



# Game Studies Download 2.0

*Prepare to be schooled.*





# Who We Are

Ian Bogost, PhD

Georgia Tech and Persuasive Games



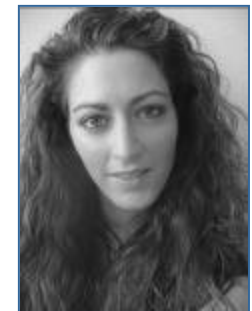
Mia Consalvo, PhD

Ohio University and Memory Card



Jane McGonigal, PhD

Avant Game and Institute for the Future





# Why are we back?

You agreed with us: **game studies matters.**

*Our first top 10 list has **20,000+** downloads and counting.*

**There's more** to game studies...

*This year's list features **expanded targeted expertise** in: social psychology, ethics, personality theory, drama, cognitive science, narrative, and more.*

# Get ready!

- ⌘ This is a **rapid-fire** top 10 countdown.
- ⌘ You can **download the slides** and full references online later.
- ⌘ We have a super-secret bonus level...



## #10 Top Research Finding



→ Games needs more laughter in the slaughter.



Q: “What is the role of humor in videogames?”



-Claire Dorman, Pippin Barr, & Robert Biddle (Carleton University, Victoria University)

# Q: “What is the role of humor in videogames?”

## The big insights:

- Humor makes games “**stickier**” (relief theory)
- Humor creates **social bonding** (superiority theory)
- Humor supports **cognitive immersion** (incongruity theory)

-Claire Dorman, Pippin Barr, & Robert Biddle (Carleton University, Victoria University)

# #10 Design Takeaway

Humor does important work  
in *any* kind of game.



Does your game need more humor? Which kind?



## #9 Top Research Finding



→ Players want to help other players do well in the game—even when it's competitive.

**Q: “Do players seek to win at all costs?”**



- Jonas Heide Smith, IT-University Copenhagen

## Q: “Do players seek to win at all costs?”

### The big insights:

- In games, players behave rationally--**they play to win**
- While playing, individuals will **verbally help and encourage others**, even in competitive games
- **Fairness is important**, but happens only in certain ways

- Jonas Heide Smith, IT-University Copenhagen

## #9 Design Takeaway

Most players will go out of their way to establish a level playing field.



Does your game let players help each other without risk?



## #8 Top Research Finding



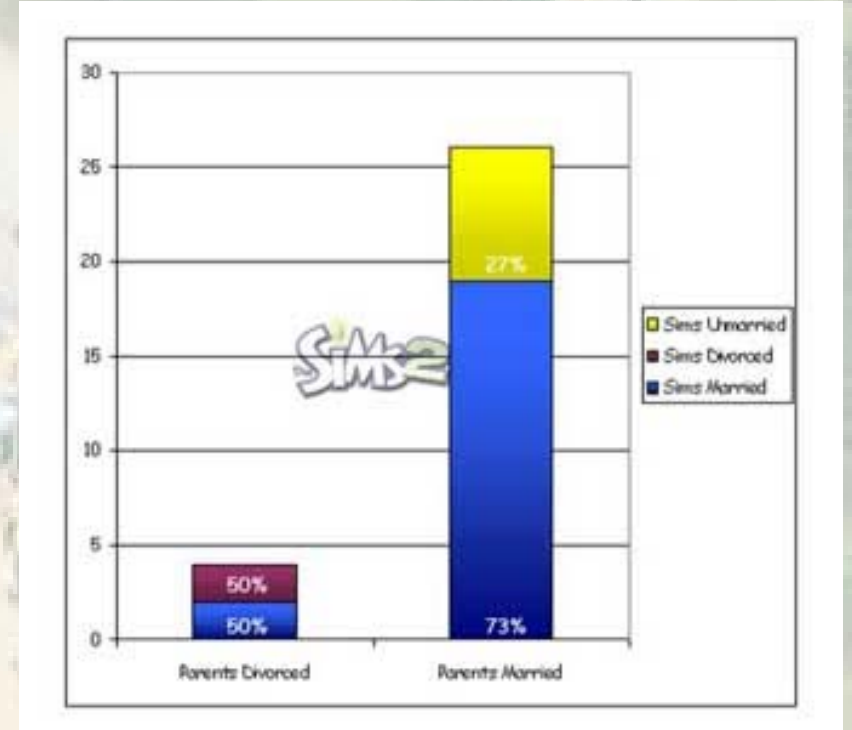
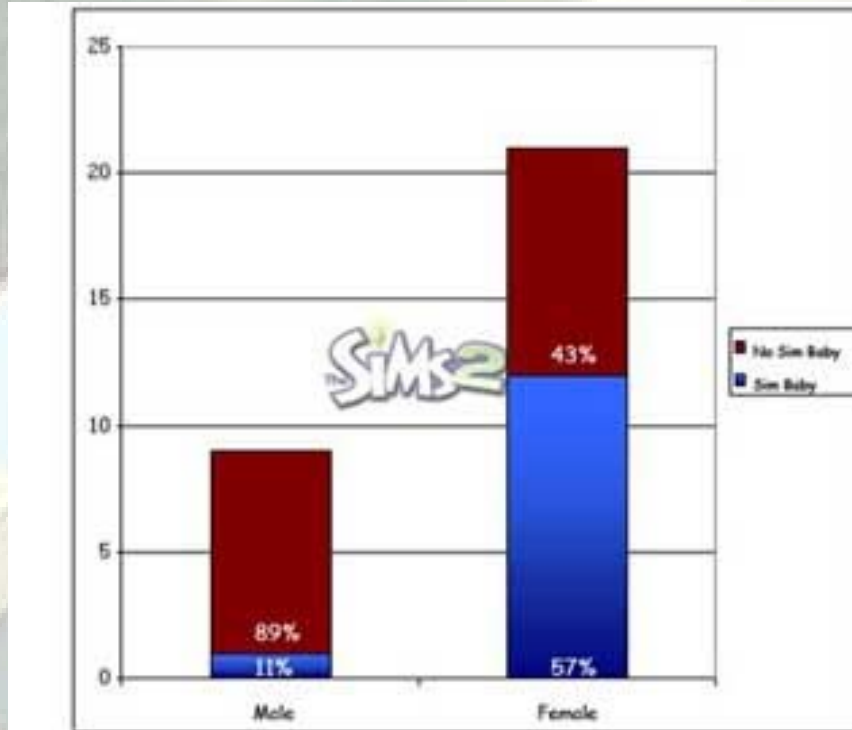
→ Games need non-white characters that aren't gangsters or criminals.

Q: "Do players project aspects of their lives onto game characters?"



- Thaddeus Griebel, independent researcher for  
*Game Studies Journal*

Q: "Do players project aspects of their lives onto game characters?"



- Thaddeus Griebel, independent researcher for *Game Studies Journal*

Q: “Do players project aspects of their lives onto game characters?”

The big insights:

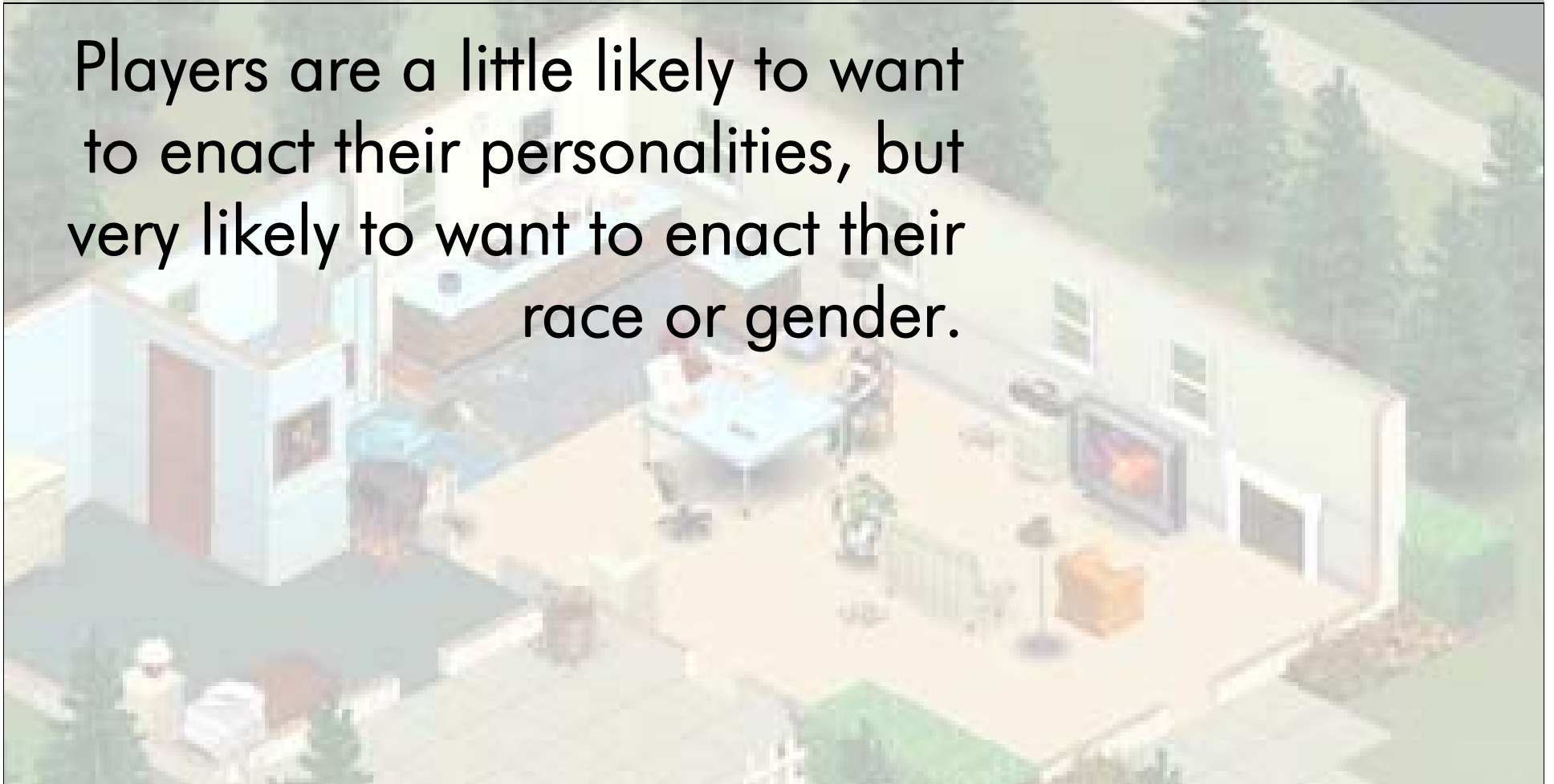
- there is a **weak** correlation between player personality and in-game behavior
- there is a **strong** correlation between player race and game character choice
- **females** are much more likely to make their Sims have **babies**

- Thaddeus Griebel, independent researcher for  
*Game Studies Journal*



## #8 Design Takeaway

Players are a little likely to want to enact their personalities, but very likely to want to enact their race or gender.



Are you offering players positive racial roles in your games?

# #7 Top Research Finding



→ Gamers are less social than you think they are. In fact, gamers are less social than *they* think they are.

Q: “Why do MMO gamers spend so much time playing alone?”



- Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., Moore, R. J. Palo Alto Research Center and Stanford University



Q: “Why do MMO gamers spend so much time playing alone?”

The big insights:

- there is a new middle ground to social gameplay
- gamers get major benefits from shared presence, with little to no direction interaction
- gamers can play “together alone”

- Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., Moore, R. J.  
Palo Alto Research Center and Stanford University



# #7 Design Takeaway



Can you make your game more playable together,  
alone?



# #6 Top Research Finding



→ If it *looks* like a sniper, it should *act* like a sniper.



Q: "How do gamers learn to play a new game?"



- J. Graham, C. Gonzalez, L. Zheng, United States Military Academy, West Point & Carnegie Mellon



Q: “How do gamers learn to play a new game?”



- J. Graham, C. Gonzalez, L. Zheng, United States Military Academy, West Point & Carnegie Mellon



# #6 Design Takeaway



Are you designing game units whose function is equal to their form?

## #5 Top Research Finding



→ Gestural interfaces that make sense, make sense for very specific reasons.

Q: "How do players learn new gestural controls?"



- John Payne et al, Glasgow School of Art



Q: “How do players learn new gestural controls?”



**figure 5:** Above is a screenshot of the gesture definition screen in the Battle of the Wizards game. This highlights the direction and orientation of the Black and White gestures.



**figure 4:** Battle of the Wizards screen shot showing the two wizards casting spells at each other.

- John Payne et al, Glasgow School of Art

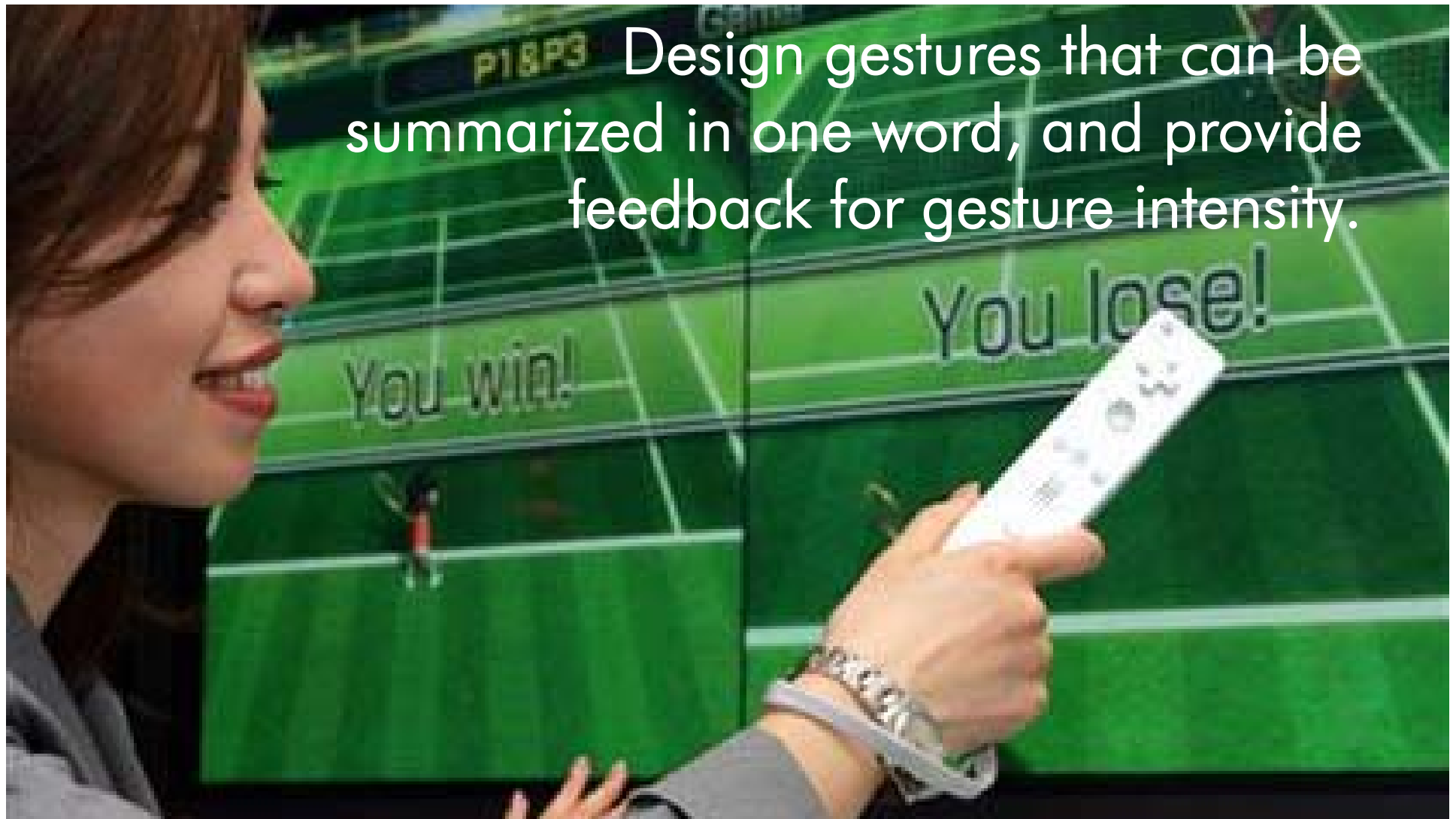
Q: “How do players learn new gestural controls?”

The big insights:

- Feedback calibration is key
- Complex gestures fail
- Common movements are good. Artificial movements are bad
- Player experience attenuates expectation for precision

- John Payne et al, Glasgow School of Art

## #5 Design Takeaway



How are you helping players make sense of your gestural controls?



## #4 Top Research Finding



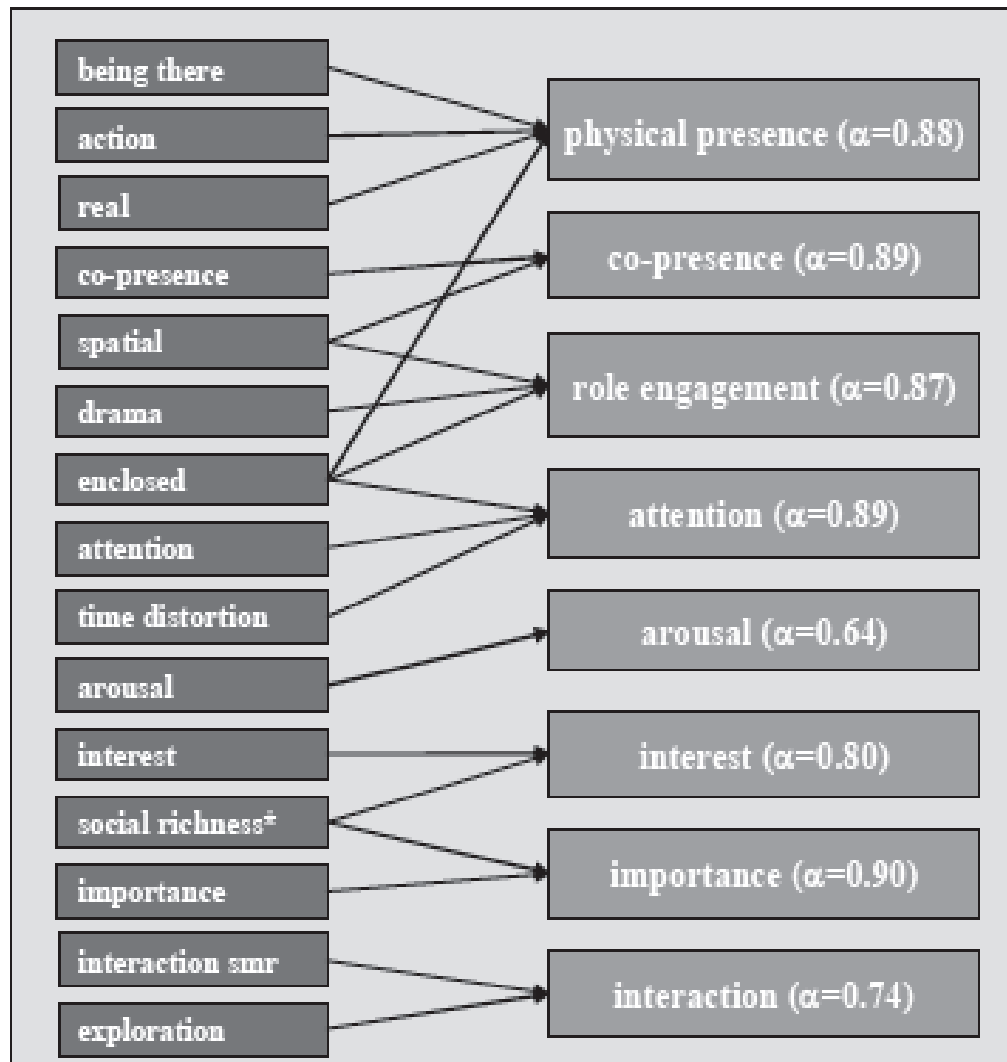
→ You can quantify which factors matter most in immersive game design.

Q: “How can we measure and evaluate which design factors create immersion?”



- J. Takatalo, J. Häkkinen, et al  
University of Helsinki, Nokia Research Center

# 8 factors in immersion



- J. Takatalo, J. Häkkinen, et al  
University of Helsinki, Nokia Research Center

# 8 factors in immersion

1 <sup>st</sup> order factors	Name & nro. of items	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Description	2 <sup>nd</sup> order factors	
					Presence	Involvement
1	Role Engagement	12	19,65	23,67	captivated and enclosed into the role provided by the storyline and narrative	
2	Attention	12	6,19	7,46	time distortion, focus on the game world instead of the real world	
3	Interest	6	3,39	4,09	interesting, exiting as well as lively	
4	Importance	8	2,72	3,27	meaning, relevant as well as close, personal and sensitive	
5	Co-Presence	14	2,03	2,44	feeling of sharing a place with others, being active in there	
6	Interaction	9	1,80	2,17	speed, range, mapping, exploration, predictability of own actions	
7	Arousal	5	1,78	2,15	active, stimulated vs. passive, unaroused	
8	Physical Presence	17	1,49	1,79	feeling of being transported into a real, live and vivid place	
					Eigenvalue	2,23
					% of variance	31,90
						1,32
						18,85

- J. Takatalo, J. Häkkinen, et al  
University of Helsinki, Nokia Research Center



## #4 Design Takeaway

You have 8  
specific  
ways to  
strengthen  
immersive  
experience  
in your  
game.



Which specific aspect of immersion will your game  
innovate?

# #3 Top Research Finding



→ There are multiple ways players would like you to keep it real in games.



Q: "How do players define realism?"



- Steven Malliet, Catholic University of Leuven

## Q: “How do players define realism?”

### The big insights:

- Players enjoy different kinds of realism
- Accurate depictions of geography, past events, & items reflect on realism
- Many players regret the lack of realism in character development

- Steven Malliet, Catholic University of Leuven

# #3 Design Takeaway

To players, realism isn't just about graphics or physics.



What are three different ways you could make your game more realistic?

## #2 Top Research Finding



→ There is such a thing as *ethical* videogame design.



Q: “What is videogame ethics?”



- Miguel Sicart, IT University of Copenhagen



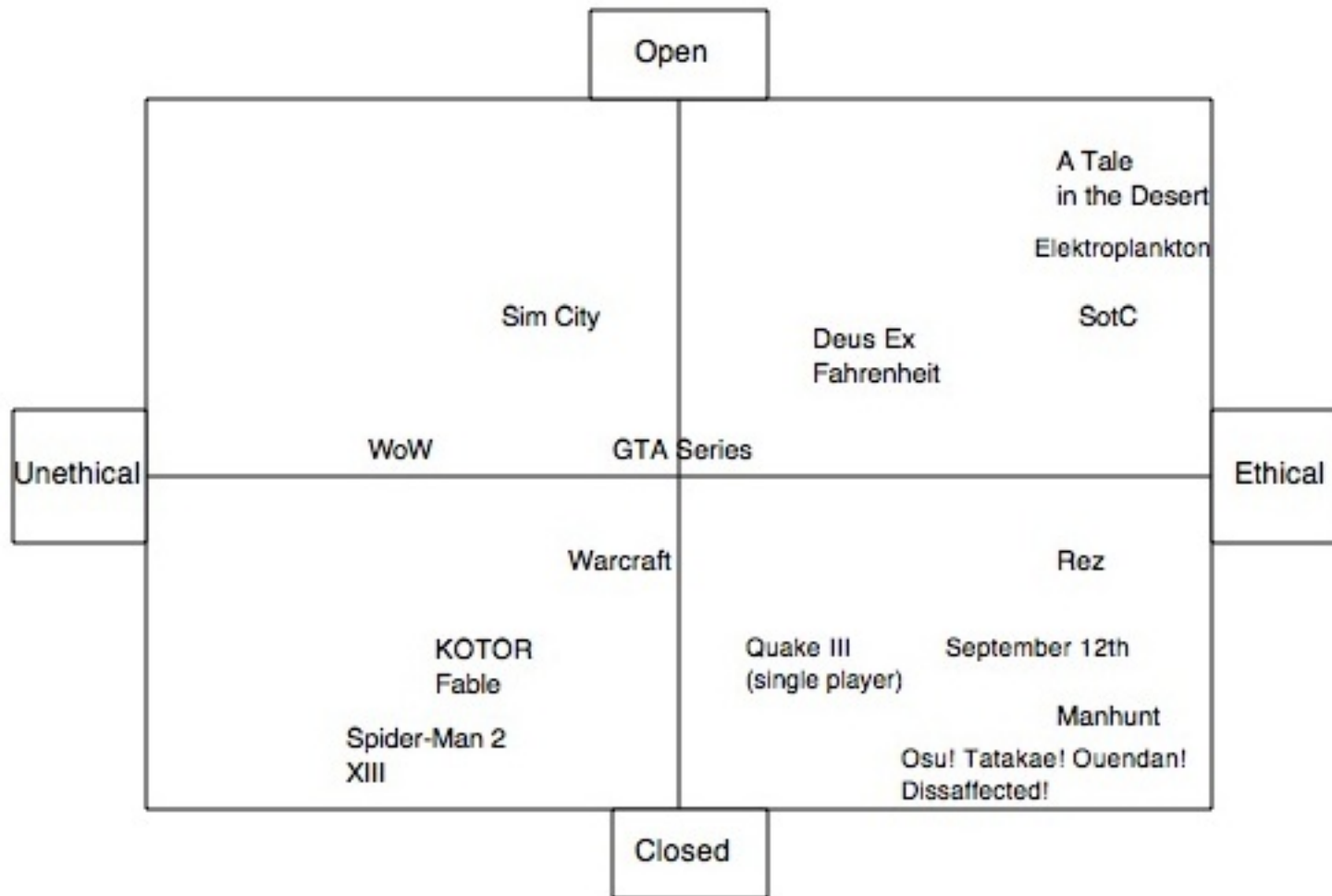
# Q: “What is videogame ethics?”

The big insights:

- black/white good/bad decisions are not ethics
- ethical games allow players to practice or reflect on ethics
- supporting the player community is a part of ethical game design

- Miguel Sicart, IT-University of Copenhagen

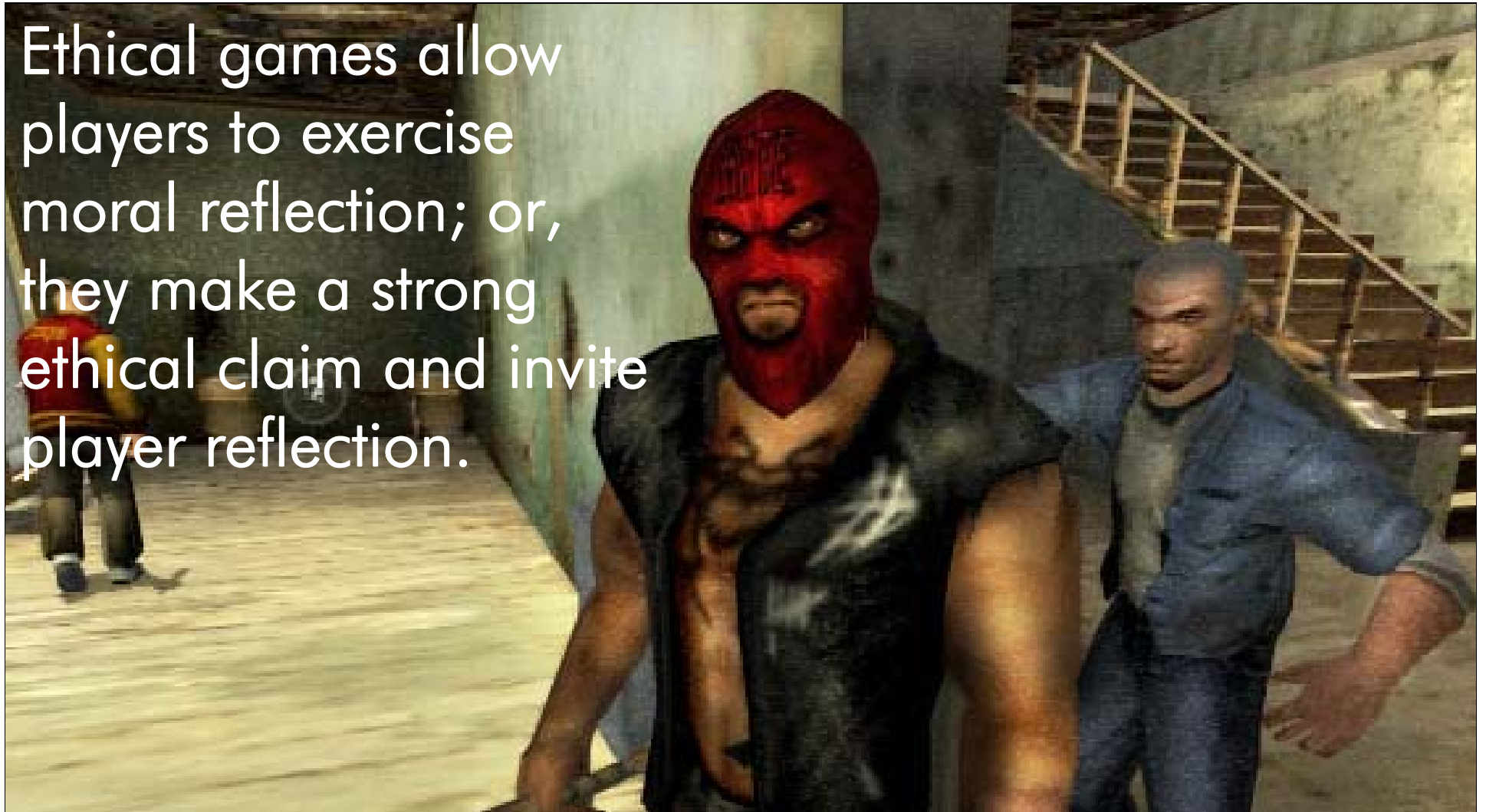
Q: "What is videogame ethics?"



- Miguel Sicart, IT-University of Copenhagen

## #2 Design Takeaway

Ethical games allow players to exercise moral reflection; or, they make a strong ethical claim and invite player reflection.



Are you giving players a chance to explore your or their ethics in your game?

# #1 Top Research Finding



→ Death matters.



Q: “How do players experience in-game death?”



- Lisbeth Klastrup, IT-University of Copenhagen

Q: “How do players experience in-game death?”

The big insights:

- Visual markers of death heighten gameplay intensity
- Death rituals make a game feel more balanced and meaningful in the long run
- Non-trivial death encourages “heroic, social, and yet individualizing” gameplay

- Lisbeth Klastrup, IT-University of Copenhagen

# #1 Design Takeaway



Have you designed a death that matters in your game?



# Super-secret Bonus Level







# Our New Research!

Ian Bogost, PhD

Unit Operations (MIT Press, 2006) &  
Persuasive Games (MIT Press, 2007)



Mia Consalvo, PhD

Cheating (MIT Press, 2007)



Jane McGonigal, PhD

This Might Be a Game (Avant Game, 2006) & "The Puppet Master Problem" (MIT Press, Second Person, 2007)





# Download this talk.

[www.avantgame.com/top10.htm](http://www.avantgame.com/top10.htm)



And now: QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?