RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GAME PLAYING
AND PERSONALITY

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Summary.—The relationship between personality variables and involvement in adventure games (such as Dungeons and Dragons) has been equivocal with both negative and positive correlates being reported. 75 college students were evaluated with the 16 PF. No differences were found between heavy and light involvement gamers; both groups' scores were similar to the 16 PF standardization population.

Parents and educators have expressed concern over the increased amount of time young people appear to be spending playing various games or engaged in game-like activities (Kestenbaum & Weinstein, 1985). Fantasy adventure games, such as Dungeons and Dragons, have been blamed for suicidal and antisocial behavior, while other frequently used game pastimes (such as videogame playing or using card or board games) have been associated with emotional passivity and underachievement (McClure & Mears, 1986). Menlancon and Thompson (1985) reported less interpersonal sensitivity or empathy, while Lin and Lepper (1987) reported increased impulsivity.

Other literature, however, does not seem to support this notion. It has been argued that game-playing fosters autonomy (Booth, 1982), identity (Mitchell, 1986), logical thinking (Melancon & Thompson, 1985), and conflict-resolution skills (Chanin & Schneer, 1984). Kestenbaum and Weinstein (1985) have argued that much of the concern over games stems more from parental over-reaction than from hard evidence concerning the harmful effects of game usage.

Since the literature reports some basic conflicts concerning the relationship between game use and personality characteristics, the present study was conducted.

Subjects were 75 college students enrolled in upper-level psychology classes and members of a "games" club at a middle-sized midwestern university of approximately 17,000 students. All students in the sample were white and could be characterized as largely coming from middle-class homes.

Form A of the 16 PF (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970) and a questionnaire on game use or involvement were administered to each subject, using a counterbalanced presentation of materials.

Based upon their responses to the questionnaire, 24 subjects were identified as moderate to heavy game players (the range was from 4 to 10 hr.

per week, with a median response of 6 to 9 hr. per week). Fifty-one subjects were identified as light users (range 0 to 3 hr. per week, with over three-quarters of this group indicating that their involvement was less than 1 hr. per week).

The heavy-involvement group consisted of 17 men and 7 women (M age = 20.8 yr., SD = 2.8) while the light-involvement group consisted of 19 men and 32 women (M age = 21.8 yr., SD = 4.0). Age differences were nonsignificant ($p < .05$).

The two groups were compared on scores on the 16 PF. Independent t tests on each of the 16 factors indicated no statistically significant differences between the two groups. For the entire group all but two of the sten scores were in the average range (5 or 6) with the groups scoring slightly above average (sten = 7) on Factor A (outgoing) and slightly below average (sten = 4) on Factor C (affected by feelings). The results are similar to those of Simon (1987) who concluded that game players present a normal and even mundane personality picture.

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