

Introduction

Esports as Community

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The Well Played Journal is a forum for in-depth close readings of video games that parse out the various meanings to be found in the experience of playing a game. This special issue is uniquely focused on esports as an emerging type of community, largely within the context of colleges and universities.

How do college esports clubs facilitate campus social life?

How do the communication systems within competitive games constrain and enable fan/player relationships?

How do these same systems limit gender equity among players?

These questions and more will be explored in the following pages.

This issue differs from others in the Well Played series in a number of ways.

First, this is being produced through a team that recently launched a public pathway to the gaming industry, composed of high school programs in low-resourced communities that lead to a new undergraduate degree in game design at the City College of New York (CCNY), with both connected to local gaming industry leaders (both AAA and indie). This Gaming Pathways Program launched in spring of 2022 through five public events, from which all of the content of this journal are drawn: two evenings of Well Played lectures, two afternoons of esports competitions, and one press conference with the mayor of New York City.

Second, as this publication draws from these public events, the diversity of voices represented across those events are reflected within these pages: college students, academics, gaming professionals and, yes, even a mayor and (separately) a nerdcore rapper. (While most Well Played articles are peer reviewed, our chapters followed a different publication path).

Third, all of these chapters were designed to be presented orally. We have worked with the contributors to adapt them where possible for print; for others we retained the conversational tone if that format was preferred.

Like all Well Played Journals, we focus here on one topic (esports as community). Through different voices and perspectives we try to understand the topic in a new way, through careful analysis and understanding the topic from the inside out.

The journal opens, echoing each of our events, with wise words from former educator and nerdcore rapper Mega Ran, who wrote these lyrics for his song celebrating how games offer a wide range of pathways to careers in everything from “information tech to architects.”

Then, Stan Altman, the Director of the Gaming Pathways Program, introduces the new initiative and sets some context. In “Games as Gateway to College,” Nick Fortungo, the educational director of the game design program at CCNY, makes the case that esports are “a great preparation for college, because now you have an angle to connect with the people around you...” This theme of esports creating communities on college campuses is explored from a personal angle in “The Power of Collegiate Esports Clubs,” as college student Matthew Lopez recounts his experience during the global pandemic finding connections through the CCNY Club. Finally, Jessie Su, attending the same school, argues for a more inclusive definition of community within her article, “Women Gamers Comming within a Toxic Community.”

The last collection of essays move from a college level to a city-wide and national level. Asi Burak, a professional in the industry, recounts his experience building a city-wide esports community through the first major esports competition held at Madison Square Garden. Masaya Heywood, a college student, follows-up with an analysis of how the needs of esports athletes differ from traditional sports, generating different fan cultures, for better and for worse. Finally, Eric Adams, the Mayor of New York City, makes the case of leveling up New York City to become a major center for gaming within the nation.

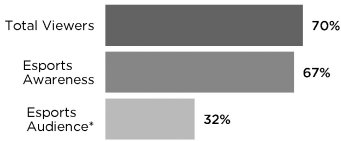
As there is so much more to be explored regarding esports and community,

this collection is intended to generate conversations and inspire others to do the same.

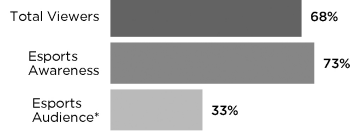
So, if you are game for it: tag – you're it!

VIEWING & ESPORTS

Distribution | Gen Alpha



Distribution | Gen Z



Top Reasons to View | Gen Alpha Viewers

Rated 5, 6, or 7 out of 7

- #1 Get ideas on things to do in games and new ways to play 81%
- #2 Learn from other (professional) players 81%
- #3 See high-level gameplay / skills 80%

Top Reasons to View | Gen Z Viewers

Rated 5, 6, or 7 out of 7

- #1 See high-level gameplay / skills 75%
- #2 Get ideas on things to do in games and new ways to play 73%
- #3 Learn from other (professional) players 71%

*Esports Audience: Gaming video content viewers that watched esports in the past 12 months.

Levels of interest in viewing gaming videos and in esports among Gen Alpha and Gen Z. Additional game-related research and reports can be found at Newzoo, who provided the above information. .