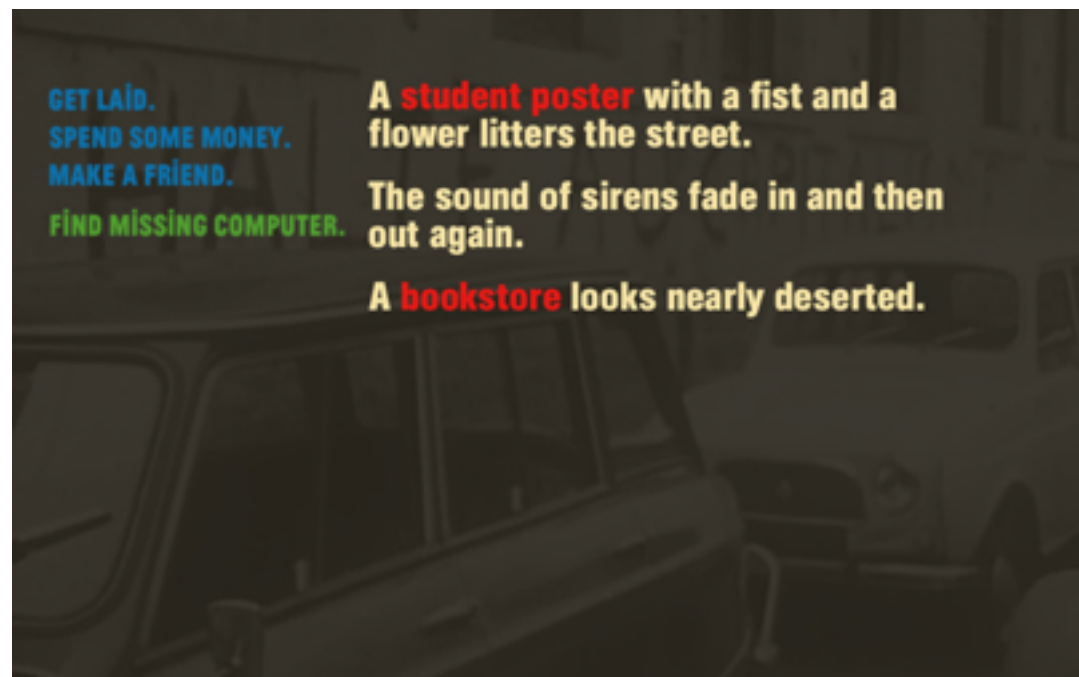


Hi!

hi.

PARSONS **THE NEW SCHOOL** FOR DESIGN

As Nick mentioned, I'm a professor at Parsons The New School for Design in NYC. I also make games...



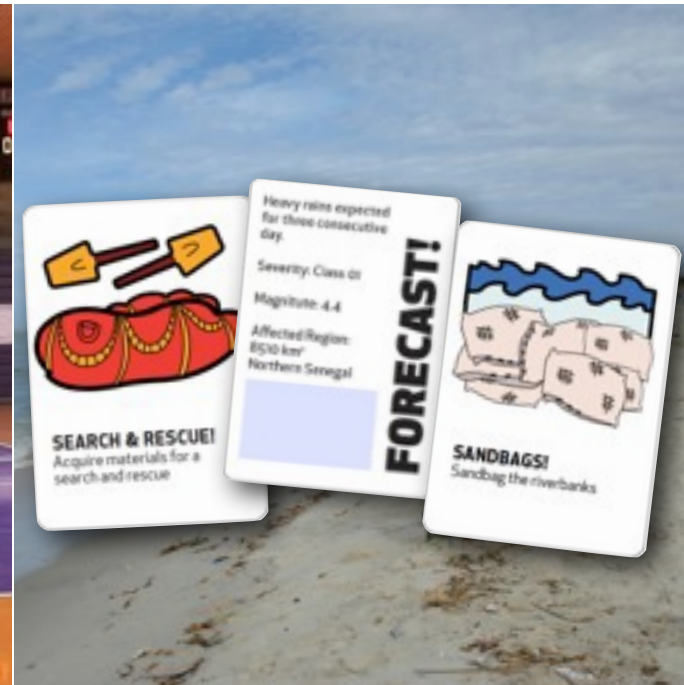
theleisurecollective

revolution

...with groups like the Leisure Collective and Local No 12., responsible for the Metagame - which you can play here at GDC! Just go to the IDGA booth to pick up your deck. Pictured here is also the culture edition of the deck. And I work by myself on little game experiments. Above is a prototype of a minimal 2-player e-sport I'm working on for the iPad codenamed Revolution, hopefully coming to you soon!



A public interest game design and research lab for interactive media
Prototyping, Evaluation, Teaching and Learning



I also direct PETLab at Parsons The New School for Design, a research lab for experimental games and learning or social change. We've created location based games about activism and ecosystems played in city streets, Sports about the federal debt played on college campuses and on the national mall with members of congress, and international projects including lo-fi physical and paper games with the red cross about disaster preparedness.



Games for Disaster Preparedness

This is an image from one of our recent games played in Doune Baba Dieye, a community in Senegal suffering from increasing floods due to climate change. (CLICK) The games we developed -- a set of physical and paper games -- are meant to generate an awareness about forecasts and probability so that one can prepare better for floods. But even though I love making these kinds of games I'm also increasingly uncomfortable about it. I have a problem with international games for change.



Many of these projects, including those with the Red Cross, involve the airdrop technique: we make a game and drop it somewhere. We sometimes go there too, and sometimes we are very careful about consulting with knowledgeable local people. But the problem is that it always seems to be us, and not them making the games.



Here's where our projects have landed so far. In addition to the Red Cross games I just mentioned is Activate, a game making curriculum funded by the AMD Foundation. As a global corporation, AMD has offices and fabrication in many countries around the world.



In 2010 we traveled to China, to teach over 400 immigrant children how to design games. Last Summer we went to Abu Dhabi to do the same, with the invitation of the Education Council there as part of the “Summer of Semiconductors”. But it wasn’t until after, when the project was over, we were all back in the US, the snazzy video about the project was cut, uploaded and finally, on the airplane as I reviewed the video and prepared for my talk here today that it hit me.

Games for Change

I've been involved with games for change for years and I've been thinking about this for a long time and let me show you something that recently created a seismic shift in how I think about our field and the path forward.



Let me show you the video so that you can see what I mean. These kids are talking about the games they play – a typical list of games like the ones we celebrate here at GDC. But I'm going to fast forward to the best part at the end. Lot's of talking heads, happy faces in front of computers... You have to listen carefully. get ready...

Games for Change

We don't need more games for change right now.

Change for Games

We need change for games.



So – let me tell you – they are smart. She’s smart. And instead of giving the usual talk about a project we did and how that makes us smart – or trying to subtly convince you of that – I wanted to bring up an issue that this students’ comment provokes for all of us here today at GDC.



**24 HOUR ON DEMAND ACCESS TO A
LIBRARY OF DEVELOPER KNOWLEDGE.**

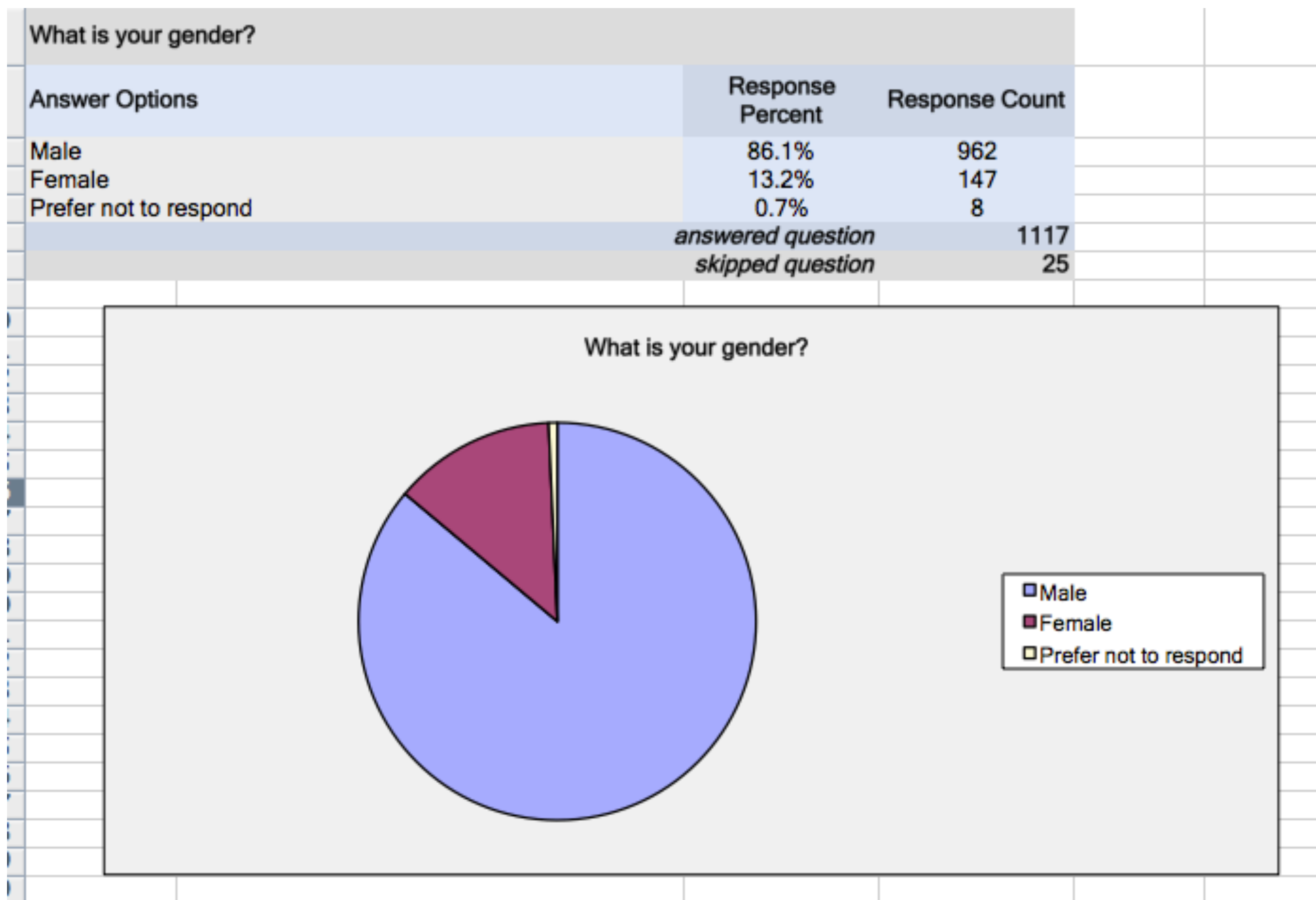


Streaming video, audio, and PowerPoint

This morning wandering the conference halls I came across a poster advertising the GDC Vault. I looked closer.



There were no female speakers depicted -- the other 50 percent. I don't see any faces like the faces in the Abu Dhabi video. This may have been an unintentional oversight, but even the most benign acts reinforce the status quo.



It's a global issue. The Global Game Jam numbers this year were amazing. Over 10,000 game makers participated. Again, from a particular portion of the population. It's not just a gender issue -- and gender itself should not be even viewed as such a binary. It's about how games as an art form are perceived culturally and how accessible the culture of making them is.



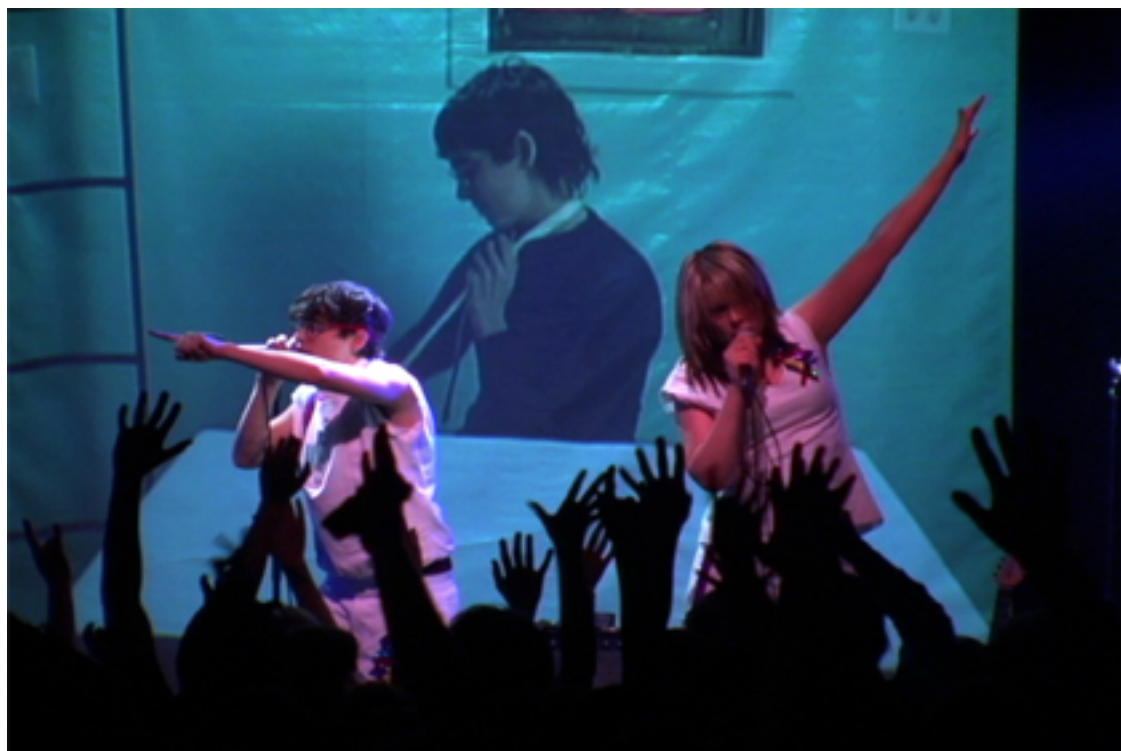
Why are digital games so sparse in the dykes making art department? Why are the experiences that games present, the stories they tell, the voices in which they speak, so limited?

I'm not alone in this. Anna Anthropy writes about this absence (and the emergence of something new) in her book *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters*. I'm pretty sure I'm speaking to the converted in this room. So how do we create change for games?



It starts with really bad games. Here are our international games for change created by the students in Abu Dhabi. Actually, they're not that much worse than some other games for change I've played. But this is how it starts. With someone's first game.

But these games won't happen in a vacuum. The Abu Dhabi Education Council is one step ahead of us here in America. They're integrating games into public education via courses in math, science and computer science. Interestingly, Abu Dhabi schools are divided by gender, so gendered rifts in these subjects don't exist like they do here. But even despite that I think just focusing on games for STEM learning limits the diversity of games. And so does just focusing on games for change. It's not in these circles alone that change for games will happen.



For change for games to happen we need to treat games as an art form with all kinds of potential beyond games for change or games for learning or games as a delivery platform for STEM. The cultural forms above, from pop music to performance, installation to dance show the wide range of possibilities in expression and identity (Ai Wei Wei, Yoko Ono, Kara Walker, Trisha Brown, Jack Smith, Le Tigre). Can we get here with games?

I think that to get here, game design needs to be taught not just in Computer classes, which is a given, but in Art classes. And guess what? It's starting. I was recently asked to work with a group of people to write national educational standards to include games in K-12 art classrooms. It's a small step, but change for games is coming. It has to. It's time. Thank you.

Thank you!

www.activategames.org