IDENTITY IN THE MILLENNIUM: SOFTWARE, MEANING AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS’ IDENTITY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Ella M. Shawntain Black, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
2004

Dissertation Committee:
Professor William Taylor, adviser
Professor Linda Meadows
Professor Antoinette Miranda

Approved by
Adviser
College of Education
ABSTRACT

In the millennium, computer games have become more sophisticated. Advances in computer technology allow designers to place greater emphasis on creating a new wave of games and characters that children identify quite closely with. Nancy Drew CD-ROM role-playing games are instrumental in this new wave of gaming. In this study, it was observed that influential aspects of the game played a significant role in shaping African-American girls’ social and academic identities, causing moments of double shifting to occur. Double shifting asserts that African-American girls’ shift when they negotiate race and gender and further explains ways in which they transcend the racial dissonance that exists between them and the Caucasian-like character they play.

Using a qualitative methodology, this study explored African-American girls’ and teachers’ perspectives about the cultural phenomenon of a Nancy Drew CD-ROM: “Secrets Can Kill” and the dynamics of identity development. A Multidimensional Concept Scale was used to evaluate aspects of identity. Over six months, fifteen African-American girls, ages 11, 12 and 13, from high, middle and low socio-economic statuses and two teachers detailed their experiences with Nancy Drew after playing the game for three weeks. Teachers’ evaluations provide illuminating accounts of the game’s non-neutrality, an important education observation. It is important for teachers to examine computer games because they can easily be integrated into classrooms and appeals to girls’ empirical experiences.
During pre-adolescence, girls desire to express the complexity of their lives. They want the “story” of their lives heard from their social, cultural and economic standpoint; that is how they relate to the world. Ohio teens discuss the relevancy of Nancy Drew to their complex identities. Stories emerged from their experiences, revealing the game’s reinforcement of girls’ social and cultural identity. Thus, the game became the catalyst for understanding girls’ identity while teachers added another dimension based on conflictual and contentious aspects of the game.
Dedicated

To the memory of my brothers:

Antonio L. Black
and
Randy W. Black

May their spirits continue to live through me
and may all children of the world
Dream the impossible dream
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The longevity involved in completing a dissertation does not happen without the remarkable contributions of many people. I want to thank each of them here. First and most important is Dr. William Taylor, my adviser and colleague. His support and understanding encouraged me to explore ideas outside my own thinking. I am appreciative for his precise questioning, wisdom and insight throughout this process. Dr. Linda Meadows’ enthusiasm, attention to detail, ability to articulate analytical strategies and her ability to apply creative insight to my research were inspiring and empowering. I am forever grateful. I am appreciative to Dr. Antoinette Miranda’s encouragement, openness, and inspiration. Her advice and support sustained me in unimaginable ways.

I am also grateful to Dr. Suzanne Damarin and Dr. Rhonda B. Spero for shaping early versions of my work and providing numerous revisions. I wish to further thank the parents, teachers and administrators at Gate Academy, Parkwood Middle, and Imani Secondary who played an important role this research. Among the people I wish to acknowledge are Dr. Hayot, Mrs. Kathy Christoff, Mrs. Brenda Hayhurst, Mrs. Linda Sigman, Ms. Mary Ellen Hansburg, Mama Rahanni, Baba Ansari, Mr. Owens, Ms. Thompson, Mrs. Trotter, Mr and Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Christian, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson-Breckenridge, Mrs. Tanyhill, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Broomfield, Mr. and Mrs. Locke, Mrs. Crockett, Mrs. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Upchurch, Mr. and Mrs. Cobb-Bell, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan, Mr. and Mrs. Burke, and Mr. and Mrs. McAllister.
The support of my family and extended family has been a wealth of encouragement and I give honor to those who came before me and those who will follow in my footsteps. The influence of my parents, grandparents, nieces, aunts, uncles and cousins is reflective of my commitment to make a difference in young people lives. To extended family, R. Valentine, you continue to be a constant and supportive force in my life. I am grateful to have you as a sister friend. Another extended family member, Dr. Herman Whalston believed that this was possible. He was the first person who encouraged me to pursue this rewarding endeavor; he came into my life and mentored me during a time when I needed direction. I am grateful we crossed paths early in my life.

Finally, I am humbly thankful to the girls who gave generously of their time, insight and participation to this study: J-Lo, Left-Eye, J-Bug, Rosanna, Katie, Mikka, Taña, Lil’ Moma, Ashanti, Aaliayah, Love, Pieface, Nikki, Monique, Janel and Latoria. Your thoughts and “stories” inspired me to keep working on behalf of young people who have something to say and want to talk about their experiences; thank you for allowing me to learn from each of you. It has been an unforgettable journey.
VITA

March 26, 1972…………………………………….. Born – Cincinnati, Ohio

1990………………………………………………. Robert A. Taft High School
Cincinnati, Ohio

1994……………………………………………….. B.S., Merchandising
Kentucky State University

1997…………………………………………………M.A., Instructional Technology
The Ohio State University

1997-1998………………………………………….. Substitute Teacher, Columbus Public
Schools

1998-1999………………………………………….. Computer Technology Specialist
Dayton, Ohio

1999-2000………………………………………….. Assistant Production Manager for
Web Development
Brooklyn, New York

2000-2003………………………………………….. Graduate Technology Assistant,
Policy and Leadership, The Ohio
State University

2003-Present……………………………………….. Graduate Research Assistant,
Associate Dean of Curriculum, The
Ohio State University

FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.........................................................................................................................ii
Dedication......................................................................................................................iv
Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................v
Vita.................................................................................................................................vii
List of Tables..................................................................................................................ix
List of Figures................................................................................................................x
Chapter

1. Introduction...............................................................................................................1
2. Literature Review.....................................................................................................14
3. Data Collection........................................................................................................33
4. Narratives of Fifteen Girls and Two Teachers.........................................................70
5. Double Shifting: (De) Constructing Nancy Drew..................................................105
6. Appendices
   A. Terms Used by Girls in Describing Self and Game Characters.........................135
   B. Chart of Character Stereotypes.........................................................................141
   C. Research Letters and Informed Consent.........................................................144
   D. Journal Entry Protocol and Questions............................................................149
   E. Multidimensional Self Concept Scale..............................................................151
   F. Home Interview Questions..............................................................................161
   G. Focus Group Script / Questions.......................................................................165
   H. Personal Data Sheet.........................................................................................168
   I. Personal Reflection Sheet................................................................................171
   J. Teachers’ Phone Interview Script / Research Questions...................................176
   K. Member Check Letter.....................................................................................178
   L. List of References.............................................................................................180
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

3.1 Demographic Chart of Gates Academy Participants.................................67

3.2 Demographic Chart of Parkwood Middle Participants.............................68

3.3 Demographic Chart of Imani Secondary School Participants.....................69

4.1 Multidimensional Concept Scale (MCS) Standard Score Ranges and Classifications of Self-Concept (Gates Academy).................................95

4.2 Multidimensional Concept Scale (MCS) Standard Score Ranges and Classifications of Self-Concept (Parkwood Academy).................................96

4.3 Multidimensional Concept Scale (MCS) Standard Score Ranges and Classifications of Self-Concept (Imani Gates Academy).................................97

4.4 Self-Concept Classifications Corresponding to Standard Score Ranges..........98
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

3.1 Coded Data Analysis Map.................................................................66

5.1 Double Shifting and African-American Girls......................................109

5.2 Cultural Lens of Self.................................................................121

5.3 Game Characters Girls Are Most Like........................................126
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Computer technology embodies more than a machine: it embodies complex social and cultural dimensions that shape society (Teich, 2003). The social and cultural dimensions are captured in the ways in which gender and race is represented in children’s software. To a large extent, stereotypical representations of females in girls’ games are part of these dimensions that have become significant in the development of such games. Few games exist that show girls in alternative roles; most reveal that girls have not moved beyond the confines of being helpless, feminine and pretty. Such limitations continue to exist in games that claim to represent female characters in an alternative manner. Regardless of the stereotypical underpinnings that are an inevitable part of many girls’ games, research (Cassell & Henry, 1998; Furger, 1998) continues to suggest the need for girls’ computer games because cultural barriers still turn girls off from participating in the culture of computer games. Computer games that hold the greatest interest for girls are role-playing games, which have become popular due in part to engagement with problem solving strategies and collaborative play environments.

Because girls’ games have appeal, more are interested in playing with video and software games (Entertainment Software Association, 2004). In 2003, more than 239 million computer and video games were sold and games rated “T” for teen consisted of
eighty-five percent of all games purchased. Role-playing games, which largely represent preteens, were the fourth best-selling genre of video games sold last year at 8.7 percent of the overall sales. Unsurprisingly, vast units of girls’ games, Barbie and Nancy Drew, were sold when they first launched in the mid 1990s. When Mattel released “Barbie Fashion Designer” in 1996, they sold more than 200,000 units during the first month of release and tapped into a forgotten market of more than 25 million girls between the ages of 6 and 18 (Gorriz and Medina, 2000). Barbie targets a younger audience of girls instead of preteens because younger girls create objects that can be used in dressing and “fixing” her appearance.

While Barbie continues to be influential in young girls’ lives, HerInteractive, Inc. has found that Nancy Drew, a girls’ problem-solving mystery game is equally interesting for girls who desire a game that allows for role-play. With the development of Nancy Drew, girls are able to immerse themselves in the virtual world of computers and have opportunities to solve problems in a friendly virtual space while assuming the role of Nancy Drew.

Like years past when her books were popular, Nancy Drew has become the quintessential symbol of girlhood and female adolescence (Inness, 1997). Given her popularity in the last 60 plus years, it comes as no surprise that she remains well known. When Carolyn Keene created Nancy Drew books in the 1930s, Nancy exemplified a courageous, smart, and resourceful female detective. She continues to be the same self-determined character who reflects strength that young girls desire in their lives (Inness, 1997). From the beginning of her publicized books and television shows, she won the hearts of thousands of teenage girls across America because she transcended traditional
identities of girlhood. The character not only provided new meanings of girlhood, but projected an identity that was flexible, new age, and different for girls eager and ready to be like her; in effect, she revolutionized girl culture and continues to do so today with her many self-acclaimed software titles (Agosta, 2000).

The Nancy Drew CD-ROMs are role-playing games (RPGs) that are part of a common sub-genre of all adventure games; they are played from a first person perspective or from the viewer's own eyes. In one of her adventure games, “Secrets Can Kill,” players start off in Nancy's Aunt Eloise's house, searching for clues. The player is free to explore the different locations of the game—the diner, the high school, and the house. Players roam the halls of the high school and meet up with interesting students. Interrogated students are given a choice of a few questions to respond to, which are displayed at the bottom of the screen. The game’s central theme is to solve an unfortunate act of violence at Paseo Del Mar High School while visiting her aunt. In her quest to find the suspect, Nancy is inquisitive, aggressive, and unrelenting.

Given some of the social and cultural implications of Nancy Drew, I explored children’s and teacher’s perspectives along with my own personal journey with computers to speak to the unification of our voices, our existence and our history as African-Americans. Because my insights are not much different from many of the girls or teachers, I present my voice, my story as a way to show that while our personal stories cross three generations of experiences—student, researcher and educator—we are unified as African-Americans in search of rich meaning for our lives. Thus, I have provided a subjective point of view in order to call attention to the common experiences of students, teachers, and myself.
Because Nancy Drew games can be played from a first person perspective, I, as a researcher, set out to explore the social and cultural underpinnings of “Secrets Can Kill.” I chose this game because the game’s environment is set in a school building where students engage in dynamic conversions about studying, learning and dating and given my research background in cultural studies, I was interested in taking notes about the cultural aspects of the game and the stereotypical nuances of characters as well as any other mundane, yet interesting activities that might emerge. I started the game as Nancy Drew and soon realized that stereotypical representations of Japanese, Hispanic, Mexican American and Caucasian individuals surfaced. As characters identify themselves, their values, future goals or aspirations, a polarizing effect encapsulates each character into a one-dimensional role of either a Hispanic jock (Hector “Hulk” Sanchez); a wealthy, popular, flirtatious Caucasian male (Daryl Gray); a secretive, mean, ethnically mixed, short-haired female (Connie Watson); and a book smart Japanese exchange student working to become a doctor (Hal Tanaka).

When I evaluated the ways in which Nancy (or I) interacted with the group of characters, I felt like a teenager again; it took me back to my time as a school age student. I was consumed by the imaginary world of Nancy Drew. It held my attention in a way where my identity shifted and I became keenly aware of being both an African-American researcher and a teenager. While engaged in the game, I felt smart, strategically investigative, and different. The game appealed to my desire to solve problems and situations but I wanted to know if the game would similarly appeal to African-American girls from different social classes and school structures. How might they respond to the aspects of the game? I had an unfavorable reaction to the football player; would African-
American girls have a similar reaction? As a Hispanic all-star football player, Hector Sanchez is also a jock and a ladies’ man. He says (to Nancy) “Whoa, a new girl at school. Do you realize what destiny has brought you today? Yours truly Hector ‘Hulk’ Sanchez. I know all the beautiful girls at Paseo Del Mar High.” Nancy replies, “How do you know all of the girls?” Hector responds, “I know all of the girls because I am tall, dark, handsome and a Superstar athlete.”

This exchange between Hulk and Nancy (or me as Nancy) is part of a larger set of constant interactions in computer games where girls are talked to in a sexualized manner, which is unfortunate because designers of the Nancy Drew game claim to have created a game devoid of stereotypes (Her Interactive, 2000). However, these mundane interactions remain under the radar as if it is a natural part of girls’ computer games.

The ways in which children come to understand the world are learned through imagery. Images consume children’s daily experiences and are prevalent throughout educational media and computer software (Bigelow, 1997). Similar issues about computers and identity are central in understanding the ways in which African-American girls engage in negotiation practices while playing computer games. “Who is the character I am playing?” “Does she look like me?” “Does she dress like me?” “Does she style her hair like me?” “Does she act like me?” “Is she a role model for me?” While engaged in a role-playing game like Nancy Drew, these questions are likely to surface for girls because the quest to find self is a never-ending journey for African-American girls who grapple with issues of being both black and female (Lewis, 1988). The on-going search to solidify a viable identity is most significant during adolescence because children are impressionable. The perpetual messages or imagery spawned from media
promote females in a sexy manner and this idea unsurprisingly emerges within the realm of video and software games (Angolinos & Cope, 1994). Highly sexualized embodiments surface in games where girls or women are in leading roles. Angolinos and Cope (1994) validates this point after reviewing more than two hundred educational programs and realizing that women were objectified and did not play leading roles. The virtual environment of girls’ games is a source of cultural meanings for girls because they look for themselves in the very games they play.

Children’s learning from computer games has become more intimate and personal, especially with more role-playing games on the market today; thus, children’s beliefs about who they are compared to who they want to be is a “game of negotiation” (Provenzo, 1991). With role-playing games, children move in and out of moments of negotiation; their identities are not fixed; they are in flux and mediated. Even the most savvy computer game player engages in some form of negotiation. The term negotiation emerges from Hall’s (1997) formulation about negotiated reading, which posits that consumers of mass media accept some aspects of dominant readings and reject others.

What is important to recognize is that many girls’ games, even those that claim to sit outside mainstream gender stereotypes, invite young girls to participate in some form of negotiation. This idea is explored in the alternative play theory of Brunner et. al (1998), which looks at the ways “game playing can deliberately expand our sense of who we are (p. 81).” Girls’ games that underpin contradictions of femininity can hold interesting and meaningful insight into the negotiation process that girls experience. Nancy Drew begins to play around with such issues; however, thinking around this topic is undermined due to the ways in which Hulk Sanchez addresses her. While issues of
femininity are complicated, Brunner et. al (1998) believe that role-playing games could be integral in providing girls with space and opportunities to play with notions of femininity.

Because Nancy Drew expands and shapes children’s epistemological and ontological experiences by solving a simulated (or real life) detective mystery and interacting with characters from diverse backgrounds, how might African-American girls “read” Nancy Drew? How might they evaluate their role as Nancy Drew? Will they reveal any changes in their identity? What thoughts might they have about the game’s projections of culture and gender? These questions are important to explore because African-American girls’ experiences should be included in today’s technological research. They can offer significant insights into girls’ games in order to help researchers, designers, and teachers understand the ways in which they search for answers to identity questions in today’s technological sphere, such as “Who am I?” and “Who do I best identify with?” (Tatum Daniels, 1997). These questions are important in everyday life but are equally important for many African-American girls who play girls’ computer games.

These questions are equally important for teachers who educate African-American girls because with the influx of educational software programs in schools, children are likely to learn, through tacit imagery, the cultural beliefs and value systems of the majority culture. Critical perspectives of such games suggest that teachers should be savvy in choosing educational software materials and develop classroom activities that develop students who are media literate and able to read the many messages that capture their attention.
The reason for teachers and schools being integral to understanding African-American girls’ identity as they play with computers is that schools are more than traditional learning environments; they are diverse educational spaces where popular culture and gender-driven computer games flourish (AAUW, 2000). With schools and girls’ computer games having a stake in shaping children’s epistemological and ontological experiences, teachers’ insights into the cultural implications of Nancy Drew are instrumental in creating a learning environment that accepts the experiences of African-American girls as an important aspect of how they come to learn about themselves.

Background and Rationale

Because girlhood is constructed and intertwined with complex issues of beauty, perfection, self-acceptance and identity, it is vital that girls’ games reflect real-life experiences that do not exacerbate social pressures for girls (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998). As popular culture and mass media become increasingly synonymous with a child’s cultural world, software designers are called upon to be more conscientious and sensitive to the cultural issues that concern diverse populations of girls. Designers not only have a stake in changing the landscape of software but so do teachers. Teachers play a crucial role in evaluating children’s software as they play an important role in the flow of knowledge and learning that is disseminated in the classroom. Children and teachers can play a significant role in changing the socio-political development of many children’s games.
Research Questions

With racial and ethnic populations increasing in the next 10 to 20 years, understanding links between visual representations in electronic media and identity development with regard to African-American girls is imperative. It is imperative because African-American girls’ voices are missing from educational technology literature. They need a voice, a platform to express themselves, their experiences and perspectives in educational environments. Throughout this investigation, the girls’ meanings of Nancy Drew were central to three research questions:

1. Are African-American girls’ identity shaped by playing with the software game, Nancy Drew: Secrets Can Kill?
2. What stereotypes and meanings emerge for the girls about the characters?

Definition of Terms

Culture—is the transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and language from one generation to the next, usually within the confines of a physical environment. In effect, culture is learned behavior (Jones, 1998, p. 100).

Educational Games—educational games are available on CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs and on the Web. They usually include a set of rules, and students can compete against other students or the game itself. Games can be an effective way to teach information through repetition and practice (Cashman Gunter, 2002, p. 5.22).

Educational simulations—computerized models of real life that represent a physical or simulated process. Users can cause things to happen, change the conditions, and make decisions based on the criteria provided. These interactive programs model some event, reality, real-life circumstances, or phenomenon (Cashman Gunter, 2002, p. 5.23).

Ethnicity—refers to a group and a social-physical context based on common experiences that come, in time, to distinguish one group from another (Jones, 1998, p. 100).

Gender—social or cultural quality of distinctions based on sex (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998).
Mass media—those media that are designed to reach mass audiences, and that work in unison to generate specific dominant or popular representations of events, peoples, and places. The primary mass media are radio, television, the cinema, and the press, including newspapers and magazines. Computer-mediated communication, such as the Internet, the World Wide Web, and multimedia, is a new form of mass media that expands its definition in many ways (Struken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 359).

Race—refers to a presumed biological taxonomy applied to humans and represents the assumption that a group’s shared genetic heritage is evident from physical characteristics. (Jones, 1998, p. 100).

**Significance of the Study**

Discussions about cultural and gender representations in girls’ software games are important because they are a subset of larger manifestations that represent people in different ways. Thoughts about one-dimensional representations in computer games are important because “representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things” (Hall, 1997, p.15).” As a researcher in the field of cultural studies, the ways in which people, objects or language are represented in everyday culture is the basis for this study. I provide my experience with computers as a way to show that computer games have changed drastically and examination into such transforms is more of a necessity now than twenty years ago.

*When I was younger, computer games were a significant part of my life. When I was growing up though, they did not present most of the cultural and gender imagery that is explicit today. I was a young gamer who enjoyed playing games at least two to three times a week because they offered an escape from my real life and allowed me to be competitive in a world often filled with boys. It was the challenge of the game that always left me wanting to play better and smarter. I enjoyed playing video games when I was a little girl. Anytime I could get a few quarters in my small hands, I was off to the arcade eagerly waiting for the next open game terminal. Right on cue, I placed my quarter in the slot and stood at*
the tall black arcade box. As I waited for the game’s introduction to complete its setup, I held my sweaty right hand on the joystick pointing to the right side of the screen. I mostly played Ms. Pacman; that game always seemed to draw me in; I found myself in a world that only spoke only to me. I guessed I liked “soft games” or “girl games” because I was not interested in playing any kind of “fighting” video games—boxing, kung fu, or “shoot ‘em up.” With Ms. Pacman, the chase was very exciting because I was able to think about how to outsmart the computer ghosts following Ms. Pacman. Fighting games were for boys, not girls and the distinctions were clear. I can still remember. I was probably 10 or 11 when I started playing games. Looking back, I now realize girl games were about thinking, expression, and being smarter than the game. I draw from the same strategic mindset when I play computer games today. Playing Nancy Drew brought back memories of times spent in the arcade. I enjoyed games then because they allowed me to think and plan the next move in order to be victorious. And interacting with Nancy Drew, it was no different. After four plus hours of playing the game, I still had not solved the mystery. It was a little disappointing to think that I was not quick to uncover the villain.

At one point I was more interested in why I spent three hours trying to solve a simulated mystery game than completing the game. What was it about the game that captured my attention so intensely? Did I like the idea that the game’s design targeted girls? Did I like the problem-solving aspect? Did I like that I was given as much time as I needed to interact with the game? Did I like the idea that technology—educational software—provides an opportunity to explore the world of games by viewing actions, interactions, and gestures of people from different cultures? The answer was unclear but as a situated context, like computer games, connecting groups of children across time and space becomes increasingly possible. The necessity then for employing a critical lens to examine computer technology becomes even more relevant, especially as it relates to educational software. Recognizing that technology has the potential to bring cultures together, it is hard to ignore the tensions that exist around issues of culture, gender and race.

Because we live in a pluralistic society, all Americans look for parts of themselves out in the world and the activity of playing computer games is no different. Mikka, attending a private girls’ school, desired to see herself in Nancy Drew when she played. What children say about what’s important to them, their identity, and their culture is just as important as how they tell their lives. In our short exchange, Mikka
provides a glimpse into her thinking about the representation of African-Americans in the game.

_E.B.:_ What did you think about the game [Nancy Drew] not having any African American characters?

_Mikka:_ The positive side was there wasn’t any Black people being bad this time like the Black person wasn’t doing the bad thing or the Black person wasn’t shooting, the Black person wasn’t stealing cars…the Black person was not beating people up, etc. However, there was a negative side because there were no Black people in the game period. I pay a lot of attention to stuff like that. For all my projects in school, I turn them into a Black History projects. If we have to write an essay, I turn it into a Black literature project. I change all of my stuff. Last year we had to do a project on holidays. I made my project Kwanza. I really try to make all my projects Black History projects because at this school we don’t have one. For February we kind of don’t pay attention to Black History month.

Mikka’s short “story” describing issues of identity and culture is the impetus for other collections of “stories” featured in this study where the experiences of African-American girls counteracts misrepresentations about Black girls as a monolithic group. African-American girls are not a monolithic group; they are as diverse as the many stories presented in chapter 4. Their experiences and identities stretch across class and family upbringing. Thus, explorations of differences across gender are not embedded in discussions of differences among groups of young people of the same gender (Phillips, 1998). Studies that do address gender too often treat “male” and “female” as monolithic categories, neglecting issues of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, all of which intersect with gender in the construction of personal group identity” (Phillips, 1998, p. 5). With males and females seen as two universal groups, African-American girls sit on the periphery of discussions that do not address pertinent issues of race, ethnicity, and class. The misrepresentations that all African American girls are alike must be replaced with
personal “stories” of girls who have something to say about their lives, their identities. It is time to record the diverse voices of African-American girls because when opportunities are missed to discuss intersections of race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality and gender, girls of color become invisible. It is time that they have their say; it is time that they have an opportunity to talk about their experiences during the explorative time of adolescence.

**Organization of the Study**

Five chapters structure this study. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, the problem statement, a rationale, three research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews scholarly literature on African-American youth identity, schools, teachers, and software programs. Chapter 3 describes the study’s qualitative research design, procedures, data sources, characteristics of an ethnographic study including participants, and setting, data analysis, and validity. Chapter 4 presents a collection of girls’ and teacher’s “stories” and Chapter 5 offers analysis and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Middle childhood and adolescence can be both a rich and complex time for children (Berger, 2000; Steinberg, 2002; Huebner, 2000). Children’s lives can be difficult as they begin to learn about themselves in a multiplicity of personal and social domains. The learning that takes place is marked by physical, emotional, and cognitive changes that must be effectively navigated in order to piece together a healthy identity. According to Ozretich & Bowman (2001), when children matriculate through the middle childhood stage, ages 8-11, they experience uneven physical growth, increased cognition, moral conciseness, little emotional stability, and close peer attachment.

While not all adolescents follow the same developmental timeline, most teens become overly sensitive about physical changes and developmental stature with constant comparisons to peers. The majority teens not only want to fit in, they need to feel “in-step” with peers, physically or otherwise. Aside from physical growth, cognitive awareness surfaces; an increase in cognitive abilities (or thinking skills, known as metacognition) is central in how adolescents process information and evaluate the everyday experiences of the tacit world, which is non-verbal and experiential (Berger, 2000). Of the many psychosocial aspects teens face, establishing an identity is a significant task they must negotiate as they transition into adulthood.
The peculiarity of adolescence situates many teens in an awkward “in-between” stage where they are a child but becoming an adult. In addition to this already difficult process, African-American teens have to contend with issues of race (Spencer, 2001). A rage of feelings and emotions emerge as African-American youth are faced with new experiences based on racial and ethnic identification. Many teens, especially those of African decent, look to the cultural ethos of family (McAddo, 2002; Powell Hopson & Hopson, 1992; Hill, 1999), social class factors (Brantlinger, 1993; Hooks, 2000) and school (Gay, 2000; Banks, 1996; Davidson, 1996) to solidify their identity. In the digital age, however, the places youth look to find role-models has slightly shifted from the family domain to computer and video games (Roberts, 1999; McDonald and Kim, 2001), which play an important role in shaping adolescent construction of self. These researchers suggest the culmination of family, social class, and the level of involvement playing with computer games are extensions and socializing agents in children’s lives, which impact the ways they see themselves.

While research exists about the diverse issues facing African American youth, links between computer game play and African American adolescent identity needs further investigation. The literature review explicates historical moments of adolescent identity, the role of media and computer games in the lives of adolescents as well as African American children and teachers’ meaning of computer games.

**Early Identity Experiences**

Identity and the ways in which it develops for adolescents was first noted by psychoanalyst Erik Erikson some forty-five years ago, in 1959. He wrote that children
who experience maturation during the middle childhood stage construct self in accordance with everyday social and cultural environments of family and friends. As they begin to formulate their identity, it is important to recognize that they are influenced by relationships with family and peers and are also greatly concerned with physical appearance. Erikson wrote in 1959,

Identity development of an individual is always anchored in the identity of his group, although through his identity he will seal his individual style. Of individual differences we may often not have the fullest potential. (p. 105-106).

His insights into childhood identity formation captured the complexities of this tumultuous stage in children’s lives. Some time later, he cemented the idea that “identity is conceptualized as an internalized, self-selected regulatory system that represents an organized and integrated psychic structure that requires the developmental distinction between the inner self and outer social world” (p. 1). The inner self plays a large role in the development of ego identity, which is the ego’s sense of its own identity. James Marcia’s (1966) ego identity model proposed four stages of youth in transition—(1) Diffused, (2) Foreclosed, (3) Moratorium, and (4) Achieved. Diffused individuals are not actively seeking an identity while Foreclosed individuals have accepted an identity created by others. Youths in the Moratorium stage have not settled on an identity but are actively seeking one. During the Achieved stage of ego-identity, individuals have achieved a comfortable sense of self. Marcia postulated that during preadolescence, children experience a preoccupation with how to construct their identities, yet they are
faced with the discontinuities of the day and concerned with how they appear in the eyes of parents and peers.

John Hill’s (1973) thoughts about adolescent identity emerged out of Erikson’s theories about youth identity. He recognized that physical and social complexities shape identity but he moved beyond his predecessor’s research and maintained that children’s concern with detachment, autonomy, sexuality, intimacy, achievement and motivation, and identity crisis and its resolution are major developments in defining adolescent life. Children desire to separate from parental attachment and guidance and want autonomy—essentially, they want to be individuals who have the will to think for themselves in accordance with gender roles, sexuality and intimacy, which play a major role in social life and the sense of self.

**Girls’ and Boys’ Identity Development**

Gaps in youth identity research from the late 1960’s and early 1970’s (Erikson, 1968; Hill, 1973) closed when feminist researchers recognized girls and boys develop identity differently (Gilligan, 1982; Pipher, 1994). While similarities exist between girls and boys, distinct differences also exist as they experience adolescence in social and cultural settings. The similarities reveal that both genders are overly concerned with physical changes e.g., skin problems, height, weight and overall appearance (Ozretich & Bowman, 2001; Phillips, 1998). However, during adolescence, girls’ image of themselves, particularly as it relates to body image concerns, begins to decline and self-esteem drops, which inadvertently limits many girls to conform to gender stereotypes in various social, cultural and educational settings. Compared to boys, girls are more
collaborative, cooperative, and interdependent while boys need to feel autonomous and independent (Ozretich & Bowman, 2001). Consequently, girls’ self-development is viewed as more complex than boys.

The task of identity formation is more complex for females than for males in that they endeavor to work out for themselves their goals, values, and beliefs in more domains than do males…they engage in more active reflection and decision-making regarding identity in a relational context than do their male counterparts. (Waterman, 1993, p. 62).

Similar ideas continue to emerge today. Gender role differentiations dominate females’ and males’ identity status, which persists long after adolescence. According to Gecas and Burke (1995), “gender identities are the socially defined self-meanings of masculinity/ femininity one has as a male or female member of society and are inherently derived from and tied to social structure” (p. 54). The gender roles displayed by girls and boys during the adolescent stage of development sets the stage for their place in society, especially as they move into adulthood.

African-American Identity Development

Just as gender plays a large role in children’s identity so does race and ethnicity. Racial identity development is applicable to all racial groups, which illuminates the distinct sociopolitical histories of a group. Carter and Boyd-Jackson’s (1998) racial identity development theory has two sets of perspectives: the set which influences how one perceives and understands members of the dominant group and non dominant groups and the next set includes perspectives involving one’s view of his or her own group and personality. Identity development for African-Americans is largely based on race. The
concept of race is a social, historical and cultural construct, which continues to differentiate groups of people along color lines. According to Helms (1995),

Racial identity theory evolves out of the tradition of treating race as a sociopolitical and to a lesser extent, a cultural construction. In such theories, racial classifications are assumed to be not biological realities, but rather sociopolitical and economic conveniences, membership in which is determined by socially defined inclusion criteria (e.g., skin color) that are commonly considered to be “racial” in nature (p. 181).

Given the definition of racial identity, the construction of it is limiting because such categorization is based on one aspect of an individual’s identity—skin color—opposed to the totality of an individual’s identity. While race is a construct based on skin color, ethnicity, on the other hand, defines group beliefs of individuals belonging to the same cultural group. Ethnicity is dynamic and multidimensional; its salience is dependent on social contexts and how children assess their membership in the group (Côté, 1996, p. 148). The social construct of race can minimalize the manifestation of racial identity, which is seen to be not as fluid as ethnicity (Berger, 2000). Ethnic identity then is more than a standard notion; it is a product of an individual’s consciousness. In the case of African-Americans and Caucasian children, the experience of building an identity is both complex and subjective, yet constructing an identity that is aligned with individuals that children can identity with is very important. Differences reveal, according to Corerdill (1997) that Caucasians typically do not form a collective identity based on skin color, and they generally believe that “ethnicity identification is assumed or shed easily over time and in different situations” (p. 146). Most African-Americans, on the other hand, find racial and ethnic group connections with peers significant aspects for their social and cultural experiences (Spencer Beale, 2001).
African American children have to grapple with constructs of race and ethnicity at a much earlier time in their lives than Caucasian children (Spencer Beale, 1990). Because African American children must contend with these issues early in life, the family plays a pivotal role in a child’s self-concept. Accordingly, the beginning phases of children’s racial or ethnic identity depend largely on how parents discuss race and ethnicity with their children. In their article, *African-American Identity Development across the Life Span*, Cross et. al (1999) describe the social and cultural contexts of childrearing strategies that significantly shape children’s racial identity. There is more to childrearing than discussing race; however, parents raising African-American must contend with race discussions. Parents may (1) encourage race and culture-consciousness; (2) discourage any association of race; or (3) avoid discussions of race. Whether a parent encourages, discourages or avoids such discussions, children learn about the relevancy of race to their lives.

The customary ways children learn about race from their parents is an important as a family’s socioeconomic status, which further serves as a crucial factor in children’s development. As recognized by Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003), economics, educational level, and neighborhood setting are all indicators of social status; thus, an African-American family’s socioeconomic status is tied to a child’s construction of self, which points to most African-Americans children as deficient. While most research about African-American children and the family makes known that many low-income families are disadvantaged, the Black middle class continues to grow. More than one-third of African-American families are middle class; in 2000, 31 percent of Black
families were living in households with an income of $50,000 or more while one third live in suburbia in upscale communities (p. 123).

Depending on a child’s parental guidance, family traditions, social class, neighborhood environment, school setting, church affiliation as well as local community, identity and self-concept take shape based on these factors (Tatum Daniels, 1997; Hill, 1999; Spencer Beale, 1990). In order to develop a positive self-image, Black children need to see people who enact similar attributes and characteristics as they do especially in accordance with the larger social environment of the majority culture. Hill (1999) states, “we judge and compare ourselves with others in the broader society, and it is in that society that we expect to receive affirmation” (pg. 90). In effect, children must visualize their existence, their lives as valuable and need to feel images and characterizations of their racial group positively portrayed in the media (i.e., film, television, computers, etc.). When Black children look to the world to affirm themselves, they rarely see images that resemble their culture or ethnic identity; therefore, the answer to “Who am I?” depends largely on a child’s race, gender, family structure and the cultural world of children’s media.

Research about African-Americans is vast. However, typically missing from the repertoire of literature is specific knowledge about African-American girls. Because of this gap, Villarosa (2002) published a yearlong series of articles about the many social and cultural influences that impede African-American girls’ overall development. Villarosa reported:

Compared with other race groups and boys, African-American girls are the least likely to be enrolled in physical education classes or to exercise consistently. They are twice as likely as White girls to be overweight. Black girls are nearly 3
times as likely as White girls and more than twice as likely as Hispanic girls to have had intercourse by age 13 and are twice as likely as White girls to be victims of crime (p. 95).

In another issue, cultural critic Joan Morgan (2002) found,

Today’s hip-hop videos are making our girls less than the sum of their parts. Certainly there is little question that the majority of Black girls are ill equipped to handle this onslaught of sexually degrading content...[thus] we cannot abdicate the responsibility we have to our children (p. 120/122).

Such editorials place a spotlight on African-American girls’ concerns and issues. The writings not only give voice to a generation of girls who have been voiceless and invisible (Carroll, 1997), they heighten awareness about a variety of concerns that impede the lives of African-American girls. Faced with many issues that can influence self-image, resiliency and “armoring” strategies are central to the ways many girls maneuver their everyday realities of racism and sexism. In Shifting: The Double Lives of African-American Women in America, Jones & Shorter-Gooden (2003) use Edmondson Bell & Nkomo’s (1998) research about African-American girls to explain their use of protective strategies known as “armoring,” which counters the challenges and prevailing stereotypes that implicitly cast them as “unattractive, unworthy, and insignificant” (p. 246). Not only are such strategies important in girls’ lives, but the powerful words and stories that they speak gives them some solace in American’s cultural tapestry. In resisting debilitating stereotypes, Black women [and girls] shift in order to transcend harmful messages rooted in the cultural apparatus of media. When shifting occurs, it brings about a greater sense of interconnectedness and unification in an African-American female’s life.

In Sugar in the Raw, Carroll (1997) presents a picture of hope, resiliency, vitality, and strength for African-American girls ages eleven to twenty. Her research consisted of
more than fifty interviews. Girls from different familial and socioeconomic backgrounds
offered a wide range of experiences and challenges that motivate African-American girls
to transcend issues of racism and sexism. Chronicles of their feelings reveal the stark and
diverse aspects of their lives. The words of eleven-year-old Tiffany, for example, were
thoughts commonly expressed by other girls who talked about personal life-changing
events,

“What I’d like to say to black girls in America is that it’s okay to be who they are and to express what they want to express. I really have a solid family, which I feel lucky about [and] I claim the right to be Tiffany and Tiffany is many things. I claim the right to play basketball, study science, do karate, listen to rap music, love my parents, be as loud as I please, and have an attitude that separates me from everyone else” (pg. 134).

Regardless of how outspoken African-American girls are in their communities, their unique thoughts about how they choose to construct self against the backdrop of American society remains untold. Because their voices and experiences remain considerably invisible, Hooks (1990) and Carroll (1997) give attention to the experiences of African-American girls. They observe that social, cultural, political, and psychological factors influence young girls’ development. “The War on Our Girls,” a special issue about Black girls reflects Carroll’s thinking that being Black and female in American society can be both significant and problematic.

Much attention is given to the psychological internalization of Black music videos and its salience to girls’ overall development. Emerson (2002) recently conducted a content analysis of Black music videos. She writes, “The medium of the music video, the primary promotional vehicle for the recording industry today, is an especially rich space to explore ways in which race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect in the construction
and proliferation of ideologies of Black womanhood in the mass media and popular culture” (p. 116). If African-American girls look to music videos for their identity, they too are likely to believe that the scantily clad African-American women in music videos are a normal part of a girls’ role in society.

Like music videos, television has the power to shape children’s thinking about themselves. According to Hall (1997),

Television is considered “…complex structures of dominance…because at each stage they are ‘imprinted’ by institutional power-relations and certain codes may, of course, be so widely distributed in a specific language community or culture, and be learned at so early an age, that they appear not to be constructed (p. 55).

In many ways, television is likened to the symbolism of computers and computer games and what girls’ learn from the cultural artifacts of computer games. Given such implications, in-depth examination into the cultural artifacts of computers and how they shape girls’ identity and self-concept is needed.

**Self-Concept and the Computer Game Culture**

While many facets of identity development are integral to children’s daily experiences, research about computers and video games holds promise for understanding how such artifacts impact the lives of children (AAUW, 2000). Not only is the digital age of computers an important aspect of children’s leisure time, it is instrumental in shaping a child’s identity and self-concept (Funk, 2000). As children learn to effectively play video games, there are cultural and gender aspects they must negotiate. In her brief synopsis about the cultural and gender aspects of video games, Swanson (1996) found
children’s introductory computer experiences are codified through video games. Computer games are instruments designed by males for males. As a result, they are usually in leading roles while most female characters embody the role of “damsel in distress.” Such character roles can socialize females to be dependent and males to be dominant. Swanson further affirms that boys and girls typically like to play different kinds of games; most electronic games that focus on aggression, violence, competition, speed and action cater to the behavior of boys while girls tend to choose games with familiar environments that allow them to solve puzzles.

The activity of playing video games appears benign. However, it encapsulates experiences of middle childhood and adolescent identity (Funk, 2001). Video games are not only instrumental in shaping children’s epistemological and ontological experiences but present a dichotomy between who children are and who they ought be as they move into adulthood (Funk, 2000). In many of Funk’s studies (Funk, 1993, 1996), she reports that time commitment is a significant factor in a child’s self-concept and preference for violent video games. In a study of 364 fourth and fifth grade students (203 girls and 160 boys in four schools in the Midwest), she framed links among self-concept, time commitment and preferences for violent electronic games in determining high-risk players. She first found that girls spend less time than boys playing video games. While girls scored higher on self-evaluations scales than boys, their preference for violent video games was no different than boys. The belief is that many girls have come to accept many of the gender stereotypes in video games.

Another study about video games and gender by Beasley and Standley (2002) found that the majority of female characters dressed in a manner that brought attention to
their bodies. The scantly clad dress of female characters holds strong sexual meaning for young males who play many of the video games on the market today. The study further explicates that children socially learn gender stereotypes in video games. Gender stereotyping persists because at the heart of many of girls’ software programs (or any computer game) are the developers who are typically young, white and male computer scientists (Swanson, 1996).

The inappropriate representation of gender is so commonplace today that similar concepts and designs are incorporated into educational software used in classrooms (Gikas & Van Eck, 2004). One popular educational software game used in classrooms is Nancy Drew. Many of the Nancy Drew games are based on her mystery novels, but highlights of racial and ethnic inclusion is of issue (Agosto, 2000). One of the Nancy Drew games was reviewed by Agosto (2000), and received high marks on the basis of personal identification and confidence. However, Agosto preferred to see more inclusion of diverse groups of characters. While Nancy Drew remains a role model for many girls and plays a leading role in all of her games, she continues to be framed by gender.

With focus on gender-driven games, companies realize that girls are interested in games that include feature females and embody strategic and problem solving characteristics. According to Gorriz and Medina (2000), girls from diverse backgrounds who play software games continue to increase, because designers realize that girls are drawn to games that represent them in different active roles (e.g., detectives, creative thinkers) rather than traditional, one-dimensional roles. In effect, computer game companies have designed and marketed games that are more appealing to girls. These games generally champion the spirit of “girl power.” Game companies have come to
realize that they must use a different strategy to appeal to female gamers in order to increase game sales to females.

The millennium has brought forth a new version of simulated software for girls’ entertainment, blurring reality and fiction. This blurring of worlds (Baudrillard, 1994), between the real and hyper-real, captivates children. When aspects of the real are simulated, its status is elevated beyond the real. Thus, as children become virtual characters through role-playing, the distinction between the real and the simulated real vanishes. In a sense, the simulated world is the “only” real, rather than being merely a socially constructed version of the real. In effect, children’s learning is reinforced through the use of “transmedia”—television, games or toys that cross over different media or reference other media (Kinder, 1991). Children’s use of “transmedia” goes hand-in-hand with child development theories, because they learn, play, communicate, and form relationships with media. The best way to get these results is to create experiences that offer more control over eye, hand, and foot coordination as well as finger dexterity and “socio-emotionally, experiment with the numerous roles and activities they draw from the surrounding culture” (Kinder, 1991, p. 382). The relationships children create with “transmedia” worries some software critics because non-neutral aspects are deeply insidious.

Critics report software is not neutral. Indeed, Bowers (1988) posits that “there is always a bias in a program, and not necessarily an individual bias; most often it is a cultural one. A gender bias, a racial bias, and a technological bias can be passed on in the guise of neutral presentation” (p. vii). Research in the field of social, cultural, and technical criticism has uncovered fallacies in many software programs that children play
(Agalinos & Cope, 1994; Bigelow, 1997). Agalinos & Cope (1994), for instance, undertook an analysis of software with a perspective of its sensitivity to cultural diversity, gender fairness, and language appropriateness. The study focused on content analysis of 21 primary and secondary software games. It revealed that most software is non-neutral and is heavily saturated with biases, persuading the users to values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and ideologies of the dominant culture. Caucasian characters dominated the programs and received more attention, which resulted in minimal examples of diversity. Of the 259 characters analyzed, 208 were males while 48 were females. Very few were sexually ambiguous and 22 were identified as ethnic. Further evaluations revealed that women of color were rarely shown as active participants in the current social, political and economic sphere and did not hold high-status careers or roles.

Subsequently, Bigelow (1997) reported an alarming degree of cultural bias in the tacit narratives of “The Oregon Trail.” He noted that diverse cultural images were not real representations of American society and were symptomatic of a larger societal and educational problem. Similarly, based on a report by Children Now’s Children and Media Program, Monifa (2002) finds that video games send negative messages about violence, gender, and race. Her report about the “innocuous” features of video games asserts that most African-American female characters experienced violence and were clothed inappropriately more than any other group of characters. In other games, African-American characters were verbally aggressive, screaming, taunting and insulting (p. 4). The manner in which people of color are represented in computer games needs intense examination because “representation is an essential part of the process by which
meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture; it involves the use of
language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things” (Hall, 1997, p.15).

Stereotypical images of women and people of color imbue most programs and transmit sexist and racist representations of people in real life (DeVaney, 1993). It will take a team of teachers, parents, and designers working together to create programs that are free of the gender and cultural stereotypes that demoralize individuals who do not identify as Anglo-American males. Children need strong, positive role models for the development of their self-esteem—the omission and misrepresentation of members of their own micro-culture is serious. Monifa’s (2000) assertion is that it often teaches members of those groups that they are less important, less significant, in society than are majority males.

**Reviewing Girls’ Software in 21st Century**

With teens consuming the greatest number of hours watching television and playing video games, kids between the ages of 8-18 spend an equivalent of six hours each day or 40 hours a week using media (Roberts, 1999). The amount of time that children devote to media exacerbates a growing concern that media sources like television and video games have the potential to distort children’s worldviews. Because images are everywhere, how does visual culture address youngsters? This question should concern educators and parents because most of the time magazines, television, film, and computer video graphics are incorporated into the curriculum (Gikas & Van Eck, 2004) and when such media are associated with youth culture, they construct representations of the world
and serve as socializing agents, providing young people with beliefs about the behaviors of the world (Considine & Haley, 1999). It is imperative, then, to teach students about difference and representation using approaches that incorporate visual culture. Duncum (2001), a proponent of visual culture, finds that “a visual culture approach requires a substantial shift in what is to be known about images and thereby has far-reaching implications for changing the pre-and in-service training of teachers” (p. 7).

Giroux (1994) further expands this idea about visual culture, difference and representation. He states that,

“Educators and other cultural workers need to develop a concept of critical citizenship informed by a set of values that embraces the pluralization of democratic rights, entitlements, and obligations as part of the wider discourse of struggle, agency, and ethics. Without imitating an all-embracing humanism, progressives need to acknowledge the shifting nature of identity, while not eliminating the issue of human agency; at the same time, cultural workers and other educators need to expand the basis for dialogue and community without erasing a politics of difference” (p. 59).

His sentiment is that educators should teach students early in the educative process to detect when particular photographic constructions can be harmful or counteractive to their culture and identity. If educators teach students to be critical of images associated with technology, it can transform how they see themselves in the world (Hooks, 1994) and help them develop a level of consciousness that gives them agency over their lives.

Teaching critical consciousness to young people is crucial. Tatum Daniels’ (1997) assertion is that “it is necessary to empower children (and adults) with the vision that change is possible.” Since meaning is public and open for interpretation, the need to make connections between technology and self-concept is necessary in the new
millennium. In effect, it is important to notice that virtual learning is everywhere and
ingames impact children’s lives. They can speak on many topics about children, the culture
of technology and identity because “transmedia” construct representations of the world
and serve as socializing agencies, providing young people with beliefs about people and
larger contexts of the world (Considine & Haley, 1999). Thus, it becomes imperative
that educators teach children about the symbolism of imagery, in general, and in software
programs in particular.

Educators who understand the potential impact of cultural (popular) media on
children can be influential in teaching students to read codes, signs, and representational
meanings of mass media. In order to read codes, a basic understanding of the image
needs to be agreed upon. The image, according to Fiske (1994), is consumed within an
image-saturated culture (p. 62) and offers a desire, an emotional feeling and, perhaps, an
identity. Educators should teach students early in the educative process to detect when
particular photographic constructions can be harmful or counteractive to their culture and
identity. When they bring visual aids into the classroom, they should ask themselves a
series of questions: When young people “look” out into the world, do they see parts of
themselves reflected back to them through images associated with the virtual world of the
computer? How often do they see their history and their life experiences reflected back?
What belief systems do they begin to formulate about themselves? How do they
visualize their existence in the world? How can I (as an educator) work with students to bring about change?

Even when students are educated about “reading” images or tacit imagery in computer programs, the reality persists that software programs inundate children’s lives. When playing these games, children learn a great deal from the virtual world of computers (Subrahmanyam et. al, 2001). Therefore, the researcher set out to (1) investigate the different ways African-American girls—from high, middle, and low socio-economic statuses—move or transition through moments of identity awareness while playing the role of Nancy Drew and (2) explore the evaluations of two teachers regarding the game’s stereotypes.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to document the influence of “Nancy Drew: Secrets Can Kill” on African-American girls’ identity. The study also sought to investigate teacher’s perspectives regarding the cultural and gender implications of the game. In order to capture the diverse voices of students and educators, the research design elicited present day ideas about visual culture (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Carson & Pajaczkowska, 2001; Doy, 2000), which embodies the cultural meanings carried by imagery. Visual culture is filled with images that hold meaning and is central in how individuals understand themselves in the world. Imagery and its continual influence in children’s lives suggest that they should learn to read codes, signs and representational meanings that are circulated throughout mass culture because the image, regardless of how it is framed offers viewers an emotional feeling, an identity (Fiske, 1994). It “says” (implicitly) who viewers should be and what they should think about themselves.

Provided that images are cultural artifacts that shape children’s learning, it is important to attend to these issues as they relate to software games because these issues are largely ignored in teaching and curriculum development.

This study emerged from personal observations and analysis of Nancy Drew. Personal observations noted about the game relied on Delgado’s (1995) and Ladson-
Billings’ (2000) critical race theory framework to analyze the data. “CRT begins with the notion that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society…it is a permanent fixture of American life and because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of the U.S. social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this society” (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv). At the base of CRT is the idea that racism is a social construction in American society and is inherently present in cultural artifacts such as interactive media and other technological advancements. It is interwoven into the material culture of children’s everyday lives, such that they are unable to recognize its inappropriateness (Giroux, 1997). When race is socially constructed through educational software and other children’s artifacts that beckon children’s attention, they are persuaded to think about their lives in affirming or non-affirming ways (Giroux, 2000). Thus, the CRT framework is integral to critical inquiry into the racial structures inherent in children’s interactive media. CRT not only calls attention to the construction of one-dimensional racial identities, it is important in revealing inappropriate imagery throughout girls’ software programs.

Since visual culture inundates children’s lives daily, the voices of girls and teachers are presented to assist software developers, policy makers, parents, and teachers in gaining a different perspective about the landscape of children’s gaming culture.

**Characteristics of a Case Study**

The experiences and voices of African-American girls were gathered using a case study approach. A case study involves “ethnography, participant observation, qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory and exploratory research” (Merriam, 1988,
Robert E. Stake (2000) writes, “…case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied…” (p. 435). He further writes, “A case may be simple or complex…it may be a child, or a classroom of children, or an incident such as mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition” (p. 436). Given Stake’s case study definition, this study employed a case study approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved.

Stake (2000) discusses three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. An intrinsic case study “is undertaken because, first and last, the researcher wants better understanding of this particular case…in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest” (p. 437). An instrumental case provides new generalizations about an issue; it is examined in depth, its contexts scrutinized, and ordinary activities detailed. In the collective case study, “a researcher may jointly investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition…it is an instrumental study extended to several cases” (p. 437). For this study, the collective case study approach is ideal. Three cohorts of girls from private and public school systems provided insight into the impact of Nancy Drew on identity. Either at home or school, respondents played with Nancy Drew CD-ROM over the span of three weeks and recorded journal entries illuminating thoughts and feelings about various dimensions of the game: solving the mystery, playing the role of Nancy, and interacting with characters.

**DESIGN AND PROCEDURES**

Burgess (1991) describes access as an ongoing negotiation process between the researcher, site administrators and participants in the study. The social practice of
obtaining access is as important at the beginning of research inquiry as it is throughout the study. Thus, to conduct this study, the principal investigator and the researcher obtained approval during the summer of 2002 from the Human Subjects Review Board. Before the research process began, each respondent selected a pseudonym to ensure privacy. The assurance of confidentiality was very important; therefore, all names used in this study are not real.

Access

In January 2003, the researcher received official informed consent from 15 African-American female respondents and their parents for participation in the study. Three different cohorts of girls required different procedures and involved different expectations for the researcher. Naturalistic inquiry instructs the researcher to gather data about participants in their normal, everyday setting, thus, with regard to this study, the researcher describes research sites and details of how access was granted to conduct a study at Gates Academy, Parkwood Middle and Imani Secondary.

Gates Academy

On a beautifully kept tree-lined street of an upper middle class community lies Gates Academy, a symbol of private education for girls for the past 60 years. The gray stone, castle-like structure is full of rich history. This is evident inside, where pictures of graduates—from the 1950s to the 1980s—adorn the main hall. Walking through the lobby, my eyes were drawn to the life-size pictures of the women who headed the school
from the very beginning. Their pictures are lined up along the right-hand side of the wall near winding stairs leading to the second floor. The floors are black and white granite and the walls, stairwells, banister, tabletops and office desks are of rich mahogany. The school’s décor looked professional.

Access to Gates Academy proceeded in four stages. The first stage involved human subjects approval to seek consent from the parent, child, and teacher. The second stage involved a meeting with the middle school director, Mrs. Thompson. During the third stage, the researcher waited for final approval from the Head of School and the lower and upper school directors. The fourth stage provided the researcher with an opportunity to present research objectives to the middle school student body, which included a private conference with 20 African-American female respondents.

Meeting with the middle school director, the researcher discussed the study and numbers of girls needed for the study, when the study would start and end. She informed me that she was required to meet with other school administrators and have everyone read the research proposal before granting official approval. The researcher waited several months for approval. In exchange for collecting data, the researcher agreed to share the final results with teachers.

Once the researcher received final approval from Gates Academy, Mrs. Thompson introduced me to the middle school technology teacher, Mrs. Samson. The researcher provided a brief outline of the study with hopes of working with students in her classroom but she was unsure of how best to get girls interested. Then, the researcher met with the director again to inform her of tentative plans to introduce the study in Mrs. Samson’s technology class. Her suggestion was to talk to the students and call names out
loud from a list of names. It was decided that the study’s introduction would take part in the commons area a week later during morning announcements. The commons area is a meeting place where students hang out to type term papers, study or just talk.

As the researcher explained the study to the entire middle school population, the general study body were informed that the study would last two months and participants would be expected to play the Nancy Drew software game at least three weeks for approximately 2-4 hours per week. Upon explaining the study’s expectations, the researcher called 18 names from a list of names that had been given to me the day before. Respondents met with me in a room near the commons area. During the meeting, the researcher wanted verification that everyone was interested in participating in the study; the girls confirmed that they wanted to participate by nodding their heads “yes.” Each girl received a consent form and quickly reviewed expectations then respondents opened the envelope in order to view content forms. Respondents were informed that the deadline for returning the consent form was at the end of the week. The drop off location was in the main office.

One month prior to beginning the study, the researcher was immersed in the school culture so respondents could have familiarity with me personally. As more time was spent at the school, the researcher built trust with many of the teachers. The building of trust created a relationship where administrators and teachers offered insight into the history of the school. Their advice and insight was particularly helpful because the researcher had not attended a private school as a girl. The researcher discovered that Gates Academy school community was essential in the ways in which teachers worked together to give students a solid education.
While volunteering over the span of three months, the researcher found the time spent in the school was important in understanding the culture of the school, the teachers and students. The researcher engaged in classroom activities and other learning events. For example, occasionally teaching web development computer classes to the eighth graders was part of the time spent at the school.

From the study’s start, the researcher became worried that too many participants were interested and there would be a need to draw names from a bowl; however, that was not the case because six forms were received. The following week, respondents who returned content forms participated in the study. They were handed three important pieces: a copy of the Nancy Drew software game, a personal journal, and a colored ink pen. The researcher explained that journal entries could be a list of words, a sentence, poetry, or a paragraph explaining personal feelings relating to the game. In exchange for participating in the study, the respondents were given permission to keep the software game and the journal.

**Parkwood Middle School**

Parkwood Middle School is an urban school that educates more than 300 students and is populated with racially mixed students from mostly low socio-economic backgrounds. In early February, the researcher met the principal, Mrs. Jones and informed her of my approval from the public school district to conduct a study at Parkwood. After explaining the study, she introduced me to the computer lab teacher, Ms. Jenkins.
The principal believed Ms. Jenkins would be the ideal teacher to work with because her students use different types of technology everyday: computers, electronic pulleys, etc. The study was then described to Ms. Jenkins. She allowed me to introduce the study to her students. She informed me of the best days and times to visit and we planned my return the following day.

The next day the study’s objectives were explained to a heterogeneous group—male and female seventh graders—but no one seemed interested in participating. The same was true for the eighth grade students. The 7th and 8th grade students felt they were too old to play the game. As children move into late adolescence, they make attempts to move away from any association to the child who is two or three years younger than them. Thus, young children were more interested in the study. Later in the day, the researcher talked to sixth graders, who seemed eager to participate.

After handing out more than 15 consent forms the day of the visit, the researcher thoroughly explained the study and showed each student where to sign their names on the form and where their parents should sign. The form was to be turned in by the end of the week. The respondents who returned consent forms were presented with a personal journal, a colored pen and a copy of the Nancy Drew software game.

When the researcher met with Parkwood Middle’s principal in early February of 2003, it was the first week of Black History Month and the school proudly decorated and lined the halls with large colorful posters of famous African-Americans who changed America. Shirley Chisholm, Alice Walker, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois, Oprah Winfrey, Spike Lee, and Paul Roberson were some of the influential people featured. There were poster-sized photographs along with detailed descriptions of their life and
how their contributions to African-American culture have changed literature, television, politics, theatre, and dance. Walking downs the hall to the principal’s office the researcher could feel the cultural pride of African-American students and their teachers.

The researcher initially obtained approval to conduct research at Parkwood Middle from the city’s public school system. In the summer of 2002, the university’s liaison to the city’s public school system received the research proposal. The process involved a committee of board members reviewing the proposal to ensure the study would not disrupt the daily functions of the classroom. The proposal assured that interview sessions and communication with the girls would be conducted after school only. Research at Parkwood Middle was mostly conducted in the school’s computer lab. The computer lab is used to educate students about a relatively new technology-based program called ScanTech whose curriculum is specific to most urban schools, because in many ways it relates to vocational education and offers students computer skills they can integrate into their adult lives. The large ScanTech classroom accommodates 25 plus black-cased Dell computers. All the systems are the latest in technological advancement and the desks are set up for individual or collaborative work. A few computer systems have two monitors connected to one central processing unit to maximize the system’s capabilities.

The first day of the study, the researcher entered the classroom and sat in the back of the room and watched students who were eager to start the day’s lesson and use the new computers. Parkwood Middle’s computer lab is unique; while the computers have the latest technological programs, they run what are basically pre-packaged lessons for students. A pre-packaged program primarily did the instruction, while the teacher had
more of a facilitator role. For example, the computer presents students with a series of questions for a nutrition lesson. To answer, the student must mouse-click option A, B, C, D or E. When the lesson is complete, the computer generates a percentage and a grade.

Throughout the many weeks of the study, the researcher visited the school, met with each of the participants, and read statements, thoughts and feelings written during the journaling process. The researcher wanted to monitor and ensure that each of the girls responded to the game after playing it. Within a week of collecting consent forms, the girls were briefed on the methods by which they could record aspects about the game in their journal; if they were inspired to write, they could write poetry, single words, sentences, or draw pictures. The researcher asked if there were questions regarding journaling or playing the game. Questions were answered that offered clarification and greater understanding for the respondents’ game playing experiences.

In the midst of processing the many tasks placed before them, most of the participants wanted to know if they could keep the game after the study. The reply was “yes.” Excitement filled many faces and they expressed that they understood the process of moving between playing the game and responding to seven questions stapled to the inside of each decorative journal [see Appendix D]. There were also times when students talked privately about their feelings regarding the game. The researcher recorded notes from these conversations in her notebook.

Identification with Nancy primarily emerged through journaling and the way the girls talked about the game. The purpose of journaling was to elicit the inner most private aspects of the girls’ thinking about the game. Specific questions guided the girls whenever they played the game. The idea was to have the girls write thoughts and
feelings about any aspect of the game, but they were reluctant to provide intimate details.
Initially, the journals did not reveal insightful responses. On the second examination
however, the short responses revealed the girls’ desire to feel smart.

**Imani Secondary School**

Imani Secondary School is located in the center of the city’s downtown district.
The school is a large brick building and enrolls about 400 elementary, middle and high
school students. Most students who attend Imani Secondary School are from working or
middle class families. Outside the main entrance to the school, a hand-painted message is
displayed for all visitors across the top of the large school doors. The message reads,
“Welcome to our Village,” and following the message, a beautifully hand drawn map,
outlined as the continent of Africa is there as well. The welcome message offers visitors
an opening glimpse into the cultural perspective of the school and its Africentric
teachings and curriculum. In the main hallway, a display case holds valuable ancient
African masks and school paraphernalia.

The school is divided into elementary, middle and high school divisions.
Regardless of grade level, students are taught the African concept of Ma’at, which is
founded on the principles of pride, respect, love, sharing and community. Anywhere that
students go in the school, pictures of renowned people who look like them provide
affirmation and encouragement as the students move toward their future goals.

Walking through the halls, the researcher noticed elementary students neatly
dressed in uniforms, walking in an orderly manner from recess to their classrooms. To
the researcher, their carriage suggested pride and respect, quite appropriate since they attend a school that is built on the idea that African pride is essential to learning.

Procedures for access to Imani Secondary were similar to those required by Gates Academy and Parkwood Middle. Prior to the first meeting with Baba Shangu, the principal, in early spring 2002, we conferred on the phone about the study’s goals. The name Baba is symbolic to the Africentric school culture because, out of respect, students are expected to greet teachers by names used in the African tradition like Baba or Mama. In African culture, Baba means father and precedes the elder male’s last name and Mama means mother and precedes the elder female’s last name. While Baba Shangu granted final access approval to Imani Secondary, the researcher worked more closely with Mama Parks, the sixth grade principal, than Baba Shangu.

The researcher informed Baba Shangu that research approval from the public school district was given to conduct a study about girls’ identity and software. However, at the time of approval, students were engaged in proficiency testing so the date to start the study was set for three weeks later.

Three weeks later, Baba Shangu was presented with a copy of the research approval letter from the school district. The study was explained in detail and the researcher assured that the curriculum would not be interrupted and that she would only collaborate with students after school or during recess. He agreed with the study’s goals and walked me to the sixth grade principal’s office, Mama Parks. The meeting with Mama Parks lasted 15 minutes. During that time, she received an explanation of the study’s intent, the number of participants and the length of the study. She requested that I return the next day because teachers were planning to start a semester.
Upon her return, the researcher met with the three 6th grade teachers: Mama Yancey, Mama Homes and Baba Johnson. Each teacher granted her permission to meet and talk with girls in each of their classes. Since the study requested participation of African-American girls, Mama Yancey suggested that all female students meet the researcher in the auditorium for five minutes. The other two teachers agreed and the last five minutes of class was allocated to meet students in the auditorium. The researcher waited for the girls in the auditorium. When the thirty-five girls arrived, the researcher asked, “Does anyone know about Nancy Drew?” All the girls nodded their heads and replied “no.” Since the girls had no prior knowledge of Nancy Drew or her CD-ROMs, it was explained that they did not need to have prior knowledge and that the study was about Nancy Drew—a female detective.

Once specifics were discussed (i.e., expectations, amount of time allocated to play with the software game each week, weekly journal writings and writing responses to guided questions about the game), the girls were very enthusiastic about participating. After questions were answered and they understood the study’s expectations and procedures, everyone one received a copy of the consent form. When the envelopes were opened, the researcher pointed to where child and parents should sign. Collecting consent forms the following week, the researcher noted that only five girls completed and returned the form. Because the researcher received five consent forms, there was no need to pull names from a bowl. Again, the researcher met in the auditorium with the final group of respondents and handed each girl a copy of the software game, a personal journal and a colored pen. The girls agreed to play with Nancy Drew each week, write in
their journal following each session, and meet with me to talk about the game and their journal writings.

**Pilot Study**

During the 2003-2004 school year, the researcher conducted a pilot study with two eleven-year-old participants from Gates Academy. The middle school director granted permission, as did the girls’ parents, to interview respondents in the school’s computer lab after school. The weekend prior to our interview session, J-Lo and Left-Eye received a copy of the game and were encouraged to play it before our meeting. Because there were problems loading the game at home, they decided to play the game an hour before the start of the interview in the school’s computer lab. As the girls played the game, the researcher observed them and recorded their verbal reactions. A few times, the girls jotted down one or two words in their journal but quickly returned to the game. The hour-long interview revealed that the girls liked playing the role of Nancy. Further, they did not voice any concerns about Nancy’s race nor did the researcher note impact on racial identity.

The preliminary findings did not give credibility to perceptions about Nancy’s impact on identity. Reaction to Nancy was overwhelmingly positive. However, because specific data did not emerge, the research design was changed to a questionnaire about Nancy and the characters, a series of home interviews, and personal reflection sessions where students were given an opportunity to review and discuss screen shots of the game. New questions were added while others were deleted from a proposed questionnaire after two rounds of changes.
Sample and Selection

The study’s participants were selected from both homogeneous—female students—and heterogeneous—males and females—classrooms. Homogeneous groups of sixth, seventh and eighth grade girls were selected from Gates Academy while heterogeneous groups of sixth grade girls were selected from Parkwood Middle and Imani Secondary Schools. The overall study required five to seven participants from each school, but if more students returned their consent forms, then names would be pulled from a small glass bowl. The process of pulling names from a bowl did not occur because the exact number of students required for the study returned their consent forms at each of the schools.

The final number of participants from each school was five to six. Sixteen forms were given to Gates Academy students, with six returned, completed with appropriate signatures; 15 forms were given to Parkwood Middle School students, with four returned; and 35 forms were given to Imani Secondary School students, with five returned.

Understanding Diverse Experiences

Understanding the experiences of individuals is integral to the work of critical and feminist theorists (Narayan, 1997; Foster, 1994). Knowledge of the lived experiences of individuals is pivotal to research inquiry; for example, understanding the social, cultural and political aspects of an individual’s history, struggles and lifestyles is key to understanding the experiences of others. The experiences of others require that the researcher contend with their insider and outsider issues. In negotiating insider and
outsider status, the researcher may have similar experiences with participants. Participants who identify with the researcher’s background, whether based on culture or gender, are likely to engage in a more open dialogue than if the participants do not identify with the researcher.

Foster (1994) talks about her experiences as an African-American teacher of 25 years, researching other African-American teachers. She acknowledges that when the researcher is of the same racial group, there are always insider and outsider issues to consider. As an African-American researcher, she admits that participants accepted her insider status and, because of it, were willing to engage in longer discussions about Black American teachers. Her outsider status related to being much older than her participants, being a retired teacher and being a professor in the academy. She admits that with “minority researchers researching other minorities, those on the margins and in the center can revolutionize, enrich, and enhance current paradigms and traditional ways of thinking [but] they cannot know all things about the racial group they are researching” (p. 131).

Feminist researchers who explore the experiences of women and help give them a voice through their research discover that their research is fraught with tension and contradictions, especially with regard to being an insider and outsider (Kirsh, 1999; Naples, 1996). The researchers can never fully understand the experiences of their participants; however, they are encouraged to know as much as possible about the participants before the study begins.

As an African-American female researcher who communicated and collaborated with African-American girls from different socioeconomic classes to learn about their perspectives relating to interactions with the Nancy Drew software, the researcher had
insider and outsider issues to consider. The researcher had insider status because the
researcher and respondents belong to the same race; however, because of the age
differences, the girls may see the world somewhat differently. Due to this difference, the
researcher acknowledged an outsider status that placed her outside the girls’ everyday
experiences.

Trustworthiness

With regard to this study of African-American girls’ interactions with software,
how has the researcher ensured trustworthiness? Have participants trusted the
researcher’s intentions and representations of the data? According to Lincoln and Guba
(1985), methodological procedures of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research
involve credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability of data. To be
credible, two questions must be answered satisfactorily: “Do the constructed realities of
the participants match the realities as represented by the researcher?” (Lincoln & Guba,
1989, p. 286); and “What techniques were used to ensure integrity, validity, and accuracy
of the findings?” (Patton, 1990, p. 461).

To increase the likelihood of credible findings, the researcher engaged in
reciprocity by being immersed in the school environment through prolonged engagement,
triangulation, and member checking. Prolonged engagement involves “investment of
sufficient time to achieve certain purposes; learning the ‘culture,’ testing for
misinformation introduced by distortions either of self or of the respondents, and building
trust” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301).
Spending more than six months in the field allowed the researcher to become familiar with the activities of the schools, the school cultures, the participants and the teachers, as well as allowed ample time to collect data. It is “rigorous long-term studies that uncover the meanings of events in individual’s lives” (Janesick, 2000, p. 394), and triangulation is just as important as prolonged engagement. In triangulation, a researcher deploys “different methods”—such as interviews, census data, and documents—to “validate” findings (Richardson, 2000, p. 934). The triangulation methods used in this study were reflexive journaling, field notes, interviews, journal writings, and interviews. These methods helped validate the research findings.

In addition to triangulation, member checks clarified the researcher’s interpretations of the data. Member checking is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” because the researcher tests or does a “check and balance” of data findings, analytical categories and conclusions of interviewees (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). During member checking, the study’s respondents played a key role, because they confirmed or disaffirmed the researcher’s findings and interpretations (see Appendix K).

**Emergent Nature of the Data**

Because the existence of multiple realities constrains the development of a design based on only one construction, what is learned at a research site is always dependent on the interaction between investigator and context. In order to allow data to emerge, the researcher used a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000). “Constructivist grounded theory celebrates firsthand knowledge of empirical worlds” (p.
In the constructivist grounded theory framework, the researcher codes data and expects the research questions to evolve and change during the study. Coding data begins as it is collected; coding offers different perspectives about the data and may lead the researcher in new, unforeseen directions. Coding involves constant comparison of data with emerging categories and applying theories to similar emergent categories.

Qualitative researchers are concerned with process, meaning, and understanding gained through hermeneutics, words, and pictures. Discovering girls’ interpretations of Nancy Drew was integral to understanding their perceptions of not only girls’ software but the larger cultural context of electronic media. When Willis et. al (1990) interviewed young people about their responses to television, film and magazines, their respondents offered multi-perspectives relating to the reality of media representations. Similar approaches were incorporated during this study’s focus group sessions; before each session, respondents were asked about thoughts and feelings about the “media.” The girls’ responses provided insight into the importance of media in their lives.

**Researcher as Interpreter**

Qualitative research has many methodological dimensions (Flick, 1998). Using multi-methods, the researcher tries to secure an understanding of the participants’ responses through continuous interpretation. The interpretation process is crucial because it inherently adds rigor, breadth and richness to a research inquiry. From the beginning of this study, the researcher was constantly in an interpretative mode, applying theories to explain phenomena as they unfolded. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) use the French word, *bricoleur* (p. 4), to describe the researcher as interpreter. They borrow the
term, which describes a person working with their hands in quick and practical ways, from Weinstein and Weinstein (1991). Theoretically and methodologically, the researcher pieces parts of a puzzle together to interpret a particular phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln assert that as a *bricoleur*, the researcher incorporates a variety of methods and theories to collect and analyze data. The researcher as *bricoleur* can have multiple roles (e.g., methodological, theoretical, interpretive, political and narrative) but the interpretive *bricoleur* is of concern here. According to Denzin and Lincoln, “The interpretive *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting” (p. 6).

As an African-American female who researched the experiences of young African-American females, awareness of race, gender, and culture were integral to the interpretation of participants’ responses. My educational background, parental upbringing, and the transition from an urban environment to middle-class values inevitably colored how the researcher framed the young girls’ stories.

The researcher creates something of a montage to interpret data, increasing the rigor of the findings. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) states,

“Montage uses brief images to create a clearly defined sense of urgency and complexity. Montage invites viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as the scene unfolds. These interpretations are built on associations based on the contrasting images that blend into one another. The montage concept weaves together the methodological, theoretical and interpretive aspects of a study” (p. 5).

For example, in order to understand the social, cultural, and political underpinnings of participants’ experiences, the researcher incorporated several methods
to interpret cultural texts: documents and interviews. While a research study can have many methodological components, the researcher must be equipped to analyze findings from a wide range of sources. In the case of this study, the researcher used visual arts, cultural studies and feminist theory to analyze respondents’ narratives.

**Validity and Reliability**

Discussions about validity are central to the researcher’s findings or interpretations (Lather, 1986). To protect researchers from mere “story telling,” rigorous methodological procedures and the use of scientific theoretical terminology are encouraged to add legitimacy to a study’s interpretations. Jansick (2000) wrote: “Validity has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible?” (p. 393). The researcher engaged in extensive dialogue with participants through member checks and created audit trails. Validity extends the idea, according to Janesick, that there is no single interpretation, while reliability addresses the rigorous long-term efforts of the researcher to uncover the meaning of events in individuals’ lives (p. 394). The research process requires a long-term commitment to the research and the participants, and, as mentioned earlier, establishing trustworthiness and credibility through prolonged engagement and triangulation helps ensure validity and reliability of research findings.

**Auditability**

During months of collecting and analyzing data, it was important to arrange relevant materials in a convenient and accessible format. As data emerged, analysis was
initiated. Therefore, documenting each segment of interactions between researcher and participants required that the researcher engage in continuous audit trails. “It is essential that records be kept, whether in the form of file memos, minutes of longer sessions, attestations from debriefers, and research syntheses” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 210).

For this study, the researcher created a folder that had contact information and reflective notes relating to the project for each student and teacher. In addition, the researcher’s reflexive journal process helped the researcher organize thoughts about participant interviews or other important information relating to the study.

**Ethics**

Because ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge during qualitative research, researchers working with young children should be aware of sensitivity and reciprocity issues. The researcher was interested in understanding girls’ interpretations of software and whether they were aware of the explicit and implicit issues of power present in the construct of the game. Compliance with the Human Subjects Board required the researcher to be committed to protecting the privacy of each individual who agreed to participate and share her experiences. The researcher acknowledged the importance of this compliance and placed all field notes, audio-taped interviews, and copies of respondents’ personal journals in a locked file.

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Data collection methods involved journal writing, a multi-dimensional self-concept survey, structured individual interviews and focus group interviews with the
girls. Two teachers were also interviewed about stereotypes uncovered in the Nancy Drew game. Data inquiry involved using several methods, but as Polkinghorne (1997) acknowledges, for naturalistic inquiry to be considered valid, it should evolve from a “list or sequence of disconnected research events into a unified story with a thematic point” (p.14).

In-depth, structured interviews were instrumental in gathering data. The interview process was significant in learning about children’s epistemological experiences. As a result, the researcher decided to go into the most intimate places of children’s lives, their home and school. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) write,

“We live in an interview society, in a society whose members seem to believe that interviews generate useful information about lived experience and its meaning. The interview has become a taken-for-granted feature of our mediated, mass culture. But the interview is a negotiated text, a site where power, gender, race and class intersect (p. 633).

In acknowledgement of the above, the researcher employed interviews in the data collection process because interviews can be structured, unstructured or open-ended (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The researcher incorporated structured questions in order to structure a “story” about the girls’ experiences with the game. Interviews took place subsequently after three weeks of playing the Nancy Drew computer program.

Interviews were further conducted with teachers because schools mirror popular media and teachers incorporate media into the curriculum regularly. Thus, two middle school teachers provided feedback about their personal perspectives regarding the Nancy Drew software. Field notes were taken during both school and home interviews, and the
researcher recorded instances of what was spoken as well as what was not. An example of what was not spoken emerged while at Gates Academy. Many of the respondents found positive aspects of the game and did not discuss issues of race or any level of dissonance between them and the Nancy Drew character.

Girls from high, middle, and low socio-economic statuses interacted with the Nancy Drew game for three weeks and recorded responses in a personal journal. Recorded notes varied. Some wrote ideas about how much they liked the game while others noted aspects about the game’s limitation, the inability to type responses into the game when talking to other characters. During the open-ended journal writing process, the girls were asked to follow a protocol and answer questions about Nancy and the other characters. The protocol sheet is shown in Appendix D.

**Girls’ Interviews**

Throughout the interview process, there were three types of interviews: personal and reflective, home, and focus group (Appendices I, F, and G respectively). After school, one-hour personal reflective interviews were conducted in the school’s computer lab. During reflective interviewing, the girls were asked to look at five screen shots of five characters, including Nancy Drew, on a laptop computer and respond to questions on a sheet of paper relating to each character’s personality, race, identity, and dress. The reflective interview sheet had a variety of checkbox, fill-in, and short answer questions. The girls were also asked who they were most like and why. This style of interview allowed the researcher to gain insight into the girls’ perspectives about representations of race and gender.
The one-hour home interviews were structured similarly to the personal reflective interviews except the interviews took place in the girls’ homes. The protocol for the home interviews was to record where the child primarily played the game and to have the child write journal responses about the five screen shots she saw during the personal reflective interview. If a respondent said, “I played the game at school and not at home” then the researcher did not inquire about the family’s personal home computer. If the game was used at home, the girls showed the researcher the location of the computer and explained if there were technical difficulties installing the program or using it in general.

The actual interview was typically held in the kitchen or dining room area of the house. With the laptop loaded, the girls responded to screen shots of five characters: Nancy Drew, Daryl Gray, Hal Tanaka, Connie Watson and Hulk Sanchez. Responses were not tape-recorded. Instead each respondent replied to questions in her journal. Questions for the home interview are shown in Appendix F. Once data collection procedures were completed, the researcher copied each journal, provided each person granted permission to make copies. After all of the journals were copied, the researcher returned them to the students.

Subsequent to the individual interviews, focus group interviews were conducted. During these sessions, the researcher engaged the girls in initial discussions about the media and video games (see Appendix G). Then the researcher asked more specific questions about software, identity and meaning.
Teachers’ Interviews

Teacher interviews were conducted via telephone after the completion of the young respondents’ interviews. Teachers from Parkwood Middle and Imani Secondary were instrumental to the study’s research methodology and data collection. Data collection occurred between January of 2002 and June of 2003. They were asked about the game’s stereotypes. Five months after gathering data from the girls, the researcher asked the teachers to engage with the computer game for three weeks and record their thoughts and feelings about the game’s main character, other characters, and stereotypes that could potentially harm girls’ self-concepts. Each teacher was asked two questions: “Were there stereotypes you noticed in the game?” and “Do you think teachers should examine educational games before children play with them?” The phone session was not tape-recorded; however, in-depth notes were written in the researcher’s journal to document the teachers’ responses to the game.

Self-Concept Survey

The self-concept survey (Braken, 1992) illuminated quantitative data about the girls’ multi-dimensional self-concept. However, the survey presented generalizations that were not completely representative of girls’ narratives. While the survey was insightful, the process of assessing self was intimidating to the girls. When I handed Monique a survey, she immediately said, “I don’t have a good self-concept.” However, she was the only participant who spoke candidly and openly about her identity and similarities between her and Nancy. She scored very positive on the academic scale and moderately negative on the social scale.
Bracken’s (1992) self-concept survey consists of 150 questions grouped into six self-concept domains: social, competence, affective, academic, family, and physical.

**Social**

The social domain reflects the level of social interaction children have with other people while in diverse settings. This includes anyone the student comes in contact with at home (e.g., family members), during school hours (e.g., teachers, classmates) and in their community or other communal environments (e.g., neighbors, elders).

**Competence**

The competence domain reveals the success or failure of children/students as they reach goals or achieve desired outcomes or functions within various environments. As children set goals to complete a desired task, they evaluate their actions or physiological processes used to achieve a particular end result. Typically, children are constantly assessing a variety of abilities (cognitive, physical, emotional) they need to reach a goal.

**Affective**

The affective domain relates to the individual’s feelings and the self-evaluation of their behavior in certain situations. As their affective behaviors develop over time, students are able to assess, recognize, evaluate, and monitor their actions and feelings. Similarly, with the academic domain, children become proficient in evaluating their cognitive abilities and overall achievement in school settings. Because children spend a great deal of time engaged in school activities of reading, writing and studying they
continually assess intellectual ability and its relationship to academic success (Bracken, 1992).

**Family**

The family domain epitomizes the emotional support given to a child as he/she grows into adulthood. In the family context, children interact with family members more than in any other domain and it is important to understand how children see their family’s roles in their social, cultural and racial development (Hill, 1999; Powell Hopson, 1992). The family unit is broadly defined as the traditional family structure, foster family, surrogate family, stepfamily or a guardian who provides nurturance, care, and security for a child.

**Physical**

The physical domain exemplifies the direct and indirect assessment of the physical body. Physical attractiveness, physical prowess, shape, height, weight, and body build resonates differently for some people. In certain situations, children evaluate their physical condition according to internal and external (e.g., positive and negative) feedback because the physical body condition is central to children’s overall self-concept (Bracken, 1992).

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis procedures the researcher used were based on Moustakis’ (1990) inductive analysis process. He offers five inductive approaches in order to uncover
meaning in participants’ lives. First, immersion in the setting begins the inductive process. Second, the incubation process allows for thinking, becoming aware of nuance and meaning in the setting, and capturing intuitive insights, to achieve understanding. The third phase expands awareness; fourth includes description and explanation to capture the experience of individuals in the study. Finally, creative synthesis enables the researcher to synthesize and bring together an individual’s story, including the meaning of the lived experience. During the collection and analysis of data, the researcher used similar inductive approaches.

Implementing inductive procedures, the researcher administered Bruce Bracken’s (1992) Multidimensional Concept Scale, which includes six categories of children’s self-concept: social, competence, affect, academic, family, physical. While the self-concept scale was used as a benchmark by which to understand identity, the researcher’s overriding intent was to listen then extract meaning shared by the respondents, which was important in the integration of grounded theory techniques.

Grounded theory techniques and data analysis began following the first set of interviews with the girls. Grounded theory consists of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build middle range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data (Charmaz, 2000, p. 509). Grounded theory techniques shaped each respondent’s narrative because it helped inform respondents’ experiences with the computer game.

The inclusion of grounded theory was useful in illuminating the respondent’s meaning of Nancy Drew. The imagery in the CD-ROM presents a “story” to young players. The game’s “story” is in the form of interactions with people, objects, people
and language. The “story” was created based on respondents’ oral experiences and written recordings. The combination of oral and written experiences, collected via interviews and journal writing, was used to capture significant meanings of respondents’ thinking about the game. Links to written texts that are typically newspapers, movies, sitcoms, e-mail, folktales, life histories and computer games can be “read” as a non-linear “texts” similar to that of the sociological tradition: (a) words or phrases generated by techniques for systematic elicitation and (b) free-flowing texts, such as narratives, discourses, and responses to open-ended interview questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 769).

**Data Analysis: Journal Writings and Interviews**

Journal writings and transcripts from individual interviews and focus group sessions were analyzed with N.U.D.I.S.T., a qualitative analysis computer program designed to code and assess large amounts of data. The analysis program helped the researcher identify commonalities and differences based on participants’ responses. With the program’s assistance, the researcher identified coding relationships that related to words, narratives and journal writings (see Figure 3.1).

Home interviews proved to be extremely beneficial. During the process of conducting home interviews questions (see Appendix F), the researcher asked if respondents were able to load the game on the family’s home computer, “Were you able to load the game on your computer and did you have difficulties loading the game?” Two thirds of the girls used home computers to play with Nancy Drew while other girls
played the game in their school’s computer lab. Those who loaded the game at home had problems but issues were quickly resolved.

Because of the home interview methods, the researcher was able to get a close-up view of the dynamic relationships that exist at home and not at school. For example, J-Bug, a respondent from Gates Academy was relatively quiet at school but during our two and half hour home interview, she was very outspoken and expressive in ways not noted during the school day. While she provided insightful and meaningful aspects about the game, it became clear from our many other conversations, that day she was a proud and intelligent individual willing to talk about a variety of topics. Here is an idea of what she had to say,

“A year before enrolling in Gates Academy [school name has been changed], I attended the public school where my mother teaches fourth grade. Because my mother is a teacher, she pushes me to work and study hard. Once when I had to study for the state proficiency test my mother, who graduated from Gates Academy years ago encouraged me to study for the test without any books; she wants me to think without relying on books to excel.”

This exchange gave the researcher insight into her expressive nature. Without the home interview method, the researcher would not have gathered important information about J-Bug, her mother’s role in her educational experiences and her mother’s alma mater. The home interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to understand other dimensions of the girls’ lives outside the school environment.

Furthermore, the focus group sessions and the questions (see Appendix G) provided important themes about each of the girl’s thinking about the game as well as the characters’ behaviors. It captured another dimension for this study. During these
sessions, respondents completed a demographic data sheet, which clustered parental educational status as high school and college. The demographic information further revealed that the girls described their neighborhoods as “nice,” “quiet,” and “ghetto.” This one-word description captures the differences in socio-economic status that existed among the girls. The combination of events and interviews, participant interactions and participants’ cultural perspectives transitioned from a set of loosely related data into intriguing narratives about the Nancy Drew computer program. Thus, as the teachers’ and the girl’s narratives were composed, it became apparent to the researcher that many of the interpretations had a critical perspective threaded throughout each. This critical perspective is illuminated throughout each respondent’s “story.”

For instance, the building of meaningful responses materialized whenever respondents spoke about the game or the ways in which race transcended the girls’ experiences with the game or Nancy’s interaction with males. This is pointed out in the focus group discussion held at Gates Academy regarding race and the flirtatious nature of male characters.

*Left-Eye:* ...Everybody can do anything. *If White girls are playing it, she might find the same thing as a Black person.*

*E.B.*: *It doesn’t matter what race you are as long as you find the clues? It shows that you are smart.*

*Left-Eye:* I had a hard time at first.


*J-Bug:* It helps you use your brain because when you’re just sitting there it’s not like those other video games where you’re just racing people or doing other stuff. It’s just like you’re trying to solve a mystery so you’re thinking okay “What do I do next” and it helps people see from different perspectives.
E.B.: So how does it influence your self-concept?

J-Bug: It helps me because any race can do it and so it seems like no matter who you are, what color you are, where you come from you can still do it because you basically are doing the same thing: you’re asking questions trying to find answers. It’s not prejudice.

E.B.: Okay, Tanya.

Taña: Ummm, okay. The waiter and the football player were flirtatious and that’s like a clue to stay away from them because...

E.B.: Is that a clue for you?

Taña: Yeah. People like that when they talk to you like that they are not talking to you like they should be...it is just a clue to stay away from them.

Because of this interaction during the focus group session, it became clear that at this focus group gathering there was greater influence on the girls’ interactions with each other more than other data collection methods conducted individually.

Codes about video games and the Nancy Drew software game are below (Figure 3.1). The codes are reflective of the very issues that are important to African-American girls such as race, physical stature, efficacy, social, and dress expectations. The implications inherit in computer games place physical and social pressures on females. Those pressures have gender expectations (i.e., should Nancy wear heels or dresses; is flexible attire is more appropriate). Nosiness can be socially good if girls want to be a reporter or journalist and playing Nancy Drew can help increase smartness and intelligence.
Qualitative Data Analysis

Figure 3.1: Coded Data Analysis Map (Adopted from Ryan & Bernard, 2000)
# Gates Academy Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>J-Lo</th>
<th>Left-Eye</th>
<th>J-Bug</th>
<th>Taña</th>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Rosanna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at School</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Description</td>
<td>Safe and quiet</td>
<td>Well managed</td>
<td>Quiet, sort of ghetto</td>
<td>Decent, quiet, kind neighbors</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>It’s a nice friendly neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your family like?</td>
<td>My family is great. I have a good relationship with them</td>
<td>My mom is fun, loving and caring. We are best friends</td>
<td>We are Christian-like. I love my parents</td>
<td>Loving, kind, friendly, we can talk to each other and we are happy</td>
<td>I have a good relationship with all my family members</td>
<td>My mom’s family is wonderful, I have a great relationship with my mom and sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Education:</td>
<td>College, Graduate School</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Education:</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Employment:</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>School Worker</td>
<td>School Teacher</td>
<td>Entrepreneur receptionist nurse</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Training Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Employment:</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>Works at Cigna</td>
<td>Entrepreneur and substitute teacher</td>
<td>Inspirational Speaker and author</td>
<td>Computer Specialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Gates Academy Demographic Chart
## Parkwood Middle Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Lil’ Moma</th>
<th>Aaliyah</th>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Ashanti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at School</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Description</td>
<td>It has Crips and Bloods</td>
<td>Ghetto, drug infested</td>
<td>It is not good for my family, friends and not fun</td>
<td>It’s quiet but when people fight it is not quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your family like?</td>
<td>I like my parents very much</td>
<td>Good. We are close</td>
<td>They are fun. I have a good relationship with my parents</td>
<td>They are great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Education:</td>
<td>12 year degree</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Education:</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Employment:</td>
<td>Works at hospital</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Works</td>
<td>House-wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Employment:</td>
<td>Business worker</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Works</td>
<td>Cook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Parkwood Middle Demographic Chart
# Imani Secondary Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Monique</th>
<th>Latoria</th>
<th>Janel</th>
<th>Nikki</th>
<th>Pieface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at School</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Description</td>
<td>Calm, neat and clean</td>
<td>Very quiet; up and coming</td>
<td>Ghetto / quiet</td>
<td>Nice, quiet; a nice place to live and play</td>
<td>Nice, quiet and clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your family like?</td>
<td>Good, I can have fun with my family</td>
<td>Great. It is great because we do everything together</td>
<td>They are fun yet provide discipline</td>
<td>Fun. Me and my dad are close</td>
<td>Nice and understanding. I really love them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Education:</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Education:</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>High school degree</td>
<td>Non-college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Employment:</td>
<td>Loan officer</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>School Worker</td>
<td>OSU hospital</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Employment:</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>Independent Businessman</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>Barber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3: Imani Secondary Demographic Chart**
CHAPTER 4
NARRATIVES OF FIFTEEN AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS
AND TWO TEACHERS

Bracken’s (1992) Multidimensional Concept Scale (MCS) was integral to each girl’s narrative. The quantitative self-concept survey provided insight into the identity status of each participant (see Appendix C). The researcher examined girls’ self-concept across social, competence, affective, academic, family, and physical domains. It was crucial to take into account their diverse contextual environments where they are both active and passive participants in shaping the many aspects of self. A further rationale for employing the survey was to present significant connections between self-concept and visceral responses to Nancy Drew.

Responses by fifteen African-American girls are presented as meaningful and reflective. Respondents’ natural conversational style of speech has been maintained. The narratives are clustered according to school contexts: Gates Academy, Parkwood Middle and Imani Secondary. Teachers’ narratives are subsequently presented after the girls’ narratives and self-concept survey results. Each narrative materialized from field notes, home interviews, personal reflections, focus group interviews, survey data, and teachers’ phone interviews.
J-Lo  
Gates Academy  
Age 12  

She likes to play basketball and participates in girl scouts. Just as she likes basketball and girls scouts, she likes attending Gates Academy because of the large pool. For the past two years, her parents have been influential in encouraging her to excel academically. “My parents and family are great. I have good relationship with them. My home is warm and loving and our neighborhood is safe and quite.” J-Lo has a solid relationship with her parents. This came across during her reactions concerning the game. During an interview, she said

...It’s bad and it’s good [responds to the importance of computer games]. Well, whether you play those games or not, it’s on your parents. If your parents allow you to play those kind of games...

Because her parents are central in her life, this quote is an example of her parent’s influence in her life. While she is shy, quiet, and reserved, she has many things to say about different topics and I become aware of the disjuncture between her reserved nature and the deliberate decision to use the name J-Lo. In choosing the name, it became apparent that while her family provides a stable life for her, she is forming her identity outside the family domain at the same time. What this shows is that she, like other girls, look to the media to shape identity (Sturken & Cartwright, 2000). Her palpable connection with the talented J-Lo, whose real name is Jennifer Lopez, is constantly in the media spotlight for her electric music style, well-celebrated movie career, and young and hip clothing line designed for girls and young women.
In the spring of 2003, I visited her home to conduct an individual interview. As I walked to the front door, her mother and father greeted me and invited me inside. During setup of the computer laptop used for the home interview protocol, her mother sat with us at the kitchen table as I explained the purpose and expectations of the interview. This shows that her parents are always interested in how J-Lo spends her time.

Asking questions about Nancy Drew, J-Lo expressed how Nancy shaped and did not shape her identity. As she answered questions about the game, it became clear that her parents will continuously play an active role in her overall development.

When I read a book, my dad likes me to read a book about African-Americans, like no offense to Caucasians, but he likes me to read about my culture. I know this is like Nancy Drew and there might not be any African-Americans and if we were reading a book like Amazing Grace we might not find Caucasians there. Stuff like that doesn’t bother me like it’s not like I would go to Sweet Home Alabama [the movie] and there’s hardly any Black people. I wouldn’t think about that while watching the movie I would just enjoy it and the same with the Nancy Drew video game; I would pay attention to Nancy Drew.

Nancy kind of reminds me of me. Although she is a fake detective, she is kind of nosy and I’m nosy. She is a detective who is smart and creative. She is also determined and fearless because she knows how to crack codes and she isn’t scared when the codes read, “Watch your back Nancy.” The game is really fun but there were some questions I liked to ask that might make the game better like they could give you questions and you could type in answers that you have.

Some girl games like Barbie and stuff like it might not be important because they say Barbie is the reason why some girls go bulimic or stuff like that. But some games are positive, not all games are bad. Like ummm basketball games show that there are famous African-Americans like Michael Jordan. But if there is an African-American person on a video game then they are [usually] a bad person.

While Daryl Gray and Hulk Sanchez are arrogant and flirtatious and Connie Watson has and attitude problem and is mean, I am more like Nancy Drew because she is curious and fearless but I want to be more like Hal because he studies more and gets good grades. I am confident and I believe in myself so I would also have to say that I relate to Daryl Gray and Hulk Sanchez.
Left-Eye  
Gates Academy  
Age 12

Left-Eye is close to mother. They are best friends. She is a determined and energetic young girl who loves her family. She always has pleasant words for her family. Once she wrote, “I have fun with my family and I feel appreciated by them.” The strong family support was illuminated during conversations about “strong females.” For instance, she chose the name of a strong, independent female entertainer who experienced an unfortunate accident. The actual Left-Eye whose real name is Lisa Lopez created a legacy of urban music back in the early 1990’s with a group named TLC. While the real Left-Eye exhibited feminine qualities, she was also seen as an alternative entertainer who moved to the beat of her own drum.

Left-Eye’s conversations about Nancy Drew revealed that she believed that Nancy signified both male and female characteristics. While she believed Nancy embodied male and female characteristic, she thought Nancy was intelligent. Most people who are familiar with Nancy Drew as a detective can quickly determine that she is as strong as the male counterparts she encounters because she refuses to quit until a mystery solved. Because of Nancy’s strength, Left-Eye said,

*I think Nancy Drew is a smart detective. I think the first name [Nancy] incorporates her as being a woman and the second [Drew] as strong as a man.*
Through interactions with Left-Eye, both at home and at school, it became apparent she sensed that girls who are smart have male characteristics. The more often Nancy moved beyond her expected gender role, the more she appeared intelligent, pushy and nosy, which were concluded as positive aspects for a character like Nancy to exhibit.

....I am just as smart as she is. If you found something out and you said [as Nancy Drew] you need something to make this work then you just took your time and started to look around and you found what made it work and then you got to use it and you figured it out, it made your self-confidence go up and that you were able to do something and it shows like you know what the media are saying that all Black people or all White people are bad or good or whatever.

Left-Eye expressed how she identified with characters other than Nancy. Therefore, I gather that Left-Eye draws her identity from external sources such as video games because she acknowledges that they are positive.

[In the video game] The character I would like to be most like is Hulk Sanchez because I’m certain of myself that I can play basketball but I would like to be more like Daryl Gray because he is a student body president and has a Porsche. Although she is determined, observant and never gives up on a case, I am not like Nancy because I am not interested in any of the things that she is and I don’t like a lot of danger.

I think some games are positive. I used to have a Barbie make-up on the computer and I used to make the Barbie up but if a girl is playing it and she thinks like I can go out and get a make-over like a facial, get my make-up done at the mall or something then maybe she’ll come home and feel good about herself. Like I look nice maybe I should start doing this even more then if she sees that she can go do one thing about one part of her body or one part of herself she can go do other things about it. Like she knows “I’m pretty now but I have some things that I can still change and like she can go change other things and like she’s still looking at Barbie and stuff she knows that Barbie doesn’t do that kind of stuff she doesn’t have a Barbie bulimic game so she knows that Barbie doesn’t have to be bulimic and she can do good things.
J-Bug
Gates Academy
Age 12

J-Bug sings in the NuVoices Youth Choir at her church. Initially, I was unaware that she is an active child who loves to dance, act and play the piano. On the few occasions I visited her home, she played a wonderful melody on the piano. J-Bug has been at Gates Academy for one year. What she likes best about the school is that there are a lot of hand-on activities that highly engage her and her classmates in quality learning. She not only spends a great deal of time studying and learning at home and at school but she also spends time with her family. Her family’s Christian faith is central in her life. “I love school and I love my family. My parents care about my happiness and make me feel loved.”

While J-Bug defines her identity in terms of her relationship with her family, she also defines herself in relation to the characters in Nancy Drew. The simulated world of computer games provides players, such as J-Bug, an opportunity to assume the characters they play. With that in mind, J-bug discusses her reactions and identification with the game’s characters. Because children spend many hours playing video games and interact with simulated 3-D worlds, identity is negotiated. This idea was elucidated in J-Bug’s narrative.

*Girl games are not really necessary or important because of Barbie. They are saying that Barbie encourages you to want to be like them, there are girls and they look really hot and you go like “Oh I want to be like that because I want to*
have boys and I want to have cute tight clothes.” And that’s what they do, they go out and try to be skinnier and look prettier. They should be happy with the way they are. You expose yourself when you wear bikinis and stuff like that. THAT’S NOT COOL because what you want to do is wear the bikinis and go to the beach and look skimpy and nobody wants to see that, except the boys. It’s not bad, bad, but it’s not cute, cute. I don’t want to be looking skimpy and have an eating disorder because I feel like I have to be just like her, I have to look just like her because she’s cool.

Video games are both positive and negative. I’ll start with the negative. They are negative because half the reason why girls are bulimic, anorexic or all those other eating disorders is because they see stuff on video games and say “Wow, I wish I was like her, wow I want to look like her or wow, she’s so popular I want to be like her,” and that’s not cool. Be happy with who you are. But video games are positive because it’s enjoyment. You sit there and you’re hitting the controls and you’re changing the clothes and everything, it’s really cool, it’s like “wow I want that outfit. No, I want that outfit. No, I want that outfit”. It’s real enjoyment.

It helps you use your brain because when you are just sitting there, it’s not like those other video games where you’re just racing people or doing other stuff. It’s just like you’re trying to solve a mystery so you’re thinking okay “What do I do next” and it helps people see from different perspectives. It’s not like “Okay I have to put her clothes on,” it’s “Okay I have to ask this person a question to find out who killed whom.” It helps me because any race can do it and so it seems like no matter who you are, what color you are, where you come from, you can still do it because you basically are doing the same thing. You’re asking questions trying to find answers. It’s not prejudice.

Yes, I am like Nancy. I like to ask questions. I like to know stuff and find out facts before I assume something. She is a very detailed detective. She asks a lot of questions and her questions help me pinpoint the murderer. I think being a detective is hard because you have to look for clues. Nancy is a good detective but the character I think I am most like is Hulk Sanchez because I like to be athletic. I also like to be funny and I like to give information out.
Because Taña’s parents are acquainted with her book smarts, they encouraged her to attend Gates Academy. School, studying, and family are essential in her life. What she likes best about attending Gates Academy are her friends and the quality education the school provides. She said her family “…is loving, happy, nice, trustworthy, friendly, and great! My parents care about my education and are proud of me.” As I inquired about video games and Nancy Drew, she stated that video games are not real and should not be accepted as real.

Throughout home sessions and focus group sessions, I was quite surprised by Taña’s comments about the moral inappropriateness of video games, where girls are featured in bikinis. When I asked, “Do you think video games are important?” Taña responded “No because you have better things you can do. It could be important in one way…like to keep you off the street doing stuff it’s like another activity but it’s like basketball and it also influences you to do that stuff and so it’s kind of bad and it’s kind of good.”

_There are some good games like Tony Hulk (I don’t play that but…the only thing I do play is Vice City.) but that’s fun but it’s not real. They are not real because you just don’t walk up to somebody and their car when it catches on fire and you get out and steal somebody else’s car, that’s not real but I play because it’s fun but I don’t really don’t go outside shooting people. But it does influence people to do that._

_But girl games are not important because on girls’ games girls are exposing their bodies and stuff and that’s not how you’re suppose to grow up to be, you’re not_
suppose to expose yourself. So some games are bad because of your body and you’re doing things you shouldn’t be doing. In the game, the waiter was flirtatious. Daryl is a smarty-pants, flirtatious and trying to be impressive by saying things that a stranger or criminal would say and Hulk is a non-impressive jock. The character I think I am most like is Hal Tanaka because he’s intelligent. But I want to be more like Nancy she’s doing the right things and helping the police solve a mission. In the past, she’s revealed herself on books and I think the designers of the video game made her the same because it was probably easier for them to relate if Nancy is Caucasian but if she wasn’t than it’d probably be kind of challenging but fun. Playing a Caucasian detective felt normal because she’s just doing her job and I’m around Caucasian people everyday.

I think that it’s kind of weird but it’s also kind of inappropriate to be investigating in high heels and a dress because it’d be hard to investigate. It’s okay to wear that to other things but not undercover. Something comfortable like maybe jeans and a shirt because it’d be more comfortable and I’d look normal, not undercover.

I’m very curious and nosey. I like to do things for a good cause and I’m a little weird too. I’m different because I don’t think I’d risk my life for an unfinished investigation and I wouldn’t wear a dress and high heels. So I am like Nancy because she gives me courage to help others but I am not like her because she’s kind of showing her feminine side to the suspects. I don’t think Nancy needs to be bossy because it could get her in a bad situation but nosey could help to solve mysteries that would be helpful. Personally, I would only be nosey not bossy because if I was bossy I could be kind of mean and I’d probably get myself into trouble as a suspect.

Nancy could not work with Connie as detective partners to solve this mystery because I think although Nancy didn’t really know Jake she wanted to help out his friends and family and Connie seems like she didn’t care.
Katie
Gates Academy
Age 13

At 13, Katie is very grounded. It was evident in our conversations about the way external media forces have potential to shape girls’ lives. The possibility of video games shaping her identity was irrelevant because she is self-assured. Her motto is ‘Be Happy With You.’ She recently began to notice how girls younger than 13 began to look to celebrities to define themselves; she found they emulated a celebrity’s mannerisms and style of dress. She does not look to television or video games as a marker for measurement of her identity. I asked, “Which character would you like to be more like? She replied, “None of them. Although Connie Watson is independent and confident; Nancy Drew is inquisitive and outgoing; Daryl Gray is outgoing; Hal Tanaka is kind and friendly and Hulk Sanchez is outgoing and friendly,” she declared “I am fine with my own character!”

Her assertion was that girls should be happy with who they because she is happy with herself. Her thoughts are oppositional to the game because she does not use media sources to shape her individuality.

*I am 13 and for the past eight years, I have attended Gates Academy. When you come here, you don’t have to worry about what you look like. The school is near my neighborhood and the neighborhood I live can be described as middle class. I like where I live and I love my parents. My parents care about my education and my future; I have a good relationship with all my family members.*

*Be happy with who you are. But I also think that if there is something you don’t like about yourself and it’s in your control to change then you should work as hard as you can to make yourself happy. Of course setting healthy goals and
healthy standards but I think that if it in your control I think that things that are
embedded in your personality and in your character are things that you should be
proud of.  The things you should be proud of about yourself but other things like
physical.  If you think you’re too skinny or too overweight or if you think
something about yourself and it’s within your power then more power to you if
you can change it.

When you make a product, you have a target buyer or a target group of people
you try to get to buy your product.  That’s why when you make it you try make to
improvements so it can appeal more to that group of people and I think that the
reason why some people choose some games over other games it may be
interesting even if there are unnecessary elements or bad things about it.  You
choose it because of its appeal even if it’s not good.  I never play video games.
I’ve never played one in my entire life but I just think that I personally don’t
understand the idea.  I have cousins who play it and enjoy it and I think it’s out
there to target a certain audience.  The manufacturers know who they are
targeting and they know what’s on there and it’s on there for a reason even if we
don’t think it’s necessarily all that great, they know that their putting it on there
and they know who will buy it.

I think a lot of girl games can be important it depend on what kind of person you
are and depend on whose playing it and what you take from it.  It depends on if
you take a game and say this is what I’m suppose to be like or just take this game
and say I’m fine; it depends what level you take it.  It’s like music, if you are
going to take an artist seriously and be like oh my gosh I’m suppose to go out and
kill somebody or be like this is a thong song…I like the beat, I like stuff about it.

When the designers developed this software, do you think they had you in mind?

I think they have their target audience in mind and they are trying to target girls
and they are going to do stereotypes for what most girls like and I think that
target audience and stereotype is based mostly on Caucasian culture and
Caucasian teenagers.  When they probably think of what the normality of it all is,
they can’t do everybody, they can only do the majority and I think that’s the
stereotypic mind when they are creating a game.

Which character do you think you are most like?

Nancy is feminine, smart, inquisitive and outgoing, but the character I am most
like is Connie because I think of myself as very independent as well.
Rosanna
Gates Academy
Age 13

Gates Academy provides Rosanna with a good educational foundation and so does her family. Her family is her foundation. She acknowledges “I have a great relationship with my mom and sister.” The family bond is strong. As I engaged in dialogue with Rosanna about her family, she informed me that her mother is very important to her.

Rosanna believes video games (for girls) are important because most teenagers who play video games feel a certain level of connectedness with the game. In Rosanna’s case, she has a great affinity for computers in general. She enjoys reading and is intrigued with solving mysteries and deciphering many aspects of a situation. Because she loves mysteries, she related to Nancy Drew as a detective. Knowledge of Nancy Drew books drew Rosanna in as she played with the game and revealed that she was like characters in the game.

I am thirteen and this is my second year here at Gates Academy. I decided to come here because I wanted to get a good education. I like the people here; that’s what I like best about attending this school. I also like to play sports and act in the school play. I like the computer a lot and I think video games are sort of important. I think it’s a good way to have a good time. I think video games are important in general and I think they are important for girls also because it tests how good you can be at fun things. Sometimes you can be better than boys are sometimes boys don’t believe that but yeah I think video games for girls are important. I think video games can both positively and negatively influence a girl’s self-concept because you might not be very good at it and others might be and then you could be very good at it so I think it could do both.
I love mysteries so I think that Nancy Drew influenced my self-concept. I guess it helps you look at different aspects and different situations and not just look at the obvious but different things also; you have to pay attention to other things, you have to be observant. I think it is important to be very observant to your surroundings. If you are observant, you are aware and you are paying attention to things, your surroundings and everything around you.

I read a book about Nancy Drew and I think playing the role of Nancy Drew is fun. She is smart and pushy and the other characters responded to her in a nice and open way. Connie Watson seemed very open to talk to her, Hal Tanaka seemed very friendly but Daryl Gray seemed like he was more into looks than personality and Hulk Sanchez seemed like all he wanted to do was talk about himself. [Of all the characters in the game.] I am most like Connie Watson because she seemed like a social person who likes to talk. I don’t think that I have some of the same qualities as Nancy Drew but I would most like to be like her because she seemed smart.

Yeah the game had me in mind because I like mysteries and I like figuring things out so yeah in a way it had me in mind. I think it takes a lot of skill [to design a video game]; I think they are very talented because it’s hard to do that. Some people who can do that I think that’s good. But I think there could have been at least one African-American character. I think it was good that they put two minorities in there but I do think it’s important for African-Americans to be recognized. I think African-Americans have done a lot in this world. I know it’s a video game and most people don’t pay attention to it but it would be nice be we have done a lot and been through a lot so it would be nice to at least put us in a video game.
Lil’ Moma
Parkwood Middle
Age 11

Lil’ Moma walks twenty minutes to and from school every day. Her life is not easy but education is one way out of her low-income neighborhood. She is courageous and strong and has a large appetite for learning, even with her short stature. She is petite, quiet, and reserved. She loves working with computers and her routine each day is to come into the computer lab, quickly inquire about the day’s assignment in order to quietly begin her assignment. She works quietly and efficiently. Differences between home and school are not that dissimilar: she lives in a low-income neighborhood and goes to the local public school. Because education is important to her, it was not surprising that personal and academic experiences emerged as she spoke about Nancy Drew.

Crips and Bloods are in my neighborhood. I really don’t mind because I like school and like to read. I usually do a lot of things to keep myself busy. I like computers and my ScanTech class. After school, I play with Nancy Drew and I think I am more like Hal Tanaka, the Japanese exchange student who is smart and likes to study than like Nancy. Nancy is nosey, mysterious and asks too many questions. I am not like Nancy because Nancy and me couldn’t get along because she is nosey and she is just not like me in any way. But we are alike in one way: we like to get in other people’s business.

Nancy does not represent all girls because some girls want to be like Nancy and some girls don’t. I don’t think girls should want to be like Nancy Drew; they should be their own person. I didn’t become Nancy Drew because the only thing I wanted to do was to be in her shoes, solve the puzzle and find out who killed Jake Rodgers. She is not my role model because she is too independent. I don’t think
she needs to be nosey and bossy. I wouldn’t be that way I would just like to get
the job done.

I don’t think the game is not really negative to girl’s self-concept because it’s just
like a brain smart game with many different characters. Hal Tanaka likes books
and likes to read, Daryl Gray and Hulk Sanchez is flirtatious with Nancy and
Connie Watson is mysterious and secretive. The designers explained the
characters well. I did not notice any stereotypes but I do think they [the
designers] made Nancy Drew White for some people.

I don’t think it [the game] was designed for me because I don’t like doing the
things that Nancy does. I don’t like asking people all those questions but I like
clicking on things and figuring things out. I felt like a detective because there are
so many things in Nancy Drew that you can’t really figure out that much but when
you figure things out you understand what you are doing. When I figured it out it
was really fun playing it. I was a good detective because a bad detective would
make accusations but a good detective would go around and ask questions and
talk to the mysterious person.
Aaliyah
Parwood Middle
Age 12

Aaliyah jumps double dutch after school and participates in gymnastics and drill team. “My school is near my neighborhood and I would describe my neighborhood as thuggish and ghetto. Although I live in a bad neighborhood, I am close with my family.” Besides living in walking distance to the local public school, her mom encouraged her to attend Parkwood Middle. Because she enjoys her school and teachers, I wanted to know if she enjoyed playing Nancy Drew. I asked, “What do you think about Nancy Drew?” She responded,

*I think Nancy is cool but I wouldn’t want to be like her except as a reporter. I don’t want to be like Nancy Drew when I grow up but when I’m playing the game I want to be like Nancy Drew and get the case solved. The game did not change me in anyway because when I was playing the game it didn’t make me like Nancy but when I’m playing the game I want to know more about what it going on in the game. When I am not playing the game, I stick to myself. I do not think I am like Nancy but I think I’m nosy and I want to get down to the bottom of every single problem. I think girls should be like Nancy Drew if they want to be a reporter or mysterious and like to know what happen or if something goes on and they want to be something when they grow up or whatever. They should try to be a reporter or an investigator.*

*I felt like a detective because I wanted to get more clues and solve the mystery so I had to think like a detective and I wanted to be a detective and wanted to find out who killed Jake Rodgers. When I was playing the game I became Nancy Drew (I don’t know who she is, I never even met her) because when Nancy Drew solved her mystery she can’t go where I’m expecting to go I just want to be in her shoes. She’s being me while I’m being her and we’re thinking together as one person to get the mystery solved. I was a good detective because I was meticulous. If there was anything that looked suspicious I tried out what was going on. I think the Nancy Drew game was fun and really challenging, it’s not that challenging but it makes you think and I think it’s a good activity. I think the game was designed for me because I like figuring things out but I think it was kind of prejudice because it not have any African-American characters.*
Love
Parkwood Middle
Age 11

Love likes gym, art and Nancy Drew. She said, “My parents decided that I attend Parkwood Middle, although I do not live near the school.” She lives in a low-income community. “Where I live is not fun but my family is fun because I have a good relationship with them.” Although her neighborhood is not appealing, Love’s family is supportive.

Because she liked the Nancy Drew game, she was one of the first respondents to answer a question I posed, “Did Nancy change your identity?” She essentially replied that she felt White and Black. According to her peers, the response was unpopular. When her classmates laughed, she felt obligated to change her response in order to “fit” into the dynamics of the group. She understood that expressing a view other than expressing racial pride provided a negative perspective about the Black race. While her comment was interesting, she had other interesting comments that she expressed. For example, she said,

*What I liked about the game was that the characters were suspicious and trying to figure out the mystery and you get to find stuff.*

*I am not like Nancy because she’s dressy and I don’t like to be dressy. Only when I’m going to church or somewhere special and she likes to be dressy and I don’t like to wear heels. She is in people’s business and I’m not; she’s mysterious and she goes up to people and ask questions and I don’t. I am not like Nancy and there was not a time when I wanted to be like anyone in the program because they are all different than me and I just want to stay the same. Nancy dresses different than me, she acts different than me and she talks different than me and when she talks to people and when she goes back people are mean to her. People are not mean to me when I talk to them and when I say something people don’t say come back later.*
Ashanti
Parkwood Middle
Age 12

Similar to Aaliyah, Ashanti likes her school, teachers, likes to jump double dutch and dance with the drill team after school. She lives near the school in a low-income neighborhood in single-family duplex. She described her family as great and further said, “We take care of each other.” While her family plays an important role in her life, so did Nancy Drew. Ashanti’s assertions about the game indicated that Nancy influenced her academic and intellectual identity.

Because all reporters are White, I think the designers made Nancy Drew White. Even though I can’t see her face, I think she is a White lady who is very pretty.

I really like game. I think it’s cool to meet different people [in the game]. It challenges your mind because you have to figure out a mystery to find things and it’s cool.

The game does not influence you to do things because it’s a game that works your mind. I just played the game and did not notice any stereotypes or think about how Nancy was dressed. I thought it was normal for Nancy to wear high heels and a dress while searching for clues. I would wear high heels and dress like Nancy because she is the same person with heels and dress and so am I. I am like Nancy because I like being nosey, talking to people and talking to handsome guys.

I don’t think Nancy represents all girls, I think she represents some girls who want to be like her. All girls she is not representing. I think she’s not representing all because some girls are not nosey and don’t want to be in people’s the business. They say ‘leave me out, I’m not in it.’ I think some want to be like her because they might not know what they want to be when they grow up and they might want to be a reporter cause they know they want to do good things by asking questions and solving mysteries.

I think I’m like Nancy because I am in people’s business and she is nosey and so am I. I like to know what’s going on. But she is like me in one way. That one way is I like to get to the bottom of a problem.
Monique
Imani Secondary
Age 11

Monique has attended Imani Secondary over the last years. She and her mother decided that she would Imani Secondary because it has an Africentric base. “I like the way they teach us about people like us. Our family is very Africentric. Even our dog’s name is Etu, which means Saturday in Swahili (we got him on a Saturday). I live in a calm, neat and clean neighborhood and my relationship with my family is good; I can have fun with them. I am a cheerleader and a dancer. I perform ballet and African dances. Most people stereotype me as a brainiac because I’m smart. I like being nosey and I am kind of prissy in a way, it just depends on the situation—like if we are going to a dance or somewhere we have to dress classy, I might act a little bit more prissy.”

Nancy Drew resonated with Monique because she saw Nancy as a role model. She gave detailed feedback about all the characters from Nancy Drew. She did not like Daryl or Connie, however. Before my home visit with her, I realized that she was very outspoken and well versed on many topics relating to evaluating intended messages. Her comments were attention grabbing.

The game brings you into Nancy Drew’s world. It makes you feel like a detective. You feel the tingle of suspense. The game is very interesting, it is suspenseful and once you start playing it, it is hard to stop. Nancy is intelligent, feminine, and mysterious and a good detective but I am smart, feminine, nosey, and pushy. Nancy is a good person in and out. She looks about 15 years old and wears high heels and a dress but I think it is weird to be walking so much while wearing high heels and dress. I think girls her age should not wear high heels and a dress because it is too dressy. She should wear tennis shoes and jeans if she is digging around. When she wears high heels and a dress, I do not want to be like her; I
am not a dress and heels person. I will only wear that if necessary. I am like Nancy because I like mysteries and like to know what’s going on. I also like to do detective work. But I am not like Nancy because I am not Caucasian. I don’t wear dresses and heels and I am not in high school and don’t have curls. Although I can’t see her face, she has pale skin, blonde hair and a pointed-round nose. I think the designers made her that way because Whites are considered smarter and they get more publicity.

I felt a little upset playing a Caucasian detective because I believe there should be at least one black detective. Me being Black I don’t want to feel lower than anyone. I don’t know any Black detectives. The Black detective [I know] is me; I was the one figuring out the things and I was the one looking up stuff and taking clues the game did not automatically give me clues, it told me where to go and it gave me help so I wouldn’t spend a lot of time in one place but I was the actual one figuring out the clues and piecing it together.

I don’t know any Black detectives because in society Black people are considered low and White people are considered higher than those who are Black because of slavery. They thought we were goods and they could use us. When you use White detectives or White people being smart because that’s what society thinks—thinks White people are smarter—their getting more press using White people than Black people because of the stereotypes that have been set. I want to see more Black detectives because I’m tired of seeing White people being in the higher [position]. White people are more than what they are because they are not seeing enough Black people achieving goals and making their place in history. In the past, Black people were considered unequal but then White women were considered unequal too so for women who were considered African-American they had double the pressure: being Black and being women so I would like to see more Black, African-American women detectives but more females. Seeing more Black detectives would make me feel a lot better knowing that there are people who can achieve as much as the other cultures.

Do you think video games can negatively or positively influence a girl’s self-concept?

Video games can negatively or positively influence a girl’s self-concept; it just depends. If the game is real violent and the person has no self-control it is going to have a negative influence on the girl’s behavior but if it is good and positive game it will influence them to do better. Nancy Drew influenced my self-concept because it made me feel a lot better about myself. It taught me how not to jump to conclusions and you figure out things and use the facts before deciding anything and take your time and always be self-assured that you are on the right track and you got the right things. I think girls should want to be like Nancy because she does not let her mystery solving get in the way of her being polite, lady-like and being pushy towards other people. She doesn’t jump to conclusions; she involves
herself for justice and for everything to be solved. So in a lot of ways, I am like Nancy. She is one of my role models because she is polite and seems to carry herself correctly. She also like to solve mysteries and shows me how. I think I am like two people in Nancy Drew but I think I am more like Nancy Drew because I like getting involved with things and knowing everything and not being left out on information. On the other hand, she is like me because we both are mysterious at times. We both like solving mysteries, we like being involved in everything and once we’re done we feel confident and feel better about ourselves and we accomplished something without any real bad things happening or doubtfulness in the mystery.

What did you think about the other characters in the game (Daryl, Hal, Connie and Hulk)?

I think Daryl is flirtatious because he always says words like pretty and beautiful to Nancy. I don’t think it is good for him to flirt with Nancy because he could lead her off the case. He could make Nancy start believing lies he may tell if she is flattered.

One of the stereotypes I saw was that Hal was a Japanese exchange student and making it seem like everybody sounds alike and talks like that who are Japanese and making it seem like he’s just a big ole geek or something like that or because he’s from a different culture.

Connie behaves like a smart mouth person and its bad. She has a bad temper. She looks unclassy and acts bad. She behaves like this because of her past and Nancy asking questions about someone she doesn’t care about [referring to Jake Rodgers, the boy killed in the video game]. Most girls are like Connie. Most have bad attitudes and are annoyed easily. In a way I can be shady, have a bad attitude and be annoyed like Connie. Nancy and Connie can work together because what Connie knows about Jake and the school’s students they can crack the case. Because of our attitudes, I could not work with Connie but I could work with her because I am kind of a detective and like her and Nancy, we could crack the case.

Hulk [the school’s football player] behaves like a jock and as if he was god of football. It’s bad because he is self-centered and thinks about himself which causes loneliness. No one wants to be with him. Being a football player he thinks he is higher and more important than others.
Latoria
Imani Secondary
Age 11

Latoria recently finished her first year at Imani Secondary. Although she lives close to the school that is not the reason why she attends. She enrolled in Imani Secondary because of mother’s encouragement. She and her mother are close. “The neighborhood I live in is quiet and up and coming. I like my neighborhood and I love my family. They make me feel loved.” Latoria imagined herself as an African-American Nancy Drew as she played the game.

Most people say I'm pretty, tall and skinny and some say I have a baby face. That's how I think Nancy look. I think she is pretty with light brown eyes and skinny legs. She even sounds Black. She is a Black American like me. We are alike: we are feminine, pretty, mysterious, smart and pushy. Nancy’s like me—because she gets things before anybody else and she likes to keep going to the end—until she finds out who did it. I think sometimes and sometimes not I am like Nancy Drew because say if something happened, I would want to know who did it and why—somewhat like an instigator. She likes solving mysteries that involves dead people and she likes blood but I like to solve mysteries on games, like to have fun and not be so serious.

Nancy is not too lady like or too much like men, she’s in the middle of both of them. I don’t think she should wear high heels and a dress because she might trip and fall while on duty. She should wear pants and tennis shoes because it is better to walk around in and look less obvious. I would not want to wear a dress like Nancy because I do not like to wear dresses but I do like to find clues and talk to people about details. She is my role model because she is one of the first Black detectives I know but I think we need more African-Americans [in video games] because I think they can achieve just like the rest of the White people.

Can video games can negatively or positively influence a girl’s self-concept? Did the game influence your self-concept in anyway?

It doesn’t matter how you are influenced by the game it matters how you feel about yourself and your experience. I think the game changed me a little bit because I used to jump to conclusions and not figure out details what people did I just put it on somebody. Now, I ask them questions.
Janel
Imani Secondary
Age 11

Janel lives in a working-class neighborhood that is quiet, yet “ghetto-like.” She has been a student at Imani Secondary since August 2002. She likes the supportive nature of her school and appreciates the support her mother and family provide. She asserts that, “they are fun to be around.” Janel acknowledged that features of the game did not influence her identity because Nancy was the opposite of her with regard to race, dress, and hairstyle.

Nancy is the opposite of me. I am eleven and she looks 23. She is Caucasian with blonde hair, feminine, and likes to wear dresses and high heels so she can look professional. But I am sort of timid and soft spoken. I can’t see myself wearing a dress and high heels like Nancy. I would wear a pants suit because it is more comfortable. Instead of me being like Nancy, Nancy is more like me because she likes to get the job done and she asks a lot of questions.

She is a role model for other girls who wear dresses but not for me because I am a tomboy.

When the designers created her, she remained the same from the 1970’s. The way she speaks and the way her voice sounds, she is the same Caucasian girl from back then. It isn’t bad playing a Caucasian detective as long as you don’t see her face in the game.

I liked being a detective and solving mysteries but I don’t know any Black detectives. I think it is because they [the designers] think White people are better than Blacks because of what happened in the past. Seeing more Black detectives would make me feel better.
Nikki
Imani Secondary
Age 12

She says her family is fun and that she is close to her father. It was her mother who encouraged her to attend Imani Secondary because of its Africentric teachings. She has spent the last three years at Imani and says, “What I like best about attending this school is my best friend Stephanie, other friends and the education it provides. I do not live near the school but where I live it can be described as nice, quiet and a nice place to live and play.” After assuming the role of Nancy Drew over a three week span of time, Nikki said,

*Even though I can’t see Nancy’s face, I think she is Caucasian with pale skin, blue eyes and curly hair. I think Nancy is intelligent, talented and the bomb. She’s also smart, fun, pretty, mysterious and feminine. I am like Nancy because I am smart; I like to find out a whole bunch of things. I’m nosey and helpful. I wouldn’t say I’m nosey…I’m not bossy and pushy but I like to ask questions.*

*What do you think about the other characters in the game?*

*Daryl Gray is a flirt, Hal Tanaka is nosey and untrustworthy, Connie Watson is secretive, mean with a bad attitude and Hulk Sanchez is a flirt and thinks he’s all that. So I think I am more like Nancy Drew because I’m everything I marked for her and more. If I had a choice to be more like one of the other characters, I would choose no one; I just want to stay me.*
Pieface
Imani Secondary
Age 12

Pieface recently completed her 7th year at Imani Secondary. She has been a student since its opening in August of 1997. She and her younger brother attend the school. She illuminates the importance of the school in her life. “I like Imani Middle. What I like best about this school are my friends and my teachers.” The connection between her teachers and her family balance each other because both environments are nice and understanding. She loves her family and together they live in a middle-class neighborhood that is “nice, quiet, and clean.”

I thought the game was very interesting. Once I started playing, I wanted to play more and more to find out about the killer. I think I am more like Nancy Drew because I am mysterious sometimes, I like to find out things, I am nosy and I ask a lot of questions like how and why. I am just nosy; I ask a lot of questions. I did feel like a detective when I was playing the Nancy Drew game because I was investigating the things that were happening around the high school and the murder and things like that and I was trying to find out who did what.

Nancy does not represent all girls because a lot of girls, nowadays, girls are interested in different things other than CD-ROMs cause the new hit things are music, boys and fashion that’s about it; their not interested in mysteries. I think a game cannot influence you it depends on how you feel about yourself but I think the game changed my self-concept in a way because I am more mature.

I do not think the game was not designed with me in mind because there were not any African-Americans in it. I think a lot of Black people are not detectives because I guess what happened in the past. We believe we couldn’t do anything or we couldn’t achieve but Caucasian people never heard that but we have. I would love to see more of our Black people being detectives because we’ve seen a lot of White people achieve their goals and I would like to see our Black people do things other than make fast cash. I thought it was like a stereotype because they did not put any African-Americans in the video game. I felt kind of offended because I saw White people, Japanese people and did not see African-Americans in the game.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>J-Lo</strong></td>
<td>(124)</td>
<td>(114)</td>
<td>(115)</td>
<td>(123)</td>
<td>(120)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Left-Eye</strong></td>
<td>(77)</td>
<td>(106)</td>
<td>(101)</td>
<td>(104)</td>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>(101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Negative</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J-Bug</strong></td>
<td>(105)</td>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>(110)</td>
<td>(109)</td>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>(113)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taña</strong></td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>(116)</td>
<td>(107)</td>
<td>(125)</td>
<td>(119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Katie</strong></td>
<td>(120)</td>
<td>(115)</td>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>(113)</td>
<td>(96)</td>
<td>(101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosanna</strong></td>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>(99)</td>
<td>(105)</td>
<td>(95)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
<td>(67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Very Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 : Gates Academy Classifications of Self Concept
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lil’ Moma</strong></td>
<td>(94)</td>
<td>(129)</td>
<td>(119)</td>
<td>(109)</td>
<td>(125)</td>
<td>(126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aaliyah</strong></td>
<td>(111)</td>
<td>(108)</td>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>(96)</td>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>(110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love</strong></td>
<td>(88)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>(107)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Moderately Negative</td>
<td>Moderately Negative</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ashanti</strong></td>
<td>(128)</td>
<td>(141)</td>
<td>(106)</td>
<td>(129)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
<td>(121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
<td>Extremely Positive</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
<td>Moderately Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Parkwood Middle Classifications of Self Concept
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Concept Classifications</th>
<th>Social Competence</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monique</td>
<td>(76) Moderately Negative</td>
<td>(74) Very Negative</td>
<td>(96) Average</td>
<td>(134) Very Positive</td>
<td>(102) Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latoria</td>
<td>(126) Very Positive</td>
<td>(99) Average</td>
<td>(122) Moderately Positive</td>
<td>(93) Average</td>
<td>(113) Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janel</td>
<td>(105) Average</td>
<td>(84) Moderately Negative</td>
<td>(105) Average</td>
<td>(106) Average</td>
<td>(125) Moderately Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>(100) Average</td>
<td>(115) Average</td>
<td>(103) Average</td>
<td>(125) Moderately Positive</td>
<td>(66) Very Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieface</td>
<td>(102) Average</td>
<td>(103) Average</td>
<td>(107) Average</td>
<td>(90) Average</td>
<td>(106) Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Imani Secondary Classifications of Self Concept

Self Concept Classifications

Classifications of respondents’ selections offer a glimpse into the feelings and perspectives of how these respondents feel about their social interactions, competency efforts, affective behavior patterns, academic achievement, family environment and physical condition. Table 4 lists the range of scores associated with classification and

Self-Concept Classifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 135</td>
<td>Extremely Positive Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126-135</td>
<td>Very Positive Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116-125</td>
<td>Moderately Positive Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-115</td>
<td>Average Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-85</td>
<td>Moderately Negative Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>Very Negative Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 66</td>
<td>Extremely Negative Self Concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Self-Concept Classifications Corresponding to Standard Score Ranges

Tables 4.1 – 4.3 illustrate the computations of standard scores and corresponding self-concept classifications for each of the five self-concept domains. On the left side of the table, the respondent’s names are listed while their corresponding range of scores while self-concept classifications are presented across the top of the table. Overall, most of the respondent’s social, competence, affective, academic, family and physical self-concept classified as average. An average self-concept score means that the child is well adjusted whereas those who deviate significantly from the norm or “average” score scale of M = 100 are either better adjusted or less well adjusted. Insight into the standard scores and classifications of the survey data that was collected are examined below:
**Social Domain.** According to the social interaction domain, 2 participants scored very positive, 5 moderately positive and 8 girls have an average social perspective while 2 rated moderately negative.

**Competence Domain.** The competency efforts ranged from extremely positive to negative; 1 scored extremely positive, 1 very positive, 3 moderately positive, 9 scored average, 3 moderately negative and 1 moderately negative.

**Affective Domain.** Affective behavior patterns varied from moderately positive to moderately negative: 3 girls are moderately positive, 11 have average affective behavior patterns while 1 participant is moderately negative.

**Academic Domain.** Academic experiences spanned from very positive to average; 2 are very positive, 2 moderately positive and 11 scored as average.

**Family Domain.** Family environment diversification classified the family unit from very positive to negative. One scored as very positive, 6 are moderately positive and 8 are average while one participant has a negative perspective of the family unit.

**Physical Domain.** The physical condition ranged from very positive to negative. One very positive, 3 moderately positive, 7 participants scored a classification of average and 1 is categorized as moderately negative and 3 fall under the negative rank.
Because computer games are catalyst for understanding technology in children’s lives (Biocca, 2000), teachers’ evaluations of game imagery is crucial. Teachers’ thoughts about Nancy Drew illuminated stereotypes as well as points of interest. The non-neutrality of games should pass through an educator’s checklist. Sloane et. al (1989) write,

“The easiest approach to evaluating bias and stereotyping is a simple count of terms and graphics that portray certain characters…within any given program, logic suggests that approximately fifty percent of the characters should be female and fifty percent male…look for a variety of racial and cultural groups in the program’s characters and examine the role they portray” (p. 29).

Sloane’s approaches to evaluating computer programs were echoed by Ms. Jones’ thoughts about Nancy Drew because she strongly supported the idea of evaluating children’s games.

Ms. Jones

Ms. Jones’ teaching and computer work experiences in the technology field offered insight into her comments. She believes her job as a schoolteacher is a long awaited break from long working hours in the private sector. Ms. Jones has many years of experience as a technology support staff. She finds that teaching is very rewarding. Students benefit from her ScanTech class because it offers opportunities for students to
learn about reading “images.” On any given day, students crowd around her desk.

Students believe she cares. Because Ms. Jones pushes students to become computer
literate, the researcher thought she could provide insightful responses about Nancy’s CD-
ROM.

A phone interview with Ms. Jones, in the spring of 2003, elucidated stereotypes.
She noted that while Nancy worked to solve a mystery, Daryl addressed her
inappropriately.

E.B.: Were there stereotypes you noticed?

Ms. Jones: Yes. All the pictures of the family were White. There were no African-
American or Asian American families. All families were European. Remember,
when she went to the diner and Daryl was hitting on her—that was one of the
stereotypes. The game wasn’t very fun...it was actually boring because of the
limited options. Unlike Carmen San Diego, you could gather info and go play. It
wasn’t user-oriented.

E.B: As a teacher do you think it is important to evaluate software before students
use it?

Ms. Jones: Most definitely.

E. B.: Why?

Ms. Jones: When I bring software into the classroom, I stay away from gender-
specific games. I make sure the characters are cartoon-like. I make sure the
educational software shows boys and girls are equal, lifting things, digging holes
or whatever. I make sure the game doesn’t make fun of race or gender. I
borrowed a game from the library—I can’t remember name—but it was making
fun of Asian culture. Slanted eyes, buckteeth. Poorly made. I do it with videos. I
make sure it doesn’t have major stereotypes. Did you see the movie Clueless?

E. B.: No.

Ms. Jones: Well, I get kids to recognize stereotypes. We look at Clueless to
recognize stereotypes. It has nothing to do with technology but has everything to
do with being a teenager.
Mr. Baba Johnson

As a teacher for more than 15 years, including 5 years at Imani Secondary School teaching Language Arts, he illuminated aspects about the the game.

E.B.: Do you think video games are important for youth development?

Baba Johnson: No. Because before video game children were developing very well and I think it is a stimulus in their development but we have become so reliant on video games and interactive learning it does not replace what kids needs to know through repetition. I think video games are replacing traditional learning and I think it makes it difficult for teachers to keep students attention because they want a different stimulus. You are competing to get students attention.

E.B.: Do you think video games for girls are important?

Baba Johnson: Along the same line of thinking, I think there’s a place for video games in our society. When you think about learning from video games they are not the primary tool, but if you are using it for pure entertainment that’s okay. If they (designers) create games that appeal to young ladies they would be more interested in playing them. There should be a balance in the target audience because it is targeted more towards males.

E.B.: Were there stereotypes you noticed?

Baba Johnson: It was always let's get the Man. What I mean is that...I draw back to the days of Nancy Drew on T.V. where solving cases sometimes involved catching the man in his act of defiance. If girls take on that personality when dealing with men they get it from watching Nancy Drew. It might be a subconscious thing that girls take on or reflect about when they interact with men. That’s the thing with video games, we subconsciously enter a world and pick up or take on characteristics of a character and don’t even realize it; they filter into our being and we are not able to realize where it came from. I think the game was trying to empower girls in essence it was a good thing for girls to see because they could get a sense of empowerment through her job. I thought that was positive.

E.B.: As a teacher, do you think it is important to evaluate software before students use it?
Baba Johnson: It is very important for teachers to review software if they want to figure out if it is content relevant and age appropriate and whether or not it will support the teacher’s goal and your lessons and what the district is requiring as far as teachers are concerned because you don’t want to have software that you can’t use. It (the software) should be interactive and learning should take place when kids are using the software.

The ethic of care (Banks, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994) is exemplified in Ms. Jones’ and Baba Johnson’s perspectives regarding software evaluation. Connections between culturally relevant teachings by teachers, who are culturally responsive regarding integration of learning materials such as computer games, empower students (Gay, 2000; Banks, 1996).

“Because culturally responsive teaching is empowering, it enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners. Empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act…” (Gay, 2000, pg. 32)

A teacher’s ethic of care is vital in the dynamics of the classroom. Evaluating children’s computer programs is necessary in a society that is growing more and more diverse with each new decade.

The game clearly sends the message that girls can play major roles and be just as smart as boys, but issues of gender inequality are still at the center of the program.

“Gender inequality—the devaluation of “women” and the social domination of “men”—has social functions and a social history. It is produced by identifiable apparatus built into the general social structure and in individual identities deliberately and purposefully” (Lober, 1994, pg. 87). Messages are not only problematic but are inappropriate. Weil (1997) acknowledges such inappropriateness with Nancy Drew. She collaborated with a
team of designers at Her Interactive, Inc. in order to create new plot twists and puzzles into the development of designs and interiors involving Nancy cracking codes and trapping the villain at the local high school. She was astounded when one designer posed a predictable scenario where Nancy finds a purse and lipstick and makeup compact and credit card. Weil later said, “We're going to get hit with, 'It's so stereotypical. It's such a girl game. A graphic designer says under her breath, “but what are you going to do, you know? Girls like lipstick. I have lipstick in my purse.”

Women behind the decision-making process can still promote stereotypes that are all too common. Inclusion of female designers does not guarantee that gender roles will counteract most stereotypes about “what actions girls should enact.” Thus, a coalition of team players from teachers and psychologists to educational technologists and designers should be integral to the design process.

With an ethic of care, teachers can better understand children’s experiences with games and help youth resist stereotypical images that could impact and potentially harm identity. Therefore, teachers’ evaluation of children’s computer programs is necessary.
CHAPTER 5

DOUBLE SHIFTING:
(DE) CONSTRUCTING NANCY DREW

Investigation of African-American girls’ responses to the Nancy Drew CD-ROM provided a catalyst to understanding the ways young girls look to digital media as sources of identity development. Children look to games and other digital media as artifacts of culture, against which they compare themselves in their assessment of self worth (McDonald and Kim, 2001). So, even something as “innocuous” as game playing can have a profound influence on children’s process of identity formation.

For the respondents in this study, their process of coming to know self was fraught with challenge. As African American females, they found a paucity of images in the dominant culture with which they could readily identify. This was true even for the CD-ROM that was the central artifact of this study. The respondents faced the challenge, from the very outset, of reconciling the obvious racial difference between themselves and the character of Nancy Drew. Although there are no fully rendered pictures of Nancy on the CD-ROM case, the respondents immediately noted characteristics about the silhouette of Nancy that they associated with whites. They deduced from her loosely curled hair and aquiline nose that she was white. The racial difference here complicated their task in the study, as they were to assume the role of Nancy in the game. The challenge for them,
clearly, was that they had to successfully negotiate this difference in order to do well in the game.

Indeed, the data indicate that the majority of the respondents identified quite closely with Nancy Drew as well as the other high school characters. Their logic in this process seemed to be a sort of a la carte selection of qualities that they like about the characters in the game. That is, the game characters have many positive attributes, such as intelligence, social astuteness, and athleticism. The respondents gave primacy to these characteristics and aligned themselves along these lines. The racial attributes, however, seemed to be overlooked or completely ignored. In order to negotiate the disjunction between the girls’ subject position and that of the characters with whom they most closely aligned themselves, the respondents employed double shifting methods.

Framework of Double Shifting

Jones & Shorter-Gooden (2003) explain the theory of shifting in their work *Shifting: The Double Lives of African-American Women in America*. They use Edmondson Bell & Nkomo’s (1998) research as their point of departure to explain how African-American girls use armoring strategies to protect themselves against negative stereotypes. Not only are such strategies important in girls’ lives, but the vocabulary and narratives they construct serve as powerful correctives to the damaging images circulating in dominant culture. Shifting creates a greater sense of interconnectedness and uniformity in African-American female’s life.

In the context of the game, as aforementioned, the respondents were selective about the qualities they discussed in their narrative. Nancy, as an intelligent role model,
appealed to them greatly as evidenced in each respondent’s narrative. For them, Nancy embodied intelligence, fearlessness, and strength and the respondents wanted to believe they had similar qualities. One of the ways they reinforced this notion of quick-witted wisdom was by successfully cracking the codes and finding clues to solve the mystery. Left-eye addressed this issue in an interview:

*Left-eye: I don’t know much about Nancy because we haven’t seen her a lot, but she’s really smart now that I’m playing her.*

*E.B.: So does that make you smart?*

*Left-eye: Yeah.*

What Left-Eye says here is important because it highlights the collapse between the reality of the game and the real world. The girls become the characters when they play these games. Further when they perceive that the character is smart, this quality is also conferred upon them as the gamer.

This task is complicated by the difference in race between the respondents and the characters. Girls who rejected or accepted Nancy on the aspect of race engaged in double shifting. Shifting has been used to explain the ways in which African-American women shift in order to hide their true selves and move beyond sexism and racism (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Double shifting asserts that African-American girls shift when they negotiate race and gender. With double shifting, African-American girls engage in the deconstruction Nancy Drew as a Caucasian-like character to constructing her as a possible role model. Figure 5.1 shows double shifting moving in and out of one identity
to another then back again to settle on characteristics of the game that solidifies a viable identity.

The double shifting model shows that the African-American girl who played the game shifted. The first shift (1) occurred during Nancy’s encounters with one of the four characters: Daryl Gray, Hal Tanaka, Connie Watson and Hulk Sanchez. Initial deconstruction of Nancy was based on her speech, nosiness, pushiness and perceived race, dress, and hairstyle. Most respondents believed Nancy’s personality and style was in opposition (2) to their perception of themselves. Employing double shifting helped them redress this situation. In fact, when there was less overlap between Nancy’s personal qualities and the respondents’, evidence of shifting was more prevalent. That is, when the girls felt that Nancy was very different from them, they deconstructed her more; they shifted. When they felt that she identified closely with them, they deconstructed her less, shifting again. This shifting (3) back and forth—thus the name double shifting—enabled the respondents to construct Nancy as a positive role model.

Although differences existed between the game players and the perceived racial and cultural indicators of the character they played, the respondents accepted her as a positive role model. In addition to Nancy, respondents also identified quite closely with the other characters. Comparisons of the characters with constructions of self are consistent with literature that suggests that identification with others in the virtual world of computers is characteristic of a dynamic development of self (McDonald and Kim, 2001).

Girls’ dynamic identities are embedded in the notion that identity is always negotiated, and therefore, constantly in flux. The ways in which identity is negotiated is
akin to the idea proposed by Sturken & Cartwright (2001), which refers to negotiated reading,

“Which is enacted when the consumer accepts some aspects of a reading and rejects others…most readings are negotiated in which viewers actively struggle with meanings and modify them in numerous ways because of their own social status, beliefs, and values (p. 361).”

Negotiated readings are informed by media reception theories, which provide ideas about the complex negotiation that happens when spectators are “hailed” by mass media. Approaches to media reception explain various ways viewers view, interpret, and interact with media and some approaches pay particular attention to race and gender. Negotiation is tied to semiotics. Semiotics is a form of language and codes. These codes can be revealed through “textual” analysis as all images have two levels of meaning: denotative and connotative.

**African-American Girls and Shifting**

| African-American Girls As Game Players | Deconstruct Nancy and other characters | Construct Nancy & Characters as Role Models |

Double Shifting

Dynamic Identities Emerged

Racial  Gender  Family  Academic  Social  Competency  Physical

**Figure 5.1: Double Shifting and African-American Girls**
Denotative meaning describes the physical elements of an image while connotative meaning relies on the cultural meaning of an image and the viewer’s interpretation of it. The meanings ascertained by the viewer are subjective and are based on their cultural background, age, gender, social status, etc. These characteristics are what designers and producers use to interpolate spectators. Interpolation describes the process by which images and messages call out, address, or “summon” subjects. When subjects are “hailed” by an image, they first encode then decode images. There are moments, however, when viewers resist or renegotiate the intended meaning of an image. Resistance is an opportunity for subjects to have power, agency, over the cultural meanings they make as they “read” a text.

In choosing to read against the grain, most respondents rejected characteristics of Nancy based on indicators of race, speech, and dress. Love, a respondent from Parkwood Middle states,

*Nancy dresses different than me, she acts different than me and she talks different than me and when she talks to people and when she goes back people are mean to her. People are not mean to me when I talk to them and when I say something people don’t say come back later or something like that.*

Although most respondents rejected racial and cultural markers of Nancy, they clearly found her to be a smart and intellectual role model. Monique, an Imani Secondary respondent, believed Nancy positively impacted her detective searching abilities. There were instances of dissonance, though, between the African-American player and the Caucasian character. Monique explains that,

“When she [Nancy] wears high heels and a dress, I do not want to be like her; I am not a dress and heels person. I will only wear that if necessary... I am not like
Nancy because I am not Caucasian. I don’t wear dresses and heels and I am not in high school and don’t have curls. Although I can’t see her face, she has pale skin, blonde hair and a pointed-round nose. I think the designers made her that way because Whites are considered smarter, and they get more publicity.”

Oppositional reading of Nancy is akin to Duke’s (2002) assertion of African-American girls’ resistance of mainstream media and magazines. While most media, including magazines, teach African-American girls about “codes of femininity” (p. 212) through tacit imagery, Duke found that the girls in her study resisted or opposed images that presented a Caucasian ideal of beauty because such images do not reflect cultural ideals for African-American girls.

There is a greater preponderance of dissonant images in the media because of the greater access we have to technology. Accordingly, the need to perform double shifting takes on an increasing urgency. It stands to reason, then, that the findings indicated double shifting was integral to the respondents’ thinking about the game.

Identity Perspectives and School Context

Youth identity is complex and difficult to quantify because it is both elusive and dynamic. Accordingly, the researcher’s investigation into responses to Nancy Drew would not be without tension and complexity. It was further difficult to recognize significant changes in the girls’ identity over a three-week span of time. However, the multiplicity of their identities emerged with survey data triangulation methods. Ideas that emerged were most evident across socioeconomic junctures of class and school structure instead of racial identity.
Emergence of diverse and multi-layered findings indicated that social class played a significant factor in the ways in which they “read” Nancy Drew and the other characters, detected stereotypes, and the impact of the game on identity. While key dimensions surfaced, playing the game posed tensions and contradictions on the basis of racial identity yet solidified aspects of social and academic identity for the respondents.

As subjects from different social and cultural backgrounds viewed images and characters in the game, interpretations were varied and multiple. The game’s visual imagery was decoded according to the viewer’s social, cultural, and racial experiences. Analysis of visual culture solidifies this idea. Nancy’s inquisitiveness—read as “nosiness” by the respondents—the ways in which she interrogated the characters and solved the mystery, was viewed as a positive element of the game, according to many of the girls.

**Gates Academy**

The difference in primary maker is evidenced by the information gleaned from the Gates Academy respondents. They placed more attention on other aspects of their identity, aspects other than race. It seemed they wanted to define themselves in a multiplicity of ways—as if they did not desire to have their race or identity in a box. They wanted to talk freely and openly about themselves.

Furthermore, most of the girls commented about the ways male characters addressed Nancy with sexual overtones, but their commentary about Nancy’s intelligence over-shadowed these conversations. The girls remembered the portrayal of sexy and
adult-like female characters in games like Sim City, Vice City, Grand Theft Auto, and Nancy Drew Murder Mysteries.

_E.B._: _What do you think about girls’ games? Are they important?_

_Tana:_ No, because on girl games girls are exposing their bodies and stuff and that’s not how you’re suppose to grow up to be, you’re not suppose to expose yourself. The waiter and the football player were flirtatious and that’s like a clue to stay away from them because...

_J-Lo:_ Some girl games like Barbie and stuff like it might not be important because they say Barbie is the reason why some girls go bulimic or stuff like that.

_Katie:_ In real life she [Barbie] would be 7'2" and like disproportionate let’s put it that way. I think a lot of girl games can umm...depending on what kind of person you are and depending on whose playing it depends what you take from it. It depends if you take that game and say this is what I suppose to be like or just take this game and say I’m fine; it depends what level you take it.

These respondents here are quick to point out—and reject—the stereotypical treatment of female characters. They refuse to accept the role model offered by the game because it is not true to their cultural and moral values. This moment of diffidence is only one of many in which the respondents detail the contours of the stereotypes circulating in the game (see Appendix B).

The Gates Academy respondents, in general, detected stereotypes easily while respondents at other schools were less able to identify typical typecasting of characters. Most girls referred to some stereotypes as “uncool.” While the girls did not pinpoint specific stereotypes about Nancy, they did, however, voice concern about the larger context of the gender stereotyping of females in computer games. Those who picked up on the stereotypes found the way Daryl Gray and Hulk Sanchez approached Nancy as she worked to solve the mystery was inappropriate. The stereotypes the respondents noted
varied according to the school. In another case, Left-Eye voiced that the football player was a turn-off.

*Left-eye:* I met a football player he was kinda cocky.

*E.B.:* What does cocky mean?

*Left-eye:* Just that he thought he was all that.

*E.B.:* Me: What does all that mean?

*Left-eye:* He thinks he is above everyone else.

*E.B.:* Including other football players?

*Left-eye:* Including other football players and he just thinks all the girls like him.

*Me:* Ok.

*Left-eye:* He calls himself the Hulk.

*Me:* So you didn’t like that?

*Left-eye:* No.

Left-eye refuses to accept the stereotypical “jock” behavior. This more than just a rejection of the stereotype however. It is also a rejection of the social order presented in the reality of the game. Left-eye rejects the notion that the character’s status as a football player should compel her attraction. She suggests that not all the girls like this character—that he is possibly deluding himself. This type of response is typical of the Gates Academy participants.
Racial identity held greater interest for the girls at Parkwood Middle. While the girls’ narratives captured thinking about the meaning of Nancy Drew, they were able to decipher aspects of the game that affirmed their identity. However, they were also able to reject or oppose elements that did not support the dynamic aspects of their identity. At moments throughout the study, most girls clearly stated they were not changed on the basis of race. While most girls remarked that Nancy did not impact their racial identity, one participant verbalized that she felt White during moments of playing with Nancy Drew:

E.B.: Did the game change you in general? Did you want to be Nancy Drew? How did it change who you think you are Love?

Love: It changed me because inside of me I think I am really White because I think Nancy is White and Black.

This is a moment of identity negotiation where Love double shifts. Race seems to be a primary marker for her and she is unable to reconcile this difference. Because she becomes the character in the role playing game, she feels that she becomes white.

Another instance where race comes up when the Parkwood respondents discuss what they call Nancy’s “nosiness.” Most of the girls did not believe that her meddling was acceptable. Some did believe that this quality would be good if she were planning a career as a reporter or a lawyer. Those were the only two domains that the girls found such social skills to be appropriate. While Ashanti and Aaliyah said that they are nosey like Nancy, they also said to me before a focus group session, in a private corner of their classroom, that being nosey is a deterrent in the neighborhood where they live. It is
essentially frowned upon. They live relatively close to each other and if a violent act happened in their neighborhood, they informed me that they would never help the authorities nor nose around in someone’s business where an accident occurred. In the same vein, they understand the appropriateness of being inquisitive in certain environments—in the classrooms or when relaxing with friends.

The respondents associate Nancy’s behavior with whites. They explained that it would be viewed negatively in their community for someone to be so concerned in the goings on of other people’s lives. Culturally, privacy is highly valued. This explains why the respondents explained that only lawyers and reporters could ask questions without raising the ire of the community.

**Imani Secondary**

As with the Parkwood respondents, because race was a more important aspect, their identities were in opposition to Nancy’s and they deconstructed her more. With oppositional identity, most African-Americans find strength and personal empowerment in resistance to Euro American culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). So, rejecting Nancy was not simply for the mere sake of rejection. They were reconfiguring power by rejecting the dominant paradigm.

Although there was racial diffidence, many of the girls connected with Nancy on an intellectual level. The game played a significant role in the lives of the respondents by providing a (virtual) space to play and learn. Overwhelmingly, the game appealed to the girls’ academic abilities as well as their desire to experience the world of microcomputers. The respondents were forced into a metacognitive mode by the
challenges presented by the game and that appealed to them greatly. The respondents felt challenged by the game and discovering clues made them feel smart. Their sense of efficacy was directly influenced by their success with the game. There is further evidence of this in their interviews:

_E.B.: Can you tell me what you liked about the game?

Monique: The game was very interesting, it was suspenseful and once you started playing it, it was hard to stop._

_E.B.: Latoyia?

Latoyia: It was very fun and interesting to play and a lot of people in the game was very suspicious._

_E.B.: Okay._

Nikki: The game was very fun and mysterious. I hope to play many, many times._

_E.B.: Okay. Pieface?

Pieface: I thought the game was very interesting. Once I started playing, I wanted to play more and more to find out who the killer was._

_E.B.: Okay, thanks. Do you think (now this is your opinion) girls’ software can influence a girl’s self-concept? Like how girls think about themselves if their playing a game?

Latoyia: It doesn’t matter how you are influenced by the game, it matters what’s your opinion and experience._

_E.B.: So you are saying it depends on how you feel about yourself. It depends on that?

Latoyia: Yeah._

Being African-American and female is part of who they are, clearly. However, another important aspect of their identity emerged as a salient detail. The game play
made it plain that mental acuity was also very important to the respondents. The mental engagement the game offered excited them and made them want to continue playing the game. Further, as indicated above, the respondents derived a sense of positive self worth from the game.

**Differences Among the Girls**

Many “stories” expressed from Gates Academy’s girls emerged from a middle-class worldview whereas narratives from Parkwood Middle and Imani Secondary girls were situated according to a low to middle class perspective. These differences were directly related to the respondents’ age and social class. For instance, all the girls scored relatively moderate to high on the self-concept scale. One would assume, though, that respondents from the Africentric School would score higher on this component given the strong emphasis on racial pride at the school. This was not the case. The girls from Gates Academy and Parwood Middle scored similarly on the self-concept scale, which was reflected in their narratives.

What seemed to affect the respondents’ interpretation more was age. Four of the eleven year olds, 9 of the twelve year olds, and 2 of the thirteen year olds talked about Nancy differently. Responses from the 13 year olds differed more than those of the 11 or 12-year-old girls. This difference can be explained by the changes of psychological development that occur during early adolescence. Eleven and twelve year olds are at different cognitive and developmental stages, so their narratives bear witness to this fact. Interestingly, the two thirteen year olds rarely compared themselves with any of the characters. From their perspective, there was a greater need to feel independent from the
characters; thus, there was less of an impact on development. Again, given their age, it stands to reason that they want to flex their emerging independence by distancing themselves from others, especially a game that they might have perceived as being too young for them. The younger respondents, in contrast, clearly noted that they identified with two or more characters.

Based on conversations with the girls, the researcher’s characterizations of the girls’ self-concept were greatly influenced by the many aspects of the self-concept scale as well as the embodiments of race and gender. The multidimensional concept scale, social, competency, physical, age, and the respondents’ family background undergirded differences among the girls.

**Multi-dimensional Concept Scale (MCS)**

There were six multidimensional elements guiding the analysis of this study: social, competence, affective, academic, family, and physical as discussed in Chapter 4. Out of the five aspects of the scale, the affective scale findings were not as significant as other self-concept characteristics. Because there are many ways to address identity, the MSC scale provided a link between assessment of self and verbal responses about the game. Interesting findings emerged about the respondents’ assessment of themselves. Most respondents who scored relatively high on the self-concept scale reported more positive evaluations of Nancy Drew.

While important data emerged from the survey, it did not completely capture respondent’s complex identities. For example, while twelve-year-old Nikki from Imani Secondary circled answers to questions she also wrote in capital letters verbal responses
that captured exactly how she felt about herself. One statement under the physical scale was ‘I have a nice figure.’ She wrote “ONLY SOMETIME,” which indicates that her physical outlook depends on her emotional status and environmental factors. Another statement related to the role of family in her life. She wrote, “I am an important member of my family.” She follows this statement immediate with the statement, “I TRY.” This statement here indicates that Nikki works hard to contribute to the dynamics of her family.

**Social and Competency**

Five out of six respondents from Gates scored higher than those from Parkwood and Imani. At Gates, the elite school, there was a greater propensity for the respondents to collaborate. There was a very collaborative environment at Gates that was fostered by the parents, teachers, and administration. Across all the schools, most of the girls believed that Nancy’s nosiness was positive. Most of the respondents identified with the social aspects of Nancy. Nancy’s nosiness was encouraging because it increased respondents’ confidence, as they believed it to be a necessary skill for the preparation of a career in reporting. These positive attributes formed the basis for the respondents’ belief that Nancy was like them (and they like Nancy), which had a huge positive impact on their overall self-concept.

In addition, a child’s competency is inextricably tied to identity. As Wegner (1999) explains, identity is learned through practice while engaged in a multiplicity of communities. Self-efficacy increases in social, cultural, educational settings and is always being refined as people learn and explore. In the girls’ case, they learned and
practiced identity through the process of mastering Nancy Drew. The more they played with the game the better equipped they were to evaluate the relevancy of the game to personal experience. Figure 5.2 is a visual representation of the respondents’ transitional processes in relation to self-efficacy, learning, and self-evaluation. It is important to be mindful that the ways children create meaning is filtered through their cultural lens (e.g., social class, school structure, etc.), which ultimately affects their self-evaluation and self-competency. High self-efficacy usually correlates directly with higher evaluations of self.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Lens of Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious – Pop Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Survey Data Results)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Lens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self- Competency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.2: Cultural Lens of Self**  
Adapted from Spero’s (1999) Self-Efficacy Model

**Physical**

There were discrete moments when the respondents mentioned their physical stature in relation to Nancy Drew and their feelings about their body image were reflected in their scores on MCS. The respondents at Gates Academy assessed their physical state from average to moderately positive. Compara...
scored in the average to very positive range. Imani Secondary School respondents scored in the average to very negative range. The differences among the three schools proved to be illuminating. Respondents from Imani, the Afrocentric school, scored low considering the emphasis on positive self-image, cultural pride, etc at the school.

Contrary to what might be expected given the low SES status of Parkwood, the respondents scored average to very positive. Two out of four were average, one was positive, and one was very positive. In Parkwood, the respondents did not compare themselves to anyone. Their values about standards of beauty are defined strictly from within the confines of their community. That is, they reject the prevailing notion that European features are the most desirable. In contrast, the respondents from Imani, where most students belong to the middle-class SES, were more influenced by external notions of beauty. It is this researcher’s opinion that, because of their higher SES status, respondents from Imani perceived that assimilation was an available option for them. Accordingly, respondents from this school were more receptive to standards of beauty that were defined by external sources, ie outside of their community. The Parkwood respondents, however, did not believe that they could assimilate because of their general lack of material resources. Therefore, they rejected the notion that they could achieve beauty as defined by the cultural mainstream.

Age

Although some of the respondents scored low in the physical aspect of the scale, their verbal self-assessment indicated much higher self-image. This disjunction between the survey and interview responses can be explained by their differences in age. The two
older respondents from Gates viewed their physical state ranging from average to very negative. The younger respondents from Gates, however, viewed themselves from average to moderately positive. The older respondents defined themselves in more physical terms because their physical development more drastically differentiated them from the male characters of Nancy Drew. That is, the primary marker that they used to identify themselves was focused more narrowly on their status as female. As their bodies developed, the physical changes they experienced had a greater impact on their sense of self. The younger respondents, on the contrary, whose physical selves were not as distinct from males as the older respondents, aligned themselves more often with male characters. So, because the physical differences were not as pronounced for the younger respondents, there was nothing preventing them from identifying themselves with male characters.

**Family Background**

Although family educational background ranged from GED to college degrees, there were no differences among girls thinking about Nancy Drew and family background. All the girls, except for one, scored high on the family section. The younger respondents looked to the family unit as an instrumental filter for many of their responses. The family unit is the locus for the respondents’ overall development in terms of morality, self concept, and racial identity. The younger respondents, because they had fewer external sources, were more heavily influenced by their families’ standards of acceptable behavior. Thus, their narratives feature more prominently the expectations of the family.
Racial and Gender Identity Issues

None of the girls in this study, except a few, had prior knowledge of Nancy Drew, so Nancy’s iconic representation as a smart and fearless female detective was new to them. The girls’ lack of familiarity with Nancy was valuable because it enabled them to easily construct and deconstruct Nancy as a role model.

Despite the small number of participants, considerable evidence revealed that children have dynamic identities and identify with computer game characters of all walks of life (e.g., females, males, etc.), and these identities are enacted while playing with educational software games. This idea is common in the literature, which supports the idea that educational software games are exploratory spaces where youth learn and evaluate themselves as they play electronic characters (McDonald & Kim, 2001).

McDonald and Kim (2001) write that “liking a character is likely to lead to identification with that character, and then do modeling or imitation” (p. 254). In effect, children’s dynamic identifications have implications for girls’ overall development. According to Cassell & Jenkins (1998), “video games constitute virtual play spaces which allow children…to extend their reach, to explore, manipulate, and interact with a more diverse range of imaginary places than constitute the often drab, predictable, and overly-familiar spaces of their everyday lives” (p. 263).

Despite the many indicators that identify Nancy as a Caucasian female, most of the respondents identified with the social aspects of Nancy. They reasoned that she exuded positive energy, “girl power,” and confidence in her many interactions with other characters and this seems to be adequate justification to overlook the racial difference.
These positive attributes formed the basis for the respondents’ belief that Nancy was like them (and they like Nancy), which had a huge positive impact on their overall self-concept. Not only did Nancy reinforce the respondents socially, other characters had a similar effect on the girls’ identity. For instance, some girls identified with the athleticism and popularity of the male characters. A few wanted to be like Connie because she embodied independence. Others identified with Hal Tanaka, the book smart Asian student as he represented those who loved to read or study. Identification with a male character represents a different aspect of double shifting, according to race as well as gender. Figure 5.2 below shows the percentage of respondents who identified with Nancy as well as some of the other characters, including Hulk, Daryl, Connie and Hal.

The only aspect that posed dissonance for most of the girls’ identity was divided along the lines of race. From the girls’ narratives, there were clear indicators where the girls recognized that Nancy’s race and cultural personification, as a Caucasian character, was in opposition to the girls’ racial and cultural identity. On the basis of race, most of girls resisted Nancy as a role model. They resisted Nancy Drew being a stand-in for them or other African-American girls. Based on the girls’ subjective standpoint and racial identity, the deconstruction of Nancy as a role model was met with opposition and acceptance. It became clear upon reflecting on codes and themes developed (see p. 57) that the girls were able to transcend race and accept the positive characteristics of the game.
Game Character and Girls

Where noted by the respondent, descriptions, emergent themes, and connections were formulated into a chart showing percentages of girls describing self and characters (see Appendix A). In figure 5.3, a high percentage revealed a significant connection to the character. As expected, Nancy as the protagonist received the highest percentage on both charts. Respondents not only assumed the role of Nancy, they became her. However, there are many girls who identify with the male characters Daryl Gray, Hulk Sanchez, and Hal Tanaka. With software computer games, when the real and unreal converge, children are more likely to become and imitate what they see.

Figure 5.3: Game Characters Girls Are Most Like
Perceptions of Self-Concept

African-American girls are not oblivious to stereotypes yet. The girls do enjoy playing video and computer games that do not prominently feature them. However, the respondents were far less likely to embrace the idea perpetuated by the racial indicators of Nancy Drew. The respondents readily detected the racial indicators that defined Nancy Drew’s race, which they perceived to be in opposition to theirs. They reasoned that the physical representation of whiteness on the CD-ROM cover indicated that the targeted audience was white. However, they were able to take what was useful from the game nonetheless.

Implications of the Teachers’ Evaluations

It is clear that instructional media has a direct bearing on students’ self-concept. There is always, then, a caveat for teachers. Understanding the racial, gender, and class aspects of instructional material—regardless of the media—is an important aspect of the education process, one that teachers need to give serious consideration to. Teachers need to evaluate software with an eye toward insuring that the perspectives in the game are balanced. Children will employ double shifting, to be sure, but teachers need to examine games very carefully. The process of educating students is complicated and requires that educators teach students early in the educative process to detect when particular photographic constructions can be harmful or counteractive to their culture and identity. In classrooms where depictions of ethnic people can be found throughout the curriculum materials, including computer games, contributions of underrepresented groups cannot be
ignored in classrooms if teachers are attempting to foster tolerance, challenge racism, and promote respect for all peoples.

Because children in the digital age look to electronic media as sources of role models, it important that teachers screen all media used in the classroom—in keeping with the “ethic of care”—with an eye toward shielding students from media that may provide damaging images or messages. Further, it is the responsibility of educators to teach students early in the educative process, as discussed in Chapter 2, to detect when particular images can be harmful or counteractive to their culture and identity (Giroux, 1994). In order for teachers to satisfy this responsibility, teachers need to have a critical awareness of the ways in which the lenses of race, gender, and class influence students’ assimilation of information and, also, how imagery used in electronic media affect students’ burgeoning sense of self.

The teachers in this study embodied an “ethic of care” in their analysis of Nancy Drew. They noted negative stereotypes and inappropriate interactions, among other things, between Nancy and the other characters. This is evidenced when Ms. Jones voiced concern about the character Daryl Gray’s sexual advances toward Nancy. Nancy was conducting an investigation and Daryl’s advances were inappropriate given the nature of her visit. She was there in a professional capacity and his advances, in this situation, revealed a lack of respect.

Ms. Jones believed that this sends a damaging message—that it is socially acceptable for Daryl to make sexual advances. Daryl’s behavior objectifies Nancy and makes her work seemingly insignificant. Ms. Jones recognized the potential harm here and believed that was important to teach children to be critical of the information they
consume. She asserts, “it has nothing to do with technology but has everything to do with being a teenager.” She demonstrates here that her role in the educative process transcends mere dissemination of academic content. On the contrary, she is keenly aware that the classroom is a site for student socialization and that the teacher has the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes or to teach children how to recognize and reject them.

Ms. Jones also noted the lack of diversity in Nancy Drew. Agosto (2000) also addresses this lack of diversity in Nancy Drew. She explains that, while Nancy Drew generally receives high marks for providing positive role models for girls, the CD-ROM falls short with regard to presenting representations that reflect larger society. One third of the world’s population is composed of people of color, yet the world Nancy Drew presents is one dominated by whites.

Baba Johnson also recognized negative stereotypes in Nancy Drew. He objects to the notion that men and women should always be at odds. He argues that Nancy Drew naturalizes a conflictual engagement between men and women because the mandate for the investigative process in the narrative is to always get “the man.” He interjects, “…we subconsciously enter a world and pick up or take on characteristics of a character and don’t even realize it; they filter into our being and we are not able to realize where it came from.” Baba Johnson is concerned that young girls will internalize the characteristics modeled by the female characters in Nancy Drew without scrutiny. This is problematic because information that is internalized and that has bypassed the cognitive process becomes naturalized. This forecloses the possibility of debate and creates an impediment to social progress. Further, Baba Johnson suggests that digital media is
becoming an apparatus of socialization that is not subject to the mediation of parents, teachers, and community.

This lack of mediation is not intentional, however. It is the result of the expedience of technology. Because digital media can expedite the educative process, teachers have become accustomed to the efficiency they gain when they integrate digital media in the classroom. Baba Johnson highlights the problem inherent with this endeavor. He states, “We have become so reliant on video games and interactive learning . . . I think video games are replacing traditional learning, and I think it makes it difficult for teachers to keep students’ attention because they want a different stimulus.”
So, not only does he recognize the students’ difficulty is scrutinizing the information they consume, he also brings to the fore the idea that the teaching process has been complicated by digital media as children also have become accustomed to digital media and that their focus tends to wander during traditional instruction.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The unfolding nature of an ethnographic study lends itself to new questions that emerge from the limitations of a study. While the researcher explored the meaning of culture and gender in the respondents’ thinking about a computer game designed for girls, the narrowly defined characteristics of race, gender, and age limited comparisons among other ethnic groups. Further research with extended playtime might reveal significant changes in identity. To bring greater depth to this study, it could be expanded to include an older group of adolescent girls or adolescent boys and the ways in which their self-concept is shaped by the game’s male characters. The study could have included
interview data of parents and computer design companies in order to add an level of
dimensionality. Although parents were on the periphery of this study, their input could
have offered a different perspective about the role of girls’ games in their daughters’
lives. Time constraints, however, made including the parents not feasible.

Because educational software is a resource that encompasses political, cultural,
and social dimensions, the design needs to show greater levels of diversity. In order to
improve courseware, it needs to be placed in the hands of teachers who are culturally
aware of the “non-neutral” aspect of computer games. Furthermore, designers should
aim to create games girls’ games with characters that transcend traditional boundaries of
race.

As situated contexts for connecting groups of learners or individuals across time
and space become increasingly possible, the necessity for employing a critical lens to
examine the effects of technology on culture and gender becomes more relevant. If one
acknowledges that technology has the potential to bring cultures together, it is hard to
ignore the tensions that exist around issues of culture and gender. It is also hard to ignore
social constructions of gender that are ‘naturalized’ and reproduced in educational
software because software, thought to equalize technological computer skills between
boys and girls, is inherently problematic (Cassell & Jenkings, 1998).

Additionally, a limitation of the literature review section revealed studies that are
part of a growing discourse about the impact of children’s media, electronic media, and
mass media on children’s self-concept. Although there is a paucity of literature on the
subject, research findings of this study debunk most of the existing video game literature
by showing that children’s emerging identities are not doomed by playing with games.
Durkin and Barber (2002), in fact, find that children are not as negatively impacted by game play as supported by previous studies. They find that game play is associated with positive aspects of development.

In addition to current discourse on the topic of video games and their effect on children’s development, the findings of this study compel this researcher to recommend that teacher preparation programs invest in a software evaluation coursework with a primary focus on game structure, diversification, and overall appropriateness for children. It is clear, based on the research findings in this study, that universities, primary and secondary schools, and parents should work together in developing the content of an introductory course as a way to prepare diverse groups of teachers to consider the social and cultural aspects of computer programs before harmful games end up in the hands of students.

In addition to this recommendation, this researcher hopes African-American girls continue to find platforms from which to speak about the topics investigated here. Discussions about culture and technology should start from the bottom up. They should start with the generation who will hold leadership roles and make decisions about the use and dissemination of future software. If such intellectual exchange about culture and technology is unable to occur, then educators and parents should point girls in the direction of mentoring programs whose primary focus is to continue talks about crucial technological issues that influence young minds.

An exemplar program in this area is Bennett, Brunner, and Honey’s (1999) Telementoring program. This program, for females from diverse backgrounds, encourages girls to get involved with technology. Through the program, high school girls
are linked, via telecommunication, with practicing female professionals in technology-related fields. The support and role modeling these female professionals provide helps reduce the number of African-American girls who opt out of computer science and technology courses.

Such programs are commonplace and educators, business leaders, and feminists should continue to support girls’ identity and self-esteem concerns. They have positive results in increasing girls’ interaction with computers. The earlier girls learn to use computers the less fearful they become in a classroom or in other male-dominated environments. Most proponents believe that if girls are interested in using computers at a young age, they are more likely to enter technological professions (AAUW, 2000). The availability of more programs can motivate and encourage girls to enter the field of software designing—a field where females can really begin to change the landscape of design environments and interject a different perspective that is reflective of a diverse, ever-changing society.

Even the respondents were aware of the need to make the software design field more inclusive. Mikka expressed concern about there needing to be more African-Americans represented in software and computer design. She believes there needs to be a change in the ways African-Americans are presented in (if they are not completely absent from) software games. She explains, “I think we need more Black designers like computer developers…I don’t think Black people are involved enough with the computer. Like my cousins don’t have computers…like 25 of them don’t have a computer.” Regardless of African-American respondents’ experience with Nancy Drew, there is a clear need for them to continue to speak from those quiet places that motivate
them to move in the right direction. If educators teach students to be critical of images associated with technology, it can transform how they see themselves in the world (Hooks, 1994) and help them develop a level of consciousness that gives them agency over their lives.
APPENDIX A

Terms Used by Girls in Describing Self and Game Characters
### Terms Used by Girls’ in Describing Self and Game Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls’ Self-Description</th>
<th>Description of Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>J-Lo</strong>&lt;br&gt;Age 12</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearless</td>
<td>Determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to Study More</td>
<td>Fearless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Left-Eye</strong>&lt;br&gt;Age 12</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays Bskball</td>
<td>Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Certain</td>
<td>Observant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Gave Up</td>
<td>Never Gave Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drives Porsche</td>
<td>Drives Porsche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J-Bug</strong>&lt;br&gt;Age 12</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observant</td>
<td>Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Quests.</td>
<td>Asks Quests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedian</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lks. to Give Info.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taña</strong></td>
<td>Age 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Katie</strong></td>
<td>Age 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosanna</strong></td>
<td>Age 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lil’Moma</strong></td>
<td>Age 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaliyah</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Feminine</td>
<td>Not Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Nosey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Daryl</th>
<th>Hulk</th>
<th>Hal</th>
<th>Connie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Dressy</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>Cool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Good Person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Cares about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Cares about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashanti</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Daryl</th>
<th>Hulk</th>
<th>Hal</th>
<th>Connie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Good Ball Plyr.</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Secretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Good Person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Cares about</td>
<td>his work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Confidential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Daryl</td>
<td>Hulk</td>
<td>Hal</td>
<td>Connie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monique</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Needs Atten.</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Jock</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Suspicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flirtatious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bad Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latoria</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Secretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Careless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Soft Voice</td>
<td>Conceited</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likeful</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Big Flirt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Nosey</td>
<td>Lovely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Janel</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Never Quits</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
<td>Fling Type</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Spoken</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sneaky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flirt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suspicious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Nikki
**Age 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Daryl</th>
<th>Hulk</th>
<th>Hal</th>
<th>Connie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
<td>Flirt</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Secretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bomb</td>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talented</td>
<td>Talented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pieface
**Age 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Daryl</th>
<th>Hulk</th>
<th>Hal</th>
<th>Connie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Nosey</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Lks. to Study</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Secretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Flirt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suspicious</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weird</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Chart of Character Stereotypes
Chart of Character Stereotypes: Did the Girls Notice?

Respondents from Gates Academy including several respondents from Parkwood Middle and Imani Secondary detected many of the game’s stereotypes that related to Nancy Drew, Hal Tanaka, Daryl Gray, Hulk Sanchez and Connie Watson. Other respondents from Parkwood and Imani, however, did not detect stereotypes (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Nancy Drew is the main character. She wears a dress and high heels during her detective adventures <em>(Stereotype 1)</em></th>
<th>Hal Tanaka is a Japanese exchange student. He is the model minority because he is planning a career as a doctor <em>(Stereotype 2)</em></th>
<th>Daryl Gray is a wealthy and popular guy who tries to distract Nancy Drew by flirting with her <em>(Stereotype 3)</em></th>
<th>Hulk Sanchez is a Hispanic football player who is a self-absorbed jock only interested in flirting with girls <em>(Stereotype 4)</em></th>
<th>Connie is a mean girl who has a bad attitude. Her bad attitude prevents collaborative detective work with other females <em>(Stereotype 5)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J-Lo</td>
<td>Gates Academy</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-Eye</td>
<td>Gates Academy</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-Bug</td>
<td>Gates Academy</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taña</td>
<td>Gates Academy</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Gates Academy</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosanna</td>
<td>Gates Academy</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lil’</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moma</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaliyah</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>smoked</td>
<td>drink</td>
<td>drug</td>
<td>酒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monique</td>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latoria</td>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janel</td>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieface</td>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>√ (Yes)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Research Letters and Informed Consent
Research Letter for Parents

Solicitation for Parents

My name is Ella M. Shawntain Black. I am a graduate student at in the College of Education at The Ohio State University. As a future educator, I am interested in conducting a study on African-American girls ages 10, 12, 14 and their responses to images in the Nancy Drew “educational program,” a program targeted to adolescent girls 10 and up. Black girls experiences are unique and diverse and their voices are absent from media, culture and technology research. Between the ages of 10-14, young females move through complex stages of gender identity and cultural identity and capturing their responses to imagery in educational software during their teen years will offer insight into how media is a powerful stimulus that helps define adolescent identity.

I would like you to allow your daughter to participate in my study. She will receive a copy of the Nancy Drew program to interact with for about 30 days and a personal notebook to write down feelings, experiences, and important observations. Then, the week following the 30th day, I will interview her individually after school for one hour. The interview will be tape-recorded and will be conducted in the school’s conference room. I have developed questions to help guide the interview.

Your child’s participation is voluntary and you can cease participation at any time. All responses are confidential and no names will be used in the final documentation. I will meet with your child 30 days after interacting with the Nancy Drew software program. This interview will take place following the child’s month long interaction with the computer program.

I am interested in interviewing 18 girls, but only need 9 African-American girls, therefore, I will assign random numbers to choose the 9 participants. Thus, your daughter may not end up actually participating in this study. I am, however thanking you in advance for your show of support.

If you would allow your daughter to participate, please sign the attached consent letter. I will contact you if your daughter is selected.

If you are not interested, thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Appreciatively,

Ella M. Shawntain Black
The Ohio State University
Parent and Student Informed Consent

Protocol #: __________________

Consent for participation in research (Students)

I consent to my child’s participation in a research project entitled: Identity development in the digital age: African American girls, cultural representations and computer software

Dr. Antoinette Miranda, Principal Investigator, or her authorized representative Shawntain Black has explained the purpose of the study, the followed procedures, and the expected duration of my child’s participation.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that my child is free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me or her.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I acknowledge that I received a copy.

Date: ___________________________ Signed: ___________________________
(participant)

Signed: ___________________________ Signed: ___________________________
(Principal Investigator or her authorized representative) (Person authorized to consent for participant)

Witness: ___________________________
Research Letter for Teachers

Solicitation for Teachers

My name is Ella M. Shawntain Black. I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University. I am conducting a study on African-American girls ages 10, 12, 14 and their responses to imagery in the Nancy Drew “educational program,” a program targeted to adolescent girls 10 and up. Because Black children’s voices are absent from media, culture and technology research, this study will explore how Black adolescent females respond to cultural and gender depictions in computer programs. Between the ages of 10-14, young females move through complex stages of gender identity and cultural identity and capturing their responses to imagery in educational software during their teen years will offer insight into how media is a powerful stimulus that helps define adolescent identity.

Your participation is voluntary and you can cease participation at any time. All responses are confidential and no names will be used in the final documentation. I will meet with you approximately 3 hours over a six-month period. I will meet with you one hour after interviewing girls from your prospective school. I will then ask you to participate in a two-hour focus group session. Any questions? If not, please sign the consent form. Thank you.

Ella M. Shawntain Black
The Ohio State University
Teacher Informed Consent

Protocol #________________

Consent for participation in research (Teachers)

I consent to participating in a research project entitled: Identity development in the digital age: African American girls, cultural representations and computer software

Dr. Antoinette Miranda, Principal Investigator, or her authorized representative, Shawntain Black, has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures, and the expected duration of my participation.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study with prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I acknowledge that I have received a copy.

Date:________________________Signed:__________________________
(participant)

Signed:________________________Signed:_________________________
(Principal Investigator or her authorized representative) (Person authorized to consent for participant)

Witness:__________________________
APPENDIX D

Journal Entry Protocol and Questions
Journal Entry Protocol and Questions

You will receive one Nancy Drew program, a personal journal and a pen. After you play with the game, answer the following questions in your journal. We will talk about what you have written in your journal next week. You can write in a way that feels most comfortable for you. If you like, you can write single words, sentences, poetry or draw pictures.

If you have questions loading the game on your computer, feel free to call me at home. If you need to play the game at school, let me know and I will make arrangements for you to play during recess or after school. Do you have any questions?

1. Every time you play with Nancy Drew, write the date each time you write in your journal.
2. Explain how all the characters act and talk about if that is good or bad.
3. Do you identify with Nancy in any way? Explain if that is good or bad.
4. How are you like Nancy? Explain. Talk about if that is good or bad.
5. Which character or characters are like you? Why? Explain if that is good or bad.
6. What is Nancy’s race? If you could change her race, what race would you like her to be? Talk about if that is good or bad.
7. If you could make changes to the game, what changes would you make?
APPENDIX E

Multidimensional Self Concept Scale
Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992)

Please rate the following statements according to how well the statement applies to you. There are no right or wrong answers, but it is important that you rate each statement according to how you honestly feel. Be sure to be honest with yourself as you consider the statement you are rating. To mark your answer, simply circle the letters that correspond with your feelings towards that statement. Each statement should be rated as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Agree (SA)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Disagree (D)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

S-SCALE
(Social Scale)

1. I am usually a lot of fun to be with
   SA A D SD
2. People do not seem interested in talking with me
   SA A D SD
3. I am too shy
   SA A D SD
4. Most people like me
   SA A D SD
5. People avoid me
   SA A D SD
6. A lot of people make fun of me
   SA A D SD
7. I am not accepted by people who know me
   SA A D SD
8. Most people think I am interesting
   SA A D SD
9. People enjoy being with me
   SA A D SD
10. Most of the time I feel ignored
    SA A D SD
11. I feel desired by members of the opposite sex
    SA A D SD
12. No one seems to laugh at my jokes
    SA A D SD
<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Most people appreciate me just the way I am</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I often feel like I am left out of things</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. People tell lies about me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have a lot of friends</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I spend a lot of time feeling lonely</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I am never sure how to act when I am with people I don’t know well</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. People tell me their secrets</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. People pick on me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. People do not seem to notice me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I get a lot of phone calls from friends</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Many people have a low opinion of me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I let people bully me too much</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. People have to get to know me before they like me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**C-SCALE**  
(Competence Scale)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. I am honest</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Too often I say the wrong thing</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I am too lazy</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I have a good sense of humor</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I am basically a weak person</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I feel that most people respect me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I am not very good at speaking my mind</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>I am assertive when I need to be</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I am unlucky</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>I am very self confident</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>I don’t seem to have any control over my life</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I frequently put off doing important things until it is too late</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>I give people a good reason to trust me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I am not as good as I should be</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>I don’t keep quiet when I should</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>I am successful at most things</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>I handle my personal business responsibly</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>I lack common sense</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>I always seem to be in trouble</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>I can do most things pretty well</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>I am not very smart</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I am a coward in many ways</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Other believe that I will make something of myself</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Too often I do dumb things without thinking</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>I waste money foolishly</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. I enjoy life</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. I am afraid of many things</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. There are many things I would like to change about myself</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. I am not able to laugh at myself very easily</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. I am not a happy person</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. I am proud of myself</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. I feel like a failure</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. My life is discouraging</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. I am happy with myself just the way I am</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. I am too emotional</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. I have good self control</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. I often disappoint myself</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. My life is unstable</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. I have a positive outlook on life</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. I am frequently confused about my feelings</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Sometimes I feel worthless</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. I often feel ashamed of things I have done</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. I frequently feel helpless</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. I feel loved</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. I wish I could be someone else</td>
<td>SA A D SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
71. I feel insecure                      SA  A  D  SD
72. I am a good person                  SA  A  D  SD
73. I am not as happy as I appear       SA  A  D  SD
74. I am usually very relaxed          SA  A  D  SD
75. There are times when I don’t like myself SA  A  D  SD

______________________________________________

AC SCALE
(Academic Scale)

76. Classmates usually like my ideas      SA  A  D  SD
77. I frequently feel unprepared for class SA  A  D  SD
78. I am good at mathematics              SA  A  D  SD
79. Learning is difficult for me          SA  A  D  SD
80. I usually do well on tests            SA  A  D  SD
81. I am proud of my school work          SA  A  D  SD
82. I can spell better than most people my age SA  A  D  SD
83. I read as well as most people my age  SA  A  D  SD
84. I don’t think very quickly            SA  A  D  SD
85. I work harder than most of my classmates SA  A  D  SD
86. I don’t understand much of what I read SA  A  D  SD
87. I learn fairly easily                 SA  A  D  SD
88. I never seem to have good ideas       SA  A  D  SD
89. My teachers like my classroom behavior SA  A  D  SD
90. I often feel dumb  
91. Most of my teachers seem to like me  
92. I have poor study habits  
93. Science is easy for me  
94. I am uncomfortable in school  
95. I usually work very hard  
96. Most people would rather work with me than someone else  
97. My teachers have a low opinion of me  
98. Most subjects are pretty easy for me  
99. I am not very creative  
100. I usually feel good about my written work

________________________

F SCALE
(Family Scale)

101. My parents care about my happiness  
102. My family makes me feel loved  
103. My family ruins everything for me  
104. In my family, we take care of each other  
105. I feel appreciated by my family  
106. I have fun with my family  
107. I wish I could trade families with someone else
<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>108. My parents are interested in me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109. My parents don’t trust me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110. My home is warm and caring</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111. My parents do not like my being around them</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112. My parents help me when I need it</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113. I am an important member of my family</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114. My parents are proud of me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115. My family is no good</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116. Nothing I do seems to please my parents</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117. My parents attend events that are important to me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118. My parents believe in me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119. I am proud of my family</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120. My parents care about my education</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. My family is one of the most important parts of my life</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122. My parents love me just as I am</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123. I don’t know why my family stays together</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124. My parents care about my future</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125. My home is not a happy place</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P SCALE</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Physical Scale)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>126.</strong> I feel good</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>127.</strong> I am attractive</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>128.</strong> I am in poor shape</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>129.</strong> When I look in the mirror, I like what I see</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>130.</strong> I tire too quickly</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>131.</strong> I have nice looking teeth</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>132.</strong> I look nice in just about anything I wear</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>133.</strong> I am ugly</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>134.</strong> I am stronger than most people</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>135.</strong> I have a nice figure</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>136.</strong> I am healthy</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>137.</strong> I feel good about how I look</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>138.</strong> I am good at most sports</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>139.</strong> I do not like how my clothes fit me</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>140.</strong> I am typically chosen among the last for team sports</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>141.</strong> I am physically fit</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>142.</strong> My hair never seems to look very good</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>143.</strong> My skin is attractive</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>144.</strong> I do not like to be seen in a swimsuit</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>145.</strong> There are parts of my body that I try to keep others from noticing</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
146. My clothes look good on me  

147. I do not seem to have the energy to do very much  

148. My weight is just about where it should be  

149. I would change my looks if I could  

150. I am graceful
APPENDIX F

Home Interview Questions
Home Interview Questions

The purpose of this one-hour visit is to have you look at various screen shots of the Nancy Drew game and have you write personal reflections in your journal. Is that okay? I have Nancy Drew loaded on this laptop and what I will do is show different scenes from the program then ask you questions about the scene and / or the characters. Then I will give you a few minutes to reflect on my question and give you a chance to ask me any questions. The response can be a single sentence, several sentences, bullet points, a paragraph, poetry, or words and pictures. Take your time and reflect before you write your response. Do you understand?

Nancy

1a. The first scene is of Nancy Drew. How old does Nancy look?

1b. Notice that Nancy is wearing high heels and a dress. What do you think about Nancy wearing high heels and a dress while searching for clues?

1c. Do you think girls her age should wear high heels and a dress when searching for clues? Why? Why not?

1d. If no, what would you wear instead? Why?

1e. After noticing how Nancy is dressed would you like to be like her? Why? Why not?

1f. Explain to me how you are like Nancy.

1g. Explain to me how you are not like Nancy.

1h. Is Nancy one of your role models?

1i. Would you consider that Nancy needs to be nosey and bossy to be a good detective?

1j. Would you be nosey and bossy if you were a detective?

1k. What’s Nancy race?
11. Why do you think the designers made her that way?

1m. How do feel about playing a (fill in the race) detective?

1n. Of the 3 guys you met in the program, which do you think Nancy would want to date?

10. Of the 3 guys, which do you think you would want to date?

**Daryl (The blonde-haired, popular Daryl Gray works in a student populated eatery, Maxine's Diner)**

1a. Is Daryl flirtatious?

1b. How do you know?

1c. Do you think it is a good idea for him to flirt with you while you are trying to solve a mystery? Why? Why not?

**Hal (As a Japanese exchange student, Hal Tanaka studies all the time)**

1a. Hal looks smart and likes to study. Why do you think the designers made a Japanese boy behave like that?

**Connie (A short haired Connie Watson is resistant to talking to Nancy; she has some secrets to hide)**

1a. As female, how does Connie behave?

1b. Why do you think she behaves like that?

1c. Are most girls like her?

1d. Are you like her?

1e. Do you think Nancy could work with Connie as detective partners to solve this mystery?

1f. Do you think you could work with Connie as detective partners to solve this mystery? Why? Why not?
Hulk (Hispanic all-around sports star Hector "Hulk" Sanchez is the school's star football player).

1a. How is Hulk behaving?

1b. Do most football players behave that way?

1c. Do you like the way he flirts and talks to you? Why? Why not?
APPENDIX G

Focus Group Script / Questions
Focus Group Script / Questions

Welcome. Thank you for taking time to talk to me after playing with the Nancy Drew game. Before the focus group session begins, I want to collect your journals and make copies; I will return them to you next week. Before we start our focus group session, I would like you to complete a short demographic survey then I want to inform you about some important information about this research project:

- This discussion will help me understand what you thought about the program. I will ask you a series of questions that will help guide our discussion.

- The interview will be tape-recorded and will take approximately one hour.

- There will be no names attached to comments. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

- Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as well as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

- If you have any questions following this session, I am available to talk to you.

Do you have any questions? The first question I have is:

1. What do you think about the media in general (e.g., television, computers, video games, music videos, etc.)?

2. Let’s focus on video games in general. Do you think video games are important?

3. Do you think video games for girls are important?

4. Do you like to play with video games regularly?

5. What video games do you play?

6. Other than Nancy Drew, are any of those video games girl games?

7. If yes, tell me about those games. Why do you like them?
8. Do you think playing with video games can negatively or positively influence a girl’s self-concept? Why? Why not?

9. Describe aspects of a video game that might influence a girl’s self-concept?

10. Describe aspects of a video game that might influence your self-concept?

11. Does Nancy Drew have the potential to influence a girl’s self-concept? Why? Why not?

12. Do you think any aspects of Nancy Drew influenced your self-concept?

13. Did the game help you understand who you are as an African-American female? Tell me about it.

14. Do you think the game was designed with you in mind?

15. The game did not have any African-American characters. What do you think about that?

16. What do you think about the designers of the game?

17. How could Nancy Drew be used in the classroom?
APPENDIX H

Personal Data Sheet
Personal Data Sheet

Pseudonym_______________________Age_____________ Date____________

Address_________________________School Name_______________________

1. How long have you attended this school?________________________________

2. What factors influenced your decision to attend this school?_________________
_________________________________________________________________

3. What do you like best about attending this school? ________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

4. What do you like least about attending this school? ________________________
_________________________________________________________________

5. List school club memberships, after-school activities or any job you have:
_________________________________________________________________

6. Do you live near this school?  _________________________________________

7. How would you describe the neighborhood you live in?_____________________
_________________________________________________________________

8. What is your family like? What is your relationship like with your parents and
your siblings?
_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Profession: Mother: __________________________________
Father: __________________________________

169
Education:  
Mother: ________________________________________________
Father: ________________________________________________

Number of children in family: ______
APPENDIX I

Personal Reflection Sheet
Personal Reflection Sheet

Name____________________________   Pseudonym__________________  Date_____

Personal Reflections
This personal reflection sheet has check boxes and short answer responses. With a pen or pencil, select the box that best describes each character from the Nancy Drew program. I will show you a screen shot of five characters then you should select the word that best describes each character. As you answer each question privately, remember there are no right or wrong answers. After you have completed this sheet, I am the only person who will read your responses and I assure you that they will be kept confidential.

1. Select the word(s) that best describes Nancy Drew
   Select the word(s) that best describes you
   □ Feminine
   □ Not Feminine
   □ Pretty
   □ Mysterious
   □ Smart
   □ Pushy
   □ Nosey
   □ Feminine
   □ Not Feminine
   □ Pretty
   □ Mysterious
   □ Smart
   □ Pushy
   □ Nosey

2. What other words would you use to describe Nancy?
   ____________________________________________________________

3. What other words would you use to describe you?
   ____________________________________________________________

4. What do you think about Nancy?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. Were there stereotypes you noticed about Nancy? Yes □ No □
   Explain ______________________________________________________________
6. Even though you can’t see her face, describe what you think Nancy looks like.

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

7. Describe how might someone describe your look.

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

8. What is Nancy’s race?______________________________________

9. Why do you think the designers made her like that?
   Explain _________________________________________________

10. Select the word(s) that best describes Daryl Gray? Select the word(s) that best describes you

    □ Masculine    □ Pushy
    □ Handsome    □ Nice
    □ Pushy    □ Trustworthy
    □ Nice    □ Untrustworthy
    □ Trustworthy
    □ Untrustworthy

11. What other words would you use to describe Daryl?

_________________________________________________________

12. What other words would you use to describe you?

_________________________________________________________

13. What do you think about Daryl Gray?

_________________________________________________________

14. Were there stereotypes you noticed about Daryl? Yes□ No□

    Explain _______________________________________________
15. Select the word(s) that best describes Hal Tanaka

☐ Smart
☐ Mysterious
☐ Mean
☐ Masculine
☐ Likes to study

Select the word(s) that best describes you

☐ Smart
☐ Mysterious
☐ Mean
☐ Likes to study

16. What other words would you use to describe Hal?

________________________________________________________________________

17. What other words would you use to describe you?

________________________________________________________________________

18. What do you think about Hal Tanka?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

19. Were there stereotypes you noticed about Hal?  Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain ________________________________________________________________

20. Select the word(s) that best describes Connie Watson

☐ Feminine
☐ Helpful
☐ Mysterious
☐ Pushy
☐ Secretive

Select the word(s) that best describes you

☐ Feminine
☐ Helpful
☐ Mysterious
☐ Pushy
☐ Secretive

21. What other words would you use to describe Connie?

________________________________________________________________________

22. What other words would you use to describe you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

23. Were there stereotypes you noticed about Connie?  Yes ☐ No ☐
24. What do you think about Connie Watson?

25. Select the word(s) that best describes Hulk Sanchez

Select the word(s) that best describes you

- [ ] Smart
- [ ] Athletic
- [ ] Helpful
- [ ] Mean
- [ ] Untrustworthy

26. What other words would you use to describe Hulk?

27. What other words would you use to describe you?

28. Were there stereotypes you noticed about Hulk Sanchez?  
   Yes [ ]  No [ ]

29. Which character do you think you are most like and why?

30. Which character would you like to be more like and why?
APPENDIX J

Teachers’ Phone Interview Script / Research Questions
Phone Interview Script / Questions with Teachers

Thank you for taking time to talk to me. This phone interview should take about 20 minutes. Your responses are very important to this study and I want to inform you about some important information about this research project:

- This discussion will help me understand what you thought about Nancy Drew. To guide the discussion, I will ask you a series of questions.

- The interview will be tape-recorded and will take approximately one hour.

- There will be no names attached to comments. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

- Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as well as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

- If you have any questions following this session, you can call me at 292-3699 or e-mail me at black.160@osu.edu.

Do you have any questions? The first question I have is:

1. Do you think video games are important for youth development?

2. Do you think video games for girls are important?

3. Were there stereotypes you noticed?

4. As a teacher do you think it is important to evaluate software before students use it?
APPENDIX K

Member Check Letter
Member Check Letter

2040 Iuka Ave. Apt. 2A
Columbus, OH 43201

September 3, 2003

Hope you and your family are well. I am busy working and writing the last few chapters of my research. I just finished a draft of your personal thoughts about the Nancy Drew program. I turned your personal thoughts into a short story. Your personal thoughts came from the group interview, home interview and the fill-in form (completed at school). I would like you to read what I wrote so you can make sure the story is okay.

If you want to make changes or add anything to the story, feel free to do so. If you make changes, write the changes on the side of the page and draw a line to the change (it is easier for me to understand the change). Once the changes are complete, sign and date the bottom of the document then send the signed document to me in the self-addressed envelope. If you feel your story is okay as is please sign and date the bottom and send it back to me in the self-addressed envelope.

As you read the story, your school’s name has been changed to protect the school.

If you have questions, feel free to call me at (614) 853-4840.

Sincerely,

Ella Black
The Ohio State University
LIST OF REFERENCES


Duncum, P. (May, 2002). Clarifying visual culture. *Art education, 6-11*.


Foster, Michelle. The power to know one thing is never the power to know all things: Methodological notes on two studies of Black American teachers. In A. Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and method: Political activism and education research* (pp. 129-146). New York: Routledge.


