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Source Dialogue

Gerard Jones is a media researcher whose work in his most recent work, *Killing Monsters,* is primarily focused on the effects of the media on children. He has lectured at various universities and has published books including *Honey I'm Home: Sitcoms Selling the American Dream* and *The Comic Book Heroes.*

Steven Poole is an independent writer and journalist focused on videogames. His work *Trigger Happy* deals with the various issues surrounding the videogame industry and culture.

Henry Jenkins is a professor of Media Studies at MIT. He has published a wide variety of books and articles. His article "Complete Freedom of Movement: Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces" deals with the idea of how boys and girls use videogames differently and the psychological effects involved.

Poole: I think Lara Croft is a very sexy character that has boosted sales of PlayStation consoles and has revolutionized the way female characters work in videogames. But it's not just Lara that makes the *Tomb Raider* series. Lara Croft could be any other character and the games would be just as good. It's the games that make Lara, not Lara that makes the games. Her sex appeal and curves might help sell the game initially and it was also the freshness of using a femme fatal figure that increased publicity for the game, but it was not in any way the character that created the empire. *Tomb Raider* and Eidos built the celebrity that is Lara Croft.

Jones: Well, I think that though the game definitely contributes significantly to the creation of the persona of Lara Croft, it really is her femininity that has helped sell the game. The *Tomb Raider* series is one of the few series to be able to sell well to both males and females. It was the personality of Lara Croft that helped make the *Tomb Raider* series. Most boys will tell you that they bought the game because Lara is sexy. But there's no way that they beat the game from that sheer motive alone. They beat the game because it allowed them a chance to explore the world in a way different from their own and let them push some of their sexual anxieties into the game world. Similarly, girls who are reaching the age of puberty are able to push the fear and stress associated with the new "sex power" they wield into the game through Lara Croft. It is through these methods that the games have become successful.

Jenkins: I don't think that makes any sense. Boys and girls use their play spaces differently. Girls are generally more explorative and wish to resolve conflict through negotiation and emotion whereas boys will attempt to use competition. The *Tomb Raider* series of games clearly ought to appeal more to boys because it's the typical type of adventure that is described by the 19th century boy culture. I think for girls, the appeal

comes from the female protagonist. It's their chance to check out "the other side" because they are still confined to the domestic role that was so dominant in the 19th century.