

The switch article I came across was, *Online Game communities are social in nature*. This drew my attention because I believe that the further into the future we get, the more we are seeking to merge technology and life; we are developing our social lives using technology as the primary medium. The article begins by telling us about the first two player games that were designed to be played on PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations) starting in the early 70s such as: Spacewar, Star Trek, Avatar, etc. By 1973 "Notes" was designed, for PLATO, which was basically a chatroom where players could log on and chat to one another using their name or anonymous as well as being able to identify themselves as any gender. In online gaming you can identify yourself as a male or female based on your character as well. This brings up the issue of gender roles in the gaming world. At first glance online gaming seems to have a sense of anonymity, your username doesn't have to be your real name. You don't have to tell anyone where you are from, age, etc. However in choosing a more feminine username or by choosing a female character, fellow gamers can assume that you are female. Gamers have found that people get treated differently based on their gender for example males have found that female characters get treated better in virtual worlds that are mostly male dominated. Therefore there are some males that choose to identify as a female in the gaming world in order to escape the competition and in turn also find it easier to chat with other characters.

Online game communities are much like real world communities, except in a way less segregated. "Boundaries of geography, economy, culture, degrees of education and family traditions have disappeared...Communities are playing fields for social interaction." A gamer can be playing with someone on the opposite side of the world, a 70 year old man can be playing against a 10 year old, or a rich dentist can be playing an unemployed high school dropout. The game doesn't segregate based on any of these characteristics. The only thing it would segregate you on is based on your level in the game for example. This leads us into friendships, oftentimes playing with fellow gamers for days or months can turn into friendships in game. Often times these friendships that occur in game turn into real life friendships. This article compares these communities as becoming an extension, in a sense "a new medium of human touch." These gaming communities exist by free and paid subscribers, "gamers occupy real estate within the online game. Communities live in both space and time. Thus, it is a lifelike system." This idea of paying for your real estate in the game and spending time interacting in the game is like paying to have a second life. Once your second life reaches over into your real life such as gaming friendships turning into real friendships, this is how these communities truly become an extension of human touch. Through the use of technology we are living out and developing our social lives.