

# Gotta Catch Em' All: The Compelling Act of Creature Collection in Pokémon, Ni No Kuni, Shin Megami Tensei, and World of Warcraft

Sonja C Sapach  
University of Alberta  
[sapach@ualberta.ca](mailto:sapach@ualberta.ca)

## Abstract

Since the release of the first *Pokémon* video game(s) in 1996, the need to "catch 'em all" has captivated players around the world. While the collection of objects, coins, experience, and points has played a significant role in many main stream video games over the years, *Pokémon* took the concept to a whole new level by enticing players to gather a massive collection of "pocket monsters", each with their own unique abilities and aesthetics. This paper attempts to answer what makes this form of collection so compelling through an investigation of four different games where the collection of trainable creatures, used to do battle on behalf of the player's main character, plays a central role: *Pokémon X/Y* (2013), *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* (2010), *Shin Megami Tensei IV* (2013), and *World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria* (2012). Four common themes surrounding creature collection are identified: Immortality, exploration, organization, and specialized knowledge. These themes are uncovered through a close reading of the four above mentioned games through the theoretical lenses of Azuma's (2009) "Database Animals", Greenberg et al's (1986) Terror Management Theory, and McIntosh & Schmeichel's (2004) social psychological perspective on collectors and collecting. The paper concludes with a discussion of McIntosh & Schmeichel's (2004) eight steps of the collection process, and argues that the medium of the video game allows for the elimination of half of those steps, partially explaining the popularity of creature collection video games in our postmodern world.

## Author Keywords

*Pokémon*; *Ni No Kuni*; *Shin Megami Tensei*; *World of Warcraft*; terror management theory, creature collection, database animal

## Introduction

Since the release of the first *Pokémon* video game(s) in 1996, the need to "catch 'em all" has captivated players to an extreme never before seen in a video game series. As noted in the introduction to the 2004 book *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*:

Pokémon is the most successful computer game ever made, the top globally selling trading-card game of all time, one of the most successful children's

television programs ever broadcast, the top grossing movie ever released in Japan, and among the top five earners in the history of films worldwide. At Pokémon's height of popularity, Nintendo executives were optimistic that they had a product, like Barbie and Legos, that would sell forever, and that, like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, would become enduring icons worldwide.

Tobin, Loc. 108 (2004)

While the collection of objects, coins, experience (XP) and points has played a significant role in many main stream video games over the years, *Pokémon* took the concept to a whole new level by enticing players to gather a massive collection of "pocket monsters", each with their own unique abilities and aesthetics, that could be trained, evolved, and used to do battle against other "pocket monsters". As a series that is still going strong, with the most recent game<sup>1</sup>, *Pokémon X/Y*, being released in North America in 2013, it is hard not to wonder what makes the form of collection that takes place in games such as *Pokémon* so compelling? This paper seeks to answer this question through an investigation of four different games where the collection of trainable pocket monsters, creatures, demons and pets, who are used to battle on behalf of the player's main character, plays a central role: *Pokémon X/Y* (Game Freak, 2013), *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* (Level 5 and Studio Ghibli, 2010), *Shin Megami Tensei IV* (Atlas, 2013), and *World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria (WoW)* (Blizzard, 2012). In the cases of *Pokémon* and *Shin Megami Tensei*, creature collection is not unique to a single game, but to each series as a whole. While I will be focusing on these specific games for the sake of accurate game descriptions, I will refer to them by their more general series names (*Pokémon* and *Shin Megami Tensei*) for the remainder of the paper, with the intention of emphasizing that I am talking about the form of creature collection found throughout these series more generally.

Before moving forward, I think that it is important to acknowledge and then separate this paper from a socioeconomic focus on blind capitalist consumption. The question of whether Pokémon players are “dupes or savants, passive consumers or active constructors of the Pokémon world” (Tobin, 2004: Loc 203) is well explored in *Pikachu's Global Adventure* and is not an argument that I wish to rehash here. This paper is also not focused on a discussion of the negative aspects (or perceived dangers), of online creature collection games like *Pokémon Go*, an interesting analysis of which is presented by Polansky (2016)<sup>2</sup>. I accept that the arguments that I make below stand in contrast to more pessimistic views on collection games, for example the argument that item collecting is simply a form of compulsive hoarding as outlined by Graft (2009)<sup>3</sup>. Instead, I want to focus on collecting as a meaningful and pleasurable activity that is open to individual interpretation. McIntosh & Schmeichel (2004) do an excellent job of analyzing various theories surrounding collecting and conclude that “[w]hile the motivations behind collecting are clearly complex and multifaceted, it is notable that many of the motives offered as central to collecting revolve around the self, and especially the development of a more positive sense of self” (p. 87). Due to the central role that the collecting process, described by McIntosh & Schmeichel (2004), plays in answering the question of what makes creature collection so compelling, it is their description of the motivations behind collecting that I encourage the reader to keep in mind.

In order to answer the question posed above, I will first define the specific form of collecting that

I aim to explore. Following this, I will provide a description of each separate game through a brief close-reading of their specific creature collection mechanics and any relevant gameplay or narrative information. Once I have outlined what makes each game unique, I will narrow my focus to the characteristics that they all have in common in order to describe four central themes: Exploration, organization, specialized knowledge, and immortality. I will explore the significance of these themes with a focus on the following theories: Azuma's (2009) postmodern concept of the "Database Animal" which describes the animalistic consumption of pleasurable symbols selected from a large database of free-floating elements, and Greenberg et al's (1986) "Terror Management Theory" that posits that humans manage the terror of the knowledge of their own mortality by maintaining beliefs and undertaking activities that develop and maintain a sense of their own significance in a meaningful world. The paper will conclude with a brief analysis of McIntosh & Schmeichel's (2004) 8 distinct steps of the collecting process and argue that a reduction in the number of these steps, due to the medium of the video game, explains (at least partially) the popularity of creature collection as I describe it below.

### **Creature Collection Characteristics**

There are a specific set of characteristics, which these four games have in common, that I am interested in exploring here. As stated above, I am specifically interested in the appeal of creature collection. I will use the term creature to refer in general to the pets, familiars, demons, and monsters that are actively gathered by the player in any of these games.

The first characteristic of creature collection that these games have in common is that there are a large number of unique creatures available to be collected. As of June 2013, *Pokémon* had 718 collectable pocket monsters; *Shin Megami Tensei*, had 488 collectable demons; *Ni No Kuni* had 444 collectable familiars, and *WoW* had 444 battle pets<sup>4</sup>. It is notable here that while each of the creatures included in this count are unique, with their own names and characteristics, many of the creatures in *Ni No Kuni*, and *Pokémon*, are evolutions of previously counted creatures. In *Ni No Kuni*, for example, there are 87 'first tier' creatures, with the remaining 357 familiars falling under the remaining three evolutionary tiers. A player will, for example, start out with a tier one familiar called a "Mite". Once the Mite has won enough battles, it can evolve into a "Mighty Mite" and finally into either a "Dynamite" or a "Mermite", depending on the player's preference. Despite this, they are counted as unique collectables and will be considered as such for the remainder of this paper.

A second characteristic that I believe is important to consider is that each of the creatures can be used in battle against other creatures, or other players in control of their own collection of creatures. In fact, the most common method of creature collection in these games occurs through the successful seduction or capture of an opponent that has been sufficiently weakened during battle. In other words, the creatures that the player collects actually have a practical purpose. I will explore the individual characteristics of creature battles in each separate game in the explanations below.

A third characteristic, directly associated with creature battles, involves the detailed classification

and categorization of the various types of creatures. Typically based on species or race, the classification of creatures in all four games determines the strengths and weaknesses of the creatures in relation to one another. For example, in *Pokémon*, if an "electric" type creature attacks a "water" type creature, it will inflict double the amount of damage because "water" types are weak to "electric" types. In *Ni No Kuni*, a creature that falls under the celestial sign of the sun will do 20% more damage to a creature with the celestial sign of the moon, but 20% less damage to one with the celestial sign of the star<sup>5</sup>. The fact that the creatures that are being collected are able to be strategically utilized interchangeably in battle adds to the appeal of the type of collection that occurs in these games. Categorization and classification provide meaning and allow for the player to develop and utilize specialized knowledge about the creatures they are collecting. As noted in *The Meaning of Video Games: Gaming and Textual Strategies*:

[M]ost collectors value the process as much as the objects, the pursuit, research, bidding – the social interaction – as much as the acquisition. After acquisition, competitive sharing and collaborative hoarding of particular knowledge, backstories, provenance, lore, become in effect bridges to new levels of the game.

Jones, Loc. 1147 (2008)

The use of categorization and classification allows for the player's active participation in the collection process beyond simply acquiring the objects.

One final characteristic that I want to focus on is the way that attachment is fostered through certain characteristics of the collected creatures. While the specific motivations for the development of individual players' attachment to the creatures may differ, there are factors in each of the games that are designed to facilitate some level of connection that allows the creature to be seen as more than a tool, item, or piece of gear (similar to a sword or piece of armour for example). The fundamental argument here is that the creatures act as "otaku-bait" (Jones, 2008, Loc. 1572) in that they are designed with specific characteristics, or "moe-elements" (Azuma 2009) that appeal to fan culture. Big eyes, colourful pointy hair, and other kawaii (cuteness) characteristics contribute to the feeling of moe, an attachment (often described as somewhat sexual) to characters in anime, comics and games that disregards the narrative in which the character is found, and only applies to the character itself. The appeal of the collected creatures, therefore, is not related to specific personality traits, or to their place in the narrative, but instead on their ability to induce feelings of moe. I will go into greater detail within each game description below.

To summarize, the specific form of collection that I am considering here requires a set of four characteristics: 1) There exists a large number of creatures that a player is able to collect; 2) The creatures are used to battle enemies either alongside, or as direct representatives of, the player; 3) The creatures have a set of unique and detailed, type-specific, skills and affiliations that a player can use to strategically battle opponents; 4) The creatures are designed in such a way that allows a player to form a moe-type attachment with them, thus viewing them as more than mere weapons or tools. These characteristics distinguish the type of creature collection that this paper is investigating from the more generic bestiary's found in typical RPG's. Consider as a counter-example, the Aeon's in *Final Fantasy X* which are collected (only 3 of the available 8 are optional

however, which negates the existence of the first characteristic) and summoned by the player, but are not trainable and not designed to allow the player to form strong attachments to them. For a game to fit into my analysis, it must contain all four of the characteristics described above. My analysis does not take into consideration issues of rarity (how challenging or costly a certain creature or type of creature is to obtain) as described, for example, by Ham (2010), as my argument does not involve analyzing the perceived fairness of the collection process. I will acknowledge, however, that rarity likely influences the organizational techniques of the players' collections and may be an interesting topic for future analysis.

### Pokémon X/Y

*Pokémon X/Y* was developed by Game Freak, published by Nintendo and was released worldwide, for the Nintendo 3DS on October 12, 2013. *Pokémon X* and *Pokémon Y* are sold as two distinct games, as has been the tradition in the series since the first set of games, subtitled *Blue* and *Red* in North America, was released in 1998. Despite this fact, I will be talking about *X* and *Y* as a single game primarily due to the fact that they are fundamentally the same game. The only difference between the two involves the inclusion of exclusive creatures. *X* is named for the legendary, fairy-type creature called Xerneas, and *Y* for the legendary, dark, flying-type creature called Yveltal (see *figure 1*). There are also different special powers and forms available for high level creatures depending on which version of the game the player has.

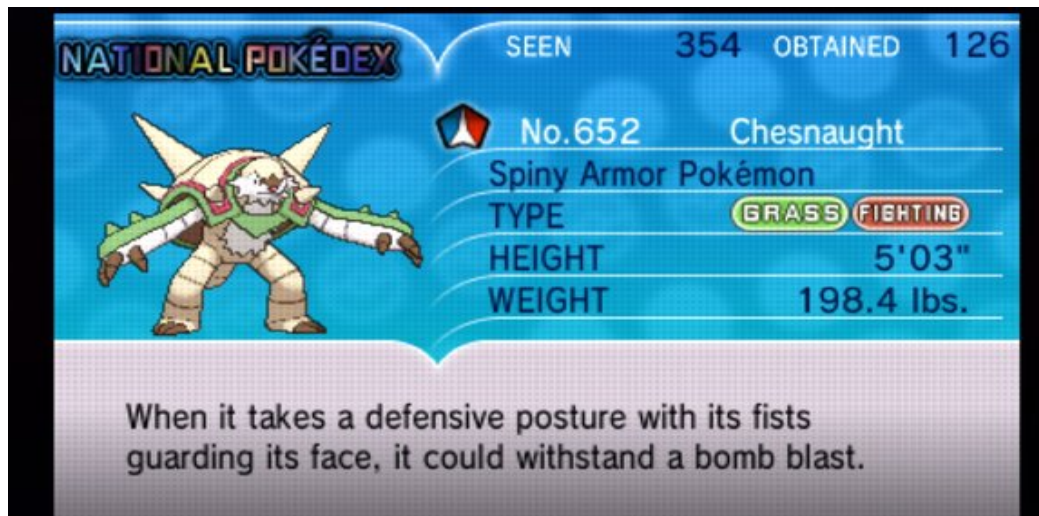


**Figure 1:** *Xerneas and Yveltal. This figure illustrates the two, primary exclusive creatures that differentiate Pokémon X and Y. Xerneas is on the left, Yveltal is on the right.*

Before deciding which game to purchase, players - especially dedicated players - have to analyze a variety of factors including which exclusive creatures they like the most, and who among their friends will be buying which version of the game. This second consideration is based on the trading system that can occur between two players: If one player has *X* and one player has *Y*, then they have the ability to trade exclusive creatures with one another. The fact that Game Freak has been able to successfully market and sell multiple versions of the same game, on multiple occasions throughout the series' 15-year history, based solely on exclusive collectable creatures, attests to the importance of unique creature collection in this series.

The game takes place in the Kalos region of the Pokémon world. It follows a linear storyline about a young teenager from the small town of Vaniville who travels with friends, across the Kalos region, on a quest to become a Pokémon master<sup>6</sup>. In order to become a master, the player must collect and train a variety of creatures and use them to battle gym masters in order to obtain 8 different gym badges. The gyms are spread out around Kalos and the battles with the masters become increasingly difficult, thus requiring more specialized and skilled creatures as the story advances. In order to win the game, the player must challenge and battle the Elite Four of the Pokémon league before the final battle against the Champion. Once the player has defeated the Champion, they have officially won the game. However, the world remains open and the player is able to undertake a variety of additional battles and side quests in addition to working on completing their collection of creatures.

The player begins the game by choosing one starter creature from a selection offered by the NPC that recruits the group of friends to complete the Pokédex, an electronic book of sorts that compiles information about all of the various creatures that the player encounters during their travels. As a player battles and captures each creature, the Pokédex fills up with specific details about each one (see *figure 2*).



**Figure 2:** Pokédex Entry. This figure shows an example of a Pokédex entry for the creature "Chesnaught"

The player then begins to explore the world, battling wild creatures as well as creatures controlled by NPCs. During a battle, the player gives commands to their creature, strategically using regular attacks and special moves in an attempt to defeat their opponent. Players are also able to change the creature that they are using mid-battle, chosen from a queue of up to six previously selected creatures that they have collected and trained. Battles can also involve attempts to capture the opposing creature (if it is wild) to add to the player's collection.

When doing battle, the creatures each have an individual health bar that drops as they are injured. Once the health bar reaches zero, the creature falls unconscious and the player is able to replace it with one of the other five remaining creatures in the queue. If all six creatures lose consciousness, the player loses the battle and must revive their creatures either through the use of potions or through a healer in town. The fact that the creatures, once collected, are somewhat permanent (unless traded to another player) plays an important role in allowing the player to form attachments to the creatures, as opposed to viewing them as disposable objects to be used until broken. To emphasize the importance of attachment, Tobin notes:

...Ash and his friends (and by extension the players of the game) have to nurture and “train” the Pokémon they capture in order to succeed. In this sense, they occupy decidedly “adult”, even “maternal” roles: they have autonomy and authority, as well as burden of responsibility for those who have less power than themselves.

Tobin, Loc 428 (2004)

This attachment is also facilitated in a variety of other ways, including the cute and colourful aesthetics and associated feelings of moe (described above), that make the critters unique. The creatures in *Pokémon* are practically the quintessential, mainstream example of characters with moe-elements. A quick Google Images search of Pokémon results in hundreds of images of colourful, cute, smiling, big-eyed creatures that make it easy to see why it is hard to resist the desire to ‘catch-em-all’.

A discussion of any *Pokémon* game would not be complete without referring to what media theorist Henry Jenkins (among others) refers to as transmedia storytelling. He explains that:

There is no one text where one can go to get the information about these various species; rather, the child assembles what they know about the Pokémon from various media with the result that each child knows something his or her friends do not and thus has a chance to share this expertise with others.

Jenkins, p. 132 (2006)

The series as a whole is so successful largely due to the multiple forms of media that are used to weave together the stories of the various creatures. In addition to the games themselves, the creatures and themes are found in multiple TV series, movies, manga, card games, and fan fiction. Listening to the 16 different *Pokémon* theme songs highlights the key themes that encourage a connection to the creatures and to the process of collection and battle found in the games. Words such as friendship, destiny, courage, believe, victory, challenges, and understanding are common throughout the songs. The theme song from the first TV series (in English) gives the following example: "Pokémon (gotta catch 'em all). It's you and me, I know it's my destiny. Pokémon. Ohh, you're my best friend, in a world we must defend<sup>7</sup>" (Tanaka & Paige, 1998). I will discuss these themes in greater detail in the conclusion of this paper.

The important thing to highlight at this point is that *Pokémon*, with its method of creature collection, and themes that have been transmitted through multiple forms of media, is the most popular and pervasive of the games that I am discussing here, which is the reason for the rather lengthy description. Although I could focus this entire paper on this series alone, in order to understand the popularity of creature collection, it is important to move away from the popular, main-stream series toward a discussion of some less well known, but still important, games. I am doing this primarily to provide evidence that my argument applies to creature collection games (that satisfy the above four criteria) in general, as opposed to just Pokémon games. An exploration of multiple creature collection game mechanics will provide more evidence to support the arguments that I make in the conclusion of this paper.

### **Ni No Kuni: The Wrath of the White Witch**

*Ni No Kuni*, developed by Level 5 and Studio Ghibli, and published by Bandai Namco<sup>8</sup> was released for the PlayStation 3 in Japan in 2010 and in North America in 2013. It is a Japanese Role Playing Game (JRPG) that takes place in the fictional world of Motorville, where the hero of the story - a young boy named Oliver - suffers the tragedy of losing his mother, an event for which he blames himself. During his mourning, Oliver's beloved doll, one that his mother gave to him, comes to life and tells him about an alternative dimension where the lives and fates of the citizens of a fantasy land are directly linked to the people of Motorville. Oliver learns that he may be able to save his mother if he travels to the alternate dimension and is able to save her "soulmate". The story, then, is centred around the journey of a young boy on a quest to change the destiny of his mother and himself.

It is worth pausing here to note the relevance of Studio Ghibli's role in the development of this game as it is a powerful example of convergence between the anime and video game industries. Fleury notes that:

...the characters and world, rather than the story, establish the transmedia connections across platforms. As part of this media mix strategy, Studio Ghibli used *Ni no Kuni* to design new characters that could be subsequently merchandised and carried to other media. In a promotional video, the studio's Yoshiyuki Momose enthuses that, with the game, "[W]e made characters that we normally wouldn't create." To be more specific, *Ni no Kuni* not only stars human characters, but also the anthropomorphic doll Drippy and a diverse array of Pokémon-like creatures called familiars that populate the Another World's landscape.

Fleury, n.p (2015)

The game is Pokémon-like not only in relation to the type of creature collection that it entails, but also in relation to the story of a young person undergoing an adventure that will eventually result in an evolution into adulthood. I will return to this theme later in the paper. The specific details of Oliver's quest are quite complicated and while very meaningful, are not explicitly relevant for our purposes. For a detailed analysis of Oliver's hometown of Motorville and the fantasy narrative of *Ni No Kuni* I suggest reading Hancock's (2014) essay "Motorville & the Portal-Quest: Rhetorics



of Fantasy in Ni No Kuni<sup>9</sup>.” What is important here is that Oliver is aided in his quest by a variety of creatures called familiars. As noted above, Oliver starts out with one creature, called a "Mite" (see *figure 3*), with whom he completes the first portion of his quest.



**Figure 3:** Mite. This figure shows an image of the starting familiar from Ni No Kuni, called a Mite.

During battle, Oliver has a set of skills that he is able to directly use to defeat enemies. Ensuring that Oliver's life bar does not drop to zero is the ultimate goal of each battle, for if he dies, the game is over and must be restarted from the last checkpoint. As each battle begins, the player is offered the choice of controlling Oliver directly, or substituting in one of his trained creatures. The creatures' battle time is based on a timer system, meaning that they can only substitute for Oliver until their timer runs out. Once the time is up, the creature must be substituted for another or return control to Oliver for a short time while the timer resets. A key factor here is that the creatures do not have a life bar of their own, so if they are injured, Oliver's life bar drops. This creates an intertwined relationship between Oliver and the creatures, unlike in *Pokémon* where the creatures each have their own life bar, and there is no explicit player-character that must fight for themselves. The direct impact that the creatures' performance in battle has on Oliver's life bar creates a powerful connection between the two, highlighting the need for the player to invest a significant amount of time in training and developing knowledge about the creatures. The creatures are not incidental or simply a 'cute pet' but instead have a direct link to Oliver's mortality.

The method for obtaining new creatures is somewhat similar to *Pokémon*, in that the enemies that the player encounters (with the exception of those found in boss fights) are drawn from the list of 444 available familiars. Approximately a quarter of the way through the game, Oliver meets a young girl who joins his party (a party that eventually consists of 3 humans each in control of 3 familiars) and is able to sing in order to seduce weakened enemies to join their side. Like *Pokémon*, the creature must be sufficiently weak before the player is able to seduce them. Once seduced, the creature joins the player's collection and the player is able to re-name, train, evolve, and use the creature in battle. Although the explicit goal of the game stands apart from the collection of the creatures, there is a detailed system of categorization in place that allows the player to view their collection and the detailed description of each creature, making collection a significant part of the game.

There is a strategic element to the management of the creatures as Oliver, and his other two party

members, can each only have three creatures with them at any one time. In order to improve the stats and skills of each creature, they must participate in battles in order to gain XP. Additionally, the player is able to feed the creatures a variety of treats (cakes, chocolate, sundaes, etc.) that add to a specific stat such as attack or defence. On top of that, each creature is able to be equipped with specific types of weapons and armour that can boost their effectiveness in battle. These factors make the management of the collected creatures a complicated and time consuming process.

Attachment to these creatures is fostered through a variety of factors. They are aesthetically similar to the creatures found in *Pokémon* in that they are typically "cute" and are seemingly designed to create a moe-type reaction. If, for example, you feed a creature its favourite food, it becomes excited, making a cute noise while jumping around excitedly as little hearts float above its head. Also, as effective use of the creatures requires a great deal of time and strategic resource management, the player is consistently exposed to their favourite creatures, caring for them and fostering their growth. On top of that, since the creature shares a health bar with Oliver, the fate of the creature is directly linked to the fate of the player. Unlike in *Pokémon*, where the player is never actually hurt and where the creatures only fall unconscious, in *Ni No Kuni*, each battle is a life and death situation. The number of available creatures, their use and direct link to the mortality of the protagonist, the knowledge required to train and best utilize the various creatures, as well as their moe-inducing characteristics, lead to the conclusion that the type of creature collection found in *Ni No Kuni* satisfies the four requirements that I outlined at the beginning of this paper. The fact that *Ni No Kuni* satisfies the above requirements, justifies its inclusion in an analysis of the appeal of creature collection as I have outlined it.

### **Shin Megami Tensei IV**

*Shin Megami Tensei* is a JRPG developed by Atlus, and released on the Nintendo 3DS in Japan on May 23, 2013 and in North America on July 16, 2013. It takes place in the medieval, class divided country of East Mikado and has strong themes centred around religion, class imbalance, and slavery. The protagonist, Flynn, travels from a small farming community to the city to participate in a ceremony where he becomes a samurai. His ultimate goal as a samurai is to protect the world from a flood of demons that threaten to destroy it. The story evolves into a complex battle between good and evil, with the angels of heaven involved in a battle with Lucifer and the demons of hell. Ultimately, it is a story where the hero, a young man with no real training, is recruited to save the world. The only hope that he has to survive lies in the power of friendship and the collection and use of creatures to fight alongside him.

The battles in this game work on a party-based system where Flynn can have up to three party members to fight alongside him. In order to build the party, Flynn must recruit and train demons that he encounters and battles throughout his journey. The method of creature collection that occurs here is different from the previous two games in that it involves the seduction of a demon through dialogue and negotiations, as opposed to capturing a weakened opponent or singing to them when they are near death. The player faces the demons through random encounters that occur when exploring the rather open-ended environment. When the encounter begins, the player has the option to attempt to seduce the demon which begins a dialogue. The demon may ask questions or

ask for money, items, or skill points and it is up to the player to make the correct choices based both on how the demon looks, and on chance. If successful, the demon joins Flynn and becomes part of the creature collection.

Unlike the other games discussed thus far, each member of the party is equally important in this game. They each have their own health bar, and the death of one, even Flynn, does not mean the death of all. So, for example, if Flynn were to die during a battle, it is still possible to defeat the opponent using the other members of the party. Even the death of the entire party does not automatically end the game as the group is transported to the River Styx where they are able to attempt to negotiate with Charon the boatman for the right to return to the world of the living. The point here is that the creatures in this game, while a part of the player's collection, are quite independent and able to function apart from the protagonist. This, in some ways, can foster stronger relationships between the player and the creatures, as their independence and ability to save the hero solidify their place as teammates as opposed to tools.

Creature training and evolution is centred around the idea of fusion where different, captured demons are fused together to create new ones. Reminiscent of evolution in *Pokémon* and *Ni No Kuni*, fusion results in the creation of a new creature that is considered to be a separate part of the collection. In order to obtain all 488 collectable creatures, the player must sacrifice previously captured creatures in order to create new ones. This adds to the strategic elements of creature management due to the negotiation method of collection. If, for example, a player wanted to fuse two demons together in an attempt to complete their collection, they would have to consider the difficulty that was involved with obtaining the two sacrificial creatures. If one of them required an extremely rare item to be traded for surrender, then the player needs to decide if they are willing to destroy that creature, along with any possible chance of recruiting a new one, in exchange for the new creature. In *Pokémon* and *Ni No Kuni*, if a player wants to capture another lower tier version of a creature that they have chosen to evolve, they only need to be willing to "grind" (spend the time fighting battle after battle in search of the randomly appearing creature). But in *Shin Megami Tensei*, it is possible that the player may be unable to reacquire the rare item that was needed to seduce the demon in the first place. Also, there are some demons that require Flynn to be a certain moral alignment before they will consider joining him. If he captured a creature while he was neutral, and has moved toward being chaotic, he will be unable to re-recruit the creature that required the alternate alignment. Creature collection, then, is far more reliant on the choices and sacrifices that the player is willing to make than in the other games.

An additional step away from the above mentioned games involves the altered aesthetic nature of the creatures. They visually range from holy and powerful, to beautiful and sexualized, to grotesque and beast-like (see *figure 4*).



**Figure 4:** *Three Demons.* This figure shows three examples of the demons that can be collected in *Shin Megami Tensei IV*. Archangel on the left, Leanan Sidhe in the centre, and Baphomet on the right.

Although most of the demons are not considered to be "cute", they still have many of the elements that are associated with triggering feelings of moe. What makes them stand apart even more however, is the fact that the majority of them are linked to mythological creatures from around the world. Unlike the creatures in the other two games, these creatures have strong connections to already existing narratives and cultural traditions. This use of familiar names and characters has the potential to increase the level of attachment to certain creatures based on the real-life experiences of the player.

Despite the differences between *Shin Megami Tensei*, and the previous two games, the inclusion of *Shin Megami Tensei* in this analysis is appropriate due to the number of creatures available for collection, the fact that the creatures fight alongside the protagonist, their unique skills that are strategically used to battle opponents, and their design, which includes both moe inducing characteristics and cultural familiarity, that encourages player attachment.

### **World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria**

*World of Warcraft (WoW)* is easily considered to be an outlier in relation to the other games that are being discussed here, as it is the only one that is not developed or played in Japan. It is a PC based Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game (MMORPG) that was released by Blizzard Entertainment in North America and Australia on November 23, 2004. Most relevant to our discussion is the expansion, *Mists of Pandaria*, which was released (also by Blizzard Entertainment) for PC and Mac OS on September 25, 2012. It is in this expansion that the *WoW* universe was introduced to a pet battle system that has been both favourably, and unfavourably, likened to *Pokémon*<sup>10</sup>.

*WoW*'s story, setting, and characters are far too complex to be explained in any sufficient detail here. There are, however, a few key things to understand about the game. As suggested by the genre, it is a multiplayer game where a massive number of players interact with each other in the virtual world of Azeroth. There is a linear progression through the main story based on which race and faction the individual player's chosen character belongs to, however, players are free to explore and focus their attention on side quests, player versus player battles, skill development, wealth acquisition, and earning achievements. It is this last type of gameplay that we will focus on here.

In the almost eight years before the *Mists of Pandaria* expansion, players were able to purchase or earn vanity pets. Rare versions of these pets were gained through the completion of difficult side quests, or given as rewards for gaining certain achievements. For example, players could (and still can) earn a "Singing Sunflower" by completing a *Plants vs. Zombies* (PopCap Games, 2009) style mini-game in *WoW*. The only purpose of the flower is to act as an aesthetic companion to the player; it walks beside the player's avatar and occasionally sings a very short nonsensical tune. While this is indeed a form of collecting, it does not satisfy the four characteristics of creature collection that I am interested in here. Specifically, vanity pets did not (and still do not) fight alongside of or as a direct representation of the player, nor do they have skills or abilities that can be trained and strategically utilized in any way. The "Singing Sunflower" and other vanity pets do not satisfy the requirements for creature collection as I have defined it above, which is why my analysis of *WoW* only begins with *Pandaria*.

What changed with *Pandaria* was the introduction of pet battles that follow almost the exact same formula as *Pokémon*. Players can now collect up to 444 creatures that can be used to battle the creatures of other players, or of in-game NPCs. Creatures earn XP through winning battles, and players are able to customize certain skills and actions that can improve the creatures' stats. One of the primary methods of collection occurs through battles with wandering, wild creatures. Once the opposing creature's health has dropped below a certain point, the player can attempt to capture it by throwing a cage at it, an action not very different from throwing a *Poké-ball* in an attempt to capture a creature in *Pokémon*. The player can have up to three creatures in a queue for each battle, and once all three have fallen unconscious, the player loses the battle and must heal the creatures with potions or through a healer in town<sup>11</sup>. The creatures are strategically used in battle based on their racial and elemental affiliations which affect the strength of their attacks against opponents. A final important similarity involves the aesthetics and inclusion of moe-inspiring attributes that increase the "cuteness" of many of the creatures (see *figure 5*).



**Figure 5:** *World of Warcraft Battle Pets.* This figure shows two different types of battle pets, a humanoid pictured on the left, and a dragonkin on the right.

It is not surprising that in a time when *WoW* subscriptions were falling drastically<sup>12</sup>, that elements from one of the most successful Japanese game franchises were borrowed and integrated into the game. A quote found on the *WoW* online forums provides a good example of what I mean: "Pet battles are fun. I am aiming to beat all the trainers and capture over 400 pets...this is the ONLY thing keeping be subscribed right now. A rip-off of pokemon [sic]<sup>13</sup>." Another player noted that "...pet battles I can do on my own, at my own pace, no pressure...no annoyance...and it's quite addicting." From personal experience, having conducted my MA thesis research<sup>14</sup> in-game when *Pandaria* was first released, I can attest to the powerful impact that the introduction of pet battles has had on some players. When I was conducting interviews for my research, there was one individual who insisted on telling me all about their creature collection, which was in no way related to the questions that I was asking. Even in my own personal gameplay, I found myself drawn to the pet battles and the need to collect as many of the pets as I could. On the other hand, glancing over the forum entries just prior to the release of *Pandaria*, there were lots of debates and discussions about the pros and cons of introducing pet battles. Some people seemed really offended that Blizzard was trying to do a "Pokémon ripoff". Many people made the point that Blizzard took only the monotonous, boring aspects of *Pokémon* without including the beneficial or fun stuff. This perspective points to the most significant difference between *WoW*, and the other three games I have talked about: motivation.

Pet battles in *WoW* have nothing to do with satisfying any part of the main story. Players can completely avoid the creature collection aspect of the game and still "win". In the other three games, creature collection, training, and battles are at the heart of each of the stories. The player cannot avoid the activity, and cannot succeed without doing it. In *WoW*, the only motivation for collecting and battling pets, apart from enjoyment of the activity in itself, is to obtain achievements. It is an activity that is designed to add content and variety to a game with a massive achievement system. According to *Wowhead*<sup>15</sup>, a website with a large database of information related to *WoW*,

there are, as of the original writing of this paper, 3791 achievements that a player can earn in the game, 35 of which are directly related to pet battles, with many of them focusing on collecting all of the creatures from certain geographical locations around Azeroth<sup>16</sup>. So, the use of pet battles and creature collection in *WoW* is not only removed from the central story, but is also only a sub-collection within a much larger collection of achievements. Having made this point however, I still believe that the form of creature collection that is found in *Pandaria*, in addition to satisfying my creature collection criteria, does share some important similarities to the creature collection found in the other three games. It is to these similarities that I now turn.

### Similarities Between Games

There are four common themes surrounding the type of creature collection that is found in the four games discussed above. The first theme is that of exploration. In all of the games, the only way to complete the collection is to fully explore the virtual world. Whether this involves a fairly linear, story based exploration as in *Pokémon* and *Ni No Kuni*, or a more open-ended exploration as in *Shin Megami Tensei* or *WoW*, the player is encouraged to wander around and explore a variety of environments. The exact location of each creature is impossible to pin-point as they are either randomly generated, or wandering around freely. The player must hunt for the creatures through the exploration of new environments. According to an interview with the creator of *Pokémon*, Satoshi Tajiri (1999), the idea for the game came from his childhood love of insect collecting. When asked about his childhood he stated:

The place where I grew up was still rural back then. There were rice paddies, rivers, forests. It was full of nature. Then development started taking place, and as it grew, all of the insects were driven away...the change was so dramatic. A fishing pond would become an arcade centre...Every time I found a new insect, it was mysterious to me. And the more I searched for insects, the more I found<sup>17</sup>.

Tajiri (1999)

Exploration, it would seem based on this excerpt, was an important part of Tajiri's childhood, and something that he was inspired to pass on to others through *Pokémon*.

The second theme involves the organization of the various creatures. In all four games, there is a screen or set of screens dedicated to organizing and classifying the different creatures. In *Pokémon*, this comes in the form of the *Pokédex* discussed above. In *Ni No Kuni*, the player can access the Creature Cage in order to feed and organize the creatures that are currently in their possession. They can also access the Wizard's Companion, a book that holds all of the important information about various things within the game. Finally, there is a creature storage location that can be accessed from any save point, where the player can store the creatures that they are not currently using. In this last case, the creatures can be organized in a variety of ways (alphabetically by name, by type, etc.) with the click of a button. In *Shin Megami Tensei*, there is an in-game app called the Cathedral of Shadows where players can view all of their demons, perform demon fusions, and search their current demons based on specific categorical keywords. In *WoW*, the player can access a pet screen where they can view, access, and organize their pets according to name, level, or type. This ability to view and organize creatures allows for control over collections of creatures that can

reach up to 718 in number.

This theme of organization is indirectly pointed to through the aesthetic design of the creatures as well. Azuma (2009), when talking about Japanese otaku culture, described a postmodern world that has moved away from the need for a grand narrative, toward a desire for a grand non-narrative. He called the individuals who participate in the consumption of moe-inducing characters and settings (which lack a solid narrative of their own) Database Animals; in other words, the players consume the collectable creatures in an animalistic way, without a direct attachment to the individual backstories of the creatures. While the main character(s) in each of the four games are involved in a narrative that describes their exact place in their world, the same cannot be said for the collectable creatures. While it is true that there are some small narratives associated with certain creatures, especially as developed in the transmedia storytelling that takes place around *Pokémon*, the creatures do not need a story or narrative in order to be important, or to have a place in the collection. Players are free to consume the creatures, placing importance on some, developing attachments to others, and completely ignoring the rest. The player is free to access the database (the assortment of free-floating symbols) of their collection in whatever way they deem desirable. The way that the creatures are organized, alphabetically or by type, have nothing to do with a grand narrative. They are organized in such a way that the player can access the database, make determinations based on specific characteristics of each creature, and move on. The form of organization found in these games allows for the pleasurable, animalistic consumption of moe-inducing creatures.

The third theme is closely related to the second and involves the specialized knowledge that a player develops about the various creatures in their collections. In order to strategically use their creatures in battle, players must understand the relationship between the various types of creatures, specifically related to how the various race/type combinations affect a creature's attack and defensive moves. Tobin specifically states that “[o]n one level, Pokémon is centrally about acquiring knowledge. Like Tajiri collecting his insects, the successful Pokémon player needs to master a detailed taxonomy of the various species and their unique characteristics and powers.” (Tobin, 2004, Loc. 436). All of the games discussed above have a comfortable learning curve when it comes to developing the knowledge and skills needed to train and successfully battle the various creatures. While obviously important in single player games like *Ni No Kuni* and *Shin Megami Tensei*, this form of specialized knowledge becomes exponentially more important in multiplayer games like *WoW* and *Pokémon*, where players have the opportunity to battle other players head-to-head. Unlike NPCs, whose strategies are dictated by their programming, real players develop unique strategies based on personal experiences and their understanding of the skills of their creatures. Returning to the transmedia example of *Pokémon* above, specialized knowledge develops from a wide range of sources. The best way for a player to succeed against other skilled players is to have a specialized set of knowledge that comes not only from the game, but from external forms of media related to the game. In *WoW*, players share information and strategies online through forums. Even in the single player games, players share strategies and information about the various creatures online, and through strategy guides. In these games, it is almost a requirement to gain specialized external knowledge about the creatures in order to fully complete the collection.



The final theme is one that ties the other three together in a fairly cohesive but complex way. It involves the notion of immortality achieved through collecting. This notion is best summarized by McIntosh & Schmeichel (2004) who, through a summary of the work of a number of researchers, including Greenberg et al (1986), attributed the notion of immortality through collecting to terror management theory. They state that terror management theory:

...maintains that people are motivated to participate in culturally approved activity in order to ward off awareness of their mortality. Culture may reduce death-related anxiety by offering the hope of immortality, either symbolically or literally, to those who engage in culturally valued activity.

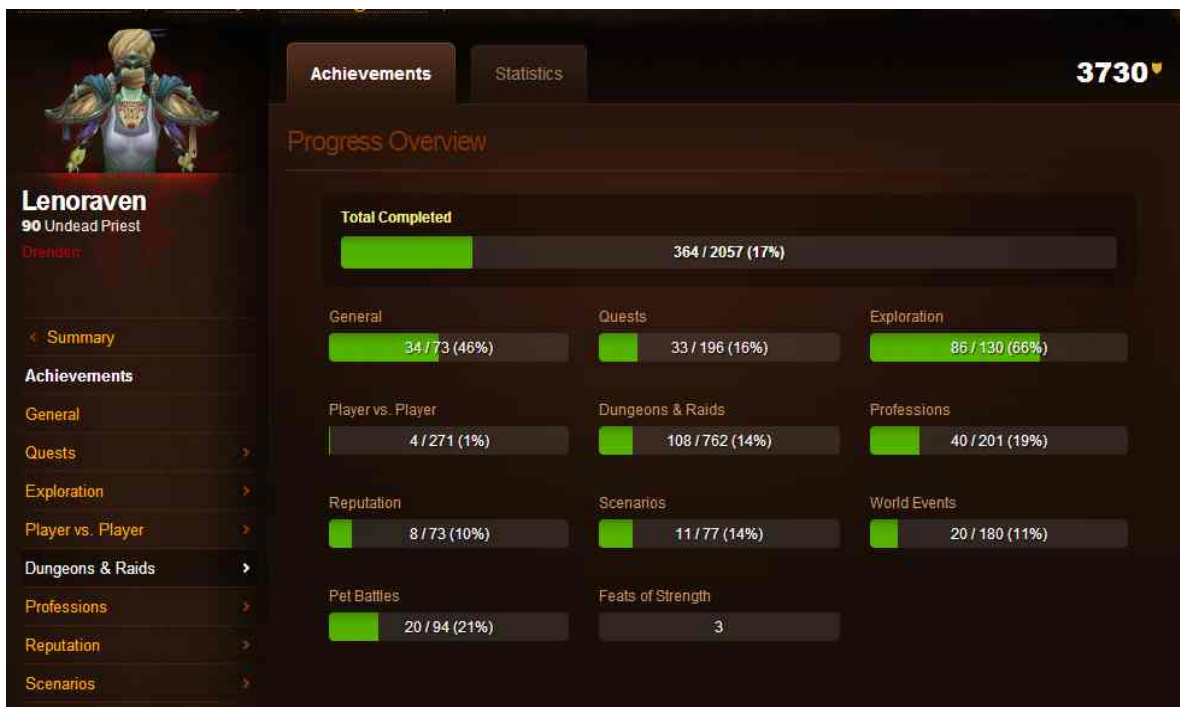
McIntosh & Schmeichel, p. 87 (2004)

A detailed analysis of terror management theory as a whole is not the focus of this paper, but I do believe that it provides a solid foundation for thinking about the theme of immortality in the games being discussed here. It is not a stretch to state that video game playing, and participation in the *Pokémon* phenomenon, are viewed by a large number of people as culturally valued activities. How the hope of immortality (symbolically or literally) is fostered through participation in these activities can be described in two ways, as outlined below.

One of the ways that immortality is fostered is through the thematic notion of saving the world. This theme is central in the three Japanese games, but not really present in *WoW*, at least not in the same way. As noted above in the various descriptions, the Japanese games focus on a youth, who comes from a small, comfortable existence, being called upon to save the world. This is less explicit in *Ni No Kuni*, as Oliver initially has rather selfish reasons for embarking on his quest, and only later decides that it is about more than his desire to have his mother back. The youth is innocent and unaware of the dangers that he or she is about to face. It is only through friendship and courage that the character is able to move forward, grow stronger, and eventually save the day. The actual danger that is faced by the world, or what "the world" actually entails, is different between each game, but the theme remains. Within the game, the player is able to take on the role of a hero, someone who makes a difference by overcoming insurmountable odds. By cunningly collecting and training creatures, they have risen above their station in life to become someone who matters; even if it is only within a fictional world. By feeling that they have made a difference, players can bolster their sense of immortality, even if it is only within a video game.

The second way that immortality is fostered involves the player's ability to make a mark in the real world, based on their creature collection. This form of immortality is primarily found in *WoW*, but also in *Pokémon*. Above, I discussed the way that achievements play a large role in the gameplay of *WoW* players. These achievements are something that can be shared with others both within the game world, and outside of it. If a player is a member of an in-game party or guild, and they gain an achievement, the computer automatically announces the achievement to all other members of the party or guild. This is accompanied by a link that players can click on to get more details about what the achievement entailed. During my MA research, almost half of all guild interactions that I observed involved players congratulating or "gratizing" other players for their achievements. Outside of the game, players (and interested non-players) can search for different characters through the *WoW* website. A wide range of statistics can be obtained about each character,

including what spells they can use, what gear they have equipped, and most importantly for our purposes, what achievements they have earned (see *figure 6*).



**Figure 6:** Lenoraven's *WoW* Statistics. This figure shows the achievement page from an online search of the author's main *WoW* avatar, Lenoraven<sup>18</sup>.

The fact that I have not played *WoW* in over 6 months but am still able to search online to find the achievement statistics for my main avatar, highlights the way that games like *WoW* can foster a symbolic sense of immortality. Not only are people able to share their achievement progress outside of the game, but they can also show off their creature collection. Sharing does not occur in quite as much detail in *Pokémon*, however, players are able to view the creatures that others (who accept a friendship request) have in their current queue. *Pokémon* also allows for trading of creatures which acts as a way of sharing accomplishments between players. Ultimately, the ability to share creature collections, acquired creature knowledge, and associated successes with other people, is another way of achieving symbolic immortality. As a rather morbid example, if I were to die before closing my *WoW* account, people would still be able to view my virtual accomplishments through my avatars' information pages online. Similarly, if I were to trade a rare *Pokémon* creature with a friend, there would be a part of me left behind in that particular creature for that particular person. Finally, if I were to contribute a key strategy or piece of information to the *Shin Megami Tensei* or *Ni No Kuni* forums or wikis, my contribution would act as a sort of symbolic immortality.

### **Creature Collecting in Video Games is Compelling Why?**

As explored in quite a bit of detail above, I have argued that there are four main themes that are fostered through creature collection in video games: Immortality, Organization, Specialized Knowledge, and Exploration. Based on the research I reviewed on the subject of collecting, these themes are also found in collecting in general. Mitroiu (2011) wrote about the culture of collecting by referencing discussions of the biblical Noah as "the first collector." Noah was destined to collect all of the animals in order to save the world. He needed to "catch 'em all" in order to ensure that all of the knowledge and history of the ancient world was carried on following the massive flood. Mitroiu continued by stating that "any collection is based on a classification and, if this is the mirror of collective knowledge, the history of a collection is a story of the permanent attempt to assimilate and enrich the taxonomy and the heritable system of knowledge" (Mitroiu, 2011, p. 214). Noah, and collectors that followed, used exploration and organization, combined with specialized knowledge, to make a permanent mark in history, thus achieving a form of immortality. But returning to Azuma's concept of the database animal, we no longer live in the same world that Noah did. We are able to collect and share information with almost no effort thanks to digital technology and communication. We can no longer "save the world" in the same way through organized and narrative driven collections of knowledge. Instead, we live in a world of a grand non-narrative where every piece of information seems to be a fragment of a database too large to fully explore or collect. Creature collection in the games discussed above can be thought of as the database animal's version of Noah's quest in a way. As there is no grand narrative to follow, postmodern collectors can find pleasure in the ability to choose from large numbers of collectible creatures, deciding which ones to focus their attention on, which ones to gain specialized knowledge about, and which ones to brush aside. The player can construct their 'ark' - not according to a grand directive - but based on their own desires to pick and choose from the database of a multitude of creatures in order to develop their own contribution to a fragmented database of collective knowledge.

Despite the fact that we live in a non-narrative driven world, the use of exploration, organization, and specialized knowledge can lead to feelings of symbolic and/or literal immortality through participation in culturally approved activities as described by terror management theory. For our purposes, I am specifically talking about the activity of creature collecting in video games as outlined throughout this paper. I could stop here and argue that simply by using exploration, organization, and specialized knowledge, creature collection games are compelling by appealing to our collective desire to ward off our own mortality. I do, however, want to make one additional argument based specifically on the medium of the video game.

McIntosh & Schmeichel outline 8 distinct steps in the collecting process as follows:

1. Goal Formation: Deciding to Collect Something.
2. Gathering Information.
3. Planning and Courtship.
4. The Hunt.

5. Acquisition.
6. Post-Acquisition.
7. Manipulation/Display/Cataloguing.
8. Return to State 3 or Stage 1.

McIntosh & Schmeichel, p. 88-95 (2004)

Based on what has been uncovered during the course of this paper, I would like to propose that the reason that creature collecting in video games is so compelling, is that the activity caters to the database animals in postmodernity by streamlining the collecting process and making it more applicable to a database centred culture. Specifically, the games described above reduce McIntosh & Schmeichel's collecting process from 8 steps down to 4. I argue that steps 1, 2, 3, and as a result 8, are all done for the player through the medium of the game itself. The game, while providing a certain sense of freedom about how many creatures to collect, has already formulated the goal for the player. The information that is required to proceed with the collecting process is already supplied, either by the game itself, or through transmedia storytelling and internet communication. Players do not need to formulate a plan as most of the collection is done through grinding and random chance encounters. Any planning that the player has to do is actually part of the hunt itself, in that it directly involves seeking out and obtaining the creature in question. Even the desire to begin a collection in the first place is built into these games through the design of the creatures. Their moe-inspiring elements, combined with their roles as friends, partners, and saviours, makes them desirable and attractive for selfish and animalistic reasons. The collections are able to be pleasurable in a world where attention spans and patience for detail seem to be at a low. Games like *Pokémon*, *Ni No Kuni*, *Shin Megami Tensei*, and *WoW*, successfully satisfy the needs not only of the collector, but of the database animal, and the individual (consciously or unconsciously) seeking symbolic or literal immortality, which in turn makes the act of creature collection in these games so compelling and desirable.

## References

- Atlus. (2013). *Shin Megami Tensei IV*. [3DS]. Atlus: Japan.
- Azuma, H. (2009). *Otaku: Japan's database animals*. [Kindle version]. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from Amazon.ca
- Blizzard Entertainment. (2012). *World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria*. [PC]. Blizzard Entertainment: United States.
- Fleury, J. (2015). Studio Ghibli's video game play: The media convergence of Ni no Kuni. *Mediascape: UCLA's Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*. Retrieved from [http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Fall2015\\_VideoGamePlay.html](http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Fall2015_VideoGamePlay.html)
- Game Freak. (2013). *Pokémon X/Y*. [3DS]. Nintendo: Japan.
- Graft, K. (2009). Analysis: The psychology behind item collecting and achievement hoarding. *Gamasutra*. Retrieved from: [www.gamasutra.com/view/news/114668/Analysis\\_The\\_Psychology\\_Behind\\_Item\\_Collecting\\_And\\_Achievement\\_Hoarding.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/114668/Analysis_The_Psychology_Behind_Item_Collecting_And_Achievement_Hoarding.php)
- Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., and Solomon, S. (1986). The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In R.F. Baumeister (ed.), *Public self and private self* (pp. 189-212). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Harper, T. (2011). Rules, rhetoric, and genre: Procedural rhetoric in Persona 3. *Games and Culture*, 6(5), 395-413.
- Ham, E. (2010). Rarity and power: Balance in collectible object games. *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research*, 10(1).
- Hancock, M. (2014, May 21). Motorville & the portal-quest: Rhetorics of fantasy in Ni No Kuni. *First Person Scholar*. Retrieved from <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/motorville-the-portal-quest/>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jones, S. E. (2008). *The meaning of video games: Gaming and textual strategies* [Kindle Version]. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Level-5. (2013). *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch*. [PS3]. Bandai Namco Games: Japan.
- McIntosh, W. D. & Schmeichel, B. (2004). Collectors and collecting: A social psychological perspective. *Leisure Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 26(1), 85-97.
- Mitroiu, S. (2011). To collect in order to survive: Benjamin and the necessity of collecting. *Cultura, International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, 8(1), 213-222.
- Polansky, L. (2016, September 4). *The world's most dangerous game: Pokémon's strange history with moral panics*. Retrieved from: [https://waypoint.vice.com/en\\_us/article/the-worlds-most-dangerous-game-pokemons-strange-history-with-moral-panics](https://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/the-worlds-most-dangerous-game-pokemons-strange-history-with-moral-panics)
- Sapach, S. C. (2013). *The WoW factor: The development of social solidarity in Azeroth*. Retrieved from Acadia Graduate Degree Theses Database. (LE3. A278 2013).
- Square Product Development Division 1. (2001). *Final Fantasy X*. [PS2]. Squaresoft: North America.
- Tajiri, S. (1999, November 2). *The ultimate game freak*. Retrieved from: <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2040095,00.html>
- Tobin, J. (Ed.). (2004) *Pikachu's global adventure: The rise and fall of Pokémon* [Kindle version]. London: Duke University Press. Retrieved from Amazon.ca
- Tanaka, H. (Series Music Writer) & Paige, J. (Singer) (1998). *Pokémon theme*.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> This paper is being published at an interesting time due to the recent release of *Pokémon Go* (2016) with its explicit focus on creature collection and its role in the resurgence of the Pokémon fad. The addition of *Pokémon Go* to the mix calls for an entirely new study that is beyond the scope (and timeline) of this paper.
- <sup>2</sup> [https://waypoint.vice.com/en\\_us/article/the-worlds-most-dangerous-game-pokemons-strange-history-with-moral-panics/](https://waypoint.vice.com/en_us/article/the-worlds-most-dangerous-game-pokemons-strange-history-with-moral-panics/)
- <sup>3</sup> [www.gamasutra.com/view/news/114668/Analysis\\_The\\_Psychology\\_Behind\\_Item\\_Collecting\\_And\\_Achievement\\_Hoarding.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/114668/Analysis_The_Psychology_Behind_Item_Collecting_And_Achievement_Hoarding.php)
- <sup>4</sup> As of June 2013 according to the list of Pokémon on Wikipedia: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Pok%C3%A9mon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Pok%C3%A9mon)  
According to the *Shin Megami Tensei IV* demon list found on the *Shin Megami Tensei* wiki: [megamitensei.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Shin\\_Megami\\_Tensei\\_IV\\_Demons](http://megamitensei.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Shin_Megami_Tensei_IV_Demons) The list of *Ni No Kuni* creatures can be found on the *Ni No Kuni* wikia: [ninokuni.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Familiar](http://ninokuni.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Familiar) and the *WoW* battle pet list, up to date as of April 24, 2012, can be found at the *WoW* wiki: [www.wowwiki.com/Battle\\_pet](http://www.wowwiki.com/Battle_pet)
- <sup>5</sup> There are three celestial signs that have a 'rock-paper-scissors' type relationship where sun beats moon, moon beats star, and star beats sun.
- <sup>6</sup> What exactly happens when a player becomes a master is left to the imagination. Based on the lyrics of the theme songs from the TV series however, it is not unfair to speculate that masters play a very important role in saving the world.
- <sup>7</sup> The 16 song compilation can be found here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4jkHr2MaRo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4jkHr2MaRo)
- <sup>8</sup> I have mentioned the publisher of Pokémon and Ni No Kuni in order to demonstrate awareness that these games are published by companies deeply invested in targeting a younger market.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/motorville-the-portal-quest/>
- <sup>10</sup> This statement is being made based on personal interactions that I have had within the game and the forums both before and after the release of *Pandaria*. I am unfortunately unable to find a direct quote; however, I am willing to risk calling this anecdotal evidence as it was a commonly held opinion during many of the debates that I personally witnessed.
- <sup>11</sup> The pet healing method has changed since the release of *Warlords of Draenor* in that there is a time-delayed healing button as opposed to an item used during battle or a distracting visit to town. This time-delayed heal mechanic does slightly alter the battle technique, however it does not appear to significantly impact my analysis of creature collection.
- <sup>12</sup> World of Warcraft subscriptions peaked at 12 million in 2010 and have dropped to 7.6 million as of November 2013: [wow.joystiq.com/2013/11/06/world-of-warcraft-down-100k-subscribers-to-7-6m/](http://wow.joystiq.com/2013/11/06/world-of-warcraft-down-100k-subscribers-to-7-6m/)
- <sup>13</sup> The forums can be found here: [us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/7388394/](http://us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/7388394/)
- <sup>14</sup> <http://openarchive.acadiau.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/Theses/id/685/rec/1>
- <sup>15</sup> [www.wowhead.com/achievements](http://www.wowhead.com/achievements)
- <sup>16</sup> [wowpedia.org/Pet\\_Battles\\_achievements/Collect](http://wowpedia.org/Pet_Battles_achievements/Collect)
- <sup>17</sup> [content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2040095,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2040095,00.html)
- <sup>18</sup> [us.battle.net/wow/en/character/drenden/Lenoraven/achievement](http://us.battle.net/wow/en/character/drenden/Lenoraven/achievement)