

Project Belinda Ideas

Name: Not certain, but something emphasizing family play and/or rotational play; ideas “*Family Folk*” or “*Neighborhood Life*,” or “*Our 20th Century Life*.” Need ideas. No actual name yet. I also have no cute name for characters yet. Importantly, the name should emphasize family/household play, so no “My” titles should be considered, but such ideas should be converted to plurals.

Autonomy AI: Planning on a Utility AI at its core, with some form of action planning simple any required sequences (such as: eat ← get food ← cook ← prepare ingredient ← get ingredients). This would probably not distinguish goals from action as the goals are actions. *Note: It has occurred to me that current life simulation games probably don’t use any action planning, but rather canned sequences for those rare cases where several action are done in sequence and many or may not be useful here.*

Story Progressing by Life Goal Planning: Similar to ordinary autonomy, but handled daily at midnight, say one unplayed character per frame to divide the load. Essentially pick a goal based on personality and wish/aspiration (dream might be a good name), and see if there are sub goals. For example, someone early in a romantic relationship might decide advance the relationship status, while a hopeless romantic might have marriage a goal thus looking for a partner with plans on advancing toward marriage when possible (deciding when to advance would be part of the daily check). Similarly one wanting a family might have marriage as a sub-goal, while one seeking wealth might to seek hire paying jobs or work on skill relevant to career advancement. Etc.

Relationships: Separate bars for social and romantic status, but also separate for each character (just because you like someone doesn’t mean they like you); possibly with long and shorter term bars.

Control Limited to the Player’s Own Active Characters: What you tell a character to do only effects their behavior and no one else directly, and such decisions have real consequences – whether minor or major, or for better or worse. Any effect on others is the result of the controlled characters action on them or interaction with them.¹ Imagine the following situations:

Bob Perez sees his crush on Sue Simpson at a park on the bayou. If Bob chooses to have a snack, chat with his friends, and then needs to use the bathroom before talking to Sue, and Sue leaves while this is happening, that is the result of his choices – Sue has her own life and does not exist simply for Bob to pursue a relationship with. He should have talked to her first, and loosing the opportunity is a natural consequence of his actions. Even if she happens to be leaving when he arrives and he still fails to catch her in time, that is fine, life doesn’t always happen the way you want it to and some unpredictability is desirable, though his chances would be much better if he prioritized that interaction over other activities.

Similarly, a bartender should not walk off the job and out into the parking lot to present themselves to you because they magically detected you wanted to be friendly and say, “*Hi*,” before ordering; telling one of your characters to say “hi” to someone should cause your character to go to them and initiate, not the other way around. That is not only silly, but gets in the way of the next intended action, as the bartender is no longer at the bar to order from – being friendly or nice has broken the player’s plan, and done it in nearly the most ridiculous way possible.

In short, the world does not revolve around you. You control your characters, not the whole world, and the rest of the world should not order itself around your goals or those of your characters. *This is not vehicle for telling whatever story you dream up, but rather a potentially strategic game* – one where some strategy and adaptability is needed to create more optimal outcomes, though playing a regular Joe/Jill without high ambitions or even a foolish person or loser should be possible. Any story,

however, should be neither provided and told to the player not created and told by the player, but rather emergent with where you end up not necessarily being where you thought you would. If the journey is convoluted with unexpected twists and turns, all the better – and of course, it should be possible to *fail*.

Interruption of another character's actions must obviously be possible, but should happen when your character reaches the other, as a result of and at the time of their (inter)action, not in advance to force the (inter)action to occur!

Language: The goal is to use a gibberish language, similar to other current and in development games in the genera. The “language” must try to sound distinct, its own separate “dialect” of Gibberish, and to this end should have different sound system from the U.S. English spoken by the Maxis voice actors. To this end, it all “r”s will be trilled/rolled, alveolar and palatal fricatives included, and some consonant clusters not typical of English should also be used. A few words from a childhood make-believe language (shared with the wannabe dev's sister) might be thrown in, such as /jvivava/ (“*sweet baby*”) for baby – though of course, the vast majority words and phrases should have no defined meaning, with no more than a handful of special case exceptions.

Genetics: The basis of genetics will what I call the Three Gene System. The idea is simple, each trait (in a broad, everyday sense) effected by this system would have three genes: two “real” genes, one inherited from each parent, and a third fake gene to represent the complexities of genetics beyond what a game can realistically do or should really try to. This also allows for both inheritance with some implied player control but a certain amount of randomness at the same time. It also does approximate the bell-shaped normal distribution curve typical of most traits in real organisms (including humans); it is also coincidentally similar to the “3d6 down the line” used in table top RPGs of the 1970-80s, though here the RNG virtual dice would be floating point with fraction sides and designed to produce a 1-10 or 0-10 scale. This is powerful, as it can be applied to anything represented by a number that might have a genetic component. Thus Core Trait and Talents (see below) could be controlled by these, but so could skin tones and anything with a slider (e.g., sliders for body shape).

Core Traits and Talents would by on a 0-20 or 1-20 scale and be 50% genetic and 50% developmental (i.e., based on special early life skills for Talents, or life experience for Core Traits).

Core Traits: The plan is for six core traits, based loosely on the HEXACO model of personality, though some of them being having a fuzzy overlap with related but different traits from the older 5-Factor model of personality (as tested by the NEO-PI and various derived “Ocean” tests). Notably, Emotionality overlaps with but differs from Neuroticism, though the game’s Emotional score would sometimes be treated more as one and other times more as the other, as meets the needs of game play and the underlying simulation. Importantly, there should be no best personality, unlike early games in the genera where the personality sliders acted as “low key” ability scores. Instead, all Core Traits should be based on a system of trade-offs, with the sliders starting at a default mid-position, and the player being able to place them where ever they choose. In other words, instead of a limited point-buy system with high score generally being better, the player could create what ever core personality they wanted, with the understanding that more does not mean better. For example, a highly Emotional character might experience negative emotions more strongly and for longer, but might also have better survival skills (paying the bills on time, more likely to avoid danger or dangerous situation, or handle low needs more quickly) so that there fear of danger increases there survival chance. These can also be use to for social compatibility as the euclidean distance between personalities in a sixth dimensional space. The current plan has these (some names are tentative):

OPEN (from openness)

MORAL (from honesty-humility)

EXTROVERT (from extroversion)

SENSITIVE (from agreeableness)

EMOTIONAL (emotionality and neuroticism)

INDUSTRIOUS (from conscientiousness)

Minor Traits: These are very similar to the trait system of more recent major dollhouse life simulators which have become available starting in 2008. Embarrassingly similar even, to the point not much else needs to be said in general. As they are a short list of discrete personality characteristics, and not a simple number, they cannot be heritable, but chosen to represent the effects of life experience, a character concept, or whatever basis the player might have. One caveat, though, is that Core Traits should limit which Minor Traits can be taken; for example, someone high in agreeableness cannot be mean, while someone high in agreeableness or morality cannot be wicked. Some of these are connected to real life sub-traits of the core traits, so that for example, one extrovert might be more outgoing and less active, while another might be more active or cheerful but less outgoing (even though outgoing, active, and cheerful are all components of extroversion according to science). Other will be things that don’t fit neatly into a Core Trait but make the character more unique.

Talents: These are similar to the Ability Score typical of RPGs, and have some functions that overlap with the aspiration traits or starting skill bonuses earned in childhood in some existing games. A list them is as follows:

PHYSICAL

INTELLECTUAL

PRACTICAL²

CREATIVE

SOCIAL (might be renamed to Charisma?)

All skills would be tied to one of the talents, and effect the rate at which they are learned (and for very low score, the maximum skill) in a way the relates to the how skills themselves work. I will not go into the math here, but the way it works out a Talent of 15 would have the character usually one skill level ahead average with the same amount of practice, and 20 would be two ahead, while 5 would lag one behind and 1 or 0 would lag two behind and have maximum of 9 instead of the 10 for everyone else.

Emotions: These are based largely on Plutnick’s color wheel of emotions, but with a few modifications / liberties to make it work better as a game. First, fear and surprise are switched, then an axis is drawn between happiness and acceptance / disgust and sadness (where Plutnick placed Love and Remorse) and another at a right angle to it (though Aggression and Awe). These are the positivity and avoidance axes, effectively making an emotion a 2-dimensional vector. This allow for generally pleasant emotions to be on a clear positive side and unpleasant emotions to have negative positivity. Secondary and tertiary emotions are not bothered with, but the emotions can be categorized into the eight hypothesized primary emotions based on the angle (calculated from the vector by the arctangent), while the intensity can be calculate as the magnitude of the vector. These are the emotions:

Negative

FEAR
SADNESS
DISGUST
ANGER

Positive

INTERESTED
HAPPY
CONNECTED
SURPRISED

Its true that there are some mental states and experiences this does not cover, however there one specific one that especially relevant: Sexual arousal; however a separate bar for “horny” or “flirty” bar may not be needed explicitly, but instead folded into the interaction and relationship systems.

Skills: Skills come in the 1 to 10 scale many would be familiar with 0 for those who have not learned the skill. They are increased through practice.³ Points are earned at one per in game minute (probably about 2 seconds in real time, though the exact time scale will be tweaked through play testing). This means someone with an average talent (score of 10) would take one in game hour (probably about two real life minutes) to go from level 1 to level 2. The cost of further improvement increases exponentially based on the fifth root of 10, with initially learning the skill (reaching level 1) taking slightly longer than going from 1 to 2. For every five point of talent the skill XP rate increase by the fifth root of five, thus putting a max talent two levels above average. The amount of needed for each level is as follows, given an average level of talent:

ZERO	=	0
ONE	=	100
TWO	=	159
THREE	=	252
FOUR	=	399
FIVE	=	631
SIX	=	1000
SEVEN	=	1585
EIGHT	=	2512
NINE	=	3982
TEN	=	6310

This open to tweaking if play testing reveals the increases are too fast (or slow). As shown, it would take about 63 hours of practice (probably two hours of real time) to reach level 10 in a given skill. Skills can also decay; if not used for two consecutive days skill XP will be lost at 100 point per day until used again (which resets the skill decay clock, effectively returning the one day grace period so that two day must pass before losing more skill points). Note that working a job that requires the skill counts as using it. Also note that there is minimum it can drop to, which is the square root of the highest amount ever gained (effectively the level will never drop below half the highest level obtained). This minimum is also set to 100 upon reaching skill level 1, so the skill is never completely unlearned. Also note,

though, the maximum skill XP that can be gained is 10,000, so no one is ever immune to skill decay, and also those with very little talent are limited to level 9 – though with practice and determination most can max it eventually and anyone can get good at it.

One thing to note: Driving will be a skill, like others, and so every one must learn to drive before driving effectively. Driving with low skill no adequately skilled teacher present will result in a chance (a high chance if the driving skill has not been learned) of wrecking and totaling the car. However, learning to drive will not be an ordeal leading to panic attacks and a character that is effectively non-functional for the rest of the day.

The design of skills should be not too broad or too narrow. This is not a game where every musical instrument is its own skill while plumbing, electronics, woodworking, and sculpture are folded into one skill. Instead, skill should have a roughly similar level of breadth.

Actions and (Social) Interaction: Actions act upon and objects (or, in some special case, another character). Interactions are done with/on another character, and are verbal or social (including romantic). Interactions may be done along side some actions, or on their own. Actions that someone would reasonable converse during (eating, play a game, walking together) or at least would not be disrupted by social engagement can be combined with interactions. Actions that would disrupted by being disturbed (such as those requiring concentration, such as reading or programming), or that would physically make no sense to do while talking, cannot. This is all the multitasking that is needed, wanted, or planned for. Generic socializing is an action that involves continued interaction with someone in and of itself.

Having a special talk while eating might be needed for that combo, however, do to possible conflicts in mouth animation.

Jobs and Careers: These will likely be shorter, variable length chains, with movement between them. Perhaps some would require some skill just to start or to be unlocked through progress in another career path, maybe. Typical lengths would be 4-7 levels. Importantly include full time blue collar careers, not such a focus on “professional” and exciting careers, with all full time careers being a viable way to make a living. Some may want to make a high profile or high status career a priority, or something glamorous or exciting, while others may want to focus more on other aspects of life or shoot for a balance. Working class professions are something that are not well represented in current games, nor is the fact that in many businesses corporate level management is often reach from other job types (such as retail).

Build-Buy: Though some existing an planned games my have better or worse systems in terms of user-friendliness of the controls, more or less content, or features like manipulating rooms or color wheels, the basic system appears to be the same for current and up coming games. The core system works, so basically the same general kind of system as used by everyone else. Including room identity, and an efficient way to determine what room someone / something is in should be included, as it has value in planning actions (especially the object of those actions).

Putting permanent items (furniture) in lists by use type on a per room basis would be a good idea, allowing characters to check first for an item to use in that room, then checking the rest of the lot. Consumables (e.g., food) like should just be listed per lot, however, due to its short-lived nature.

More on Decision Making: When choosing a goal characters should use a utility (desirability) function. The function should have multipliers inserted based on current needs, traits of both types, and emotions. Making availability have an effect would be desirable but not essential if it becomes too complex – you are more likely to eat if surrounded by visible and readily available food, though this is not essential. Some actions and interaction might also be injected by both Minor Traits and Emotions; anger might enable mean interactions, but a mean character might be able to use them at any time.

Choosing targets and planning any required sub-goals should use lists to avoid searching through everything on the lot. If the list is empty then the action may be impossible or may need planning actions toward the goal as a sequence of sub-goals.

Needs: Needs come in two types, physical and psychological. Each has four needs, and are combined to find the physical wellbeing and social wellbeing, which are combined to form the overall wellbeing (just “Wellbeing” in game). Lower needs have priority in decision making and higher weight in calculating current wellbeing scores, separately at both levels. They are as follows:

- *Energy:* (Physical) Decreases somewhat slowly, and is restored by rest (sleep); exertion may drain it faster. Running out causes passing out. When low, health decreases.
- *Hunger:* (Physical) Decreases at a moderate pace and is restored by eating. When low, health decreases.
- *Potty:* (Physical) Decreases at a moderate speed, decreased some by eating, restored by bathrooms – because bladder has already been used, but it's basically the same need with a different name. Running out causes an embarrassing loss of bowel control.
- *Health:* (Physical) Based on several things; slowly decreased when other needs are low, when diet is not balanced, or when sick or injured. Improved slowly by keeping other physical needs high and when recovering from illness. Running out causes death.
- *Social:* (Psychological) Decreases over time at moderate speed, increased by socialization; rates in each direction are affected by Extroversion and by some extroverted Minor Traits. When low an emotion in the pure negative direction is produced (thus it can affect the next need, they are not completely orthogonal.)
- *Emotional:* (Psychological) Based on positivity component of the current emotional state vector. When very low it becomes hard to continue or focus on tasks, so they may be abandoned prematurely.
- *Situational:* (Psychological) A mixture of current environment and comfort; these are added to create a target that the need itself tracks (but does not jump to equaling).
- *Fulfillment:* (Psychological) Decrease very slowly over time, and is increased by doing things that the character would enjoy doing or find meaningful based on Minor Traits, Dreams, and Interests.

Low Wellbeing decreases functioning (skill use) and when very low, motivation and perseverance, in a way similar to Mood in some existing games – though here mood would best describe the Emotional need, rather than the totality of the needs, albeit with superficially similar (though not identical) effects.

There will be some hidden value that effect these. Notable levels of specific nutrients (proteins, fats, carbs, and vitamins) and hygiene (not as a need, but having small effects on Situation and Health needs and moderate effects on the success of interaction with other characters, and perhaps some effect on the chance of becoming sick). Note that sickness should not cause immediate, unavoidable death – the player should always have a chance, though not a certainty, of avoiding a controlled character’s premature death through skillful play.

Death from letting needs get to low non-randomly is another story – the player already had the chance to prevent that by keep the need from dropping so low.

Life Stages: These would based loosely on two days equals a year. This would result in life spans similar to an existing “realistic life spans” mod for a currently popular game. The stages themselves would not deviate too far from what players are used to, and most would be rounded to weeks, and some may be lengthened a little to provide time to play them.

- Infant⁴ – 1 day (age 0-1 days), the helpless, object life stage
- Baby – 3 days (age 1-3 days)
- Young Child (aka, “toddlers”) – 7 days (age 3-10 days)
- Child – 14 days (age 10-24 days)
- Adolescent (aka, “teenagers”) – 14 days (age 24-38 days)
- Young Adult – 14 days (age 38-52 days)
- Adult – 70 days (age 52-122 days)
- Senior – variable based on health, RNG, the Physical Talent, and the athletics skill, but at least a week or two but no more than 30 days. So, age 122-152 days or so (if all is optimal and you are lucky). Note that a random variation of a few days at the end is not comparable to killing off a young adult by pure random chance. Health may slowly tick down in this stage.

Late childhood / older children (aka, “preteens” or “tween-agers”) are not included, because though a popular request, I’m not sure how they would be differentiated from children in general, and dividing them up would make the stages too short in my opinion (while adding a whole extra week or two would make childhood too long). Dividing “adult” into “adult” and middle-age is an idea, too, though I’m not sure what effect it would/should have on gameplay; then “adult”/“young adult” doesn’t do much, either.

Continuous growth would be cool, but potentially more complicated than it would be worth. Also, continuous growth would not eliminate the need for life stages, as proportions, not just size, changes. Further, life stages have other effects, such as actions available, types of employment (school, job, retirement), skills available, skills available (including when Talent improving skills are must learn). Thus even continuous growth would not eliminate the need for life stages, even if include, something which in not planned and probably will not be added.

Character XP and Rewards (Perks): For each *new skill* level gained in a skill the character gets a number Character XP equal to the sum of all skill levels up to that point ($xp = (level * (level + 1)) / 2$) would be used). This only applies when a skill reach a new level, one that skill has never been at before; no XP are lost if skill level is lost to lack of use, but no XP are gain from regaining a previously lost skill level. These XP can then be spent on special traits called Perks, that give them minor advantages; these should stay grounded, however, and not turn the characters into super beings.

Dreams: Major life goals. The Life Dream is permanent, perhaps changeable through a cost in XP. Those who achieve their life dream have their Aspirational need given a minimum value above 0, say 50% or 25% full. These would define much of the source of the Aspirational Need, though many traits would come with some lesser ways to feed that need. These tasks are always available and repeatable, just as the need constantly counts down.

Interests: A small list of things the character is interested in, they enjoy doing and talking about these things. There should probably be a way of gaining more interests, such as by reaching a certain skill level in a skill related to the interest. These are discrete topics / activities picked from a list, much like Minor Traits initially.

As Rotational as You Want to Be:⁵ Unplayed characters age and have story progression, played characters do not have independent story progression and only age while being actively played. The rate of aging and story progression would be divided by the number of active households, to keep them in sync with played household that age while played and have their story progressed by the player. By default, played households would be locked / frozen while not the active household, with only relationships with members of the active household being changeable – thus allowing the player to jump back in where they left off (but still able to have relationships between played characters in different household). Alternatively, the aging and story progression could simply keep up with whatever played household has been played for the longest or shortest time (controlled by a setting). Of course, many of these features might ultimately be able to be turned off, but this is how it would work by default.

There should also be a place where the played households are listed in reverse order of when last played along with the number of days that household has been played, thus making it easy to know who is behind or to keep a strict progression if desired. There should also be an option to reset the day counter to zero, or perhaps two counters (one starting at household creation and one showing days since the last timer reset). Ideally, this list could be sorted by when last played or number of (in game) days played, as either ascending or descending. All this enables rotational play of all types, from strict rotations to random jumping around.

All this so that the players can fully play several, even many households, while giving all full attention as if they were the only played household. It is so that you can play all your characters in all their life stages, not miss a new baby's entire childhood and teen years while playing other families.

This is design pillar #1, the core goal of this game, rotational, generational family play in an open world, without having to miss huge parts of some families' history while off playing others.

The Setting and Related Game Play: The setting should be a bounded open world. In this world most entertainment venues and other places a character would visit in their free time should be enterable. Jobs and schools should mostly be “rabbit holes,” where characters disappear into until their shift is done. (Some players really like following characters into such places, however it is a lot to ask of one person, or even a small team, on top of everything else, and I have concerns it would limit the number of jobs that can be included.) There should also be a road out of town, to a place known as “The City.”

The characters live in a what is in a very literal and etymological sense a suburb – a sub-urb, a small town next to a big city. The City is a sort of ultimate rabbit hole, where jobs not available on the map are found (the character travels off the map by road, disappearing into The City as they cross the border). Entering The City requires a car; local jobs must be walked to if a car is not available.

The City is also a source for temporary characters (out-of-towners) that may exit on some community lots, and then be delete unless an actively played character forms a relationship with them. The number of out-of-towners may increase if a festival is occurring. This provides a potential source of new characters beyond those found locally. They should only usually be found on lots that typically would be social hub – there should also be the less traveled remote areas where characters can get away, or head off to on a secret rendezvous.

Other towns should be visitable, but requiring money, effectively treated as vacation worlds.

The world is not magical, and not inhabited by supernatural beings. If a magical expansion were ever added (or made an optional feature of the game), magicalness (magicality?) would be set per town and determine if magical characters, events, and related story progression exists in that town.

Hardcore minutia (laundry, mowing lawns, dust accumulating, applying skin treatments, putting on tampons as some players of such games seem to like, etc.) will not be included by default. If it is included it will be a per save file (world, as opposed to neighborhood) special “hardcore” option, off by default. It would not be part of the normal core game play, but more like a “hard” difficulty setting.

Seasons will last a week; yes its been done before but this is what makes the most sense. Shorter seasons would be too short to be meaningful, while much longer would lead to too few seasonal cycles in a character’s lifetime.

Failure to pay bills will go through three stages: (1) first a warning, (2) if another week goes by all utilities are turn off, making toilets unflushable and other appliance unusable, and after another week (3) foreclosure and eviction (the house may of course be re-bought of course if money is available, as might happen if somehow this was all about forgetting on and on or refusal despite warnings).

Epilogue on The Genera: There are a few things worth mentioning, about the genera especially considering it has so far been dominated by a single series. Yes, this final section deviates from pure design descriptions and planning, but is relevant to it. This gets philosophical in a way that is not typical of design document but I believe it to be important to consider; those only interest in core design can skip this.

First we need to define the genera, since “Life Simulator⁶” has different meanings, along with the term “Dollhouse Life Simulator.” In the original since a life simulation game (or *life simulator* for short) is any game based on the idea of artificial life, that is a game based on simulating living organisms. A *dollhouse life simulator* is a life simulator in which the organism being simulated are people living in a home and doing typically human things like building relationships and pursuing careers; a life simulator in general could also be an ecology simulator or evolution simulator, and might not have houses, cloths, jobs, skills, relationships, or even people. The one thing all life simulators must have, besides virtual organisms, are needs organisms have and a way for them to acquire those needs (and thus avoid, or at least delay, death). A dollhouse life simulator also needs a home for the people to live in (the “dollhouse”), career advancement, relationships, a way to give the virtual people personalities, a some forms of personal development (usually including skills similar to many RPGs), and a generally representation activities or daily living and other everyday actions and events – as well as simulating human behavior. They can also have content to make the game interesting that doesn’t directly follow from that, and so is not core the genera but particular to the game.

A comparison could be made to first person shooters: every first person shooter has a first person camera, guns, ammo, some form of health bar tracking wounds, and enemies to shoot. They don't all need to have BFGs or cyberdemons, despite the genera being pioneered by Id Software and popularized through *Doom*, with early FPS games largely imitating *Doom*. Similarly, when a gamer complained that *GURPS: Cyberpunk* had no rules for cyberpsychosis, Steve Jackson Games pointed out that cyberpsychosis was invented by the creators of *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0* for their game and was not a core part of the genera. In the same way, a lot of what you see in existing dollhouse life simulators can be seen as core to the genera, but some things really are part of the identity *The Sims* from Maxis/EA and should not or cannot be copied (and doesn't need to be).

This important to point out, as I have included in this design mechanics and content that fits the genera, and similarities to existing games are based features essential to the genera and being largely mechanics derived from imitation of real life. In contrast some things do not fit this. Having wants or wishes randomly pop-up and earning spendable reward point for achieving them is a really cool and fun game mechanic, but is not an obvious feature flowing from real life or the core nature of the genera – it is part of the identity of someone else's game, and so should not be directly copied. This is one example among many that could be made.

One last thing to point out, since some examples could be taken as slamming an existing game, which is not the intention – this is not meant to say such features have no place in a game, just that it is not the goal of *this* game. Some players may want a game that acts mostly as a creative outlet to create and tell stories, with the control that requires, and there is no reason they should not have that game or that someone should not make it – but that is not the goal of this design. Others may like pre-made stories they can play through and enjoy, and the same applies, that's fine but it is not the goal of this game. Some may want excruciating levels of detail, while others may want something very simple and hyper-casual, but neither those are not the goals of this game. This is why the genera as a whole need more games, with different focuses, coexisting and satisfying different tastes; the last thing it needs is for a new top game to simply take over and replace the current monopoly with a new *de facto* monopoly.

Appendix A: Side Notes Referenced in the Text

1. This is how the first game in the genera actually worked if my memory serves me correctly – other characters did not wait for or automatically approach those seeking to interact with them, and could leave the lot or become otherwise unavailable. Obviously it can be done, and really should be a lot easier to set up and code than forcing the rest of the world to revolve around the player’s currently active character. It only becomes an issue when giving that kind of control to the player, “to tell [their] own stories,” becomes a design priority.

2. The “*Practical*” Talent has gone through several forms, and started from simply wanting more than four talents; for inspiration I turned to the Holland Codes for career interest (though those are for interest, not talent) realizing existing talents lined up well with skill related to four of the codes. “*Practical*” started as “*Organizational*” and effected to skills related to both Conventional and Enterprising interests. Later, when brainstorming a skill list I realized very few fit this, only the Business skill – so I changed it and moved some skill related to the Realistic interest but not physical in nature under it as well. Adding a sixth Talent, attractiveness was considered, but this is not usually seen as a “talent” per se, and (more importantly) would have worked in a completely different way from all other – not connected to any skills, but simply having a minor effect on social interactions and moderate effect on romantic interactions.

3. Note that none of this was invented at EA, as a 10 point scale for skills was used by West End Games at least as far back as the 1991, and learning through practice imitates real life and started showing up in games from Bethesda in 1996 – I don’t know if any of this was done even earlier by others.

4. This was designed before any other games had a stage called “infant,” though this has change, though the order of the first two stages is different. This is based on the following from labels from child development: neonate (baby less than 6 weeks old), infant (baby less the 6 or so months old), baby (the ages before learning to walk as a primary means of getting around, as one who toddles around on two legs in now a toddler). Thus, infants are babies, but not all babies are infants, and new born would only last a few hours so it is just treated as part of infancy. Not a criticism of anyone, just the association that led to name life stages as I did; in the end “what’s in name,” a baby by any other name would cry as loud.

* Trivia: The origin of the word infant comes from a word for one who can’t talk (yet), just as toddler refers to one who toddles around.

5. Several other ideas were considered. Time freezing was the initial idea, but the idea of having of jumping seamlessly between played households by simply switching to characters in other households was considered as an alternative; this was abandoned because trying to play a large number of large families this way would become overwhelming unless some families or characters were neglected to the point of not being really played. There was also an idea to extend the time-freezing to characters within the household by jumping back in time when characters went home from somewhere while keep the character who went out available (in a kind of pseudo-rabbit-hole) until the time they went home, while possibly making lots they visited while out unavailable. That second idea was quickly abandoned as it would be too complex to set up, too limiting on who goes where, too prone to possible inconsistencies, and something that didn’t make sense and might not be doable in an open world where many destination might just be part of the world. Thus, all characters in a household being active at once, where ever they may be, was chosen – along with inactive played households being present in the world in an NPC-like role just like the unplayed characters, but having their skills, jobs, finance, etc., and most relationships frozen (possibly even caching their needs to be restored when next player, maybe).

6. Some people have taken to using the term “life simulator” loosely to mean what might better be described as non-violent RPGs. This common colloquial usage is not being considered here, though dollhouse life simulators can be played as essentially soap-opera RPGs if the player chooses, as their core features happen to support that as a play style. They can also be played in a strategic-managerial style, similar to city builders and “God” games.

Appendix B: Brainstormed Lists

(minor traits, skills, and careers)

These are very rough list of ideas, the result of brain storming, and not final, concrete plans. They are largely subject to huge potential changes, with the list of skills being the closest to a final set form and the list of traits being the most raw and likely to shrink.

Skills

Physical

Athletics
Dancing
Driving
Martial Arts

Intellectual

Science
Mechanical
Computers
Gaming***

Practical

Business
Cooking
Housekeeping
Naturalist*

Creative

Art**
Music
Writing

Social

Charm
Performance
Persuasion

* “Naturalist” includes such things as gardening, camping, animal handling, and other practical interaction with the natural world.

** “Art” includes drawing, painting, and sculpture (and visual arts in general); its not just a painting skill.

*** “Gaming” includes games of all kinds, not just video games.

Some of these could be in more than one category; cooking can be creative or practical, for example, but each must be based on one, and only one, Talent. Part of the classification was also made to try to keep the number of skills per talent reasonably balanced.

There might be hidden skills for thing like specific activities or instruments, that are combine with main skills, though these have not been brainstormed but are fairly concrete and obvious, should this be added in the future; any hidden skills would effect things like animations or sounds and have no mechanical effect.

Minor Traits

Musical	Clumsy	Loner	Hopeless Romantic
Artistic	Socially Awkward	Outcast	Nerdy
Cooking	Imaginative	Charming	Scholarly
Urban	Dreamer	Attractive	Materialistic
Suburbanite	Ambitious	Lazy	Thrifty
Country	Fearful	Messy	Independent
Outdoorsy	Nutty / Loony	Polite	Reckless
Spooky	Forgetful	Affectionate	Energetic
Brave	Absent Minded	Innocent	Cheerful
Cruel	Family Oriented	Curious	Assertive
Kind	Aggressive	Childlike	Gregarious
Wicked	Irrational	Rebel	Trusting
Loyal	Brash	Heroic	Honest
Faithful	Cheerful	Caring	Modest
Jealous	Leader	Down-to-Earth	Compassionate
Promiscuous	Crude	Mentor	Confident
Seductive	Peaceful	Two Faces	Organized
Friendly	Egotistical	Silly	Self Disciplined
Weird	Egocentric	Crafty	Prudent
Unstable	Greedy	Craftsman	Prudish
Morose	Good	Excitable	Talkative
Indoorsy	Humorous	Athletic	Happily Single
Homebody	Gluttonous	Neat Freak	Liar
Unpredictable	Serious	Control Freak	
Chaotic	Shy	Immature	

I have no idea what many of these would do specifically / mechanically; many may go and a few other might be thought up and added. The final list will probably be shorter, however.

Possible Careers / Job Types

Laborer	Game Developer
Life Guard	Musician
Graphic Artistic	Fire Fighter
Athlete	Childcare / Daycare
Business	Retail / Grocery
Criminal?	Fast Food
Culinary	Banker / Financial
Education	Administrator
Entertainer (actor / comedian)	Gardener / Landscaper
Espionage	Sales
Journalism	Bar Tender
Law	Manufacturing / Industrial
Law Enforcement	Maintenance (aka, "Handyman")
Medicine	Automotive
Military	Construction
Politics	Information Technology
Science	Therapist
Programmer	Engineering
Graphic / Commercial Artist	

Jobs that are work-from home such as...

Author
Fine / Decorative Artist
Farming
...and various forms of crafting based entrepreneurship

Will not be treated as "normal" jobs, but simply done at home and the resulting product(s) sold or published.

Ideas to Explore (and Develop?)

- What about a system of *Advantages and Disadvantages*, similar to Gurps?
- “Our Medieval/Victorian/etc. Life” could work as spin-off, or even an alternate setting within the game.