Editorial

Game Studies meets Surveillance Studies at the Edge of Digital Culture: An Introduction to a special issue on Surveillance, Games and Play

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Introduction

There is something primordial about the relationship between surveillance and games. Perhaps it is their shared military history but perhaps there is something more. Consider chess. This is a game in which two opponents do “battle” over a field of game pieces according to a set of esoteric rules. A high level game requires an attentive watchfulness over all the pieces on the board, and their possible futures. Framed by its Cartesian landscape and a pretense toward equality, chess is a game about watchfulness, anticipation and prediction in which one player uses the data presented (and organized) by the board and pieces to make judgments about the future actions of the other player. What matters in chess is not the present but the future and this is why the best players always know when they have won a game many moves in advance of it actually happening.

Each player surveys the field of play in as much minute detail as they can with the goal of using that information to affect the course of play in their favor. Of course, the defining principle of chess—unlike surveillance—is that both players have equal access to the “data” about the other. Both players are meant to be equally agents and subjects of this localized surveillance with no one player having the upper hand based on the unequal distribution of information. And yet, for chess, the mode of attentive watchfulness of each piece in relation to the past, present and future of the board is similar to that required of what many of us understand by the concept of surveillance. With surveillance, everyday watchfulness will not do. Surveillance requires a focused attention that requires special circumstances, specific training, or indeed, machines to accomplish. As Torin Monahan, amongst many others, reminds us, “Surveillance can be defined as the systematic monitoring of people or groups in order to regulate or govern their behavior” (2011: 498). It is a reasonable starting point to observe that playing games requires nothing less than this as well.

Consider the chess players. If the players are playing by the rules then nothing matters about them other than the possible actions they might take as chess players. The players’ mutual understanding and acceptance of the rules of the game effectively order and direct their understanding of each other (Juul 2005). For the duration of the game, chess players are nothing more and nothing less than a finite knowable range of actions that the rules allow. A chess player is nothing but the possibility of moving a pawn to king’s knight four or a rook to queen’s two and the player’s agency and subjectivity has been rendered by the rules, the board, the pieces and the occasion of the game in terms of finite knowledge categories that may be easily attended to and acted upon. Games as social sorting, games as discipline,

games as social control... and all this is for fun and of course, the occasion is meant to be temporary. Everyday life is not a game like chess.

But it is in their capacity to work as ordering devices that produce a finite range of meaningful actions that makes games especially amenable to digitization. Computer chess works well, in part, because of the very large but finite range of possible actions that are meaningful in terms of the rules of the game. We shall not get into an extended discussion of the differences between humans and computers playing chess because all that matters is that the range of allowable moves is the same such that one player (human or computer) may make a plausible decision about the possible moves of the other. In effect, the more extensive capacity and interpretability of human action is reduced—or rather produced—at a more organized, knowable and predictable level that makes machine play both possible and enjoyable. Digital games work more efficiently, in fact, than analog games in circumscribing and ordering the actions and subjectivities of their players. This core function is what matters in thinking about the intersection of contemporary surveillance practices and digital games.

From computer chess to the latest blockbuster video games on computers, consoles, and mobile devices this core attribute of games remains consistent. Games can provide remarkably sophisticated simulations and deep and engaging narratives but they still function as ordering devices that parse players into manageable and computable units. Actions in a first person shooter game like *Call of Duty* are limited to a complex array of “realistic” movements and weapon choices which are computationally not much different from calculating the most appropriate choice of chess piece and its movement on the chess board. At a representational scale in this militaristic shooting game, the board and pieces are transformed into physical and ideological battlefields in a variety of contemporary settings, and the pieces are replaced by AK-47s, rocket launchers, and a variety of other realistic and fantastic weapons. But, at the game mechanical scale, and at the level of computation, all of the rich battlefield environments with their mountains, streams, cityscapes and corridors, and all of the weapons and armor (including the avatar body of the player), appear as variable clusters in a finite data array not significantly different from those of computer chess (Aarseth 1997).

What makes these more contemporary video games different from chess from the point of view of Surveillance Studies is that chess players operate close to the game mechanical scale while *Call of Duty* players (for the most part) do not. Good chess players are well aware of the limits on their action afforded by the rules of the game. In *Call of Duty* the rules are enacted by the computer but not shared with the player. The *Call of Duty* player is meant to feel “as if” they have more freedom to act than they do and that their choices do not arise from an understanding of the rules of the game so much as an outcome of their own motivated desire. Indeed, many game designers will speak of the need to make players “forget” that they are playing a video game, and it is from this notion that we get the language of immersion and engagement. The more immersed you are in a video game, the less aware you will be of the conditions for the production of that experience. This idea that video games allow players to act “as if” their choices were not constrained by the rules is what leads us to some of the more palpable effects, concerns, and possibilities inherent in digital games as an intriguing aspect of contemporary surveillance culture.

In December 2013, Edward Snowden released NSA documents from 2007 and 2008 that detailed the role of games and virtual environments not only in state intelligence gathering operations, but also their utility as an “interactive influence medium.” The discourse surrounding games, play, and surveillance is encapsulated in the table of contents of one of these documents, “Games: A look at emerging trends, uses, threats, and opportunities in influence activities” (Science Applications International Corporation 2007). The first chapter on the “Exploitation and function of games: As an interactive influence medium” contains subsections on why security agencies should care about games at all. The answer to “why we

care” about games, at least from the perspective of the NSA, appears to be three-fold. On a technological level, games are increasingly easy to produce. They are also popular, both in terms of reach and revenue-generating potential, especially with the 18-35 year old males commonly targeted by the militarized gaze of the state. Thirdly, games—when framed by these militarized discourses—serve multiple functions, including: i) propagandizing and influencing populations, ii) circumventing established communications monitoring methods, iii) military recruiting, iv) military training and simulation, and iv) potentially laundering money and fundraising.

In the second chapter on “Why Games are an effective influence platform,” we learn that games have a role in education and skills training, that they are capable of “passive messaging and conditioning,” promote specific value systems and emotions, and they are engaging and addictive thus compelling subjects to “return for more.” The third chapter moves on to provide “plausible scenarios for the use of games in terrorist activities,” detailing how game genres such as first person shooters, virtual worlds, alternate reality games (ARGs), simulation games, knowledge-based games and strategy games can all be employed by terrorists as ideological, recruiting, training, and strategic planning tools. Chapter four then outlines a number of emerging trends in the gaming space, including improving communications infrastructures, such as broadband diffusion and third generation (3G) communication standards, technological advances in digital rendering and haptics (tactile feedback from digital interfaces), and trends in gaming itself, such as the popularity of virtual worlds and the rise of user-generated content. Finally, the fifth chapter, “Winning hearts and minds *virtually*,” outlines a strategy for future intelligence operations by first countering anti-American in-game propaganda, second, attracting players to state-sponsored games and away from games deemed problematic, and ultimately highlighting games’ utility for collecting intelligence data, particularly virtual currency transfers and communication streams.

Like so many of these sorts of documents it is difficult to separate an attempt at factual documentation from an exercise in creative fiction. What is clear is that there is an imagination of possibilities for digital games in the context of the surveillance state apparatus. For the NSA and the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), the contractor hired to produce the report, video games and online interactive entertainment are a loci of both desire and fear. There is the desire to make digital play productive by enrolling its inherent surveillant capabilities at both the representational and game mechanical levels. Games and their players might be put to work at covertly monitoring populations, buttressing pro-military ideologies, and improving military training. Games are a locus of fear because other opposing nation states and groups, from the Hizbollah to skinheads, could already be deploying games for these purposes. These groups are additionally suspected of hiding pro-terrorist activities within gamespaces that have otherwise escaped state surveillance (see Zarsky 2006).

For scholars such as Kline, Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2003), the coupling between games, technological advances, and the military is nothing new. The practices detailed in the NSA documents are yet a further instantiation of the military-entertainment complex. The fear/desire that games may serve as ideological tools to “win the hearts and minds” of a population, or channel youth and train them for militarized futures is also not new. As the history of organized sports and board games attest, using games as a form of training for non-game tasks has a long history (Campbell 2000; Flanagan 2009). From dollhouses to polo, virtual worlds to first-person shooters, the persuasive power of play and games has been intertwined with governance projects. This perhaps is never more true than with digital games, which are, first and foremost, ordering devices, relating player to computer, and player to player, in spaces bound by their own rules and physics. To draw from Mark Andrejevic (2007), digital games—particularly online games—epitomize surveillant enclosures, wherein each push of the d-pad, each word typed, each nudge on the joystick is translated into code and shot across the ether, and thus our play is made fodder for surveillance (Whitson 2010). Because games are surveillant enclosures, the NSA can now claim that players related to Islamic Extremist Groups, Nuclear Proliferation, and Arms Dealing are now locatable in

games via the metadata siphoned from communications satellites and then filtered through open-source packet-sniffing software (National Security Agency 2008; Elliott 2013).

However, there is a different way to view these leaked NSA documents. Their hyperbolic claims strain credibility, especially from our privileged vantage point more than half a decade in the future (and thus an aeon in terms of technological-time). For example, “Exploiting Terrorist Use of Games & Virtual Environments,” another leaked NSA document, was originally written to be shared with the rest of the “Five Eyes” nations (Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand) (National Security Agency 2007). It states that games and virtual environments are so successful in imparting a targeted message or lesson that the Army “no longer needs to use [*America’s Army*, a U.S. Army recruitment game] for recruitment, they use it for training,” and that other games teach Lebanese Hizbollah youth to become suicide martyrs (National Security Agency 2007: 1). Assertions such as these draw upon the hypodermic needle theory of communications, wherein games’ content and messaging are directly received and wholly accepted by players. Ostensibly, for the document’s authors, the very act of role-playing a suicide bomber creates suicide bombers. Thus games become powerful governance tools if used correctly: “One cannot discount the ‘fun factor’ involved – it is important to hold your target audience’s attention – and makes ingesting the message not even noticeable” (National Security Agency 2007: 1). And so, for the NSA, games are seized upon as “an opportunity! We can use games for: CNE exploits, social network analysis, HUMINT targeting, ID tracking (photos, doc IDs), shaping activities, geo-location of target [sic] and collection of comms” (National Security Agency 2007: 2).

These NSA documents present us with an ideal form, forecast, or schema for what digital games might do, aimed at precipitating action on the basis of the implied consequences. They are surveillance imaginaries premised on total information awareness leading to the complete control of the hearts and minds (and leisure time) of subjects of government. When we play, where we play, and who we play with, regardless of the form of game, creates a wealth of data—our social networks can be diagrammed, our on-line presence linked via geolocation and IP addresses to our physical locations, and our identities tracked. In 2007, games were nascent potential—an “opportunity space” wherein more research was needed to figure out “effective exploitation” (National Security Agency 2007: 1). The documents are organizational fictions intended to channel and justify state expenditures (primarily into broadening communications monitoring, particularly into private leisure domains). The discourse evoked by these leaked NSA documents is a masculinized, militarized, westernized, “closed world,” wherein games are tools of state surveillance, espionage, training and tactics. Players become pawns in larger games of states and terrorists.

The surveillance imaginary of using games and virtual environments to monitor and combat terrorism and extremist groups never came to fruition, however the discourse of games as capture devices was taken up and developed further by commercial interests in the form of “metrics,” a practice further discussed by Alessandro Canossa (this issue). Interchangeably referred to as game analytics (Medler and Magerko 2011), game telemetry (Moura, el-Nasr, and Shaw 2011), and instrumentation (Kim et al. 2008), “metrics” refers to the automated monitoring of player activities through logging user actions, thus providing a quantitative record of player-game interactions such as when a player starts a level, finishes a tutorial, or dies.

While commonly used in the console sector, emerging game sectors such as mobile and Facebook games have expanded their usage and introduced much more sophisticated tools, including real-time data collection and analysis. These metrics direct rapid alterations to the gamespace, including dynamically changing the game’s difficulty in order to reduce player frustration and thus encouraging them to play longer, to individualizing in-game advertisements based upon a player’s demographics or even—in some cases—rudimentary psychological assessments derived from logs of their play-style and social network (Whitson 2012). Metrics have precipitated the shift in games from an off-the-shelf static product to an

ongoing service that is constantly updated and altered to attract and retain players. These metrics are continually refined to learn what attracts the greatest number of players, and thus cater to economies of scale. Taking cues from a/b testing in web design, developers are now able to simultaneously offer different versions of a virtual object, mechanic or entire game to see which is more effective in terms of player retention and revenue. An example of this is Zynga's discovery that changing the text color of ads from red to pink resulted in a much larger click-through rate, thus increasing profits (Elliott 2010). Large scale data collection allows corporations to streamline their operations and create whole new revenue streams, such as this in-game targeted marketing (Andrejevic 2009) and microtransactions (impulse purchases that are generally a few dollars or less), and are thus the secret to offering low cost and even free games in contrast to the \$60 off-the-shelf console games.

The use of metrics in the game industry directly parallels the hype around big data more generally, emphasizing surveillance in the future tense: collecting and collating massive databases of seemingly trivial data in the hopes of inferring hidden patterns and correlations in human behavior that then can be used to profile subjects, predict their actions, and to act upon them accordingly (see Lyon 2014). Digital games are exemplary ordering devices, reducing human action into a more knowable and predictable level due to the finite rule set that undergirds the operation of the gamespace and limits what players can do within it. However, hidden behind the representation of the game (i.e. the game's graphic and narrative level) players feel as if they have more freedom to act than they do. Accordingly, as detailed by Casey O'Donnell (this issue) and in a previous issue of this journal (Whitson 2013), there is a drive to extend in-game governance measures outwards, via the "gamification" of everyday tasks.

The use of metrics in games presents considerable appeal to developers because, as long as the methods of measurement are reliable, developers can create *reproducible* and *scalable* patterns of human behavior. The collection of data in games maps and thus creates a territory, rendering visible the space over which government can be exercised (see Kücklich 2009). Metrics become an inscription device. They are modes of objectifying, making, inscribing and preserving otherwise ephemeral and subjective visions (i.e. what exactly *are* players doing when they are playing? Are they having fun? What do they like about this game?). Inscriptions such as maps, charts, diagrams, graphs and now metrics, make things stable, mobile, durable, comparable. In a few simple and elegant statistics, metrics define what matters, distilling the complexities of the world and human behavior into something more tractable, such as measuring 'fun' as a function of Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) calculations, or determining human worth according to the money they spend in-game and whether they are likely to spend more.

While metrics are continually evolving in order to provide contextual cues about player behavior (i.e. what they were doing just before they quit, or just before they purchased an item), there are many things metrics cannot tell developers (i.e. *what* motivates player behaviors). Many of these aforementioned problems are addressed through the increasing surveillance of players, collecting more intimate and refined knowledge about what players are doing in-game, and linking this information to what players are doing *outside* of the game (e.g. demographic details, larger purchasing and consumption habits, social networks, etc.).

There is something in common between the State imaginaries of terrorist surveillance in games and the corporate imaginaries of big data games: the production of subjectivity. Harkening back to the chess player we introduced at the beginning of this article, gamers are ordered, disciplined, and knowable subjects. It is this function of games that is both appealing and worrying to the NSA. It is games' ability to produce coherent and "docile" populations, ordered subjectivities that are organized into manageable, computable units, that game companies have seized upon, and that—in 2007—the NSA sensed but could not quite understand. The organization of social and economic structures according to these imaginaries works at the macro level, but breaks down at the level of players. Players, more often than not, tend to be more unruly than the rules of their games would presume them to be.

Watch Dogs (Ubisoft Montreal 2014) is a single player adventure marketed as a game about surveillance and surveillance technologies. The video game has been a huge commercial success, selling over 4 million copies in the first week of release, and despite significant criticisms about its representational politics (especially in the treatment of women and minorities), graphics quality and derivative gameplay, it may surely be interpreted (albeit lightly) as a commentary on the ways in which surveillance technologies like CCTV, GPS tracking, and database profiling are bleeding seamlessly into our everyday lives. This topic is a frequent theme of contemporary video games (Chandler 2014). *Watch Dogs* takes place in a realistic simulation of urban Chicago where politicians and criminals control a central data network that links, scrapes, and analyzes all digital data collected from citizens and locations throughout the city. In this fiction, all individuals are understood as perfectly knowable subjects that can be acted upon at will by the agents of the shadow state assemblage that really control the city. The player is positioned as a rebel hacker whose understanding of the network allows him to use the surveillance system against itself in a classic morality tale about who watches the watchers.

At this representational level *Watch Dogs* can be understood in the context of a long line of cultural engagements with the surveillance state ranging from the novels of Huxley, Orwell and Dick, to films like *The Conversation* and *Enemy of the State*, and a myriad of other artworks, performances and cultural conversations about the politics and meaning of contemporary surveillance technology and practice. Yet, what matters here is that *Watch Dogs* can be understood somewhat differently because it is a surveillance game, not just a game about surveillance. The NSA documents are partially right in this sense; the medium of the video game in the case of *Watch Dogs* allows players to act “as if” they were agents or subjects of surveillance. *Watch Dogs* is a game in which the experience of watchfulness in gameplay is layered with the possible meanings of acts of watching in contemporary society. In other words, to play the game you must engage in a focused watching that is represented literally, rather than abstractly or metaphorically, to the player as surveillance.

A quick example drawn from recent discussions about the game online will help make this point. One of the game’s features is that the player/protagonist can use their cell phone to create a data overlay of all the computer-controlled characters they meet. The fictional cell phone app the player uses is called “the profiler” and you are basically meant to be using this all the time as you travel through the gameworld (the same function will also allow the player to find other players lurking amongst the AI characters in the multiplayer aspect of the game). The profiler provides basic differentiating information about the characters, their names and occupations, a bank account balance (so you can hack their ATM account and steal their money), their music play lists (so you can steal their music to augment your own playlist), any criminal activity (so you can intercede) and one or another personality quirks that mark the character as deviant, abnormal or problematized in some way (e.g. has cancer, lives with their mother, collects pornography, etc...).

Other than the obviously functional information like bank balances, music lists, or criminal activity, there is no direct effect of knowing about the name, occupation, or personality of the characters for completing the game. You do not need this information. However, an important part of *Watch Dogs* comes from players’ decisions to simply bypass or sidestep the main story arc and explore the gameworld as they choose. This is a feature of other so-called open world games like the *Grand Theft Auto* series and it allows players to create experiences within affordances of the game design that the designers may not have anticipated or experienced. This was the case with one youtube video of a *Watch Dogs* player using the profiler to selectively kill AI characters with different racial, ethnic, religious markers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hC83kY3rywE>). The video, titled “Making the World a Better Place,” prompted widespread concern about the developers’ decision to facilitate this kind of profiling in their game, although there are some who argued that the video was meant more as black humor since a

Canadian, fan fiction writer and avid video game player are also targeted. Developers also tactfully turned the critique around by pointing out that the game calls attention to the possible horrors of profiling technologies with the youtube video being a case in point.

While this debate centers on the blurring of reality and fiction in video games that focus on simulations of the “real” world, what is especially interesting for us is how players are able to “make use” of the available data to determine new courses of action that have not been otherwise defined in the rules of the game. Aside from the question of whether using the profiler in *Watch Dogs* to commit racially motivated and targeted acts of violence causes or condones similar acts in the real world, the youtube video takes us in two other directions of interest at the intersection of Game Studies and Surveillance Studies.

The first concerns our analytic attention to the social construction of the profiler app itself. Barring any fictional account of how the profiler was created in terms of the story of the game, which would add another interesting layer, we are left to consider how the Ubisoft developers themselves might have arrived at the specific functionality of this game feature. We do not yet have access to an account of the development of this mechanic in the game but from ethnographic accounts of other game design processes we can surmise that there is a variety of constraints on decision making that range from the idealizations of a design document or the creative lead, to technical constraints concerning memory space or processing complexity, to marketing concerns, to the pragmatic need to meet a deadline. Nevertheless, as commenters on the youtube video have pointed out, there are implicit values and politics associated with the database list of deviant “personality” features that players may choose to act on. Many of the categories are “common sense” or even comedic notions of deviance and otherness presumably from the perspective of the white heterosexual male that is the protagonist of the story.

What we get with this intriguing system for making decisions in the gameworld is not a celebration of difference or plurality but a mechanism for defining deviance and otherness against some undefined norm. What is also clear is that there is a finite set of “otherness” categories (mostly likely limited by both technical constraints and developers’ imaginations) which must be assigned to all characters in the game (except of the player). The result is a basic Surveillance Studies truism in that the world and its characters are literally resolved in terms of the identity categories provided by the database. We could draw on the work of Roger Clarke (1994), Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (1999), or William Bogard (1996) to discuss this further but our point here is that the game experience affords an opportunity for reflection as well as analytic consideration of the construction of similar databases and their effects in the real world.

The second interesting avenue for analysis has to do with the subject position of the player as an agent and subject of surveillance. In terms of the game, the profiler function allows the player to know more—or rather, to perceive that they know more—about the gameworld than is immediately apparent. This extra data is seamlessly presented as part of the causal world of everyday experience in the game and it turns casual inattentiveness into focused watchfulness in which every encounter becomes a matter of concern. A casual walk down a Chicago street in the game with the profiler on becomes a) a source of serious work in the sense that you must focus attention to collect and filter the extra data that may or may not be important, b) a source of voyeuristic pleasure as you attend to characters’ categories of otherness. This is meant to generate some affective relation to the gameworld as you laugh at the notion of being Canadian as other or feel anger at the character who consumes child pornography, and c) a source of anxiety as you learn to worry about what information you are supposed to act on.

This last effect is most pronounced in the multiplayer element of the game in which other real players online are able to pass into your own gameworld and hack your phone for a reward. The effect of this is uncanny at first as you will be alerted when another player is close to you but they will not look any different from the AI characters in the game. At first, the real players are easy to spot because they move differently from the AI characters but experienced players know how to move and act like the AI or how

to hide from view. In this situation, the player must use the CCTV cameras and the profiler to spot the player and hunt them down. It is an extraordinarily effective game mechanic that independent of the challenge provokes a mode of attention and concern in the gamespace that one would not otherwise have. The interesting analytical issue here is not whether similar agents of surveillance lurk in the shadows of the real world but rather how surveillance technologies propose new modalities of attention and watchfulness in our everyday lives.

Games like *Watch Dogs* use and explore the surveillant capacities of games at both the game mechanical and representational scales while also drawing on the dominant surveillance imaginaries of the culture. Recent public concerns over privacy and state surveillance in the United States dovetailed nicely with the release of *Watch Dogs* and media outlets used the game to draw attention to these concerns, both critically and uncritically (Hall 2013; Cowen 2014; Borrelli 2014). When these levels of analysis (mechanics, representation, and imaginary) are considered together *Watch Dogs* becomes an effective platform for critical thinking, if not action, with respect to surveillance culture.

Our introductory comments, on chess, NSA documents, and *Watchdogs* are a small glimpse into the specificity and potential for thinking about games in the context of Surveillance Studies. Rather than hold tight to outdated, oversimplified surveillance imaginaries, this special issue highlights and explodes the complexity of the conversation at the intersection of games, play and surveillance, a conversation that is rooted in the work of T.L. Taylor (2006), Thomas Malaby (2006), Sal Humphreys (2008, 2013), and others. The articles we have assembled acknowledge the important new terrain articulated by Anders Albrechtslund and Lynsey Dubbeld (2005) in their observation that there is something that is “fun” about surveillance. Together, this collection begins the task of unpacking the fun of surveillance by looking closely at its instantiations in very specific contexts that are culturally located in terms of games and play.

A great example of this, for instance, is Alex Cybulski’s contribution which demystifies the technical surveillant apparatus of games, using the example of the Xbox 360’s achievement system to explain how corporations such as Microsoft glean players’ data. In counterpart, Austin Walker describes the passive and active stances taken by players who broadcast video footage of their gameplay, highlighting the new modalities of watching and being watched engendered by play, and the corporate drive to enroll the products of play into cycles of production and profit. Both authors successfully deconstruct what are otherwise normalized, celebrated, and taken-for granted aspects of contemporary video game cultures.

The drive to make play productive and generate further data used to profile and predict human behavior is taken up by Nathan Hulsey and Joshua Reeves in their work on Google’s Alternate Reality Game, *Ingress*. In turn, Jason Farman enters into a dialogue with Hulsey and Reeves, examining how ARGs create a particular embodied relationship to surveillance wherein layering the gameworld and its rule systems upon everyday space creatively (mis)uses existing surveillant infrastructures, such as GPS tracking devices, and thus reframes our relationship with both monitoring technologies and urban space in playful ways.

Playing with surveillance becomes a touchstone with many of the articles in this issue. While the NSA and corporate surveillant discourses detailed above cast players in the role of pawns, this ignores playful subjectivities that focus on exploring, pushing back upon, and finding loopholes and exploits in rule systems. This is aptly demonstrated by Justine Gangneux, who shows how artists playfully re-appropriate CCTV cameras to re-take city spaces. Her article sets the stage for the work of both *!Mediengruppe Bitnik* and Holly Robbins and Katherine Isbister. Robbins and Isbister describe how they incorporate CCTV feeds into their games, using play to promote collaboration amongst strangers and thus reconfiguring social relations in public spaces. In contrast, *!Mediengruppe Bitnik* hi-jacks CCTV feeds, inviting

surveillance camera operators to play a game of chess, thus using play to invert established power relations between the watched and the watcher.

The assumption that the objects of surveillance are pawns is further troubled by Carol Barron's ethnographic study of children's use of mobile phones. These devices, while framed and marketed to parents as surveillant risk-reduction devices, are commonly employed by children to actively negotiate and resist the monitoring of their play spaces and play time. Barron's article links to the growing body of work on the surveillance of childhood by scholars such as Val Steeves (2006, 2012) and others (Chung and Grimes 2005). This literature is further enriched by Kate Raynes-Goldie and Matthew Allen. While sharing commonalities with David Barnard-Wills and Debi Ashenden's (2013) work on designing games that educate players about privacy, Raynes-Goldie and Allen's project is unique in that it uses the design process to learn more about what their young co-designers know about surveillance, and how they engage with and represent it to others.

The role of surveillance in everyday life and our anxieties about it are common narratives in video games (Chandler 2014). Gaming narratives such as *Watch Dogs*' incorporate the *experience* of watching and being watched into gameplay, and thus offer something different from the *representations* of surveillance, of watching and being watched, that are developed in other media such as television, films, comics, and novels. This is exemplified by Carrie Andersen's article on military drones, which compares media coverage of drones to video games about drones in order to highlight how closely tied military surveillant technologies are to games, and how this in turn shifts the discourse of soldier-heroes closer and closer to soldier-gamers.

As Lauren Collister shows in her ethnography of LGBT and minority-friendly guilds in *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*), the social context of the game determines whether this watching is about caring (e.g. watching the back of your fellow players) or disciplining (e.g. stigmatizing the player who is not pulling their weight or conforming to community expectations). Surveillance is most commonly leveraged in games in order to co-ordinate social action and mutually construct persistent gameworlds such as Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOs) like *WoW* (Taylor 2006). However, Aphra Kerr, Stepano De Paoli, and Max Keatinge identify the elements in games that allow MMOs to operate as surveillant assemblages and systems of corporate governance.

The importance of this collection is that the authors detail how play and players intersect with surveillance, rather than treating players as pawns. This is in direct contrast to the NSA and corporate surveillance imaginaries we detail above. Unlike those neatly packaged imaginaries, reality is much more messy and leaves many questions still unanswered. For example, does surveillance in gamespace matter, given that roleplaying, experimenting, and identity-switching effectively introduces "chaff" and noise into the surveillant system (see Brunton and Nissenbaum 2011)? With the popularity of algorithmic surveillance, including big data, social network analysis, behavioral profiling, and predictive monitoring, can importing play into our non-game activities (such as rule systems that encourage roleplaying, the frivolous, or otherwise irrational and thus unpredictable behavior) obfuscate everyday profiling practices? And, is there something about rationalities of play and the subject position of players that can fruitfully reframe resistance to everyday surveillance? Moving away from dystopic imaginaries, such as those presented by the NSA documents and *Watch Dogs*, how can we embrace new models of everyday watchfulness and surveillance as essential elements of collaboration and cooperation? Finally, are the multitude of identities that players take on, experiment with, and shed, correctives to dominant surveillance imagines that see people as fixed, predictable, datapoints to be governed? We hope this special issue will open lines of inquiry on these issues and more.

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