Digital games and leisure ecosystems

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INTRODUCTION
On October 4, 2006, *South Park* aired an episode entitled, "Make Love, Not Warcraft" where the Massively Multiplayer Online Game *World of Warcraft* took the town by storm. This episode—now over a decade old—may have been largely facetious but the image of the four main characters now overweight, slumped back in their chairs clicking away and all-consumed by playing the game, has become ubiquitous as a stand in for the 'stereotypical gamer.' While the stereotype of the socially inept gamer living in his parents' basement has largely been debunked (Bergstrom, Fisher, and Jenson 2016; Kowert, Griffiths, and Oldmeadow 2012; Kowert, Festl, and Quandt 2014), still underexplored are how players make decisions about how often they play, when they play, and what activities they give up in order to spend their leisure time playing games.

MOTIVATION AND CONTEXT
In this abstract we report on the preliminary results of an online survey that queried adults living in the United States (N=1334) about their relationship to gaming and how it does or does not fit into their leisure time. This broader study is theoretically informed by feminist game scholarship, the overarching goal of this research is to add to the growing body of literature that examines why some people quit gaming, or never begin playing in the first place (Bergstrom 2019; Dutton 2007; Pearce and Artemsia 2009). Feminist game scholarship has long documented that games are marketed in a way that assumes they are more interesting to boys (Burrill 2008; Cote 2018), and when girls and/or women are specifically targeted, their interest in games is assumed to be focused on collaborative play (Cunningham 2018; Flanagan 2005) or as a means towards self-improvement (Chess 2010; 2017). This scholarship has also long-documented that choices around gameplay are never truly unfettered, and instead are shaped by social expectations and stereotypes (Harvey 2015; Kafai, Richard, and Tynes 2016; de Castell and Bryson 1998).

PRELIMINARY RESULTS
Data collection was completed in October 2019 and analysis is ongoing. In this abstract we report on the first round of analysis, focusing on a sub-question where we seek to

examine the activities that survey participants indicated they participated in during their leisure time. In particular, we examined the self-reported leisure activities of current players (participants who reported they have played games in the last 6 months, n=573), former players (participants who reported they have played games in the past, but not in the last 6 months, n=247), non-players, (participants who reported they do not play digital games, n=432), and participants who were unsure if they have played digital games, (n=82). The gender breakdown of the survey participants is indicated in Table 1. We note that we purposefully oversampled women, as previous research has suggested that women are more likely to leave gaming due to constraints on their leisure time (Bergstrom 2019). We also attempted to oversample former and non-players, as our literature scan indicated that these perspectives remain under addressed in game scholarship to date. Participants were able to self-identify whether they identified as a player or not, rather than the researchers providing a specific criteria for each of the categories.

Current, former, and non-players were all queried about what leisure activities they participate in, and the frequency of the participation. This information is summarized across the three groups in Figure 1. These findings, while preliminary, add empirical evidence indicating that for current players, gaming appears to be part of a larger leisure ecosystem. Instead of being an all-encompassing activity depicted in popular culture, such as the *South Park* anecdote above, our findings indicate that gaming exists alongside—not necessarily in place of—other leisure activities. We also note the similarities of the leisure patterns across these three groupings, especially the participation in exercise, cooking, music, and watching television. This does however, point towards the need for future follow-up investigations to better understand the ways current players prioritize gaming and non-gaming leisure activities.

	Men	Women	Other/Prefer not to say	Did not answer	Total
I have played digital games in the last 6 months	173	388	8	4	573
I have played digital games previously, but not in the last 6 months	66	175	5	1	247
I do not play digital games	126	300	4	2	432
I am not sure if I have played digital games	17	64	1	0	82
Total	382	927	18	7	1334

Table 1: Summary of participant gender as compared to current status in relationship to digital gameplay. We acknowledge the incorrect use of "other" to refer to diverse gender identities, which was a result of a miscommunication between the researchers and the survey recruitment service.
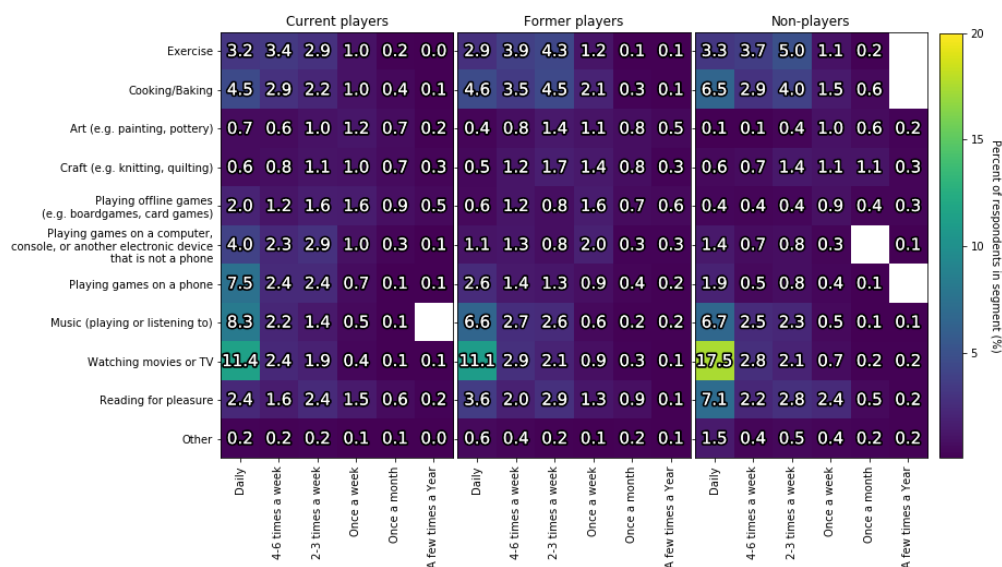
Current players / Former players / Non-players

Activity	Current players						Former players						Non-players					
	Daily	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once a month	A few times a Year	Daily	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once a month	A few times a Year	Daily	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once a month	A few times a Year
Exercise	3.2	3.4	2.9	1.0	0.2	0.0	2.9	3.9	4.3	1.2	0.1	0.1	3.3	3.7	5.0	1.1	0.2	
Cooking/Baking	4.5	2.9	2.2	1.0	0.4	0.1	4.6	3.5	4.5	2.1	0.3	0.1	6.5	2.9	4.0	1.5	0.6	
Art (e.g. painting, pottery)	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.2	0.7	0.2	0.4	0.8	1.4	1.1	0.8	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.4	1.0	0.6	0.2
Craft (e.g. knitting, quilting)	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.7	0.3	0.5	1.2	1.7	1.4	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.7	1.4	1.1	1.1	0.3
Playing offline games (e.g. boardgames, card games)	2.0	1.2	1.6	1.6	0.9	0.5	0.6	1.2	0.8	1.6	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.4	0.3
Playing games on a computer, console, or another electronic device that is not a phone	4.0	2.3	2.9	1.0	0.3	0.1	1.1	1.3	0.8	2.0	0.3	0.3	1.4	0.7	0.8	0.3		0.1
Playing games on a phone	7.5	2.4	2.4	0.7	0.1	0.1	2.6	1.4	1.3	0.9	0.4	0.2	1.9	0.5	0.8	0.4	0.1	
Music (playing or listening to)	8.3	2.2	1.4	0.5	0.1		6.6	2.7	2.6	0.6	0.2	0.2	6.7	2.5	2.3	0.5	0.1	0.1
Watching movies or TV	11.4	2.4	1.9	0.4	0.1	0.1	11.1	2.9	2.1	0.9	0.3	0.1	17.5	2.8	2.1	0.7	0.2	0.2
Reading for pleasure	2.4	1.6	2.4	1.5	0.6	0.2	3.6	2.0	2.9	1.3	0.9	0.1	7.1	2.2	2.8	2.4	0.5	0.2
Other	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	1.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2

Percent of respondents in segment (%)

Figure 1: Summary of activity frequencies of current, former, and non-players expressed as percentages of player segments.

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