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Understanding Digital Affection Games as Cultural Lens:

Love Not War
as Play Experience

Abstract

While much attention has been focused on digital games and violence, little research exists on digital affection games. Affection games require players to flirt, hug, kiss or make love to meet their objectives. This paper takes the several hundred affection games offered online and in mobile marketplaces as a case study. Understanding play as instructive, practice, release or escape inspires engaging questions about affection games. This paper explores four perspectives of affection games as escapist fantasy, as technological affordance, as quantifiable experience, and as the product of mutual benefit, demonstrating how these games reflect and encode philosophies about affection and gender.

keywords: flirt, heteronormative, secrets, hug, kiss affection, gender

Introduction

A discussion on video games in academic spheres often leads to a discussion of violence. While much attention has been focused on games and violence¹ or the positive effects of educating and creating social impact², little research has focused on the advent of digital affection games. Affection games are play-experiences in which players flirt, hug, kiss or make love to meet their in-game goals. Understanding play as instructive, practice, release, or escape inspires engaging questions about affection games, their role in digital play and their players. If one wants to make the simplest of arguments about the expressive potential of games, a simple dichotomy can be had. There are games about war, and there are games about love. Affection games are an emerging genre in digital games that are ostensibly about love.

As with the development and growth of any new genre, the task of understanding affection games begins with a relative comparison. The history of affection games is marked by studies from sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists looking to understand interpersonal relationships within specific cultures as widespread trend³ or reflection of specific groups.⁴ Much of the previous work involves non-digital play.⁵ An analysis of sexual representation in digital games was published by the well-known game designer and researcher Brenda Brathwaite.⁶ Others have studied the depiction of sex-stereotype in games and its effects.⁷

However, sexual affection and sexual depiction are not the same as studying digital affection. Most clearly, not all sex games are affectionate. To this distinction, sex games are referred to as games depicting sexual content, while sexual affection games are games which depict sexual acts with the express goal of mutual satisfaction and mutual benefit.

There is also considerable psychological study in the relationship of affection and violence,⁸ although much of this study relates to physical, not digital affection. At the very least, an understanding of affection games does provide some perspective on the games players choose to play, which sociologists have accepted as reflection of socio-cultural values.⁹

Of these researchers, the most prominent is Brian Sutton Smith. Although the author of more than 50

books and 350 articles on games, one of his least cited works is an analysis of *The Kissing Games of Adolescents in Ohio*.¹⁰ Published in a collection of folklore research, the study's goal was "to record a collection of contemporary kissing games of adolescent children." Sutton-Smith reminds the reader that the study of affection games had until his 1959 publication largely existed as an analysis of courtship. His assertion to his contemporaries was simple — "in this century, however, the explicit and formalized elements of courtship... have been practically discarded." While Sutton Smith's pre-sexual revolution contemporaries may find such an observation noteworthy, our twenty-first century has an ever more radical perspective on the formalized elements of courtship.

In a society that has embraced digital dating, (e.g. online dating services, first contacts via email, chat rooms, et al.) the specter of courtship remains, but many of its first formal elements have been discarded. When the manufacture of dating simulation games grows to become enmeshed in a culture,¹¹ and a person endeavors to marry a game character,¹² the thread of courtship intertwines in ways that indicate cultural shifts that are at one time eagerly propelled into a digital future and steadfastly anchored in the past. In such cases it is not enough to divorce from tradition of dating or marriage, but instead to affirm them by bring one to the other. The research goal, Sutton Smith offered half a century ago in examining kissing games, remains an important one in our contemporary digital play.

This paper takes as its case study the several hundred affection games offered online and in mobile marketplaces. Extending previously published content analysis of hundreds of online affection games,¹³ this article brings to light the characteristics of these games. These characteristics reveal patterns in the design and distribution of affection games.

The patterns reveal cultural norms and values. They expose design assumptions about the ways in which affection is conveyed and received as a set of operational rules within the games. This procedural rhetoric¹⁴ offers perspective on the designers as well as the audience that consumes the games. In this way, affection games are not only artifact of digital culture, they are an archive of encoded rule sets indicating cultural angst and expression

of fantasy. The analysis of such games provides borders between what is socially acceptable to play and what is not. It also helps us understand where taboo ends and begins. While taboo play is a topic worthy of substantial research in itself,¹⁵ it is useful to understand that the border between what is normative and what is not begins and ends at taboo play. As such, this article focuses almost entirely on mainstream affection games. The affection games discussed need not reside in the digital red light districts of virus riddled pornography websites. The affection games discussed are instead readily available through popular game clearinghouses like Kongregate, the Apple App store, and Google Play.

Understanding Affection Games

As mentioned, affection games are games in which players must flirt, hug, kiss or make love to meet their goal. These games are not merely about such topics as conveyed through situation or narrative, they are integral to the game experience. Instead, players or their representations in game worlds are tasked with affectionate activity. Where some games may task players with shooting all obstacles in their way, affection games ask them to kiss them away.

The definition of affection games is based not on

situation, but on mechanics. These games' central activity is the act of affection. They are, in formal game design terms, games for which the central verb is flirt, hug, kiss or make love. This differentiates affection games from dating simulations whose verbs are often more rich. In dating simulations, players may need to negotiate the complexity of maintaining a relationship by balancing a complex system of game verbs. Dating simulations, particularly those with a more sexual focus, may treat the non-player characters as objects. The characters become puzzles to decipher via an increasingly complex balance of compliment, social prodding, and negotiation. These games, while a fascinating space for cultural examination, are not focused on affection. They are better as they describe themselves, social simulation.

A simple query on Google Play for "kissing games" reveals more than 250 results that illustrate the basic division between affection games and the others. Those results include two types of games. The first are digital versions of analog kissing games, like Spin the Bottle. This first category can be understood as affection-facilitating games. They use the digital toy as the social lubricant to facilitate player-to-player interaction. This first category is

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1. Craig A. Anderson, Douglas A. Gentile, and Katherine E. Buckley, *Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2007.
 2. Jane McGonigal, *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*, (Penguin 2011).
 3. Helen E. Fisher, *Anatomy of Love: A Natural History of Mating, Marriage, and Why We Stray*, (Random House LLC, 1994).
 4. Goran Hyden, "The Social Capital Crash in the Periphery: An Analysis of the Current Predicament in sub-Saharan Africa" *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 30, no. 2 (2001): 161-163.
 5. Janet Lever, "Sex Differences in the Games Children Play," *Social Problems* (1976): 478-487.
 6. Brenda Brathwaite, *Sex in Video Games*, (Charles River Media, Inc., 2006).
 7. Karen E. Dill, Brian P. Brown, and Michael A. Collins, "Effects of Exposure to Sex-Stereotyped Video Game Characters on Tolerance of Sexual Harassment," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 44, no. 5 (2008): 1402-1408.
 8. Hilary Saner and Phyllis Ellickson, "Concurrent Risk Factors for Adolescent Violence," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 19, no. 2 (1996): 94-103.
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 10. Brian Sutton-Smith, "The Kissing Games of Adolescents in Ohio," *Midwest Folklore* (1959): 189-211.
 11. Emily Taylor, "Dating-Simulation Games: Leisure and Gaming of Japanese Youth Culture," *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 29 (2007).
 12. Kyung Lah, "Tokyo Man Marries Video Game Character," CNN, February 17, 2009.
 13. Lindsay D. Grace, "Affection Games in Digital Play: A Content Analysis of Web Playable Games," *Digital Games Research Association* (2013).
 14. Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (MIT Press, 2007).
 15. L. Grace, "Discomfort Design: Critical Reflection Through Uncomfortable Play, in *Proceedings of the 17th International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA2011)*, Istanbul, Turkey (2011).

digitization of existing games and has the support of prior research within their analog equivalents. Affection-facilitating games reflect the minority of affection focused games in mobile spaces and an even smaller amount of the web playable games.

The second and larger type of game is the traditional affection game. In these games, player characters engage in affections to meet their goals. These are referred to as affection games, and are distinct from affection-facilitating games. Affection games average just under 9% of the games offered online. The highest proportion, 28.7%, can be found at KissingGames.com and the lowest proportion is at NewGrounds.com which offers only .1% of its 65,520 game catalog.¹⁴ These games are also strongly targeted at female players. KissingGames.com visitors, for example, are almost twice as likely to be female than visitors to other websites.¹⁵ For the websites analyzed, the largest single demographic were children under the age of 18. Age ranges, 18–24, 25–34, and 35 and up, decline steadily with 35 and over being the smallest set of visitors to these sites.

In previous research, the descriptions and titles of more than 500 affection games were parsed. Of that set, kissing is the most common non-sexual affection. More than 250 games exist where kissing is the primary action of play. Hugging is the least, with fewer than ten online and mobile device games as examples. Just over 75 games require flirting.

Sexual affection is a difficult characteristic to study in games. It is problematized by depictions that are complicated by cultural encoding and social rule sets. Affection games are distributed beyond national and cultural borders and sometimes poorly translated. Censorship and the abstract borders of



pornography make formal analysis even trickier.

As mentioned, not all that is sexual is affectionate. It is also inadequate to ignore sex as an act of affection and a subset of the affection games domain. For the value of accurate academic reporting, it is clear that there are more than 800 games whose focus is sexual acts. Many of which are available at larger clearinghouses like SexGamesFun.com (which has 850 sex games in its catalog). The total number of sex games includes sexualized dating simulations and a number of conventional game mechanics re-skinned to include pornographic content or sexual simulation (e.g. Space Invaders with a Phallus or puzzles that reveal nude pin-ups).

It is important to understand that much like the pornographic film industry, which may produce many films of varying quality and content, sex games run the gamut from extremely amateur productions to well-funded enterprises. The culture reference for some of these games is anime and manga informed. Others are whimsical and sophomoric. Discerning the affection play from within the wide range of sex games is simply too large for the scope of this analysis and too loaded with cultural landmines that require expansive cross-cultural subject matter experts. It is true, from a limited examination, that many of these games conflate violence while others depict abstract representation of sexual situations.

Short rounds of play and simple, non-diverse games mechanics are the common characteristics of casual games. These games are designed to be quick diversions, delivering a play experience quickly and affording for easy understanding of goals immediately. While casual games can be played for hours, the core experience is delivered in minutes. The majority of affection games are casual games. In a detailed content analysis of 30 affection games, 70% of the games provided rounds (as marked by timers or levels) of less than two minutes.

The First Lens: Affection Games as Escapist Fantasy

If understood as escapist fantasy in the way that romance novels or violent play have been noted, affection games offer an interesting view into their players' desires. Much of the affection play space is

14. "2013 Essentials Facts," Electronic Software Association, http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/esa_ef_2013.pdf.

15. ???

conventional. The majority of game mechanics are the same, with only minor changes in situation. The most popular of these games are sneaking kiss games, in which player characters kiss when an authority is not looking. The games flirt with taboo in fleeting seconds, stealing a forbidden affection, but rarely worrying about how that affection was received. Examples include kissing at work while the boss looks away or kissing at the mall while the security guard is not looking. Authority figures are sometimes culturally coded, as one game depicts a male devil and feminine angel sneaking kisses while a bow-equipped angel rests watchfully in a cloud. Others employ the convention with less clarity, as players lose points when frogs and birds catch them kissing.

The operationalized affection constructed in these games is perceivably goal-oriented. The standard is that players are rewarded for getting as many kisses or as much kissing time without getting caught. The result of getting caught is often game end.

The games are situation-focused. The thing that most distinguishes a sneaking kiss game from another is not the way one kisses or the constraints, it is the situation. Players kiss under the stars, on a bridge, on a boat, in the sky. The character are most commonly human. When they are not human they are furry, friendly, and lighthearted. If the character is not human it is a cute bear or magical unicorn.

Also of note, these games do not depict steamy kisses, they depict playful kisses. There are very few games that depict the mechanics of a kiss, it is most often the act. Characters may be holding hands, but only rarely do those hands move. Many of the games ambiguously depict who is kissing whom. The characters move at the same time.

The clearest commonality in these kissing games is their placement of affection within a kind of magic other. Kissing happens when authority can't see. Kissing is a secret. Kissing is a space alongside the everyday experience of combing your hair or shopping for clothes. The sneaking kisses genre is the symbol of affection games.

These observations highlight the kind of fantasy the games prescribe. First, the sneak kiss game is a soft revolt to authority. Players kiss, despite authority's

warnings, but they never do it as outward revolt. Where games in other domains have players vehemently and aggressively challenging authority, these games are at best soft revolts. The player characters accept and acknowledge the authority over their affection and work within the system, subverting it at best. In the end the authority always wins.

The fantasies are not physical, as the physical characteristics of kissing are most commonly demonstrated as one head in front of the other. There are no tongues to manage in these games.

The fantasies offered are also heteronormative. Save for the radical games offered by Molle Industria,¹⁷ the gender is affirmed and coded. In these games boys kiss girls, men and women kiss. If they are cats, one cat has a pink bow and slight features, the other does not. If they are unicorns, one is pink and adorned with jewelry, the other is blue and unadorned. Same gender affection, whether sexual or non-sexual, is a rarity in such play.

With the recent growth of digital affection new opportunities and characteristics present themselves. Unlike the games that people play with each other, the solitary experience of the digital affection game affords for an experimental play that requires only a single contract – the contract between player and device. The affection play within devices is not one to be negotiated as much as it is to be sought and requested. In this dynamic, digital affection games imply a future more analogous to digital prostitution than to the playful, mutually beneficial affection play between two human participants. This is not to cast a negative light or to encourage such games to find spaces in the same red light district of adult experience. Instead, such play has an opportunity to be public in the way that hugs, bows and handshakes are accepted.

If understood as escapist fantasy in the way that romance novels or violent play have been noted, affection games offer an interesting view into their players' desires. Much of the affection play space is conventional. The majority of game mechanics are the same, with only minor changes in situation. The games flirt with taboo in fleeting seconds, stealing a forbidden affection, but rarely worrying about how that affection was received.

17. Paulo Pedercini, Molle Industria, <http://www.MolleIndustria.com>.

The Second Lens: Technological Affordance and the Move Toward Mobile Affection

The game experience is not limited to that which occurs on screen or during the few minutes of human-computer interaction. It's important to imagine how these games are played. From the growth of mobile downloads of these games that picks up momentum in 2012, it is highly likely that the games which originated as web games moved to the mobile games at about that time. A number of games were simply ported and renamed. The School Girl Flirt game,¹⁸ for example, became Japan Flirt¹⁹ on Google Play.

A comparison of mobile downloads to web plays is not an accurate comparison because games on a website may count each individual play session as a new play. That means that repeat players can be counted every time they revisit the website. Mobile players on the other hand, install a game, and keep it for as long as it is useful. However, popular games introduced in 2013 have more than 1,000,000 reported installations on Google Play.

Affection game play counts at the most popular internet clearinghouses are significantly lower than those reported by mobile game distributors in the same time. A popular affection game in a specialty collection may report 1,000,000 downloads over the 5-year life of the game. Of course, mobile games distribution is consolidated to a few specific outlets, where web playable games are offered in a fairly diverse network of widely distributed sites. However, the growth in mobile affection games offers many potential reasons, to which I can only offer hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is that mobile devices support the illusion of privacy. Thinking on a global scale, players of these games in 2009 may have purchased computer time at an Internet Café or used the family computer to play as a distraction. That dynamic changes with the seemingly more personal experience of owning your own mobile phone. With a mobile version of the game, the risk of an Internet Café host or visitor catching a glimpse of you playing a "girlie game" as a boy or a disruption in your

hot and steamy game situation have been reduced.

The games can also be played for a few minutes during your commute on Japan's Shinkansen or while babysitting a toddler fast asleep. That is to say, you can sneak this experience into your everyday life and your private digital life is more easily encapsulated. Where downloading an affection game on a shared computer avails the player of public critique, the privacy of the phone empowers he or she to try things he or she may not have otherwise.

Second, there is a culture of disposability within mobile play. As a place for taking risk, the mobile platform consumers are fickle. The widely recognized standard in mobile apps is that at least 90% of users will uninstall an app within 30 days of initially downloading it. The potential result is that many such games get uninstalled, reinstalled, and tried. Players have a wide range of options, worry less about viruses, and expect to try many different experiences. Unlike the console market, the commitment is at most \$1 USD, not \$60 USD.

Third, endorsements come from all over the world in more languages, changing who recommends what. Suddenly, where a player may have felt like they were the only person in the world playing this esoteric genre of games, they now see thousands of downloads with reviews suggesting it is a wonderful experience. In short, the community of players has expanded. Where once players were shy sharing their reviews of affection games with classmates and office mates, they can now skip them and use the recommendations of thousands of anonymous strangers.

Unbeknownst to many mobile consumers is the army of computer bots and low wage review farms that have been employed simply to bolster the download numbers and reviews of games. They exist as part of a marketing push to bolster paid downloads and keep specific games at the top of the ranks. They also obviously complicate the accuracy of the aforementioned installation counts. Their existence clouds all quantitative and qualitative the data integrity. A question few players may be asking is how much of the game community in which they participate is

18. "School Flirting Game" [Adobe Flash, Online Game], (Girls Go Games, 2009), <http://www.girlsgogames.com/game/school-flirting-game.html>.

19. Alex Keller, "Japan Flirt" [Digital Game, Android], (Google Play, 2013), <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.alexkeller.japanflirt>.

already gamed by disingenuous praise and affection for the games they play.

The Third Lens: Affection as Commodity and Quantity — Knowing the Score

Digital affection play can at once be very private and exceedingly public. While many of the affection game experiences are simple one-person experiences that can be had in the darkest alleys or most intimate spaces, they are also made available via websites and app stores. The result is that the contemporary affection game is not a secret shared between two or more people as are affection-facilitating games. Instead it is a consumable experience delivered via the application vending machines of Google Play and Apple's App Store. The rush of giving or getting affection can be purchased and its situations come prepackaged as prescribed fantasy.

Affection as some of these games deliver it, becomes a commodity. The game *2nd Kiss When the Boss Is Not Watching*²⁰ is a good example of such experience. When players win at their gambling, they earn a currency that can be used to adorn or affect the one primary character of the game. This anime beauty tells you when she's not in the mood for a kiss, but the money you earn changes her mood quickly. Likewise as an abstraction of process and feedback, the quantification of affection is a thematic emphasis.

Even the game designs quantify affections. Games within this space often provide numerical scores, despite the fact that much of the game industry has found more clever ways to encode the complexity of human interaction. Where a game like *Indigo Prophecy*²¹ depicted the player's mood in 2005, the modern affection game still counts the number of kisses you have successfully landed or rates your performance like an Olympic score.

This quantified self, as a recipient or deliverer of affection may not be as simple as a programming shortcut or design myopia. The games exist within environments that quantify their value, letting the most downloaded or installed bubble to the top,

resulting in titles designed to draw people into their uniqueness, even ignoring intellectual property to win the race. One such game, *Princess Kissing Game* as it is described in Google Play continues to provide its web playable title *Barbie Healing Kiss*. Likewise, celebrity names are used in titles turning an anonymous blonde player character into Britney Spears or a bowl-cut lad into Justin Bieber. On Google Play, there are currently ten Justin Bieber kissing games, I suspect none have been endorsed by the child celebrity himself.

The race from the marketers of these games is not the retention of players, but merely that first contact. The model is similar to hormone-infused teens, racing to get as many notches in their belt before their time has passed. The result is a high number of downloads, with only a few notable experiences. To return to an earlier allusion, some of the developers of these games follow the pornography industries model of high volume, low production quality. Some of these games sell on the cleverness of their names (e.g. *Big Damn Bridge*), not on the endearing qualities of the experience. Not only do the games quantify affection as an experience, they sell on volume.

The Fourth Lens: A Scarcity of Consent and Mutual Benefit

There are several philosophical and cultural questions that will remain unanswered through this research. These include what it means emotionally, experientially, and as a cultural trend to not only express emotion digitally but to play through its expression. It is tempting to understand such digital affection as a harbinger of a general social decline, to blame an increasing distance mediated by the contradictory benefits of being more digitally connected, but more emotionally and physically distant. But to do so is to forget the fundamental benefits of play. Play is practice, play is an experiment.

From a philosophical perspective digital affection affords people to play with only one consent — their own. Assuming that the kinds of affection play the player seeks have been created, the benefit of such digital play is that players can experiment without

20. Si-yeon Kim, "Second Kiss While Boss is Not Watching", [iOS] HighMind, (2012), <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/2nd-kiss-when-boss-is-not/id525280100?mt=8>.

21. David Cage, "Postmortem: Indigo Prophecy," Gamasutra, http://gamasutra.com/features/20060620/cage_01.shtml [Accessed 24 March, 2009] (2006).

hoping to meet another who shares their interest. Tastes and biases for or against public display of affection and other individual characteristics are pre-programmed into the designed experience of an affection game.

As such, many affection games fail to consider the non-player character as recipient. In this way, there is a clear bifurcation in the experience of these games. On the one hand there are games that are wholly focused on the player's needs. In this model, non-player characters are dumb-bots awaiting affection, to which their response means little. They are creatures with none of their own desires, simply the ability to be mesmerized by your flirt or the always-willing doll to receive your kisses. Such play is not far from play with a doll, which empowers to the player to imagine its needs and pleasures.

In the other direction are games that require players to work to please the other. The non-player character is a puzzle to which players must work to please. The system may be rhythmic, like a round of Guitar Hero full of distinct sequences and appropriate cadences. *A Really Great Night*,²² a game that requires players to please a woman during sex, is an example of following the affection receiver's rhythm. Players must slip between pleasing moves, following cues from the non-player character to match her desire for variety and proper build-up. The system may also be more of cocktail, where the player is responsible for creating the right balance of elements to land the perfect kiss. Games that ask players to create the right concoction of kiss dimensions (e.g. *Passion and Sincerity*) are a good example.

This distinction, between player-centered pleasure and non-player character-centered affection seems to permeate the two distinct cultures for which the games exist. One distinct characteristic seems to bias the design preference for one or the other. Where non-player character centered affection appears, game play tends to be longer and more involved. The more detailed these affection games become, the more they move toward becoming something else – dating simulations. Rarely do these narrative-based experiences obscure the desires of the non-player characters. Instead, they encourage players to solve the puzzle of unlocking the non-player characters

mysteries. What makes the non-player character happy, what pleases them and what desires do they most need?

If one chooses to consider games a kind of training ground for prosocial or anti-social play, affection games that ask players to practice pleasing others may seem quite appealing. Of course, such games have to be examined from a critical perspective. Like all things designed, they have abstractions that simplify a complicated dynamic. *A Really Great Night*, for example, has no before and little after. It jumps to the center of it, starting foreplay with a nude body and finishing the game shortly after its climactic moment. There is also the very critical perspective of losing focus. A training in wholly worrying about others to the detriment of self is perhaps no more positive than ignoring the needs of others for a self-centered objective.

The arising challenge in examining such games is then in the extreme examples. Refraining from expressing the deplorable examples of rape in such games, there is a kink in the examination of sexual affection games. There are digital games that depict a role play where the non-player character is simulating an unwillingness with a thin veil that eventually lifts to expose a mutually enjoyed experience. These games are doubly complex in their representation and mechanics. To what extent does such role-play represent the relatively secret activities of couples engaged in activities that require safety words and furry cuffs, and to what extent are they wholly violent depictions of criminal acts?

From the perspective of post-modern philosophy, how much of the simulated experience mimics the pseudo-simulated world in which we already exist? Players know that reviews may be bolstered by artificial endorsements from inauthentic, automated reviewers. Players know that the *Princess Kissing Game* is not the *Barbie Kissing game*, yet they accept its two titles as one. In this space it is okay for something to be two contradictory things at once, occupying the same space and being two different things.

The social sciences offer little more clarity on this question, as they divide their claims between the cathartic experience of imagined play and the more

22. *A Really Great Night* [Adobe Flash, Online], Sangwiched (2007) New Grounds, Glenside, Pennsylvania. <http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/446277>.

conservative you are what you play stereotype. This is where the arts might at least offer one clear if not comforting motto — art imitates life.

Conclusion

As the game industry and the academic research community look for new ways to understand and engage wider demographics, the lessons learned from studying affection games may prove useful. Affection games reveal cultural values, taboo, and may potentially expand the space of prosocial play.

From this research it is clear that there is a content bias against same gender and interracial affection, whether romantic or friendly. The games are marketed towards females. The games also affirm conventional gender roles and lack little operational diversity. What may be most interesting is that the

majority of affection games offer rigid rule sets and little space for players to explore.

Returning to the earlier discussion of courtship and games that indicate social shift, digital affection is a profoundly interesting space to observe. What does an absolutely quantified affection mean in our contemporary space of computer mediated relationships? How does consent evolve or devolve? Why is this relatively rigid space of play attractive to players? These are questions better left to social science analysis or the artistic investigations into alternatives. Suffice it to say that digital affection games exist, persist, and permeate the general play spaces in significant ways. At the very least they serve as perspective on the way some of our contemporaries choose to play.

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