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Game Choice

I have chosen to play a variety of games from the Half-Life series. When presented with the possibility of playing any game of my choice this semester, I knew exactly what to do: ask my best friend from high school. Growing up, I did not play video games seriously until eighth grade. Even then, I would have described myself as a parasitic gamer. I never had a console or computer for myself until college. As a result, I spent a lot of time over at friends' houses. My best friend, Will, took me in most of the time. He has an intimate knowledge of every game I have played or, probably, ever will play. When I came to college and got a PlayStation 2, he told me what games to get. For this assignment, he suggested Half-Life, and I immediately agreed (Will Colton, personal communication, 6 Sept, 2007).

After doing some research on the Half-Life series, I am somewhat confounded as to how I have not played it before. I have always had an affinity for first-person shooters, whether it is an epic, explosive game in Halo's vein or one like Resident Evil 4, with its combination of horrifying action sequences and puzzle-based challenges. Half-Life and its sequel are unique and transcendent for their seamless blend of these different varieties of shooters into a single game (Adams; Dulin). In his review of the game, Adams notes how the game designers indicate the passage of time by the sun's position in the sky. This simple, yet elegant touch in the background simultaneously allows for both beautiful scenery and an easy transition from pitched battles in the glare of day to adrenal encounters with enemies silhouetted in the beam of a flashlight. Largely for this

juxtaposition of several different divisions within the shooter category, Half-Life was widely acclaimed as the best first-person shooter ever made, before being surpassed by its sequel.

The Half-Life series has received similar praise for its dedication to maintaining the impression of reality (Dunlin). Instead of incorporating elaborate cinematic cut scenes into the game's story, the entire narrative occurs from the first-person perspective of the protagonist (I must confess that I already purchased Half-Life and started playing, so I can confirm Dunlin's opinions). Furthermore, ammunition is not randomly scattered but instead is locked in supply rooms or retrieved from the bodies of enemies. In light of our discussions about the characteristics of playing, this attention to detail demonstrates the importance of creating an alternate reality within the game (Kim Reinhold, personal communication, 9 Sept, 2007). Part of the reason that Half-Life is enjoyable is the depth of the illusion into which the player can immerse her/himself.

Because the Half-Life games appear to provide a mix of all the different shooters that I have enjoyed, I think playing them will be an appropriate use of free time this semester. I will continue playing Half-Life and move on to Half-Life 2. After finishing Half-Life 2, I may have a hard time choosing what to do next. Because of its popularity, Half-Life has produced a variety of spin-offs. I could either continue with the single player sequels, Blue Shift or Episode One, or test the multiplayer versions, Team Fortress and Counter Strike. Regardless, I am confident that whatever I choose will end up occupying much more than seventy hours of my time.

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