Girls and Video Games

Discipline and/or subject:
Computer science, gender studies

Pedagogy:
Case study

Implementation:
This case deals with the representation of females in video games based on the experiences of Madeline Messer, a 12 year old video game player. Maddie observed that in most of the games she played the default character was male. If you want to play as a female, you often have to pay. Maddie did some research to test her observation. The results prompted her to write an op-ed piece that was published in the Washington Post. The op-ed piece was read by video game developers and had some surprising results.

Have your students read the NPR piece on Maddie Messer: A 12-Year-Old Girl Takes On The Video Game Industry, April 8, 2015:
http://www.npr.org/blogs/money/2015/04/08/398297737/a-12-year-old-girl-takes-on-the-video-game-industry
and Maddie’s op-ed in the *Washington Post*, March 4, 2015:  

**Further Reading/Resources:**
A course where students are developing video games provides an opportunity for students to examine these issues in greater depth. Although the numbers of girls and women playing video games are increasing, there are far fewer female characters portrayed in games than males. There are even fewer minorities and people with disabilities represented. Additionally female characters are often hyper-sexualized. Consider having teams of students research these issues, along with gathering data to examine the socio-economic and ethnographic backgrounds of gamers. In a game design course, students could be tasked with creating a game that is more inclusive, based on what they find from their research.

**Learning Outcomes:**
- Students will discuss how gender bias affects young girls.
- Students will be able to describe how price discrimination becomes gender discrimination.

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