervisor at the University of Huddersfield. If all parties were to leave the University of Huddersfield, data will be destroyed.</p>
<p>Psychological support for participants</p>	<p>Whilst this study is focuses on a non-clinical sample, it is in regards to anxiety in university students' experiences. It will be made clear that the State/Trait Anxiety questionnaire is not a clinical diagnosis of anxiety, however if a participant were to confess high feelings of anxiety to the researcher and believe they may be unwell, they will be supplied with information within the debrief towards suitable help in the form of 1. Information about the university's counselling service, and 2. Anxiety free telephone, online, local support service information.</p>
<p>Researcher safety / support (attach completed University Risk Analysis and Management form)</p>	<p>Please see attached (1)</p>
<p>Information sheet</p>	<p>Please see attached (2)</p>
<p>Consent form</p>	<p>Please see attached (3)</p>
<p>Letters / posters / flyers</p>	<p>None</p>

<p>Questionnaire / Interview guide</p>	<p>State/Trait Anxiety Assessment: State and trait anxiety will be assessed with The State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1984). Half of the scales 40 items will measure state anxiety - comprised of descriptive statements to which individuals respond by indicating how they feel at that moment and the intensity of that feeling, and the other half measure trait anxiety - consisting of statements to which individuals respond by indicating how they generally feel.</p> <p>Please see attached (4)</p>
<p>Debrief (if appropriate)</p>	<p>This study is straight forward with participants. The purpose of debriefing is to offer the participants additional information about the study area, the nature of the project and its importance, the instruments used during the experiment, the data collected, as well as to thank them for their participation. They will also be reminded of their right to withdraw whilst being provided researcher and supervisor contact information in the case of any questions or concerns. Further, information regarding anxiety support services available to participants.</p> <p>Please see attached (5)</p>
<p>Dissemination of results</p>	<p>Data will be presented as part of a Masters thesis, and potentially at conferences and in publication form.</p>
<p>Identify any potential conflicts of interest</p>	<p>No conflicts of interest</p>

<p>Does the research involve accessing data or visiting websites that could constitute a legal and/or reputational risk to yourself or the University if misconstrued?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p> <p>If Yes, please explain how you will minimise this risk</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>The next four questions in the grey boxes relate to Security Sensitive Information – please read the following guidance before completing these questions:</p> <p>http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2012/oversight-of-security-sensitive-research-material.pdf</p>	
<p>Is the research commissioned by, or on behalf of the military or the intelligence services?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p> <p>If Yes, please outline the requirements from the funding body regarding the collection and storage of Security Sensitive Data</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is the research commissioned under an EU security call</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p> <p>If Yes, please outline the requirements from the funding body regarding the collection and storage of Security Sensitive Data</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>Does the research involve the acquisition of security clearances?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p> <p>If Yes, please outline how your data collection and storages complies with the requirements of these clearances</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Does the research concern terrorist or extreme groups?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p> <p>If Yes, please complete a Security Sensitive Information Declaration Form</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Does the research involve covert information gathering or active deception?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Does the research involve children under 18 or participants who may be unable to give fully informed consent?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Does the research involve prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>Does the research involve significantly increased danger of physical or psychological harm or risk of significant discomfort for the researcher(s) and/or the participant(s), either from the research process or from the publication of findings?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Does the research involve risk of unplanned disclosure of information you would be obliged to act on?</p> <p>Please state Yes/No</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>There is potential for participants to disclose feelings of Anxiety due to the subject of this research. I will offer all participants details for the university counselling services as well as additional support options.</p>
<p>Other issues</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Where application is to be made to NHS Research Ethics Committee / External Agencies</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Risk Analysis and Management Form 2. Participant Information Sheet 3. Informed Consent Sheet 4. Participant Recruitment Advert 5. State/Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1984) 6. Debrief 	

All documentation must be submitted to the SREP administrator. All proposals will be reviewed by two members of SREP.

If you have any queries relating to the completion of this form or any other queries relating to SREP's consideration of this proposal, please contact the SREP administrator (Kirsty Thomson) in the first instance – hhs_srep@hud.ac.uk

1 THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD: RISK ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

ACTIVITY: Postgraduate Psychology Research			Name: Richard Peralta	
LOCATION: University of Huddersfield			Date:	Review Date:
Hazard(s) Identified	Details of Risk(s)	People at Risk	Risk management measures	Other comments
Loss/ theft of data	Security of data	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic data to be stored only on password secured computer equipment and storage devices. • Paper documents to be kept secured in lockable storage. 	
One on one experimenting	Personal Safety	Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Log times and date of experiment with colleagues / administrator • Meet with participants remotely 	Specific experiment arrangements and location will be identified with administrator/colleagues in advance of online meeting.
Protection of participants:	Feelings of ongoing Anxiety	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is potential for participants to disclose feelings of Anxiety due to the subject of this research. • I will offer all participants details for the University of Huddersfield counselling services, and a charity Anxiety helpline on the debrief. 	I will also provide a number to an anxiety support services, and details of how to contact the University of Huddersfield's counselling services in the unlikely event that participants may reach out to me regarding feelings of anxiety.

2 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

School of Human and Health Sciences



Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students Managing Anxiety with Counselling

INFORMATION SHEET (Example)

You are being invited to take part in a study about the psychological impact of video games on university students managing everyday university anxiety. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to explore how university students utilize video games to relieve anxiety caused by their university experiences. The experiment reported here will address their awareness of how their habits affect them and their academic success.

Why I have been approached?

You have been asked to participate because you identify as a current university student and completed a form indicating that you've utilized video games as a form of entertainment to manage anxiety.

Do I have to take part and right to withdraw?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw up to two weeks after completion, without penalty, and without giving a reason.

How do I withdraw? And is this confidential?

Should you wish to withdraw your results upon completion of this study, you can do so up to two weeks after your last meeting and inventory completion. *To withdraw your results, please email richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk*. Confidentiality of participants is maintained at all times through the write up and any publications. Only researchers have access to the data, which will be securely stored and password-protected until completion of research.

What will I need to do?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to complete the following within one month's time.(give an indication here of methods and procedures in lay person's terms – interview? How long? Will it be recorded?)

1. **Complete the State/Trait Anxiety Inventory** (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1984) at the ***beginning and end*** of your participation. In your inventory results, half of the scales' 40 items will measure state anxiety (comprised of descriptive statements allowing you to indicate how they feel at that moment and the intensity of that feeling), and the other half measure trait anxiety (consisting of statements allowing you to indicate how you generally feel).
2. **Play video games** of your choice and preference in the comfort of your home for a minimum of **30 minutes at least once a week** when you're feeling pressure from anxiety.
3. **Meet regularly with your researcher** to discuss your State/Trait Anxiety Inventory results at first, as well as your video game habits from that particular week. You'll meet with your researcher remotely online via Skype a total of **four times for 45 minutes** each meeting within a month's time, preferably once a week. These meetings will be recorded, yet times will be generally flexible and are preferred to be scheduled a minimum of 24 hours in advance. One appointment must be made during an anticipated high anxiety week (examinations, thesis deadline, etc.).

Will my identity be disclosed?

All information disclosed during the study will be kept confidential, unless you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, in which case I would need to pass this information to university wellness staff.

What will happen to the information?

Peralta, R.P.

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you require any further information about this study at any time, please do not hesitate to email me, Richard Peralta at richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk

If you wish, you may opt to receive a summary about the project and it's results upon completion of the paper. If you decide to take part in the study and you would like to receive a summary of the findings from this research project, again, please email me at: richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk.

3 CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project: Psychological Impact of Video Games on University Students
Managing Anxiety with Counselling**

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research as outlined in the
information sheet version X, dated 00:00:00

I consent to taking part in it

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time
without giving any reason up to two weeks after completion of participation

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym)

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions
for a period of 10 years at the University of Huddersfield

I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will
have access to the information provided.

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the
report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will
be included in any report.

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put
a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant: _____	Signature of Researcher: _____
Print: _____	Print: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

4 The State/Trait Anxiety Inventory

(Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1984)

Y-1

DIRECTIONS:

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then circle the appropriate number to the right of the statement to indicate how you feel *right now*, that is, *at this moment*. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

	NOT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT	MODERATELY SO	VERY MUCH SO
1. I feel calm.....	1	2	3	4
2. I feel secure	1	2	3	4
3. I am tense	1	2	3	4
4. I feel strained	1	2	3	4
5. I feel at ease	1	2	3	4
6. I feel upset	1	2	3	4
7. I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes	1	2	3	4
8. I feel satisfied	1	2	3	4
9. I feel frightened	1	2	3	4
10. I feel comfortable	1	2	3	4
11. I feel self-confident	1	2	3	4
12. I feel nervous	1	2	3	4
13. I am jittery	1	2	3	4
14. I feel indecisive.....	1	2	3	4
15. I am relaxed	1	2	3	4
16. I feel content	1	2	3	4
17. I am worried	1	2	3	4
18. I feel confused.....	1	2	3	4
19. I feel steady.....	1	2	3	4
20. I feel pleasant.....	1	2	3	4

Y-2

DIRECTIONS

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then circle the appropriate number to the right of the statement to indicate how you *generally* feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe how you generally feel.

ALMOST NEVER
SOMETIMES
OFTEN
ALMOST ALWAYS

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. I feel pleasant..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. I feel nervous and restless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. I feel satisfied with myself..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. I feel like a failure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. I feel rested | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. I am "calm, cool, and collected" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. I feel that difficulties are piling up so that I cannot overcome them..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. I worry too much over something that really doesn't matter..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. I am happy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. I have disturbing thoughts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. I lack self-confidence..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. I feel secure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. I make decisions easily | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. I feel inadequate..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 36. I am content | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. Some unimportant thought runs through my mind and bothers me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 38. I take disappointments so keenly that I can't put them out of my mind..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. I am a steady person..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. I get in a state of tension or turmoil as I think over my recent concerns and interests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

SCORING KEY

Form Y-1	<i>NOT AT ALL</i>	<i>SOMEWHAT</i>	<i>MODERATELY SO</i>	<i>VERY MUCH SO</i>	Form Y-2	<i>ALMOST NEVER</i>	<i>SOMETIMES</i>	<i>OFTEN</i>	<i>ALMOST ALWAYS</i>
1.	4	3	2	1	21.	4	3	2	1
2.	4	3	2	1	22.	1	2	3	4
3.	1	2	3	4	23.	4	3	2	1
4.	1	2	3	4	24.	1	2	3	4
5.	4	3	2	1	25.	1	2	3	4
6.	1	2	3	4	26.	4	3	2	1
7.	1	2	3	4	27.	4	3	2	1
8.	4	3	2	1	28.	1	2	3	4
9.	1	2	3	4	29.	1	2	3	4
10.	4	3	2	1	30.	4	3	2	1
11.	4	3	2	1	31.	1	2	3	4
12.	1	2	3	4	32.	1	2	3	4
13.	1	2	3	4	33.	4	3	2	1
14.	1	2	3	4	34.	4	3	2	1
15.	4	3	2	1	35.	1	2	3	4
16.	4	3	2	1	36.	4	3	2	1
17.	1	2	3	4	37.	1	2	3	4
18.	1	2	3	4	38.	1	2	3	4
19.	4	3	2	1	39.	4	3	2	1
20.	4	3	2	1	40.	1	2	3	4

5 DEBRIEF

Thank you for your participation!

What data were collected?

The State/Trait anxiety inventory is used to gain insight into your feelings of anxiety. This information, in conjunction with qualitative information provided during your meetings with researchers, will be used to note changes in levels of anxiety from gameplay, any patterns of video game usage, and your awareness of both in the context of your success as a university student.

Background Context

With a rise in mental health issues of university students in the UK and US, counselling services in higher education institutions have become strained due to the growing demand for support. Anxiety is recognized to be one of the most common mental health issues amongst university students, leaving some with rising apprehensions about how younger generations cope. With concern for suicide amongst university students, the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics' 2017 statistics report states that the male completion rate is still approximately three times more likely than females, with the latter being of its highest rate in a decade. The United States' Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) 2015 statistics reported that males completed at nearly four times the rate of females, while noting that 8.7% of college aged adult men have made completion plans. Neither reported statistics of transgender or gender variant completion, despite the CDC's acknowledgement of youth LGBT completion.

As anxiety continues to intensify in college and university settings, research continues to show that stress or anxiety can be managed in various ways. Anxiety reduction via leisure activities has been shown to be an effective strategy for college students to manage stress. Successful leisure participation has led students to better grades and positive adjustment. Whether utilized as a leisure activity or a part of therapy, activities such as art, music, sports, and even baking have proven to result in positive psychological benefits including mindfulness and overall wellbeing. This confirms that taking time from stress to recover from anxiety and stress is beneficial and that prioritizing psychological recovery positively affects mental health maintenance.

Despite still being considered novel to some, the video game industry has grown to a global entertainment and media market value of \$1.81tn with a global revenue of \$106.62bn. Its success has made a place for itself within popular culture due to its use by millions. Research shows that one of the most popular ways men manage stress is through video game use. Unfortunately, most research focuses on negative impacts of gaming, including addiction and aggression, however a recent study found no enduring effects on empathy from playing violent

video games. Other research has found positive usage for educational and therapeutic practise, such as improving user coordination, special training visualization, or distraction for children after chemotherapy sessions. A positive bearing on the experience may be that modern gaming has become more social as an activity, especially in the realm of online gaming. With this information, well-developed game designs can influence feelings of instinctive control. The engagement of games through moderate use can be utilized for learning, goal setting, behavioural change, and teaching skills. As a medium for projecting one's emotional life, video games can be utilized toward positive user interventions in conduct change, including goal setting and skills development. Further, it could be a tool for helping people navigate out of depression, serving as groundwork for general well-being, mental health, and even cognitive ability in old age.

Controlled studies have proven gaming can provide cognitive training transferrable to the real world. Patterns in research thus far are mostly quantitative and have widely varying methods. Some cognitive behavioural therapy approaches use video games specifically developed for participants, especially if managing acute instances of eating disorders or cancer. However, there's limited qualitative data on the psychological behaviour and impact of video games specifically on university students managing their anxiety in higher education. This project will explore these trends and habits.

For Further Information

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this research or if you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to email me: richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk

Concerns

All data is anonymous and confidential. You will not be identifiable.

In the event you should wish to withdraw your data from this study, please contact Richard Peralta (richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk). This can only be done until two weeks after participation is completed.

If any issues arise, please contact me: richard.peralta@hud.ac.uk

Additionally, if you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone else in confidence, you may contact:

Dr Simon Goodson

University of Huddersfield

s.goodson@hud.ac.uk

01484 473173

Peralta, R.P.

Dr Gurjog Bagri

University of Huddersfield

g.s.bagri@hud.ac.uk

01484 473926

Professional Contact

Anxiety UK

Charity providing support for individuals who believe they may be suffering with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 08444 775 774 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm)

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

University of Huddersfield Counselling Service

How to access the service:

Attend a Wellbeing Drop-in appointment at, iPoint, Level 4, Student Central, (Mon-Fri, 11am)

Phone: 01484 471001 or [e-mail ipoint@hud.ac.uk](mailto:ipoint@hud.ac.uk) to make an initial appointment.

After this initial meeting, which will be with one of the Wellbeing Advisers, they will refer you to counselling if this is the right option for you.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND HEALTH SCIENCES – SCHOOL RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL

SUPERVISOR REPORT
Please complete and return via email to:
Kirsty Thomson SREP Administrator: hhs_srep@hud.ac.uk

Name of student: Richard Peralta

Title of study: Psychological impact of video games on university students managing anxiety with counselling

Name of course (if not MPhil or PhD) MSc by Research (Psychology)

Name of supervisor(s): Dr. Simon Goodson, Dr. Gurjog Bagri

Date: 9.6.17

I confirm that I have (a) read all documentation submitted to SREP in respect of the above research project and (b) support its submission to SREP. I also confirm that a Risk Analysis has been conducted in accordance with University requirements.

Please identify all documents seen below:

Letters (specify)	N/A
Participant information sheet	Yes
Participant consent form	Yes
Interview schedule	Yes
Questionnaire	N/A

Peralta, R.P.

NHS REC form	N/A
University of Huddersfield Risk Analysis and Management form	Yes
Other	

Signed (if submitting hard copy):

S. Goodman

Please note:

No application submitted by a student will be considered by SREP without a fully completed Supervisor Report

If you have any queries relating to the completion of this form or need any other information relating to SREP's consideration of this proposal, please email hhs_srep@hud.ac.uk

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
School of Human and Health Sciences – School Research Ethics Panel

AMENDMENTS TO PROPOSAL

Applicant Name: Richard Peralta, M. Ed., Counselling Education

Title of study: Psychological impact of video games on university students managing everyday university anxiety

	Amendments required	Please explain below how you are addressing the required amendments. Please refer to any revisions you have made to documents (if appropriate), indicating page & line numbers. ¹
Researcher(s) details		
Supervisor(s) details		
Aim / objectives	There appears to be a mismatch between the aims and objectives and the description of the aims on the participant information form.	“What is the study about?” section of the PIF was updated to accurately reflect the aims articulated in the aforementioned Aims/Objectives section.

¹ There is no need to amend and resubmit your SREP application form.

	<p>The PIF suggests that the dependent variable in the study is academic success – but this is not referred to in either the stated aims on the proposal nor does this appear in the measures or data to be collected.</p> <p>The title is a little confusing as it suggests that the participants will be students who are currently receiving counselling for anxiety – but this doesn't appear to be the case.</p>	<p>Removed “academic success” from PIF.</p> <p>Reworded title to “psychological impact of video games on university students managing everyday university anxiety”</p>
<p>Methodology</p>	<p>I am not sure that this study should be considered an experiment as it appears that all participants will be undertaking the same conditions – there doesn't appear to be a control group and it is a qualitative study. Please remove all reference to ‘experiment’, particularly on participant facing documentation.</p> <p>A psychometric scale measuring state and trait anxiety is included, but it is unclear how this is going to be used. It is a means of selecting participants?</p>	<p>Removed of language pertaining to “experiment” to “study”</p> <p>The scale will be used before participant interviews and after to be compared for any changes in participant responses. It will not be utilised as a means for selecting participants.</p>
<p>Permissions for study</p>		

Access to participants		
Confidentiality		
Anonymity		
Psychological support for participants		
Data Storage		
Researcher safety / support (attach complete University Risk Analysis and Management form)		
Information sheet	<p>See comments above.</p> <p>Additionally, it sounds as though the participants will receive covert counselling as no reference is made to the counselling element of the interviews in either the participant information sheet or the debrief – this needs to be considered further as this means that participants are not fully informed when giving consent. Additionally, we would need to have evidence that the researcher is suitably qualified to provide this type of counselling. It might be that this issue has arisen due to a poor choice of wording.</p>	<p>References to counselling removed from study and documents, resulting in only behavioural interviewing of participants. However, please note that the researcher is suitably qualified for counselling due to his previous studies as a Master of Education in Counselling Education. Clarification is made in the PIF regarding the right to withdraw, including the use of participant numbers.</p>

	<p><i>Right to withdraw does not refer to the participant number as discussed within the SREP form.</i></p> <p><i>Section detailing what participants need to do has not yet been finished as your notes are still present.</i></p>	
Consent form	<p><i>Perhaps reflect upon wording: Right to withdraw at any time up until two week after completion of participation. Any time is not a two week period.</i></p> <p><i>There is no mention here either of the participant number as outlined above (Information sheet).</i></p>	Clarification is made in the PIF regarding the right to withdraw, including the use of participant numbers.
Letters		
Questionnaire		
Interview schedule	Interview schedules for the 45 minute sessions with the participants have not been included. It would be important to see these.	See attached interview questions.
Dissemination of results		
Other issues		
Where application is to be made to NHS Research Ethics Committee		
All documentation has been read by		



Peralta, R.P.

supervisor (where applicable)		
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Signed:

(SREP Applicant – electronic signature acceptable)

Date: 8th July 2017

<p>Additional comments by reviewers: (You are not required to address these issues in order for SREP to approve your application. However, their consideration is likely to further improve the ethical conduct of your research.)</p>

Data analysis quotes

DAQ-1

I took the GREs last week, so that was one of my stressors. And then finishing an application and doing a visit with some faculty members. It's more pitching ideas and connecting with the faculty to see if what I want to work on is something that they're willing to work with me on or at least serve as one of my committee members.

DAQ-2

Everybody that I tried to communicate with has not been able to meet the times when the performances are due. That's really stressing me the fuck out. And all my homework and trying to make sure that I do what I can to graduate. Because at this point I just need to get by and pass everything. And I'm at the point where things are coming at me and I'm prioritising which one is more important, which one weighs more, and I'm just doing those first. And then things that don't have as much weight to my grade are just, not falling to the wayside, but they are receiving less attention. I'm just turning them in just so I can get a grade.

DAQ-3

My only anxiety at uni at the moment is the fact that I still haven't settled in. Coming back to second year, I still feel like I'm not at uni. Because in second year, I was speaking to my support tutor and she was saying second year is a strange time because obviously lectures focus on first years and third year, not exclusively obviously.

DAQ-4

It's quite weird because I know deadlines are gonna start coming up soon. But because a lot of them are in January, I feel like I need more time. I need to match how I did last year to this year in terms of the marking gets harder and I want to get the same grades. Because they're in January I'm very much just drifting through.

DAQ-5

I go to my lectures and often I try to do the reading, but I don't see the point in it, so I don't do it. And I do some of the little tasks that the lecturer's set, but it's never anything substantial enough to think that I'm at uni. I kinda just drift through it, and that's what's giving me anxiety is the, "I'm gonna drift about and then I'm soon gonna be hit by a wave of anxiety because your deadlines are in a week now. You've got to do it now." So, I kinda want to get myself in gear, but I don't know how.

DAQ-6

I'm just saying "Just fuck it" to a lot of things recently, which is a nice feeling because that's not me at all. I'm kinda like, "I need to be attentive to everything" and that's what stresses me out. I've been starting to say that my diligence is my detriment. Just because it's true, I say yes to everything.

DAQ-7

I say yes to too many things. For example. This Wednesday I have an interview with the dance department... [...] But for whatever reason my brain switches off and I'm not able to communicate anymore. And this happens to me, either when extremely tired, which is happening a lot recently, or when I feel surrounded and I just can't focus on anything, and I go into this weird autopilot mode that feels like I'm just a rider in my own body. It's just experiencing everything around me, and responding to people, but in the most short, direct way possible that seems like I have a cue card in front of me and I'm just reading from it. [...] The interview went well. In my mind that's how it felt like it went.

DAQ-8

So, there was that. And then I had a thirteen-hundred-word paper due, but I didn't really have time to do it, so it was literally like during my lunch break, I'd type some. And then I'd stop. I'd bring my laptop to work and then any time there was a break between patients I'd do that. And finally, the last day it was due, which was Wednesday as well, I just sat down and typed up whatever, because it was an argumentative paper, but it had to have research. I wrote poorly. Basically, I did my writing and just threw in citations which is horrible, but that's what I needed to do get the paper through. Haha! I got it in at 11:50pm which it was due at midnight, but I just feel horrible about it because I'm actually really passionate about the topic and I feel like this semester I haven't had any time to really do any research because I feel like I'm just trying to meet deadlines as they're due, instead of having the time to do it. And that's just with work and school. I'm meeting deadlines with work and I'm meeting deadlines with school, and I can't figure out a good way to make it work.

DAQ-9

I had to have an informal attendance meeting because I've a span of authorised absences, which I really didn't have to go into because I walked into the room, they go "Yeah, I don't know why you're here. Your attendance is fine." It's because I suffer from migraines. I had quite a few recently, so I had to have days off, that I had put through as an authorised absence. And they were checking to see if there's anything they could do, but nothing they could do. I got this mental disability that's very similar to dyslexia, but it's an off branch of that called Irlen Syndrome.

DAQ-10

The past two days I've tried to go into uni, but I've been quite anxious for one reason or another. I don't understand why really. It's literally just, because it's reading week, I just wanted to go to uni and catch up on my reading and towards the end of the week I wanted to read for my upcoming assignment that's due. Yesterday I got up early, like half seven, which is my normal time of getting up for a uni day. I was gonna get to uni half eight, nine o'clock and do work until seven. I just got up and I was lying in bed and was pretty much having just an argument with myself because I was really anxious about going into uni. I don't know why.

DAQ-11

Peralta, R.P.

I think it was just to do with the "I think I've got so much work to do, even though I know I haven't got so much work to do." And then the other side of the argument was "It's just reading." It doesn't matter too much. It does matter, but I mean like it doesn't matter to the extent that I'm working myself up. I was quite upset about it, so I stayed at home yesterday. And today I stayed at home because, well partially because I needed to do our interview, but also because I, again, I just can't face it. I just can't face going to uni. It's just work really. Workload at uni.

DAQ-12

But this year, obviously, with it being more difficult, I had anxieties last year, but this year it's worse. And it's happened earlier. Last year I'd get anxious about things, but I kinda overcome it within a couple of minutes. Whereas towards the end of the year it was quite debilitating. And now it's the same as last year, which I didn't really want.

DAQ-13

I would like to be playing Destiny. Basically, it's an online game, but I don't have many friends who play it. The ones that do are on PlayStation instead of Xbox. With the lack of cross play, we can't really do anything.

DAQ-14

I think the fact that I've made one friend in two years shows something. It's the talking to people that I don't know that I have an issue about really. It's about trying to figure out how to figure your way into a big group or clique. Or just not bother.

DAQ-15

Really just to have someone to be with, sit next to. Because I have breaks in between classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour. Just to have someone to come up to at that time instead of just sitting there and watching YouTube.

DAQ-16

Capable in an independent sense, not so much a social sense. I don't know, I've found difficulty creating groups. Like I've always had to latch onto someone. And then they introduce me to a group. It's never just been me finding or integrating into a specific group just by myself. I'd like to change this, but I don't know if that's possible. It's just the issue with sparking up a conversation and keeping it going. Or just going, "Hi, I'm this person, I'm friends with this person" and talking about the other people.

DAQ-17

I don't know. It's hard to kinda go to others because if I say I'm stressed people always ask what's wrong, what's going on. And then you have to list that is going on in your life and why it's stressful. I have to really explain that problem. I have to really explain what our topic is, what the project is, how far into that we are, how much work he's done, how much work everyone else has done. And that's just one thing. The best way for me to deal with stress is to talk to people about it and I

Peralta, R.P.

haven't talked to people because there are so many things going on that I don't have time to catch anyone up.

DAQ-18

Yeah, that's a really important one for me.[...] I would probably [take] an entire evening, drunk, with my brother or something. My brother doesn't live here, and I don't drink. And when he is here, he hangs out with everyone he knows at once. We talk on the phone a lot but it's hard to work through everything. He lives in New York, but in the summers, he is in Alaska. [...] And they're three hours behind us. So, he'll get off at 3pm Nebraska time, but I have school in four hours. And now that he's in New York, he works in a restaurant, and he caters, and he goes to an acting conservatory, so he's really busy now, I'm really busy, and we don't have hours to sit down and talk about life.

DAQ-19

My partner is in New Jersey, and he's not a very sensitive guy. But he's an only child. [...] He's a very emotionally stereotypical "bro." So if I try to bring anything up, he would say "Oh stop, just stop." Because that's just how some people deal with that stuff, they just don't.

DAQ-20

*I just don't have the money really. There was a point just before we bought the XBbox1 where we were deciding whether we wanted an Xbox or a PS4, but because the Master Chief Collection got released, and Halo 5, that was the only thing that kept me on Xbox rather than switching to PlayStation.
(P2, i1)*

DAQ-21

*It's sort of to do with money. Because I've barely got any left. Like it's got to the point where I'm looking for weekend jobs. Over the summer I worked at Sports Direct, which, I didn't mind, I'm enthusiastic so I enjoyed it. But since leaving and coming to uni I passed the one in town every so often and I'm just like "I'm never going back there for Christmas. Not a chance." Haha! Now I'm looking for weekend jobs, so I don't have to work over Christmas really. It's not going over too well, I haven't found one yet.
(P7, i4)*

DAQ-22

*But I can't really afford the [rugby club] membership and the kits and everything. The average membership cost is about £55. But the American football team is £145.
(P2, i2)*

DAQ-23

Connecting with faculty at the university. Applying for some grants and scholarships and meeting those deadlines. Submitting letters of interests. Then waiting. The

waiting. The waiting game. Waiting to hear did you get it, or did they accept it, taking it to the next level. And plus, I had two interviews this week.

DAQ-24

Let's start with what's been going on from the beginning. I was anticipated to graduate in spring of this term. So, spring next year. And basically, they reversed my financial aid because I had exceeded my credit limit as a double major. Which they told me as a freshman that wouldn't be an issue but clearly now in my senior year it is. So basically, they took away my financial aid. And I was like "Well crap, how am I gonna finish my degrees?" And I appealed for it and they accepted it, however they only accepted it for one semester, so essentially, I have two semesters in one as a double major. So that's, yeah. That already is a total mind fuck. So yeah that's super stressful there.

DAQ-25

So, I'm managing eight classes, four of which are writing intensive courses, and the recommended amount for writing classes is two for a semester. Of those writing intensive courses, two of them are senior exit courses, so they involve tons of research. So, I'm doing research in the biology department, which is actually really cool. And then I'm doing other research in the dance department. [...] It's just really stressful with all the coursework I have to do.

DAQ-26

It's just constantly hanging over me. What happens in May when my TA stipend stops? And assuming I get into somewhere for a PhD program somewhere, I'm like four months away from the fist stipend check for that. How am I gonna move to this new place? Do I need to try and get my thesis done earlier so I can find a job before the spring semester ends and start saving up money? All of that just like constantly hangs over my head.

DAQ-27

But then there's my brother and he kinda set the example. And he didn't go to college, so none of us went to college. But we all tried to go to college, but [my father] didn't help us. He wouldn't sign my financial aid loan application when I was 18. So, I couldn't go to school, but he always blamed it on me. "Oh, you went to school for one semester, but you didn't like it, so you dropped out." "No, they kicked me out because you were- no one paid for my school. I couldn't even apply for loans because I was only 18. He had to sign along with me, but he wouldn't.

DAQ-28

For a long time of my life I've lived in poverty. Class differences and stuff like that upset me and I used to get a lot of stick in 6th form, in high school, because I'd point this out, because all my friends from home are middle class and mainly upper middle class as well. So, they could do whatever they want and then I wouldn't be able to because I had no money. And it upsets me because not only can I not do things, but my mum can't either. And they never used to understand that, and I used to always get into arguments with people because they're like "Oh you politicise everything!"

Often it wouldn't be about politics. It would just be the fact that they don't understand the difference being able to do something and having to save so you can eat.

(P4, i2)

DAQ-29

It's hard when I go out with family members and they are doing really well. And they all want to argue over who is gonna pay the bill. And I think there's no way I can pay this \$150 dinner tab. It would bankrupt me. But my lawyer cousin argues with my doctor aunt about whose turn it is to pay the bill. That gets under my skin. But at the same time, I don't have it, you invited me, if you obviously still love me. You know I'm not gonna be able to pay.

(P1, i1)

DAQ-30

Income, so, work. Because right now he's not here to make any funds so anything I'm making is going towards the household and for food. So, there's been some food insecurity that I've been stressing over. I'm maxing out our items, especially for the younger two. And I haven't gone to the food bank yet this week. I was planning on going by the end of this week and just pick up a few things.

DAQ-31

And then there's the whole transitional life moment right now. Like, what do I do when I graduate? I graduate this December. I was anticipating spring, so that would have given me time for my GRE and applications to defer my student loans and then go back to school in the fall. Now that that I'm graduating in December, my student loans are gonna come a lot quicker, so that means I'm gonna get into grad school a lot quicker, but I'm not gonna be able to do that with all the course work I'm doing now, so what I'm gonna do in the spring is I'm gonna do the GRE, look at different schools and try to figure that out. And also, my clinical hours because I want to do physical therapy. But with that transitional moment of school, there's also this transitional moment in my relationship. That's an added stress, because I don't really know where we are currently and where I want to be.

DAQ-32

It was stressful because right now my partner is not with me. He went to go see his sister who is really sick, so I've been taking care of three kids on my own since the day after Thanksgiving. So last week, there was one day, that day, that was particularly hard. All three of them were acting up. [...] And just for some reason all three of them were feeding off of each other and it just kept getting worse and worse and by the end of the day I felt like I totally failed. And I needed to just not be present in the moment.

DAQ-33

I guess just because right now I'm in college, so my cohorts are people who are younger than me. A lot younger than me. So, I see them and then I see myself, and I'm like "I relate with all of them, and we all hang out and stuff," but then there's

this little separation and I can't figure it out. And I'm like "Oh wait, it's probably because of my age." And it's like, I don't really want to hang out with them all the time. I'm also a commuter student, so I'm never really on campus.

DAQ-34

But it's weird because you're told by society that the norm, that being a "normal adult" is to have your suit and tie and briefcase, you're gonna work at thirty, meanwhile I'm at school doing this backwards and playing Pokémon on my time off. Hah! And I feel like I'm in my early 20s again, according to what is "normal." So, I've been fighting a lot with this idea of what is normal. It's put on a lot of pressure and stress on me as well. Yeah, it's trying to figure out what's normal and then realising this is my normal and accepting that this is my normal and not caring about what others' "normals" are. So yeah, that's been a struggle.

DAQ-35

I just started a new job and I'm in a training period where it's four weeks of sitting in a classroom taking notes. And there's exams coming up and everything else, so it's like "Crap." It feels like I'm at school 24/7 pretty much. Just learning two different subjects. Sometimes I can get anxiety-based performances.

DAQ-36

I was pretty consistent about it. I was playing every day actually. Haha! Then over the weekend I didn't really touch it at all. Besides being sick, I've been wanting to play just to kinda not think. There's also some folks I know in my circle who, either had cancer, who were in remission, but now apparently all have cancer again. One of them actually passed away yesterday. And my sister-in-law is on life support now, because her cancer came back it and it became pneumonia and now it affected her lungs. So, it's been a rough week.

DAQ-37

Because it's just kinda a quick reflex, I carried my 3DS in my pocket, for 5 years. I always had it in my left pocket, so I would pull it out as often as someone who may pull out a cell phone. And just, y'know, if I wasn't interested in the conversation or just wanted to turn off for a minute, I could pull it out and play whenever you know?

DAQ-38

In between classes I had free time, and if I didn't have an assignment due for that next class, I would play games. So, I would use it to procrastinate and kinda, and it's super lame to call it meditating, but y'know it's really story heavy. You can just kinda turn off and think and explore. Walking around in Zelda gives you as much time to think as walking around in the real world.

DAQ-39

Yeah, on Pokémon Go! there's actually a PokéStop that's right outside my work so I'll go there, I'll get my items for the day and if there's new Pokémon I'll catch them. I usually do that for my 30-minute break and then I come back, and I'll play a little bit of Candy Crush or Yu-Gi-Oh! and I'm fine.

DAQ-40

There's also a game called Flower that I really enjoy. It's the same people who did Journey. It's beautiful. The theme is great, you're just a flower petal in the wind, forming life, terraforming. It's beautiful. It's just very relaxing. My partner actually, if I'm in a very anxious mood or if I'm angry, angry from not doing well from something, he's like "Put on Flower. You're always happier after Flower."

DAQ-41

Nothing really besides my mom having a severe asthma attack and had to be admitted in the hospital overnight, but she's alright. [...] I actually just jumped straight on the Xbox. [...] I mean yeah, I replied to her of course. She texted me while she was there.

DAQ-42

*For the past week I've been playing a lot actually. I just got done having a final paper that was due and after that final paper I was like "I need to play some VGs. I need to get that stress off of me." I did that. I played a lot of Friday the 13th the game. I played a lot of that. That mainly has helped me escape from reality a lot. I also play mobile games such as Pokémon Go!, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Candy Crush. I do a lot of that just kinda get out there and explore.
(P6, i1)*

DAQ-43

*I know that while I'm doing homework I'll freak out and think "I can't do this anymore." I'll just go downstairs, and I'll turn the PlayStation on and just start gaming. And it's just a way for me to kinda escape what's going on with my homework or have a way to reset.
(P3, i1)*

DAQ-44

The thing was, it was my opportunity to kinda release from my whole day as far as killing stuff. So as far as that goes I thought "Okay, let me defeat the boss. This will take out all my frustration from the day. I can get mad at the boss, whatever I can do." It's kinda like my punching bag almost. And then I was able just to defeat him.

DAQ-45

I picked [Overwatch] up and I would play it once every couple weeks and then something like a few weeks ago clicked for me. And ever since it's been like something I really got into. Like I feel like I'm in this spot where my skill level with it is really getting higher every session, so it's really satisfying to play right now. So, right now, that's a thing where if I'm busy doing something not fun, my brain is looking forward to when I have a chance to play Overwatch for an hour.

DAQ-46

I would probably plan it as what I could do for the next couple of days and then plan my VG habits through there. That would probably be my first step. And then

Peralta, R.P.

probably play one or two VGs, if I could, maybe just play Friday the 13th just to get rid of the anxiety and then just go on.

DAQ-47

I actually sat down this morning after I did my schoolwork and after I played my VG and wrote down a little schedule of what I can do and what games I could play and that helped me. [...] So, Wednesday can be my school day. I can get done with my assignments and then I can play my VGs until about 6 o'clock on. And then Thursday will be my day to kinda relax, like do laundry if I need to. And I work Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday.

DAQ-48

Most likely, the people in my house I like to spend time with. They usually help me de-stress a lot, and put things back into perspective, maybe talk about different things. My friends that I live with and my boyfriend, of course, and he actually helps me a lot. He lives with me.

DAQ-49

I like the multiplayer games... [...]. Especially when I was younger I liked the multiplayer games and I still do because I still like to play. I haven't made as many friends at uni as I would have hoped to. So, I stay in touch with friends from home, especially my best friend. He goes to Manchester, where I'm from. So, we talk daily, whereas if I didn't have an Xbox we wouldn't. So, I do play the multiplayer.

DAQ-50

There was stuff like that when we're going Trials of the Nine, when it matters, but like most of the time no. Like it's all like "Woah, look at my guy dance!" Haha! Banter. I don't think me or any of my mates are aggressive at all, so we'll just take the piss out of each other constantly. I tend to surround myself with non-aggressive people. [...] Like I don't see a point in being serious about it all because it's for fun. I am not good online. I'm awful at PVP. I'm easily the worst, so if someone's annoyed at me I'll laugh it off. Haha! [...] Just to bring myself back down to neutral. Haha.

DAQ-51

I have a friend who's also in graduate school, so we don't have time to see each other in person. So, whenever we have a little bit of time to hangout or talk we usually do it while playing Rocket League together. [...] They're the primary friend on that game. [...] It's just the one friend where it becomes social time over the game.

DAQ-52

Just doing things to take my mind off it or thinking about it and being rational about it. So normally I'll just spend some time with my girlfriend. We'll talk, or we'll have some food. We'll just watch some shows and stuff and I'll be with friends. Or I'll go onto my Xbox and talk to my friends online.

DAQ-53

I waste time. I enjoy it. [...] I'm listening with headphones as I go to sleep. That's how I want to wake up as well. I'll wake up about half an hour later and it'll be on a completely different album, be a different artist. [...] Pretty much every night. My mind just goes into standby mode, like when gaming.

DAQ-54

A little bit. While I'm super frustrated, I'll play some Rock Band 4. That doesn't really feel like gaming. I have a pretty nice electric drum set that functions as a controller for Rock Band. It feels more like playing along with songs than gaming. Usually it's just a few songs, just to work out some frustration. Sometimes if I'm like feeling it, I'll get lost for maybe an hour or so.

DAQ-55

Well that's where the three-hour gaming time came right before the GREs. And I was like "I can't do this" and I just zoned out [while gaming]. [...] And purposely this week I had cut out a lot of stuff I had planned for the week. I cut back my work hours. I'm only working 2 days this week and the rest of that time I said I was gonna try and cut out, reduce how much time I spend online, so I'm trying to do that and trying to go to the gym too just to get out stressors in a different way.

DAQ-56

Maybe take a walk. That usually calms me down too. It's like take a walk and breathe in the fresh air, just kinda get out of the house, walk around. That's usually one of my go-to's as well. [...] More than anything I really just wanted to take my anger out and frustration and play just a VG or just go out for a walk or something. Right where I live there aren't that many lights, so I don't really see myself going out in the dark. So mainly what I did when I got home was I played about thirty minutes of a game and then that was it. And that actually helped me fall asleep.

DAQ-57

I used to be into the old classics, just like Call of Duty basically. And it's very competitive. It's very intense, very fast paced. But then stuff like FIFA or Madden, put it on a low difficulty and just play that for a bit to relax yourself or when you go to sleep, something like that. It's just a lot easier. [...] It's either, when I'm tired because I do hockey training as well. And I'm not usually used to sport, that's a new thing for me. So, it takes it out of me quite a bit. So, it's either that or when I've been playing an intense game and I just want to rest a bit.

DAQ-58

I guess with dance, it's definitely a different thought process because it's more artistic. It's more visceral. [...] Versus with gaming, I'm more task oriented. In a way that's not what I'm doing with school, but I'm involved in a task that I want to accomplish within a game, within an environment that I choose, whether that be like Mass Effect, going around to different planets and exploring and finding these treasures or whatever. Or running away from the guy that's trying to kill me in Outlast. Haha! I feel like they both relieve stress in their own way. Because also with

Peralta, R.P.

dance, it's physical. So obviously those physiological responses to stress relief with dance because you are releasing endorphins.

DAQ-59

I think I was 12 or 13 and I remember that that was a time that I found out I had another father. And I remember playing [Legend of Dragoon] and really it just made me feel at ease with myself. I didn't have to pay attention to nothing, I just focused on that. And that just became my outlet.

DAQ-60

I had me first console, a Nintendo 64, when I was very, very young and I played with my dad quite a lot. My mom and dad separated when I was about 3 years old. I still see him like every month. But my dad has always liked Nintendo. [...] If I went on it now, my dad would have 100% file on every single game. Haha! When I was younger, you don't really understand the game but you're playing it. When I was younger, because I didn't have a brother to play with me, so I'd sit there playing a game I didn't understand. Haha!

DAQ-61

Well I see him a lot less frequently now. But I used to see him like once a month. Then it went down to one every three months. Now I see him like twice a year at most. When I see him it's not really a full conversation. [...] I did have a conversation with him about the Nintendo Switch and why he got it.

DAQ-62

Yeah, basically before my mum and dad split it was a hostile environment in the living room to say the least. So, I'd just go either up to my sister's room to play on the Game Boy or in the front room to play on the Sega Mega Drive just to get away from it, escape from it. I don't think I felt it at the time, but when I look back on it, it probably was. I've been there, when we've been used as weapons. It wasn't really that bad because it was very clear that I was not my dad's favourite. It was more that my mom used my sister as a weapon than me, which is fine, because she was very much a daddy's girl and I was very much a mummy's boy, still am. But it was hard to watch. Parents split up when I was nine, so probably a period of five to nine, so four years.

DAQ-63

I think a big part of the reason I play games is maybe as an escape, but also because I like to stay in contact with my best friend who is a big constant in my life and because we've grown up together and we're practically like brothers. We are from the same situations really, maybe some differences. But his mum and my mum are quite reckless in certain aspects. They both have mental health problems themselves. And I very much think he uses gaming as an escape.

DAQ-64

He very much lives in the same circumstances I do in that his mum has a mental illness and they live in poverty and he has a girlfriend that he spends a lot of time

with to the point where they've pretty much moved in together. I feel like I use it in a same way in that it inspires me. Because it lets my imagination run, but it's not about negative things. It's about new ideas and it's about law and universes that aren't our own and I don't have to pay attention to certain bad aspects, because I cannot run away from being in denial by imagining myself in a different world, but by imagining myself in a different world it makes me want to write a story. [...] And that's why I think I like gaming, it's because a lot of the things that I enjoy, or that I like to imagine, will be in these games. And so, it's almost like a pseudo-I'm-playing-in-my-imagination.

DAQ-65

When I was younger after my mum and stepdad split up I was quite angry and anxious as well. So, I had to go to counselling for that for a couple of months. And then after that we moved around a lot and my mum got a new boyfriend and I didn't really like him and eventually we moved in with him despite me saying I didn't want to. So, I had to live in a house with someone that I didn't enjoy the company of. So, he would come home from work and he would come and sit down and try and engage with me, but I really didn't like him, so I would just leave. So that was a lot of anxiety because I didn't feel welcome in my own home.

DAQ-66

Maybe. [My father] was really disappointed with my brother, I think. He always blamed him for setting a bad example because my brother never got good grades. And then the rest of us stopped getting good grades and stopped doing homework. But it was really because our family was really dysfunctional, and my parents would drink all night, stay out, so that they were so drunk that they couldn't drive us to school in the morning. Just this unhealthy lifestyle that we grew up in. I think it's their fault that we didn't do homework or go to school on time. [...] He put so many of our failures on us, that he should probably take some blame for. I feel like it's because he works in country clubs, like he has forever. And I feel like old, rich, white people told him about how shitty his kids were when he would complain.

DAQ-67

It was a lot of different things. Sometimes before I was ever out or accepted things myself, I kinda really shut myself down emotionally. And sort of the only time I connected with any emotions was through fictional narratives. So, I was big in movies and single player long narrative VGs because I think it's really easy to connect with characters when you're interacting with the storytelling like you are in VGs.

DAQ-68

So, VGs in one way just sort of acted like sort of an empathy machine for me when I was otherwise pretty emotionally neutral in every other aspect of my life. And then my home life, family life, there could be much worse situations, but definitely wouldn't be considered a happy home. So, being able to retreat to my bedroom and put headphones on and play a VG allowed me to sort of like escape from that.

DAQ-69

That's a really hard question because I grew up with gaming. I remember the original Macintoshes with Oregon Trail on there and dying from dysentery every time. And just grew up from that. My sister and I, we had an Atari. We have an Atari now! We grew up playing Pong. And it's just always been part of my life. I always went to it as a stress relief because I never had an easy childhood. My mom, she was illegal for a while. Finally got her citizenship, thank god. We lived in an abusive family as well. So, my way to escape everything was either through the arts, performing music, dancing, or through VGs. And that's the two worlds that I basically lived in. And it's still my go to until today.

DAQ-70

Yeah, it helped me sort of nurture myself and figure out who I am in a fake world instead of having to worry about how people perceive me in the real world. So, it let me play with identity more.

DAQ-71

Well a lot of the games that I play, you've got an objective to head toward. In the whole thing of going through just to get to one objective then get to the next one. Just build platform upon platform. And I kinda do that, I made a plan which I've had to re-alter at some point. [...] I said I was going to a specific school, which I did end up going to, then going to a specific uni to do a specific course, and I got to the uni but am on a different course. [...] They got me in law instead. I took a shining to it. Teachers saw I took a shining to it.

DAQ-72

And then my parents bought me a Nintendo and I started playing Super Mario Brothers and it evolved from there. I got Kirby's Adventure. I got Ducktales for instance. And each one of them was a different world I could explore. When I was a kid I was an only child. There were no friends down the street and that became my go to, especially if I was bored and had nothing to do. [...] Where I lived, in the city where I was at, I couldn't really go anywhere because we were so far away from everything else. It was like, what can I do in order to explore my surroundings? And VGs became a part of me like that. I could explore Niagara Falls if I wanted to on Ducktales 2. I could explore a new city thanks to Carmen San Diego. So, it was really just an exploration sort of deal for me. [...] Didn't really have a lot of kids down the street per se. That's how I learned that VGs were my best friend and those were the ones I could really count on.

DAQ-73

It's just nice having someone else in the room with you. Both being focused on the same thing. Sometimes [my flatmate and I] hang out and watch TV and I'll put things on the TV for us to watch. [...] But playing a game together we're both focused on the same thing. It's one of the few ways that people still feel present together, you know?

DAQ-74

My siblings are close, and sometimes we'll just be on speaker phone together, not talking, scrolling through Facebook or playing games, or watching TV. [...] We play

Tetris, Mario Kart, Mario Party. Maybe once a year we'll play games together, but it's a thing on our list of things to do together. My brother and I play Smash Brothers together sometimes.

DAQ-75

Game Boy colour. It was my sisters', but I'd always sneak into her room and "accidentally" delete her save file. Haha! We were pretty close anyway, because we had a lot of stuff happening when we were growing up. The games kept us close together, because she's always had an appreciation for Halo, and recently Final Fantasy. [...] Because we both played games, like we played Final Fantasy 15, but that's not a multiplayer game, so we talked about it. She got big into that and just told me what to do. Haha! [...] Sonic Anniversary, we played through Sonic 1, 2, and 3, as like co-op. It brought that sense of nostalgia, because we already knew the map, we could just go as fast as possible. We used to compete with Pokémon Silver, who could get the furthest.

DAQ-76

I think primarily with my brother I play competitive, but other random people I just play just to wind down. [...] We played VGs together, but I always helped him in those. And I think we used to use all my quarters helping him win until he makes it to the final stage and then he'd beat the game. So that's one way I used to help. Haha! [...] On that regular Nintendo they had a race game on that one, that track I think. And we couldn't do it alone so we sort of played together trying to get the highest score with jumping, with the high jumps. So, he'd be running with his feet on the mat and I'd be behind him just using my hands pounding on the mat with my hands. Haha

DAQ-77

Interesting fact, my boyfriend actually got back into gaming again. He got this game called Epic Mickey 2. [...] So, I'm like "Ooh! Maybe me and you can play!" He's like "Yeah, basically we need to go to the store and get another controller." So, we might actually start playing cooperatively. We played co-op, like the original Super Mario Brothers, we have, any kinda puzzle games we try to do, because that's just our thing, we're very intellectual on the puzzle aspect of it. Any kinda puzzle games is what we're good at. We'll sit there, and we'll figure out a puzzle. Like if he doesn't understand a part of it maybe I will. And we work on that together as a team. That's why I like playing with him so much because we're of the same mind but at the same time we think differently. I'm more a think outside of the box while he's strictly by the books, so we complement each other.

DAQ-78

A few months ago, I played a little Portal 2 split-screen with a friend. But other than that, a couple years I had a partner where we would play games together in person. [...] With my former partner, we played games like the co-op version of Shovel Knight. A lot of Nintendo games, like Wii-U games, like the Mario ones. Kinda like low investment games, not very intense games. More social. It was sort of a comfort thing. Our relationship was defined by our time together being on the couch, eating food, and consuming media. It was either watching movies or playing VGs. [...] When we were one with that our escape was spending time with each other doing low energy things. [...]

Peralta, R.P.

My sister and I definitely grew up playing games together. And then early adulthood my friend groups we'd have LAN parties, both computers and Xboxes.

DAQ-79

There's Mario Kart and Super Smash Brothers. [...] Yeah, we have game nights every- well we do Dungeons and Dragons at least twice a week, on Fridays. It builds a community within our friends. It's cool to know you have other friends who have similar interests. So, you get to hang out with all these people who you don't normally hang out with outside of school or the bar. It's nice to get out of the bar scene or just seeing them at school. It's just cool hanging out with friends who have similar interests. It's normally like a party we had each season.

DAQ-80

Well me and my best mate, doesn't go to uni or anything. He works here so I see him. We used to only play local co-op. Because I still go to his. Like every weekend when I'm home. But it's harder now because with new generation consoles they don't really have split screen anymore. It doesn't really exist. So, we still go back to old consoles just to play certain games. It is a bit different. I do prefer co-op. I'm not really a fan of online co-op. But I'm not very good at it either. Destiny is the only one that I'll push the boat out for. Even then you're with your mates doing it. But I much prefer doing strikes where you're against AI.

DAQ-81

I've never really been a co-op person. I've tried it with Destiny. I really enjoyed it because my friend. He invited me to play Destiny, Taken Queen, I mean King! Haha! Sorry! Taken Queen is what we called it when we played it. Culturally the homosexuals change the name of their games. Haha! It was an interesting experience. I really enjoyed it for the month that I played it. It was cool. It was hanging out with friends, but they weren't there, so that was really weird, but I kinda enjoyed it as well, because I've been more of an introvert recently. It was cool meeting people, hanging out with people that you normally don't hang out with and gaming together.

DAQ-82

Yeah, if anything it's helped me socialise. Because, with my close friend group, there's about ten of us in my really close friend group back home. We always go out all the time. But we're split down the middle of who're got PS4 and who's got Xbox. [...] Gaming is the bridge between socialising. So, if anything it does help a bit because I was never a quiet one at school. I've always been quite a loud, open person. But it's just kinda a place to reset yourself, gaming. You sit there, you cool off, and then you go get back in again.

DAQ-83

I like the community of it, because I've got all my mates back home because we all used to play Destiny 1. So, now that I've come to uni I'm away from them all. We play Destiny 2 together, so that's kinda my way of getting back to them.

DAQ-84

I consider myself a gamer. In my circle of friends, and the way I identify myself, is as a gamer. Growing up in high school, all my friends had PlayStations and Super Nintendos. Those are the people I hung out with, so that was my community. Those are the people I hung out with. Those are the people I associated myself with. I normally hung out with the gamers or theatre people. It is part of my identity because I've always hung out with these people and played Magic the Gathering as well. So yeah, geeks and gamers.

DAQ-85

I have Facebook and just started getting back into Instagram. Also, on Discord, I found out there's a Discord channel for Gaymers, so I joined that. I've been pretty active on social media too. I'm actually an administrator for a Friday the 13th LGBT community one. We have about 400 members and we're still growing strong by the day. [...] Mainly we just talk about the new updates. That's one way to connect with friends on PS4, Steam, or Xbox1. It's a great place to meet new friends and you don't have to worry about the slurs that you can get with multiplayer games.

DAQ-86

As I said, on Friday the 13th the game especially, you have people that are being singled out because they're gay or they don't act like you do. And that's mainly why I love the group that I'm in on Facebook. Because we accept everybody. It doesn't matter, gay, straight, bi, whatever, we accept you for who you are. But we don't allow harassment or violence in our group. If we see any of that we let you go.

DAQ-87

But I know how hard it was to actually try to find who I was as a person being a gay guy, being a gamer. And so, when I found this group I finally felt a sense of belonging that I've always been wanting. [...] But it's something that I've always wanted to find. And I was never able to find it until now. And so, I'm very thankful I actually get to find people that I can actually connect with on not only an intellectual level but also the same aspect and mindset that I am.

DAQ-88

I work in the campus LGBT resource centre and just interacting with students there I just found so many gamers. So, we actually started doing gaming nights as social events. [...] And we started sort of collaborating and doing coffeeshop/LGBT resource centre gaming night. So, met a lot of people through there. My best friend who I now have a lot of my social time with through Rocket League, met her by working at the centre. There's that and then also there's a couple different Facebook groups or Discord servers that I'm on that are just dedicated to either Transgender or Queer gamers. So, if I ever have a night where I get into a couple games where there's just toxic people it's nice to retreat back to those, have conversations there, or find play partners through there that don't leave that toxic experience as the experience that defines the night.

DAQ-89

I know that gaming's also helped me with forming friendships. I have social anxiety, so I know that when in high school, and even to now, the friendships I've formed were with the people that played similar games. "Oh, Final Fantasy! Oh, you like Final Fantasy too?"

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Oh my god!” And we’d talk about Final Fantasy and it wasn’t weird. I would always feel weird at home, because my sister, she never played any of that stuff. And she’s like “Eh, you’re such a weirdo, why do you like this?” And then I’d go to school and I didn’t have any friends that played that stuff until I met that group of friends.

DAQ-90

And then after that my friends circle just got bigger and bigger and those are the same people I used to play Dance Dance Revolution. Oh my god I love DDR! It’s also a way for people who are, who have social anxiety to also meet people in circles that are in the gaming community. It’s really interesting now with games like Destiny where you are out in this open world and communicating over your headset with people you never actually see or have met, but you’re still having this form of community. It’s really nice having that community feeling in those type of games as well.

DAQ-91

My first gaming experience was when I was about four years old, maybe younger because me dad gave me his Nintendo 64. I was playing that. I still have it. I still play it, because I grew up in a generation where obviously games have become huge. Games are massive now. It’s like everyone knows how to talk about it. It’s an easy one to be social about. [...] I don’t say to myself, “Gaming does this for me.” It’s just, become such a big part of me life that if it went I’d be missing it loads. It’s become like a natural thing to think of. It’s just part of the persona, top of your mind, to go play PS4.

DAQ-92

I think it’s so strange that overall on the surface, gaming is a terrible environment for a trans woman. But there are so many pockets where I can find great communities. And for some reason it still is such an important release for me, even though I know how toxic gaming environments can be. So, it’s something I’ve always thought was a really strange phenomenon that gaming is simultaneously this breeding ground for toxic masculine communities as well as just appearing like there’s also a high amount of Queer people attracted to it.

DAQ-93

I see myself as a fat person before I see myself as a gay person, identity wise. And that’s always been harder for me in game protagonists and stuff that you know there’s never any just kinda chubby dudes.

DAQ-94

Ever since I was a kid I’ve always had this mentality that after I come home from school I start playing VGs automatically because it seems to alleviate a lot of the stress from the day. That way I don’t really have to focus on it at night. I can just play and after I play for a couple hours then I’m fine. It’s an escape from the real world.

DAQ-95

With me, I have Social Anxiety Disorder and Generalised Anxiety Disorder, GAD. [...] I would also explain how the theory of escapism, you’re able to escape your life into a VG for X amount of time and being in another reality kinda helps you cope with things

you're not able to cope with in your own life. For example, Outlast. In my life I'm not experiencing a guy that's trying to murder me every five seconds, but anxiety kinda feels that way. It feels like your skin is constantly being ripped apart in any situation that you're in. And for me that happens in social situations. I feel like I constantly have people yelling at me and I feel like I'm constantly surrounded by people of really close proximity and I have to be aware of what I say, how I say it, how I look, how I think. Everything. I have to be aware of every little aspect of myself. Otherwise I'll have a panic attack.

DAQ-96

So, with Outlast I feel like if I'm able to escape into this VG and successfully beat this monster, this scary person, this thing that constantly is after you, then I can kinda do that in my own life. It kinda rewires the brain in a way and I feel like, I know I'm not in the situation and I get fully immersed in there, so it feels like I'm in there and if I can do it in this VG then I can do it in real life.

DAQ-97

It distracts some of my focus, so I can work through things in the background. Like you know Tetris, sometimes it's really low and it's not stressful and sometimes it's really high and it's stressful. And when it's really high you have to focus on playing Tetris. But when it's low you can think about other things. [...] I don't know if you know about anxiety a lot, but it'll kinda snowball, which is kinda dangerous for a lot of people. So, you have to find a way to stop that. No matter who you are, you can't just worry, worry, worry, about something that you can't change. It's important to think about it, and to know what you can do and what you can't do. But you need to find a way to stop worrying. And Tetris has that built in. Y'know, sometimes you have to focus on the game and you can't worry about it then, but then it'll go down and you can think about it again.

DAQ-98

I probably wouldn't explain to someone that it's like a meditative thing. Because that's a really awkward thing to bring up in a casual conversation. But it is really therapeutic to just focus on putting all the pieces together and not have to worry about fitting all the pieces together in your life.

DAQ-99

You would think that it would induce more stress. I guess it's the whole escapist theory. Like, you go to a movie, or you go to a theatre, or a show, whatever, to escape your own reality kinda thing. I know I'm not in an insane asylum. I know there's not this monster trying to kill me with a machete. But I put myself in this situation knowing that maybe I can escape it. [...] It's like "Okay, cool, I'm in this very scary situation. I know it's not real, but I can escape it. So maybe subconsciously I'm doing that in my own life as well."

DAQ-100

With the chance to review everything in your game, it makes you take a step back and just look at the whole situation rather than go in head strong doing whatever and if it doesn't work out you go back, and you try it again. [...] It's better to take yourself away from a situation just to think it over then have another go later. Give your mind a rest.

DAQ-101

In the real world, things just come to me naturally. But if I'm in a VG I kinda have to do a little bit of research. So, it's kinda different but at the same time it's similar. Because sometimes if I can't figure out a puzzle for instance, I keep trying until I can finally figure it out. Or if I can't figure it out then I just use online and figure out what's going on and then I'm good with it. [...] When I had to help my god children with their math and their history and all that. If I didn't know the answer, then I would definitely try to look it up. I would try to figure out "Well okay, I know this from math class. What if I do this?" and sometimes it ends up being the right answer. So, I'm like "Oh! Okay, that was easy!"

DAQ-102

Aside from being scared shitless, I never played a VG where the only way to beat it is to run away. So normally all VGs is about fighting back. So, you have that control. This is in a way, you're giving up that control, but you have to survive by doing the thing you don't think you could do, which is run away. It's interesting because I find it a metaphor for life. You can't always fight every single problem that comes up. Sometimes you have to turn around and walk away from it. And this game is forcing me to sometimes accept that things are gonna be the way they are. You can't control everything. And sometimes you have to run. Of course, it's terrifying. You have to laugh at it, otherwise you're gonna sit there and cry.

DAQ-103

I'm very organised when it comes to my life and being organised in a game is the same task. In order to complete a side quest, you have to do this, or you may have multiple side quests within the side quests for you to accomplish it and I make sure that everything is done. And if nothing is done then everything just goes out of place. And I become out of focus.

DAQ-104

I also noticed that I like games that have to-do lists. And I do this in my own life, I write lists of things that I need to do throughout the day, and I scratch them out and that's just something I love doing, because it makes me feel accomplished. And Mass Effect, Assassin's Creed, Watch Dogs, are some of the games that have this list feature. And you can do all of these side quests or you can stay on the main mission. And as you do them, it scratches them out, and that's why I really actually enjoy this game.

DAQ-105

It makes me feel great. It's definitely a stress relief. When I do stuff around the house I make a list. Do dishes. Clean bedroom. I can do these things without writing a list, but actually physically seeing it in front of me, and physically scratching it out, it just makes me feel good.

DAQ-106

I'm constantly stressed out with that school work, which I also use an app called My Study Life, which also puts all your homework in list form, so you can check them. It puts everything in priority order, so you can go down the list and do your homework in that way. It's fantastic. It's the same with Mass Effect and Assassin's Creed doing all these

lists. Seeing everything accomplished just makes things a lot easier. If I'm able to see things in front of me it makes things less stressful. If it's all in my head, then it becomes too much because it doesn't seem like there's a way around it. But when I write it down on paper it's actually not that bad.

DAQ-107

Other than feeling like I'm going crazy? Haha! It was really funny because I've noticed at least with this week, before I even decide to touch homework. Once I come home from class or from work, I've been playing Assassin's Creed just to kinda like, ease stress from everything. I'm not gonna think about anything right now other than Assassin's Creed. [...] I feel like it prepares me for what I have to do for my homework, because Assassin's Creed has lists of missions and tasks and side quests you have to do. So, it's a list you have to complete. So that translates to my real life. Oh, I have this list of homework I have to complete so, if I can do it within the game and have success in the game, then I'm like "Oh, it's not that bad in my real life as well." So, I can do these little lists. And I can make lists for myself and realise "Oh okay. This isn't so bad. I have these five things, not these three hundred things and it's really only five things." So, in Assassin's Creed style, I'll do the thing that's either closest or easiest in the aspect of my homework. I do that one that's easiest or the one that's due sooner. So, I do my lists that way as well. [...] I feel good. I feel less worried about the things coming up after I've done it.

DAQ-108

When I sat down initially I was like "I got to get this frustration out. I got to just get this day out of my head." And then as I was playing it I could feel myself more comfortable. I was more aware of what I was doing. When I get into that anxiety state I just get overwhelmed. That's something I don't want to happen, but yesterday it did happen. [...] I did a little bit of gaming today, it was about 30 minutes. But it was mostly just to release my day, get my mind on the right track, and just basically enjoy my day off.

DAQ-109

Last week I played Outlast for about three or four hours. [...] It's just, every time I play it, I'm like "Why am I playing this?" Last week I was just feeling like, numb, to describe the feeling of last week. Everything hit me at once, with the papers, and I had interviews. I just had too much on my plate, and I was just "Okay, I'm just gonna play Outlast." And I needed something else to like, freak me out, just so I could feel something. Haha! Other than the stress. I was just there. I was just a robot running on autopilot, so that brought other feelings back into my body. Oh yeah, I am a living person right now, I'm not a robot! Haha!

DAQ-110

I think what stands out was my experience with Final Fantasy 7. For me that was sort of like the game that shifted what my expectations for what VGs could do was. That's probably like middle school age for me. [...] Final Fantasy 7 was the first VG I played where it felt like a different medium of being a storyteller, whereas like everything in the past was just a way to play a game. With me, gender identity stuff, that one weird cloud cross dressing section definitely brought weird feelings to the surface that I knew were

there but always tried to ignore. In a way it made me feel less weird since it was in a VG that everyone loved and there were commercials for on mainstream TV.

DAQ-111

While I was in [the navy], gaming sort of disappeared for a bit. Just because I was on a submarine and my ability to get a hold of anything was limited for a long time. But when I was being kicked out for being Trans, there was a good seven-month discharge limbo I was in where I was no longer on the submarine, but I was still in the military. [...] That was definitely my distraction while I was figuring life out. It was definitely those binge games. [...] But as soon as I started playing the first [Mass Effect] again I was having fun with the nostalgia. I had gotten to the point where I had realised that joining the military didn't make me suddenly find masculinity and that transition was gonna have to be a thing I had to do to be okay with in life in general.

DAQ-112

Well Mass Effect, I like the story line, and it reminds me a lot of Choose Your Own Adventure books, like Goosebumps use to have. If you choose this then go to page 67, and it's like "Oh, okay! What's gonna happen next?" And that's kinda what Mass Effect is kinda like. It's like you base this character's story on either what you want them to experience or what you would do. And it changes the outcome for the whole story. It's a fun experience in that way.

DAQ-113

Yeah, actually I'm a huge fan of horror movies altogether! And when they said that they're coming out with Friday the 13th I'm like "I've got to play it!" I've been waiting for a game like this forever and I incorporate myself into the game because I've always wanted to play a game that's based around my favourite movie characters of all time.

DAQ-114

Kingdom Hearts is another one. I'm a huge Kingdom Hearts fan and when I played that game for the first time it relieved a lot of stress because I felt like I was escaping from the real world and going to this Disney, I love Disney, so it was a big sense of "Oh wow, I'm in their world." Basically, you're still in control but you're in another world in control if that makes any kind of sense.

Also, it brings a sense of relaxation because you remember those games as a kid. So, you're able to actually be at peace with that. You're like "Hey, I remember this as a kid. This actually relaxes me. It gives me a sense of control."

There's this one game, Legend of Dragoon for PlayStation 1. I just recently started that again. It brought me back to my childhood, because I'm like "Oh wow. I forgot I even played this." Just by playing it, it brought back a lot of memories.

It makes me feel kinda at ease because I've played the game before and know how to get around it. It's a way to just lay back and just chill. I don't have to worry about anything because I know what to do already. [...] It's like "Oh wow, I remember this from

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when I was a kid.” It was just like one of those childhood moments like, “Yeah, this is what I grew up on!”

Quantitative data

Due to the low number of participants, quantitative data collected was regarded insignificant to the study, especially as the primary purpose was to explore participant experiences through IPA, a quantitative research approach. Data was collected through the questionnaires below in the appendices beginning on page 110.

Participants completed the State/Trait Anxiety Questionnaire and Metacognition Questionnaire-30 before and after interviews, which can be found on the following pages. This was to gather quantitative data to support or oppose any themes interpreted through qualitative IPA research. Results conclude that the State anxiety mean of 40.75 decreased to 38.5 through the interview process. Trait anxiety, a measure of inherent quality of trait that one has, decreased in mean as well from 47 to 44.4. In terms of metacognition, mean score also declined 71 to 69. From the start through the conclusion of the study, the metacognition mean score also decreased. As expected, this data coincides with the clusters of meaning which imply a successful decline in anxiety throughout the participant interview process. Not all participants display a decrease in scores, however, conclusively scores do not lower for everyone. Whilst the decrease in scores are was nonsignificant, note that standard deviation showed a large variation. Results support the need for IPA in this present study, as the quantitative data represents individual experience as opposed to a group sample. The t test for State anxiety revealed a non-significant result: $t(7) = 0.769, p = 0.467$. The t test for Trait anxiety revealed a non-significant result: $t(7) = 0.956, p = 0.371$. The t test for MCQ-30 revealed a non-significant result: $t(7) = 0.553, p = 0.597$. (See Table 3 below)

Table 3

Paired Samples Statistics

n=8

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	SAnxietyStageOne	40.7500	12.84801
	SAnxietyStageTwo	38.5000	10.67708
Pair 2	TAnxietyStageOne	47.0000	14.56022
	TAnxietyStageTwo	44.3750	11.26229
Pair 3	MetcogOne	71.0000	12.15378
	MetcogTwo	69.0000	12.73213

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* Required

1. Email address *

2. Participation Number

Questionnaire #1: State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults

3. Directions: CURRENT Feelings *

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then mark the appropriate response to the right of the statement to indicate how you feel RIGHT NOW, that is, AT THIS MOMENT. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately so	Very much so
I feel calm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel secure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am tense	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel strained	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel at ease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel upset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel satisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel frightened	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel self-confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel nervous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel jittery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel indecisive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am relaxed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am worried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel steady	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel pleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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4. Directions: GENERAL Feelings *

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then mark the appropriate response to the right of the statement to indicate how you GENERALLY feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.
Mark only one oval per row.

	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
I feel pleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel nervous and restless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel satisfied with myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like a failure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel rested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am "calm, cool, and collected"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that difficulties are piling up so that I cannot overcome them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry too much over something that really doesn't matter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have disturbing thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I lack self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel secure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make decisions easily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel inadequate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some unimportant thought runs through my mind and bothers me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take disappointments so keenly that I can't put them out of my mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a steady person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get in a state of tension or turmoil as I think over my recent concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Questionnaire #2: MCQ30

This questionnaire is concerned with beliefs people have about their thinking. Listed below are a number of beliefs that people have expressed. Please read each item and say how much you generally agree with it by circling the appropriate number. Please respond to all the items, there are no right or wrong answers.

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5. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Do not agree	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree very much
I do not trust my memory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a poor memory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have little confidence in my memory for actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have little confidence in my memory for places	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have little confidence in my memory for words and names	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My memory can mislead me at times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worrying helps me to get things sorted out in my mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worrying helps me cope	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to worry in order to work well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worrying helps me to solve problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to worry in order to remain organised	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worrying helps me to avoid problems in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am constantly aware of my thinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I pay close attention to the way my mind works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think a lot about my thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I constantly examine my thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I monitor my thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of the way my mind works when I am thinking through a problem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My worrying thoughts persist, no matter how I try to stop them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I start worrying I cannot stop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could make myself sick with worrying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cannot ignore my worrying thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My worrying could make me go mad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My worrying is dangerous for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could not control my thoughts, I would not be able to function	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not being able to control my thoughts is a sign of weakness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I should be in control of my thoughts all of the time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is bad to think certain thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I did not control a worrying thought and then it happened, it would be my fault	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/10FpG5lqbWOD3MjKEB6X08LywKxh-hDjDvyll72dowsQ/edit>

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	Do not agree	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree very much
I will be punished for not controlling certain thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided

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 Google Forms

Peralta, R.P.

PILOT INTERVIEW

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your normal gaming habits. How often you play and what you've been playing

PARTICIPANT 1

Growing up I was always a lot of a handheld gamer. I don't know why. I just, didn't like to play on the TV as much. I think I like the quicker hits you could get, even though I would spend a long time playing a hand held. It was nice to just be able to pause it, set it down. It just felt like more of an ordeal to play a game on the TV. Recently I got a Switch and went through most of Zelda, but I didn't beat it. And the day after finals I bought Persona 5. I've played a lot of Persona 5. I played 100 hours in less than a month, but I didn't beat it. So, the game is on a calendar, it's kinda stressful. When I was telling me mom about it. I was like "Isn't that cool?" She's like "No, that sounds really stressful. So, you live in the real world and you have to make friends at school and stuff, but then those correlate to your stats in, you go into an alternate world where you get to fight demons and stuff. But every time you go into the alternate world it uses up one of your days. So, the optimum way to play is to try to beat each dungeon in one day. That's just one sitting. So, they keep getting longer. The last one took me six hours. I stayed up all night playing it. There are save points in there, but once you're in it. You're "Ok, c'mon let's go." Every time I think about going back and doing the next dungeon, I know I'm really close to the end, but I just don't want to sit there for 8 hours or do some of it and never come back to it. It's good. It's a lot like Pokémon, but the story is a lot more adult. And the character designs are a lot more inappropriate. They look like real monsters and damage shit.

RESEARCHER

So how many days a week would you say you're gaming?

PARTICIPANT 1

5 maybe? I play a lot of Tetris also.

RESEARCHER

No, that counts, that totally counts.

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah, every once in a while, it's just Tetris.

RESEARCHER

About how much time for each sitting would you play, ranging from lowest to most?

PARTICIPANT 1

Maybe 1 to 3 hours. That's an average. I have played 10 hours in a row, I'm sure. In between semesters, you got to get your gaming in.

RESEARCHER

So, when you're gaming while you're in school, how often would you say that you actively choose to turn to gaming due to any sort of school stress or anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 1

Peralta, R.P.

Maybe, pretty often. Because it's just kinda a quick reflex. I carried my 3DS in my pocket, for, 5 years. I always had it in my left pocket, so I would pull it out as often as someone who may pull out a cell phone. And just, y'know, if I wasn't interested in the conversation, or just wanted to turn off for a minute, I could pull it out and play whenever you know?

RESEARCHER

What are some instances where you know you typically would experience stress and right away whip that handheld out?

PARTICIPANT 1

Well in between classes I had free time. And if I didn't have an assignment due for that next class, I would play games. So, I would use it to procrastinate and kinda, and it's super lame to call it meditating, but, y'know it's really story heavy you can just kinda turn off and think and explore. Walking around in Zelda gives you as much time to think as walking around in the real world. [Starts smoking a cigarette]

RESEARCHER

Tell me a little bit about your smoking habits when dealing with any stress or anxiety.

PARTICIPANT 1

I use it to procrastinate. So, if I sit down to do my homework. I'll open up all my tabs, and open my word processors, and download the assignment description, and then I'll go out and smoke. And then I'll get lost in a phone call or something. And I'll come in and get a snack and something to drink, and then I'll go outside and smoke. So, I use it a lot to get out of things and put things off.

RESEARCHER

Would you say that your smoking is also used to manage stress and anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 1

Well when I'm really stressed, that's what I do, is I put it off. Like "I don't want to deal with this right now." Y'know even just putting it off for 5 minutes, it just gives me an excuse to not stress about it, at that moment.

RESEARCHER

When you're using gaming for the same reason, how do you usually feel when you stop, and you put down the game?

PARTICIPANT 1

Like I want a cigarette. I usually don't let myself game if I do have something that needs to be done at that moment. But if I justify in my mind that I have enough time, even if it's just barely enough time, then I can be like "Oh I can play video games" because I can y'know do that assignment tomorrow before class.

RESEARCHER

How else do you justify gaming?

PARTICIPANT 1

Peralta, R.P.

A lot of people don't realize it, but games and play time is just part of the human experience. We've played games forever. Yesterday was my brother-in-law's birthday, and I was at my grandma's for dinner, and I was like "Hey I have to go grab a present. I'm gonna go grab a game or something." And she's like "A game? He [is an adult] man!" And I was like "Yeah, but I'm gonna get a card game." And she's like "Oh, okay." For some reason, she was okay with a grown man playing a card game, but not a grown man playing a video game? But everything else in our world has moved to electronic. We don't send mail anymore. We send email. We don't watch TV anymore, we stream TV. So, we still play games, but we play them online. I like a game, a board game that's really popular called Cataan, but I mostly play it on my phone, because it's difficult to set up, get everyone in the same room, but I can play it with my sister. I don't have to go all the way over to her house, I just, play it on my phone with her real quick. There's an app for pretty much every board game, but Cataan, Carcassonne, Exploding Kittens, even Pokémon cards, Magic cards, those have all gone online. I mean everything is online. It's indicative of where we're going.

RESEARCHER

You were talking about that experience of why it is okay to play card games as a grown man as opposed to video games. Talk to me a little bit more about how you feel about that.

PARTICIPANT 1

So, I like the puzzle elements of games, and the strategy, trying to figure out how to win, how to solve a problem, and my grandma, she likes dominoes. And slot machines. And I don't see the difference. She does, but she doesn't use the internet. She doesn't have a phone or anything. She's very old world.

RESEARCHER

You mentioned that you played console gaming. Tell me more about when you choose to play handheld versus console on your television and why.

PARTICIPANT 1

Handheld is just more convenient. Console gaming feels like an ordeal. Like it's purposeful and deliberate. I have to turn on the TV, move over to the settings, settle in your seat, look directly at the screen. But handheld gaming, wherever you're sitting, you can just flip it open and continue playing. You can shut it and it's paused. So, it's just, you don't have to schedule it. It's more spontaneous.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you have a good sense of self control when it comes to experiencing university related anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know that I do. I do get really anxious. I get anxious about driving. Sometimes I'll just be at home and I'll be really hungry and I'm like "Oh I should go get food" and I'll be too anxious to drive down the street. Y'know, I've done it a million times. And I feel like a lot of my work isn't good enough. Because it's not perfect, it'll never be perfect. That's the whole point of gonna school is to try and get your work to be more perfect. But then when I look at other work, like when we do peer edits and stuff, it makes me feel silly, but sometimes I just need to kill some more time before I have no choice but to do the assignment. And then it's as good as it will be and there's nothing I can do about it, so it takes a lot of my anxiety out of the equation.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

What specifically takes the anxiety out?

PARTICIPANT 1

Killing time. Because if I have 4 months to do an assignment then I spend 4 months wondering how I'm supposed to justify spending 4 months on that assignment. Because y'know if you really put 4 months into something it's gonna go above and beyond than what the teacher is expecting. So, it's nice to kinda shorten the deadline on your own terms.

RESEARCHER

Would you say that you work better under that kind of pressure?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know that I can work without that pressure. [Lights another cigarette]

RESEARCHER

What other kinds of anxiety do you experience being a college student?

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm a bit older, so I'm always worried about y'know, all the children around. I don't know. What if they all make fun of me, or what if I don't fit in? I'm worried about embarrassing myself. And just seeming like the weird old dude, but I'm not that old, I'm 27, but I'm a lot older than some of the people in some of my classes.

RESEARCHER

Is there anything you'd like to share about gaming done in the past week and what kind of stressors have affected your decision to play or why you play?

PARTICIPANT 1

I've been playing a lot of Tetris. Tetris is just completely mindless y'know? You can get lost in it. And I've been kinda stressed about summer classes starting. So, the reason I'm taking summer classes, my dad said he would pay for them. And he recently got a new job out of town, 6 hours west of here, and he had really bad phone reception to the middle of nowhere and this past weekend he broke his phone. And I had just paid for my classes and my books and I was completely broke, and I was like, "Hey, I need to get a hold of my dad, but he's nowhere, so there was nothing I could do but stress about it or find a way to not stress about it. So, I just turned on some podcasts, and played Tetris and that was it.

RESEARCHER

How long do you usually play Tetris when you want to zone out?

PARTICIPANT 1

Maybe 2 hours.

RESEARCHER

Okay. What would you say your awareness is like of that stress when you're playing?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 1

It distracts some of my focus, so I can work through things in the background. Like you know Tetris, sometimes it's really low and it's not stressful and sometimes it's really high and it's stressful. And when it's really high you have to focus on playing Tetris. But when it's low you can think about other things. So, it's kinda, I don't know if you know about anxiety a lot, but it'll kinda snowball, which is kinda dangerous for a lot of people. So, you have to find a way to stop that. No matter who you are, you can't just worry, worry, worry, about something that you can't change. It's important to think about it, and to know what you can do and what you can't do. But you need to find a way to stop worrying. And Tetris has that built in. Y'know, sometimes you have to focus on the game and you can't worry about it then, but then it'll go down and you can think about it again.

RESEARCHER

How were you to explain to a friend why you play Tetris in the simplest of terms?

PARTICIPANT 1

I would say it's fun. I probably wouldn't explain to someone that it's like a meditative thing. Because that's a really awkward thing to bring up in a casual conversation. But it is really therapeutic to just focus on putting all the pieces together and not have to worry about fitting all the pieces together in your life. I'm sorry, that's awful. [Laughs]

RESEARCHER

What impact have games had on your identity?

PARTICIPANT 1

I see myself as a fat person before I see myself as a gay person, identity wise. And that's always been harder for me in game protagonists and stuff that you know there's never any just kinda chubby dudes. But I've always felt that part of why I'm gay is because I really don't like competition. And I didn't fit in with the really competitive nature of men and manliness, and I never really wanted to compete for women or anything. And I think that I kinda felt that at such a young age that I just didn't develop that way in wanting to compete for women. So, I've always wondered if that was a thing. But I really don't like losing. And I'm impatient, so I like to take time to get good at things. So, I played a lot of single player games growing up that got me to the point to where I am good enough to beat people in some games. But still in a lot of games, I'm not good in a lot of games I've never played before. It hurt my pride less to learn how to lose against a computer than a person. And that helped me kinda to feel competitive in some things.

RESEARCHER

Would you say your self-confidence has grown to an extent because of your gaming?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah, it helped me sort of nurture myself and figure out who I am in a fake world instead of having to worry about how people perceive me in the real world. So, it let me play with identity more.

RESEARCHER

I'm hearing that gaming has been positive for you. And that there's a gratitude for that?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know. I think so, I've just played games my whole life. So, I don't know, I like my life, so I couldn't imagine it another way. Do you know Splatoon? It's on Nintendo, it was one of their first really competitive online games. Everyone just got so good so fast and I wasn't willing to put in the time in to get as good as everyone else. It just wasn't fun. It felt like a waste of time to not be having fun playing video games. I felt that way with most shooters because they draw such a young demographic. I don't need to get into that.

RESEARCHER

What I'm hearing is you're more comfortable with those puzzle or problem solving one-player games?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah, and I like co-op, and I'll like play competitive games against people like in the same room with me, just as a social thing. You know I don't mind losing if we're all having a good time. But if it's online, I'm not having a good time if I'm losing. Like the Nintendo game called Arms, where they took Wii Boxing and they turned it into Street Fighter. Yeah, with way better motion controls, it's really technical. They did tests before the game came out and I played 45 minutes of it and I lost every single match and I'm like "I'm not interested in this." Everyone else seemed to love it so much, but I'm just "I'm not playing this."

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

Let's start with what anxiety you've experienced in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm okay, I'm really stressed this week. I have a lot going on this week. My brother came in town this weekend and we went to a wedding. And that just ate up a lot of time. And, I had other things to do. A lot of homework. I think I signed up for too much stuff at school. Because I joined this thing called PRSSA. I just joined this week, and I'm on the school paper. And I'm looking for an internship. And on Mondays I have five classes. And they're from 8am in the morning until 8pm at night. And, oh my gosh, my sister just texted me that Betsy Devoss is here in (my state). That's, I mean, it doesn't affect me, but it adds more stress. Grr! I hate her! I have a lot of stress. One of my classes, the first assignment, it was a really small assignment, it was an elevator pitch. It was written, so the hard limit was 85 words. And we had to list all our accomplishments. So, I put all my accomplishments and I worked for a long time before I went to school. So, it was sales, goals, sales awards that I won. And I'm a licensed stock broker. That's two really hard tests you have to pass. So, I've accomplished things in my life. I've worked. I've written for a website for two years now. And I tried to fit everything in. I turned it in and I got an 80% on it because I didn't say I that was a junior in college. She was like "The assignment said you had to put your education and your expected graduation date." And I was like "But that's not an accomplishment. That I'm gonna graduate from the university less than a mile from the house I was born in in two years. That is not an accomplishment. I'm not gonna lead with that." So that stress stressful I always worry that she's gonna create harshly. And this class is a one credit class so it's not a big deal or anything. It added a lot of stress that I got an ad on the first test and now blackboard tells you how everyone else did and the average score was 85%. That also added stress. So, I'm putting more thought into this one credit class that I should.

RESEARCHER

So that's a lot you are dealing with.

PARTICIPANT 1

There's more. I left a lot out. If you like it over committed myself at school and I don't know what I'm getting out of it because in a lot of my classes I seem to be treading water. This class is a career prep class that they make you take before they give you credit for taking an internship and it's through the school of communications, but I already took technical writing because I thought it would be interesting and then I had to take managerial communications for my marketing minor and end this one is through the school of communications. They're all the same class. All of them, about how to write cover letters how to write memos, how to write in a business setting. So, I'm taking the class for the third time getting an 80% on my first assignment. It's really frustrating. And with these organizations that I'm joining I don't know if I'm making lasting connections. I will not live in Omaha when I move away all these children are much younger than me. But it just seems like something that I have to put on my resume just because. I don't have time to spend with my friends, my family, or anything. It's just there's so many obligations that I don't find rewarding. I worry because my biggest thing was when I worked as an assistant manager at Radio Shack for a few years. I did well there but I feel like I don't have any work to show for it. I can put on my resume all the people skills I learned, and sales skills, and teamwork but I can't put any of that in a portfolio.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

What industry are you going into?

PARTICIPANT 1

Either journalism or public relations. Everything that I'm stressed out about I volunteered for. I signed up for. It's all my fault. But I want to do a good job. I don't know. I feel like I'm making up for lost time a lot. I don't value my real-world experience because I had a lot of fun, so it doesn't feel valid you know? Because I enjoyed it so much and it was it was easy. I was working at the mall. I loved it. It didn't feel like work and now I'm in school and I enjoy aspects of it, but it is work a lot of the time.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about how you've been managing all of this and all of these thoughts.

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm trying to supplement them with the traditional school stuff, like the organizations. I'm trying to get a diverse portfolio. On the newspaper most people sign up for a section of the paper. But I just pitch stories and sign up for news stories sometimes. I wrote a review on a television show selfishly just to put in my portfolio. I definitely did it to myself where I had to watch all of these episodes, which I enjoyed, and write a review and get it in by a certain time on a school night. It was due at midnight on a Tuesday and I had school at 8:00 AM on Wednesday. And you better believe I turned it in at 1:00 AM. It was late, and I had to go to school in a few hours, but I did it and that was my fault 100%. Every day I'm just trying to maximize my marketability. So, my fiancé lives in New Jersey and he works in New York. I live in Omaha to go to school and live in Omaha. There's this podcast that I really like and last summer they were hiring for an intern in New York City, I think they were in Brooklyn or something. And the two people in the podcast, they used to work for an NPR station and now they both live in New Jersey and work in New York. And I really wanted the internship but when I sat down to apply I felt like it would be in bad taste to submit my sad little resume. I didn't want my name associated with my resume as it was last summer. So that's what I'm trying to do this year is built on it. I don't have any concrete audio experience. See I feel like I have any concrete experience in anything. But I'm in a podcast now. I've recorded things. I've had assignments where I had to edit things on Audacity and stuff, but now the internship that I'm gonna apply for at school is a production assistant at the school radio station. And also, I don't feel like I'm worthy for that, but I feel like no one is gonna apply for that and that I can just have it because I am an adult. If I can get that internship, I only need one to graduate, I'd still apply for the other one just, so I can work in New York over the summer with my fiancé there. Oh my gosh here's another one. A text from my friend. She's been trying to hang out all weekend. She had all day Thursday off and she had all Friday off and I just didn't talk to her and I'm reviewing a game for the website I write for. I hate it. I hate this game so much. I know you want to talk about gaming. And that's kinda ruining video games for me. I got this really fun game called Mario Plus Rabbids. It's really stupid, silly. And it's a tactical RPG. So, it's like a turn-based strategy game. The combats are actually pretty deep. So, it's fun. I was having a lot of fun with it. But some of the matches were really quick. And in between matches there's a little bit of an over world. You can go find extra weapons, and art, and soundtracks. You can spend time messing around, spend a few minutes exploring the world. Or you can get yourself invested into a battle. A story battle, or a challenge battle. Depending on the level of investment you want to put into the game at any given moment they have that opportunity. I was enjoying that. In between classes I could just run around and look for stuff. Or before school I could wake up and do a battle. Or at night I could come home and try and see how many of the challenges I could go through.

Peralta, R.P.

It's on the Nintendo Switch. So, I could play it anywhere. I could play it at school. I could play at my sister's house. I could play it at home. On the TV, on the couch, in bed. Wherever. The game is nice in that they built in those tiers of commitment for how you feel at that moment. You can run around for 5 minutes or get into a really deep battle.

RESEARCHER

How has this game been affecting any anxiety you've been experiencing in this past week?

PARTICIPANT 1

It was nice because I could just set things aside for however much time I wanted to. Each world has two battles. And usually the first one is easy and the second one is hard. But your health doesn't recover in between them. So even if the first one is easy, you have to be smart in how you complete it, so you have health for the second battle. But it's nice to set aside what you're thinking about and just focus on the game. You can get lost in the menu. There's a big skill tree and you have to think about how you're upgrading your characters. Since it's turn based you go as quickly as you want to. So, you could stop in between turns and worry about your problems, but no one wants to worry about their problems, so you just take the next turn instead. But it's nice that even if you have to think about your moves a lot it's not really fast paced. So, you do have time to stop and think. Like Tetris, you have time to think when your bars are low, and you have to focus on the game when your bars are high. But in this one you get to choose when you feel the bars are low. You can just drop it at any moment and think about your problems and jump back in the game.

RESEARCHER

What other ways have you been managing all of this recently?

PARTICIPANT 1

Every morning I tried to advance myself, just make myself more marketable. And every single thing I accomplish I make sure to congratulate myself for it. Even small things like "Good job wore a nice outfit today to school. You didn't wear dirty shirt or weird pants. You went to school. You weren't late. You didn't oversleep for this class. You did your homework. There are people in the world who don't do their homework. You should be proud of yourself for doing this assignment. I'm sure someone in the class didn't do it. Like when I went to the PRSSA meeting some people don't do that. I may not have contributed, but I did it. I went to the meeting. I signed up two go to more meetings. I went to the second meeting. I did accomplish something even if I didn't do anything at the meeting just going by itself was an accomplishment. I didn't think I would know anyone there. I thought it would be a bunch of children who knew what this organization was and what they were doing. And I then get there and one of my best friends from school comes and taps me on the shoulder and she's like "I'm joining tonight too." So that was a nice surprise, but I wasn't expecting that going in and it was still good that I went because if I hadn't gone to the first meeting I never would've joined until maybe next year when I was a senior and that wouldn't have been as useful. So, I just try and make sure that everything I do I look at the positives even when I slack off. Last night, my brother keeps telling me to watch Kimmy Schmidt on Netflix and I've kinda fallen off of the show, but last night I watched it, I enjoyed it, and when I was done with that I was tired and I was like "Oh good you're tired, I can go to bed on time now. Good job! Normally you lay in bed and worried about things and stay up, but now you're tired and you're gonna go to bed. That's an accomplishment."

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Do you see yourself as a capable student?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know. It's really hit or miss. I have never had much trouble school. Most of my problems have, with motivation, and getting stuff in on time, and the things I never really felt were valuable. But as I grew up I realized they are more valuable than being smart. It doesn't matter how good you are at something if you never do it the person who did do it did a better job. If you could write the best book in the entire world but you never write it, if it'll never be as good as a book that has been written. Sometimes I worry a lot. I'm really bad at revisions and getting things done early. It's almost always like I last minute dash to the finish, which I think I kinda thrive on which is dangerous because as I'm getting farther in my career I realize that I have not grown much as a writer since I was 12 or 14. I feel like I've picked up a word or two here but I've gotten back so many assignments over the year with no marks on them, no suggestions, just "Great job!" I started to get more markets and I don't understand why. It's not something I'm used to. I got an 85 on that writing and I did a really good job on it but apparently, I did a good job on something that was not the assignment. I felt it was well written, she didn't tell me it wasn't well written, she's just said I didn't follow instructions. So, I don't know if I'm capable student. I really don't know.

The one thing I worry about is everyone job experience. And I can't really work fulltime in PR as a student but maybe I can gain an equivalent amount of experience while I'm still in school. I could come out of school with two years' worth of material that I've worked on. I feel behind. When a graduate of the almost 30. I'd like to slip into the workforce near other third year olds instead of with other 22-year olds. My partner has done real well for himself. He just has a two-year degree but he's an IT exec and he owns a home and none has another house that he rents out. I feel like I'm behind him to. He's five years old or but in five years I'll never get to the point. If we're both chasing careers. At what point do we make the really difficult decision of being gay men with children. We both want kids, but we wouldn't want to be at the wrong age, or have the wrong amount of money, or find the wrong people to help us, as so much goes into it. I worry a lot about when we'll have that conversation. With my Arab side of the family none of the old people know that I'm gay even. And they are always saying I need to find a wife so that I can have kids. It's always about having children. That's their whole lives. Most of them didn't work they just had a bunch of children and raise their children. So, I feel like in the turmoil that would come out when we get married will be smoothed over if we do have kids. It would validate our relationship in their culture's mind.

RESEARCHER

What games have you played where you crossed reference notes with friends as far as how far they are, what level there on, how strong or weak their characters are?

PARTICIPANT 1

I have done that with lots of games. Pretty much every Pokémon game. Right when they come out I call my friends "How far you? What gym are you on? You want to battle?"

RESEARCHER

What does that matter?

PARTICIPANT 1

Peralta, R.P.

I don't know, we all started at the same point. It came out on a certain day. Most of the people in my life lives on the same timeline. They turn 18 after 18 years no matter what. There's not a leap year in there that's gonna throw off how old they are.

RESEARCHER

What if one of your mates who also plays Pokémon has to work two-part time jobs and has a kid? What if they've not caught as many are gotten this far in the game? How you feel about that?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know. Sometimes I try and trick myself into feeling better than them because I beat Pokémon before them, but also, I feel like I'm wasting my life. Maybe I should get some jobs are some kids. But that happened to me in high school. My best friend at the time and I bought a Pokémon game that day it came out at midnight. And I worked after school and he didn't. We were pretty close to each other's progress for a while and when I was about halfway through the game he had told me he had finished it. And it's actually the only Pokémon game I've never finished. I just lost steam without that sort of competition anymore. He beat it. No one else was playing it. I think keeping up with the Jones' is a real important part of society. It's hard to judge where you are based on where you've been and where you're going. That takes a lot of thought and inward looking, but it's really easy to judge who you are just by looking at where other people around you are. Because that's something you do automatically in your mind. You know? Some people even say it's not healthy to dwell on the past, where you were a year ago, compared to where you are today. Some people can get an unhealthy obsession with their own past. But society, just everyone judges each other that's the way we are built.

RESEARCHER

Do you subscribe to that?

PARTICIPANT 1

I think it's just how society works. It's really hard to build your own identity if you don't see what you like, and they don't like out of other people's identities. If you were the only person on earth and lived your life the only person on earth and then you ran in two a woman or a man how would you even know how you felt about them? Would you even find an attractive? If you grew up your entire life without them. Would you decide to wear shirts if you found shirts brain around somewhere? We draw so much from each other that we have to decide what we like and don't like from society. The way each person decides their identity, you have to pick and choose what you like from them. I can't think of anyone who's created their own identity in a vacuum. You're either accepting or rejecting things from society.

RESEARCHER

I'm curious what you are accepting and what you are retracting in the context of your own life's journey, because I'm sensing a bigger influence on your life that causes a lot more stress and anxiety than is necessary or healthy, in my opinion.

PARTICIPANT 1

That's my dad's side of the family. My dad is the middle of seven kids. Two of them married their cousins. Two of them married these other two brothers from another family who are also Arab. My dad and one other boy married American women. And my American aunt is the most boring person in the entire world. And they always equated that with my mom. They discounted my parents' relationship. "Oh, she's American..." They were just really weird about my mom always. But all my Cousins are really

Peralta, R.P.

successful. My one cousin from my American aunt, I don't think she finished college. I don't think she's a successful either. But none of them have any friends. And none of them ever dated. If they dated anyone in their life they married that person. I don't see their lives as fulfilling outside of the time they spend with their family. But they are lawyers and doctors. I have a cousin who makes \$1,000,000 a year. He's six months younger than me. He's like a financial adviser or something. He does the math behind this big trust fund. I don't know what he does. It's something I should have learned when as a stockbroker, but it didn't learn it. If when my dad says he's proud of me I don't feel like either of us believe it. He'll say "I'm proud of you" for gonna school today, after he finished telling me about how much money my cousin makes or how cute someone else's baby is. He tries really hard to accept us for who we are, but I feel like his siblings aren't proud of him for the job he did raising us. And that permeates our whole family. My brother is a pretty successful performer. He just got accepted into the acting school in New York that Anne Hathaway went to. So, it's a really big deal, he makes a lot of money just playing the guitar at different venues. He does well for himself, but no one ever saw that success because he never went to college. So now they are all so excited he is gonna school and they're asking him "What are you gonna school for?" He says "Acting. It's an acting school." But they're like "Oh..." They don't care but it's a really big deal. It was run and founded by Broadway director. All the teachers are probably directors. If at the end of the year they have a big recital were they all do their performances which is like a big Broadway casting call. It's a huge deal. But the rest of the family doesn't see that. They're like "Oh, after that is he gonna get a medical license?" Fuck them. I mean I love and I keep them at arm's length. But my dad, that hurts that he is so invested. That's his family. He loves them. They still talk on the phone every day. I feel guilty. I wanted to get to the point where he can brag about me like they brag about their kids.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you've needed that validation all your life?

PARTICIPANT 1

Maybe. He was really disappointed with my brother, I think. He always blamed him for setting a bad example because my brother never got good grades. And then the rest of us stopped getting good grades and stopped doing homework. But it was really because our family was really dysfunctional, and my parents would drink all night, stay out, so that they were so drunk that they couldn't drive us to school in the morning. Just this unhealthy lifestyle that we grew up in. I think it's their fault that we didn't do homework or go to school on time. But then there's no brother and he kinda set the example. And he didn't go to college, so none of us went to college. But we all tried to go to college, but he didn't help us. He wouldn't sign my financial aid loan application when I was 18. So, I couldn't go to school, but he always blamed it on me. "Oh, you went to school for one semester, but you didn't like it, so you dropped out." "No, they kicked me out because you were- no one paid for my school. I couldn't even apply for loans because I was only 18. He had to sign along with me, but he won it." He put so many of our failures on us, that he should probably take some blame for. I Feel like it's because he works in country clubs, like he has forever. And I feel like old, rich, white people told him about how shitty his kids were when he would complain.

RESEARCHER

Do you think he's ever going to own all that?

PARTICIPANT 1

No, and it's fine that he doesn't.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

But how does that affect you now? Because I'm hearing that you need some sort of validation from your father, whether you both believe it or not, yet you're wanting him to be able to brag about you to your family.

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm close with them. I don't really care what they've dropped me. But I know my dad cares what they think about him. So, I don't want to embarrass my dad to the family forever. I don't want to be the one who doesn't have a job, who didn't finish school, whose living with some man. I want him to be able to say, "He has a family, and kids, and a house, and a job, and went to school." I want him to be able to list off the things they list off about their kids.

RESEARCHER

Is this something you stress about often and regularly?

PARTICIPANT 1

Maybe in the back of my mind. It's hard when I go out with family members and they are doing really well. And they all want to argue over who is gonna pay the bill. And I think there's no way I can pay this \$150 dinner tab. It would bankrupt me. But my lawyer cousin argues with my doctor aunt about whose turn it is to pay the bill. That gets under my skin. But at the same time, I don't have it, you invited me, if you obviously still love me. You know I'm not gonna be able to pay.

RESEARCHER

How often do you smoke?

PARTICIPANT 1

About a pack a day, maybe a little more. Sometimes I'll smoke two or three in a row between classes, or when I'm on the phone a lot. Not packs of cigarettes. I don't know what to do, because my back will get so tight. I know it's because of fat and lazy, or if it's cancer growing at the top of my lungs. And I don't have Health Insurance. I just ignore it and hope it goes away or hope I magically quit smoking someday.

RESEARCHER

How many hours have you played video games in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 1

Maybe four. It was a busy week.

RESEARCHER

Would you like to play more?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah. So, the game I'm reviewing, I don't like. It's Lego Minecraft. It's called Lego Worlds or something. I've never played a building game before, and this doesn't seem very inspired. It's kinda boring. And I'd really like to play a different game, like literally any other game, but I've signed up to do this review. And it feels like a chore. The and it feels like that one joy that I had was stolen from me. It makes me question my career, where I'm going, because the way things are going when they graduate I could

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probably get a really shitty job at a game in journalism company making \$20,000 a year or something. Just with my current resume. But I would probably be playing a lot more games I don't enjoy like this. I don't know.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming for the past week. What you've played and how often you played.

PARTICIPANT 1

Well I'm trying to finish the review of Lego Worlds. I played that yesterday for quite a few hours. Maybe six. I couldn't get comfortable because it felt like I was on a deadline. But then at one point it popped up on screen that a second player can join. So, I made my roommate come and play with me, and that let me get lost in it. Because we were both in the same giant world, there's a lot of stuff buried so you have to dig to find things. I would walk around an area I've never seen and then fall into a big hole. You can hurt each other. I will hurt someone my other team a lot for fun. We murdered each other a lot.

RESEARCHER

Does this game play like your other Lego games?

PARTICIPANT 1

It's their version of Minecraft. I'm not a builder so I don't get the appeal of building my own world. I know a lot of people will get lost in that, but it just does not work for me. Everything I've built thus far has been the standard red brick. Here's your fucking wall.

RESEARCHER

In terms of gaming culture, the building is generational. I feel like there are more games that have provided the tools and the quality of gaming that allows these younger generations to build. You have Minecraft, Little Big Planet where you can create your own levels.

PARTICIPANT 1

Even with Mario Maker, there are some built in levels, but there are more demos for how to use the creation tools than you download everything else off the Internet. I didn't have the patience to build anything cool. And everything I played online was so over the top, really hard. So, I felt like I wasted my money on that game.

RESEARCHER

Are you happy with logging that much time for this game review?

PARTICIPANT 1

Just because I felt like I was accomplishing something. So, you unlock the final item once you get 50 gold bricks. And you get those by doing missions like building walls and painting things, stupid things you find. And I self-imposed this, but I feel like I should unlock that last item before I can write the review. So, as we were playing we were finding a break here or there. So, I did feel like I was accomplishing something, which is important to me and playing games, especially when I'm busy. When I am not accomplishing something I feel like it's a waste of time and something that I didn't earn sometimes.

RESEARCHER

What other games have you played since we last chatted?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 1

Yesterday I watched an episode of South Park, about the character with severe anxiety who wanted to make good with North Korea, so he sent them cupcakes. And the president tweeted that he probably pooped in the cupcakes, you should shoot missiles at him. And he starts freaking out and getting so anxious. And after that my friend wanted to talk about politics. And I was like "I don't talk about this." And the drink a little while we watch that, so I was feeling really anxious. And when I laid down in my bed, I understood as having a panic attack, that's what was happening. I remember thinking that it felt like a ton of ants were racing around my stomach organ. And it was just really weird. So, I decided to do something I like to calm down. Normally when I go to sleep I like to listen to podcasts, but I've listened to video game podcasts and news podcasts. And the news was giving me anxiety. And video game journalism was giving me heavy anxiety. I was like "I cannot listen to that right now."

RESEARCHER

The video game podcasts, what was causing you anxiety there?

PARTICIPANT 1

Just the fact that they were video game journalists and that's something that I'm currently failing at with my procrastination and anxiety. So, I didn't want to listen to that. On my 3DS and my Switch, I'm friends with my boss, so if I'm online you can see what I'm playing. So, I was like "I can't play any of my video games! What am I gonna do?" So, I ended up playing Tetris on my phone for an hour, hiding from the world. No one will know that I'm playing Tetris on my phone. It's something I never thought about before, but we're just so connected now that if you want privacy you have to seek it out when you're just playing a video game.

RESEARCHER

So, you mentioned Tetris, Lego, and what else have you played?

PARTICIPANT 1

I played a little more Mario and Rabbids. I was at my friend's house. I was not connected to the internet, so I felt okay to play one level. And he wanted to see it. And I did just fall into that one. I could've played that game for forever. This is my first Rabbids game and they aren't anything like the others.

RESEARCHER

How many hours, or even minutes, would you say in the past week you played of each of those games?

PARTICIPANT 1

Mario, half an hour, Lego 10 hours over the past week. And Tetris, like an hour.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about that? Are you happy with playing that many hours?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know I feel a little guilty. Because of a lot of stuff going on at school and I used to not really care but I have a lot of group work and one of my group members a month into power project decided that he didn't like our topic and he wanted to change it. It was this big thing, and we ended up staying on

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our first one, but during our argument he was like “OK, Adam, I know you’re a writer, a journalism major, but you need to leave some of this to the business majors.” And I was like, “Woah. OK, this is Principles of Marketing. It’s a pretty basic class. And I’m a marketing minor. I took all the pre-reqs. And that’s just been on my mind a lot. I feel like I should be working hard to prove him wrong I guess. I don’t want our grade to just be whatever assignment he turns in. I want to make sure I get my input on that grade. And it’s been weighing on me like I should be working on long-term things, instead of playing games.

RESEARCHER

How are you managing the stress from that group project?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don’t know. It’s hard to kinda go to others because if I say I’m stressed people always ask what’s wrong, what’s going on. And then you have to list that is going on in your life and why it’s stressful. I have to really explain that problem. I have to really explain what our topic is, what are the project is, how far into that we are, how much work he’s done, how much work everyone else has done. And that’s just one thing. The best way for me to deal with stress is to talk people about it and I haven’t talked to people because there are so many things going on that I don’t have time to catch anyone up.

RESEARCHER

It sounds like one of the ways you manage anxiety is verbal processing. Would you say that’s correct?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah, that’s a really important one for me.

RESEARCHER

Had you the time, what would you need as far as talking to someone to feel a little bit better about everything?

PARTICIPANT 1

About everything? I would probably an entire evening, drunk, with my brother or something. My brother doesn’t live here, and I don’t drink. And when he is here, he hangs out with everyone he knows at once. We talk on the phone a lot but it’s hard to work through everything. He lives in New York, but in the summers, he is in Alaska. And when he’s in Alaska he has a lot of free time after he gets off work, and he plays guitar in a bar. And they’re three hours behind us. So, he’ll get off at 3pm Nebraska time, but I have school in four hours. And now that he’s in New York, he works in a restaurant, and he caters, and he goes to an acting conservatory, so he’s really busy now, I’m really busy, and we don’t have hours to sit down and talk about life up. My partner is in New Jersey, and he’s not a very sensitive guy. He’s but an only child, and he grew up with these bros. He still knows every single person he went to high school with. And they all play football together. And they all watch football altogether, all weekend, every weekend. He’s a very emotionally stereotypical “bro.” So if I try to bring anything up, he would say “Oh stop, just stop.” Because that’s just how some people deal with that stuff, they just don’t.

RESEARCHER

How would you ideally like to manage all of this? What would you need each week to be able to manage anxiety from school and everything else?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 1

I really need to get a good agenda system. Right now, I have a calendar on my phone that has when all my classes are and when all my other currying stuff is like this and like a group meeting we have. But I need a checklist, so I can look at all the things I have accomplished and all the things I have left. Because once you have two things you have to remember you constantly think "I have to remember things." Until you go to the list mentally and realize that you finish the list then you feel better. And I don't have a list.

RESEARCHER

Do you like making lists?

PARTICIPANT 1

I like making lists but I'm really bad at going back to them. They don't feel like an effective use of my time, but if I don't go back to them it feels like I wasted a constructive hour of my life worrying.

RESEARCHER

So, you're aware of that?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yet if I were to put everything in my calendar than I would never look at my calendar at again because it's a list of things that I have to do, and I would think "no thanks."

RESEARCHER

What if someone else was holding you accountable?

PARTICIPANT 1

I would avoid that person. My boss gave me a free game to play and then write 500 words about it. It's not that big of a deal but I worked it up so much in my head. And now the game came out for 2 ½ weeks and I'm avoiding my Switch because he'll see what I'm playing. I avoid my 3DS because he'll see what I'm playing. I'm scared of Facebook because we're Facebook friends, Twitter. I tweeted something today and he was the first comment on it. He wasn't mad, he just replied to the tweet. I thought "Oh my gosh no! I was walking to class up. I was like 'He knows that I wasn't playing that game!' I was busy."

RESEARCHER

Do you think that creating boundaries with your boss might be beneficial to managing that anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 1

It might be, but I don't think that's the world we live in anymore. I made my Twitter to use it professionally in the media. If I ever have another job, I would hope that the interviewer and my bosses look at my Twitter and say, "Oh wow, he knows how to use Twitter." I have a friend, he's in grad school now, and he started teaching last year, and I definitely met him on Growlr. That's how we became friends. And now whenever I see him, I'm like "Hi professor" and he's like "Don't call me that."

RESEARCHER

What I'm hearing from you is you're looking for balance, resulting in gaming being that tool for anxiety relief. Balancing that and the real world. You're telling me you're limiting your gaming because it's

Peralta, R.P.

connecting to your boss. That boundary is adding anxiety for you, and it's not letting you get the enjoyment you want. With not being able to get the support you need from talking with your brother, that anxiety is snowballing. You seem to be putting a lot of pressure on yourself, and much of that you've shared is the cultural impact of your family.

PARTICIPANT 1

I worry about what other people think of my father as a father because of who I am, so I worry for him a lot. I used to dance, I miss it. I felt like that was an outlet that I had. I do this stupid thing where, when I get really stressed out, I think about the past. I'll go back a day, a week a month, ask "When was the last time I wasn't stressed?" And I'll always go back to show choir, when you're in high school, when you didn't care about your grades at all because you didn't think they'd affect your life, and you got to sing and dance with your friends every day. I'm so sorry, I completely left out that I play Pokémon Go! So much! So, my best friend's roommate goes out every night and gets on the gyms and as he's walking out the door, I'm like "Take me with you." And it's not really that I care that much about Pokémon Go! I just play really casually, but I just want to sit in his car with him and just chat.

RESEARCHER

About how many hours have you logged for Pokémon Go! in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 1

30? It is a lot. Because I play during school and while I'm driving. It's pretty much constantly on in the background of my life. It's okay, because I have this little thing where all you have to do is push the button. So, when you're driving we just put it on your seat belt and you push the button and you catch Pokémon.

RESEARCHER

Was anything we talked about today helpful?

PARTICIPANT 1

No, not at all. It was very helpful. Honestly talking to you is a lot of help every week. It's nice to talk with someone not part of my circle. It's really nice to be able to literally unload all of this somewhere where it won't come back to bite me or anything. I can say whenever I want to you about anyone and it's not gossip. It's working through things. Thank you again. I think what you're doing is really up important. When I was a kid, I was in therapy with this woman. We had nothing in common. She was like passed retirement age, and I came out, and we never talked about it. I was a 16-year-old gay boy! I think it's really important what you're doing, and I'm glad I can help with your research.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

Hi, how are you?

PARTICIPANT 1

Hi, so stressed, oh my god. I'm sending a text.

RESEARCHER

Okay, go ahead.

PARTICIPANT 1

So, you know about the Super Nintendo Classic? It comes out tonight at midnight. Wal-Mart has 37 of them and people are lining up. Nintendo said they are gonna have more at launch than they ever made of the NES Classic, and they are coming out with the NES Classic again next June. So, it may not be that hard to get down the line. But today, it's gonna be crazy to get.

RESEARCHER

Well I think it's a great place to start this week. Let's talk about why SNES Classic, for you?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't know. I grew up with a Super Nintendo I got one when I was four for Christmas. I'm 27. Oh, I feel that the Super Nintendo is when society perfected 2D games. And I feel like we're not quite at that point with 3D games yet. If you play a Super Nintendo game, Super Nintendo vs. original Nintendo, things looked tight and well designed and well thought out. The art has been perfected. But when we move to the 3D models, it lost a lot of the artistic flair and started to go towards realism. We haven't gotten to that level of perfection yet, I don't think. I don't really know why I want one. There's a game on their called "Secret of Mana" or something and my roommate was like "We should play it. It has two players." I've never played it.

RESEARCHER

I think you'll enjoy playing it with your roommate.

I think that will be fun. He's actually at Wal-Mart to wait in line. It happened right before this! He was coming out of the bathroom and I grabbed him, and I was like "I have the research interview thing I have to do! You have to go to Wal-Mart now!"

RESEARCHER

I was going to say, we could reschedule if you want. Or we could keep it short.

PARTICIPANT 1

It's fine. I committed to this. Worst case scenario I can camp outside of GameStop. I've done that many times.

RESEARCHER

He's already queued up, and you're going to be bringing snacks and chairs and-

PARTICIPANT 1

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Cigarettes! If Wal-Mart already has 37 people in line when I get there, then I have to IP go camp outside of GameStop until 10am in the morning. I called them before he left and there were two people in line, but the Facebook group here was blowing up and a lot of people are just getting off of work now. I think they're gonna hand out tickets at a certain point.

RESEARCHER

It sounds like you already have a nostalgia with SNES.

PARTICIPANT 1

I do. Like I said I grew up with the Super Nintendo. I think it's perfect. I feel like there wasn't compromise in the design of a lot of super Nintendo games, but you can still see compromise in 3D games like modern games.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits this past week.

PARTICIPANT 1

The other day I was laying in my bed and I was thinking of "It's bed time. I have to wake up early. I have to go to bed right now." And I was wide awake, completely awake, so I was like "Ah! I'm gonna play Pokémon up Picross." It's kinda like a crossword puzzle. So, there will be a series of numbers along the top and along the side. And if it says one, two, and five and you will know in that order going down that column there will be one filled and blocked and then a space on either side, and then two filled in blocks, a space on either side, and then five filled in blocks with a space on either side. So, you have to figure out going along the top and the sided to figure out exactly where all the dots are. At the end of the colour in and it's a picture! The first one came out on Game Boy. This 3DS one is just a Pokémon one, and it was free to play, but I definitely spent \$40.00 on it, because when you spend \$40.00 on it they just unlock everything, and they are like "OK you can't, you're not allowed to spend any more money on this game." It's been out for a year or two, and I forgot about it all the time. But it is low key my favourite game. It's like a crossword puzzle, really therapeutic. Kinda like Sudoku. It's just one of those you know?

RESEARCHER

Tell me more about how that's more therapeutic for you personally.

PARTICIPANT 1

You don't really have to think. There's no complex, it's really low stress. It'll be like solve this puzzle within half an hour, and most of them take 5 minutes. So just a lot of quick hits. You feel really clever when you figure out where one of the dot go. There is a bit of a completion-ist thing to it. Each time you finish a picture you catch that Pokémon. Each different type has a different ability. At the beginning of the round it will fill in a random row or column or it will light up blue all the lines that you could potentially figure out. And there will be missions where you have to use certain things or not use certain things. When you complete all the missions and you catch all the Pokémon for that world then you get a crown for it on the map. And I'm trying to go through and get all the little crowns.

RESEARCHER

So, there's clearly a sense of accomplishment for you. It's easily accessible on a mobile device. And also, that it's quick and easy, as you mentioned quick hits.

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PARTICIPANT 1

Usually when I play it, it doesn't have the most compelling sound. It has songs and clicking sounds, so usually I put on a podcast or something. And it's just a really easy way to digest the news. I remember I was telling you that I was really stressed when I wasn't listening to podcast, so I caught up on a week's worth of news podcasts while I was playing this game.

RESEARCHER

Is it safe to say that you follow the Pokémon franchise?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yes.

RESEARCHER

Let's finish going over your general gaming habits for the week. How many hours did you say you've played Pokémon Picross?

PARTICIPANT 1

I also played Samus Returns, the new Metroid Game. It's weird going back to the 3DS, since I haven't touched it since the Switch. So, I played 6 hours of Pokémon Picross and 2:40 of Metroid. Metroid came out on September 15 and I'm just getting around to it.

RESEARCHER

Tell me what appeal there was to that for you.

PARTICIPANT 1

The Super Nintendo is the greatest system of all time. It's perfect. And the best game for super Nintendo super Metroid. I have data to back that up. It's a keystone to who I am as a person. It's definitely the Super Nintendo. The new doesn't even have all the best games, just some of them. A couple of years ago, right when the Wii U came out, they sold virtual console games for 30 cents each and I bought all of them. For some reason one of them was Super Metroid, which is the best game of all time, but I had never played it at this point. I had only played some of the Metroid Prime Games and Metroid Fusion on Gameboy Advance when I was a kid. And one night in the middle of the night I just opened my eyes and a voice in my head said, "Go play Super Metroid." And that was it. I went into the family room, sat down with my Wii U, and just played through all of Super Metroid. I was blown away, like "Wow! My life is different. I have seen the best game ever. This is it, no question." So, no one ever wants to argue with me. They are dismissed. And immediately after that I played Metroid Fusion all the way through on my 3DS, and I was really hungry for more Metroid and nothing came out for years. Metroid Fusion came out in like 2003 or something. The original Metroid was garbage. Unplayable. No map, so confusing. Every room looks the same. You die immediately. Too hard, like it's trying to steal my quarters or something. That's every NES game. All of them. Ninja Turtles. Castlevania. That's everything. It's impossible. Mario. The reason that I'm playing this Metroid game is because they haven't come out with a new Metroid game since Zero Mission in 2005. They did Prime on Wii, and a weird game made by an outsourced company. I was so down, even though I was really busy, I bought it at midnight to show Nintendo I wasn't more Metroid games all the time, please. Now I'm playing it. It's fun. I like exploring. As you get lost you start to recognize where you are. You'll recognize rooms, so you

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know, I've been here already, or I haven't been here yet. It's fun because you start on this alien planet, you don't know where everything is, but you learn where everything is.

RESEARCHER

What other games have you played and for how long?

PARTICIPANT 1

Project Octopath Traveller. This plays into the whole nostalgia thing. They call it HD2D where all the backgrounds are 3D, but it looks like Zeno Gears on PlayStation. There are eight characters spread throughout the world and you pick which character you start as. And each of the eight can do something different. He can challenge anyone in the game to a duel. And you just fight him one-on-one and some are hard. It took two hours to get to the end of the demo, but I put five hours into it.

RESEARCHER

Did you get any Pokémon Go! in?

PARTICIPANT 1

15 hours maybe.

RESEARCHER

What are some of your favourite franchises or all-time favourite games and why? We already covered Metroid. Tell me more about Pokémon.

PARTICIPANT 1

I was seven when Pokémon came out. It has a lot of really stupid, positive message that I've carried throughout my whole life. I said until I was 25 that I wanted to be the best Pokémon Master of all-time. Before I realized I can just say I want to do PR for Nintendo, It's the same thing in my mind. I feel like if you have a PR position at Nintendo and you're high enough, you could just change your title to Pokémon Master and people would be like, "Ok, he handles PR for the Pokémon franchise." It's been around for forever. I love the Pokémon Musical. It's so stupid! I mean it's good! When I was a kid the collecting aspect really talked to me. I made a lot of friends at school it came out when I was in the 3rd grade. And for some reason my school didn't offer 3rd grade, so they bussed me to a school on the other side of town. It was this stupid thing our school district did where one random grade you'd have to go to a different school. Like if you were a rich kid you had to go to a poor school, and if you were a poor kid you had to go to a rich school. Just to get people more diverse. But I didn't have any friends! I just spent three years making all these friends, now you send me to this new school for a year! So that was a really easy way to make friends. We all rode the bus. We all got Pokémon on the same day, at the same time. So, it was a really easy way to start a conversation with literally anyone at the school. "Do you play Pokémon? Do you want to trade cards? Do you want to battle?" And that's followed through my life. I've always found other Pokémon fans just out in the world of all ages. I always see at family events, this nerdy fourteen-year-old and be like "I was you once. You play Pokémon, don't you? You're into training. You're about to kick my ass. Let's battle."

RESEARCHER

There's not just the history for you, but there's the social aspect that was beneficial for you. And the fact that you can relate with other people. It gave you an opportunity to break the ice, not just in school but

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even now. I'm sure there's a lot of nostalgia for you when it comes to anything Pokémon. Tell me a little bit about that and what that looks like to you.

PARTICIPANT 1 (Nostalgia relieves anxiety)

So yesterday my roommate and I were playing Pokémon Go! which is a game 100% fuelled by nostalgia. It's a garbage, awful game, and people only play because they want all the Pokémon. And there's a cat Pokémon from Generation 2 called Sneasel. My roommate was commenting that it was weird that it doesn't get an evolution until Generation 4, it evolves into a Weavile. Gen 2 came out in 2000 and Gen 4 came out in 2006. Six years of doing nothing with this cool black cat Pokémon. And when he said that I remembered having a Sneasel and a Weavile card in my deck when I went to a tournament and met someone that I'm still friends with, this was 2009 when I had this card in my deck. So that's how it kinda works. You see a Pokémon and it brings up all these memories. Another Pokémon like that is Murkrow. It's just a crow from Gen 2, and in Gen 4 it evolves into Honchkrow. And when I played Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver, I had a Honchkrow in my party, so any Pokémon brings up a memory for me. I remember the first time I encountered it where I used it in my team, which game I used it in, if I used it and get someone else, if I ever had the card. OR someone who likes that Pokémon.

RESEARCHER

How does that make you feel to recognize that the game illicit nostalgia?

PARTICIPANT 1

I think that a lot of the nostalgia comes from the community. Their intention is just to make an accessible children's game that is somewhat balanced. Like they never put that much effort into story or designs of anything. The games are pretty generic, but when you get deep into the system, it's pretty deep and that's where they put in a lot of their effort. But the community identifies with different creatures from different generations. And the most popular ones do stay, because people have nostalgia for them. So that's what brings back the fan favourites.

RESEARCHER

Any other franchises that you're loyal to or all-time favourite games?

PARTICIPANT 1

I really like Zelda, but a lot. Some of them I like more than others. I like when the stories are a little light. When they get really story heavy, like Twilight Princess is dark and edgy, but Nintendo doesn't really know how to do a really good story, so it's just kinda boring. But what I like about Zelda the most is probably the dungeons. The dungeons are pretty much puzzle solving and special awareness puzzles. And I like them. It makes me feel really clever when I can internalise a map. I think that's a lot of the appeal of Pokémon Go! too, is I'll go to a new area and after walking around for a little bit, I'll be able to recognize an area. "Oh, that area that's a Poke stop. That's where I caught this Pokémon."

RESEARCHER

Can you tell me about any anxiety or stress you're experience this week from school, or anything?

PARTICIPANT 1

We went to a newspaper meeting on Tuesday. This 24-year-old photographer, who doesn't have a degree in photography, and isn't very good at taking pictures. This start up hired her out of journalism school to be their photographer. She takes pictures of their company outings and retreats. If they want

Peralta, R.P.

to promote anything on social media, she takes a picture. So, it was just a weird event. I was nervous to go because I was asked to write one article this semester and everyone I emailed, no one got back to me before it was due, and then someone got back to me the next week. So, I emailed the editor to say I'm gonna get this done as soon as possible. She said she might be able to use it and I just never did it. Instead I wrote a review of Raven's Home, that new That's So Raven show. And they put that in the newspaper. But I was really scared to go. Also, when my sister was looking for a house, her realtor is related to us. We call her Aunt Joann. But she's this white lady who speaks Arabic with the weirdest American accent. And it's just bizarre. Which she married into the family and learned Arabic. And then I think her husband died, but she has a big family, and I think she's still really close to the family. But she asked me what I'm doing, and I told her "Oh, I'm a journalism student and I just writing for the paper." And she's like "Oh! Your cousin Will writes for the paper! You have to find Will!" I was like "Who's Will?" and I felt like a really bad. When she said he's stocky I thought I have to find out who this is. And he doesn't have social media. And I go to this event and there's this big dude there, and I'm like "Ok, that's probably my cousin." And I end up talking to him for way too long, and I'm smiling a lot. I was hitting on my cousin. He's a distant cousin. I was an awful thing that I did. But that made me nervous, because he's family, I don't know if he's gay. I may have a gay cousin. And he's the entertainment editor, so he's the one that published my reviews. Oh also, I stayed up too late playing Pokémon Picross. I overslept for my class the next day. My class for 10:30am which is not that early. But then I woke up and I started to feel bad for myself. I was like "Oh no, what do I do?" So, I checked my email and class was cancelled! But that was a bad thing that I did, was staying up all night and playing that game.

RESEARCHER

How did she know that you are cousins?

PARTICIPANT 1

It's because my distant realtor aunt, it's her grandson or something. I was really scared because everyone else who writes for the paper are women. So, I had no idea who the editor I blew off was, if I blew any other editors off. So, I was nervous about that, what if people are like "Oh, that guy that doesn't write anything for the paper ever is here." So, it was kinda nerve wracking, I guess.

RESEARCHER

How do you manage when servers are down for a game that you're playing?

PARTICIPANT 1

I don't play online. I'm not a competitive person. I'm a really bad loser. No online for me. When I was a kid, my brother and cousin were allowed to play Street Fighter II and I was not. And no matter how much I aged, I was still not allowed to play Street Fighter II, because I was not old enough, even though the other two were my age when they started playing it. So, I felt like, for some reason I wasn't supposed to play competitive games or violent games. Still to this day I've never played Mortal Kombat or any of the fighting games. I never got into shooters. I played the Halo story mode, but then zombies showed up and I stopped playing. The flood man! It was so scary. And I was pissed because I was reading a Halo novel, and when I got to that point in the game where the zombies show up, and then when the zombies show up in the book too, I was like "What the fuck in the book too? Alright, we're done with Halo." Sometimes I feel like I have trouble feeling that I'm worthy of things, so I don't want to take the time to get good at some sort of competitive video game. It just doesn't seem like a fun thing.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Are you part of any gaming groups on any social media that you invest time in?

PARTICIPANT 1

Nintendo World Report, and I'd like to get more involved with that. I've only played a few Splatoon games with people, and maybe some Mario Kart. But I feel like I can engage with the fans more, because that's my job. I think as society progresses, I think something like 90% of people play video games, even if it's just mobile games. And one of the best medicines is talking to people and being social. And as a society we're spending more time with screens not talking to people, so I think that America is headed toward a mental health crisis. You know, a lot of the developed world, but I see it in America, and also, we're playing more video games. So, I think it's gonna be a growing concern, as video games become the norm, and mental health issues become the norm. There is a definitely immaturity to a lot of gaming communities. A lot of the most vocal people are unemployed, or under employed, and they're all men, and all think that they're grownups now and they can say whatever they want, and they have the world figured out. And I'm not interested in that. But if you have a group of 30yos, established people, human beings, who play games. That's what I like about Nintendo World Report. It's a lot of older people. The website has been around for like 20 years. Everyone's excited about the Super Nintendo Classic because we were all alive when the original Super Nintendo came out. But it's a volunteer site, so everyone else has a real job, and families, and kids. More relatable things.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

What have you played in the past week and for how many hours each?

PARTICIPANT 1

Last week my roommate and I both got the SNES Classics. The first game we played was Secret of Mana. I'd never played that game before and he had never played that game before. Mostly he played for two hours before we got a second character and then I could play. It was really nice. It took me back. It brings up a lot of feelings like Chrono Trigger, but the combat is so simple. I don't know if I would have the patience for a deep RPG like Chrono Trigger right now. But this one sort of scratched that itch where it had the art style and the feel, but the combat was really quick. It was, hit the button twice and its real time combat. So that was nice. We played another two hours together. I played for two participating before we played together. Kirby's Dream Course! We played that for two hours. Neither of us had ever played it. It's Kirby mini golf. It's a weirdest game. So weird. It's like a mini golf course and there are enemies and you have to hit all the enemies and then the last enemies turns into the hole. And you have to land in the hole. You can't roll over the hole. Every time you defeat an enemy it leaves a star of your colour, and the whole has two stars. And the goal is to get more stars than your opponent. And you can go through your opponent's colour to change it so there were times when, before we figured it out, someone would go into the hole and still end up losing by quite a bit. Just because the stars were all the other person's colour. It took us some time to get into it. It was mostly fun because it was the two of us. Maybe two or three hours. I played that Pokémon Picross game a lot. Maybe 5 hours. I played that one a lot. I played an hour of Metroid. I'm reviewing Lego Ninjago. This one is much better than the last one. It's based on the movie that just came out. It's very story driven, level, level, level, level, level. This one has some glitches, but I'm reviewing it, so I'm forced to play it. But it's alright. I made my roommate play it with me and we played together for six hours in one sitting. I played it on my own for three hours. Then we played together for six hours the next day. I'm just trying to get through it. But it's fun. It's always better to play a game with a friend.

RESEARCHER

What are the benefits for you as far as playing co-op in person?

PARTICIPANT 1

It's just nice having someone else in the room with you. Both being focused on the same thing. Sometimes we'll hang out and watch TV and I'll put things on the TV for us to watch. And then halfway through the show I'll look over and he's watching YouTube on his phone. He'll put YouTube on the TV and I'll just go on Facebook. And there's a disconnect sometimes when you're in the same room. But playing a game together we're both focused on the same thing. It's one of the few ways that people still feel present together, you know?

RESEARCHER

When you're not gaming or studying, what do you allocate your time to?

PARTICIPANT 1

Facebook. I'm on all the time. I scroll through as fast as I can while power smoking cigarettes and it's really bad. I don't like Facebook. I'm sort of disillusioned with the media anymore. Right when I decided to be a journalism major I went and I followed every news organization I've ever heard of. I thought it

Peralta, R.P.

was a good idea to keep up on the news. But they will sensationalise everything and they all post the same story, every day, all day. I'll scroll through and it's Donald Trump tweeted something mean, and I'm like "I don't fucking care anymore. Okay?" I don't care. Of course, he tweeted something mean. It's not news anymore, it's just a fact of life. He hasn't declared war over Twitter or anything. He hasn't done anything over Twitter other than just be mean. But that's just what I do, scroll through Facebook. The other day I got in a big fight with my mom on Facebook. She posted some meme that was offensive. I said "It's not cool mom. It implies that all NFL players are criminals and that all Black people deserve to be murdered for being scared of the police. You need to look at this and think is this really okay as a white lady who will never go to jail for pot or be shot at? Is this okay for you to post?" And then I guess she had lost her phone or something. My grandma called me on the phone and was like "I need to talk to you about your mom's Facebook. You can't call your mom out on Facebook like that and attack her with that comment." And I'm like "Woah, grandma! She posted it on Facebook which is inviting comments on it. And I put what someone needed to say." And she said, "Well she's just saying if they didn't resist there wouldn't be so many problems." I was like "OMG, no grandma, Black people just get shot at all the time by the police. Children, shot in the face, unarmed. Like it's awful." She's like "That's not true. Where did you hear that? That's not true." And I'm like "Are you fucking kidding me, grandma? You need to watch the news and google this. You need to understand why people are so angry and still hurting over this." And I just hung up on my grandma. It was really bad and nasty. And I ended up deleting my comment and unfriending my mom because she went through and commented on every single person that commented "I don't care. Whatever. I think it's funny." It's just embarrassing. I have to distance myself from this. I don't want to fucking see this on Facebook. But the past few days I've been realizing that I don't want to see anything on Facebook. But that's all I do is just go on Facebook. While chain smoking. So, I need to find something else to do with my life. But I can't delete my Facebook. I'm also very messy. My sheet came off my bed, and all my pillow cases all fell off. It happened at least a week ago. Oh no, it's three corners of the sheet. I have a pile of boxes that I never unpacked. These are two shelves that I never finished decorating. This one is just junk. I could've just organized this and put those boxes there but instead I just put them down. My clean clothes are on top of my dirty clothes. All those drawers are empty because I never put away my clean clothes. I should probably clean my desk at some point. I put my laptop on my chair because I don't use my chair anymore because my desk is so messy.

RESEARCHER

How organized are you when it comes to academics in comparison to your room?

PARTICIPANT 1

Zero. I do all my homework after midnight the day that it's due.

RESEARCHER

How are you as far as organising your strategy in a video game?

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm really good at looking forward and planning, but usually I don't execute them. I'll just stop playing that game.

RESEARCHER

And if it's a game you like?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 1

I'll just stop playing. Like in Pokémon it takes maybe an hour to get a perfect Pokémon. Any Pokémon you want, you just pick it, to level to 100 in maybe 2 hours. And in my head, I've had a Pokémon team planned out for so many years. And I have like three Pokémon from my team. And they're like three Generations ago. I need to transfer them to the newest one. It's like I have it planned out, but I'll never execute it because it takes some effort. But then I'd have the perfect Pokémon team and I could go and battle people.

RESEARCHER

So how do you feel about all that?

PARTICIPANT 1

It feels like it's some checklist in the back of my mind. I need a perfect Pokémon team.

RESEARCHER

Would you say that applies to your school and your room?

PARTICIPANT 1

Oh yeah. I've got a lot of shit I have to do. I have to do laundry. Every day I think about how I need to wash my sheets at some point. I should probably wash my pillows.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you have concerns with self-control?

PARTICIPANT 1

Maybe. I'm really good at procrastinating until it's time for the next cigarette. I come back in and procrastinate some more until it's time for the next cigarette.

RESEARCHER

Anything else you allocate your time to?

PARTICIPANT 1

I talk on the phone a lot, while smoking. My siblings are close, and sometimes we'll just be on speaker phone together, not talking, scrolling through Facebook or playing games, or watching TV.

RESEARCHER

How many siblings do you have?

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm the second of four. We do photo shoots every time we get together. We take lots and lots of selfies together and stuff.

RESEARCHER

Do your siblings game?

PARTICIPANT 1

Peralta, R.P.

My brother only plays Mario. Every Mario game. My sister only plays Zelda an Animal Crossing, and Tetris. My little sister only plays non-conflict games like Animal Crossing and Space Camp, where you go to the moon. But none of them are very serious gamers.

RESEARCHER

Do you ever play any games with them?

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah, we play Tetris, Mario Kart, Mario Party. Maybe once a year we'll play games together, but it's a thing on our list of things to do together. My brother and I play Smash Brothers together sometimes. I'm pretty darn good at Smash Brothers, but not good enough to say I'm good at Smash Brothers. In a pool of normal people, I'm probably the best, but in a pool of good, serious players, I'd be one of the worst. And my brother is not very good at Smash Brothers, but he can always beat me. All his friends can beat him, and I'll beat all his friends, but always from the beginning of time, he plays Captain Falcon and I play Link. I don't know how he does it. He switched to Ganondorf recently. And he's not very good at Ganondorf. But he likes him because he's trolly, loud and stupid.

RESEARCHER

How do you think what you've shared in this study can help other people in the long run?

PARTICIPANT 1

I have some anxieties, so I feel like it would be okay to consider some of my problems as normal. I think a lot of people think normal is white, blonde, soccer mom drinking Starbucks, but I don't think that it's normal. I think normal is weird, gay, video gamer, who went to college when he was old. That seems more normal to me. And I just think it can help people understand how normal they are instead of thinking of video gamers as some weird thing. Just realize that it's normal, and it's normal to feel like you don't belong because no one really belongs. You have to work so hard to make yourself part of a group. My partner doesn't know how many siblings he has. He's met his half-sister once. That's weird to me. I put a lot of work into being close with my family, and I guess that's my group of friends. People can benefit from the relationships they have and that contributes to my self-identity and what I think is normal. There have to be other people experiencing what I do.

RESEARCHER

How would you use what we've talked about to help other people?

PARTICIPANT 1

I think that gaming is sort of seen as a disease, like it's bad, like smoking. It would be a habit that someone might aspire to outgrow, or someone might be pressured to stop. But I don't think that that is gonna happen in the future. I would use this to advocate for the gaming community, to normalize it, expand the view to include all people. Because everyone plays games. My grandma is in her 70s and she plays casino on her iPad. It's a normal thing, but I don't feel like it's treated like a normal thing. So, if someone were to unwind by playing a video game for a few hours a night or a few hours a week, that should be a positive thing, that they're finding a way to enjoy their lives. It's a way to relate to people. I've made a few friends in my life through work and school, but pretty much everyone else has been through video games. The gaming community. My roommate, we met at school, but we didn't bond over school. We bonded over video games many, many years ago and we've been playing video games together ever since.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Do you have any final questions as we wrap up our interviews?

PARTICIPANT 1

I'm sad that this is ending. It's actually like a lot of fun!

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

What games have you played in the past week and how many hours each?

PARTICIPANT 2

Mostly I've been sticking to the Halo Master Chief Collection. Anywhere between half an hour to an hour at a time, depending on if I'm on multiplayer or on campaign. I didn't play yesterday, so about 8 hours in the past week.

RESEARCHER

Do you play anything on your mobile?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, Solitaire if I'm just on a bus or on a train or something. There's this other game that I got about a month ago called Rider that just passes the time. It's basically a land rider type game. You hold down the screen and the thing goes. I'm aware that I'm taking the game out to play, mostly when I'm bored on transportation.

RESEARCHER

The primary game you're playing now, what console is it on? Tell me a little about the game and why you like it.

PARTICIPANT 2

Basically, it's just Halo really, but the previous games of the main character. It's the same creators that made Destiny. Really, I play it just for the nostalgia factor because I grew up playing those games so it's nice getting back to them.

RESEARCHER

What about the nostalgia do you like about it?

PARTICIPANT 2

It just takes me back to when I didn't have to worry about anything.

RESEARCHER

So why choose to play something nostalgic instead of something new?

PARTICIPANT 2

I don't know really. The most recent game, Forza, I played that solidly for a week. The racing simulator. Got a bit more difficult and I started getting worse so. Maybe I'll get back to it at some point.

RESEARCHER

Are there any games you'd like to be playing now?

PARTICIPANT 2

Peralta, R.P.

I would like to be playing Destiny. Basically, it's an online game, but I don't have many friends who play it. The ones that do are on PlayStation instead of Xbox. With the lack of cross play, we can't really do anything.

RESEARCHER

Have you considered trying to connect with people within say a community that you may not know but also play?

PARTICIPANT 2

Before I came to uni, yeah, because I knew people that played but I never really got around to buying the game or adding their account. Some of the people I did know had moved onto PlayStation.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about when you do game, why you choose to play at that specific time.

PARTICIPANT 2

I share a house, and we get crowded with the TV in the living room, and because I don't have my own TV. Basically, I only play it when there's nobody else in the living room, or I've got the day off or something. I live with mates. I play after uni.

RESEARCHER

Are you experiencing any sort of anxiety from university?

PARTICIPANT 2

I think the fact that I've made one friend in two years shows something. It's the talking to people that I don't know that I have an issue about really. It's about trying to figure out how to figure your way into a big group or clique. Or just not bother.

RESEARCHER

What would your ideal situation be at school?

PARTICIPANT 2

Really just to have someone to be with, sit next to. Because I have breaks in between classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour. Just to have someone to come up to at that time instead of just sitting there and watching YouTube.

RESEARCHER

How do you know the participant who suggested you partake in this study?

PARTICIPANT 2

He came to my sixth form since we're from the same area. And he joined my secondary school, just for a year in sixth form, which we both failed so, and then we both kept in contact. We live together for uni with six others in an eight-bedroom house. The house always has about fourteen people. They've got four on the bottom floor, six on the middle floor, and four on the top floor. They're a different group.

RESEARCHER

How does that work for you socially?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 2

It's alright. Because the centre of the house is the living room and you can have a conversation there with whoever comes in. Just going to the pub with a majority of them really.

RESEARCHER

Is there anything else from your university experience that causes anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 2

There's always the issue with the crowds in the uni. Because there's only so much space. The new building that I'm in most of the time, it connects to Student Central. There's a crowd of people you've got to get through and if they're moving slowly it just feels awkward. Because you got to go at their pace or speed past them. It's just.

RESEARCHER

Tell me a bit about your course load.

PARTICIPANT 2

At the minute there's not really that much to do. But when in exams, I've got three exams and six course works. Which is gonna be great... The first one I've got to do for the end of November. And then I've got like four to do within the space of a month, which is gonna be hell, but. I'm studying law. Super easy subject... I read somewhere, it was a research shown that if you know you've got to teach somebody something you take more in that way, rather than just listening to a lecture.

RESEARCHER

Are you a gamer who prefers to play in multiplayer or do you just play the campaign or story?

PARTICIPANT 2

Once upon a time, it was just playing the story, because I couldn't really afford to pay for online, but once I got that, it was. I'd play it online in Halo and I actually beat the developers at one point. Well actually on two different games I beat the developers on Halo! Basically, what they'd done is, they'd jump onto the online system, randomly, as a team. There'll be either two or four of them. And on both games, I got matched up with them and ended up beating them quite convincingly. Yeah!

RESEARCHER

Wow! That must've been so rewarding!

PARTICIPANT 2

Oh, it was! It was great.

RESEARCHER

And how did you know it was them?

PARTICIPANT 2

Because you can have a specialty number or code, and you have a message afterwards saying you've actually beat the developers, which was just incredible.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Wow. Would you say then that having rewarding moments like that is important to you when you're gaming?

PARTICIPANT 2

Part of the reason I play online is just to show improvement. Because you can't really show that in a campaign besides upping a level. You jump online, the less you die, that shows improvement.

RESEARCHER

What other things do you find rewarding when you're gaming?

PARTICIPANT 2

Getting achievements really and perfecting games. I don't do it that often, platinum-ing a game. But I don't do that often. I've done that maybe four times. Not many games I'm into besides Lego Batman. That was a good campaign, that one. I play it with my sister all the time.

RESEARCHER

What makes a game worthy of that effort to platinum for you?

PARTICIPANT 2

There's stuff that I've tried to do that I haven't. Like the Borderlands series because you can play them so many times in so many different ways. It's just got that replay-ability which, stuff like Far Cry. It's just something to keep you focused. It gives you a goal to aim for. I bought Borderlands on three different consoles. The pre-sequel was done by 2K Australia instead of 2K America, just as a side project really. And what they did is they added cryo weapons, which are ice weapons. And oxygen masks, which were a pain in the ass unless you were Claptrap. Because obviously he doesn't breathe. He's skill three, you can actually have the other character's special abilities, which is quite bizarre.

RESEARCHER

What's keeping you from getting a PS4 and playing it there?

PARTICIPANT 2

I just don't have the money really. There was a point just before we bought the Xbox1 where we were deciding whether we wanted an Xbox or a PS4, but because the Master Chief Collection got released, and Halo 5, that was the only thing that kept me on Xbox rather than switching to PlayStation. Halo is one of my top five franchises.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about when you started gaming as a child.

PARTICIPANT 2

I started with the Sega Mega Drive, which I believe was the Saturn in the states. Just after we moved into my second house, I was about four maybe? And it started with Sonic, obviously, and Street Fighter, because it was button mashing and I didn't really know what I was, but I kept beating my sister, so. I was happy with it. I didn't really own a console then up until the Wii, wait I had the PlayStation 1 as well. Some great titles on that one. Definitely what I played on there was the Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's

Peralta, R.P.

Stone game. They released them on the DS because I remember playing it on that. They had Goblet of Fire on there. I lied, actually I started playing on the Game Boy, on the Pokémon Yellow. I completely forgot about it.

RESEARCHER

How old were you then?

PARTICIPANT 2

My sister was five, so three. Game Boy colour. It was my sisters, but I'd always sneak into her room and "accidentally" delete her save file. Hahaha!

RESEARCHER

It sounds like you both have an appreciation for gaming, whether it's a lot or just every now and then. How has that affected your relationship?

PARTICIPANT 2

We were pretty close anyway, because we had a lot of stuff happening when we were growing up. The games kept us close together, because she's always had an appreciation for Halo, and recently Final Fantasy. And we differed in games, obviously, because once Halo 3 came out with side characters, she really enjoyed that game, but I only played it once. It branched off from the main story telling, and it confused me really. Because it was slightly open world, but not.

RESEARCHER

What's the most recent game you played with her?

PARTICIPANT 2

Probably Halo 5. Because we both played game, like we played Final Fantasy 15, but that's not a multiplayer game, so we talked about it. She got big into that and just told me what to do. Haha!

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

Let's start with what you've played in the past week and about how many hours each.

PARTICIPANT 2

GTA 5 and Forza Horizon about four hours each in the past week on Xbox.

RESEARCHER

What's keeping your playing these games?

PARTICIPANT 2

GTA because they've just released a new game type basically. I've just been playing that one. And Forza Horizon because I actually want to complete the campaign. I'm about 60% through. It's taking longer than I thought.

RESEARCHER

What have caused you anxiety at university in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 2

I turned up to one of my modules, which I haven't done in the past two weeks, because it was my last thing and I had migraines throughout the rest of the week. And I turned up to a class that was already sort of integrated with each other, so I was just there. But thankfully there was this African guy who sat next to me that got me involved, so. It's basically lecture, but I was able to catch up on the stuff that I missed so it wasn't too much of a hassle. I had to go to the bank to handle an overdraft, but I couldn't because I didn't get a job over the summer, and I was meant to be catching up with one of my exes, one of my good friends, but she like, ignored me, so that was not fun. I'm sure I'll have another chance to catch up at some point. But she had just broken up with her boyfriend, and she's a bit wishy washy at the minute, so.

RESEARCHER

When dealing with any anxiety from school, how do you normally manage that?

PARTICIPANT 2

If it's something that I need to do for a certain time I'll get that done as soon as possible. Or if it's gonna take a while to do, I usually just pass it on until the last minute, procrastinate until then.

RESEARCHER

When you do that, passing it off until the last minute, how does it make you feel? What do you end up doing? What's the outcome?

PARTICIPANT 2

Usually I just spend that time on the Xbox and I don't think about it and it'll just pile up and then I have to do it, so it gives me the motivation to get it done.

RESEARCHER

How long have you had this habit?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 2

Probably since I started secondary school, or high school. Actually, I'd probably put it back down to primary school. Because I was one of the smartest in my class, in my year, and the work was just so easy for me, I didn't bother to do it half the time. And then when I got to secondary school, because I went to a grammar school, the work was harder, pretty much as soon as I got there. And then it was, kinda couldn't be bothered doing it.

RESEARCHER

So, walk me through your process when you finally do sit down and do what you have to do.

PARTICIPANT 2

It will be an hour or two after I wake up. I just go through my usual morning routine, get the shower, get breakfast, do my teeth. Then I just lock myself in my room, sit down with music and get it done. I did it will all my assignments last year. I was meant to spread it over a period of three weeks, but I did it in four hours in a day, so. I'm doing okay. Didn't do bad, didn't do good. It were just there. It's the content, applying the right stuff to the right areas.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you manage anything in gaming the same way?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, I suppose I kinda do. When I was playing the Dishonored, Dishonored 2, what I do is I do a playthrough just to get my bearings straight, and I just sit down and try to perfect the game, platinum. Just in like one sitting, which I did do with the first one, not quite got there with the second one.

RESEARCHER

Would you say that's a common habit for you with games, or only certain games, earning platinum?

PARTICIPANT 2

Only recent games to be honest. When I moved onto the current console.

RESEARCHER

Why do you think that is?

PARTICIPANT 2

I think it started actually with the transition going from the Xbox360 to the Xbox1, because everybody I knew at the time had the new console. And I was just there for like two years afterwards, onward, on Xbox360, so I just played through, old, older games just to see how well I would do with them.

RESEARCHER

Are there any moments in university where you clearly have that reward from something?

PARTICIPANT 2

I didn't really at any point last year, but I started doing it this year on one of my modules, because I've done it previously. So, I'm out about 40% of the content that we're doing already. And it was just with

Peralta, R.P.

the tutorial in Criminal Law, where it's just me and the other guy just firing out the answers. Me more than him, but we actually knew what we were saying, which helped.

RESEARCHER

Have you ever felt gaming helped develop who you are as a person?

PARTICIPANT 2

Well a lot of the games that I play, you've got an objective to head toward. In the whole thing of going through just to get to one objective then get to the next one. Just build platform upon platform. And I kinda do that, I made a plan which I've had to re-alter at some point. It was when I was in year three, so I was probably nine. I said I was going to a specific school, which I did end up going to, then going to a specific uni to do a specific course, and I got to the uni but am on a different course. So, it's just outlaying what I need to do. I was gonna do forensic chemistry but by the time I went to sixth form, I got an E, so they told me to drop that and do something else by the time I got to A level. They got me in law instead. I took a shining to it. Teachers saw I took a shining to it, and then they were like, "Yeah why don't you go on to do this," so.

RESEARCHER

Do you see yourself as a capable student?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah. I've never really had much difficulty in stuff. It's just finding the effort to actually learn properly.

RESEARCHER

Outside of school, do you generally see yourself as a capable person?

PARTICIPANT 2

Capable in an independent sense, not so much a social sense.

RESEARCHER

Okay, tell me about that.

PARTICIPANT 2

I don't know, I've found difficulty creating groups. Like I've always had to latch onto someone. And then they introduce me to a group. It's never just been me finding or integrating into a specific group just by myself. I'd like to change this, but I don't know if that's possible. It's just the issue with sparking up a conversation and keeping it going. Or just going, "Hi, I'm this person, I'm friends with this person" and talking about the other people.

RESEARCHER

What would your social life look like ideally?

PARTICIPANT 2

Just go out with different groups of people rather than the same core four people. Having people outside of my core group to talk to. To just have normal friendly conversation. I used to play sport and would like to play rugby, because I was good with that in secondary school. We were put into four groups throughout the whole year and I was always in the third group. Not good, but not retarded. And

Peralta, R.P.

when we were doing rugby during the winter and spring time, and the coach we had for our group was the coach for the rugby team, and he asked me to join for four successive year, but it was on the same day I had to march for marching band, so I couldn't do both.

RESEARCHER

Have you thought about doing it now?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah? I was talking with one of my mates from back home, he's also here, but in a different house. But I can't really afford the membership and the kits and everything. The average membership cost is about £55. But the American football team is £145. So, it could run between.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you have the same challenges with dating and meeting people?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yes. I'm on Tindr, but I don't talk to any of the matches. I can't be bothered to think of any cheesy pick up lines. And nobody wants to start a conversation with someone that just says "hey." I can't segue from one bit of conversation to another. The conversation will just die. Or at least that's how it's gone. I'd like to build my confidence because I've been sorting this out for a while.

RESEARCHER

What things are you confident in?

PARTICIPANT 2

I'm confident in things that I know. Stuff like, performing. Because I was part of a marching band since I was seven, until I was 18. So, there's a good 12 years. And I moved that into being part of a band. We had performances. I was perfectly fine because what I enjoyed and what I knew how to do. So, it's stuff that I know I can do, rather than stuff I might be able.

RESEARCHER

You also sound confident in the classroom. How do you get to that level?

PARTICIPANT 2

It's only when it's stuff that I know. Because I won't answer if I'm not entirely sure. I'll answer if I know I'm right, rather than make up an answer if there's a follow up question.

RESEARCHER

What are you confident with in terms of gaming?

PARTICIPANT 2

Once I figured out the mechanics of the game I'd be alright with it.

RESEARCHER

What else do you do to make sure you understand something new?

PARTICIPANT 2

Peralta, R.P.

I think that's where I talk to people to get different opinions, to see if I'm right, or if there's a right way to do things.

RESEARCHER

What about when meeting people online to play with?

PARTICIPANT 2

I've had people message me after I've done something or done really well on Halo. I've had people popping up congratulating me, saying "good game" and all that. And on Halo, I've actually had offered to team up because we both did really well. It was pretty much whenever I get online I got offers asking to play, but I don't actually know who they are. I don't use a headset because I lost it, I don't have one to replace it, and I can't be bothered to get one.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your last week.

PARTICIPANT 2

I've just been playing Forza for the last week. Pretty much non-stop. It's been great. Done about 12 hours in the last week of that. I'm doing more this week. I just really got into the swing of how to play it again. I thought I completed it, but when I got to the last bit it gave me more things to do. More events and stuff, so I've just been going through them. I was excited and then I saw two of the races, one of them was to do 81 laps in one sitting, which is gonna take about two hours. And the other one is to do 300 miles of another one, which is gonna take about 2.5 hours. It's gonna be fun. Score Hero on my mobile. It's basically a football game. You start off as a rookie and go through the seasons. It's just another time waster. I play just when I've got 10 minutes free. I've probably played about an hour over all this week. It's got a level of difficulty that's annoying. Some of the scenarios are impossible in the way you want them to go. So, you've got to think of a different way to do them. It's got an energy meter, so if you mess up on one, but then it takes a bar of energy off and if that all goes down you've got to wait a while for them all to come back.

RESEARCHER

Do you play that with other people?

PARTICIPANT 2

No, it's all me.

RESEARCHER

What about any anxiety in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 2

I've not really had any. Besides I got an email, for an attendance meeting, but it's not gonna be any hassle, so. I've been pretty chill this week.

RESEARCHER

Do you prefer co-op online or in the same room?

PARTICIPANT 2

The same room. Because when I was in primary school I used to go to my neighbour's house, and he had an Xbox and it was the only time that I'd get to play really. Well on a new console rather than the Sega Mega Drive. And it's nice to have something you can see, a live reaction, you enjoy yourself more. Because you can mess around rather than just having to do stuff.

RESEARCHER

What are your favourite franchises? Developers?

PARTICIPANT 2

Halo's definitely one of them. I bought that one, every console possible. Borderlands. I think I bought it three times for the same game. Not really any Developers, maybe Ubisoft. I played all the Assassin's

Peralta, R.P.

Creed up until just before Black Flag came out. And I got that one release date. Then I got onto the Far Cry Series, so I'd say Ubisoft.

RESEARCHER

How would you handle servers being down?

PARTICIPANT 2

My usual strategy on that one is restart the console to see if it's a console problem. Then restart the game to see if it's a game problem. Then keep trying until I couldn't be bothered and then I'd go to sleep.

RESEARCHER

Does it cause you anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 2

I've got other things to bother with.

RESEARCHER

How capable do you see yourself as a student?

PARTICIPANT 2

Fairly capable when I can be bothered to put the effort in. My test results have shown that one. Because I resat my first year of year twelve, and then getting an A, A, B, C at the end of A level. Which is decent. I've proven that again with uni, barely through from last year, but I'm putting an effort in this year and I'm understanding everything. So, I think I'm fairly capable.

RESEARCHER

Would you say there are any times that you fear failure?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah. Generally, it just comes around when exams are one. That's probably when I'm the most stressed. I've done all I can up to that point to learn all that I need to. It's just whether I can remember it when I'm in, in the room, doing the exam. And that's the only time that I fear failing really.

RESEARCHER

What about outside of school? Do you see yourself to be a generally capable person with friends or family?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, I just trudge along, carrying myself.

RESEARCHER

Would you say how you manage game strategy parallels that of managing things in real life?

PARTICIPANT 2

Peralta, R.P.

Yeah, probably. With the chance to review everything in your game, it makes you take a step back and just look at the whole situation rather than go in head strong doing whatever and if it doesn't work out you go back, and you try it again.

RESEARCHER

If you were to help another gamer struggling with something, how would you use gaming to relate or help them through it?

PARTICIPANT 2

It's better to take yourself away from a situation just to think it over then have another go later. Give your mind a rest.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about the nostalgia that old games brought you and do you go back and play any?

PARTICIPANT 2

It was simple. There wasn't really any issue, so you just go to a place. I'd go to our front room and just beat the hell out of my sister gaming. It was playing Sonic 3, just the fact that you needed Tails to lift Sonic up. In the end that companionship. Sonic Anniversary, we played through Sonic 1, 2, and 3, as like co-op. It brought that sense of nostalgia, because we already knew the map, we could just go as fast as possible. We used to compete with Pokémon Silver, who could get the furthest.

RESEARCHER

We spoke about your challenges connecting with others. Have you had the opportunity to meet anyone in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, just course mates really. The one that I vaguely spoke to, have been speaking to recently, we sat next to each other in lectures the last few days. So, it's been nice having someone there. There wasn't time to spend time together in between classes. I was supposed to meet up with a couple other people today, but I had other things to do, so I didn't really get the chance, but I'd like to.

RESEARCHER

What games have helped you develop your identity?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, basically before my mum and dad split it was a hostile environment in the living room to say the least. So, I'd just go either up to my sister's room to play on the Game Boy or in the front room to play on the Sega Mega Drive just to get away from it, escape from it. I don't think I felt it at the time, but when I look back on it, it probably was. I've been there, when we've been used as weapons. It wasn't really that bad because it was very clear that I was not my dad's favourite. It was more that my mom used my sister as a weapon than me, which is fine, because she was very much a daddy's girl and I was very much a mummy's boy, still am. But it was hard to watch. Parents split up when I was nine, so probably a period of five to nine, so four years.

RESEARCHER

What's your relationship now with your family?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 2

Really close with my mum and sister. And my stepdad. Haven't spoken to my dad since he came to visit me for fifteen minutes on my most recent birthday. And that was it. I haven't spoken to him since.

RESEARCHER

How did that make you feel?

PARTICIPANT 2

I'd like to say I was disappointed, but I've come to expect it.

RESEARCHER

How do you think your relationships with family carries over into friendships?

PARTICIPANT 2

The ones that mean the most to me I'm gonna keep a hold of. I'll never let them go. But the ones that wronged me, or anyone, I can just cut the ties and never talk to again. It's just come so easy because I've had to with my dad and my granddad and at one point my auntie.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

How's your week? Tell me about your week?

PARTICIPANT 2

Good. I got a lot more gaming done than usual. I was playing Doom, the one they released on the current consoles. They released it last year. It's good. It has an interesting story, and it was gruesome, which is always fun on those types of games. I piled through the campaign, did about seventeen hours. About five hours with Forza as well.

RESEARCHER

That seventeen hours, was it small large sessions?

PARTICIPANT 2

Sitting own and playing for a couple hours each time. So about 22 hours overall.

RESEARCHER

Were any of those sessions a result of anything anxiety based?

PARTICIPANT 2

Kind of. I think it's because I've got an assignment due in the next couple of weeks. So, I'm just getting as much as I can done before I have to sit down and do that.

RESEARCHER

Has anything caused you anxiety in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 2

No, I don't think so.

RESEARCHER

Socially, family, friends?

PARTICIPANT 2

Nothing really besides my mom having a severe asthma attack and had to be admitted in the hospital overnight, but she's alright.

RESEARCHER

How did you manage that?

PARTICIPANT 2

I actually just jumped straight on the Xbox.

RESEARCHER

Right after receiving the messages?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 2

I mean yeah, I replied to her of course. She texted me while she was there. Actually, there was one other thing that was kinda causing me stress. I had to have an informal attendance meeting because I've a span of authorised absences, which I really didn't have to go into because I walked into the room, they go "Yeah, I don't know why you're here. Your attendance is fine."

RESEARCHER

Why did they initially say you had an issue with attendance?

PARTICIPANT 2

It's because I suffer from migraines. I had quite a few recently, so I had to have days off, that I had put through as an authorised absence. And they were checking to see if there's anything they could do, but nothing they could do, so.

RESEARCHER

Let's talk a little bit about that. Tell me about how often you have it, what causes it, and how you manage it.

PARTICIPANT 2

I got this mental disability that's very similar to dyslexia, but it's an off branch of that called Irlen Syndrome, or Scotopic Sensitivity. It basically means that I struggle reading black and white, or have fluorescent light in a room, or just anything that causes glare. And in a situation where I can't, say I'm in a lecture hall and there's always those fluorescent lights going on, and I can't get away from that, I start getting migraines.

RESEARCHER

How do you deal with them while in class?

PARTICIPANT 2

I just go home. Because the only way I can get rid of them is just sleep it off. Otherwise I can barely see, and I get very nauseous with them as well. It's not a fun time.

RESEARCHER

How does that impact the content in class you may be missing?

PARTICIPANT 2

Not so much in some of the modules because they've got lecture capturing, but there's three modules where they don't. But thankfully on those modules, all the lecture slides, on the PowerPoint, they're actually quite detailed. It's not so much of an issue, really. And I have people that can give me their notes. But it's in one of the modules we get a worksheet to go through each workshop and if I don't turn up then it don't get posted, so I don't get that week's work.

RESEARCHER

Do you work with the instructor to get it?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 2

No but it's something I'm gonna have to go onto.

RESEARCHER

Does any of that cause you anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 2

I kinda came to terms with it, but when it was happening because I had two weeks on the run where I missed the same workshop, so I thought I was gonna be well behind. But when I got to it, after I'd done all the notes from the previous one, it was fine. I understood what was going on, so.

RESEARCHER

Do you identify as a person with disabilities openly?

PARTICIPANT 2

When it needs to be. All my close friends know, but I'm not just going to someone I barely know and go, "Hi, I've a mental disability."

RESEARCHER

Some have said their disability is as much a part of their identity as being a gamer. How do you feel about that?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, I'd agree with that.

RESEARCHER

Have you always managed this, or has it come about recently?

PARTICIPANT 2

Well the migraines I've had, starting at aged eleven, but I didn't actually get diagnosed with the Irlens until I was seventeen. So that's something I've had to deal with more recently than the migraines. The fact that I got diagnosed before I got to uni, I just went through DSA and they did it most of it for me. The uni set up a personal learning support plan, it outlines what the disability is, what I need to do, what the lecturers should do, and all that. It was hard at the start but it's alright now.

RESEARCHER

Since you were dealing with this at a young age, would you say gaming helped you with any of it?

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, although at the start of it, my mum basically blamed the gaming on them, for the migraines. I used to get it from the old TVs, the massive one with the lights coming through. And she blamed it on that at first and now that we've figured out what it is, and what causes it, she just lets me get on with it.

RESEARCHER

How did you feel when you realised it's not gaming?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 2

I was so relieved. I'd tell her it was wrong, but it I knew it had something to do with it.

RESEARCHER

What else may initiate a migraine?

PARTICIPANT 2

We do think stress is something to do with it. I will go through a period of stress, and then I'll go a week where I just get migraines just on and off, which sucks. But weirdly, bell peppers cause migraines for me. It's weird. Chillies don't have any affect for me. They don't cause migraines, but the bell peppers do.

RESEARCHER

Can you anticipate when you may start having more migraines if you are experiencing a lot?

PARTICIPANT 2

No, not really. The only indication I get is I get an aura, so like squiggles and dots that just appear in my eyesight that basically just cut off a bit of my sight for like, maybe half an hour to an hour before the migraine actually starts so. I got a period up until the point where I know I just need to get to bed and try and get to sleep before the migraine comes in. Other than that, there's nothing that tells it.

RESEARCHER

How do you manage during exams?

PARTICIPANT 2

I take regular gaps between revision. I'll do like 45 minutes to an hour of revision, and then fifteen minutes to a half an hour of rest. And then get back to it.

RESEARCHER

So, it all seems quite manageable for you.

PARTICIPANT 2

When they started I had no clue. And they were much, much worse, and prior to the last, maybe two years, because I've been on daily medication to prevent them happening so often, but some of them still come through.

RESEARCHER

What role would you say anxiety affects how you manage your migraines?

PARTICIPANT 2

I don't know. I haven't put much thought into it really. Although, when I get migraines during the day, sort of beginning of afternoon I have to go out and have to get rid of it. Which puts my body clock to like at like 3am or 4am. Say I have a 7am start, and I only get three hours of sleep, which means I'll more likely get a migraine the next day as well or the day after so my whole sleeping pattern gets messed up. I had to postpone one of my exams last year because I had a migraine the morning of. I wouldn't be able to give my best attempt of it, rather than throw up on the paper. Postponed two months, from May to July.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Are there things you know that cause enough anxiety that it will, in turn, cause a migraine?

PARTICIPANT 2

Presentations. Not fond of presentations. Standing on front of a projector, there's a glare facing you, so it doesn't really help.

RESEARCHER

Have you done anything that would make it easier for you to give presentations?

PARTICIPANT 2

I don't really know what I could do, aside from maybe stand at the side of the screen.

RESEARCHER

Is there anything that you're surprised with in our interviews?

PARTICIPANT 2

Not really, although I didn't think I used it as a coping mechanism when I was younger. So, it may be something to look at in the future. If I want to have kids, to allow them to have that accessibility to something other than, a dispute.

Peralta, R.P.

PILOT INTERVIEW

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits. How often you play, what you're playing right now, why you like it.

PARTICIPANT 3

I basically game maybe every day or every other day at least. For two hours. Depending on how much I get into the game. At the moment I'm actually playing Mass Effect Andromeda on PlayStation 4. I have a PlayStation 4. I have a WiiU, Super Nintendo, and then several arcade machines and a pinball as well. I love gaming. I usually have my 3DS with me playing Pokémon too.

RESEARCHER

Why Mass Effect?

PARTICIPANT 3

Well Mass Effect, I like the story line, and it reminds me a lot of Choose Your Own Adventure books, like Goosebumps use to have. If you choose this then go to page 67, and it's like "Oh, okay! What's gonna happen next?" And that's kinda what Mass Effect is kinda like. It's like you base this character's story on either what you want them to experience or what you would do. And it changes the outcome for the whole story. It's a fun experience in that way. I also noticed that I like games that have To Do lists. And I do this in my own life, I write lists of things that I need to do throughout the day, and I scratch them out and that's just something I love doing, because it makes me feel accomplished. And Mass Effect, Assassin's Creed, Watch Dogs, are some of the games that have this list feature. And you can do all of these side quests or you can stay on the main mission. And as you do them, it scratches them out, and that's why I really actually enjoy this game.

RESEARCHER

How does that make you feel?

PARTICIPANT 3

It makes me feel great. It's definitely a stress relief. When I do stuff around the house I make a list. Do dishes. Clean bedroom. I can do these things without writing a list, but actually physically seeing it in front of me, and physically scratching it out, it just makes me feel good.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about how that habit and satisfaction connects with how you manage anxiety in your life.

PARTICIPANT 3

Right now, I'm in undergrad and I'm a double major, so I'm usually at seventeen credit hours or eighteen or nineteen. I'm constantly stressed out with that school work, which I also use an app called My Study Life, which also puts all your homework in list form, so you can check them. It puts everything in priority order, so you can go down the list and do your homework in that way. It's fantastic. It's the same with Mass Effect and Assassin's Creed doing all these lists. Seeing everything accomplished just makes things a lot easier. If I'm able to see things in front of me it makes things less stressful. If it's all in my head, then it becomes too much because it doesn't seem like there's a way around it. But when I write it down on paper it's actually not that bad.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Do you use gaming then as a way to manage anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh yeah, definitely. There's also a game called Flower that I really enjoy. It's the same people who did Journey. It's beautiful. The theme is great, you're just a flower petal in the wind, forming life, terraforming. It's beautiful. It's just very relaxing. My partner actually, if I'm in a very anxious mood or if I'm angry, angry from not doing well form something, he's like "Put on Flower. You're always happier after Flower."

RESEARCHER

How else to you actively manage anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 3

I also manage with medication and counselling, so there's that. I'm on three medications on an as need basis, and counselling has helped as well, learning techniques on how to ground myself when I'm not gaming or at home. It's knowing that this is my normal and that's okay. MY partner is very supportive about everything. Although he doesn't fully understand what I go through. He can sympathise, well not empathise, but he can sympathise with it and tries to be there for me in any way possible.

RESEARCHER

Has your counsellor ever utilised gaming or processed your gaming with you to help you manage things?

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh, no. We haven't talked about that. We talked about me doing some dance, because I'm a dancer. That's what my other major is. And I told him how this past semester, how dancing has really helped me manage a lot of my anxiety just outside of my home. It's been great trying to figure that out. And I'm trying to put that into my own studies, because I'm a biology and a dance major. So, it would be fun to merge that for my own studies.

RESEARCHER

Aside from that task list, what do you get out of it, what pulls you into gaming?

PARTICIPANT 3

That's a really hard question because I grew up with gaming. I remember the original Macintoshes with Oregon Trail on there and dying from dysentery every time. And just grew up from that. My sister and I, we had an Atari. We have an Atari now! We grew up playing Pong. And it's just always been part of my life. I always went to it as a stress relief because I never had an easy childhood. My mom, she was illegal for a while. Finally got her citizenship, thank god. We lived in an abusive family as well. So, my way to escape everything was either through the arts, performing music, dancing, or through video games. And that's the two worlds that I basically lived in. And it's still my go to until today. I never realised how my gaming habits have flowed throughout my own stressful day. When I come back from classes I normally do throw on the PS4 and start playing, but subconsciously I'm not thinking "Oh I've had a stressful day, let me game." Usually it's just I go, and I just game, I feel good, and then I start doing my homework after that. It's funny, I never actually realised that that's actually what I'm doing. Gaming is more than just sitting there idly doing nothing. It involves tons of brain power and just critical thinking and logic

puzzles. It involves a lot. Every semester at my university there are giant trailers full of gaming. It's like a gaming bus, essentially. It's like a party bus but with games in it, with different consoles and projectors. They usually show up on campus around midterms and finals. I know that gaming's also helped me with forming friendships. I have social anxiety, so I know that when in high school, and even to now, the friendships I've formed were with the people that played similar games. "Oh, Final Fantasy! Oh, you like Final Fantasy too? Oh my god!" And we'd talk about Final Fantasy and it wasn't weird. I would always feel weird at home, because my sister, she never played any of that stuff. And she's like "Eh, you're such a weirdo, why do you like this?" And then I'd go to school and I didn't have any friends that played that stuff until I met that group of friends. And then after that my friends circle just got bigger and bigger and those are the same people I used to play Dance Dance Revolution. Oh my god I love DDR! It's also a way for people who are, who have social anxiety to also meet people in circles that are in the gaming community. It's really interesting now with games like Destiny where you are out in this open world and communicating over your headset with people you never actually see or have met, but you're still having this form of community. It's really nice having that community feeling in those type of games as well.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

How are you?

PARTICIPANT 3

I always feel like I'm always doing things right at the deadline, which is a dangerous game to play.

RESEARCHER

Tell me what games you've played in the past week and about how long for each one?

PARTICIPANT 3

This past week I played Outlast. I played that for four hours. I played Flower for about an hour. I played snake game on my phone. It's a math game as well.

RESEARCHER

What keeps your interest in the mobile game?

PARTICIPANT 3

I feel like it's brainless, although it involves lots of math, but it's fun. I enjoy it. It challenges me a little bit. I play it while standing around in line. Otherwise between classes I normally throw up Pokémon Go! as I'm walking to classes! I play that every day, about an hour on campus usually. Two hours a day maybe. About fourteen hours this week.

RESEARCHER

What console games are you currently playing?

PARTICIPANT 3

On the PS4, I have right now that I'm playing is Mass Effect Andromeda and Outlast. And I redownloaded Flower because I was stressing out with all my research papers so it kinda chilled me out.

RESEARCHER

So, Flower to relax, and then why Outlast?

PARTICIPANT 3

Outlast, I've heard of the game several times from friends and I wanted to try it out. I am horrible at horror games because I freak out too easily. I get too involved into it. I was like "Sure I'll play this survival horror game that you can't fight back. That sounds like a great idea." It's interesting and the first time I played it, I had to stop after ten minutes because it freaked me out. And then I turned the brightness all the way up. But after a while, maybe if I can face my fears this is kinda good. So that's the reason I'm playing that game. If I can survive these jump scares, then I'm good. I normally avoid these games. My friends are like "Hey have you played Resident Evil?" and I'm like "No!" It definitely involves strategy, and I like strategy games. It's basically trying to figure out what move you can do to survive this horrific event. One wrong move and you're dead. All the games I've played normally have strategy involved in them. Mass Effect, you have to strategize how you're gonna obtain everything. All my games involve strategy. I think that's just from originally when I was a teen when I started getting into gaming it was all RPG games, all strategy-based games as well.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

What are you getting out of Outlast that's different from any other games?

PARTICIPANT 3

Aside from being scared shitless. I never played a video game where the only way to beat it is to run away. So normally all video games is about fighting back. So, you have that control. This is in a way you're giving up that control, but you have to survive by doing the thing you don't think you could do, which is run away. It's interesting because I find it a metaphor for life. You can't always fight every single problem that comes up. Sometimes you have to turn around and walk away from it. And this game is forcing me to sometimes accept that things are gonna be the way they are. You can't control everything. And sometimes you have to run.

RESEARCHER

What's interesting is that you recognize and laugh at the physiological affect it's having on you.

PARTICIPANT 3

Of course. It's terrifying. You have to laugh at it, otherwise you're gonna sit there and cry. The first night of me playing it, my partner and his friend were sitting on the sofa watching me play it and there was a jump scare. I didn't think I would have this physical response to it, but I literally flew back and fell on my back with the remote extended out like this and they were laughing hysterically. Holy shit, this game! They do horror very well. Even with the music, they play it up very well. I'm a fan of horror genre as it is in movies but playing it is a different thing because I have a very vivid imagination. So, playing it, I put myself in the situation, so it's harder for me to do that. But I'm trying to get myself to enjoy horror games more. Kinda like Until Dawn, which is awesome as well. And it's a horror game too. I don't play in the dark. I've not played the game in the dark yet. I don't think I ever will. Especially right now with my partner and partner gone for the week. Brightness level I had to turn up, because I was done screaming and being frustrated about not finding an exit or a hiding spot, because you have to find hiding spot too. You're being chased and then you have to run and then you have to hide under a bed and hope that they don't see you hide under the bed and grab you and kill you. It's horrifying. Haha! I turned the brightness up, so I can see better inside the game, yeah. The sound I leave, I guess, but...

RESEARCHER

How does a horror game affect your anxiety relief when playing video games?

PARTICIPANT 3

You would think that it would induce more stress. I guess it's the whole escapist theory. Like, you go to a movie, or you go to a theatre, or a show, whatever, to escape your own reality kinda thing. I know I'm not in an insane asylum. I know there's not this monster trying to kill me with a machete. But I put myself in this situation knowing that maybe I can escape it. So maybe that's what it is. Maybe that's now I get off on that. It's like "Okay, cool, I'm in this very scary situation. I know it's not real, but I can escape it. So maybe subconsciously I'm doing that in my own life as well." I don't know, but you would think that it would induce more stress because of the subject matter. Why would I play this over Flower? If I'm stressed out. I don't know. I don't know how to answer that. I mean, there are parts in the game where I'm like "Fuck this, I can't do this anymore." And I just shut it off. And that's just because it freaked me out, but for that time period playing, I'm really enjoying it.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

What in the past week has been causing anxiety for you, school-wise?

PARTICIPANT 3

Haha! Everything! Haha! Let's break that down. Let's start with what's been going on from the beginning. I was anticipated to graduate in spring of this term. So, Spring next year. And basically, they reversed my financial aid because I had exceeded my credit limit as a double major. Which they told me as a freshman that wouldn't be an issue but clearly now in my senior year it is. So basically, they took away my financial aid. And I was like "Well crap, how am I gonna finish my degrees?" And I appealed for it and they accepted it, however they only accepted it for one semester, so essentially, I have two semesters in one as a double major. So that's, yeah. That already is a total mind fuck. So yeah that's super stressful there. So, I'm managing eight classes, four of which are writing intensive courses, and the recommended amount for writing classes is two for a semester. Of those writing intensive courses, two of them are senior exit courses, so they involve tons of research. So, I'm doing research in the biology department, which is actually really cool. Any then I'm doing other research in the dance department. My research in the biology department is how probiotics can affect anxiety related behaviours and how it can reduce them. And then for the dance department it's how dance can improve neural plasticity and help with patients with more motor neural conditions. It's just really stressful with all the course work I have to do.

RESEARCHER

What else has been causing anxiety for you?

PARTICIPANT 3

Well school is a major one. And then there's the whole transitional life moment right now. Like, what do I do when I graduate? I graduate this December. I was anticipating spring, so that would have given me time for my GRE and applications to defer my student loans and then go back to school in the fall. Now that that I'm graduating in December, my student loans are gonna come a lot quicker, so that means I'm gonna get into grad school a lot quicker, but I'm not gonna be able to do that with all the course work I'm doing now, so what I'm gonna do in the spring is I'm gonna do the GRE, look at different schools and try to figure that out. And also, my clinical hours because I want to do physical therapy. But with that transitional moment of school, there's also this transitional moment in my relationship. That's an added stress, because I don't really know where we are currently and where I want to be.

RESEARCHER

With everything happening, have you cognitively thought, "I don't want to deal with this. I just want to game right now."

PARTICIPANT 3

I don't know if I've done it cognitively. I know that while I'm doing homework I'll freak out and think "I can't do this anymore." I'll just go downstairs, and I'll turn the PlayStation on and just start gaming. And it's just a way for me to kinda escape what's going on with my homework or have a way to reset.

RESEARCHER

What other ways do you manage anxiety aside from gaming?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 3

Honestly? Porn. Haha! I don't have any vices. I drink seldomly, so that's not something I really do. I don't smoke.

RESEARCHER

Would you say your dancing is an outlet for you?

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh, most definitely.

RESEARCHER

About how long are you dancing weekly or even daily?

PARTICIPANT 3

Daily, I would say at least three or four hours a day. A lot of it is also creating dance to. It's a choreography class.

RESEARCHER

What's the difference between what you get out of any sort of dance movement and gaming?

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh, I never really thought about that. I guess with dance, it's definitely a different thought process because it's more artistic. It's more visceral. I'm expressing something, what I feel inside maybe? Versus with gaming, I'm more task oriented. In a way that's not what I'm doing with school, but I'm involved in a task that I want to accomplish within a game, within an environment that I choose, whether that be like Mass Effect, going around to different planets and exploring and finding these treasures or whatever. Or running away from the guy that's trying to kill me in Outlast. Haha! I feel like they both relieve stress in their own way. Because also with dance, it's physical. So obviously those physiological responses to stress relief with dance because you are releasing endorphins, this that or the other.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

What have you played and for how long in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 3

I cannot recall gaming this past week because I've been so freaking busy. I wanted to game but I honestly can't recall playing anything on the PlayStation. I mean I played Pokémon Go! between classes and stuff like that. I definitely played for more than thirty minutes. It's a good time killer between classes. And then when I'm on campus and stressing about homework and not wanting to do homework. I'll just walk around campus and collect Pokémon or do some PokéStops and spend them. Just because it's something to do and it's kinda hoarding. That's what Pokémon is, teaching people how to be hoarders.

RESEARCHER

So, there's still a rewarding aspect of playing.

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh definitely. If Ariel from the Little Mermaid was a gamer she'd play Pokémon. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How long have you been with the franchise?

PARTICIPANT 3

I started Pokémon when they started twenty years back. I loved them, and I played Red, Blue, and Yellow. And I think I played Crystal as well. But after that I just kinda stopped when they started Generation 2. I got back when XY started. So, I missed Gen 2 through 9. So, I started again with XY and I need to catch up with all the other ones.

RESEARCHER

What brought you back?

PARTICIPANT 3

I started playing Pokémon Go! and it gave me that bug again to want to play Pokémon. So, I looked on Craigslist for a 3DS with the Pokémon games and I fell in love with them again. It was really weird at first because so much had changed. And I'm like "Oh my gosh, Pokémon have gender now, this is weird." And you can breed them and all this other stuff and I'm like "This is pretty cool." And there's this whole thing about IVs and getting the perfect Pokémon. Very intricate gaming for such a simple game. I fell in love with the franchise again after starting Pokémon Go! and then Sun and Moon came out and I was like "I need this!" This is so weird, this obsession with some gaming and some franchises can occur.

RESEARCHER

How did you feel about it when you realised you were hooked again?

PARTICIPANT 3

Peralta, R.P.

Oh, it was great! Haha! It's weird being 32 and still having this love for Pikachu or Squirtle. These little muñequitos, these little cartoons! And still having this love for them, but I feel like that's just gonna be me forever. I'm just gonna be this big kid.

RESEARCHER

Why is it weird for you?

PARTICIPANT 3

I don't know! I guess just because right now I'm in college, so my cohorts are people who are younger than me. A lot younger than me. So, I see them and then I see myself, and I'm like "I relate with all of them, and we all hang out and stuff," but then there's this little separation and I can't figure it out. And I'm like "Oh wait, it's probably because of my age." And it's like, I don't really want to hang out with them all the time. I'm also a commuter student, so I'm never really on campus. But it's weird because you're told by society that the norm, that being a "normal adult" is to have your suit and tie and briefcase, you're gonna work at thirty, meanwhile I'm at school doing this backwards and playing Pokémon on my time off. Hah! And I feel like I'm in my early 20s again, according to what is "normal." So, I've been fighting a lot with this idea of what is normal. It's put on a lot of pressure and stress on me as well. Yeah, it's trying to figure out what's normal and then realising this is my normal and accepting that this is my normal and not caring about what others' "normals" are. So yeah, that's been a struggle.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about that. Do you think that is put on by you or by society?

PARTICIPANT 3

I think it's definitely put on about my perceptions on what I believe society is putting onto me. I put ideas into things that are probably not really there. I like to look at the whole picture. And when I look at the whole picture I start making scenarios for everything or maybe like twenty scenarios for that one thing. And so, I should grab onto one of those things and it just starts becoming this entire elaborate story, which, it hasn't even happened yet. If I meet somebody and they give me this weird look and then walk away, I'm like "Oh my god!" and I make up this whole story. They hate me, this that and the other. And it could have been like they needed to go to the bathroom. Or something stupid like that. And I meet them later, and they're like "Oh no. yeah, I just needed to go to the bathroom." I was like "Oh! I thought you hated me." And it's like "No, why would I hate you, I don't even know you." Haha! I make up this whole elaborate story and I don't know if it's from my theatre training, so it's like I know how to quickly make a story, or it's just a way to protect myself from whatever's happening, so I make a story up, so I don't have to deal with whatever may come. I don't know.

I remember, my first counsellor actually, she was amazing, I wish I could find her again. She was somebody who was adjunct as a counsellor at my university. And since then I haven't found anybody who I can click with. It's really hard to find that connection with a counsellor who, especially for somebody like me who, I over analyse everything, and it's not that I mean to over analyse everything, it just happens subconsciously because of all that I've been through, so it's just steps to protect myself. Or steps that I feel like I need to do to protect myself, even though I really probably don't have to do them. She said, one of the things that really stuck with me, she said "Don't should all over yourself." And it just made me laugh hysterically, and I was like, "Don't should all over yourself?" Because I used to use the word "should" a lot. Like "I should do this. I should do that." And she's like "You don't need to do any of this stuff. Don't 'should' all over yourself." She went to some seminar and there was this guy who kept preaching the whole "Don't should all over yourself" because then you pigeonhole yourself into these

notions that you need to do these things when you really don't. Saying I should do something adds a layer of guilt that you need to do something when you really don't need to.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about any anxiety from school, or anything, from the past week.

PARTICIPANT 3

Saturday was my first and last day managing the store on my own. It's not my last because I did so poorly, but it's my last because they're making me exclusively for the pharmacy now. He needed somebody to close the store for him and I was the only person available, and I was like "I've not been trained to do this, but I guess he feels I'm strong enough to do it so why not?" So yeah, I show up Saturday, he gives me the keys, tells me the alarm code. He's like "Alright yeah, you got this." And I was like "Mm, uh uh." So, the pharmacy closes, I grab the register. They bring them into the office, put them in the safe. I didn't have time to count them because I was really busy. So, I go back in there and count the registers. I have a plan in my head on what I need to do before closing. And then the alarm goes off. And I'm like "What is going on?" Wow! Fire alarm! I don't know what's going on. There's people in the store, like, still shopping! I'm like "Do you guys not have any sense of life preservation? Do you not want to run to a manager and find out what's going on? They're still walking around like nothing's happening. The alarm is just going off. So, I grabbed the people, I don't know what's happening, so I'm just gonna have to evacuate them because my instincts kicked in. I was a fire marshal for another building when I worked for the arts council. So, I was like "Alright we need to go! Everybody let's go! Let's get out of the building!" and I push them out the door and I lock the door. And the phone goes off and it's the alarm company. I'm like "Oh my god." They're like "Is everything okay? What's the code?" And I'm like "Oh my god, what's the code?" And I tell them, and I was like "Okay good, I said it correctly." So, they don't think there's somebody here trying to kill me. And they're like "Are you safe?" and I was like "I honestly don't know. This alarm just went off and I don't know what's happening. Is there a fire?" And she's like "No, there was movement in the pharmacy." And I was like "The pharmacy is closed. Why is there movement back there?" The gate's closed. The door is locked back there. And was like "Oh my god, someone is in there, trying to rob the pharmacy." So, my employee, who's more of a co-worker, he's like "Should I go back there?" and I was like "No, bud. You wait here." And I was like "I just called him 'bud.'" I turned into his father for a moment. Haha! I hand him the phone and I'm like "If anything, if you hear me yell or anything, let them know, something went wrong, hang up the phone and run for the door." Haha! He's like "Okay!" So, I go in the back, and I'm like looking through the gate to see if I can see anything, and I'm not seeing anything. So, I'm like "Okay, there's nothing back there." And they were I like "Okay, um, maybe the fax machine set it off or something." I was like "That's stupid..." So, I was like "Are you guys able to turn this off?" and they're like "No, it'll turn off on its own." It took like twenty minutes to just go off. But yeah it was so fuckin stressful. And then not ten minutes after that. Some lady came in to pick up her curbside order, which I think is the most stupidest thing ever, curbside. She came in, order didn't go through, she didn't get her ten dollars off, so we had to process it through. There was a line of people, and I was like "Can I push you this way? Because I need to take care of this line again. And then she came back, and she was upset, and it was a good thirty or forty minutes of trying to figure this out and trying to use my manager powers to make things go correctly. But she left happy, so that was great. But this whole time, I just wanted to run to the bathroom and cry. Haha! This was so much! My employee was like "Dude, I would have like, left as soon as that alarm went off and not come back. You handled this all pretty well." And I was surprised how well I handled everything. I thought honestly my anxiety was gonna get to me and I was gonna get dry mouth and I was just gonna lose it. Because usually when my anxiety starts going bad I start getting dry mouth first. That's like the first symptom to

Peralta, R.P.

occur. And then I start focusing on the dry mouth, and then because I'm focusing on my physical symptoms then it gets worse. I guess maybe there was just so much coming from everywhere that I couldn't focus. I don't know. Or maybe it's just because I couldn't allow myself in that moment to just relax or allow myself to process it all because there was just so much. Yeah, that was stressful. At the end of the night, I just sat in my car. Just sat there, staring out the window. It's like, the door's locked, the alarm's on, I'm just gonna sit in my car and stare out the window. Haha! No music or anything. I don't even remember what I was thinking about. I was just numb, just staring out the window.

RESEARCHER

So now you'll just be in the pharmacy.

PARTICIPANT 3

Yes, which is surprisingly less stress. It was a lot of stress my first week, because, it's again, being really hard on myself. My modern dance teacher, she keeps on telling me that I need to be kind to myself, and that's something I keep trying to tell myself, and whatever that means in that moment. I worked in the pharmacy for six years and I was the lead technician, I was an inventory manager, I was a scheduler. So, I had this hierarchy already. Coming back to the pharmacy, so many things have changed, and I don't have the knowledge base of the medicine anymore. And I don't know how to run the computers anymore. I just feel all the way down here again, which is fine! Because I was starting a new job again, but it's weird having been here at the top of the totem pole, and then starting all the way down at the bottom again, although I still have the credentials to be in the top of the totem pole. I feel almost useless working in the pharmacy sometimes. I actually had a one-on-one with my pharmacist about that. She's like "You've been here for five days. And you've done a lot more than anybody that's been here for five days. Stop beating yourself up about this. You're gonna get to where you were. It's just having to relearn everything. You're fine. You haven't worked here for six years." I haven't worked there for a long amount of time that it makes sense to not have that knowledge base anymore, but for me that doesn't make sense. Like I feel like I should have it. Like I need it now.

RESEARCHER

In what roles do you feel capable? As a student, employee?

PARTICIPANT 3

That is a question I don't know how to answer at this moment, to be honest. And I feel like that's where a lot of my stress is coming from. Because I'm graduating in December with two degrees. And I feel like I should have this knowledge base that will place me in the professional world in whatever field I choose, whether it be biology or dance and I don't feel like I'm at that level yet. And I know that's just me being hard on myself because, for example, when I took my practical for genetics two days ago. I sat down, I took them exam, I was like "Oh I know this stuff. Oh, I know chi squared. I did this back in college a few years ago" and I was able to recall it. So obviously I know this information, but I haven't convinced myself yet on it. I think it's because I don't know what I want to do next. So, what I'm able to contribute, I don't know. I know that my entire life, I have been an amazing performer. I can perform. I can sing, I can act, I can dance. But also, my entire life I've been told that's something I'm not allowed to do. And I feel like my entire life, it's been like "You can't do this" or "You shouldn't do this." And I feel like, so since I've heard that my entire life. It's just become a mantra, for anything that I feel that I can do or that I want to do that's not the norm or not benefitting other people, other than myself, that it's not something I can do. For example, when I was an English as a Second Language student, because I didn't know English when I was a little kid, I was told the way I spoke was incorrectly. So, I had to go to speech

Peralta, R.P.

therapy and learn to speak English in the proper form without an accent. So, I lost my accent at an early age, and I didn't process this obviously when I was a kid because you're a kid and you don't think "Oh, I'm speaking incorrectly." But when I spoke to a counsellor in the last year, just about things that were going on, like I never felt like I was doing things correctly, and I told them about, when even as a kid I went to speech therapy, and I told him about my mom. "You shouldn't be singing. Singing is not something that's gonna help you. It's not gonna benefit you." Like in high school, I was invited by this huge organization to go to Orlando to sing in this chorus in Disney, but mom denied me that and to this day. I don't hate her, but I still kinda hold it against her. She doesn't know it. So, he was like "So you've always had this, people saying no you can't do this." So, he was telling me, "You should say yes to yourself." And I've been trying to do that like "Oh yeah, I can do that, I can do this." But obviously I'm still dealing with that "No," that bit "NO" over here.

RESEARCHER

Would you say a lot of this is from fear of failure?

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh yeah, definitely. That's definitely a thing. It's not that I'm a perfectionist, because I feel like I don't have the capacity for things, but I think it's because I don't allow myself to have the capacity for things. Like for example, organic chemistry, I took it the first time and I failed it, which most people do, and then the second time I passed it. Then I was like "Why don't you just take organic chemistry two and get the Bachelor of Science?" and I was like "No, I don't think that's gonna be for me." So, I don't think I allow myself sometimes these opportunities because I am scared of failure, I guess, because it makes me feel like lesser than? I mean that's fine. I mean that's normal. I don't know.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 3

Last week I played Outlast for about three or four hours and then last night I started to play Assassin's Creed Origin, but I couldn't really get into it because I had to help my partner with some school stuff. I'm like "Ugh, I just want to game!" Also, Pokémon Go! Outlast, I think I'm at the end, maybe. This game tricks you every time. You're like "Oh yeah, I'm making it, at the end" and then they trap you and bring you back into the insane asylum and you're like "Uh, thanks... I want this to be finished!" I'm really enjoying the game though. It's just, every time I play it, I'm like "Why am I playing this?" Yeah, last week I was just feeling like, numb, to describe the feeling of last week. Everything hit me at once, with the papers, and I had interviews. I just had too much on my plate, and I was just "Okay, I'm just gonna play Outlast." And I needed something else to like, freak me out, just so I could feel something. Haha! Other than the stress. I was just there. I was just a robot running on autopilot, so that brought other feelings back into my body. Oh yeah, I am a living person right now, I'm not a robot! Haha!

RESEARCHER

How many hours with Pokémon Go!?

PARTICIPANT 3

Again, it's like every day in between in breaks, but I was also playing on my 3DS. There's just been a release with Pokémon Sun Marshadow so I had to go to GameStop and grab the event card for that, so I can download it on my 3DS. Each month they have events that you could get special Pokémon if you go to GameStop and grab something from them or you can download it online as well.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about any anxiety you've had in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 3

I'm just saying "Just fuck it" to a lot of things recently, which is a nice feeling because that's not me at all. I'm kinda like, "I need to be attentive to everything" and that's what stresses me out. I've been starting to say that my diligence is my detriment. Just because it's true, I say yes to everything. I say yes to too many things. For example. This Wednesday I have an interview with the dance department to speak regarding the dance department and what I like about it, why I went from minor to major, why I decided to do a double major, opportunities in the city. Things that I should be able to communicate easily about, but when my brain doesn't work properly, I'm not able to communicate these things easily, so. I was sitting in the interview, freaking out, camera in front of me, light over here, light over here, she's asking me questions, and instead of elaborating on "Oh the city has all these opportunities here and there," I'm straightforward answering everything like "Yes, I enjoy being a dance major." What the fuck? Haha! I know how to communicate like a person! But for whatever reason my brain switches off and I'm not able to communicate anymore. And this happens to me, either when extremely tired, which is happening a lot recently, or when I feel surrounded and I just can't focus on anything, and I go into this weird autopilot mode that feel like I'm just a rider in my own body. It's just experiencing everything around me, and responding to people, but in the most short, direct way possible that seems like I have a cue card in front of me and I'm just reading from it. It's just really fucking weird. The interview went

Peralta, R.P.

well. In my mind that's how it felt like it went. I felt like I gave her material, hopefully. They came a few of weeks ago to record us in at of the dance classes and they were all over me with their cameras, following me, looking at my footwork, and I was like "Please do not record my feet! I have terrible footwork." I'm looking at my instructor from across the room, and she and I are friends, and I'm mouthing "What the fuck is going on?" Haha! I emailed her, and I'm like, "Hey," because she had to review the video, "Please do not let them post my biscuits." Haha! And she's like "Honey, don't worry. Your feet are fine, they are not biscuits, but I will make you look great." So, there was that. And then I had a thirteen-hundred-word paper due, but I didn't really have time to do it, so it was literally like during my lunch break, I'd type some. And then I'd stop. I'd bring my laptop to work and then any time there was a break between patients I'd do that. And finally, the last day it was due, which was Wednesday as well, I just sat down and typed up whatever, because it was an argumentative paper, but it had to have research. I wrote poorly. Basically, I did my writing and just threw in citations which is horrible, but that's what I needed to do get the paper through. Haha! I got it in at 11:50pm which it was due at midnight, but I just feel horrible about it because I'm actually really passionate about the topic and I feel like this semester I haven't had any time to really do any research because I feel like I'm just trying to meet deadlines as they're due, instead of having the time to do it. And that's just with work and school. I'm meeting deadlines with work and I'm meeting deadlines with school, and I can't figure out a good way to make it work.

RESEARCHER

Is it just this semester? How much longer are you pushing through all these deadlines?

PARTICIPANT 3

That's exactly what it is. Because I've been doing this every week. I'm like "Oh no, next week I'll be fine because I'll catch up with this thing, this that and the other." But no! Another thing blind sides me and I notice this or another assignment due, and every week I'm doing new things. Either the day they're due or the day before they're due and it kinda sucks because for one of my assignments I can't do that because I have to choreograph something, on location, with other dancers. So now I have to involve other people in my process, which isn't really helpful. I mean, it works for me, barely, but definitely not gonna work for two to four people. I just haven't been sleeping well these past few weeks. But that's just because my partner has been sick, and he's been coughing a lot and keeping me up. I feel like if I were more rested this week I'd be okay.

RESEARCHER

Are you doing something for yourself this weekend?

PARTICIPANT 3

No, I'm gonna do homework. Haha! I'm gonna try to catch up with stuff from next week, so that way I'm not so stressed and I can actually sleep after work. Basically, my day is wake up at 7am, get to campus at 9am to be at class until 3:30pm, to go to work at 4pm, get off around 9:30pm, get home around 10pm, eat dinner, relax for like fifteen minutes, and then do homework until 2am or 3am. And then I repeat that cycle again and again.

RESEARCHER

How often would you say when you were gaming this past week that it was intentional to just cut off from everything else? Has it been every time you've played?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 3

Yup. Definitely.

RESEARCHER

How has gaming impacted your identity?

PARTICIPANT 3

I consider myself a gamer. In my circle of friends, and the way I identify myself, is as a gamer. Growing up in high school, all my friends had PlayStations and Super Nintendos. Those are the people I hung out with, so that that was my community. Those are the people I hung out with. Those are the people I associated myself with. I normally hung out with the gamers or theatre people. It is part of my identity because I've always hung out with these people and played Magic the Gathering as well. So yeah, geeks and gamers.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about playing co-op with others, either online or in the same room.

PARTICIPANT 3

I've never really been a co-op person. I've tried it with Destiny. I really enjoyed it because my friend. He invited me to play Destiny, Taken Queen, I mean King. Haha! Sorry! Taken Queen is what we called it when we played it. Culturally the homosexuals change the name of their games. Haha! It was an interesting experience. I really enjoyed it for the month that I played it. It was cool. It was hanging out with friends, but they weren't there, so that was really weird, but I kinda enjoyed it as well, because I've been more of an introvert recently. It was cool meeting people, hanging out with people that you normally don't hang out with and gaming together. But ever since I was a little kid, I was that one kid who always played his toys by himself. And if somebody were to come play with me I'm like "No! You're ruining my story!" Haha! So that's kinda how I feel about co-op. Haha! I like Player One. Player Two. But too many other players I'll be like "What is going on?" I never realized how much I like to be in charge with things until I stated analysing my behaviours. Like as a kid I played with these toys by myself, or now I'm a manager at my pharmacy and I like to run things a certain way. I never thought of myself as Type A, or manager style, but I guess I am. I listen to some other people, so it'll be fine. I love to collaborate.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your favourite franchises or games and why.

PARTICIPANT 3

I grew up playing Final Fantasy a lot. And I really enjoyed that because of my friends. They were the ones who normally played it and I was like "Oh my god this is so beautiful!" And that's what kinda gets me into the games, is the just art work and the story. So Bioshock, I love that trilogy, it's amazing. And the and, weird. Final Fantasy. Mortal Kombat, I always played that growing up, and I still have MKXL I think is what it's called now. Oh, and then the Mario Karts, but that just because it's fun.

RESEARCHER

Did you play those with other people?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 3

Oh yeah! Definitely! There's Mario Kart and Super Smash Brothers. Oh, and we also have game night! Why am I not mentioning this? Haha! Yeah, we have game nights every, well we do Dungeons and Dragons at least twice a week, on Fridays.

RESEARCHER

How often do you do this?

PARTICIPANT 3

We do it weekly. Oh sorry, so I guess I should have been mentioning that for the previous weeks as well! Haha! So yeah, there's D&D as well. I love it. Our game nights, we have Super Smash Brothers for like an hour or two, and we'll do Mario Kart for an hour or two, and then mortal combat, and then we also have all our arcade machine games too.

RESEARCHER

What are the benefits of your game night?

PARTICIPANT 3

It builds a community within our friends. It's cool to know you have other friends who have similar interests. So, you get to hang out with all these people who you don't normally hang out with outside of school or the bar. It's nice to get out of the bar scene or just seeing them at school. It's just cool hanging out with friends who have similar interests. It's normally like a party we had each season.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about how you acquired all your arcade machines.

PARTICIPANT 3

It started with the Donkey Kong cocktail. My partner got me that for Christmas and it's just spawned from that. He's a collector, like Ariel. Haha! He's not a hoarder! But he'll collect things and become obsessed with them. He did it with arcades machines, but it's all really cool things too. We started getting things little by little through craigslist and auctions and it just spawned into an arcade in our front room. It used to be our old partner's room until he moved out, and then we started moving arcades in there.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

How are you? How was your week?

PARTICIPANT 3

I'm okay. I was downstairs working on my presentation for tomorrow. Rough times. Haha! Presenting always gives me anxiety. Just having to speak in front of an audience does that for me. I'm not sure why. It's really weird, because I can act and be fine on the stage, but when it comes to being me, speaking in front of people, and trying to sound intelligent, it just never fares well. Haha! I have the slides ready and I'm just trying to write my script for it and trying to memorise my script for tomorrow, but I just keep on messing up. Last time I did a presentation I did really well, supposedly, like in my mind I think I did horribly, but I got like a 3.7 out of 4, which is really good. And everybody said that it was a very entertaining presentation. But I didn't see that, so I'm freaking out for tomorrow, so I may end up taking a Xanax tomorrow so I'm not having a panic attack on stage, in front of my peers. And then I have to go to work that night as well trying to not continue that ride of anxiety. This is for bacteriology. It's a senior capstone for my biology class. We're presenting, basically, bacteria presentations, and mine is on how this probiotic can reduce anxiety related behaviours and help with gut disruption. It's actually really cool stuff. I enjoy the topic. It's just having to speak about these things that I don't fully understand intelligently. It's what kinda of trips me up. But yeah, just fake it until you make it I guess.

RESEARCHER

What else has caused you anxiety in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 3

There's also my choreography class. Right now, I should be in week two of choreographing my piece that's due in three weeks. But I haven't found any dancers for my piece, so I'm two weeks behind in choreographing this piece. Week one was supposed to be go and scout our areas. It's a choreography in context class, so basically, we go out in public and find areas that inspire us to make movement. And for this class it shows a couple of areas for my final. And we have to use other dancers. My first piece was a solo and I was fine with that. I performed it myself. The second piece we have to use other dancers, at least one other dancer with our self, or more. I wanted to do this piece in a building with a beautiful structure that hangs inside this skyscraper of this office building. It's this beautiful suspended structure. Oh, and it also has to be audience engaged as well. So, we have to have community or audience engagement and I was gonna use choreography that the people of this people gave me. What does this statue represent to you? What movement can you give me that you see in this structure? Also, what is a movement you normally do at work that you feel is redundant? Like holding a phone, and I can turn that into choreography, or typing. Putting on a tie. Putting on a jacket. Things like that that relates to work and the artwork in their building. I wanted to do the stuff in there, however, I did not receive permission to perform in that space. So was like "Fuck. Now I need to find another place." And I did. But it's outside. And it's gonna be December 16th while we perform in the middle of winter, outside, in the cold, at another structure. And I don't have dancers so. Everybody that I tried to communicate with has not been able to meet the times when the performances are due. That's really stressing me the fuck out. And all my homework and trying to make sure that I do what I can to graduate. Because at this point I just need to get by and pass everything. And I'm at the point where things are coming at me and I'm prioritizing which one is more important, which one weighs more, and I'm just doing those first. And

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then things that don't have as much weight to my grade are just, not falling to the wayside, but they are receiving less attention. I'm just turning them in just, so I can get a grade.

RESEARCHER

How have you been managing all of this?

PARTICIPANT 3

Other than feeling like I'm going crazy? Haha! It was really funny because I've noticed at least with this week, before I even decide to touch homework. Once I come home from class or from work, I've been playing Assassin's Creed just to kinda like, ease stress from everything. I'm not gonna think about anything right now other than Assassin's Creed. I'm not sure if it's the To Do lists. I'm not sure what it is with Assassin's Creed. I feel like it prepares me for what I have to do for my homework, because Assassin's Creed has lists of missions and tasks and side quests you have to do. So, it's a list you have to complete. So that translates to my real life. Oh, I have this list of homework I have to complete so, if I can do it within the game and have success in the game, then I'm like "Oh, it's not that bad in my real life as well." So, I can do these little lists. And I can make lists for myself and realise "Oh okay. This isn't so bad. I have these five things, not these three hundred things and it's really only five things." So, in Assassin's Creed style, I'll do the thing that's either closest or easiest in the aspect of my homework. I do that one that's easiest or the one that's due sooner. So, I do my lists that way as well.

RESEARCHER

About how many hours of Assassin's Creed have you played in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 3

I want to say maybe six. It just came out Friday. I played it a lot. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about gaming after you've done it, when you know you've a long list of things to do?

PARTICIPANT 3

I feel good. I feel less worried about the things coming up after I've done it. I can't really explain why it is. And maybe it is that feeling of accomplishment. "Oh cool, I finished this. Or a part of this. Maybe now I can do this." Maybe that's what it is, I'm not sure. But I feel less stressed about the tasks that are ahead of me. I don't know. I know that dancing does something different for me. It actually physically makes me feel good. I'm not sure what it is with gaming that, I can't really describe how, it just makes things better for me. Like I know one day I just felt like I was going crazy, and I started doing this one moving, just dancing, and my partner walked up and was like "What are you doing?" and I'm like "I don't know..." Haha! But this is how I feel I needed to move. And now I feel a little bit better.

RESEARCHER

Have you played anything else?

PARTICIPANT 3

Yes, Pokémon Go! obviously. I play that every day on campus. I spent more time on campus this week. Oh, it was Halloween. It was the last day of the event for the ghost Pokémon, so I walked around and just caught all the ghosts. And then unlocked the new Pokémon on my Pokédex so like "Yes! New points! New Pokémon on my Pokédex!" I felt like Ash catching them and I wish I had the hat that turned

Peralta, R.P.

sideways and give a peace sign. It made me happy to achieve new things within the game, because sometimes the game is just monotonous, and you don't feel like you're excelling in it because there's not new Pokémon around, but they released new ones. So, it was exciting, and it made me feel good after a long stressful day on campus.

RESEARCHER

How long did it take you to catch everything needed?

PARTICIPANT 3

I didn't catch everything I needed unfortunately, but that day, because normally I play it between classes or walking to my car, walking to the classes, but that day I was just walking around campus and hitting stops. It wasn't like a transient gaming. It was actually me walking around and doing things.

RESEARCHER

About how many hours in the week?

PARTICIPANT 3

Maybe 6 hours this week of Pokémon. I should look at my log. Haha! I mean Pokémon logs your hours.

RESEARCHER

Are you happy with the new Assassin's Creed? If so, what keeps your attention?

PARTICIPANT 3

Assassin's Creed is essentially the same game over and over, but that's what I like about it as well. I just wish that it didn't stray so much from the original storyline, from the original three. They had this whole theme going on with these protohumans and they steered away from them. They're not really talking about them anymore which kinda upsets me. But the gaming for this, the graphics are beautiful Egypt is amazing. It makes me want to go to Egypt. I want to go on top of a pyramid and slide down it. I don't think that's possibly. Haha! The fighting mechanics are weird, but I'm still really early in the game, so I can't really tell you why I dislike it, because there's things I dislike in each of the games, but I end up liking it later. But yeah, the fighting mechanics are weird because you have to target a character, and it reminds me of Kingdom Hearts, and I hate the mechanics of Kingdom Hearts.

RESEARCHER

How does that make you feel when you realise there's something you don't like about a game?

PARTICIPANT 3

I'm not the one to develop it so I can't much say in that. I don't feel like I've ever quit a game because I don't like a certain game mechanic. At least with Assassin's Creed their storyline is good enough that it can keep me involved. Mass Effect is the same way. It'll make me play the game less if I get a new game and then I go back to it and then I have to relearn the game mechanics which is just annoying, but it's not gonna make me stop playing the game. I feel like the only game that I stopped playing was Fallout 4, and it was just because it was too open world, and having to deal with communities, and build communities and all this other stuff. I was just, "I don't want to do this shit. I just want to see where this story progresses." Because I don't want to build different colonies of people and Sim City. Sim City basically. I didn't want to play Sim City. Haha!

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Are you part of any gaming communities?

PARTICIPANT 3

No. I'm on a few gaming communities on Facebook, like Bears be Gaming and stuff like that but that's really about it. I'm not really involved in it. It's really just to see, and check out bears, or other gamers. Haha! It's also nice to know there's a community of gay men who, actually a sub community of gay men who are interested in gaming as well. So, it's nice to have that. It's nice to know there's a group like that out there.

RESEARCHER

Do you know anyone who exclusively dates other gamers?

PARTICIPANT 3

I think my friend Sean's that way. I can see it being like that, because as I get older, the little things, like gaming or being a naturalist, little things like that have become bigger things, these are the things that really matter to me. So, I can see how those can be deal breakers for some people. Because a lot of people you do relate with try to relate with gaming and whatever else you're interested in. Like me, I love performing, I love going to shows. And if somebody doesn't like doing that, it's gonna be really hard to be with that person.

RESEARCHER

How do you think the information shared with us could be beneficial for anyone in terms of anxiety and gaming?

PARTICIPANT 3

I feel like a lot of people are alone with mental illness. That's one thing. "Oh, I'm alone in feeling this way." But there's tonnes and tonnes of people experiencing anxiety. Actually, in my research 18% of the American adult population experiences anxiety annually. In my research and also experiencing life with anxiety it's expensive. It's expensive to buy medications. I'm on three different types of medications. It's expensive to see a therapist. It's expensive to see a psychiatrist. To receive your medications. I was spending like \$80 a visit each week to see my counsellor. And then each month I'd see my psychiatrist, which is another \$80 on top of that, if my insurance covered it. And my prescriptions are \$15 each, so that's \$45 a month. And just becomes very, very costly. And if there's a way to alleviate these symptoms through gaming then that would be fantastic. If people are able to understand that gaming is able to reduce these symptoms, then help alleviate that stress then that would be great. I never really thought about how gaming does that for me. I never did that until you started mentioning that. I'm like "Oh yeah, I've gamed my entire life." Because probably my entire my entire life, I've experienced levels of anxiety, be it from my childhood to adolescence to now, I've always gamed. It's always been a part of my life. And I feel in retrospect part of that reason is because of the anxiety that I've experienced.

RESEARCHER

How specifically would you use your life experiences to help others?

PARTICIPANT 3

Peralta, R.P.

With me, I have Social Anxiety Disorder and Generalised Anxiety Disorder, GAD. If gaming was used as a treatment it would have to be individualised. I would tell them how I like lists. I would mention how Assassin's Creed has that list of things to do. And by completing tasks in a game it helps me with that. I would also explain how the theory of escapism. You're able to escape your life into a videogame for X amount of time and being in another reality kinda helps you cope with things you're not able to cope with in your own life. For example, Outlast. In my life I'm not experiencing a guy that's trying to murder me every five seconds, but anxiety kinda feels that way. It feels like your skin is constantly being ripped apart in any situation that you're in. And for me that happens in social situations. I feel like I constantly have people yelling at me and I feel like I'm constantly surrounded by people of really close proximity and I have to be aware of what I say, how I say it, how I look, how I think. Everything. I have to be aware of every little aspect of myself. Otherwise I'll have a panic attack. So, with Outlast I feel like if I'm able to escape into this videogame and successfully beat this monster, this scary person, this thing that constantly is after you, then I can kinda do that in my own life. It kinda rewires the brain in a way and I feel like, I know I'm not in the situation and I get fully immersed in there, so it feels like I'm in there and if I can do it in this videogame then I can do it in real life.

RESEARCHER

Would it be helpful to have videogame-based counselling or therapy for people?

PARTICIPANT 3

I think so, yeah. There's this videogame, Until Dawn. It's like a Choose Your Own Adventure. Turn to page 26 in videogame form. In the videogame itself it has a psychologist, which is really interesting, and he analyses your character and your worth and you have to select, "from these pictures which one do you like the most?" It's very silly, but the mechanism is interesting. I select this one, then "Which one is your fear? Snakes or spiders?" and later in the game a spider crawls across the screen and you're like "Holy shit!" Haha! But it uses this medium of having a psychologist within the game because it's about this guy who goes to a psychologist. I found it really interesting, because I found it somewhat easy to just communicate with this artificial intelligence. It would be like "Yes, this is my fear for this, or I like this, or this is why this scares me." And it was within a game, but I was answering honestly, which I feel like with most things, human nature is to self-preserve, so in a video game you have less of that feel of self-preservation, because you can open up in a videogame. So, if you're able to provide some kinda counselling through a game that would be beneficial. I think I told you in our first session how, like when I would come home stressed out, my partner would be like "Just go play Flower for 30 minutes." And I'd put on Flower and it calmed me down and then I'd be happy, and he's like "See, that's much better!" Yeah, I think it would definitely benefit people.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits for the past week. Specifically, what you've played and how long you've played each game.

PARTICIPANT 4

I switch between games quite often. But this week I've been playing Dragon Age Inquisition, which is not a great game, but I don't like to pay for a game and not complete it, you know what I mean? So, I'm slogging through that at the moment to see if I can just get that done. So, I've just basically been playing that. I play, at least once a day and I know it's only Tuesday but the past weeks, couple of weeks, I've been playing it.

RESEARCHER

About how many hours would you say?

PARTICIPANT 4

For that game alone, this week alone, probably, maybe seven hours, roughly.

RESEARCHER

Are there any other games that you're working on right now?

PARTICIPANT 4

I don't have loads of games because there's just nothing out at the moment that I really want. I'm waiting for a game to come out in January, but until then I just mess about on games that I have. So, I play Titanfall 2, Halo 5, I think that's pretty much it.

RESEARCHER

Tell me more about how you feel about Dragon Age.

PARTICIPANT 4

The gameplay itself, like the game mechanics, are quite boring in a sense that when you fight things it doesn't take any tremendous amount of skill to beat anything. It's just everything seems a bit spongy in terms of, "You can't kill me," but even though I'm a high level in the game I still struggle to kill it, well I don't struggle, I mean it takes a very long time, even the normal basic enemies take quite a long time so the boss fights are even worse. You can spend up to ten minutes, which doesn't seem like a long time, but when you're in one area basically just doing the same thing over and over for about ten minutes it is quite boring. But the actual, the storyline and the law to the game I find quite interesting, because it's a nice spin on dark fantasy. And it's not really conventional in terms of its use of the fantasy races, like elves and dwarves, etcetera. And the overarching story is good and the overarching gameplay by the meta game in terms of you are the leader of this institution, and you're helping to save the world, and the things that you choose to do, and you can see them happening. I like that small attention to detail, because not everything is instant, some things are, and it's a shame, but not everything is instant when you do it, and that's nice. I feel like my disappointment with this game is because I played the Witcher 3 over summer and it has become my favourite game ever and I would argue this regularly that it is probably the best RPG/single player game ever made, just because of how in depth it is, and everything

Peralta, R.P.

matters. Whereas in Dragon Age it doesn't really matter what you do because it's always the same at the end, kinda.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about Witcher 3 and why you liked it so much.

PARTICIPANT 4

Just the fact that everything mattered. Every time I messed up, you did mess up. All the characters have good progression, it's like a book. Everything's about character development and it gets to the point where if you mess up, people will die and affects the overarching story, your choices. Which is quite massive. Even small things, it works it in a way of what would happen in real life of how you talk to people and then they go off and talk to other people. It's about those connections that affect certain people and I like that. Where as in, say Dragon Age or you get Skyrim, or any other game where you make a choice normally it's about what you say that matters rather than what you say to someone and what they do with that information.

RESEARCHER

That's good to hear. That it's not a game that you simply grind, which I've experienced with Destiny.

PARTICIPANT 4

See, I hate Destiny for that reason. The first one burnt me really badly. I didn't even buy it, my friend bought it, because we have game share on Xbox. I would play it and I was just very bored with it very early on. I was just so thankful that I didn't buy it. Because basically in my opinion it should be called The Grind because it's just, you do the same thing over and over. You just go to the place and shoot the guys and that's it. It doesn't matter at all. And then they brought out the second one and I was like... It just depressed me because I feel like Bungie made Halo and Halo's brilliant, even though it is another go-to-the-place-shoot-the-people and it's linear, which is fine, but they do it well. And Bungie made other games that are really good. But Destiny in my opinion is just terrible.

RESEARCHER

Are there certain parts of games that you enjoy playing the most?

PARTICIPANT 4

I like the multiplayer games, but I am a big sucker for, I've found myself recently, when I was younger it was about multiplayer games, but at the moment I find myself, I really enjoy a story driven game. Especially when I was younger I liked the multiplayer games and I still do because I still like to play. I haven't made as many friends at uni as I would have hoped to. So, I stay in touch with friends from home, especially my best friend. He goes to Manchester, where I'm from. So, we talk daily, whereas if I didn't have an Xbox we wouldn't. So, I do play the multiplayer. But he's a semi-pro Halo player. He plays Halo 5, he goes to the events, he wins money for competing in these events and doing well. Whereas I hate the multiplayer of Halo, especially since the community now on Halo is quite a big problem because you get people that don't play games regularly and just come on it to mess about, which is me, basically, and then me and my group of players would go into a game on multiplayer and play against people like my best friend and their groups. It's just the skill gap is so big that it makes it very unenjoyable, for both sides really. Because as much as it's great running around and killing a bunch of people doing really well in a match, at the same times there's no challenge, and my best friend knows he's not gonna get better

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by killing people that have no chance against him. So, the Halo 5 community has died in a way which, again, has affected one of the reasons why I don't like it anymore. But also, since there are such fast changes in the Halo franchise I only stick with them now because of the story, just to see where they take it. So, I do enjoy multiplayer games but there hasn't been one in quite a while that I thought "Oh I want to buy that. I want everyone else to buy that." Except Monster Hunter, which is a game that I played as a child and they've revamped it and they redid a bunch of the mechanics and it just looks excellent. And I've seen loads of gameplay for it and it's a multiplayer game, but it's got a story this time which is the first time in the franchise's history. Which you can play with friends, but you can play alone. And even though that game is quite the grind, but it's not to the point of Destiny in terms of, there's three pillars in the game. And that is, you go out, maybe with friends, maybe alone, kill a monster, carve the monster up, use its pieces to then make weapons or armour and then progress that way, which I feel is different from Destiny. I know go and kill things to get weapons, but I feel it's different because it's the parts of the weapons you collect, rather than you get a full weapon and that's it. You get a passive small percentile increase, whereas you can get a better weapon completely. And it's very stylized, the game, and I like how it looks. As opposed to Halo, which sacrifices a lot of its gameplay just to look pretty. But at the same time, in my opinion, is in the wrong because it just looks clunky. All at the surfaces of the armour it looks good, but at the same time, you just look chunky. And there's no real variety.

RESEARCHER

Is there anything you're experiencing in university that's causing any anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 4

My only anxiety at uni at the moment is the fact that I still haven't settled in. Coming back to second year, I still feel like I'm not at uni. Because in second year, I was speaking to my support tutor and she was saying second year is a strange time because obviously lectures focus on first years and third year, not exclusively obviously. But because the first years have to settle in and understand how universities works and what they need to do. And third years they're getting their degree. They're getting as much help as they require. So, second year's kinda adrift. It's like being in year ten almost, the sense that year elevens are doing their GCSEs and year nines are picking their options, so year ten doesn't really matter. It's quite weird because I know deadlines are gonna start coming up soon. But because a lot of them are in January, I feel like I need more time. I need to match how I did last year to this year in terms of the marking gets harder and I want to get the same grades. Because they're in January I'm very much just drifting through. I go to my lectures and often I try to do the reading, but I don't see the point in it, so I don't do it. And I do some of the little tasks that the lecturer's set, but it's never anything substantial enough to think that I'm at uni. I kinda just drift through it, and that's what's giving me anxiety is the, I'm gonna drift about and then I'm soon gonna be hit by a wave of anxiety because your deadlines are in a week now. You've got to do it now. So, I kinda want to get myself in gear, but I don't know how.

RESEARCHER

How are you managing that?

PARTICIPANT 4

That anxiety kinda comes on towards the beginning and ends of the day. In first year, when deadlines were around I used to wake up and be struck by anxiety and gripped by it because I knew my deadline was coming up and I had not done a substantial amount of work and I'd have to do it the night before and stay in the library until three or four o'clock in the morning. Which I'd be happy to do because I'm gonna get things done. It was just the anxiety of if I'm gonna stay up until three or four o'clock in the

morning. And it is my fault because I have left the majority of work to do it the night before. If I give it in and I get below 40% on that piece of work, then it's gonna really upset me. Whereas this year I wake up and I'm not in the grip of it, but I just get like "Oh, you should really be doing something. You haven't really done anything since you came back," which I know I haven't and then before I go to bed it's the same thought "Well you haven't really done anything. What's happening? You need to sort out doing stuff." And I know that I need to do that. I just don't, because I forget honestly. But otherwise when I'm not forgetting it does grip me. I just don't do anything. The only way I can control the anxiety is either if I forget it or spending time with friends, because I live with my girlfriend so being around her pretty much all day most days when I'm not in uni makes me very calm. But I will come home, and I will play on my Xbox most, if not all days of the week. She goes to work on Saturday and Sunday and I have Tuesdays and Fridays off most of the time. So, I have basically four days a week where I'll play on Xbox the majority of the day, which I know is kinda sad because I'm at uni. And I should really be doing things. But at the moment I'm just quite content doing it. It's not even necessarily to manage my anxiety, just because I'm quite happy. Yeah. I'm quite good at denying myself playing on my Xbox. It doesn't come to the point where I will pick it over doing things. So that's one of the reasons I do all of my work in the library because I can prevent myself from going on my Xbox. Because it makes me focus on my work. I realise I didn't do as well on my A Levels. At the time I didn't have an Xbox and I had a brief period from two years all during 6th for where I didn't actually use a console very often, if at all, because I didn't have the Xbox One I had a, Xbox 360 whilst everyone was getting the Xbox One and stuff. So, I would spend a lot of my time watching anime or Netflix or watching Game of Thrones, etcetera, and I realise that was the downfall of my A Levels is because I'm quite a bad procrastinator and I can't motivate myself generally. So, my method of dealing with that is that I'm quite good at cutting myself off from things. If I need to do work, I will put myself in a setting that forces me to do so. So, I go to the library because there's nothing there that can distract me, including my girlfriend, my phone because I'd often put it in my bag. Or sometimes I haven't even taken it with me completely. I'll put it in my bag, leave it at home. I remove all the distractions.

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INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

How are you?

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah. I'm okay. The past two days I've tried to go into uni, but I've been quite anxious for one reason or another. I don't understand why really. It's literally just, because it's reading week, I just wanted to go to uni and catch up on my reading and towards the end of the week I wanted to read for my upcoming assignment that's due. Yesterday I got up early, like half seven, which is my normal time of getting up for a uni day. I was gonna get to uni half eight, nine o'clock and do work until seven. I just got up and I was lying in bed and was pretty much having just an argument with myself because I was really anxious about going into uni. I don't know why. I think it was just to do with the "I think I've got so much work to do, even though I know I haven't got so much work to do." And then the other side of the argument was "It's just reading." It doesn't matter too much. It does matter, but I mean like it doesn't matter to the extent that I'm working myself up. I was quite upset about it, so I stayed at home yesterday. And today I stayed at home because, well partially because I needed to do our interview, but also because I, again, I just can't face it. I just can't face gonna uni. My girlfriend was trying to encourage me today to go in with her. And I was gonna go that and then possibly skype you from inside the uni but part of me was just like "No, I just didn't want to do it." So yeah.

RESEARCHER

So, this is the third day of feeling this anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 4

No, second.

RESEARCHER

So, this is essentially a form of a paralysis, right?

PARTICIPANT 4

A little bit, yeah.

RESEARCHER

You get so overwhelmed you can't do anything?

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah.

RESEARCHER

Would you say this happens often? Perhaps with other aspects of your life? Or is it just university?

PARTICIPANT 4

It's just work really. Workload at uni. It's happened since my A Levels. The first year I thought I could breeze through. I don't know why I thought that, but I didn't do as well, so second year I got quite anxious about it. I still didn't do well so the first year of uni I made sure I did well. But this year, obviously, with it being more difficult, I had anxieties last year, but this year it's worse. And it's

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happened earlier. Last year I'd get anxious about things, but I kinda overcome it within a couple of minutes. Whereas towards the end of the year it was quite debilitating. And now it's the same as last year, which I didn't really want.

RESEARCHER

How have you managed this in the past and how are you managing it this time?

PARTICIPANT 4

Just doing things to take my mind off it or thinking about it and being rational about it. So normally I'll just spend some time with my girlfriend. We'll talk, or we'll have some food. We'll just watch some shows and stuff and I'll be with friends. Or I'll go onto my Xbox and talk to my friends online. And when there is absolutely no one around then I'm forced to rationalise it, which works but I feel like my anxiety is almost becoming immune to rationalisation. And therefore, it makes my rationalisation a bit more extreme. And I lose touch with the rationalisation if you get what I mean. That's what I do. But it's becoming less and less effective. Often this level of anxiety does sort itself out. I'm less upset today than I was yesterday. So, I feel like tomorrow I'll probably be able to go onto uni. But it is that two-day period that I'm worried about because I don't want that to extend to like three days, four days. And then it becomes a week. Work will carry on backing up. Reading will carry on backing up. And everything outside of uni will also get backed up because I'm too anxious to do anything but stay at home.

RESEARCHER

When you're at home, are you doing anything for yourself to help yourself feel better?

PARTICIPANT 4

There's the rationalising again. Because my girlfriend isn't in currently I'll entertain myself on my Xbox or, I ate before. I had breakfast, and I made myself a somewhat healthier breakfast because I feel like that motivates me slightly. Nothing massive. And I'll just catch up on things, other aspects of my life that I haven't been paying attention to because of uni work. So, for example I woke up this morning and after my girlfriend had left I had decided that it's probably best if I do stay in. Because if I do go to uni I'm just gonna sit there and be anxious about it rather than do anything. I watched, I caught up on all the YouTube videos and series and stuff that I watch.

RESEARCHER

About how much time did you spend doing that?

PARTICIPANT 4

Maybe an hour and a half, two hours.

RESEARCHER

Let's switch to games. What have you played and how many hours each in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 4

I didn't play any Xbox yesterday. Because I decided that I'd spend the day with my girlfriend. And today I've played about an hour. I bought Halo Wars 2, because I've wanted it since it came out, but not desperately enough to pay the full price. So, it was on deal, so I bought it last week. And I've just been playing through that. I've been in between playing that, and I've also played Halo 5 a bit. I played a tiny

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bit of Dragon Age at the end of last week. Halo I probably played about an hour. Dragon Age I probably played about four hours.

RESEARCHER

Do you see yourself as a capable student?

PARTICIPANT 4

I did well last year. I'm happy with my grade last year. So, I feel like I can continue to do well. People self-sabotage because they don't think they're good enough and I feel like that affects a lot of my education. I feel like last year will be not only my baseline, but also the top of what I can attain, which is upsetting because, obviously, with each year the marking would get harsher and the assignments get harder and so on, and the workload will get more frequent. So, I feel like I may not do as well.

RESEARCHER

Do you feel like you've peaked in the last year?

PARTICIPANT 4

Almost, yeah.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you fear failure?

PARTICIPANT 4

In this setting I feel like I would I do, sorry. But in a lot of other things I don't really care. I'm quite, not haphazard, or reckless, but I don't really get bothered about a lot of other things. I think that may be because I don't commit myself to a lot of things. But also, because I generally try to approach things quite calm and chill and don't invest as much of myself in a lot of aspects of my life. Since I was a kid I've had quite bad anxiety, so I really don't want to get invested in something like that that and then obviously have another thing to add to how anxious I am generally.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your history with anxiety.

PARTICIPANT 4

When I was younger after my mum and stepdad split up I was quite angry and anxious as well. So, I had to go to counselling for that for a couple of months. And then after that we moved around a lot and my mum got a new boyfriend and I didn't really like him and eventually we moved in with him despite me saying I didn't want to. So, I had to live in a house with someone that I didn't enjoy the company of. So, he would come home from work and he would come and sit down and try and engage with me, but I really didn't like him, so I would just leave. So that was a lot of anxiety because I didn't feel welcome in my own home. And then going on from there I developed OCD and quite prominent germ phobia, to the point where I couldn't touch people's skin unless I trusted them enough. I couldn't touch door handles or stuff like that. Often, I wouldn't even wash my own hands because I was scared of germs being in the water, so I'd only use certain taps and sanitizing creams. That was only with me for a year, but it was quite shocking. When I went into 6th form it calmed down. It's always been there. I've had the intrusive thoughts since year nine probably, and they were a part of it really, not even the germaphobia. It was just the intrusive thoughts really. And then I went into 6th form and I did some more counselling for my

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OCD just to see if I could get rid of what was left of it. I also have an anxiety induced heart condition that's been semi-diagnosed because my rib cage bones don't properly connect to my breastplate so when my heartrate increases, mainly during times of anxiety, I get chest pains, which obviously makes it a lot worse because I'm quite the hypochondriac, so I just think I'm dying every time. I went through 6th form and I got an anxiety and partial depression diagnoses. I went into uni with that and applied for disability allowance on that as well as my dyspraxia. So, I have a tutor for both; one for my anxiety, one for my dyspraxia I see once a week. I also see a third unofficial support tutor once a week as well to help me manage, not only my anxiety, but just generally my uni life.

RESEARCHER

Would you say that support is successful?

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah! But at the same time, no, because my official anxiety support tutor. I speak to her, and she's lovely, but it's always s the same thing that I get when I speak to counsellors, which isn't an attack on counsellors. But I tell them about my life and I get upset about it and it does help but then the feelings always come back anyway.

RESEARCHER

Has anyone worked with you on how to manage when those feelings come back?

PARTICIPANT 4

My tutor tries to help me with things like being more positive and whatnot. And it does help, but overall, I still see myself getting upset about the same things. Or random things completely, because I've been through so much counselling. Because I want to be a counsellor myself I analyse all this stuff as well as my general day to day actions and so every time go in to talk about these things people are always like "Oh, you're very self-aware. That's always a great thing." Which is nice, but I think I do it too much, because that's why I get anxious. I think it also doesn't help that a lot of the issues that affect me still prevail in my life. Sometimes I, not necessarily brush it off, but I'll use it to the point where it inspires me. For a long time of my life I've lived in poverty. Class differences and stuff like that upset me and I used to get a lot of stick in 6th form, in high school, because I'd point this out, because all my friends from home are middle class and mainly upper middle class as well. So, they could do whatever they want and then I wouldn't be able to because I had no money. And it upsets me because not only can I not do things, but my mum can't either. And they never used to understand that, and I used to always get into arguments with people because they're like "Oh you politicise everything!" Often it wouldn't be about politics. It would just be the fact that they don't understand the difference being able to do something and having to save so you can eat.

RESEARCHER

What role has gaming had through everything?

PARTICIPANT 4

I'm not fully aware of it. It's one of the reasons why I took part in this study. It's not only because is it interesting but in certain aspects of my life in terms of "I am a big gamer" and I also have anxiety. But also, because I've never properly thought about how I use gaming, if I use gaming at all, or if I do, then why I do. So, I'm not really sure. I think a big part of the reason I play games is maybe as an escape, but also because I like to stay in contact with my best friend who is a big constant in my life and because

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we've grown up together and we're practically like brothers. We are from the same situations really, maybe some differences. But his mum and my mum are quite reckless in certain aspects. They both have mental health problems themselves. And I very much think he uses gaming as an escape, and because he wants it really, hence why he's gotten so good at Halo to the point where he can go semi-pro, etcetera. He very much lives in the same circumstances I do in that his mum has a mental illness and they live in poverty and he has a girlfriend that he spends a lot of time with to the point where they've pretty much moved in together. I feel like I use it in a same way in that it inspires me. Because it lets my imagination run, but it's not about negative things. It's about new ideas and it's about law and universes that aren't our own and I don't have to pay attention to certain bad aspects, because I can, not run away from being in denial by imagining myself in a different world, but by imagining myself in a different world it makes me want to write a story, but I'm not creative enough to do it. It just kinda stays in my head. And that's why I think I like gaming, it's because a lot of the things that I enjoy, or that I like to imagine, will be in these games. And so, it's almost like a pseudo-I'm-playing-in-my-imagination, which is really weird. I don't know how to explain it.

RESEARCHER

Have you ever set up a reward system for when you accomplish your goals?

PARTICIPANT 4

I've had previous reward systems in my life before and they haven't worked. But also, because once I know about things, often they don't work. And I've learned a lot about reward systems learning about psychology and counselling mainly and being in counselling myself. If I know what the end goal is I pretty much self-sabotage myself and I always think I outplay myself in terms of, I see the reward and I desensitise myself towards it. To the point where I don't care about it anymore.

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INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

Tell me how your week has been.

PARTICIPANT 4

I did reading on Thursday and Friday and then Saturday and Sunday I didn't do much. Yesterday I went to uni and then I came home and then played on my Xbox for a bit. And then last night went out.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about going in Thursday and Friday?

PARTICIPANT 4

It was okay. Thursday, I didn't do as much reading as I did on Friday. Just because I couldn't motivate myself. I felt fine doing it.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about any anxiety you've experienced in the past week. University related or anything else.

PARTICIPANT 4

Generally, after I went in on Thursday I haven't had much. Although on Saturday and Sunday part of me was overcome with anxiety, like for just a minute at a time, at random points in the day worrying about random things and then sometimes worrying about my deadlines piling up.

RESEARCHER

How did you manage that on Saturday?

PARTICIPANT 4

Went on my Xbox. I also did a little bit of exercise. We have weights at home. I'm trying to get fitter, or lose weight rather, so me and my girlfriend bought some weights and I just use those and watch YouTube videos on different exercises to do. I didn't do it for very long honestly, but still, for probably about ten, fifteen minutes. It varies during the week. I try to do it at least twice a week. My target is to do it for 25 minutes, but sometimes I don't reach that because I'm quite feeble. I've read a couple of times over now, I don't know if it's true but, 25 minutes is supposed to be a day or several days a week. I'm trying to start off small, but 25 minutes a day is supposed, to be quite beneficial. I felt better, but at the same time, after every time I do an exercise I always feel, not down, but a little bit embarrassed because again, I'm quite feeble so I can't do much.

RESEARCHER

Tell me what you've played in the past week and how long for each one.

PARTICIPANT 4

I finally completed Dragon Age. That was relieving. I played that for about four hours. And then then I've played Halo 5 for about an hour or two. Halo Wars for about four hours. And Titanfall 2 for about two hours or an hour. And then Metal Gear Solid for an hour again, or two hours.

RESEARCHER

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Tell me about how you felt while you were playing any of those.

PARTICIPANT 4

I felt alright. I don't really like playing Halo, like I've said before. I only play it when my friends aren't doing anything super serious because I just don't enjoy it otherwise. Halo Wars is a good game but it's quite hard, so I was trying to get around the learning curve with my friend. Obviously, I've said Dragon Age is quite the slog. The story's nice though. I was happy I finished it because the story was nice. Meal Gear Solid, I like it. I think it's, graphically it's amazing. Story wise it's a bit random and a bit weird, but I like it. But it's a stealth game and it's quite intense. And I find sometimes when I play it I have a little bit of anxiety when I play it. I don't know why.

RESEARCHER

Has any of your gaming intentionally to get your mind off things?

PARTICIPANT 4

I feel like none of it really has been to take my mind off things. I don't know, subconsciously it may be, but in thinking about before I go on games hasn't really been to take my mind off of anything.

RESEARCHER

Tell me how to plan and organize to achieve something in either work or school.

PARTICIPANT 4

I don't know. I plan for things. I put a lot of things on my calendar. I make what my support tutor calls a wizard list. Not very often, but sometimes before I do an assignment or just before I'm doing certain things I'll list the things that I have to do before that thing. And then I'll try to space it out over the coming days, weeks, months, etcetera. So, I use that. Often my organisation goes wrong because I procrastinate quite heavily. And it's not even just work stuff, uni stuff or anything like that. I procrastinate random things. I think my girlfriend would back that honestly, because often when I say I'll set off to somewhere and I'll always get to a time and be like "Oh, you can do it in five more minutes." Or if I go to meet her I'll think I have enough time to get the bus and I'll just do something else and I'll miss the bus because I procrastinated it completely.

RESEARCHER

How do you deal with that after you've done it?

PARTICIPANT 4

Sometimes I don't seem to learn from it and that's the problem I face the mostly because there have been times in the past where when I'm at home and, using the example of seeing my girlfriend, she lives 45 minutes away by bus and the bus is quite regular. So, I'm like "Oh I've got enough time" and then I'll go, and something will happen on the way or I'll be slowed down because of traffic or a crossing getting to the bus stop. And then the bus will go and then I can't get that bus, so I have to faff about and get three different busses instead. I always feel guilty about that because obviously then I'm late to see my girlfriend. But it's also with things like putting work off for one more day or putting reading off for one more day. Or doing chores that's quite a big one. When I do do my chores I just normally get them all done. But sometimes I'm quite easily, if something comes up, or if someone were to say anything, then I'd just drop it. I'm quite easily pushed towards not doing it.

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RESEARCHER

How do you organise your strategy when it comes to gaming?

PARTICIPANT 4

I think I've mentioned before that I really enjoy strategy games and grand strategy games. Even though I'm not the best at them I generally employ the same method of playing strategy games. Even first-person shooters, if you have to think about it normally, I'm quite a defensive player. My best friend actually calls me a turtle when I play strategy games because I'll just make some sort of defence and it will be quite strong, but I won't use it to take any territory or if I'm play FPS I won't push out into an area. I'll take my area and stay, and it's not necessarily, like our people would refer to it as camping, but I'll designate myself some spots and I'll move between them on a FPS. Whereas on a strategy game I'll just make sure I've got some sort of defence and then the rest of my resources would be spent on making my future units or future forces, future attack, whatever, as strong as possible. Which in strategy games doesn't help me that much because it can take quite a while. I play Supreme Commander on my laptop, I did over summer. The missions are quite long anyway, but because I turtle it takes like double the time. You'll get an hour-long mission and I'll take like two hours to do it, which isn't that great.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about that?

PARTICIPANT 4

Playing strategy games, because my laptop isn't that good, I can't join any larger, more recent multiplayer strategy games so I have to play them off to my own. Halo Wars 2 is a strategy game which I like because I can play it with my friends. In terms of being a single player strategy game, it doesn't help me because it's often a mistake to turtle in certain missions. And sometimes you can't, sometimes you start off in a position where you can't do that because you've got time or other reasons. If in a multiplayer setting it works out quite well because both my friends, if we play together, are quite offensive players. And they take off for territory whereas I will stay back and make sure that everyone's got support if they're somehow blindsided. It works in multiplayer, but alone it doesn't really.

RESEARCHER

Would you say this translates to your daily habits?

PARTICIPANT 4

Sometimes! I thought about this the other day actually. Sometimes I do think, because I procrastinate so heavily and then when I try to do something I try to do it all at once, it is very much like how I play strategy games. So, if I put my reading off or put chores off I'll often wait until I can do it and I'll just do it all relatively anyway. Sometimes I don't, but that's pretty much. Last year that was basically how I did my assignments, was I put them off until pretty much the last day or the day before the last day and then did all the research running up to those days and then just wrote the assignment that night and go home at about three in the morning after doing that.

RESEARCHER

Did this strategy help when you were younger in terms of school work?

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah. Maybe not necessarily in 6th form, but in high school I didn't really get told off for not doing homework and stuff because I would basically just leave it until I could at the last moment and then do

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it. That worked for GCSEs as well because it was just leaving it until a couple days before and then cramming.

RESEARCHER

Have you worked with any of your tutors about these habits?

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah, they help as much as they can. Because every time I've met a new tutor or advisor, even in 6th form and whatnot, I have said that my main problem, I feel, is my motivation and to actually start doing things and doing when I say I'll do it is the biggest problem. So, they do advise methods and they have put things in place and I have used them, and I have become better at doing things when I say, but I'm still not at a level that I would appreciate.

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INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

Let's start with what you've played this week and how many hours for each game.

PARTICIPANT 4

I played Halo Wars with my friend for about four hours on Sunday then I played some Fortnite with him for maybe two hours. Monday I was continuing through Metal Gear Solid. I played about two hours of that. And then today, I've been playing Metal Gear Solid again for about three hours.

RESEARCHER

Did you intentionally game to escape anything this week?

PARTICIPANT 4

Not that I'm aware of. I haven't really been having much trouble. I'm getting a bit anxious because I'm scared that I've realised that I haven't been scanning in as regularly as I thought I was, so I'm scared that my attendance might be quite low and that I might get a message from the dean or something. I'm quite worried about that. It isn't a massive possibility, but the chance is there that I might get an email saying regarding my attendance and I'm not looking forward to it if it does happen. Apart from that I guess I'm a bit anxious about upcoming assignments. I've kinda put work into doing them though. Nothing massive but I've done bits here and there. But apart from that, no. I've been pretty okay. It's my friend's birthday coming up so this weekend we're going on a local holiday so I'm looking forward to that. His girlfriend and a bunch of our friends are coming with us and I think he just wants to go out around town and maybe go to an amusement park, which I'll probably go but I won't do much there because I hate roller coasters.

RESEARCHER

How have you managed the anxiety you mentioned?

PARTICIPANT 4

It hasn't been really massive, nothing prolonged. Normally just pangs of anxiety that last about a minute and then they leave and I'm fine. In the cases where it could be prolonged, like I did worry the other day when I was in lecture because the lecturer started speaking about something I had no idea about. I was worried that it was one of the lectures that I actually hadn't been to. Because alongside with not scanning in I haven't been to some lectures. Not as many, but some. So that worried me. It was statistics, so I didn't actually get it anyway. Although the lecturer didn't say it would relate to your assignment I feel like maybe it will. And I feel like I may have to ask someone to help me with that because I don't get it. So, I had anxiety about that for about five to seven minutes maybe where I was just panicked in lecture. But I stopped panicking and just paid attention to the lecture really.

RESEARCHER

Have you any days this week where anxiety has kept you from going to university?

PARTICIPANT 4

No. I'm happy about it. I haven't really thought about it because I do make it in the majority of the time. Previously my anxiety has held me back. I guess it kinda is an issue with me this week because my toe hurts. I've been to the doctor about it now and I'm supposed to be getting a podiatry letter to hopefully

Peralta, R.P.

get that sorted but I don't want to be late to any more of my lectures. I haven't been as far as I know this week. I even got time to get to my student council meeting. I got there on time, which I was happy with. I'm happy that I've been making it to things on time really. When I make it on time to things I'm kinda in my own head. Obviously, I'm not overjoyed about it, but I do kinda think to myself "Well I've made it on time. I don't have to go into a lecture hall full of people and as I walk through the door people stare at me because I'm late and then I've got to limp up the stairs because I've got a sore toe." So that's been nice. But when that's moment's over I haven't really reflected on it. It's been nice. Maybe my mood has improved a bit. When I do get into this situation where I am late, especially the rooms with the really big stages for the lecturers that you enter that stage when you walk into the room. I feel like it's quite a long way to the stairs. Every time I come into that room I always think to myself it's like I'm about to do a comedy set and I'm about to walk into the middle and all these people are gonna be there staring at me. I just feel really weird about it. But yeah, being in a situation where I haven't had to walk right in front of the lecturer to get to my seat or anything, distract people, have people look at me kinda does make me feel better because up until the point I sit down I am quite conscientious about it. That people are probably thinking "Ugh, he's always late. He's always interrupting lectures."

RESEARCHER

Whilst you clearly have a history of anxiety it's still very manageable for you.

PARTICIPANT 4

In some instances, yeah. I feel it varies a lot. Sometimes it's quite bad. I have an on running joke with my girlfriend and my friends that I am scared of everything. And that is true to an extent when I do most things. Unless I'm completely and I know I'm alone in the house and I don't really worry as much unless I know later on that it is gonna be examined by someone else. But yeah when I am with people or around in public I am afraid of most things or doing most things. It's not a crippling fear like people are scared of spiders or dark alleys. It's not that kinda fear. It's just fear of I'm gonna mess this up or I'm gonna look silly. Or often when I'm speaking I feel like I may be coming across as patronising. Or I'm not actually getting my point across at all and they think I mean something completely different.

RESEARCHER

When you're processing these fears or concerns, do you process it with others?

PARTICIPANT 4

It's mainly a running commentary in the back of my head I feel like when I think about it. I'll be thinking about how I'm gonna do something. Or how I'm gonna say something. Even if I'm not thinking at all. As I'm doing something sometimes in the back of my head. It's almost like a performance pressure kinda thing but in everyday situations. It's just walking down the street and stuff. Because I know I'm quite clumsy I always feel like "Oh I'm gonna fall over." Like there's been many instances where I've just fallen up the stairs in broad view of everyone and it's just awful. I mean I laugh it off and afterwards I can laugh about it but in the moment, I go bright red. Not many people see me being embarrassed. But when I am you can really tell because I do completely change colour and go brought red, and it's not like patchy embarrassment it's like full from the base of my neck to the top of my forehead and probably my scalp but no one can obviously see that because of my hair, but it goes red. And I can feel it and I become really warm and sweaty almost instantaneously. But it's awful because that obviously makes me feel worse. But often those times I have learned afterwards that I don't really dwell on it. Sometimes I'll look aback and sometimes I get quite intrusive thoughts about how I handle things. And it just makes me

Peralta, R.P.

cringe. I laid in bed last night actually and for no reason at all, something that I did four years ago just came into the front of my mind and I just kept thinking that it was so silly. And it was nothing. It was just how me and a friend got into an argument because they didn't, I was agreeing them, but I was adding extra information and they thought that I wasn't agreeing with them and it was quite a thing. It was about politics and because me being quite political generally but back then I wasn't as vocal about it. So, they didn't know my, any kinda political stance. They just assumed I was being quite aggressively conservative about things when I was in fact agreeing with them and obviously that upset them. And I could have handled it better because then I've obviously got upset. And they wouldn't listen to me. I mean we're friends and I got over it immediately, but it just came into my head, and it was totally my fault. Yeah, they didn't understand but I could have, in a way I was playing devil's advocate to the point where I was pushing them a bit. And I just thought that was a really stupid thing to do.

RESEARCHER

Has this been something you've been managing since you were a child?

PARTICIPANT 4

Probably since around year 11, so when I was fifteen to sixteen I became more conscientious of my actions. Because that was a big point in my life, obviously GCSEs, but socially it was where I joined my main group of friends where I have back home. That's where me and my little group I had since year nine or so integrated into this larger group of friends. So, I was being more aware because obviously I was trying to make friends within that friendship group. I was being more aware of what I said, did. I've always been shy anyway, but at first meeting them didn't really help because I couldn't really be myself. And it's got to the point now where because of who I am as a person they don't recognise me as myself. So, I'm myself more around my girlfriend's friends who aren't as close to me as I am around my closest friends that I have at home, except my best friends, I am myself around them. But my main group of friends from school don't actually know what I'm like. It did frustrate me a lot through 6th form because I was often left out of things because of people's perceptions of who I am, and because I didn't get on with people as well as other people did just because I thought due to my paranoia of them, me thinking they just absolutely don't like me, because they made little effort with me, but me realising now that I didn't make as much effort, or they would have seen it as if I wasn't making as much effort with them. When I know I was, but it was very minimalistic things because of how scared I was of almost being banished from the group because of people falling out with me and such. It was also a problem because making friends within that group I actually developed and got into my first relationship, but that broke down because we were young. But the aftermath of that was basically my social suicide in terms of that group because they had known the girl longer. If we got into an argument about something, or she made a point about something, or said that she didn't want me at places they would always agree with her, so I was made out very early on to be a bad person. And a lot of things people knew, in quotation marks, about me were false, but I had no opportunities to tell them otherwise without making a scene, which would obviously exasperate the situation so that was kinda awkward.

RESEARCHER

Is there anything you would have worried about when you were younger that you don't care about at all now?

PARTICIPANT 4

It depends who I'm with because, that friendship group, and even with my best friend's friends, not necessarily my best friend, but his friends, and some of them my friends, but not as close to, I am quite

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quiet and, I'm quiet anyway, but I'm more of a nice person. People always say to me, "Oh Charlie's just super nice." They'll refer to me as a counsellor because I'll talk to them. I'll talk to whoever's crying or whatever to make sure they're okay and make sure everyone gets home and stuff and I'll do that anyway generally. And in my girlfriend's group, and with my best friend, I'm more confident. I'm quite loud and I make jokes and stuff. I worry less about other people. I worry less about how other people see me with those people. But when I am with the other groups I've mentioned I worry quite heavily. Even though I'm older now I still worry that maybe, especially now that we're all in uni now, so no one has any ties anymore besides the friends they actually want to see, and I want to see. I want to see a majority of people, even though I don't get on or I'm not really close to many of the people in that group I still want to see them and do things with them. But I worry that I will miss out on a lot during the summer times and the breaks because people will do things with the people they've actually come back to see.

RESEARCHER

When with those you're most comfortable with, how else do you feel when you're with them?

PARTICIPANT 4

I feel quite good because a lot of them have personally said to me, which doesn't help because even though I am really anxious, a lot of them have said to me that I am one of, if not the funniest person they know, which doesn't help me because even though I have quite bad anxiety often I find myself having quite complexes about certain things that will occur as fast as the pangs of anxiety I get. So, if someone tells me that I'm really funny, like my girlfriend's friend whom I've known all my life, who's previously said that I'm the funniest person that she knows, part of me gets really anxious because then I'm thinking oh there's pressure now because I don't want to say anything that's just ridiculous and completely kills the conversation. Otherwise part of me thinks that I get a slight god complex about it. If I start to speak people do stop having conversations in that group, which I feel bad about because I don't to dominate the conversation. Although I like to make jokes and be a funny person, someone who relieves the tension of anything like that. I don't want people to wait on every word because then it becomes more of a performance in a way, and then I actually do get performance anxiety. But as time has gone on, as we've gone into second year, I do find myself having that problem less, because they genuinely are nice people and I don't feel any more like I have to be funny. I can just get on with it. And that does feel good. It feels nice. And I've had that always with my best friend. But he, even though we make each other laugh, and I love him to death, he is probably the most annoying person I have ever met. I go around to see him, and we'll get on and we'll do the demographic questions of how've you been, how's uni, stuff like that, and then it will just come round to him annoying me. Incessantly. Just as a joke! I do find it funny. It's not horrible, but he will just go on about finding things to bug me. And that's how we have a laugh. So, I'm not really, I don't really have to think about what I'm saying because his reaction alone to him annoying me makes me laugh. My reaction, sorry, makes him laugh. But at the same time if I wanted to be serious with him I knew that I could be.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about a time where you made the decision to stop and walk away from something.

PARTICIPANT 4

That happens sometimes with work things, but if I talk about games, then I always pick the game back up eventually. If I'm talking about people I do always try and be civil with people even if I absolutely despise them. Otherwise normally I'll do whatever it is that needs to be done and I'll get it done in a

Peralta, R.P.

short period. I'll almost rush it. I feel like my problem though is, I do give up on things before I do them. Because I'll get too worried about it because of anxiety about just general things that could happen or just because I feel my dyspraxia let me down and I'll just completely mess up and embarrass myself. I never really find myself doing something and then thinking "I'm just gonna stop doing this now." Normally I'll just carry on even if I don't like it.

RESEARCHER

Tell me more about your worrying.

PARTICIPANT 4

Even though I do think about my worrying, it's often after I've done it. I have previously tried to catch myself when I do it, but because like I say it's often just pangs of fear of my own stupidity or how people think of me, I often don't have enough time to compute the actual worry itself and catch myself. And I've tried previously to just not think about the worrying. But as I've said previously, it's at the back of my head. It does often come from nowhere in the most random of times like when I'm about to go into sleep or in the middle of a conversation and it'll just throw me off completely from what I was saying. And I have been successful previous times. I have caught myself. And sometimes what is what gets me through to doing things. If it's not work, it's gonna lecture and stuff. And it's not motivational, inspirational stuff, I just I literally just don't have time to be this worried about things. I need to go, and I'll go. But other times something will pop into my head, like "There's a set of stairs around the corner, when you go up the stairs you're gonna have to watch the stairs because you'll fall over." But then as I get to the corner, because I am quite forgetful as a person, generally, I often forget that I have been anxious about things. So, I get to the stair sometimes and I'll just walk up the stairs and not think about it, despite having a pang of guilt/anxiety three or four seconds before. So, I don't know if forgetting about it is maybe a mechanism that I haven't put in, but it's come about and I'm almost in denial about certain things or just generally, because I am, generally, quite forgetful. It might be that.

RESEARCHER

When you're playing videogames, what happens when you make a mistake?

PARTICIPANT 4

I try to learn from what I did, take a different approach. It depends on the game really and whatever I've done in real life. Falling up the stairs would be a bigger example, but if I accidentally walk into people I guess that's more of a smaller thing. But I guess in terms of the game, I'll happily retry a FPS mission thing. But if I'm on an open world game or in a game that's quite harsh with checkpoints and stuff, often I will, because I view myself as quite the cry baby sometimes when it comes to games. Haha! Like Metal Gear Solid is quite a hard game. And because it is quite punishing, if you mess up, often I will just leave it for maybe a day or so and then come back and try again.

RESEARCHER

So, you're able to manage anxiety from a game very differently, maybe very easily?

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah.

RESEARCHER

And the pressure is different when it's real life?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 4

Yeah. I feel like it is anyway.

RESEARCHER

Tell me how gaming has helped you construct or develop your identity as a person.

PARTICIPANT 4

I've touched on it with a few things I've said but I've never given an overall summary. I don't think I could honestly, thinking about it, because of the way I talk about things.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

Tell me what you've played in the past week and for how long.

PARTICIPANT 5

This past week I've just been primarily playing games on my phone. At least, depending on the day, sometimes an hour, other times longer, but the most I think I did was I logged three hours, and then I realised I had to go to sleep. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Was that three hours in one sitting?

PARTICIPANT 5

For the most part, yes.

RESEARCHER

About how many hours in the whole week?

PARTICIPANT 5

At least twelve hours.

RESEARCHER

And what are you playing?

PARTICIPANT 5

Primarily some word games. And then some drawing app kinda games. The words games are like the interactive ones, so you play against an opponent and if they are online they play back with you. So, on that word game one, because if other happen to be on and then, if someone doesn't respond right away I just start new games until someone responds. Haha!

RESEARCHER

What's the name of that game?

PARTICIPANT 5

Words Classic.

RESEARCHER

Why do you think you play so much of it?

PARTICIPANT 5

Just to kinda not think and to try and settle in for the night, kinda zone out. Depending on how I feel like playing I can play competitively other times I just don't care and just want to put random things. I don't necessarily talk to everybody I play with, but just to not be present in what stressors I have going on.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Is it the intellectual part of the game that appeals to you?

PARTICIPANT 5

That part works when I feel like getting competitive, otherwise it's just more along the lines of just trying to keep my mind, just not think about the things I have to do.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about that day you played for three hours at night.

PARTICIPANT 5

It was stressful because right now my partner is not with me. He went to go see his sister who is really sick, so I've been taking care of three kids on my own since the day after Thanksgiving. So last week, there was one day, that day, that was particularly hard. All three of them were acting up. I have a 3-year-old, an 11-month-old, and a 9-year-old. And just for some reason all three of them were feeding off of each other and it just kept getting worse and worse and by the end of the day I felt like I totally failed. And I needed to just not be present in the moment.

RESEARCHER

Does your partner play with you at all on any of your online apps?

PARTICIPANT 5

He does more on the console. He does those war games. I tried playing it with him once, but those things make me dizzy, so I can't play that. It's weird because I tried playing it and I just tried watching it and it just doesn't work. Because I don't know if it's just how it moves around and rotates, it just, I can't watch it. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Were there any other times where you played to zone out or felt competitive?

PARTICIPANT 5

Yeah there were. My brother plays it too. He usually kicks my butt in it and he has to make fun of me. Haha! Because I'm supposed to be the word wiz. But then he kills me with the scoring and so when we have some really close games I started finally figuring out strategies with him. So, when I'm really in the mood to not just be silly and put some random scores and not care if he pulverises me with points, then those are the close ones, and I play very competitively just to try and either beat him or at least stay close enough score-wise where the loss is maybe like less than 5 points of each other. Usually when we play though it's like late at night because he has a child too. And for a while we were playing in between work but then he got kinda busy, he got a promotion and his hours increased. If we do play, it's just like every few days. We might check if the other person has responded then we fill up the other person's inbox until it's your turn again.

RESEARCHER

Is he in a different area?

PARTICIPANT 5

He's in California. I'm in Oregon.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you play more competitively or to wind down in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 5

I think primarily with my brother I play competitive, but other random people I just play just to wind down. But then there's a few people that they constantly, like even though after a few times of them beating me, I finally get tired of them bothering me to try and beat me again. So, I started becoming more serious in my playing. Haha! I think some people were just trying to play me just, so they could improve their stats and then just got frustrated with me. They just keep asking to play again or play two or three at the same time and I start taking them more seriously and then when I finally beat them a few times they stopped asking or requesting. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Is Words Classic the only game you're playing right now?

PARTICIPANT 5

That's the only word game I'm playing at the moment.

RESEARCHER

What other games are you playing?

PARTICIPANT 5

There's this drawing app, I think I recently deleted it though because I couldn't, I didn't want to play at the same time. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Did you play that in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 5

I did not play that last week. I was playing also one of those Facebook app games. I don't remember the name of it, but it was one of those. I see it in my head, but I can't think of the name at the moment.

RESEARCHER

What's the premise of it?

PARTICIPANT 5

I couldn't beat a level, so I sort of got stuck there so I didn't play it last week, but I've been playing that one off and on.

RESEARCHER

What's the general concept of the game?

PARTICIPANT 5

It's trying to clear jewels. You clear jewels or gems I think.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Okay. Where you have to connect the same shape or colour gems?

PARTICIPANT 5

Yeah. Yeah.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about that, with how you chose to just stop and start again.

PARTICIPANT 5

Well I can't beat a certain level because you have to have so many friends help you unlock it and I don't feel like spamming people to unlock it. I think it's on level 20 or 21 where you have to have at least 4 or 5 people to unlock it, but I don't feel like, I don't mind people doing it to me, but I don't like doing it to them. I know other people playing it, but I don't want to spam them even though they spam me with it.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about any anxiety you've felt university related in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 5

I took the GREs last week, so that was one of my stressors. And then finishing an application and doing a visit with some faculty members. It's more pitching ideas and connecting with the faculty to see if what I want to work on is something that they're willing to work with me on or at least serve as one of my committee members.

RESEARCHER

How was that affecting you in terms of anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 5

I think the GREs was probably the worst one because since my partner wasn't here I had to try and find someone to be willing to watch the kids that early in the morning. And the closest test site was either Eugene or Portland. Or Eugene which is a little over an hour drive, and so I had to drop off the kids as early as 7am, and I didn't leave that childcare person's house until 7:15am so I'm trying to gun it down to Eugene! Haha! And I got there at 8:15am or so just in time to start the exam at 8:30am.

RESEARCHER

How did you manage that anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 5

Well that's where the three-hour gaming time came right before the GREs. And I was like "I can't do this" and I just zoned out. And the day after the GRE I had to work, so I didn't go to sleep the following night until almost 2am or 3am in the morning so I had to get ready for what I had to do for work that next day. And purposely this week I had cut out a lot of stuff I had planned for the week. I cut back my work hours. I'm only working 2 days this week and the rest of that time I said I was gonna try and cut out, reduce how much time I spend online, so I'm trying to do that and trying to go to the gym too just to get out stressors in a different way.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Aside from your partner being away, having three children, and school, what else might have caused anxiety for you?

PARTICIPANT 5

Income, so, work. Because right now he's not here to make any funds so anything I'm making is going towards the household and for food. So, there's been some food insecurity that I've been stressing over. I'm maxing out our items, especially for the younger two. And I haven't gone to the food bank yet this week. I was planning on going by the end of this week and just pick up a few things.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

What did you play and for many hours?

PARTICIPANT 5

I think I was pretty good. I only touched it one day, playing the Word game. It's actually Words with Friends, but it's an older version, so that's why it's called Word Classic. I did look it up since you asked that question the other week I wanted to double check to give you the answer. So, it's called Word Classic. I only played it one night for like an hour and sort of forgot about it, and I ended up being timed out from several word games I had going on.

RESEARCHER

What prompted you to pick up the game this week?

PARTICIPANT 5

The kids had fallen asleep and I was too tired to get up, so I just laid there trying to numb my mind before I went to bed. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Tell me why only touching the game for you once this week was good for you personally.

PARTICIPANT 5

Because it meant that I wasn't distracting myself by playing that game. I was instead either gonna sleep, or if I wasn't gonna sleep I was doing other productive things. Because open enrollment For insurance ended on Friday, so that sorted a lot of my time, trying to take care of open insurance enrollment. Especially since we signed up last minute. Down to the wire.

RESEARCHER

What did you get out of your short gaming session?

PARTICIPANT 5

It was just to see how the games are going.

RESEARCHER

Have you and your brother been competitive with games growing up?

PARTICIPANT 5

Yeah. Haha! I think I mentioned that we used to play Monopoly against each other growing up. And he'd always win. I remember when I got older I started getting upset thinking he was cheating. But it turns out he just was really good. He had very good strategy. And then I finally had a chance to beat him and I beat him good! Haha! That was, I think, my biggest highlight to actually beat him once. And then I quit playing right away, because to me I reached my goal of actually beating him. Haha! And then one of the last times I played against him I had a really good chance of winning and I didn't have as much competitiveness in me that day, because I knew that I could hold over him that I beat him once. He can't use the undefeated winning streak against me. Haha!

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Was it just board games or did you play videogames together?

PARTICIPANT 5

We played videogames together, but I always helped him in those. So, like there's this one videogame, it was a racecar game. Like four cars, I don't know the name of it. It was like a game that you just put 50 cents in at a pizza restaurant. We used to play that one and instead of racing against him I would go the opposite way driving and destroy the competition so that he would win. Haha! And I think we used to use all my quarters helping him win until he makes it to the final stage and then he'd beat the game. So that's one way I used to help. Haha! And then, was it Super Nintendo or regular Nintendo, the one that had the duck game, that race game? On that regular Nintendo they had a race game on that one, that track I think. And we couldn't do it alone so we sort of played together trying to get the highest score with jumping, with the high jumps. So, he'd be running with his feet on the mat and I'd be behind him just using my hands pounding on the mat with my hands. Haha! I don't know how fast we ran but we'd always get to these random records because we were doing the extra fast running. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Would you say you have a fear of failure?

PARTICIPANT 5

I do, but I sort of got to the point where if I do fail, depending on what it is I failed on, it makes me feel determined to do it again. I think the big thing for me was when I didn't do well in law school. And the wake-up call and having to figure out what I was gonna do to do better. At the time too, I was leaving an abusive relationship and trying to keep myself safe from my ex. So, I had more personal things that were more important than school was.

RESEARCHER

From there, do you see yourself as a capable person with family, friends, or work colleagues?

PARTICIPANT 5

I think for me, because of my time limits, especially because I spend a lot of time, when I'm not at work, with my kids, making friends is not easy for me to do these days. And when it takes getting to know someone to be a friend, I'm very particular. Because most of my friends now are the ones I connected with, especially over the years, we are all in different states. So even of my closest friends I might see once a year. Or one of my best friends I had when I was in the Midwest, I haven't seen her in about seven years now. We still keep in touch by text or Facebook, but otherwise we haven't seen each other physically. So, most of my friends are remote. Haha! So, for example when I was in law school. Some of the friends I made in law school I still message here and there but I didn't really have any solid friendships there. And at my current university so far, I hadn't found that connection yet.

RESEARCHER

What other anxiety have you been managing in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 5

Peralta, R.P.

Connecting with faculty at the university. Applying for some grants and scholarships and meeting those deadlines. Submitting letters of interests. Then waiting. The waiting. The waiting game. Waiting to hear did you get it or did they accept it, taking it to the next level. And plus, I had two interviews this week.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

How are you?

PARTICIPANT 5

I'm doing okay. I'm dealing with, I tweaked my shoulder last week, so it's been hurting like really bad the last few days. If I keep it still it hurts. If I move it too fast it hurts. It's pretty much a lose-lose situation for me at the moment. Other than that, doing well with the kids. Thankfully they're not sick. That's one of the good things! Haha!

RESEARCHER

What did you play and for many hours?

PARTICIPANT 5

When I realized I had played it, I took a look at it last night and I played for about a half hour just to catch up with the games I was about to get timed out of. And I only have about three games going on this week versus the over ten I had I think about two weeks ago now.

RESEARCHER

What prompted you to pick up the game this week?

PARTICIPANT 5

This week I was thinking about it and I actually got a reminder on my phone. Because every so often the Words Classic sends me a notification of "Here's your word for the day!" and that reminded me "Oh yeah, I haven't touched it! Let me take a look!" I took a look and that's when I say that I had timed out from at least four games, and three of them are against my brother and one of them I was winning so it kinda made me a little mad. Haha! And then the other two games that I hadn't been timed out of yet were games he was winning, so it was sort of like "Oh great..." Haha!

RESEARCHER

What did you get out of your short gaming session?

PARTICIPANT 5

When I had the reminder for this week it was like "Oh shoot. I lost some games I didn't have to lose at. Now it's going against my stats and I don't like that." Because usually my brother wins, I think I mentioned that a few weeks ago, that when I do have the chance of winning a game, and then I just lost it because I timed out. Haha! That makes me upset! Haha! That competitive streak comes out and I'm like "Well I should have been more mindful. At least checking once every few days versus a week." It was still, normally I don't mind, but I wish it was just the ones I was losing and not the ones I was winning. Haha!

RESEARCHER

It's good that you're in contact with your brother though.

PARTICIPANT 5

Peralta, R.P.

We text and send each other goofy pictures and memes. So, there's different ways that we keep in touch, but that's our way of competing. Haha

RESEARCHER

Do you see yourself as a capable student?

PARTICIPANT 5

Yeah. But when I was in law school I didn't feel like that. I didn't do well my first time in law school. And my first semester I actually failed out. But they don't call it failed out, they call it being excluded. And then I had to wait a year and then I was readmitted and then I graduated! So, I mean, I did something right! Haha! It was a very sobering experience.

RESEARCHER

Because of this experience you feel more capable as a student?

PARTICIPANT 5

In some ways it does because I readmitted I went through two pregnancies in law school and I got it done. I graduated. Not necessarily at the top of my class but I graduated. I mean I had three kids altogether, but I had two pregnancies during law school so. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How do you plan and organise your home life?

PARTICIPANT 5

When you got two younger ones, one's one and one's almost three, you sort of have to play by ear a lot, especially when your 3-year-old is starting to do more tantrums. For example, when there's a regular school day my oldest would be up and out of the house by 8am, 8:15am or so to drop off at school. Then go home, feed the kids, then naptime for at least the youngest one. Sometimes the 3-year-old also wants to take a nap too. They all nap. Then wake up, time to eat. Maybe a second nap. Haha! Then go pick up my oldest from school then we go pick up my partner from work. All these on the days I'm not working. On the days that I'm working its sort of like, okay drop everyone off, and then me go to work and then pick everybody up and then go home.

RESEARCHER

How do you make time to play games around a busy family schedule?

PARTICIPANT 5

The last time I played a board game was because the kids were with the babysitter. Haha! They were with my mom, so my partner and I went to one of his friend's house to play Cards Against Humanity and we left early because I was falling asleep. And other than that, the Words Classic I usually play laying in bed with the kids and either one of them is crawling around me or they just fell asleep and I don't feel like getting up yet. Before when I was really into Words I felt like playing it randomly throughout the entire day. My brother and I once had I think almost 20 games going on. We times out on some of them because we couldn't keep up with it, but we were just constantly shooting games back and forth on the Words Classic, but that was before participating in this study.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

What other anxiety have you been managing in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 5

I was supposed to hear from the two interviews from last week about whether or not I got either job.

RESEARCHER

Have you gotten any responses from all of that?

PARTICIPANT 5

No. That's all still waiting. Haha! I submitted two grants too to this non-profit I volunteer with and unfortunately, we didn't get those two grants. But it's okay because they awarded us two other grants. For two other time periods, so I'm okay with that. But still, it's just a little bit disappointing, especially this last grant I worked extremely hard to try and get us funded with.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

Tell me about what you've played and for how long.

PARTICIPANT 5

I was pretty consistent about it. I was playing every day actually. Haha! Then over the weekend I didn't really touch it at all. Besides being sick, I've been wanting to play just to kinda not think. There's also some folks I know in my circle who, either had cancer, who were in remission, but now apparently all have cancer again. One of them actually passed away yesterday. And my sister-in-law is on life support now, because her cancer came back it and it became pneumonia and now it affected her lungs. So, it's been a rough week.

RESEARCHER

I'm so sorry to hear this. That's a lot to carry, I'm sure.

PARTICIPANT 5

It's mostly my partner, like it's his sister. He's fairly quiet about how he's feeling, but you could tell he's in a lot of pain. He's sort of just not been talking about it right now. But it's pretty bad to the point where, in his culture as the oldest brother, he has to make a decision on whether or not to keep her on life support. So, he also has that added stress right now and he doesn't know how to deal with it. And he's occasionally talked to me about it, and if anything, I'm trying to answer his questions when he's asking me "What does life support consist of?" and those other things that he's trying to decipher what the doctor was telling him. So, it's just now trying to listen. And last night is when I found out my friend had passed away and I haven't told my partner yet, but he knows who this person is and he knew that they were going through another round of cancer treatment.

RESEARCHER

How are you managing it right now, or at least today?

PARTICIPANT 5

Umm, well I had found out she past away last night actually around 10pm. I think she might have passed before then but I'm not sure. So, I cried a little bit, but I sort of haven't said anything to him because I know he's dealing with his own struggles with his sister.

RESEARCHER

You had mentioned you're wanting to play, to just not think about things for a bit. Have you not had a chance today to play?

PARTICIPANT 5

Well I looked at it a little bit, especially the Word game I mentioned play, but I just couldn't think of words. I just couldn't do it. Then I wanted to just play some random games on the PlayStation 4. I haven't touched it in a long time. But when I went on there it's like "But I don't know how to play them!" Haha! So, it kinda seemed pointless to try playing something I don't know how to play. I do know that when I used to play really actively on Xbox I used to love this game, oh gosh, what's it called? I ended up getting a gold version of it before it broke. It was this guy, you played this character, you chose to be good or bad and your actions dictate whether you become more evil or become nicer. And it was

Peralta, R.P.

kinda adult themed, because it had lots of violence, and you could either choose to do a certain quest and they'll open more opportunities for you. You can overeat and become super over weight or under eat and become thin and lethargic. It was like a strategic type game where every single thing you did dictated what kinda potential feature you have. You can either make the town scared of you or adore you. You could get married in it. You could get divorced. You could buy tons of homes. You could destroy an entire village and own it. They don't have it on PlayStation. Oh, now I remember the game I used to play. It's called Fable.

RESEARCHER

How many hours have you played?

PARTICIPANT 5

The kids had a hard time sleeping one night, so I think I just laid there with them for at least three to four hours playing back and forth starting new games again. And by the time they fell asleep I was too tired to get up and I just fell asleep.

RESEARCHER

What other anxiety have you been managing?

PARTICIPANT 5

My oldest daughter went to my ex's for his time for the holidays. So, she's been gone since Thursday and she comes home today. I have been dealing with that. And plus, my 3-year-old is starting to have these major temper tantrums that I've chatted with several of his teachers about whether or not it might be like an early sign of a disability. So, we sort of chatted about it, whether it's normal and things I can do to help calm him down, especially when he has these major moments. Actually, I start training next week, so hopefully that will just get me out of the house and not think about all the personal things that are going on.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 6

For the past week I've been playing a lot actually. I just got done having a final paper that was due and after that final paper I was like "I need to play some videogames. I need to get that stress off of me." I did that. I played a lot of Friday the 13th the game. I played a lot of that. That mainly has helped me escape from reality a lot. I also play mobile games such as Pokémon Go!, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Candy Crush. I do a lot of that just kinda get out there and explore.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your paper.

PARTICIPANT 6

It was pretty much a rough draft of the final paper. The final paper is actually due this week. The assignment was pretty much trying to develop ethical theories into gay marriage. That's what my paper is gonna be about. It was really stressful. Trying to apply the different ethical theories and perspectives and trying to combine my personal beliefs into it. It was so hard to do.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about wanting to game once you were done with that.

PARTICIPANT 6

It was more like as soon as I got home I jumped on that computer. It was like "I had a rough day. Don't mess with me right now, I have to get on this computer and just play."

RESEARCHER

Was there anything else school related that made you feel this way?

PARTICIPANT 6

Basically, the grading assignments was another big one. With my grads assignments, I'm used to getting really good scores and she gave me an okay score, but it wasn't what I expected. It really threw me into a loop. I'm one of those people, I'm a perfectionist. It threw me into a loop and I just needed to destress after these bits of information.

RESEARCHER

What did you do to respond to that?

PARTICIPANT 6

Friday the 13th is a multiplayer game. So, I was able to connect with people all over the world. We just chatted. We played how the game is. We try to survive. If I was the killer I would go, and I would kill some counsellors and that helped me develop a sense of letting all this stress go. I just calm myself, so I can be good for the rest of the night. And actually, go to sleep.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

What other games in your past have you played that give you that same sort of relief?

PARTICIPANT 6

Kingdom Hearts is another one. I'm a huge Kingdom Hearts fan and when I played that game for the first time it relieved a lot of stress because I felt like I was escaping from the real world and gonna this Disney, I love Disney, so it was a big sense of "Oh wow, I'm in their world." Basically, you're still in control but you're in another world in control if that makes any kinda sense. You've got to play it.

RESEARCHER

Is there anything else that may cause anxiety aside from school?

PARTICIPANT 6

I just started a new job and I'm in a training period where it's four weeks of sitting in a classroom taking notes. And there's exams coming up and everything else, so it's like "Crap." It feels like I'm at school 24/7 pretty much. Just learning two different subjects. Sometimes I can get anxiety-based performances.

RESEARCHER

You mentioned your mobile gaming. Tell me a bit more about that.

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, on Pokémon Go! there's actually a PokéStop that's right outside my work so I'll go there, I'll get y items for the day and if there's new Pokémon I'll catch them. I usually do that for my 30-minute break and then I come back, and I'll play a little bit of Candy Crush or Yu-Gi-Oh! and I'm fine.

RESEARCHER

How long have you been aware that that has been beneficial for you during breaks?

PARTICIPANT 6

Ever since I was a kid I've always had this mentality that after I come home from school I start playing videogames automatically because it seems to alleviate a lot of the stress from the day. That way I don't really have to focus on it at night. I can just play and after I play for a couple hours then I'm fine. It's an escape form the real world.

RESEARCHER

Do you see yourself as a capable student?

PARTICIPANT 6

Oh yeah, absolutely. Actually, I just got the email yesterday saying I'm on the Dean's List. I'm very capable. I'm fairly successful at doing the schoolwork. So, I'm a very capable student.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you have a fear of failure?

PARTICIPANT 6

Peralta, R.P.

I've never failed a class in my life. I've always done B grades or above. There was one time I got a D and that had nothing to do with my studies, it was due to the teacher.

RESEARCHER

When you're planning something such as schoolwork, tell me how you plan and organise that process?

PARTICIPANT 6

Basically, what I do is I start writing everything down as far as questions go and draw an outline pretty much. Like how I'm gonna address the issues, start with my introduction, write a thesis statement and then support by three different paragraphs. I also write out the introduction and the conclusion. That way I know exactly how to wrap up and start the subject at the same time. And then going from there I do my research and I write down all the research I need. I include the titles and how it pertains to each paragraph I do that. And at the very end I put it all together. That's how I do things.

RESEARCHER

Tell me a bit how you organise things at home?

PARTICIPANT 6

Basically, it all depends. Let's just say clothes. I organise through what I usually wear to work, from what I wear at home, and usually if I'm going out to a club or something. I'll organise it like that. So, every single thing has to have a place.

RESEARCHER

How do you think your habits with organising at home and for school affects how you think through gaming?

PARTICIPANT 6

Let's just say I have a side quest that I have to complete. I like to make sure that every side quest is completed. If I need a certain weapon for a side quest I usually get the weapon first and then I do the side quest. Or I come back or go to something that's more important for the lesser side quest that I didn't need at that certain point and time.

RESEARCHER

Would you say you're someone who does side quests to level up first?

PARTICIPANT 6

Haha, yeah. That's basically what happens. Haha! Most definitely.

RESEARCHER

Let's talk about the games themselves. What in a game draws your attention?

PARTICIPANT 6

Basically, it has to be fun. I can't play a game that I lose interest in within the first five minutes. Even if it's a repetitive game like Friday the 13th for instance there's only a few maps you can be in and a few killers that you can do. But each game is different based on what you want to accomplish for that round. Let's say for instance you want one round to be "Well let's fix the car so we can get out of there. Or let's

Peralta, R.P.

fix the phone fuse. Or let's attempt to kill the killer." Each round is different, and I try to do that with my gaming. Because it can't be the same. Because it becomes repetitive and I get very bored very quickly

RESEARCHER

What's the fun part of this particular game?

PARTICIPANT 6

It's probably the mystery. Who's gonna get killed and who's smart enough to outsmart the killer. Especially if you have a killer round, he puts traps everywhere that you're gonna be going. So, you ask "How do you get around these traps in order to survive?" Or "What am I gonna fix first? That way he can't kill me."

RESEARCHER

What role does nostalgia have in your gaming?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, actually I'm a huge fan of horror movies altogether. And when I said that they're coming out with Friday the 13th I'm like "I've got to play it!" I've been waiting for a game like this forever and I incorporate myself into the game because I've always wanted to play a game that's based around my favourite movie characters of all time. Just like Kingdom Hearts, I told you I'm a big fan of Disney so when they incorporate Disney into a videogame I've got to try it out. It puts me back into my childhood. I'm like "Wow, I remember this part of the Lion King when I was a kid." And now I actually get to play inside Pride Rock, it's amazing.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel that certain gameplay will help you manage things in your everyday life?

PARTICIPANT 6

I'm very organised when it comes to my life and being organised in a game is the same task. In order to complete a side quest, you have to do this, or you may have multiple side quests within the side quests for you to accomplish it and I make sure that everything is done. And if nothing is done then everything just goes out of place. And I become out of focus. And that's one of the joys of the new Friday the 13th game. You're focused on one thing but you could get side tracked whenever he's coming to get you on a different part of the map and it's like "Oh, now I got to try to do something else!" And sometimes it can get kinda hectic.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about how you first started gaming.

PARTICIPANT 6

I started playing on the old Atari. Ms. Pac-Man, Centipede, all that. Ms. Pac-Man was my game. That was always my go-to game as a kid. And then my parents bought me a Nintendo and I started playing Super Mario Brothers and it evolved from there. I got Kirby's Adventure. I got Ducktales for instance. And each one of them was a different world I could explore. When I was a kid I was an only child. There were no friends down the street and that became my go to, especially if I was bored and had nothing to do. I'm like "You know, I'm gonna play a videogame, I might as well." My parents actually gave me flack for that because I was not the most active kid. I'd rather sit inside and have my own world on a TV.

Peralta, R.P.

Where I lived, in the city where I was at, I couldn't really go anywhere because we were so away from everything else. It was like, what can I do in order to explore my surroundings? And videogames became a part of me like that. I could explore Niagara Falls if I wanted to on Ducktales 2. I could explore a new city thanks to Carmen San Diego. So, it was really just an exploration sort of deal for me. I used to live in Florida. There was a lot of retirement homes nearby. It was sort of like a neighbourhood on the outskirts. It was more of like where older people come and retire. Didn't really have a lot of kids down the street per se. That's how I learned that videogames were my best friend and those were the ones I could really count on.

RESEARCHER

How has being a gamer affected other aspects of your identity?

PARTICIPANT 6

It made me appreciate what I actually have in my life. It's interesting that I say that because when I grew up I didn't have anything besides videogames. And when I started to get older I started to acquire a lot more things based on what I like, and videogames were always that one consistent thing I could always evolve and explore the new videogames that were coming out. So that really classified me as a person that is able to adapt to anything really. Basically, I tell people that I am the person that I am. They see I'm a very sarcastic person and I kinda learned that from videogames to be honest. My sense of humour is gamer related because that's pretty much the only thing I've known since I was a kid besides movies and TV shows. So, for example at work today I talked about the new Kingdom Heart 3 that's coming out next year. I would say I really want a tattoo of Sora's keyblade because that's pretty much who I am. Sometimes I've lost my way but I'm able to get back on that horse and I found out who I was.

RESEARCHER

Are there other character's you've always admired and wanted to play?

PARTICIPANT 6

Mario was a big one for a while. Mario was the person I identified with because he's what I envision my character to be, kinda the person to save the world. And later on, it would be Sora from Kingdom Hearts because I've always wanted the sense of, you're two best friends going out and fighting people and saving the world and going on adventures, which I never got to do as a kid. I gravitated a lot towards them and those are my two inspirations from gaming.

RESEARCHER

If you were to make your own game, what would that be like?

PARTICIPANT 6

Basically, my own idea of a game would be a horror sci-fi game. It actually stemmed away from the usual R format, but basically it was more like a strategy game. Like Silent Hill, it would be a lot like that with a lot of puzzles and getting around town and finding a good story line. That would be my kinda game that I would develop. If it's a storyline that I've heard a million times I don't want to play it, because I already know what's gonna happen. But if it's a storyline that really peaks my interest or it has a neat twist to an already existing storyline it's something that I've got to play.

RICHAR

What game plots have stood out for you that you'll never forget?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 6

Final Fantasy 10 was the one that I thought "I did not expect that to happen." The whole storyline was great about travelling in a different dimension and finding out that the father was the evil they were talking about all this time. Okay, I didn't expect that all this time. And the character development was just as good because you got to find out more about the characters and how they incorporate into the story and how it affects the main character's plotline as well. Also, Tales of Xillia 1 and 2. When I first started playing those I didn't know what to expect because I never played the other ones before. But once I started to get to know more about the Tales of series and everything else. It really piqued my interest because there were so many side quests to do and you learn more about the characters' backgrounds and how they came about and why they are the way they are. A couple characters actually reminded me of myself. And I was like "I can relate to that!" because I've been through that.

RESEARCHER

Tell me more about how you related to those characters.

PARTICIPANT 6

For instance, there's this girl in there called Elize and she had this one toy that she's really grown accustomed to and pretty much that's her best friend. That was like me with this doll that I had. It was like my best friend. I remember to this day talking to it about my day because I didn't have anybody else. I could relate to that because that happened to me, although I don't have the wand that she has, or the magic powers, but I would love to have it. I've kinda imagined my magic powers to be like that too. Haha! So, it was really an expressive fictionalised part of myself.

RESEARCHER

Are there other things that were immersive to you as a child aside from videogames?

PARTICIPANT 6

I used to write short stories and poems all the time. To me they felt forced. I'm a great writer, but as far as expressing my own ideas onto paper I can't do it. I had to actually be able to express them out loud. Verbally was so much easier than writing it down.

RESEARCHER

Are you anticipating any anxiety in the coming week?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yes. On Tuesday my final paper is due. I got my feedback it looked really good, but basically there's not a lot of anxiety in that, just basically fine tuning it. So, there's really not a lot of that going on. But I have my final for work on Saturday and I have to make live calls because I work at a call centre. So, it's gonna be really hectic these next few days just trying to get everything together.

RESEARCHER

And you anticipate gaming after?

PARTICIPANT 6

Oh yeah, probably Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. I log more hours usually at night. My boyfriend he goes to bed kinda early, but I'm usually a night owl anyway so I stay up 11, 12 o'clock at

Peralta, R.P.

night. So usually I game sometime after 6pm and then I just stay gaming until I'm really tired. Friday the 13th affected our social time a lot. We overcame it. We both moved to Virginia as well, so we had the move going on. We had his jobs going on. We had my jobs going on plus my school. So, a lot of anxiety came with that.

RESEARCHER

Is he a gamer as well?

PARTICIPANT 6

He is to a certain point. He plays the old school Castlevania, Legend of Zelda, Mario, stuff like that. He doesn't really play any of the newer things.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

Tell me what you played and for how long in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 6

I played very often. I played as much as I could. I played my Friday the 13th as usual. I actually played a new game called Witch It, which is a prop hunt game and you basically turn into a prop and you try to hide from the other players and they try to get you with these little potatoes because there are these big, strong Vikings. That's the best way to put it. And I've been playing that a lot recently too. I'm playing it on my computer.

RESEARCHER

How did you get into it and how does it keep your attention?

PARTICIPANT 6

It's basically fun because you can transform into all these different objects and you can hide in different spots and you can actually trick players by sending them decoys. It's very fast paced, and I loved fast paced games like that. It's the excitement. It's "Okay, what's gonna happen now?"

RESEARCHER

How many hours did you play each?

PARTICIPANT 6

Witch it was, I think 10 hours. Friday the 13th was 6 hours. I've been playing pretty much every time I go home from work, or before or after schoolwork. It's nice because it's one of those times where I'm actually gonna be able to play because my work schedule this week has been non-stop craziness.

RESEARCHER

What kind of things have you been managing from school or work that's causing any anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 6

Pretty much, this is my last week of training and right now they put us on the phones. So, it's kinda like all the information compiled into one. I can't take any notes on the floor so it's kinda like, I have to do everything by memory and that's one thing that's, yeah. Confidentiality agreements suck. Haha! If that tells you anything, yeah. I can't have any paper, no pens, nothing like that. The only thing I can use is whatever's in the computer. And that really got me going because we had my whole test for this week. Passed every single one of them, but it was tough. From school, I actually just started a new course, introduction to literature. I've been reading all those chapters that are required of me, and whenever I start a new class I start looking over the assignments for the following weeks and that just kind of puts into perspective what I want to expect from that class. And that kinda gets me on edge too, because I'm like "Okay, how am I gonna do this? How am I gonna do that?" Haha!

RESEARCHER

How've you been managing all this, school work and training?

PARTICIPANT 6

Peralta, R.P.

To tell you the truth my time management has been really off lately. So, I haven't really had the chance to sit down to actually organise my thoughts as I would like to. So pretty much everything has been playing it by ear. Just like today, both of my assignments are due today and I got done with one of them and I'm almost done with this next one, but it was a rush to get everything done, that's what really got to me. Because I'm like "I have this to do. I have that to do." And all at once it's just overwhelming.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about that?

PARTICIPANT 6

Very angsty? I don't even know how to explain it. It's overwhelming, just very hectic and stressed. Because you know you want to do good in these discussions but at the same time you know you have to get it done. So, this time management things was not working for me this week at all.

RESEARCHER

Let's both walk through how you would like to manage this anxiety ideally. Let's walk through this together. Tell me how you would plan to manage all of this overwhelming stuff.

PARTICIPANT 6

I would probably plan it as what I could do for the next couple of days and then plan my videogame habits through there. That would probably be my first step. And then probably play one or two videogames, if I could, maybe just play Friday the 13th just to get rid of the anxiety and then just go on.

RESEARCHER

Anything else aside from videogames?

PARTICIPANT 6

Maybe take a walk. That usually calms me down too. It's like take a walk and breathe in the fresh air, just kinda get out of the house, walk around. That's usually one of my go-to's as well.

RESEARCHER

Do you do this at work too?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, I could, but we only get like a fifteen-minute break and usually that requires actually going out of the building. And seeing as how I don't have my badge yet, it's kinda difficult to get back in. Usually I just end up walking around the break room and de-stress myself, maybe get a bite to eat or something and I'm good to go.

RESEARCHER

Is that something that, once you have a badge, would be helpful for you when managing all this new work stress?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, especially with the influx of calls that are coming in. You know, and other people's problems. I can manage to just let that go. And you know, as I said, taking a walk, cool off, and then come back with a fresh clear mind.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Do you smoke or use any other substance when managing stress or anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 6

No, I actually quite smoking around four or five years ago, so it's actually been a little while. No, the last time I had a drink I didn't even drink that much, and I was done.

RESEARCHER

What about when managing everything, do you utilise opportunities to talk with anyone in your life?

PARTICIPANT 6

Most likely, the people in my house I like to spend time with. They usually help me de-stress a lot, and put things back into perspective, maybe talk about different things. My friends that I live with and my boyfriend, of course, and he actually helps me a lot. He lives with me.

RESEARCHER

Do you feel that you can play any scenes or games again that may help you develop or increase your awareness of problems in the real world?

PARTICIPANT 6

I know that in some games, like my Kingdom Hearts games for example, I can replay levels. And that usually helps me back down the stress in a way. That usually helps me trying to get rid of any kinda stress I'm dealing with, especially if it's a high functioning level where I can just hack and slash and be more active in. That usually helps me. It helps me cope with anything that goes on in my life. If that makes any sense.

RESEARCHER

When does it look like it's going to lighten up a bit for you?

PARTICIPANT 6

Probably in a week and a half. I'll probably be done in a week in a half with all the training and all the nesting. After that my routine should become regular and I can time manage a lot better. So, in the next week and a half I should be fine.

RESEARCHER

What are you anticipating will change in terms of anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 6

I feel like if I have some sort of set schedule it could level off and I could actually be somewhat, what I like to call normal Haha! Once I have a set schedule at work I don't have to worry about training, I don't really have to worry about anything besides doing my job. As far as the school thing goes, as long as I get into a routine of what I know I need to do and how to do it then I know I should be fine. It's just the fact of not knowing, it really just gets me confused and gets me overwhelmed. And I'm one person that gets overwhelmed very easily. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

It sounds like that normalcy is something you look forward to and appreciate. Tell me about that. Is having that set schedule for you always been better for you when it comes to managing a lot?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah. Because I know what's gonna happen and at what times. I like my time to be managed correctly. I don't like anything to be off the cuff. So, in a sense of normalcy, it actually helps me manage my stress a lot better. It'll help me focus a lot better. Because I know now, like my mind is going 100 miles an hour. Haha! Because there's just so much going on. But after that sense of normalcy I believe things will calm down dramatically.

RESEARCHER

What do you do if something randomly happens that causes anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 6

I try to incorporate that into it. I'm like "Maybe I can rearrange about what other things I can do and what I can't do." If I know an assignment doesn't have to be due that day maybe I can schedule it later on. Or with work stuff I can't refocus it, I can't really manage that because that's a set schedule. But as far as school maybe I can get an extension. Maybe I can rearrange it somehow where I don't have to work as much as I have to. So, when something random comes along I just try to incorporate it into what's actually going on in my life right now.

RESEARCHER

Walk me through what happens when it is out of your control.

PARTICIPANT 6

I tend to let me emotions get the best of me. I tend to think of the bad things first. Like when things are overwhelming I tend to think of negative thoughts. And I really don't like that side of me because I know I can't stop it. And once the ball gets rolling I can't seem to stop. Unless it gets fixed right then and there. And if it gets fixed, then great, I'm happy! But I'm always thinking about the other consequences, or the other ideas that come into my head. What if I don't get help? What if I'm stuck here forever? What if I can't get home? And what about school? I have this due, so what's gonna happen to my school? Everything just, it's a snowball effect.

RESEARCHER

What do you do for yourself to stop or lessen it?

PARTICIPANT 6

I don't know if I really do anything. It just kinda works out. Haha! It's pretty much, "Everything happens for a reason" is what I try to tell myself. And whenever something does happen that benefits me, then it's like "Okay, well that happened, so I don't really have to worry about this." So, it really just comes naturally. And if it doesn't come naturally I try to find a way around it, after I freak out a little bit, and then I'll be fine! Haha!

RESEARCHER

Would you say you've ever felt that when gaming?

PARTICIPANT 6

Peralta, R.P.

Oh yeah! For instance, if I can't get a side quest going, or if I don't know what I'm doing. I tend to think to myself, "Is this gonna benefit me in the future? Will I have to use this side quest in order to advance where I'm going through?" I tend to think about the negative aspects. Am I gonna lose a level? Am I gonna lose an important skill that I might need later on? But then I calm down and I ask myself, "What could benefit me? What's my sense of utilitarianism? What's gonna benefit me for later on? Mostly it just comes naturally. "Okay. Maybe I don't have to do this right now? Maybe I can come back to it." And usually I do some research and I find out I don't really need it after all. But of course, that goes against my perfect gaming score and I'm like "Oh man!" So, if I don't do it that lowers my percentage, so there's a lot of underlining questions that go along with that.

RESEARCHER

Would you say managing that kinda stress is different between the real world and gaming for you?

PARTICIPANT 6

In a way. As I said, in the real world, things just come to me naturally. But if I'm in a videogame I kinda have to do a little bit of research. So, it's kinda different but at the same time it's similar. Because sometimes if I can't figure out a puzzle for instance, I keep trying until I can finally figure it out. Or if I can't figure out then I just use online and figure out what's going on and then I'm good with it.

RESEARCHER

Have you ever had to do something like that when you're fixing something outside of a game or solve a problem?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, especially when I had to help my god children with their math and their history and all that. If I didn't know the answer, then I would definitely try to look it up. I would try to figure out "Well okay, I know this from math class. What if I do this?" and sometimes it ends up being the right answer. So, I'm like "Oh! Okay, that was easy!" Haha!

RESEARCHER

Are there any games that you're interested in starting that may be coming out in the future?

PARTICIPANT 6

I know next year is my Kingdom Hearts 3. I can't wait for that one. I saw the trailers for it and it looks just absolutely beautiful. But first I need a PS4, so I plan on getting a PS4 soon. So that's coming out. I know there's a lot of games on the switch that just came out like Zelda Breath of the Wind I definitely want to try. I'm a big, I love stuff that's RPG format. I know there's a new Tales of series coming out. I can't wait to try that one too. There's a new storyline, oh I don't even know the name of it yet. It's a Japanese based RPG game format. Pretty much all the Tales of games are on PS2 or PS3. They're remastering them for PS4.

RESEARCHER

Who else in your life also games?

PARTICIPANT 6

Peralta, R.P.

I found out that some of my boys now actually do game. So, I try to talk to them about what they play. We haven't chatted that much except in passing, but those are really the only people. Most of my friends are either in Florida or down in Oklahoma. So, I don't really get to talk to them much anymore.

RESEARCHER

You don't play games online together?

PARTICIPANT 6

Not really. They don't really have the same, like Steam, they don't have that. I kinda want to get a PS4, that way I can connect with them again. I see all these streamers on YouTube and they're pretty much on Steam, they have their own community. And here I am, maybe have like three people on my friends list. I'm like "That's kinda sad." Haha!

RESEARCHER

Have you had any communities in games before?

PARTICIPANT 6

Not really. This is actually the first time in, actually, all my life that I've actually done online games. Mine was basically all solo or if I had another person playing it would be my sister. Haha! So, this is my first time with the online experience and it's kinda new to me. So that's why I probably only have a couple friends on Steam.

RESEARCHER

What about for Friday the 13th?

PARTICIPANT 6

Oh yeah. You have your mic. You can communicate with people there. Especially if you're trying to fix a certain item. "Well, I'll go get this, go ahead and install that, and then I'll distract Jason from trying to get me." We all work together as a team.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your week

PARTICIPANT 6

I'm tired. I had a long night last night. I ended up staying at work from about 6am to midnight last night.

RESEARCHER

Oh wow! Do you get overtime?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, I got overtime, but I was on a call that I just could not get off the phone with. It was almost eight hours on the phone with about a printer call. Yeah, that was not fun. My body feels drained.

RESEARCHER

Were you able to get some decent sleep?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, actually I didn't have to go to work today, because yesterday was the last day of my training. So today, fortunately I was off. I got some sleep, I slept until about maybe 8 o'clock.

RESEARCHER

I'm sure that was a lot of stress for your body.

PARTICIPANT 6

It was. Haha! I was like "I just want to go home."

RESEARCHER

Tell me about any other anxiety you've experienced since we last met.

PARTICIPANT 6

Last week I started a whole new class. It's a literature class. And this week there was a lot of required reading that went along with it. It was two whole stories I had to go in and do, which I finished discussions today about it. But it was like trying to figure out exactly how to interpret them mostly. And that really upped my anxiety. I was like "I haven't been able to play videogames and I've been stressing out about that."

RESEARCHER

Were you able to get at least 30 minutes?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah. I got thirty minutes yesterday, actually the day before that. I did play a couple, maybe thirty minutes today, but that was about it.

RESEARCHER

How many hours would you say you had in schoolwork over the past week?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 6

I did a final paper, that was about 5 hours. I want to say about 10 hours altogether. And that's just from Monday until today.

RESEARCHER

And you're full time in terms of your work training?

PARTICIPANT 6

I'm done with training as of yesterday. Tomorrow I actually start a brand-new schedule, which it won't affect our times because I'm actually off on Wednesdays. I won't have to worry about that.

RESEARCHER

On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being an extreme amount of anxiety, tell me about where you've been at each day since Monday.

PARTICIPANT 6

Probably around 8 to 9. Yesterday was the full 10 anxiety, which I'm like "I have got to get out of here!" Because I was about to scream. But I spent it at a 9 for pretty much most of the week.

RESEARCHER

What did you want to do after you left work?

PARTICIPANT 6

More than anything I really just wanted to take my anger out and frustration and play just a videogame or just go out for a walk or something. Right where I live there aren't that many lights, so I don't really see myself going out in the dark. So mainly what I did when I got home was I played about thirty minutes of a game and then that was it. And that actually helped me fall asleep.

RESEARCHER

Tell me more about that when you got home.

PARTICIPANT 6

When I sat down initially I was like "I got to get this frustration out. I got to just get this day out of my head." And then as I was playing it I could feel myself more comfortable. I was more aware of what I was doing. When I get into that anxiety state I just get overwhelmed. That's something I don't want to happen, but yesterday it did happen. I went to bed then got up at 8 o'clock and started to do my schoolwork. It was about 3 hours altogether. During the week I already read snippets of the story I was supposed to write an analysis about. So, I did that, and I mainly wrote my discussions as I saw how I interpreted it. And then I was done with my schoolwork for the day. I did a little bit of gaming today, it was about 30 minutes. But it was mostly just to release my day, get my mind on the right track, and just basically enjoy my day off.

RESEARCHER

What did you play last night and what did you play today?

PARTICIPANT 6

Peralta, R.P.

Tales of Xillia. I played that game last night. And this morning I played a little bit of Super Mario. Yeah, old school. Haha! Last night I realised I was on a side quest, so I finished the side quest altogether. And then I noticed that I had a big boss to fight. So, I just went ahead and fought the boss. And I got it out of the way. I've played that part before, when I first originally had the game. So, I knew exactly what to do. I just wanted to get that out of the way because I know that if I don't defeat it, it's gonna screw up my whole gaming. So, I knew if I defeat that boss and do that side quest then I'll be fine. And I know exactly what to go to from there.

RESEARCHER

Why was it important for you to get it over with?

PARTICIPANT 6

The thing was, it was my opportunity to kinda release from my whole day as far as killing stuff. So as far as that goes I thought "Okay, let me defeat the boss. This will take out all my frustration from the day. I can get mad at the boss, whatever I can do." It's kinda like my punching bag almost. And then I was able just to defeat him. Haha!

RESEARCHER

So, this was added to your list of accomplishments for the day?

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah! Yeah, basically. If you can't beat a hard boss, it's gonna bother you all night. And you have to worry about it the next day. You might as well just get it done and over with and try to do the best you can. Until you get sick of it. Haha! One time when I was trying to beat something. I think I tried it about six times. It took me about three or four hours to do, but I finally beat it. I could not go to bed unless I got it done. It felt like a big wave of relief that just washed over me. So, it was more of the sense that "You know, I finally did this. I can finally relax. I'm done!" That was Tales of Xillia Part 2. And I had just finished the whole game, I beat it from beginning to end. And at the end there's this big hard boss that the only way you'll be able to defeat him is if you get all these items. And I made sure I got all the items before that. But it's just a matter of me levelling it up. That was just the hard part. Last night I played Part 1. I went back and did the backstory. I'm not really loyal to the last game, only because it's a different kinda format than I'm used to. It's kinda when Final Fantasy did, Final Fantasy 12, when they did the slashing rather than the turn-based RPGs. I didn't really care for that. In Xillia it's more of the hack and slash rather than the turn-based RPGs, but I'm used to controlling it. Final Fantasy didn't really let me control it. It was just weird how they did it. There was a lot of mashing, and okay, well you got to press this button, or do this thing. Xillia you can do all these different buttons at the same time, and you'll be able to perform special attacks.

RESEARCHER

Any other franchises that have kept your attention for a while?

PARTICIPANT 6

Mario especially, but as far as other franchises, not really. I like different games of different genres sometimes, but the Tales of series just caught my attention. There's this one game, Legend of Dragoon for PlayStation 1. I just recently started that again. It brought me back to my childhood, because I'm like "Oh wow. I forgot I even played this." Just by playing it, it brought back a lot of memories. Basically, it's about this guy that lost his home and his family to this black monster. And he grows up and finds out

Peralta, R.P.

one of his best friend's kid is kidnapped by the black monster and goes out to find her. He finds out he has these dragon powers called the dragoons. And there's different elements, the fire element, the wind element, the light element, the dark element, they're all dragons. And as the game goes on you acquire all these other characters, kinda like Final Fantasy, but they all have dragon powers. And you fight people based on those powers.

RESEARCHER

How did that nostalgia made you feel?

PARTICIPANT 6

It makes me feel kinda at ease because I've played the game before and know how to get around it. It's a way to just lay back and just chill. I don't have to worry about anything because I know what to do already. It's basically like the old PS1 format. You know how the PS1 was very blocky with their graphics. It was just like that and that's always been kinda a fascination of mine. It's like "Oh wow, I remember this from when I was a kid." It was just like one of those childhood moments like, yeah, this is what I grew up on.

RESEARCHER

When you initially played that game, what was going on in your life then?

PARTICIPANT 6

I think I was 12 or 13 and I remember that that was a time that I found out I had another father. And I remember playing that and really it just made me feel at ease with myself. I didn't have to pay attention to nothing, I just focused on that. And that just became my outlet.

RESEARCHER

Any other all-time favourite games?

PARTICIPANT 6

Crash Bandicoot was for the longest time. And then once I started getting into the PS2 format, it was Final Fantasy and then Nintendo 64 there was Mario and all them. But yeah, a lot of Mario. A lot of Crash Bandicoot, and Legend of Dragoons have always been in my top three. Today I played Super Mario 64 because I remember watching a YouTube video about and thought "I haven't played that in a while. I want to play it again. And this time I want to make sure I get all the stars. I want to make sure I get every single thing that happens in that game." Because I was able to achieve the secret ending.

RESEARCHER

And you remembered where everything was?

PARTICIPANT 6

Mostly? Haha! I did have to look online for a couple things, but I remembered where to go from childhood. I remembered where to go from there. You have to get different powers in order to achieve getting the stars and I completely forgot about some of them so I'm glad I checked that up online. I played on an emulator on my computer with a controller. I mainly play all my game with a controller. It's easier that way.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

How has Mario followed you in your life?

PARTICIPANT 6

It followed me because I've always been interested in the newer games. Like when they came out with Mario Kart I'm like, "Oh my god that's awesome!" Who would have thought you put Mario on a dune buggy would be so much fun to play? And then they came out with the RPG one and then the free world one. It evolved how I evolved. I began to explore other different types of genres of videogames and Mario has been that one thing that evolved with me.

RESEARCHER

Do you have any favourite Mario games?

PARTICIPANT 6

That's a tough one. Mario 64 is definitely one of them. Another one was the actual new Super Mario Brothers for the Wii. I loved that one. And I loved Super Mario 3 on the original NES. I remember as a kid, playing the levels and I especially hated the water world. I didn't like being the frog. I'd rather have the fire power or the wings, that's it. I had the original Smash Brothers for N64 and then when my N64 crashed then I just didn't get it again. Haha! But I did play the later ones on the WiiU and all that, and that was pretty fun, but my top three were the ones I mentioned earlier. I followed the gameplay. Going from a different Mario world to another, it was like "Oh! I'm travelling along with you, that's kinda cool!" Seeing it from a different spot. The second Mario, I didn't like. And Paper Mario. I didn't care for that one too much. I didn't care for both of them. Those were the only two I really didn't like. I liked the Mario sports games, those were actually kinda fun, but those are more meant to play with my friends rather than myself. If I'm with some friends, I'll play Mario Kart or Mario Tennis.

RESEARCHER

What else did you play and for how long in the past week?

PARTICIPANT 6

Probably 10, maybe 15 hours at the very most. It was the Mario, I didn't play any Friday the 13th this week because my computer's been kinda laggy with it. There's a new update and I tried to get into it, but it was stalling very bad. I definitely need a new computer now. But it was mainly Mario, Xillia, and I think that was it. Except for my mobile games, like my Pokémon Go! but that was about it. I got maybe a couple hours at the very most. I could only do it on break or going into work and that was about it. I got a little bit of walking in! The servers crashed this past week, so I wasn't able to get on for a couple days.

RESEARCHER

How do you manage that?

PARTICIPANT 6

I try to play something else on my phone but it's not the same. I have the Yu-Gi-Oh! trading card game, and I played maybe an hour of that. I usually discard the phone at that moment and go play a game that will work. Haha! Like on my computer I have the emulator for Gameboy Advanced so usually I can play Pokémon on that one and I don't have to rely on any servers.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about your new course?

PARTICIPANT 6

I feel like I've started all over again. Not in a bad way, mostly in a good way, because this time I can manage my time a lot better than I did last time. So especially with my training being over, thank god. I actually sat down this morning after I did my schoolwork and after I played my videogame and wrote down a little schedule of what I can do and what games I could play and that helped me. Usually I'm off Wednesdays and Thursdays for the next couple weeks. So, Wednesday can be my school day. I can get done with my assignments and then I can play my videogames until about 6 o'clock on. And then Thursday will be my day to kinda relax, like do laundry if I need to. And I work Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. During the morning I can get up, if I had any leftover school work I could do that as well. Other than that, I'm just waiting to go to work.

RESEARCHER

How much time are you able to spend with other people?

PARTICIPANT 6

My partner, I see him every day, but he works 8am to 8pm so we really only see each other in passing. It sucks but it is what it is. I actually did get a notification that I could become a trainer at work, so they put me up for a trainer position, but I have get to receive an interview yet. So, I'm waiting on that, and if that happens then I'll have a more scheduled base. I'm excited about that. I did graduate this week. My scores, I was not the highest, but I was the second from highest. And she's like "You have the urge to do this. You know what to do. Why don't you just apply for the trainer position?" I'm like "I didn't think I could being new." She's like "No go ahead and apply for it." So, I applied for it. It makes me feel successful, like I've actually done something that others can look up to me and say "Hey, if I'm having an issue he knows what to do."

RESEARCHER

Would you rank those life successes equally with some of your success in games?

PARTICIPANT 6

If I get an accomplishment I've never had before I'm over the moon, because I worked that hard to get that kinda achievement, that's amazing in my option. But as far as life achievements, they're a little bit higher on the scale.

RESEARCHER

Personally, at the end of the day I lump in my successes at work, school, and the games I've played. I'm curious if you do the same.

PARTICIPANT 6

Oh yeah, absolutely! If I think I did a really good job at work, at my personal life and on my videogame, then I think I've had a pretty damn good day. Haha! Especially if it's a boss that I have yet to defeat that was undefeated. That just made my night a whole lot better. My life and videogames have always merged together. Like I can't go to work without movie quotes, or videogame trivia, or something like that. It's always been a part of my life.

RESEARCHER

Are you active on social media in terms of gaming?

PARTICIPANT 6

I have Facebook and just started getting back into Instagram. Also, on Discord, I found out there's a Discord channel for Gaymers, so I joined that. I've been pretty active on social media too. I'm actually an administrator for the Friday the 13th LGBT community one. We have about 400 members and we're still growing string by the day. There's about 4 other administrators on there. Mainly we just talk about the new updates. That's one way to connect with friends on PS4, Steam, or Xbox1. It's a great place to meet new friends and you don't have to worry about the racial slurs that you can get with multiplayer games.

RESEARCHER

Do you notice trends in the mental health in any of these groups?

PARTICIPANT 6

Actually, now that you mention it, there are a couple people that I'm worried about. Not like they're gonna hurt themselves, but they're just very odd. I'm not sure how to explain it. They're not who I thought they were gonna be in a sense, if that makes any kinda sense at all. Yeah, they're just odd to me. I don't think they have very much friendship or they have social anxiety maybe? There's only a couple in there, but other than that it's a great group to be in. I have no complaints about them.

RESEARCHER

Do you think any coaching or counselling service to appeal to gamers if they knew "Oh, I can talk to a gay gamer that may understand some of the mental health I'm managing?"

PARTICIPANT 6

Oh yeah! Because I mean, honestly, I feel like if we have more of the gaming community out as psychologists that can actually help people. Because a lot of people take their frustrations in life out on videogames. And that's how they live their life is by socialising people online. So, if we had more of the psychologist aspect of it maybe it could actually help more people. As I said, on Friday the 13th the game especially, you have people that are being singled out because they're gay or they don't act like you do. And that's mainly why I love the group that I'm in on Facebook. Because we accept everybody. It doesn't matter, gay, straight, bi, whatever, we accept you for who you are. But we don't allow harassment or violence in our group. If we any of that we let you go. So, I think that would be a really good thing to actually follow up on.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

Tell me what you played in the last week and for how long.

PARTICIPANT 6

I played for the first time in probably a couple days. I played Friday the 13th again. I actually got my computer to actually work this time. So, I was actually able to play, and I did a few rounds. And then I was like "Oh. Wait a minute. I have a school assignment due! Crap." So, I had to go back on and figure out exactly how to do my school assignment, but I just finished, so I'm happy for that. Thankfully all I had to do was read a poem and analyse it. And that was it. It literally only took me two hours at the very most. Actually, I haven't really gotten to play any games this week. I had a lot of work to do at work. And working a lot of overtime. So, it's mainly a lot of that. And believe it or not today was the first day in four days that I've actually played. So overall a total of maybe 6 hours I played altogether this week, which is not like me at all. Haha! It was actually really funny because I saw this new game that I wanted to download. It's like an old school RPG format NES format kinda game. They based it off of a TV series called Stranger Things on Netflix. It's on the Android store and the Apple Store. It's basically like an NES game. You go around, and you find your party and you go through different episodes. It's actually pretty cool. I downloaded it 20 minutes ago and I started playing it automatically. Basically, you start out as the sheriff and he gets this call and you pretty much you go around trying to find money or these parts or weapons. It's like a puzzle game almost. Basically, it toggle switches to go through the different levels because you're in this big lab and the point where I got to, was I actually found one of the other characters that was able to use a slingshot and go to the other side of the room to do damage to enemies. So, it's actually pretty well done.

RESEARCHER

When do you choose to binge watch your programmes as opposed to playing videogames?

PARTICIPANT 6

It also depends on when I have the time. That's pretty much the justice of it. Usually if I know a show's coming out I make sure I have time for it. As far as videogames go, if I'm done watching the show, I have nothing else to do, that's when I'll start gaming.

RESEARCHER

What else do you allocate your time to aside from videogames and TV?

PARTICIPANT 6

Work is another thing because I'm trying to get as much money as I can. And I'm trying to show that I'm responsible and that I can be relied on, so I can get a promotion. Mainly spending time with my partner and my roommates are another thing. Because I realise that with my schedule and my partner's schedule we don't get to see each other that much. But whenever we do we cherish it. Basically, he picks me up from work and that's pretty much our spending time together before we both fall asleep. Interesting fact, my boyfriend actually got back into gaming again. He got this game called Epic Mickey 2. I've never heard of that before in my life. He just got it for the PS3, so I'm like "Ooh! Maybe me and you can play!" He's like "Yeah, basically we need to go to the store and get another controller." So, we might actually start playing cooperatively. We played co-op, like the original Super Mario Brothers, we have, any kinda puzzle games we try to do, because that's just our thing, we're very intellectual on the puzzle

Peralta, R.P.

aspect of it. Any kinda puzzle games is what we're good at. We'll sit there, and we'll figure out a puzzle. Like if he doesn't understand a part of it maybe I will. And we work on that together as a team. That's why I like playing with him so much because we're of the same mind but at the same time we think differently. I'm more a think outside of the box while he's strictly by the books, so we complement each other.

RESEARCHER

It sounds like you value that intellectual challenge together whilst investing in time together. I appreciate that.

PARTICIPANT 6

Yeah, it's something we kinda talked about when we first started dating. And then it all of a sudden just exploded when we started playing videogames. Because we're standing there solving all these puzzles that no one, that I don't think anyone else solved before, so. One game was definitely the Tales of Xillia game. Because sometimes I'll look online when I don't know what to do, but he's like, "Why don't you go back to that place since it had kinda like a puzzle aspect to it. Go back to that place, and follow what the design says, and maybe you can go ahead and go through to the next level." And you're like, "You know what, you're right! I've never thought about that!" Because I thought there was like some other person I needed to talk to or go and finish another task before playing this one. He'll sit there and tell me things that I don't really comprehend until maybe I looked it up online and I'm like "Oh, yeah. Well if I sat there and looked at it I could have looked at it and figured it out."

RESEARCHER

What else did you play in those 6 hours?

PARTICIPANT 6

I did play Friday the 13th for a little bit. Of course, I played the new Stranger Things one. And I played the Witch It game that I have.

RESEARCHER

Remind me, what kept your attention in this game?

PARTICIPANT 6

It's the excitement of it. I think I mentioned earlier that I tend to lean toward games that really excite me. It's not really like a scheduled thing. It's not the same thing over and over again. This game, you can transform into these different objects and you can hide. It's just the thrill of the hunt. Or if you're the hunter, then you know it's to find out who these people are. And just getting rid of them. And it's like "Okay, well, I sent this thing out and it says it's right here, but where is it?" And plus, you get to find new destinations where you can hide in your future games as well.

RESEARCHER

The appeal seems similar to Friday the 13th due to the thrill of hunting and hiding.

PARTICIPANT 6

Peralta, R.P.

Yeah, exactly. In Friday you can hide in different spots. And you can try to have Jason distracted with a radio and I can hide under a bed until he goes in that room and I can slip out the window.

RESEARCHER

How does that kind of game correlate with your real life?

PARTICIPANT 6

I think it's because I don't have a sense of adventure here. It's pretty much, I go to work, I come home, I go to school, I go to sleep, I eat. So, there's really no excitement for me to actually go and explore things or do anything. So, this game kinda replaces what I'm missing in life. There's an option in the game where you can actually kill Jason. You know, sometimes I'll go for that kill, I'm like "You know, I can't do this in real life, so I imagine that's someone that I really hate. So why not just do it to a fictional character?"

RESEARCHER

The appeal for Stranger Things?

PARTICIPANT 6

Anything that appeals to me as a show, if I can play it as a game that's wonderful! That means I can enter their lives, and I can pretend I'm living vicariously through them. I'm a huge Friday the 13th fan. Nightmare on Elm Street, pretty much any scary movie. Haha!

RESEARCHER

What anxiety have you been experiencing at school this week?

PARTICIPANT 6

I wouldn't say that it's really like a stressful issue, it's just that my instructor has been away for three weeks, so I haven't really gotten a grade yet. That's been kinda the controlling "Okay well, what if I don't pass this subject? What if he doesn't grade them?" In all honesty I actually sent an email to my student advisor and was like "Listen, I don't know what's going on. I haven't got anything graded." And then he told me "Oh yeah, the instructor left on a family emergency, he won't be back for another couple weeks." So, I'm like "So, I'm doing all these assignments and not getting a grade for them. How am I supposed to write this final paper without suggestions or anything else?" And on top of that there really hasn't been anything. Everything pretty much calmed down at work too. And I've actually gotten a lot of good feedback, so that's actually calmed my anxiety down a little bit because I thought I was gonna fail.

RESEARCHER

What are the benefits to you of gaming?

PARTICIPANT 6

Enhanced motor skills is a huge one. Let's say you're playing Wii. The Wii is a controller that you use with your hands, so it's movements. My brother for instance, he got into a really bad car accident and my mom got him a Wii. Right now, he's actually able to use his hands as a signal, whereas before he wasn't able to use his hands at all. So, using the benefit of enhanced motor skills by using controllers actually helped him move his hands on his own.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

How do you think what you've shared with me in this study benefit someone else?

PARTICIPANT 6

It could actually teach them about different games to play, because I know some people have a hard time finding games to play based on what they're feeling. So, if they're feeling stressful or enraged they could take that out on an alien or a serial killer in the woods, based on the video games I play. Also, it brings a sense of relaxation because you remember those games as a kid. So, you're able to actually be at peace with that. You're like "Hey, I remember this as a kid. This actually relaxes me. It gives me a sense of control." Also, you see other people right now, they're socially awkward because they don't know how to make friends with anybody. And for me, like three months, I had no friends, on any computer games. And I just started chatting with people on Friday the 13th forums and everything. Now I've got 30 friends on my Steam account that I regularly play with. So, it's a good social outlet. It allows me to get out. I mean, I'm not one to sit out there and go make a friend off the bat, you know? It just gives me a sense of "Oh wow, I actually have a couple friends."

RESEARCHER

How else would you use this information to help others?

PARTICIPANT 6

Part of this Friday the 13th group, as I said, I'm an administrator for. And yeah, we did have an instance about a couple days ago where someone was doing hate speech and just being very disrespectful. And we apologised to all of our people that we are in this group with. And we let them know that this is a safe place and there is no hate speech allowed. There's no form of harassment at all, and if there is something to please let us know because we'd like to get rid of it. This is a safe place to be and if anybody has anything they want to talk about to message me. In these communities you find people with similar interests and you're like "Okay we can do this and this" and maybe there may be an achievement that we don't have yet so maybe we can work together as a team to earn that achievement and we can go farther in the game than we already have.

RESEARCHER

Tell me more about being a part of the Queer gamer community.

PARTICIPANT 6

Let me just put it this way, I don't really have a stance of who I associate with. You could be gay, straight, trans, bi, whoever. But I know how hard it was to actually try to find who I was as a person being a gay guy, being a gamer. And so, when I found this group I finally felt a sense of belonging that I've always been wanting. So, with that case I usually try to stay towards what I most comfortably feel playing with. For instance, the people in my group. They're all really good people. We may kid around, we may add voices to our characters, or we may just act a fool, or whatever, but it's something that I've always wanted to find. And I was never able to find it until now. And so, I'm very thankful I actually get to find people that I can actually connect with on not only an intellectual level but also the same aspect and mindset that I am.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

Tell me what you've played in the past week and for how long.

PARTICIPANT 7

Well I'm on PS4 a lot, I'm actually on at the moment. Haha! Because gaming's a lot of time waster in uni, so just, whatever, no one's in, just play games constantly. I'm on PlayStation 4, PlayStation Plus subscription, so I play a lot of free games. The last few months I've been quite good, so I've been playing Infamous Second Son, is what I'm on right now, since I've got like this addiction of all collectibles and stuff from like Assassin's Creed days. I'm just sitting there 100%-ing it, walking through it. Infamous and Madden I've played over the last week, but a lot. Haha! About 40? Three hours a day on Infamous, so 21, 25 hours. The rest, Madden, career mode, when you want something a bit more relaxing.

RESEARCHER

When you're gaming, what makes it relaxing for you?

PARTICIPANT 7

It's just some games, I used to be into the old classics, just like Call of Duty basically. And it's very competitive. It's very intense, very fast paced. But then stuff like FIFA or Madden, put it on a low difficulty and just play that for a bit to relax yourself or when you go to sleep, something like that. It's just a lot easier. Plus, some Destiny recently, played that Trials of the Nine. There's an online marathon on Destiny 2, called Trials of the Nine. That's been pretty intense the last couple of weekends. Didn't do very well. Haha! We're awful. I've got like a group of about five mates and every week, because the challenges reset every week and we're powering up. Once a week we just log on, power through them all, then we speak next week. Haha!

RESEARCHER

What prompts you to play Madden on a low level to relax? Were you at school or is it just a long day?

PARTICIPANT 7

It's either, when I'm tired because I do hockey training as well. And I'm not usually used to sport, that's a new thing for me. So, it takes it out of me quite a bit. So, it's either that or when I've been playing an intense game and I just want to rest a bit. From uni, I don't know, I'm not really tired from uni. I don't have that long a day.

RESEARCHER

What things have caused anxiety thus far at university this year?

PARTICIPANT 7

From uni, can't really think of any major issues because the work isn't that busy yet. It hasn't gotten to a stage yet where it's intense. So, it's just been like, read a paper, analyse it, that's about it really. There's been a couple of nights where I've been out a bit too late when I shouldn't have. And getting in the next morning, and it's been a bit horrible, I've been falling asleep in my lecture and stuff like that. It wasn't fun, but other than that. Haha! I'm on the hockey team, so I have to go to the social every Wednesday and I'm in at 9am on Thursdays. Haha!

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

What year are you?

PARTICIPANT 7

I'm second, studying psychology.

RESEARCHER

Of the games you've mentioned, tell me what keeps your attention with them.

PARTICIPANT 7

I like the community of it, because I've got all my mates back home because we all used to play Destiny 1. So, now that I've come to uni I'm away from them all we play Destiny 2 together so that's kinda my way of getting back to them. But Infamous, it's just, I've always loved Assassin's Creed, just running around doing collectibles and basic missions, the story of it all, so I enjoy all that. That's my main one that I just waste time on. It's a good time waster because getting collectibles, you just plan a route and just go around, and you lose your mind a bit.

RESEARCHER

It sounds like there's some level of accomplishment from collecting things. Why do you think that is?

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah. Being OCD. Haha! Keeping it all clean on the map. Keeping all the map clean from all the little icons. I am definitely the clean freak of the house. I like the kitchen to be, I can't cook food in the kitchen without all the dishes being done, stuff like that. Haha!

RESEARCHER

When you switch on Infamous, do you cognitively think "I need to feel like I accomplish something?"

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah, because on the game it's like districts on the map, so there's different things in each district, and I'll go on, do one, and just log off again sometimes if I'm really bored.

RESEARCHER

It sounds like you value being able to connect with friends from home.

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah, when I'm at home, we all live in the same place, and there's a Wetherspoons right in the middle and we all kinda live around it. Haha! We used to go out like 4 or 5 times a week. I'm very close with my mates there. A good group of 5 or 10 of us who all go at like, all the time so. The odd ones come to uni as well, but he's living in another house this year. I don't know how, I always end up in a massive social group, even when I'm not the head of the group. Haha! I just kinda tag along. Last year in student accommodation I was a part of three flats that all came together so there was a group of 18 of us that used to just drink all the time together. But then this year we couldn't get the house of 18, so we just got two halves of 8 and 2 of us just disappeared. One of my mates is in the other house, but I still see him. We go out for drinks all the time. Otherwise, the odd one's at Liverpool, but other than that most, a lot, of them more sort themselves out with careers and stuff like that. Like one of them is a chef, one is an organiser. They sort themselves out.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Tell me what you get out of connecting with your friends through online gaming.

PARTICIPANT 7

Well, it can get a bit quiet in the house sometimes. Haha. Everyone does different things. We have movie nights and stuff like that. But when I'm a bit tired to socialise almost, I can't be bothered watching a movie I'll come to my room and all my mates will be online and I was like "Right, let's just do some strikes," something like that. It'll be talking to them on me phone all day as well. Just something to do really. Online we don't talk about the game though. We just play and just talk in the background.

RESEARCHER

Some gamers strictly don't want to talk about life and prefer to discuss strategy and such.

PARTICIPANT 7

There was stuff like that when we're going Trials of the Nine, when it matters, but like most of the time no. Like it's all like "Woah, look at my guy dance!" Haha! Banter. I don't think me or any of my mates are aggressive at all, so we'll just take the piss out of each other constantly. I tend to surround myself with non-aggressive people. Like everyone I become friends with isn't aggressive. I just think I don't really get along with people who are. Because I'm not the most serious person when it comes to stuff like that. Like I don't see a point in being serious about it all because it's for fun. I am not good online. I'm awful at Player Versus Player. I'm easily the worst, so if someone's annoyed at me I'll laugh it off. Haha! There's no point.

RESEARCHER

It's evident then that you use gaming to relax.

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah, just to bring myself back down to neutral. Haha.

RESEARCHER

What things cause you anxiety that you have to game to relax?

PARTICIPANT 7

I don't know. I can't think of anything really that pushes me other the edge with stress. Some things need to be perfect maybe. Little things annoy me, when I go to the gym, most days. Little things, like, people putting the weights back in the wrong order, the pool being too full. Haha! That will like, put me in a bad mood. Not a bad mood, but it's annoying. Stuff like that, but there's nothing in particular that I can think of really. I can give you something actually, yeah. Since we moved into this new house, the landlord at the beginning. I don't know why, but it's like he never worked with students before. So, he expects the rent on the first of September which was way before the loan came in so we all had to complain about that. And then he went "Alright, I'll wait til the 20th when the loans in." And at 2 o'clock in the morning on the 20th sends everyone a message all like "Alright you've had your loan, get it in." But some of us still hadn't had it either. I had a bit of stress at the beginning because my loan took a while to come in. And he kept messaging me every day to get me rent in. So, I was stressing out a little bit but when that got sorted I was all fine. Recently, last night, yesterday he messaged us and said that four girls are coming to look at the house today. Haha, just out of nowhere! We went "Right, okay." And she

Peralta, R.P.

went, "Anyway you don't have to be here. I'll let them in and stuff like that." And we're like "Okay..." Less than 24 hours for a bunch of strangers coming into our house. Just viewings for next year already. And even though most people in the house want to stay here next year, all we'd have to do is put down our £50 deposit. Already. All the other people who want to come here its £250, but it's first come first serve. That's a hard decision to make so early because a lot happens in a year, like some people get on placement next year and they're not guaranteed a placement yet and stuff like that so.

RESEARCHER

How do you think gaming has helped construct your personal identity and who you are?

PARTICIPANT 7

My first gaming experience was when I was about four years old, maybe younger because me dad gave me his Nintendo64. I was playing that. I still have it. I still play it, because I grew up in a generation where obviously games have become huge. Games are massive now. It's like everyone knows how to talk about it. It's an easy one to be social about. I have played a lot of games. So, you know how the trophy system works? I am a much higher level than anyone else on, especially platinums, my friend's list. Way higher, with lots of trophies. To get trophies, especially platinums, you'll sit there, plan about how you can get five trophies in one go. And then about four hours later you're still doing the exact same trophies. Haha! You don't realise how far the time's gone.

RESEARCHER

It's another sense of accomplishment I find.

PARTICIPANT 7

Because for Infamous my plan is just to play through it twice. Because in Infamous, if you know about them, it's like, you choose good and evil. Obviously, I completed it as evil and I completed it as good. For trophies, I think I'm in the last 70%. I just need to complete it on the hardest difficulty as evil. I'm doing all the collectibles and then that's it then, just the story. There's games I've wanted to platinum, but I couldn't because of online trophies and the online gets cancelled. Like I did, my first platinum was Assassin's Creed 2 and then I got Revelations, but then with Assassins Creed 3 it wasn't as good as the others. It took me a bit longer to do. So, I did all the collectible, but by the time I got to online it was only a month left before the servers shut down, because the next one came out, so I didn't really have time to do it. So, it's sitting there at about 89%. L.A. Noire was a but platinum for me on PS3 by Rockstar. That took me ages that one.

RESEARCHER

I keep hearing how satisfying it is for you to get all these trophies and essentially tick all these trophies off. How do you organize things in your life, whether it's planning for a paper or holiday?

PARTICIPANT 7

I went on a holiday in the past year and it was all very well organized. We were all paid off months before the holiday. In terms of preparing for essays and exams and stuff like that, I am awful. I don't revise, I do it last minute. I am very much the night before. Because I am very much the night before because I don't feel the motivation to do it until the pressure of the deadline really. Like until he deadline is there I don't really care.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

How do you feel about that disconnect?

PARTICIPANT 7

It's always annoyed me but there's nothing, I say there's nothing I can do about it but, I just sit there, and I look at my screen and I can't do anything about it. Haha! My mind won't do it, so.

RESEARCHER

Is that something you're okay with or would you like to change that?

PARTICIPANT 7

Well, I've always had good grades. Like I'm still a high 2-1, even though I don't revise anything. Haha! I know this year especially that may change. You need to read more. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Are you afraid of failure in a course or anything like that?

PARTICIPANT 7

There was one occasion last year where I went under the word count, even though I wrote everything I could, I just couldn't think of a single thing to add to it and I was under the word count, so I thought "It caps at 40 if you don't hit the word count or something like that" but I still got a high 2-1 on it, so. What I did last year was Skype with a mate with similar study habits and just talk but do it, but that almost became a race, so it made it a bit more competitive. Haha!

RESEARCHER

So, it sounds like you so see yourself as generally a capable student.

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah. I don't find myself like I don't know anything. Like when I'm in lectures even though it's one of those questions where the whole room goes silent and no one answers, I do know it in the back of my mind like I've heard it before. Like I do know it, I'm just not brave enough to say it even if I'm definitely right. Do you know Simon Goodson? Oh, I love him! He's brilliant! Haha! He knows me and my mate from last year and he loves us and every lecture he looks at us and says "Stop smilin' or tell me the answer." And we're just sitting there in silence. Haha! Every single lecture he stares at us too!

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

Tell me what games you've played in the past week and for how long each.

PARTICIPANT 7

I'm pretty sure it's only been Infamous Second Son still. I'm still doing that expert story because I'm about 70% of the way through now. Nearly done all that. Done all the trophies apart from story ones. I've played it for about four hours a day so, about 20 to 30 hours. Just that. I couldn't have played Madden because something happened with the file, so it got corrupted, so I had to delete it and redownload it. So, I haven't been playing that at all. That takes forever to download so just Infamous this week.

RESEARCHER

How do you feel about your progress for Infamous thus far?

PARTICIPANT 7

Good. I expected it to be a lot harder on Expert. But like, it's one of those games where, in like games like Dark Souls where you die you end up miles away from where you were, and Infamous, if anything sometimes, if you hit somewhere if anything you jump forward a little bit if you die, so it's not as frustrating. It's not a bad game to be bad at. It's just a grind. I just sit there and do it.

RESEARCHER

What are you hoping to get out of finishing it on expert?

PARTICIPANT 7

Platinum. Haha! And the freedom, to go onto another game. Haha!

RESEARCHER

So, for you, you have to platinum a game before you can move on?

PARTICIPANT 7

If the platinum is possible, yeah. If I can tell that I'm not gonna make the platinum, then I'll just do the story and enjoy it and then go to another one. One that annoys me is Far Cry 4. I did every single trophy in that apart from these two ones you needed a co-op partner for, which my mate has the game as well, but the only game he only plays is FIFA. So, putting him in a game like Far Cry, he wasn't like a serious gamer, so he never even got to the second mission where co-op becomes available. So, I was just stuck with this game with two trophies to do. Haha!

RESEARCHER

Have you considered looking in gaming groups online for a co-op partner to complete these with?

PARTICIPANT 7

They're such petty trophies there's no point because it wasn't like "Do a mission." It's just like "Jump out of a car while your friend is driving." Haha! Just stupid little ones that are too petty to bring someone else online. Like with Destiny, the only platinum I've got to do is the raid but getting six people online is a pain. Haha!

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about school and any anxiety from it over the past week.

PARTICIPANT 7

Well it's been pretty relaxed. I haven't had much work. I struggled to get in on the Thursday, but I did make it in the end. And on Monday, yesterday, I wasn't too good getting in. I didn't get in until about 1pm, when I was supposed to be in at 9am. That wasn't very good, but I think I'm starting too many late nights. I need to work my sleeping. But it's like even if I am going out, its actually, I haven't slept much last couple of nights, going out or not. Don't know why my sleeping pattern's just a bit wavy at the moment.

RESEARCHER

Are you currently training and in season for hockey?

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah, every Monday night is training. Every Wednesday night's a game. It's more exercise than I'm used to, but I go to the gym everyday so it's not like I need more sleep because of that. I'll go around 3pm, half 3 as my usual time, but there's times when I'll go late at about 8pm-ish. And there are times when I'll go in the morning around half six, seven-ish. Depends on when I'm awake.

RESEARCHER

Any other issues that caused anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 7

Not really. There was actually, I'll tell you one that's a bit less to do with uni. I go to the pub a lot. And I'm a lot more popular, to the point where the bartenders even know me. But I was talking to a girl from there. And I've been talking to her all week, but it turns out she has a boyfriend who she broke up with the night I started talking to her. And so, whenever I go to the pub, since she broke up with him, she doesn't come to that pub anymore. But when I go to the pub the boyfriend recognises me, so... Haha! And he's much older, but I don't think he'd ever do anything because I'm with my group of friends and he always goes on his own, so I'm sitting there with it in the back of my mind. Suddenly the place where I feel the most relaxed, I'm like "This stinks" as he's staring at me from the corner of the room.

RESEARCHER

How do you deal with that?

PARTICIPANT 7

As long as I keep telling myself he's not gonna do anything because I don't think he will. It's fine. They didn't go out for very long, so it's more him being a bit petty.

RESEARCHER

Has gaming had any impact on your identity development?

PARTICIPANT 7

Yeah, if anything it's helped me socialise. Because, with my close friend group, there's about ten of us in my really close friend group back home. We always go out all the time. But we're split down the middle

Peralta, R.P.

of who're got PS4 and who's got Xbox. If anything, it helps it because that means we're not spending every minute of every day talking to each other. Because we all play quite a bit, so we'll go to the pub, we'll enjoy our time, and then when they've got their own Xbox group and I've got my own PS4 group. So, it stops us, because if we were talking together all the time we'd go to the pub and we'd just be sitting there in silence or sitting there on our phones because we don't have things to talk about. Gaming is the bridge between socialising. So, if anything it does help a bit because I was never quiet one at school. I've always been quite a loud, open person. But It's just kinda a place to reset yourself, gaming. You sit there, you cool off, and then you go get back in again. When I was in school I used to game all the time. Especially when I was in primary school my mom would work late so I'd go to me Nan's and I had a console there as well. And it was just a thing to waste time like there's no tomorrow.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits when you were younger.

PARTICIPANT 7

I had me first console, a Nintendo 64, when I was very, very young and I played with my dad quite a lot. My mom and dad separated when I was about 3 years old. I still see him like every month. But my dad has always liked Nintendo. He's a massive fan of Legend of Zelda. He recently bought the WiiU on the Nintendo Switch just to get the new Zelda. Haha! It's the only games he has. He buys every console just for the new Zelda. So, I had a Nintendo 64 when I was younger. If I went on it now, my dad would have 100% file on every single game. Haha! When I was younger, you don't really understand the game but you're playing it. When I was younger, because I didn't have a brother to play with me, so I'd sit there playing a game I didn't understand. Haha! Like if a cousin comes round and wants to play a game I'll play with them, and I won't know what's going on, but he wont either. So, I can just pretend. I just sat there not knowing what the hell was going on. Haha! I just pressed buttons on random games. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How did you feel about having to sort out games on your own?

PARTICIPANT 7

With Nintendo 64, this was before games got very creative, so there wasn't touch pads or anything like that. There was a game I used to play called S.C.A.R.S, which is just a basic racing game, bit like Mario Kart. And It wasn't until I was about seven years old that there was actually more than one car. Haha! I used to just drive around this exact same track over and over again and I would come dead last every time. Haha! Seven was a bit late, I'm exaggerating. When I met me best mate in school and he used to come round, and he was a massive gamer, he still is, and we started discovering that you could unlock cars and stuff like that. So, we just started powering through this one game. Other than that, the other games were way too complex, Zelda Ocarina of time. Massive game, but just messed around. First Village, didn't know what to do. Nowadays I complete that game three times a week. Haha! I've got the remastered version on DS, I've played it to death.

RESEARCHER

Why do you go back to play that?

PARTICIPANT 7

Because it's a great game. Ocarina of Time. My Nintendo 64, it got to the point where it did collect dust. Like I barely play it at all anymore, tucked under my bed now. I'll play it like once a year. I'll get it out just

Peralta, R.P.

for fun. But pretty much all the games for it have been remastered. But that racing game, I'll go back and play it again for the fun of it.

RESEARCHER

Do you talk about gaming with your dad?

PARTICIPANT 7

Well I see him a lot less frequently now. But I used to see him like once a month. Then it went down to one every three months. Now I see him like twice a year at most. When I see him it's not really a full conversation. Haha! We'll meet in the same place in Liverpool every time and we'll talk about what's going on like last year, or Boxing Day I'll see him as well, but other than that. I did have a conversation with him about the Nintendo Switch and why he got it. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How do you think his gaming has affected you or your relationship?

PARTICIPANT 7

I had no older brother or anything, so he's the reason I game in general. Haha! It goes Nintendo 64 and then the Wii, jumped straight to Wii. Wait no, PS2 was my second console. I played a lot of PS2 as my main first console. Remember the Eye Toy? He had that and me and my sister used to play that quite a lot, so that was a lot more fun because I wasn't just sitting there on my own for hours in the dark. Eye Toy was a lot more fun. Me and my sister still joke about that. When I had PS3 and started getting into multiplayer games and everything online, you could use the Eye Toy as a microphone.

RESEARCHER

Do you see yourself as a capable person with family, friends, or work colleagues?

PARTICIPANT 7

Well, I said I'm open and social. I had a job over summer. I haven't had that many jobs which include other people my age. A lot of my jobs have been like working in a warehouse, dust mask, fenders, goggles and all that. There wasn't much socialising, and they're all big burly men, so I get along with them, but they're not mates. So, I was working in a Sports Direct selling shoes, which is a good job for me because it's just talking to people all day, which I'm good at, and it's a lot of moving. I couldn't sit behind the till. I was rubbish behind the till because I'm just sitting there staring at the clock. It was a great job for me, it was competitive as well. I made a few mates there, especially with other shoe sellers. You're just laughing about it because you're talking about customer. Haha! Especially where I worked, which was a very, very rough part around where I live. So, the kinda people we'd serve are not the kinda people you'd speak to ever.

RESEARCHER

Would you say any of your gaming affects how you're interacting with people in your life aside from online gaming?

PARTICIPANT 7

With work, I don't think it really has an effect because no one there were much gamers. So, I had to not be a nerd when I was at work. Because I'll talk forever about games, but in work I really couldn't do it, I'd have to be normal. Haha! Around my mates because it's Xbox versus PS4, at the start of every

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month we always have a long discussion on who got better free games this month. Haha! Far too long discussion.

RESEARCHER

Do you ever use gaming to become more aware of things in your life?

PARTICIPANT 7

No, it's more to do with if I've already over complicated, like when you think about things too much before you sleep and stuff like that, and then I'll just, if it gets to the point where I can't sleep then I will game, but that's quite rare.

RESEARCHER

Has gaming ever reminded you of anything happening in your real life?

PARTICIPANT 7

I can't think of anything really. Because I play Madden so much, I'll be like "Oh, there's the uni's American football team." But they are all horrible people. I won't even go there. I actually like following the NFL, so I'm already interested in all that. But whenever I'm watching NFL every Sunday when I'm watching my team, I'll come back and be like "Oh! I want to play Madden now!" Haha! For hours and hours. To get it out of my system.

RESEARCHER

And how does Madden scratch that itch for you?

PARTICIPANT 7

If the Seahawks are playing badly. Haha! Which has been common recently. On Madden, the new one is fantastic. They update it every single week. And you can play this week's games, straight away, you just jump straight in. And the commentary gets updated every week with new stats. You get to play the actual line ups, it's all live action. It's amazing, new commentary all the time. So, I'll play the Seahawks game and I'll win by a considerably higher amount than what the Seahawks actually won. Haha! It's been a boring weekend. They're on by this week, so I'm just sitting here twiddling me thumbs like that.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

How are you doing?

PARTICIPANT 7

It's all Reading Week, so I'm having a bit of a break from all that. I haven't even thought about. Haha! The social has been cancelled this week. The game's not on this week. So, I'm just staying home all week. Don't have to go back and rush for anything.

RESEARCHER

What have you played and for how many hours each?

PARTICIPANT 7

Well, Infamous Second Son, I'm on the final mission now on expert, but I haven't brought the PS4 over, so I haven't been able to complete it. About 12 hours, maybe a bit more. I made sure to play Madden now that it's back downloaded, because the game this weekend, because you get to play the game of the week. So, I got my game in there and failed miserably. The actual game went a lot better than the game I played. Haha! When I came back I started playing Mass Effect 2 again on PS3 for a little bit, but I wouldn't really call it playing it. Just sit and walk around. Haha! I've been seeing a couple of my mates, just one by one because all my mates work like all day every day, so I've got to see them one by one each day. And I couldn't get them all out at once. So, I been to the bar a couple of nights, but not late, just to see them. I've been gonna the gym with my sister. It's gotten to the point now where if I don't go I feel a bit awkward during the day, kinda like I'm missing a shower. Kinda like I'm missing something. I feel uncomfortable during the day if I haven't been.

RESEARCHER

What else do you allocate time to for relaxation?

PARTICIPANT 7

I 80% of my life with headphones on listening to music. Haha! I just sit there and listen to music. I've always been a musician, so music is just massive so. Like my album collection's far too big. I've got like 130 albums just sitting in my room. Physical CDs. I do have a vinyl player, but I can't afford vinyl.

RESEARCHER

Why do you spend so much time getting lost in your music?

PARTICIPANT 7

I waste time. I enjoy it. A song will always be in my head. Then I'll go home and like "Right, I'm in the mood to listen to that now" and I'll listen to the whole album. What are you doing when you're listening to the album. Usually either cooking or just lying around. I'm listening with headphones as I go to sleep. That's how I want to wake up as well. I'll wake up about half an hour later and it'll be on a completely different album, be a different artist and I'll take me headphones out just in pain. Pretty much every night. My mind just goes into standby mode, like when gaming.

RESEARCHER

What else do you do?

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 7

I'm one of those people that just sits there and marathons a show. Anything that's long. Haha. And doesn't require reading. At the moment I like all me old classic British humour so I'm watching a lot of Red Dwarf again since the new season started. I've got that on DVD as well. Because much like everything else I like to collect things, so I've got loads of books, loads of CDs, loads of DVDs just sitting on me shelves, having all these material things. Haha! I got all the Red Dwarves though. I don't know why I've had a recent craving to watch all the Marvel films again. Just because I thought to watch it.

RESEARCHER

What keeps your attention with all of these things? These are all different forms of media.

PARTICIPANT 7

It just kinda depends on what mood I'm in that day. If I'm already really tired, then I'll be too tired to read. My eyes will struggle to stay open, so there's no point in trying to read so I'll close me eyes and listen to music. Or if my eyes are open I'll play games until my eyes are hurting. Haha! Then I'll read for a bit. I can't really think of an underlying theme. I was a musician since year 2 in school, so I would've been about 6 years old. I played loads. I started on French horn and trombone. And then I went on to piano, then drums, then guitar, and now I'm a bassist. I went through all of them, did each for about a year or two. Trombone I did for about four years. Now on bass, I've settled for the last five years. I've just stuck to bass and I'm enjoying it more. I don't know why I'm enjoying bass the most.

RESEARCHER

You seem to allow yourself to be drawn into whatever appeals to you at the time.

PARTICIPANT 7

Yes! I've said yes to pretty much everything. The option is there. Me joining hockey this year, I never do sport. Haha! I just joined it because people said "Yeah, go on then." I never do sport. Now I'm playing every single match. Haha!

RESEARCHER

It also seems like you either choose to do something to either shut off or intentionally engage.

PARTICIPANT 7

Right. Yes.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about when you play co-op with another person.

PARTICIPANT 7

Well me and my best mate, doesn't go to uni or anything. He works here so I see him. We used to only play local co-op. Because I still go to his. Like every weekend when I'm home. But it's harder now because with new generation consoles they don't really have split screen anymore. It doesn't really exist. So, we still go back to old consoles just to play certain games. It is a bit different. I do prefer co-op. I'm not really a fan of online co-op. But I'm not very good at it either. Destiny is the only one that I'll push the boat out for. Even then you're with your mates doing it. But I much prefer doing strikes where you're against AI. Like with Madden, I'll never play it online. Ever. Madden is one of those games where

Peralta, R.P.

if you're bad at it it's especially frustrating. Haha! So, if you're online, you're almost guaranteed that people will be better than you. Haha! So, you just got to sit there frustrating yourself so. I'm not even gonna give the risk.

RESEARCHER

Have you had any university related anxiety within the past week?

PARTICIPANT 7

Not that I can think of off the top of my mind. On Thursday I only had one lecture. For some strange reason we haven't really been given any work yet. We apparently have some assignment for early December. Haha! Which I saw someone mention before on the chat. I've no idea what they're talking about. So that's gonna be on the back of me mind for the next month, wondering what the hell I'm supposed to be doing. Everyone's talking about, for the next lab session, they're all gonna have a draft ready. I don't know what for. Some sort of lab report. No idea about the write up. I'll get it together again on Friday.

RESEARCHER

What are some of your favourite franchises and why?

PARTICIPANT 7

Going back to when my mate and I would play co-op all the time. That's definitely Star Wars Battlefront 2. The original one, not the new one. Excellent game! It's not one of the first games I've played. That was near the end of the PS2 era for me, but we used to play that to death. It's just a good game. We later downloaded it on Steam as well and we played it on PC for a long time as well. I never completed the story for that. Haha! It was always too hard at one point. Haha! Favourite game of all time, never completed it. I was too young to be good at it. Haha! I got it on PC. I might just do it when I get back. Haha! Even though I really don't like shooters, I've mentioned Battlefront 2 and on PS3 I loved all the Killzone games. I love all the Killzone games. I got all them! All the Resistance games. I really want them to remaster them. If they remastered them I'd spend a lot of money on that. Haha! There was a phase of all the Lego games that you mentioned before. Haha! They've all got really good stories. They're all really good for shooters. I've never been the Call of Duty fan. I prefer the story and the co-op challenges to live multiplayer. That draws it in for me. I think that's why, because all the Resistance games have a really good, long story. The first Killzone took me far too long, but it was remastered for PS3 in this big box set which I bought, and that first one was hard to get through because the graphics are so outdated now. Even when they're remastered. The whole place just looks like a maze. I just didn't know where to go, ever. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How do you think what you've shared with me could benefit others in this study?

PARTICIPANT 7

I know I'm a very relaxed person, but I also know that I have a lot of hobbies and a lot of interests, and a lot of things to keep me busy. So, I feel like that is the reason I'm relaxed, because if I'm bored I can think of something to do straightaway. I have options. People like my mate, he literally doesn't even have a TV in his room. He has to come into the living room. He hasn't got much to do. He doesn't have any hobbies. He's not part of any societies or anything. He doesn't go out much.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

How would you use information you've shared with me to help others?

PARTICIPANT 7

Use it as an example. Get hobbies, get interests, be involved. Even if it's uncomfortable, which for the most part it is for me at first. The only reason I joined hockey was because I knew one member and came out to the socials last year. So, I just kinda knew them anyway. So, it wasn't like me going into this group of new people. I half knew them all. But that's only because I went out in the first part. To just, actually say "yes" to things. Haha! I do not have the money to be saying yes to things, but I still do.

RESEARCHER

What about in terms of gaming?

PARTICIPANT 7

I think, even if it's your biggest interest, don't dedicate your life to it. Especially when you should be studying. Haha! Especially when you're in uni. Because some people miss days of uni just to game. I would never do that, as much as I want a platinum. As close as I'd be. Haha! I'd still go to uni if I had the choice of uni or PS4, even if I hate uni.

RESEARCHER

What would you say to someone who says gaming is bad for you?

PARTICIPANT 7

You're wrong! Haha! I find the kind of people who say that, and the people who say videogames causes violence are very uneducated when it comes to videogames, or haven't played them themselves, or can't play them themselves. I'm sure if I just gave my mom a controller she just wouldn't know what to do. She wouldn't have the hand eye coordination or anything.

RESEARCHER

What benefits have you seen for yourself?

PARTICIPANT 7

I don't say to myself, "Gaming does this for me." It's just, become such a big part of me life that if it went I'd be missing it loads. It's become like a natural thing to think of. It's just part of the persona, top of your mind, to go play PS4.

RESEARCHER

What happens when you can't play?

PARTICIPANT 7

Like now, I can't go play PS4. I'm sitting here thinking that Infamous platinum is very, very close and I know I'm gonna go back and it's gonna take 15 minutes. Haha! Especially, with PS3, I've played it to death. All the games I have on it I've completed. If I go on that there's not much for me to do. I'm nowhere near platinum on any of the games. It's basically a jumped-up DVD player right now really. Haha!

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

What have you played and for how long for the past week?

PARTICIPANT 7

I got back and instantly finished Infamous Second Son. That took 2 hours. Got platinum, deleted it straightaway. Haha! I had pre-ordered Assassin's Creed Origins, so I've been smashing that out. Only been here four days give it 10 to 12 hours so far. I'm not very far, it's very hard. I've pre-ordered every Assassin's Cree and completed them all in life two weeks. I've just smashed through each of them. Origins looked good, so I pre-ordered that and everything has changed, the whole level systems and the skills trees and everything. It's so hard, the combat in it. Like Borderline and Dark Souls and stuff and difficulty like that. I'm really struggling with it. I'll get there. And it's fun still! It's just hard. I still love the game! I didn't play Madden because the game was on before I got it, which Seahawks just about won.

RESEARCHER

Any anxiety in the past week from university?

PARTICIPANT 7

It's sort of to do with money. Because I've barely got any left. Like it's got to the point where I'm looking for weekend jobs. Over the summer I worked at Sports Direct, which, I didn't mind, I'm enthusiastic so I enjoyed it. But since leaving and coming to uni I passed the one in town every so often and I'm just like "I'm never going back there for Christmas. Not a chance." Haha! Now I'm looking for weekend jobs, so I don't have to work over Christmas really. It's not going over too well, I haven't found one yet. I'm taking two days off form the gym because I'm a little injured. Just from over training.

RESEARCHER

Are you part of any gaming groups or communities on social media?

PARTICIPANT 7

I follow all the big pages to get the recent news. They have to do with E3 and games and all the announcements. I follow all that. I was part of a Destiny one for a long time to find people for Raids and stuff like that. For a while I got into Steam on PC. I'm in quite a few groups on that, like random clans for random games. I get messages from them all the time. They're like "Are you still playing?" I'm like "It's been a very long time." I'm a part of big communities.

RESEARCHER

Anyone else on the hockey team play?

PARTICIPANT 7

Tell you what, we've never really spoke about it. Never really asked them, because I've always thought people who do sports and people who play games don't really blend. They tend to be different sides of society really. I've never been sporty, but I've always been a gamer. So, me coming into sport feels a bit weird to talk about games. Or at least the people who do sport only play sport games, like the kinda people who just play FIFA their entire life. Haha! That's what I'd expect from them anyway, but no, nobody spoke about it really.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

What turns you off from gaming?

PARTICIPANT 7

I actually have a good example of this recent, actually with Gran Turismo. I've always played Gran Turismo, but the new one is online only, so I'm not getting it anymore. That new one looks really good. Everything's new. It'll be the best racing game that's online only, no career mode or anything, which is one of the best points of Gran Turismo, so. Not getting that at all. I don't tend to like games that are DLC focused, the exceptions are Destiny really and Overwatch. Other than that, I don't tend to like DLC strong games. Honestly anything that's too focused on multiplayer. I'm not really a fan of stuff like Farona. Just online focused. It had a little story, even though I play for online. Haha! PlayStation Plus and all that.

RESEARCHER

Are there any developers you're loyal to?

PARTICIPANT 7

For a long time, Ubisoft, but as of recent times things like Farona again. It's just more online again. If you go really far back I used to buy every single Rareware game for N64, because every game they made was just excellent. Pretty much all the famous ones for Nintendo 64. Like Banjo Kazooie and stuff like that. All the biggest games on N64, like Bethesda now. Haha!

RESEARCHER

How would you encourage someone to use gaming in a healthy way?

PARTICIPANT 7

I'd say try not to dedicate yourself to just games. Try and be social as well. Stick to people who you know you can be fine with, don't even risk strangers or new experiences yet, until you're fine again.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #1

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits in the past week.

PARTICIPANT 8

In the past week I have played two games, at least two hours each. I played a lot of Overwatch. I got into that game late, so whenever I sort of have free time that's what I have been going towards. And then I also play some Rocket League. I have a friend who's also in graduate school, so we don't have time to see each other in person. So, whenever we have a little bit of time to hangout or talk we usually do it while playing Rocket League together.

RESEARCHER

Tell me how you came about choosing both of these games and why you like them.

PARTICIPANT 8

Rocket League I've been into for a long time. I don't know, I think I got into it first watching other people play it on YouTube and Twitch. And it's just something that's five-minute games so you can sort of make your session or as long as short as you have time for. And there's something about it that's just addictively fun, no matter how many hours I play it. Competition is part of it. I've always tried to improve my rank and all of that. I think the big thing is just like the combination of how fun it is, how it keeps feeling new because you're always learning a new skill and achieving a new level while that time factor. I can have a satisfying session that lasts fifteen minutes.

RESEARCHER

Is that friend your primary friend you play with on that game?

PARTICIPANT 8

They're the primary friend on that game. I have some people that I've sort of just met, paired up with randomly through the game that are just now on the friends list. We all party up. But it's not like there's any real level of friendship there. The communication is all about the game and all of that. It's just the one friend where it becomes social time over the game.

RESEARCHER

Tell me how you got into Overwatch.

PARTICIPANT 8

Overwatch, a couple months ago I was itching to play something new and it had been out for a while and I knew how many people liked it. And I think it was on sale at the time or something, so I picked it up and I would play it once every couple weeks and then something like a few weeks ago clicked for me. And ever since it's been like something I really got into. Like I feel like I'm in this spot where my skill level with it is really getting higher every session, so it's really satisfying to play right now. So, right now, that's a thing where if I'm busy doing something not fun, my brain is looking forward to when I have a chance to play Overwatch for an hour.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

What are some of those activities that are not stimulating that make you want to play Overwatch instead?

PARTICIPANT 8

If I'm working on school work that's not really engaging. Or doing things around the house. That's a big thing. I've two jobs and both of them are pretty satisfying so I'm lucky, in that I'm not in that situation all that often. When it is like that Overwatch has been my release afterwards over the past couple weeks.

RESEARCHER

After work or school or both?

PARTICIPANT 8

It kinda blends. Both of my jobs are involved with school. I work in a student centre and I'm a teaching assistant. The whole summer I work at the daily new student orientation sessions they do. Sometimes parents coming up are way more challenging. I'm in a state in my program where I'm only taking one class myself, so the big thing about classes starting is that I'm teaching again now. That's sort of the biggest thing with my schedule. And then it's all just working towards a thesis in my own time. I'm finding the lack of strict deadlines is a problem for me a little bit. I spend a lot of time in my campus office just so I have less options. If I'm there, really the only thing to do is to get work done. So, I spend a lot of evenings there, when I have a nice desk and setup at home where I could just as easily get it done but I don't have things like Overwatch to distract me. I just moved over the summer and when I did I sort of upgraded my desk with the idea that I would make a nice work space at home so that I wouldn't be staying on campus until 10pm anymore, but quickly it feels like my relaxed gaming area and it never got to a point where I efficiently got work done at my home desk. It's a little frustrating, especially since I'm so aware of when I'm doing something unproductive or something that will hurt me in the long run, but I don't stop myself from doing it. So, it feels like a weakness that I have to live on campus for a full day to have a good work day instead of being able to be in a more comfortable place.

RESEARCHER

What else have you done for yourself to help manage that?

PARTICIPANT 8

I talked to my advisor about setting a more structured schedule with my progress on the thesis. But other than that, it's sort of, I've accepted how I work and how I just don't work well unless I'm on a deadline set by others. I usually try to set deadlines for myself, to keep myself on task, but if they feel artificial, like I'm just setting them as a tool to get myself focused, it doesn't work well enough.

RESEARCHER

What consoles do you use?

PARTICIPANT 8

I have an Xbox One and I have a PC. PC is probably the dominant platform I use, which is a relatively new phenomenon. I used to pretty much be exclusively Xbox for a long time, but last year I had enough money and I wanted to blow that money on something fun. And I went with building a PC and now that I have something capable of playing games on it, I'm starting to prefer that as a platform.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Is it difficult for you to get work done on your gaming PC?

PARTICIPANT 8

Yes. The thing to make me feel less guilty about it when I was purchasing it was the thought that I'd also have this great PC to get this work done. I have a dual monitor setup, so it also works really well for getting a literature review done. I can have PDFs open on one screen and I'm typing on the other without flipping back and forth. In theory it should help with work as well, but it didn't turn out that way.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about how gaming found its way into your life and how that's evolved over time.

PARTICIPANT 8

It's something that's always been there. As an older teenager my dad saved up for a Nintendo Entertainment System, NES. So, when I was born shortly after it was always there. Growing up, my parents worked a tonne. So, as soon as I was old enough to stay home and keep an eye on my little sister, especially the summers alone at home all day, and Super Nintendo and Nintendo 64 is how my sister and I would pass the time, so it was sort of always there. And then I remember in middle school having my own PlayStation One and a small TV in my bedroom. And Final Fantasy 7, Final Fantasy 8, would be my escape, my alone time at home. It sort of just always been part of my life as my recreation time.

RESEARCHER

When you say "escape," what does that mean to you?

PARTICIPANT 8

It was a lot of different things. Sometimes before I was ever out or accepted things myself, I kinda really shut myself down emotionally. And sort of the only time I connected with any emotions was through fictional narratives. So, I was big in movies and single player long narrative videogames because I think it's really easy to connect with characters when you're interacting with the storytelling like you are in videogames. So, videogames in one way just sort of acted like sort of an empathy machine for me when I was otherwise pretty emotionally neutral in every other aspect of my life. And then my home life, family life, there could be much worse situations, but definitely wouldn't be considered a happy home. So, being able to retreat to my bedroom and put headphones on and play a videogame allowed me to sort of like escape from that.

RESEARCHER

What drew you to these stories and what stands out?

PARTICIPANT 8

I think what stands out was my experience with Final Fantasy 7. For me that was sort of like the game that shifted what my expectations for what videogames could do was. That's probably like middle school age for me. And before that I had played some like longer RPG games before, but they were like Super Mario RPG or Zelda Link to the Past where there wasn't a lot in that longer story that you could connect to on a personal level. Whereas Final Fantasy 7 was the first videogame I played where it felt like a different medium of being a storyteller, whereas like everything in the past was just a way to play a game. With me, gender identity stuff, that one weird cloud cross dressing section definitely brought

Peralta, R.P.

weird feelings to the surface that I knew were there but always tried to ignore. In a way it made me feel less weird since it was in a videogame that everyone loved and there was commercials for on mainstream TV. So, then after that there was just frequently a new videogame that had somewhat close to that level of storytelling that I could play. And for a long time that was the sort of where most of my gaming hours went, was into games like that.

RESEARCHER

Thank you for sharing that.

PARTICIPANT 8

I think it's so strange that overall on the surface, gaming is a terrible environment for a trans woman. But there are so many pockets where I can find great communities. And for some reason it still is such an important release for me, even though I know how toxic gaming environments can be. So, it's something I've always thought was a really strange phenomenon that gaming is simultaneously this breeding ground for toxic masculine communities as well as just appearing like there's also a high amount of Queer people attracted to it.

RESEARCHER

Tell me how you found these pockets of safe spaces.

PARTICIPANT 8

One is just, I work in the campus LGBT resource centre and just interacting with students there I just found so many gamers. So, we actually started doing gaming nights as social events. And then there's also, we have this weird coffeeshop on campus, this one independent one that's sort of a student group and is all volunteer run. So, it's sort of a coffeeshop and social group. And they had always done gaming stuff as well. And we started sort of collaborating and doing coffeeshop/LGBT resource centre gaming night. So, met a lot of people through there. My best friend who I now have a lot of my social time with through Rocket League, met her by working at the centre. There's that and then also there's a couple different Facebook groups or Discord servers that I'm on that are just dedicated to either Transgender or Queer gamers. So, if I ever have a night where I get into a couple games where there's just toxic people it's nice to retreat back to those, have conversations there, or find play partners through there that don't leave that toxic experience as the experience that defines the night. Especially with me playing Overwatch a lot lately. My habits in that game are way different than Rocket League where I'm playing solo. Because in Rocket League I exclusively play ranked, competitive because I really enjoy the grind of working towards a higher rank, moving from gold to platinum, then once you're there you have diamond to set your sights to. But that game is mostly text-based communication unless you're going through discord because doesn't really have good voice communication built in. But Overwatch is a game where there's the expectation that there's voice communication and I don't like changing my voice, so I have an in between gendered voice. So, when you're going into competitive there's the expectation that you're constantly talking, and it just feels like the competitive scene is so much more toxic and I'm more likely to run into that. So, I have to be in a really good mood to play competitive there, even though I greatly prefer it because, same thing, I enjoy the grind of ranking up. So, Overwatch I play a lot of the alternative modes or quickplay, just to avoid running into people who are gonna ruin my night.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #2

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your week.

PARTICIPANT 8

It's been a long one. I'm happy to be at the end of it. It wasn't a great sleep week. I had a meeting with my thesis advisor and just got a whole bunch of stress piled on from that.

RESEARCHER

How've you been managing that?

PARTICIPANT 8

Sort of just delaying it. Kinda just knowing that in a few weeks it's gonna hit me. But for now, it's more just frustration.

RESEARCHER

Are you okay with that?

PARTICIPANT 8

Oh yeah, that's how I operate. No need to be stressed until the last possible moment.

RESEARCHER

Do you work well under pressure?

PARTICIPANT 8

Yes. I would say I don't work at all when I'm not under pressure.

RESEARCHER

What else has caused anxiety lately?

PARTICIPANT 8

Doing work at school for LGBT advocacy. There's a day where a few different things all happened the same day. It was disappointing and frustrating. Our university has an official Facebook group for every new group of freshmen. I'm always added to it to monitor it for potential LGBT problems. In the beginning of every semester I also introduce myself to let the Queer students know that if they have any questions or fears going in they can message me, so I get a bunch of them adding me every fall. And two of them messaged me that they are being added to this group chat without being asked and the whole purpose of the group chat was just to target and harass them. So, they were targeted for both race and sexuality. So, I helped them with making out reports of everything but at the same time I had to let them know that it's good that they're reporting it for statistics purposes but since it was on Facebook off campus you shouldn't expect a just result from the investigation. The best that's gonna happen is the problematic students are gonna get called in to talk to the dean of students. There's not gonna be any real action. In the past anything that's happened off campus and over social media doesn't really go anywhere. Our school also has a weird climate right now. Our state is becoming redder by the year and right now there's a bill going through the state legislature that would regulate speech on college campuses. The authors of the bill say it's to protect free speech, but really, it's to squash progressive

Peralta, R.P.

speech. Last year we were one of the campuses Milo Yiannopoulos visited. So, if he were to ever come back, the protest that happened last time, if this bill goes through, would now be grounds for getting expelled from school because you're shouting down an invited speaker. And you're squashing their free speech, so protests would no longer be allowed. So, that's the climate that our campus is dealing with. It used to be a really progressive campus when it came to LGBT inclusion and now they're just like scared of the state legislature.

RESEARCHER

You must carry a lot, working in your office and being that resource for so many students. Does that add extra heavy feelings for you?

PARTICIPANT 8

Yeah, in a way. It gives a lot of good feelings though too. There's nothing better than the first week of fall semester, seeing freshmen come in and every year there's at least one or two that just start crying walking in because they're coming from a high school where they had to be hidden. So, just the fact that we have a physical space is overwhelming to them. And seeing the freshman class mature over their first year is super rewarding. But yeah, in situations like this where you just feel helpless to provide the type of support that they need is super frustrating. We can provide them a lot of social support. We have a Queer and Trans People of Colour group that actually met yesterday, so both of them were able to show up to that and connect with community and vent about it, which is good. And there's a clinic nearby that we refer everyone to for trans medicine, because access is limited on our on-campus clinic.

RESEARCHER

When does the honeymoon stage usually end for Queer freshmen that you've observed?

PARTICIPANT 8

Usually towards the end of their first year, which is extra disappointing about this, because the fact that they're both freshmen and sort of the high of finding our community and in the first month. And then we've had behind the scenes struggles for policy things over the last couple years. Usually people who work in the office, at the end of that first year, students start overhearing what we're talking about and everything so.

RESEARCHER

Have you utilised your gaming at all manage any of this?

PARTICIPANT 8

A little bit. While I'm super frustrated, I'll play some Rock Band 4. That doesn't really feel like gaming. I have a pretty nice electric drum set that functions as a controller for Rock Band. It feels more like playing a long with songs than gaming. Usually it's just a few songs, just to work out some frustration. Sometimes if I'm like feeling it, I'll get lost for maybe an hour or so. But it's also something that I haven't been in practice of. I remember when I first started playing earlier iterations of the game, I was less further removed from playing actual drums, and I could play for a lot longer. Now it's sort of like, my hands are sensitive, it's a somewhat physical activity, so it's not something I do long sessions of. I only play drums.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your gaming habits this past week.

Peralta, R.P.

PARTICIPANT 8

I have been playing, pretty much any time I've had time to play, I've played Rocket League because there is a tournament tomorrow and over the past few months most of my Rocket League play has been with a friend who's newer to the game. So, I felt compelled to play with higher level people just so I'm ready for tomorrow. There are times where I didn't even feel like playing it, but I felt like I had to.

RESEARCHER

When you play with your friend does it help them build their character?

PARTICIPANT 8

It started out as that. I would play with them just so that they were with someone that they could take more risks with in the game and get better fast with some random person on the internet being toxic towards her. Over the past month or so, she's in grad school as well, and even though we live pretty close we're both busy and sometimes it's easier to just catch up through Discord while playing Rocket League than finding time to be with each other in person. It's been more of a social thing between us the last few weeks. Mainly when I play with her it's hang out time, that's probably the main motivation, and playing the actual game is secondary. When I am playing other games, especially Overwatch, it really depends on my social mood what type I'm playing. I have to have the social energy to interact with people when I hop into competitive because there's the expectation that you're gonna have your microphone. Whereas if I just want to play by myself I'll go more into the arcade mode where people don't really talk to each other.

RESEARCHER

Did you play Overwatch this week?

PARTICIPANT 8

Just a little bit. A patch came out on Monday, so I had to try it out a little bit. They reworked one character and added a new map. So, I've been itching to play it all week. It's just I felt compelled to do Rocket League. I think that's one of the reasons I wasn't having fun playing Rocket League, I was just like "I want to be playing this new patch."

RESEARCHER

Are you going to make time this weekend to play?

PARTICIPANT 8

I'll play a little bit. My workload for the weekend got a lot bigger. My advisor wants me to catch up on PhD application stuff. I had that scheduled in my head for more October/November. She wants me to retake the GRE and have a list of places I want to apply set for next week. The GRE is a downer. I last took it two years ago. She said after being in a master's program for a while now I should be able to raise my writing score so it's not the reason I don't get accepted somewhere. It's probably true but it's also a lot of money, time, and investment.

RESEARCHER

Do finances add anxiety for you?

PARTICIPANT 8

Peralta, R.P.

Oh yeah. Right now, it's one of those things that I know is something in the future I'm gonna be super stressed about.

RESEARCHER

Do you spend a lot of time feeling anxiety?

PARTICIPANT 8

It's something that comes into my mind a lot, but right now I'm able to cut it off pretty quickly. It's just constantly hanging over me. What happens in May when my TA stipend stops and assuming I get into somewhere for a PhD program somewhere, I'm like four months away from the first stipend check for that. How am I gonna move to this new place? Do I need to try and get my thesis done earlier so I can find a job before the spring semester ends and start saving up money? All of that just like constantly hangs over my head. But right now, I don't dwell too much on it.

RESEARCHER

Do you fear failure? How do you see yourself managing it?

PARTICIPANT 8

Not great. I'm definitely a person that has pretty heavy imposter syndrome in school and all of that. Part of the stressful thing of my advisor wanting me to get on PhD applications is that I'm starting to question if I'm capable of doing that. I was trying to think over if this is something I really want to do. Do I want to be into a PhD program in my mid 30s living off a meagre stipend and all of that? Am I capable of doing self-based work that long? Even if I finish the PhD program when I'm completely on my own, am I gonna get research done at a regular enough time to be a professor? All of those things I have pretty big doubts about.

RESEARCHER

Do you see yourself as a capable student now?

PARTICIPANT 8

I'm not super scared of finishing what I'm in. But I recognise that I'm not doing it as well as I should be. I think getting a thesis done will be a big struggle for me but if I get into a PhD program and I know I'm on a stricter deadline because of that I'm pretty sure I'll get it done but the thing about me is I always need strict deadlines. I need to be in panic mode in order to be productive. So, in the future where there's like minimal oversight on me that's where I have severe doubts in my ability to do the assigned work. When I'm doing all the research program this weekend, I'm gonna try really hard to find a good mesh in terms of enthusiasm for a certain topic. So, I think that would be my priority over everything else.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #3

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your week.

PARTICIPANT 8

It's just a lot of carryover from last week; dealing with campus stuff, stress about PhD applications and all that. Campus stuff is a mess. I think I decided on doing a half-hearted approach to PhD applications. I'm not gonna retake the GRE this year. I'll pick one or two schools, send out a few hopeful applications. And if neither of those pan out just take a year or two off from school and then next year, two years, do a proper application process. Since I'll have a master's thesis done at that point hopefully it will be a lot easier. And I won't have to scramble to find enough money for all these applications and transcripts and all that. This past week was a big Rocket League week because I did a tournament, a collegiate tournament. That was an almost day long event, which is really good. The other two players on my school team, I was definitely the weak link on the team and to play with two highest tier players for an entire day I feel like I learned a lot, so I was jazzed about the game the rest of the week. I kept playing it and I've ranked up all week, which was nice because in the competitive rankings I've sort of plateaued for the past six months. So, to get over that heap and to the top 1% of the players was nice.

RESEARCHER

It sounds like you consider that an accomplishment for the week in terms of gaming.

PARTICIPANT 8

Oh yeah, for sure. My friend who I play with a lot, I ended up getting the rank up at like 2:00am in the morning. And I knew going into the game, I felt like I was one game away, that if I got one more win then I'd get the promotion, so as soon as the game ended with the win I got my phone out and I had snapchat ready. I got a video of it changing over to platinum status. It was nice! I dabbled a little bit on Overwatch. I played a few songs on Rock Band. I spend like a half hour on Dream Daddy. It is a dating simulator where you are a single father and you are moved to a new neighbourhood with your daughter and it just so happens that everyone on your cul-de-sac are also single fathers who are gay, and you socialise with the whole neighbourhood. And you pick who you want to date. It is so precious. It is amazing. It's through Steam. It came out two months ago and it got quite a bit of buzz when it came out. It's such a unique concept and it had really good sales the first day, so I had to check it out. But the actual content of the game is actually genuinely very heart warming. The relationship between your character and your daughter is really nice. The overall aesthetic of the game is pretty jokey, but deep down there's a lot of heart-warming moments in it and it's a really satisfying narrative to play through. It's awesome that there's a well-made dating game. That's cool. I don't play a lot of heavy narrative-based games lately, just because they tend to be big time sucks, so they just don't fit well into my life. It's been a while since I've played a game with a good narrative that's enjoyable. Like most of my life, I definitely grew up on RPGs and whatnot. But lately games like Rocket League, Overwatch you can have more control over the session. And it's easier to just fit in wherever. The Final Fantasies, the Mass Effects, those I would just do binge sessions on.

RESEARCHER

When was the last time you played a game like that?

PARTICIPANT 8

Peralta, R.P.

Months ago, I got started on Mass Effect Andromeda and I keep wanting to go back to it. But even when I find time for longer binge sessions, the competitive part about the games I've been playing lately have been drawing me in. So, after playing those games in the short little bursts, I keep wanting to go back for more. So, even when I find time for longer sessions, those are still the games I'm gonna.

RESEARCHER

Why do you think that is?

PARTICIPANT 8

I don't know. They're not the type of games I was attracted to in the past. So, maybe I would have always been into these games, but it took playing them out of necessity to fill a gap to find out I'm so into them.

RESEARCHER

How many hours have you played each game?

PARTICIPANT 8

Rocket League has been a big chunk. The tournament day was probably like a six hour session by itself, so probably 15 hours total. Overwatch I think a single 90-minute session. I started the tournament a little apprehensive. I knew I was the lowest ranked on our team. And I kinda slept in a little bit so I didn't get as much warmup time as I wanted. Then playing with them felt good. There were times where we were clicking pretty well. Then we won some games in a row, but definitely towards the end it was starting to drag on. The last game we lost. If we won it, we would have moved on to day two. And we sort of had it and let it get away. So, it was simultaneous frustration that we let that game get away. But I was also kinda relieved that my whole Sunday wouldn't be Rocket League as well, because I was definitely feeling behind on things I needed to get done. Tournaments are really demanding. So, much pressure while you're playing. I wasn't prepared to be that long of a time commitment. It sounds really silly since it's a video game and not a physical sport, but it was like pretty mentally demanding just being in a tournament where you're playing so many games in a day and it's going on for over six hours.

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your favourite franchises or games you would revisit?

PARTICIPANT 8

I've replayed the classic Marios a tonne. The first one through 64 I've replayed a lot. Ocarina of Time I've played through tonnes of time. Pretty much anytime I go visit my sister we end up playing some sort of Super Nintendo or original Nintendo game. It's always been a thing for us. We've always bonded over video games. I don't know if my sister would identify as a gamer anymore, just because she hasn't kept up with anything current. She doesn't have a gaming PC and her latest consoles are Xbox 360 and Wii. She's not with current gaming but she has all of our old systems and she plays those a lot. She's really into classic arcade games. I'm fully expecting her to sink a tonne of money into a straight up arcade cabinet for her house soon. Because she goes to a gaming convention every year locally that's really into arcade games. And I've gone with her a couple times. And every time we go she gets really close to dropping \$300 to \$500 on a cabinet. Midwest Gaming Classic is in Milwaukee. There's a lot of arcade cabinet hobbyists there. They sell a lot of full cabinets, they sell a lot of parts there. It's definitely retro game focused over current games.

Peralta, R.P.

RESEARCHER

Then you enjoy going to the conventions with her?

PARTICIPANT 8

Yeah! I do get some of the same itch as well. I feel like it's dangerous going there and I always spend way too much money but it's a super fun event.

RESEARCHER

May I ask how the event was for you as a person who identifies as trans?

PARTICIPANT 8

It actually feels a lot safer than gaming online. Toxic gamers don't have the same courage in person than they do online to be toxic.

RESEARCHER

Is it a big convention?

PARTICIPANT 8

Next year will be the first year it's gonna be in a legit convention centre. It's always been in a hotel that they just sort of take over and then they set up a huge tent in the parking lot as well. So, it's always felt kinda janky. All the first-floor hotel rooms aren't being used as hotel rooms. They're like rooms where people are selling stuff and everything. It outgrew its location years ago. Next year will be the first time they actually move to a legit location. I feel like I still have a lot of left over socialisation left when it comes to things like that, where no matter what I was feeling internally, a good portion of my life I was presenting as a straight man. And a white straight man. Physical safety has not always been something I've had to be concerned with. And I feel like sometimes I have to remind myself that things are different now. Especially after I first transitioned. I was still taking the bus home by myself at bar close, things like that. Friends sort of expressed concern about that. There are times where I have to remind myself that I have to be more aware of my surroundings. But generally, I still have feelings of vulnerability and that I can deal with anything. The big thing is that things like that take up a lot of social energy. And I do have a bit of an anxiety with packed spaces and feeling a little bit trapped and hot, but in terms of lack of safety or concern for interpersonal reasons that's something I sort of keep myself naïve to. It probably is a defence mechanism. There was a time early in transition where I was hyper aware of my surroundings for a little bit. I couldn't function at all and I was flaking out on every social thing. So, I think I've just learned to ignore my surroundings now. Whenever I pass someone I know on campus, they have to say hi to me a couple times because I just don't notice because I almost walk about with sort of blinders on. I think that's just, so I don't make myself go crazy over analysing how other people are analysing me.

RESEARCHER

Are you aware of the GaymerX convention?

PARTICIPANT 8

Yeah, I'm aware of what it is. I sort of have delved a bit into the academic study of videogames. Especially now my thesis is gonna involve it so I'm starting to get deeper into it for my literature review.

RESEARCHER

Peralta, R.P.

Have you had to manage gaming when servers go down whilst playing?

PARTICIPANT 8

I don't really play, I've only dabbled into MMOs where I feel it would be the biggest topic for that to come up. I can't remember the last time I couldn't get onto a game I wanted to get onto for more than 15 minutes at a time.

RESEARCHER

Have you noticed within any communities online any negative patterns of mental health?

PARTICIPANT 8

Yeah, a bit. A lot of gaming communities can be so much the opposite of my core beliefs. So, there are times when that can just wear on me a bit. Even little things where, if I'm following a particular streamer, just the fact that "triggered" has become such a dominantly used word in gaming communities. Little things like that where "Ugh, I follow this person so much and I like them, but they use that word incorrectly so often." And then it goes all the way towards the toxic masculinity that's rampant throughout gaming communities. So, there are definitely times where that wears on me. A lot of girl gamer or Queer gaming or Trans gaming groups, the goal of them is to avoid that but at the same time one of the Trans gaming group I'm in, one of the rules is that you can't discuss harassment online, because the community exists as an escape from that, which I get, but places you can vent where people would understand would be nice too. I totally get it, because outside of stuff I do for work, I don't go to a lot of Trans community social events because it just seems like they all turn into vent sessions, which is great, it's a great release for people to be able to talk to people who can empathise with them, but at the same time Trans community events are always such a downer. There are just times where I feel like I just don't need that right now. So, I get the rule. One recently a Twitch streamer I watch a lot who has a pretty big following, who's one of the more prominent ones, he always goes out of his way to avoid anything political. He keeps his stream super positive but won't delve into politics or any social issues at all. But for some reason the day that the military Trans ban was announced my Trump he tweeted about it and tweeted strong opposition to it. So, I just sent him a tweet back letting him know "Hey, I know how apolitical you normally are and I'm a trans follower of yours who was kicked out of the military, so I just wanted to let you know that I really appreciate you speaking out on it" and had a bit of a back and forth with him. And what was a really crummy day, that was a surprising bright spot.

RESEARCHER

Would it be okay if I ask what were your gaming habits were like when you were experiencing everything with the military?

PARTICIPANT 8

While I was in, gaming sort of disappeared for a bit. Just because I was on a submarine and my ability to get a hold of anything was limited for a long time. But when I was being kicked out for being Trans, there was a good seven month discharge limbo I was in where I was no longer on the submarine but I was still in the military so I started doing random side jobs on base, which gave me a much more regular working schedule and it gave me a chance to catch up on everything I missed. That was definitely my distraction while I was figuring life out. It was definitely those binge games. Mass Effect 3 had been out for a while and I was able to come back to that and play through it. And I remember I didn't have my Mass Effect 1 or 2 saves anymore, so instead of diving into Mass Effect 3 I played through all three games so that I could have the character carry overs that I originally had and everything. It was only frustrating in that

Peralta, R.P.

Mass Effect 3 has been out for so long and I hadn't played it that I was delaying it further. But as soon as I started playing the first one again I was having fun with the nostalgia. I had gotten to the point where I had realised that joining the military didn't make me suddenly find masculinity and that transition was gonna have to be a thing I had to do to be okay with life in general. So, at that time I was coming to terms with that. It's something I had known for a while at that point, but I was convinced that I could never go through with or let anyone find out about. So, that part of my transition was coming to terms with it. I also bottomed out depression wise. So, I was struggling to almost literally stay alive. And then I started the coming out process to people in my life during that discharge limbo. But I hadn't taken any sort of physical steps until after I came back home.

Peralta, R.P.

INTERVIEW #4

RESEARCHER

Tell me about your week.

PARTICIPANT 8

I'm downloading the Star Wars Battlefront II beta right now. I'm gonna have to squeeze that in because it's already gonna be a busy weekend. It is a completely open beta. I played ten hours of Rocket League and then I dabbled a little bit in Overwatch and a little bit in Fortnite battle royale. Maybe a couple hours each.

RESEARCHER

What kept your attention with these this week?

PARTICIPANT 8

Making it into platinum ranks got me motivated to play it some more. Last weekend I played big chunks of it both Saturday and Sunday so that's where most of the time came from. I pretty much was alternating wins and losses, so I was pretty stagnant rank wise.

RESEARCHER

When you're not working, gaming, or studying, what else are you doing?

PARTICIPANT 8

I don't have much time outside of that. Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays I'm on campus from 9am to 9pm. So, really outside of those times I get a little bit of social time in each week. Other than that, I'm probably consuming some other form of media, usually internet sometimes streaming TV. I consume a lot of news media and social media. As a media studies student, I feel compelled to keep up with stuff like that. Sometimes with TV shows too. If something is new and popular I feel like I have to watch it. So, it doesn't always feel like a recreation activity. I've enjoyed it but a couple Sundays ago I made sure to make time to watch the beginning of Star Trek Discovery because the class I teach is intro to Mass Media and we're actually talking about streaming services the next week. So, I was like "Oh, this is a really current topic. I have to watch it and see what's going on about it, so I can talk about it in discussion this week."

RESEARCHER

Given any of your identities, how does keeping up with the news contribute to any anxiety you experience?

PARTICIPANT 8

Haha! Most of the time it's not a big effect because I've done it for so long. I seek out bad news a lot. I don't know why that is a thing I do, but it's something I've always done. Yesterday there was pretty bad news about the Department of Justice and how they rescinded previous protections of Trans people. There's someone posted a status last night about reaching out to Trans people, if they're having a hard time with it. It took me a second to realise what they were talking about because it didn't affect me at all when I read the news because I'm so used to it now. That was a moment when I realised I am super desensitised to awful things. But every now and then there will be just a random moment where consuming just gets to me and sometimes it's not even things that big. So, every now and then it gets to

Peralta, R.P.

me and there's not really any rhyme or reason to it. And it's like, there are so many bad things happening that it's like "Well, that's really bad but Trump's done ten times worse things to other groups of people." You can only have passionate outrage for so many days in a row. The first day the Muslim ban was announced I started searching things of like is it too late for me to not go to law school. Is that something I could do? Could I also start learning a second language on top of it? Because I'm not gonna be doing anything to help this with media studies, I need to do something. How many days in a row can you go through that?

RESEARCHER

What have your experiences been playing co-op?

PARTICIPANT 8

It's been a while. A few months ago, I played a little Portal 2 split-screen with a friend. But other than that, a couple years I had a partner where we would play games together in person, but in general ever since online gaming became standard, playing co-op in the same room hasn't really been a thing for me. With my former partner, we played games like the co-op version of Shovel Knight. A lot of Nintendo games, like Wii-U games, like the Mario ones. Kinda like low investment games, not very intense games. More social. It was sort of a comfort thing. Our relationship was defined by our time together being on the couch, eating food, and consuming media. It was either watching movies or playing video games. We're both sort of introverts, she more so than me. We went to the same school and we actually met at work, so we worked at the same place. When we were one with that our escape was spending time with each other doing low energy things. In the past-past it was definitely a thing. My sister and I definitely grew up playing games together. And then early adulthood my friend groups we'd have LAN parties, both computers and Xboxes. Ever since the Xbox 360, PS3 generation of games, that's just not a thing anymore.

RESEARCHER

How do you see what you've shared in this study benefitting other people?

PARTICIPANT 8

I think it's still a thing to destigmatise gaming. It's portrayed more as a negative habit than something that can be a positive place in someone's life. Especially thinking back to how much I played games as a kid. I really think it has a big component in developing hand-eye coordination, problem solving skills. And now today it's definitely my main form of relaxation and stress relief. When I'm stuck on campus doing work and writing sometimes my motivation to finish is to that I can unplug myself and play music and play video games. Over the course of my life I definitely think it's been a positive aspect in many way.

RESEARCHER

How would you use this information to help others?

PARTICIPANT 8

What I'm planning on doing myself is looking at online gaming spaces as a site of gender identity formation. Being able to portray a more authentic self in a safer space within a gaming world as practice before employing it in the real world. I think games have that power. In terms of stressors I think it could be more applied to a professional setting just so that therapists, doctors, see it as appositve thing and

Peralta, R.P.

maybe instead of discouraging use or when having a client that says they game this many hours, talking about it as a negative, maybe re-evaluating their approach.