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Also a girls world!

*- A qualitative study on female gamers in the
globalized virtual space of MMORPGs*



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Abstract

It is our interest in games that guided us towards the study of this field, namely online gaming. As we read and researched, we realised that the study of female gamers has not been often undertaken. The decision was therefore made to investigate more about female game consumers.

After further inquiries into this field, what was discovered is that in a virtual space that is considered as highly masculine and at times overtly sexist, research papers have suggested that there are spaces in which the female population is increasing at a steady pace. This further increased our interest, thus we decided to investigate the following: Looking at women in the globalised virtual space of MMORPGs, how can their gaming behaviour be understood, and how are they treated, based on their gender?

In investigating this research area, we used a subjective analytical approach, because we decided to focus on the thoughts, opinions and feelings of female gamers. We did so because we believe this approach is the best way to help us better understand women, and their gaming behaviour.

Data was gathered from interviewing a total of nine participants, selected based on specific criteria, ensuring that it can provide us with relevant answers. The data thus obtained was then run through several analysis processes. We firstly divided their statements in categories created base on our literature and theory review, coupled with our research questions.

The categories were than used as a basis for our themes, which are Globalised Virtual Space of MMORPGs, Gender, and Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs. The interpretation of these themes aided us in answering our research questions. We furthermore applied a model, known as Hierarchical Value Map, onto our findings within the Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs.

We believe that our findings prove that within MMORPGs, sexism and harassment are less prevailing, which creates a safe space for women. Thus, our case study of MMORPGs proves to be a black swan, as we believe we uncovered an online gaming space which strays from the norm. In this case the norm displaying a negative and misogynistic approach to female gamers.

One of the first findings of our analysis is that the virtual space of MMORPGs is a globalised one. As such, it displays a specific culture, rules, norms, and it also promotes equality. However, sexist incidents do occur, even if on rare occasions.

When looking at gender, we discovered that women are comfortable with theirs in this space, as our participants believe that they are treated equally all around. Furthermore, some enjoy playing both male and female characters, as they believe gender should not be seen as important.

In investigating their attraction for MMORPGs, we sought to not only identify what they are attracted to, but also what they get in return for playing. Thus, their attraction for the imaginary world was coupled with escapism, creating their character was linked to them reinventing themselves, as well as a sense of fulfilment as they carried their role successfully. Questing and raiding brought them achievements and accomplishments.

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Introduction

Online gaming has developed throughout time into a virtual world (Todd, 2012; Fox and Tang, 2013; Bryce and Rutter, 2010). One of the encountered problems within this globalized virtual space is that it is inhabited mainly by male gamers, which has given the space strong masculine undertones in manners of addressing the games, community, play styles, etc. (Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Todd, 2012; Fox and Tang, 2013; Bryce and Rutter, 2010).

This has sometimes lead to displays of hypermasculinity, and more often and not, it has also created a hostile environment towards women (Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Fox and Tang, 2013; Bryce and Rutter, 2010).

Seeing how this space is mainly masculine, researchers might feel inclined to focus more on male players. However, according to recent statistics, 48% of the American gamers are female. When looking at game purchasers, the split between men and women is even, at 50% (Entertainment Software Association, 2014). That means that approximately half of the \$21.53 billion revenue that the gaming industry has acquired in 2013, is owed to female gamers (Entertainment Software Association, 2014).

Furthermore, according to a report concerning video games consumption in Europe, actually 43% of women play video games (Ipsos MediaCT, 2012). When looking strictly at gamers, the ratio stands at 55% male, and 45% female (Ipsos MediaCT, 2012), which is interesting seeing how gaming is largely considered to be a boys thing (Lien, 2013).

Therefore it is our aim to study women who enter the “no girls allowed” (Lien, 2013) territory of online video games. This implies studying the virtual space and the environment it creates, to better understand how it affects women. Furthermore, it

presupposes a study of gender, as it is because of this aspect that women receive differential attitudes. Last but not least, as it is implied that gaming is for men, we will investigate the relationship between women and gaming, in order to discover what attracts them to it.

Problem formulation

Since we are gamers studying Culture, Communication and Globalisation, while following the Consumption stream, it comes natural to us, to be interested in studying female gamers from the perspective of our educational background.

As can be seen in the introduction, the world of online gaming is heavily male dominated, and can be very aggressive towards women (Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Todd; 2012; Fox and Tang, 2013; Bryce and Rutter, 2010). Despite this aspect of online gaming, when looking at MMORPGs, research suggests that it has a rich female presence (Terlecki et al., 2010). This shows a contradiction in the research that has been conducted so far.

One of the interesting aspects of MMORPGs is that games within this genre present a vast world, where players can interact with others in a manner similar to those of real world interactions. Through these online interactions, a new space is being created, which is defined by it being globalized, and has its own rules, regulations, and culture (Evans, 2011; Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter, 2010). Since online gaming is shown to be highly masculine, the probability exists that players might further reinforce masculine norms and discourse through interaction. Furthermore, according to Horton and Patapan (2004), globalization can act as an enhancer, thus a patriarchal space becomes more so in time, through globalization. Although at present MMORPGs are thought as having a large female population (Terlecki et al., 2010), this might hinder the process of adding new female players, or keeping the existing ones.

Another issue regarding this is that it makes us wonder whether female gamers in MMORPGs feel comfortable with openly expressing their gender, or if in here they also have to abide by masculine norms. When discussing online gaming as a whole for example, it is suggested that women are forced into specific roles (sex objects,

antagonists, etc), and are punished for stepping out of character (Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010; Fox and Tang, 2013).

We therefore cannot stop asking ourselves what it is that they are attracted to in relation to games, and how they would define their experience ingame, when it has been shown that this space is aggressive towards women. In investigating this relationship, we believe it is important to also explore the space in which it takes place, as well as the manner in which it is influenced by gender. Therefore, it motivates us to investigate the following:

Looking at women in the globalised virtual space of MMORPGs, how can their gaming behaviour be understood, and how are they treated, based on their gender?

RQ1: How is the virtual space of MMORPGs defined when approaching it from a globalization perspective?

RQ2: Why are women attracted to MMORPGs and how do they express themselves ingame?

Project outline

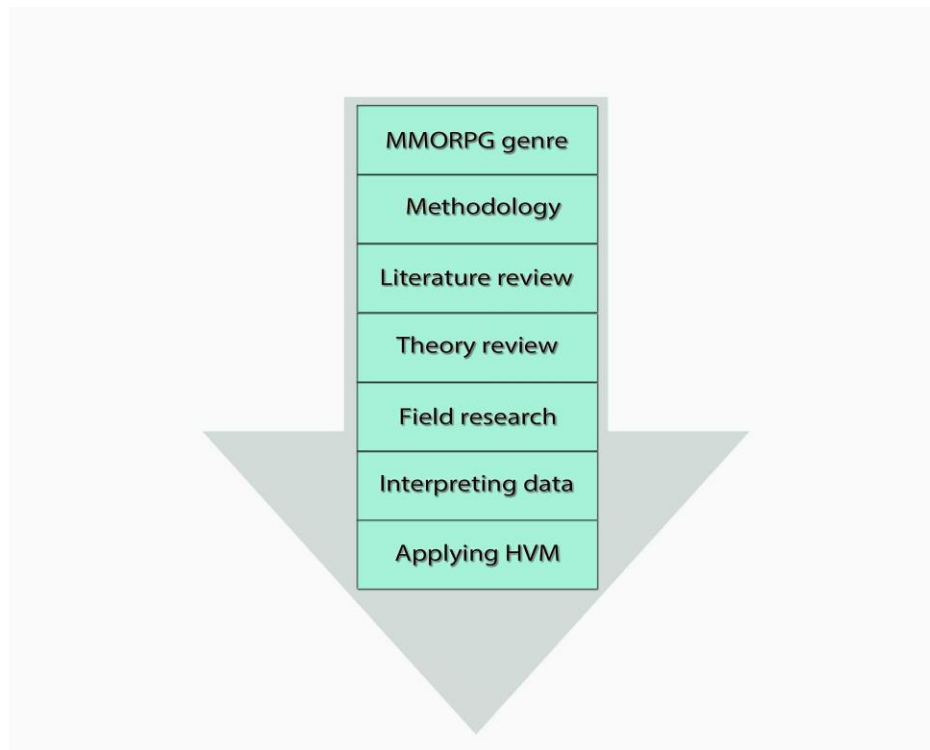
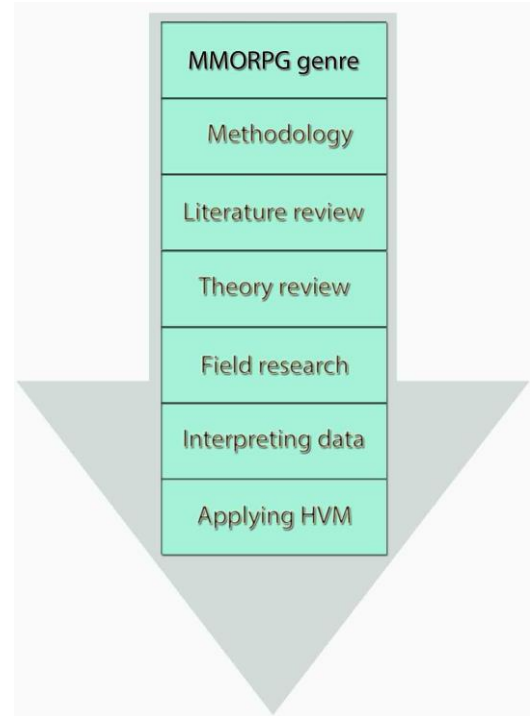


Figure 1 - Project outline (own model)

Before we begin our research, we want to present to you the steps we are taking towards the completion of this project. As a first step, we will introduce to you the MMORPG genre, and some of the most important games within it. In our second step, we will present our methodology, which includes our research paradigms, methods, design, and our methodical approach. The third and fourth step will be centred on reviewing literature and theory. Our analysis will commence with our fifth step, namely our field research, in which we build our interview guide, code and categorize our resulting data, as well as create themes. In our sixth step, the previously acquired data will be interpreted, based on the emerged themes. The seventh step will include our last analysis section, as we apply the model known as Hierarchical Value Map. At the end of these steps, we will present to you our discussion and conclusions.

MMORPGs

Although descriptive, we believe this chapter is essential in our research, as it allows our readers to better understand the virtual space in which the experiences of our participants take place. In this chapter, we will aim at not only describing the game genre, but also some of the games our participants have played, as well as the mechanics and character dynamics within them. We believe this will help us better understand some of the games we have not encountered, or tried, before this project, but will also help the reader better understand some of the gender dynamics within games, among other aspects.



In building this chapter, we will rely on our own knowledge on MMORPGs, as well as available literature. Although lacking analytical value, we will aim at making this chapter as comprehensive as possible, in order to ensure a thorough understanding of gaming concepts, mechanics, etc. for the reader.

What are MMORPGs?

So what does MMORPG mean? Well according to various dictionaries on the internet, such as the free dictionary by Farlex (2015), it stands for “Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games” which is the most common used term. But we also stumbled upon another, and more uncommon, explanation which was a bit sarcastic:

“Many Men Online Role Playing as Girls” which might have some truth to it (Urban Dictionary, 2015).

Looking at what MMORPG acronym actually means, Webopedia (2015) explains it from a technical point of view: “MMORPGs are online role-playing massive multiplayer games which allow thousands of gamers to play in the game's evolving virtual world at the same time via the Internet”. However, Wikipedia (2015) explains that Massive Multiplayer Online Games mean the following; “MMOGs can enable players to cooperate and compete with each other on a large scale, and sometimes to interact meaningfully with people around the world. They include a variety of gameplay types” which presents this genre from a different angle, showing how it can become a platform for people around the world to interact..

MMORPG is a genre which can be divided into two things, the technical platform, which is “Mass Multiplayers Online” and then the “Role-Playing Game” genre. Thus, when we look at the platform it takes place on, we can see it is created at a massive scale, and can be accessed online only. Secondly, it implies the concept of Role-Playing, which means that character creation is involved, and that you are unique within the game.

Aspects within MMORPG

By now it should be clear how enormous MMORPGs are, and therefore we find it necessary to dive into the many aspects within it, in order to understand what attracts women to this game genre.

Questing

When it comes to Role-playing games in general, questing is a big part of this genre, and MMORPGs are no different. Questing is something that takes place within the virtual world, and is often retrieved from a non-player character, also known as an “NPC”. The purpose of doing quests in MMORPGs is often character oriented, for

example to make it stronger, get higher level, obtain rewards etc. But can also be used to increase a player's faction within the game for certain clans, tribes or races. Furthermore, quests add to a story line within the game, which you as a player are a part of.

The objective of quests can vary from killing certain creatures, to defend a small establishment, escorting a NPC from one place to another, gathering herbs in a forest, or to pass along a message etc. How you do these quests are up to the player. You have the possibility to do them alone or with whomever you meet along the way. What makes this experience different from other genres is that you will constantly meet other players that are doing the same. Whether you choose to interact with them or not is up to the person playing.

Roleplaying

Roleplaying is a big part of the MMORPGs that we work with, therefore explaining this aspect will help us and the reader understand the participants better. Role Playing within this game genre enables players to be someone or do something else, which can differ from their real lives. Often this includes character creation in these games, that lets people choose what race, gender, class, belief, and profession they want to have, which will impact the role they have within the game.

Some MMORPGs have Role-play servers that people can choose to play on, which takes it even further, and has strict rules about "out of character" behaviour, that can lead to a ban. This prevents a person from accessing their characters again.

Player versus Player

Another aspect of MMORPGs is the player versus player part, which appeals to the people that want to battle against other players. Defeating other players often gives points, which can be used to buy items and equipment to further improve your

character. Most games enable players to make teams as well as fight other players on their own, by signing up for battlegrounds, which is a scenario within the game itself.

Another term that readers should get familiar with is World PvP, which is the scenario where players kill other players in the open world, which willingly or even unwillingly wants to fight back. Griefing is something that often is associated with World PvP, which is the situation where someone is killing someone over and over again to prevent them from questing or exploring the world.

Player versus environment

The opposite of Players versus Players is the concept of Players versus Environment. According to Techopedia (2015): "Player versus environment generally involves the gamer fighting AI-controlled opponents of varying difficulties while progressing through the game's storyline".

This can take place in the open world with other players, or it can be done alone. Furthermore, it can also take place in so called dungeons and raids, which involve cooperating with a group of people (dungeons), or multiple groups of people (raids).

PvE often require communication software such as Skype, TeamSpeak and Ventrilo, which offer the possibility of voice communication among the players over the internet.

The Grind

Often players use the term grinding, and therefore we find it also necessary to explain what that means. MMORPGs have a sandbox type of economy, which requires people to earn gold, craft materials and use gathering professions to provide for his or her character, guild or friends. These things take time, and can almost be seen as a side job to some extent, because it is something that is required in order to progress your character, or is expected of a person to help the guild or clan that one is in.

Depending on the dedication of the player, and how “serious” one wants to be in this virtual world, more time is required and expected. This is what people refer to as “The Grind”, which is affiliated with MMORPGs.

Related games

Within this chapter, the most mentioned games by our participants will be presented.

World of Warcraft

World of Warcraft is, as presented by its developers, “an online game where players from around the world assume the roles of heroic fantasy characters and explore a virtual world full of mystery, magic, and endless adventure” (World of Warcraft, 2015). It has two opposing factions from which players can choose, each having six different specific races.

The Horde faction represents the more temperamental, emotion driven faction. Some of the races included in this faction are:

- Orcs: large, strong characters, known for getting blood frenzy (see Appendix 1) (World of Warcraft, 2015).
- Taurens: also large, strong characters, resembling cattle, which are known for their strong connection with the earth and nature (see Appendix 1) (World of Warcraft, 2015).
- Blood Elves: seen as a beautiful, delicate race, the blood elves got their name due to their attraction to magic, as they are willing to also search more into blood magic (see Appendix 1) (World of Warcraft, 2015).

The Alliance faction is represented as being closer to the idea of good, although throughout the expansions it was shown that there are no good or evil races. Some of the races pledging allegiance to this faction are:

- Humans: generally sturdy characters, showing great resilience (see Appendix 1) (World of Warcraft, 2015).
- Night elves: Unlike the Blood elves, the Night elves have renounced all pursuit of magic, as they believe it clouds the mind. They are a very resilient race, also closely connected to nature (See Appendix 1) (World of Warcraft, 2015).
- Dwarfs: mountain inhabitants, they are very strong and resilient characters, despite their shorter height (See Appendix 1) (World of Warcraft, 2015).

The Pandaren are the most recent race added, unique due to their ability to choose the faction they want to join (see Appendix 2) (World of Warcraft, 2015). Each race comes with its own sets of racial abilities

World of Warcraft also present a wide array of classes to choose from, which can be grouped in three categories (see Appendix 3). Damage per second characters focus on dealing damage, and encompass classes such as mages, hunters, rogues (World of Warcraft, 2015). Tanks focus on vigour, as it is their role to draw in hits from the enemy, protecting their team members (World of Warcraft, 2015). Warriors, death knights and druids usually join this class. Last but not least, healers focus on healing spell, as it is their role, like the name suggests, to heal others. Monks, priests and paladins generally join this class (World of Warcraft, 2015).

The Elder Scrolls Online

Elder Scrolls Online is set on the continent of Tamriel, and the world itself is highly fantasy based, like World of Warcraft. As the players enter it, they can choose to be one of the following classes: Dragonknight, Templar, Sorcerer, or a Nightblade (The Elder Scrolls Online). Players can then choose from three factions, the Daggerfall Covenant, the Ebonheart Pact, or the Aldmeri Dominion, each faction having specific races (See Appendix 4) (The Elder Scrolls Online).

Once the faction, race, and class is selected, the players starts questing and battling players from the opponent faction, in order to ensure that his own faction

acquired dominion over Cyrodiil, the Imperial City, and the throne of Tamriel (The Elder Scrolls Online).

Guild Wars 2

Unlike the previous two MMORPGs, Guild Wars 2 features a storyline which is modified by player actions (Guild Wars 2). The actions itself takes place in the fantasy world known as Tyria (Guild Wars 2). There are only five races to choose from: the Asura, the Sylvari, the Humans, the Charrs and the Norn (see Appendix 5) (Guild Wars 2). The professions a player can choose from are divided in three groups, based in their armour class: the scholars have lighter armour, adventurers are given medium armour, whilst "soldiers" are coupled with heavy armour (Guild Wars 2). The healing class was removed. The game does not have a general storyline, as it is its purpose to allow the players to create his own storyline, and thus relies more on the PVP aspect of MMORPGs.

AION

AION presents the player with only two races to choose from, the Asmodians and the Elyos, a third race playing their common enemy (AION). The Asmodians are presented as "a brave and hardy people, separated from the Elyos by the Epic Cataclysm and plunged into a world of darkness and despair" (see Appendix 6) (AION). In contrast, the Elyos are "occupy the lower half of Atreia, known as Elysea. After the Epic Cataclysm, they found themselves bathed in sunlight for over 750 years and, as a result, have transformed into a beautiful and radiant people" (see Appendix 6) (AION).

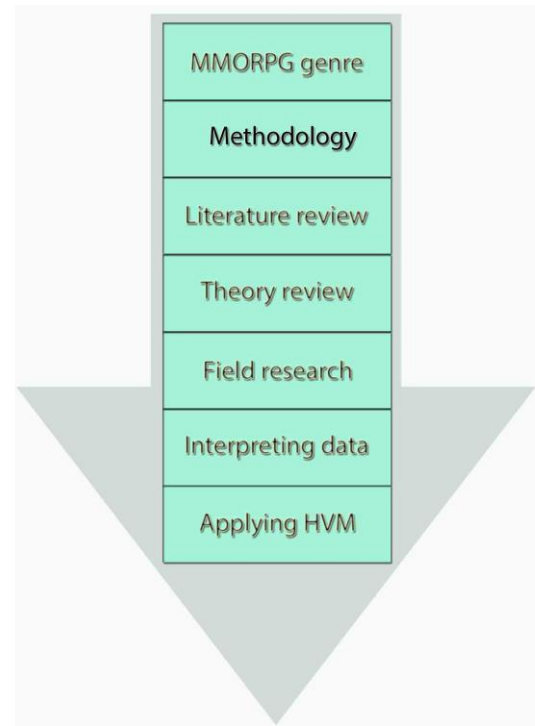
The player can specialize in six primary classes: Warrior, Mage, Scout, Priest, Technist or Muse, within which he can further specialize in one of two classes, once he reaches level 10 (AION).

Star Wars The Old Republic

Like the name suggests, this game is based on the movie series Star Wars. Within it, you can choose to either work for the Empire, or join the Republic (Star Wars The Old Republic). Within each faction, there are four classes to choose from, mirroring each other (see Appendix 7) (Star Wars The Old Republic). There are also playable species one can choose from: Human, Cyborg, Twi'lek or Zabrak (Star Wars The Old Republic).

Methodology

Ackroyd and Hughes (1992) begin their chapter on Research practice, theory, methods and data by firstly having their audience answer the question: “what is the point of research?” (:13). They give two answers, of which one is considered, by their account, as outdated (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). The first answer consists of an excerpt from the novel “The Name of the Rose” by Umberto Eco, in which Jorge de Burgos, the antagonistic blind monk, states that knowledge can only be refined, not furthered (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). The second answer however, better depicts the reality of knowledge nowadays, namely that it “has to progress and can do so only through research” (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992:13).



It is with this thought in our heads that we decided to do the present research. As already mentioned, although the field of women in gaming has been tackled by several researchers, we believe that more can be added to it. But before we can do that, it is important to present our view of the world, our choice of methods, etc., which decidedly impacts the manner in which this research will be carried.

Research paradigms

Burrell and Morgan (1979) find it convenient for social scientists to conceptualise their research based on four sets of assumptions: ontological, epistemological, related to human nature, and last but not least methodological. We adhere to this notion, and will therefore approach each set of assumption and present our stance in regard to the present research paper.

Ontology is a philosophical sub discipline that puts into question the manner in which social entities exist (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Bryman and Teevan, 2005; 6 and Bellamy, 2012; Walliman, 2006). Burrell and Morgan (1979), due to their objective-subjective approach, present two viewpoints: social entities are either seen as objective, existing outside the perception of social actors, or they are subjective, constructs of the aforementioned social actors. Bryman and Teevan (2005) and Walliman (2006) support this view, as they state that there are “two opposing theoretical attitudes to the nature of social entities” (Walliman, 2006:¹)

Depending on the ontological assumptions, the subject of one’s research shifts its nature completely (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). As Bryman and Teevan (2005) suggests, ontology “cannot be divorced from issues concerning the conduct of social research” (:14). Indeed, a researcher viewing an organization as an objective social entity will focus his/hers investigation on their formal properties, whereas a subjective view of the organization would shift the focus “on the active involvement of people in reality construction” (Bryman and Teevan, 2005:14). As Williams and May (1996) argue, the ontological standpoint will further determine what type of knowledge is relevant.

Based on their subjective-objective dimension, Burrell and Morgan (1979) account for two ontological assumptions: Nominalism and Realism. Recent researchers however, gravitate towards two other ontological positions, Objectivism and Constructionism (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006).

¹ The online version of Social Research Methods, by Walliman, written in 2006, and published by Sage Publications in Great Britain, does not include page numbers.

Both Nominalism and Constructionism operate on the idea that social reality is constantly changing at the hands of social actors and their interactions, therefore no structure exists (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). Categories, concepts, etc., are constructs that people use to define and understand the surrounding world (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). Better yet said: “The world ... is constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it, and argue it” (Potter, 1996:98, as quoted by Bryman and Teevan, 2005:14).

Perri 6 (2012) and Bellamy further distinguish between Constructivism and Constructionism, albeit mentioning also what they have in common. According to 6 and Bellamy (2012), both views emphasise the fact that people understand the events surrounding them through the prism of “biases, frames, theories, accounts, narratives and conceptual frameworks of various kinds” (:57). However, Constructivism used to be referred to as an empirical argument in psychology regarding the way in which individuals develop understandings, misunderstandings, and ways of framing issues, and is now “used to refer to constructionist accounts of social institutions and practices” (6 and Bellamy, 2012:57). Constructionism on the other hand, was and still is understood as the study of the social interactions through which either shared or conflicting understandings are created, and the practices that are built and developed based on said understandings. (6 and Bellamy, 2012)

Realism and Objectivism posit that the social reality exists outside the interpretation of the social actor, and its building blocks are tangible and immutable to a large degree (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). As such, organizations for example, operate based on rules and regulations to which social actors comply, and remain unchanged despite transitory individuals (Bryman and Teevan, 2005).

As our problem formulation states, we have three main focus points in our research paper, and all three will be analysed through the prisms of female gamers,

their experiences and opinions, which strongly implies a subjectivist approach. We therefore choose a Constructionist approach in regard to this research paper. We are however aware of the fact that the thoughts and feelings we will investigate, although subjective, and shared with us based on how our participants experienced them, are to some degree influenced by rules and preconceptions. We are aware of the fact that every space has a specific set of rules and preconceptions by which its inhabitants abide, therefore, when entering the world of MMORPGs, we think that our participants will have also been influenced by them.

Closely connected to ontology, and influenced by it, epistemology concerns itself with what ought to be considered as relevant knowledge (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Bryman and Teevan, 2005; 6 and Bellamy, 2012; Walliman, 2006; Williams and May, 1996). One of the basic questions a researcher should ask himself, when carrying out his research on a social phenomenon, is if he should use principles and procedures pertaining to the natural sciences (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). This of course, depends on his/her approach to the studied phenomenon, be it objective or subjective (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) present Positivism as the objectivist approach to epistemology, and Anti-Positivism as its subjective counterpart. Bryman and Teevan (2005) keep Positivism when presenting their ideas in Epistemology, but replace Anti-Positivism with Interpretivism. As with the above discussed Ontological duos, the defining characteristics remain unchanged.

Positivism best suits researchers that see fit to study the social reality in the same manner as natural sciences, although there may be as many ways of doing so as there are researchers (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). It mainly aims at testing hypotheses or accumulating enough facts as to enable generalizations, all undergoing rigorous testing (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). Similar to positivism, Bryman and Teevan (2005) and Walliman (2006), also introduce Realism, an epistemological stance that considers researchers are unable to directly observe and

study social structure. As such, they can only depend on what can be observed indirectly, transferring their observations in theoretical terms (Walliman, 2006).

Anti-Positivism, as the name itself presents it, appeared as researchers looked for an epistemological approach to research that countered positivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Interpretivism views subjective meaning as indispensable to social actions, therefore research should be centred on interpretations and meanings (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). Both Anti-Positivists and Interpretivists consider that the social world can only be researched by studying the meanings and connotations given to it by individuals directly involved (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

If we were to follow the subjective-objective dimension given by Burrell and Morgan (1979) in regard to approaches to social science, our choice of Constructionism as an ontological approach should translate in either Anti-positivism or Interpretivism in our epistemological approach. It should be noted that this dualism has received criticism. One of the criticisms brought argued that it does not allow for researchers to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods (Deetz, 1996). It also does not offer researchers the possibility to take epistemological and ontological stances that have both subjective and objective elements (Deetz, 1996).

As with the ontological assumptions, although we gravitate towards the subjective axis, we cannot consider our approach as completely Interpretivistic. We agree that the female gamers actively shape and challenge the world of online gaming. Furthermore, if we are to investigate them, their perceived challenges and opportunities, etc., we cannot dismiss the fact that each individual is different, and as such, although many might encounter the same experiences, they might not label them similarly. At the same time, we are aware of the fact that online gaming presents itself with specific patterns, and there are also gender preconceptions, which in turn affect the female gamer and her perception.

As previously stated, Burrell and Morgan (1979) present three sets of assumptions that together affect the methodological approach a researcher has towards his/her study. This third set is associated, albeit not similar, with ontological and epistemological assumptions, and focus solely on human nature (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Depending on one's approach to social science, (s)he can adhere to either Voluntarism, the subjective approach, or Determinism, representing the objective approach (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Again, we can see the affinity Burrell and Morgan (1979) have towards presenting social research assumptions in two opposing sets.

Determinism implies that social actors respond in a “mechanistic or even deterministic fashion” when faced with the social world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:2). This further implies that social actors are solely products of their environment, conditioned by outside forces (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). On the opposite side, Voluntarism states that the social actor is “the creator of his environment, the controller as opposed to the controlled” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:2).

Based on what we have mentioned so far relating to social actors, their environment and interactions, we consider that a clear distinction between Determinism and Voluntarism cannot be made. As such, it can be argued that Determinism affects female gamers, as their game experience, interactions, etc., will likely be influenced by the game they play, the server they are on, as well as the culture they come from. However, the nature of their choices will remain mostly voluntary.

With this we conclude our research assumptions, and move towards presenting our research methods.

Research methods

As Burrell and Morgan (1979) have stated, the above depicted assumptions affect the manner in which a researcher will choose and apply research methods. So now that the preliminary assumptions have been discussed, it is time we discuss and argue our choice of methods.

Ackroyd and Hughes (1992) refer to methods as “tools designed and thereby suited for particular jobs” (:25). One must only define his problem and then decide on what tool is best suited for identifying the answer (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). Naturally, some tools are only suited, or work best, for some types of research as opposed to others, therefore the nature of a study dictates the nature of used methods (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992).

The nature of the study also dictates the manner in which knowledge is to be acquired, if it is done through deductive reasoning, belonging to Rationalism, or inductive reasoning, associated with Empiricism (Walliman, 2006). Deductive research has its starting point in a hypothesis, the aim being that of testing it (6 and Bellamy, 2012). Inductive research begins with a question, from which a statement arises following properly conducted analysis (6 and Bellamy, 2012).

In our case for example, the raw data we will have at our disposal will consist of experiences, thoughts and opinions, which are acquired empirically. We will therefore rely on inductive reasoning in analysing the data.

In regard to methodological issues, a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is made (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). Each is coupled with specific epistemological and ontological assumptions, based on the subjective-objective dimension. As such, quantitative research is generally associated with deduction, positivism and objectivism, all in the objective dimension, while

qualitative research is put together with induction, interpretivism and constructionism, residing in the subjective dimension (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006).

Curtis and Curtis (2011) furthers the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research by adding the following: Qualitative research uses writing, therefore data becomes words, narratives, texts, etc.; Quantitative research relies on numbers, data becoming statistical formulae; Qualitative research studies “the multiple characteristics of a few” (:6), emphasising the richness of examples, while quantitative research studies a small number of characteristics belonging to many, emphasizing “the parsimony of accounts” (:6).

However, a divide exists between researchers seeing qualitative and quantitative methods as fundamentally contrasting, and those seeing them as capable of interlacing (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). Bryman and Teevan (2005) further exemplify that research studies in which quantitative methods are pervasive, may in fact also display qualitative characteristics, and vice versa. Although the present project will not include quantitative data, we believe that a large scale survey, a quantitative tool, could verify the accuracy of our findings, therefore quantitative research can complement a qualitative one, and vice versa.

Like Berg (2001) states, “qualitative research takes much longer, requires greater clarity of goals during design stages, and cannot be analysed by running computer programs” (:2). But at the same time it offers a “greater depth of understanding” (Berg, 2001:2), which we also strive to gain at the completion of our research.

But we believe that there is more to research methods than simply choosing between qualitative or quantitative methods. What also needs to be discussed is the manner in which these methods will be selected and how they will be employed. For example, Mäyrä presents the concept “toolbox of methods” (Mäyrä, 2008:155), stating that gathering your method tools is as important as carrying the research itself. Game

studies have only recently appeared, and Mäyrä (2008) brings into our attentions how methods can vary depending on the field of research.

The Humanities field for example, relies on methods which focus on the interpretation of games, as they are seen as “texts, or in textual terms as complex and multimodal signs that are constituted by other sign” (Mäyrä, 2008:157). The Social sciences methods on the other hand, aim at investigating the relation between games and players, paying special attention to players (Mäyrä, 2008:158). The Design research methods treat the game as a simple “software products as well as creative industry” (Mäyrä, 2008:162). Last but not least, Mäyrä (2008) also states that game playing can be seen as a method, and that “any student who is serious about gaining deeper expertise and understanding in the field of game studies needs to play a wide range of games” (Mäyrä, 2008:165)

As Social sciences students, we identify ourselves in what Mäyrä (2008) states, namely that the methods we will employ aim at investigating the relationship between games, in our case a game genre, and it’s players, in our case female gamers. We also take it further, in the sense that in investigation this relationship, we will also look at the space in which it takes place, and will investigate the degree to which gender influences it. As for the last statement we extracted from Mäyrä (2008), we fully agree with it, as we believe it would be difficult for us to understand and interpret their experiences without having ourselves experienced gaming. Furthermore, having experience with MMORPGs will help us in building our interview guide, and lastly interviewing them, which is the method we choose to employ in order to extract and gather our data.

Interviews

Interviews are one of the most often employed methods for gathering data (Bryman and Teevan, 2005), and are regarded as powerful tools for investigation (Bryman, 2007). As Kvale (1996) says, “if you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?” (:1).

Interviews can be seen as dialogues, an exchange of questions and answers, from which the researcher tries to draw data as raw material (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992; Bryman, 2007; Kvale, 2007). Except that it “is like the half of a very good conversation” (Schutz, 1967:113, as quoted by Curtis and Curtis, 2011:31), as we focus solely on what the other person has to say (Curtis and Curtis, 2011).

Although time consuming, due to the process itself of interviewing, transcribing, coding and analysis, interviews are preferred as they indeed offer the researcher a vast amount of data (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Curtis and Curtis, 2011).

In order to extract as much information as possible, the interviewee has to be given the opportunity to express his opinions, feelings and experiences. Because of this requirement, interviews must have a flexible frame (Curtis and Curtis, 2011; Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Kvale, 2007). This flexibility can be found in semi-structured or unstructured interviews, which comprise the two main types in qualitative interviews (Bryman and Teevan, 2005).

Unstructured interviews are depicted by Bryman and Teevan (2005) as taking place with the researcher asking as little as one question, and the interviewee being nudged to answer freely. The researcher can further encourage the interviewee to elaborate on certain topics by simply pointing out what he find interesting, a practice which we can identify as being similar to the one-way conversation idea proposed by Schutz (1967:113, as quoted by Curtis and Curtis, 2011:31). However similar to a discussion though, as Curtis and Curtis (2011) points out, it will maintain focus on the themes of the research.

A semi-structured interview is defined by Kvale (2007) “as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (:8). It relies more on an interview guide, where the main topics are detailed upon, however, the questions might not follow a specific order (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). The researcher might feel it appropriate to insert his questions randomly, picking up cues on what theme should be tackled next from the interviewee, however, the wording will remain similar, so as to help coding the resulting data (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992).

These types of interviews do not come without disadvantages and specific requirements. As previously mentioned, they have a tendency to be highly time consuming, due to interviewing, transcribing, coding, etc. (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Curtis and Curtis, 2011). During the interview itself, the researcher must ensure that the tone of voice is friendly, without allowing the interview to turn into a casual conversation, steering it towards the researchers' points of interest (Kvale, 2007). There are also moral and ethical considerations to attend to: making the interviewee feels comfortable, respecting his/her integrity, showing transparency (Curtis and Curtis, 2011; Kvale, 2007). All this we feel obligated to take into account, while we try to extract relevant and truthful information.

As we interview our participants, we will aim meeting the interviewer criteria proposed by Kvale (1996), and further improved on by Bryman and Teevan (2005), namely: an interviewer has to be knowledgeable, structuring, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, remembering, interpreting, balanced, and ethically sensitive.

Research design

Perri 6 and Bellamy (2012) offer a thorough account of what a research design is and what its attributes should be: “(1) the specification of the way in which data will be created, collected, constructed, coded, analysed and interpreted (2) to enable the researcher to draw warranted descriptive, explanatory or interpretive inferences ... based on a core set of virtues for each type of inference” (:20). It should furthermore be reliable, valid and replicable (6 and Bellamy, 2012; Bryman and Teevan, 2005).

Walliman (2006) present two types of research designs, flexible and fixed, whereas 6 and Bellamy (2012) see research designs as being either experimental or observational. Fixed designs are associated with a quantitative approach, their research methods being experimental or non-experimental (Walliman, 2006). Although quantitative data may be used in flexible designs as well, they are generally associated with qualitative data, the methods used being that of case studies and ethnographies (Walliman, 2006).

Experimental research can be equated to fixed designs, but 6 and Bellamy (2012) add that the data it works with is a product of the procedures carried by the researcher. On the other hand, observational research can work with data known as naturalistic, “that would exist in the same form whether or not the researcher carrier out any procedure to collect them and analyse them” (6 and Bellamy, 2012:74).

As far as types of research designs go, we aim at using a flexible research design, not only due to the fact that it belongs to the qualitative dimension we have employed so far, but because we believe it will help us garner relevant and sufficient data, as well as provide the framework necessary for the analysis.

In each of the two overall types of research designs, there are several main designs to choose from: experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case-study (Bryman

and Teevan, 2005, Walliman, 2006). Of these four, we will only discuss the fourth, being the only one relevant in this situation, as our research project is a study case.

The basic case study implies the analysis of a single case, in a detailed and intensive manner (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). One might ask what a case is, so 6 and Bellamy (2012) offer the following attributes: first of all, it is defined and bounded by the researcher in his attempt to investigate a phenomenon. It has to be complex in order to allow for an analysis of interacting forces, and bounded in a manner that allows certain values to contrast between elements (6 and Bellamy, 2012).

A case study can be done on a single community, organization, family, or even a person or an event (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). A researcher engaged in a case study can make use of both qualitative and quantitative data, using multiple methods of collecting data (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Walliman, 2006). However, we have already determined that we will be using qualitative methods throughout our project, namely interviews. “When the predominant research strategy is qualitative, a case study tends to take an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research ... ”(Bryman and Teevan, 2005:43).

Going back on the types of people clusters that can be the object of a case study, we feel it is important to further explain our case choice. As can be seen from figure 1, which shows the prevalent online game clusters, gamers cannot be viewed as simple gamers, just as games are not just games. When looking at the big circle, representing online games, different kinds of game genres are portrayed. Each of these genres can make up a case, just as well as one specific game can. One of the reasons we decided to opt for Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) is that we believe that the manner in which the games within this genre are played offers players a wide array of experiences, thus allowing us to investigate more aspects of females in gaming.

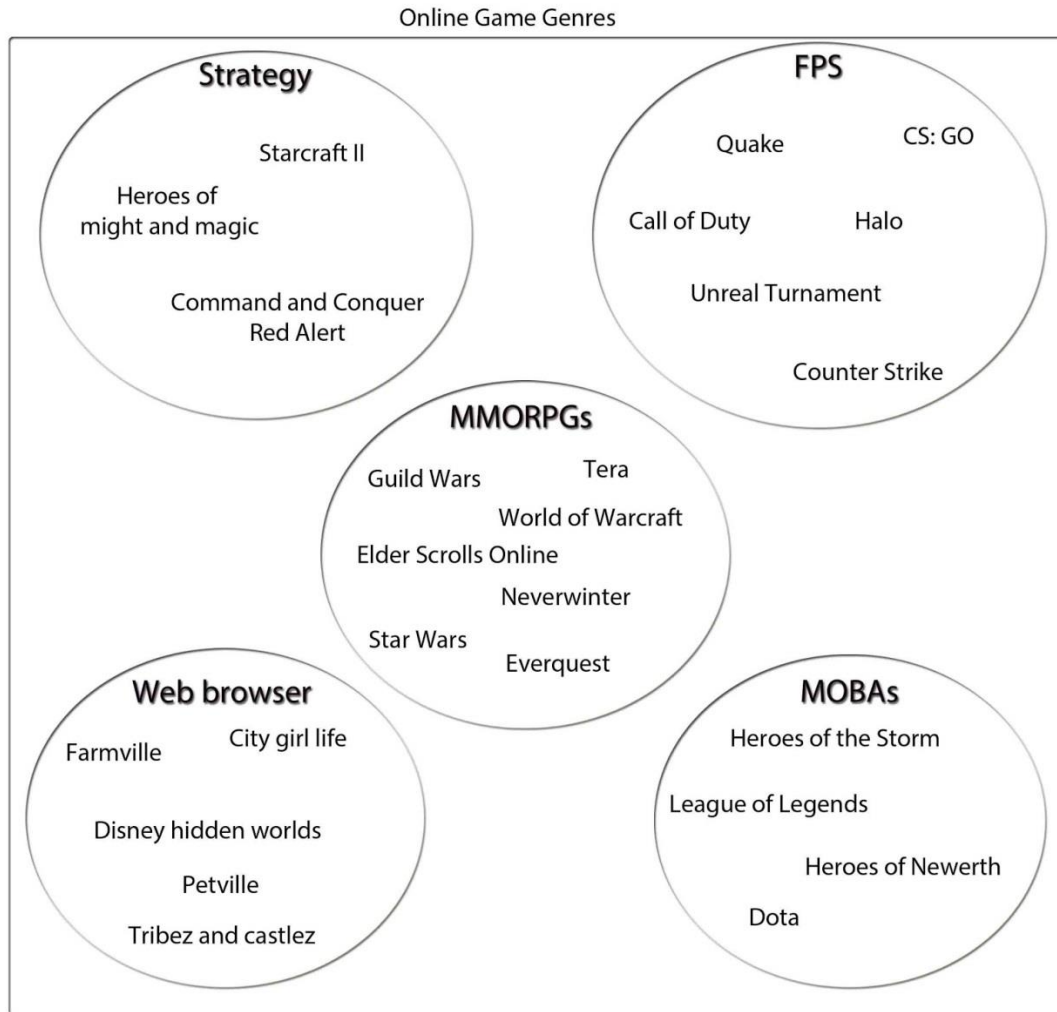


Figure 2 - Clusters of game genres (own model)

We also want to specify that within other genres, certain elements, which are vital for our research, are either present to a small degree, or lack completely. First Person Shooter (FPS) games and games within the Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) genre for example, have little to no interaction with other players, unless those players are already acquaintances in real life. The absence of a well-developed interaction aspect could prove a great set back in our project. Thus, we opted for studying female gamers within a genre that provides its players with a platform on which they can interact, the possibility to group for quests, as well as engaging the game as a single player.

Discussions have arisen around the issue of verifying the validity, reliability and replicability of case studies (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). Qualitative biased researchers have a tendency to ignore the importance of said factors, whilst researchers prone towards using quantitative methods tend to make efforts in meeting these criteria (Bryman and Teevan, 2005).

Bryman and Teevan (2005) also point out towards the difficulty of proving the external validity and generalizability of case study findings, whilst also mentioning that it is however not the purpose of researchers to prove or achieve them. “The aim instead is to generate an intensive examination of a single case and then to engage in a theoretical analysis” (Bryman and Teevan, 2005:44).

However, according to Flyvbjerg (2006), the validity and reliability of case studies can be ensured, providing of course that the research was properly done. In this sense, we have chosen to present two of the examples he gives. From Flyvbjerg’s (2006) point of view, one of the way in which study cases can be seen in is as “Black swans”. In an example Flyvbjerg (2006) gives, while studying the “affluent worker”, John Goldthorpe et al. (1968, 1969, as quoted by Flyvbjerg, 2006) focused on a case considered to be as favourable as possible. They did so based on the belief that if their thesis proved to be false here, then in all likelihood, it would be false in less favourable cases as well (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In a second example, case studies can be seen as critical cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg (2006) shows the case of an occupational medicine clinic that wanted to investigate people working with organic solvents, as they attempted to study the connection this might have to brain damage in said people. In doing so, they chose to study a single case, a model enterprise which followed all safety regulations with strictness (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In doing so, they proposed the idea that if people working in this facility presented brain damage, then it was highly likely that the same issues would appear in facilities that did not follow safety protocols as rigorously (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In regard to our project, we are aware of the fact that our findings in relation to female gamers within the MMORPG Genre may not be applicable towards all female gamers. Based on Flyvbjergs (2006) model however, we believe it to be a good starting point in investigating and understanding a distinguishable set of gamers, as our study case may prove to be a black swan.

Methodical approach

Now that our views over the world of social science research have been presented, together with the selected research methods and design, the time has come for us to present our framework for the research. In the following sub-chapters, we will present to you the steps we will take in order for us to gather the necessary data, as well as analyse it.

Literature and theory review

A first step in any research paper is acquiring more knowledge about the field one aims at investigating. The literature review can be used as means to investigate what is known about the area of interest within a research paper, as well as what can be further investigated, in order to increase the body of research in the respective field (Kirby, Greaves and Reid, 2006). Consequently, it can be used to establish a theoretical framework for a research paper, as well as provide methods and models that can be employed during the research (Kirby, Greaves and Reid, 2006).

In our case, we believe that the literature review is a good way to identify what has been done in the field, as well as the type of methods and theories employed thus far. We believe it will help us ensure that our area of interest has not been approach before, and it will provide references to which we can compare our own findings. Therefore, we will look at articles and books dealing with female gamers, in relation to gender and gaming behaviour.

Furthermore, we believe it is important for us to look at theories concerning globalisation and gender identity in relation to our particular field, as well as try to identify theories relating to women and gaming. However, as the field of gaming research is still new, relevant theories might not have been linked to gaming. We will therefore look into theories pertaining to globalization and gender, and use what can be connected to our field of research.

Field research

Every analysis has some predetermined steps: gathering relevant data, coding it accordingly, analysing it, with each step encompassing several steps of its own. We will now present the way in which we intend to carry out said steps. Furthermore, although some of the steps will be presented as a unit during this chapter, we will most likely approach them separately during our analysis, in order to ensure we have given sufficient consideration to each of them. By sufficient we mean exploring each step to the point where mentioning further aspects of it will not produce new information.

Interview guide

As previously mentioned, we believe that interviews can serve us best as a tool for gathering data. In order for us to ensure the fact that we will receive sufficient and relevant data for answering our own research questions, the interview guide will be built around them.

Bryman and Teevan (2005) stress the importance of approaching interviews as means through which the interviewees “frame and understand issues and events” (:184), which is what we strive to do. So it makes sense that the interview itself is given a sort of frame, in our case, building it on the main themes of our research. Ackroyd and Hughes (1992) and Bryman and Teevan (2005) believe that in order to understand the context from which the interviewees derive their experience, an interview should take off with a structured, closed set of questions, regarding age, marital status, education, etc. However, we believe that some of the specificities of the present research make this type of questions irrelevant. As we have already argued, the world of MMORPGs is a global, online one, where people meet without carrying their real life persona as an introduction card. Therefore, when analysing the behaviour of people in the space of MMORPGs, it seems futile to focus on such details. Although we hold this belief, we will enquire about our subjects’ age, nationality, and occupation, as we acknowledge the fact that connections might be found, which we cannot perceive yet.

The standardised, introductory questions are followed by a section, or sections, meant at extracting valid and qualitative data (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). This section has to meet certain requirements: the questions should help the conversation flow, making it easy for the interviewee to share her knowledge, while at the same time answering our research questions (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). The language has to be comprehensible, relevant (Bryman and Teevan, 2005), and naturally, it helps that as researchers, we have previous experience within the field of MMORPGs, and can therefore better relate to their experiences.

All the above mentioned aspects will be taken into consideration as we build our interview guide. Furthermore, as we mentioned previously in our project, during our interviews, we intend on meeting the interviewer criteria proposed by Kvale (1996) and by Bryman and Teevan (2005), which states that one should aim at being: knowledgeable, structuring, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, remembering, interpreting, balanced, and ethically sensitive

Participant selection

We aim at interviewing a minimum of 8 participants, which will all be female gamers, to make sure a sufficient amount of data is retrieved. However, quantity is not sufficient, therefore a careful selection of participants is important to us. Our participants will have to meet certain criteria, in order for us to ensure that they can answer our questions, and thus that we have pertinent data to work with.

This chapter will contain said criteria, as well as the means through which we aim at acquiring participants for our interviews. Once these steps have been met, we will introduce our participants, while keeping their identity anonymous. Since gaming can take place on illegal servers as well, we believe that ensuring our participants their anonymity can be used as incentive to acquire more information about their experience on said servers. At the same time, we believe that introducing our participants to the reader can help him better relate to their experiences, as well as acquire an

understanding of the type of people and personalities that join the virtual space of MMORPGs.

Coding data and creating labels

After the interviews and the transcribing are done, the next essential part is coding the resulting data, and identifying labels. In doing so, we will find inspiration for coding from authors such as LeCompte (2000), Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), and Yin (2011), while at the same time trying to ensure our creative thoughts are not stifled. We do so as we find ourselves intrigued by one of Yins (2011) statements:

“OK, so now comes that magical moment. Somehow, you are going to amass and sort all of your qualitative data in some efficient manner. You are going to follow some instructional cookbook that makes your procedure rigorous. And this analytic process will lead directly to your ability to draw the needed conclusions for your study and to write them up.” (Yin, 2011:176)

He then proceeds to elaborate, by saying that in front of such a possibility, some would wish it true, hoping that is possible to analyse data as easily as using a computer software designed for it (Yin, 2011). Others however, would feel that by doing so they would lose the freedom and opportunities provided by a qualitative research (Yin, 2011). As we approach our own analysis, we admit to wanting it to be as easy as uploading data to a computer, while at the same time being able to take full advantage of our own creative process.

This being said, we will approach our initial phase of analysis in a manner similar to that proposed by Yin (2011), firstly disassembling the data, which will then be reassembled in a manner that suits our needs. We view the process of data disassembling very similar to Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) data condensation. It represents “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting,

and/or transforming the data” (Miles, Huberman and Saldanas, 2014:12). By doing so, the data becomes stronger, as meaning is condensed into a smaller space, that of a word (Miles, Huberman and Saldanas, 2014).

LeCompte (2000) associates this step of data coding with solving a jigsaw puzzle, where you have to separate and sort the pieces: “the sky chunks, the wheatfield chunks, and the outside borders, and finally, identify the linking pieces so that the big chunks can be tied together in a coherent facsimile of a painting” (:147). In doing the coding, we will follow the same principle, as we will colour similar words and sentences, and then separate them in colour piles. “Frequency”, “omission” and/or “declaration” (LeCompte, 2000, 148) will help us in identifying codable words and sentences, or as the author puts it, what is a “sky chunk”, a “wheatfield chunk”, etc.

In our case, we believe the categories that we will create, will be influenced by the research questions (the virtual space, gender, etc.), but we are also aware of the fact that our reviewed literature and theory might also influence them. This is due to the fact that we will be more knowledgeable once the coding is done. Also, we will not attempt at forcing categories to look similar to our main focus points, as we believe that by doing so, we might overlook some interesting aspects.

Obviously some “sky chunks” might not look like other “sky chunks”, so it is important to have some rules on how to build stable sets of items. It is LeCompte (2000) that once again comes with an idea on how that might be achieved. For example, one can identify individual items such as chocolate, lollipops, taffy, etc., and bundle them together as Taxonomic Name Sweets (LeCompte, 2000). Another way of doing it would be to create labels based on the connections that exist between items (LeCompte, 2000). Such an example would be: “X is a kind of Y”, “X is a place in Y”, “X is a part of Y”, “X is a result of Y”, etc. (LeCompte, 2000:149), therefore all this Xs can be labelled as Y.

As exciting as coding will most likely be, we will look forward to the challenge of making an initial sense out of them. Therefore, once the chunks will have been separated in categories, the statements of our participants will be condensed into labels. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldanas (2014) qualitative data can be condensed, or labelled as we chose to call it, in many ways: “through selection, through summary or paraphrase, through being subsumed in a larger pattern, and so on” (:12). In our case, the labels will be created by summarizing the words and phrases into preferably one or two words.

At the end of this chapter, we will be able to present the reader our categories, with their respective labels.

Creating and refining themes

After retrieving the answers, colour coding the content, and labelling data, we have one last step, which is trying to find meaning, as well as connections between labels and categories, so we can get a better understanding of the bigger picture. LeCompte (2000) suggests that these connections can be transformed into patterns, which will consequently form our themes, a process which Yin (2011) refers to as reassembling data. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldanas (2014) this is the second step in the data analysis process, which they name data display. It implies data being assembled in an organized and compressed manner, which allows conclusions to be drawn upon (Miles, Huberman and Saldanas, 2014).

Here we will look at the connections between the labels and categories in relation to our research questions, thus creating themes that can provide relevant meaning. When looking at our label categories, we will shape and modify them so as to fit our points of interest, namely globalization, gender and female gaming behaviour. Other themes might emerge, but they will be analysed solely based on their relevancy to our main themes.

Once our themes will have been created, we believe that they can be further condensed. By this we do not imply the themes themselves being further merged, but rather the labels within them being reprocessed. We believe this is a step that can only be done at this point in the project, as the labels can now be viewed in light of the main themes in our project.

By refining our themes, we will identify the main labels, thus creating sub-themes, as well as better understand the relationship between them and our main themes. We reiterate that the labels are simply condensed meanings that our participants have shared with us, so by identifying the sub-themes within our themes, as well as the relationship between them, we can better analyse them.

Interpreting data

Coding, labelling and creating themes will be only the first part of our analysis process, albeit a very extensive one. The next part of our analysis, presented here, will heavily rely on the themes we will have previously identified, as we take each of them and interpret the findings. We will do so as we believe that this will help us in generating knowledge that will prove relevant for the study of women in gaming.

Although the presentation of this process has been done in a very succinct manner, we expect the chapter itself to be very extensive. By this point we aim at having a proper understanding of female gaming behaviour, as it is manifested in a globalized virtual space.

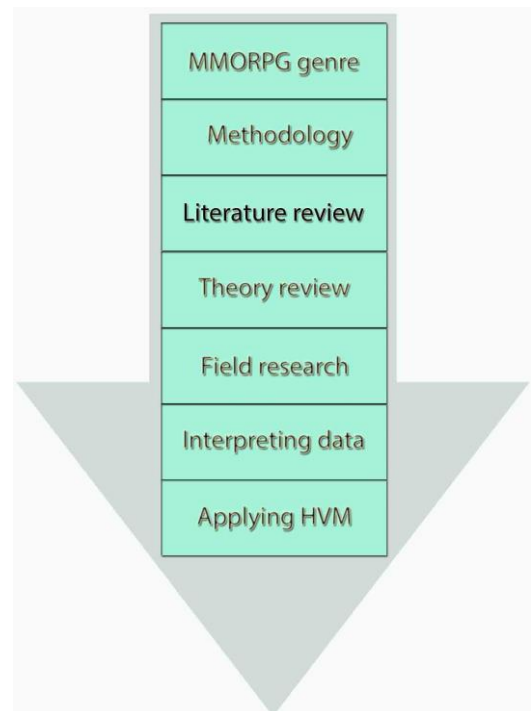
Applying the Hierarchical value Map

At this point, although we should have a very thorough understanding of female gaming behaviour, we believe it can be furthered. Therefore, by applying the Hierarchical Value Map model (Batey, 2008) on the findings regarding female consumer behaviour, we believe we will be able to view this matter from a different angle.

The Hierarchical Value Map is generally used to discover brand meanings, in order for companies to better position their brands on the market (Batey, 2008). However, we believe we can use this model in our research, as it can determine what kind of value women receive from playing games.

Literature review

We have identified several articles and books, which dealt with subjects ranging from computer games for girls to measuring gaming time for females, as opposed to males, and discussing gender roles in online games. The methods used for gathering and analysing data ranged from qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, to quantitative ones, such as surveys, statistics analysis, etc. As far as theories are concerned, the predominant theme was that of gender identity in gaming, with very few references being made towards the idea of gaming as a globalized space, and even fewer towards what attracts women to gaming.



As can be seen from our problem formulation, we are interested in three main areas in relation to female gamers: the globalized space in which they act and perform; their gaming experience; the manner in which gender affects their behaviour in relation to gaming. Therefore, while reviewing the literature, we tried to view it in light of how the research papers approached our points of interest.

Games as a virtual space

As far as our reviewed papers go, we have not identified many references regarding online gaming as a virtual space. However, the idea was discussed in several articles, as online gaming represented the space within which the object of their research was manifesting itself.

In her research, named “‘Troubling’ gender in virtual gaming space”, Todd (2012) approaches the concept of “cyber/space”, as she investigated the relationship between gaming and gender. In doing so, she acknowledges the fact that videogames have led to the creation of a virtual environment (Todd, 2012). She further adds that often, these virtual environments mirror real-life landscapes, “as well as sociocultural values and norms” (Todd, 2012:102).

As they tackle the study of sexism in online video games, Fox and Tang (2013) also use the concept of online environment, as they also attribute it with social dynamics. Furthermore, they present the idea that gaming, mainly MMOs (massively multiplayer online games) allow millions of players to come into contact, which is how the online environment was created (Fox and Tang, 2013). This online environment is endowed with social dynamics to such a degree that it allows for beliefs to be shared and even affect different players, such as sexist beliefs (Fox and Tang, 2013).

Bryce and Rutter (2010) discuss the creation of networks of social relationships, as online gaming communities create clan groups and social networks. Online gaming also creates a hybrid of “simultaneous immersion in public and private leisure spaces” (Bryce and Rutter, 2010:10). Another interesting aspect is the anonymity that it can provide, which can bypass certain stereotypes and behaviours when engaging in a quest, campaign, etc. with other players (Bryce and Rutter, 2010).

Women and gaming

We have discovered that the study of female players and their interests in gaming have been only briefly discussed. Only two of the identified articles approach these themes, and they address similar topics, namely that of gender as seen in relation to free time, frequency and intensity in playing video games. Both research papers used quantitative methods, which suggests an objective approach to what attracts women to gaming. Winn and Heeter (2009) aimed at linking together the study of gender differences in time use and gaming tendencies, whereas Terlecki et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between gender and the frequency and intensity with which

they play computer games. Although not their main interest, they have also unearthed some facts about women and gaming preferences.

Using the help of a survey administered to over 2000 undergraduates, Terlecki et al. (2010) discovered that despite several differences existing between men and women, as far as their sample goes, similarities were also uncovered. For example, it was discovered that men and women look for similar features and experiences in video gaming, even between potential games, that they would have created for their specific gender. Winn and Heeter (2009) conducted their survey on only 279 undergraduates, with the help of which they either confirmed or infirmed some of their hypotheses. The main findings of their research are that, for one, females spend less time on playing games throughout their developing years, although both genders would play more if time was accessible.

Furthermore, Winn and Heeter (2009) point out that due to their time being divided in short blocks of time, female gamers also have the tendency to avoid games that require a large portion of time for the completion of just one quest. Both researchers also point out that female players have a tendency to engage in games for social interaction, and as means to form relationships (Winn and Heeter, 2009; Terlecki et al., 2010). Therefore, the social aspect plays a big role in women gaming.

Although we do not question the relevancy of their findings, we do however question their applicability on other groups, such as people over 30, or in different geographical locations, such as Europe. The reason for mentioning these two examples is that, as Terlecki et al. (2010) mentions, it has been found that certain game genres, such as MMORPG, are heavily female dominated, with several surveys showing that adult females play for long periods of time. This is inconsistent with what Winn and Heeter (2009) propose, namely that women only play for short intervals.

As far as geographical location is considered, both researches were conducted in United States universities, one being “an urban, northeastern university” (Terlecki et al.,

2010:26), the other “a large Midwestern university” (Winn and Heeter, 2009:5). There is a possibility, which we cannot ignore, that there are differences between players in different regions, due to different cultural norms.

Gender roles and stereotypes in gaming

We would like to firstly return to Todd (2012), who investigates the relationship between gender and gaming, more precisely, how women negotiate their online identity. The study relied on qualitative data, extracted by following and interviewing eight women, aged 30 and older. Based on her research and analysis, Todd (2012) concludes that the ease and mundanity with which players can gender-switch within gaming spaces, means that the overall gender perceptions remain mostly unchallenged. However, it also sheds light on the fact that male characters are either created, or perceived, as easier to play with, more effective. Furthermore, the subjects also admitted to preferring female avatars, whereas previous literature, according to Todd (2012), showed that men are comfortable with playing avatars of both genders, sexy female characters being very successful.

The last three articles identified in our literature review focus on the research of gender dynamics and stereotypes, sexism, and hypermasculinity. The first one, written by Fox and Tang (2013), investigated types of personality traits and games, as well as other demographic variables, in order to determine what predicts a sexist attitude towards women playing video games. Supporting data was gathered through the medium of an online survey, to which 301 male and female participants answered.

Secondly, Bryce and Rutter (2010) were also interested in gender dynamics within gaming, believing that evidence exists, suggesting the reinforcement and reproduction of societal gender roles in the gaming space. They base their research on secondary data alone.

In the last identified article, Salter and Blodgett (2012) chose to do a case study of an extreme example of gender portrayal in gaming, that of hypermasculinity. They

focused their attention on an online, game related, incident, gathering data from several sources: blogs, forums, Twitter, other Web sites, amounting to almost 300 pages.

The conclusions from all three papers resemble greatly. Salter and Blodgett (2012) discovered that female gamers are expected to fill strict roles in the gaming scene, and are punished for stepping outside them. They are seen as sex objects (ex. booth babes), at times invisible, diminished with phrases such as “There are no women on the internet” (Salter and Blodgett, 2012:411), or are seen as the enemy, female gamers being belittled, assaulted, called irrational and hysterical when attempting to have their opinion heard.

Fox and Tang (2013) concluded that the virtual world provides men with the opportunity to display a dominant attitude that may not be allowed or possible in the real world. Due to the masculine atmosphere created, players feel the need for heterosexual self-presentation, which translates in making sexual advances to female players. It can also inflate to the point where they need to assert their dominance over women, turning men aggressive, even towards real women. Fox and Tang (2013) further reference previous research, stating that a misogynistic atmosphere proved harmful to both men and women, with women reporting negative psychological effects in such an environment even if they are not targeted.

Bryce and Rutter (2010) suggest that gender perception within gaming are changing, contrasting Fox and Tang (2013), who believe it is unclear whether such a change can occur naturally, in the absence of harassment policies. However, Bryce and Rutter (2010) also admit to the fact that the female gamers show a keen interest in gaming despite the attitudes and behaviour of male gamers, which implies them as being still highly problematic. Bryce and Rutter (2010) also point out that different game genres can display different gender perceptions and norms within their male and female players, due to their game mechanics and competitive aspects.

One of the two identified books, *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, was edited in 1998 by Cassel and Jenkins, and it is built around a set of interviews, aiming at better defining the gaming scene of girls. It also presents an instance, in which interviewed female undergraduates from MIT defined themselves as not feeling like real girls, since they “hadn’t been raised as girls” and “real girls don’t like computers” (Cassel and Jenkins, 1998:321). In our opinion, this comes to prove that the gendered attributions of girls are very strict.

Our opinion is further reinforced when the editors present a different real life encounter, in which a girl tries to show her gaming prowess in front of four boys (Cassel and Jenkins, 1998). The first instinct of the boys is to ignore the girl, which can be attributed to young boys generally not being willing to talk to girls (Cassel and Jenkins, 1998). However, it is followed by one of the boys remarking “What about that Barbie game?” (Cassel and Jenkins, 1998:329), which acts as a confirmation of existing stereotypes at even a small age. These types of encounters are presented in different stages of the book, reiterating the belief that “girls shouldn’t be gamers” (Cassel and Jenkins, 1998, p. 337)

The last addition to our literature review is *Gender and Sexuality in Online Game Cultures, Passionate Play*, co-written by Sundén and Sveningsson and published in 2012. A pervasive theme throughout the articles reviewed so far can also be identified in this book, namely that integration proves to be difficult for female gamers. They are more than often seen as inferior players, mascots, or something to brighten the atmosphere. An attempt to gain the same status as male players often means to discard one’s femininity. As far as expressing one’s type of femininity, the queer ethnography came to show that it is possible, as the races within the studied game, *World of Warcraft*, allowed female gamers to associate with different female typologies. The blood elf would represent the overtly sexual female, the orc and tauren depicts the butch females, with every other type of female identity finding a mirror image in one of the other races. However, as a previous article discussed, gender bending is seen as

normal activity within games, therefore, an avatar could have little influence in equalizing gender within the gaming scene (Todd, 2012).

What have we learned?

The reviewed literature has revealed several concepts about females in relation to gaming, which has given us a better understanding of the environment our future subjects face. As such, one of the concepts unveiled showed that the social aspect influences the gaming behaviour of women (Winn and Heeter, 2009; Terlecki et al., 2010).

A second concept deals with women and stereotyping, and encompasses several roles appointed to women in gaming. Some of the most pervasive stereotypes are: “girls shouldn’t be gamers” (Cassel and Jenkins, 1998:337); “women are (...) outsiders (...) violating normative sex role behaviour simply by participating in many networked games” (Fox and Tang, 2013:315); “the feminine as nontechnical and irrelevant to digital space” (Salter and Blodgett, 2012:408), “woman as sex object (...) as invisible (...) as the enemy” (Salter and Blodgett, 2012:411). These stereotypes translate in women having a difficult time penetrating the gaming scene, often having to renounce their femininity in order to be seen at the same level as their male counterparts (Sundén and Sveningsson, 2012).

The third concept is similar, in that it deals with gender and gender portrayal, but it refers to women, men, and sexism. Fox and Tang (2013) elaborate on norms that can predict sexist behaviour, and discovered in the first instance that the virtual world evolved in such a manner as to reward masculine behaviour, and give men an outlet for said behaviour. Because of that, women are often harassed by men in search for positive reinforcement from their peers, or due to their desire to display power over women (Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012). Sexism can also be seen in the creation of games such as “Tentacles Bento”, where the main aim is to rape virtual schoolgirls for points (Salter and Blodgett, 2012). The term rape itself has become known as slang for victory (Salter and Blodgett, 2012).

All these leave even less space for women to inhabit and evolve in, as they do not want to be associated with such content. Furthermore, having to deal not only with stereotypes, but also sexism, puts into perspective why the percentage of women playing games is lower than that of men in certain genres, or why they avoid revealing their gender (Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010).

Last but not least, throughout several of our articles we have identified the concept that the virtual space represents a globalized space, where different game genres, or even games, can create separate territories (Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010). Gaming can take place in public spaces such as the arcades, domestic space, and more recently, virtual space. As public space tends to be patriarchal, it comes as no surprise that women prefer the comfort of domestic space, through which they can also access the online, virtual space (Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010). These spaces are in continuous change, as gaming becomes more widespread, pulling in individuals with different cultural backgrounds. It is due to this amalgam of individuals that gaming can be seen as a globalized space, with its own norms and regulations.

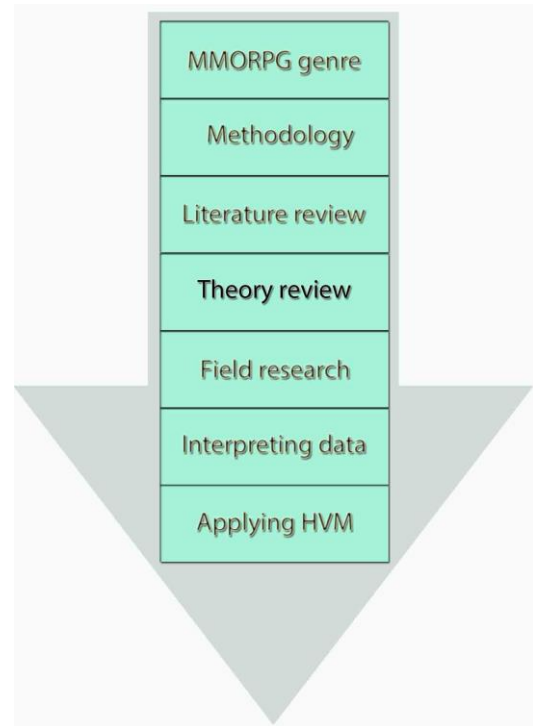
These are the main concepts we have extracted from our literature review, which we will use in our own investigation. As we move forward, it is important to also identify theories that can further help us in our investigation, which will be presented in the next chapter.

Theory review

In this chapter, we will present theories that will aid us in our research. In doing so, we will look into theories such as globalization, gender, and women and gaming, in relation to MMORPGs.

Globalization theory

Globalization has been researched by philosophers, sociologists, and economists alike, meaning that this specific term has been widely used, as well as given a wide array of meanings (Doku and Asante, 2011; Evans, 2011). Some believe that when boiled down, it's meaning is simple: it describes a process through which different cultures come into contact, and start influencing each other, by means of trade, migration, exchange of information and cultural artefacts (Doku and Asante, 2011; Lemert et al., 2010).



Other researchers claim that globalisation as we experience it today is a completely different phenomenon: parts of the world are more integrated than isolated, creating a system of cultural, economic, governmental, and information interdependence (Horton and Patapan, 2004; Evans, 2011). Alongside globalization came online interaction, which garnered momentum, creating virtual worlds (Evans, 2011; Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010).

It is the former aspect of globalization that we are interested in, namely the creation and existence of virtual worlds. We believe that through online interaction, people from different geographical locations create a new space, defined by it being

globalized and displaying new types of rules, regulations and culture. This is backed up by Evans (2011), as well as some of the researchers whose papers we have reviewed (Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010).

As Evans (2011), we further believe that this virtual space is divided, like a continent, encompassing game spaces, forums, etc., which can further be divided in smaller spaces. Thus, we will venture in exploring the virtual, globalized space of MMORPGs, as we believe that for better understanding the female players, the context should first and foremost be understood.

It is also possible that, as they approach this new space, they might chose to present themselves differently, a topic which will be discussed in the following sub-chapter. However, before we approach this aspect, we should investigate whether or not this newly created space encourages women towards reinventing themselves, and on what premises. For example, Horton and Patapan (2004) state that globalization often acts as an enhancer, and gives us as an example the gender inequality existing in Hong Kong, where patriarchy has been, if not complemented, then to some degree modified by the industrial capitalism (Horton and Patapan, 2004). As the world of MMORPGs is already a globalized space, we cannot but ask ourselves what aspects of the social world have been enhanced within it, as it may affect the female introductory mannerism.

Gender identity theory

To begin and understand the role of gender in our research, we must first deconstruct this notion, and rebuilt it in a manner appropriate for us. First off, what is gender? According to the World Health Association (2015), where sex delimits the biological and physiological traits of men and women, gender defines the “socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes” (:1) of men and women. Thus, what is expected of men and women, masculinity and femininity, depends on the society and culture in which (s)he grew up (World Health Organization; About).

In her article on Gender paradoxes and power, Knudsen (2006) remarks that society as a whole, no matter the predominant culture, sees gender duality as a fundamental norm. This implies a heteronormative model, as Knudsen (2006) further writes, in which people take their place as either woman or man. When looked at from a biological standpoint, Knudsen (2006) notes how researchers tend to link this dualism with sex, portraying it as natural, but not worth of pondering upon. Following this logic, “women are born and develop by reason of their sex into femininity and motherliness as a natural process” (Knudsen, 2006:106). It will be interesting for us to observe how this dualism translates in the virtual space of MMORPGs.

A more troubling trend is that of associating women to sex, while men are referred to as human beings (Knudsen, 2006). In short, gender awareness implies focusing on women, whilst gender neutrality becomes associated with men (Knudsen, 2006). Women are no longer just students, teachers, but girlish students and female teachers, while men and boys keep the gender neutral terminology (Knudsen, 2006). As an example in this direction would be the distinction we ourselves have made between gamers and female gamers. As we progress with our research, we will investigate to see if these types of associations present themselves in online gaming, and if so, the degree to which they occur.

The work of Carol Gilligan, starting 1982 to 1989, is covered in *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues* (Ashmore and Jussim, 1997), as the authors present her findings, showing how, when reaching adolescence, females tend to suppress their voice. Whereas as children they openly expressed their opinions and preferences, nearing adulthood, they begin to display more of an unassertive, polite, and nice persona, albeit fake (Ashmore and Jussim, 1997). According to Gilligan, they go as far as surrounding themselves in a “cartography of lies” (Gilligan, 1982, as quoted by Ashmore and Jussim, 1997: 86). This type of attitude persists well into adulthood, where women have a tendency to value other people’s needs above their own (Ashmore and Jussim, 1997). It is worth thinking, from our perspective, about the extent to which such a behaviour

would be maintained in a virtual space, where a first exposure would not reveal ones gender.

In *Globalisation and Equality* (Horton and Patapan, 2004), we encountered another notion that we believe we could further take in our analysis. It is suggested in the book that women's subjectivity, agency and associated power has to be reclaimed over and over again in feminist theory and practice. We believe this implies that whenever a new field opens for women, they have to go through a process of affirming and asserting their gender as equal.

Video games and women

In her article on Virtual materiality, potentiality and subjectivity, Dorte Marie Søndergaard (2013), aims at learning more about how the conceptualization of virtual materiality takes place, as seen through avatars, weapons, etc., among other things. During her research, based on empirical data gathered through interviews and observations, Søndergaard (2013) stumbles upon and discusses how one of the participants, a 12-year-old boy, reacts to getting killed ingame. Thus, his reaction shows a great connection to his avatar, screaming "Ouch, it hurts - I'm bleeding" (Søndergaard, 2013:63) as his avatar dies. Søndergaard (2013) also noticed how his self gets immersed in the virtual world once the game begins, with the boundary between real and virtual being dissolved. Her study focused on children aged 8 to 14 years, therefore we believe it would be interesting to see how this type of immersion translates in the case of mature female gamers.

Evans (2011), makes the claim that "virtual worlds are many and varied" (:²), yet have in common the fact that they are globalized settings. Of these, gaming worlds are the most common type, which for Evans (2011) makes perfect sense, as games make money, have drama, help one to gain reputation, improve social standing amongst other gamers, in short, games are fun. More interestingly for us, he also makes the claim that

² The online version of *Information Dynamics in Virtual Worlds. Gaming and beyond*, by Evans, written in 2011, and published by Chandos Publishing in Great Britain, does not include page numbers.

as there are different genres, there are also different game types and gameplays. (Evans, 2011)

Also according to Evans (2011), a genre roughly defines the type of world and story a player plunges into. A game type relates to the structure of the game, whether it is strategy, simulation, puzzle, role-play, etc. (Evans, 2011). Last but not least, gameplay deals with the moment-by-moment experience of a player (Evans, 2011). We have already decided on the genre of interest for the present project, based on our experience, however, we believe that game types and gameplays are worth investigating based on the experiences of our interviewed participants.

Evans (2011) also discusses the act of 'showing up' in the virtual world. As Evans (2001) states, "'showing up' inworld is easy" (:³), as you can be whomever and however you want, and act whatever role you feel like, whenever you want to, just flip open the laptop, or turn on the computer, and login. This also translates into the choice of gender, which becomes de-sexed (Evans, 2011). Thus, players "pick the gender they wish to perform almost as lightly as they pick the colors of their garments, their beard particularities, or their shoe styles" (Evans, 2011:⁴). And although a division between character features based on their gender does exist, Evans (2011) believes that certain games confer the player a sense of "emotionally rich, age[less] and genderless game experience" (Kafai et al., 2008: 170, as quoted by Evans, 2011:⁵). We believe these are some of the aspects that we should also further investigate as part of our interviews.

In *Ethnographies of the Videogame*, when discussing the competitive aspect of games, Thornham (2011) states that female gamers are in fact actively trying to exclude themselves from the competitive scene of gaming. Thornham (2011) further states that the obvious gendering of certain games and genres is a result of female gamers being very vocal about their reasons to refuse participation. Thus, it is a hegemonically constructed femininity which hinders certain gaming scenarios for women (Thornham,

³⁻⁵ The online version of *Information Dynamics in Virtual Worlds. Gaming and beyond*, by Evans, written in 2011, and published by Chandos Publishing in Great Britain, does not include page numbers.

2011). As we investigate the relationship between women and gaming, we believe we should also focus on researching the types of games and game-styles they prefer, thus better understanding what type of scenarios appeal to women.

With this final thought we conclude our Theory review chapter. We believe that the presented theories can properly serve us as guidelines in our field research and analysis. This being said, we move forward, towards our field research and analysis.

Field Research

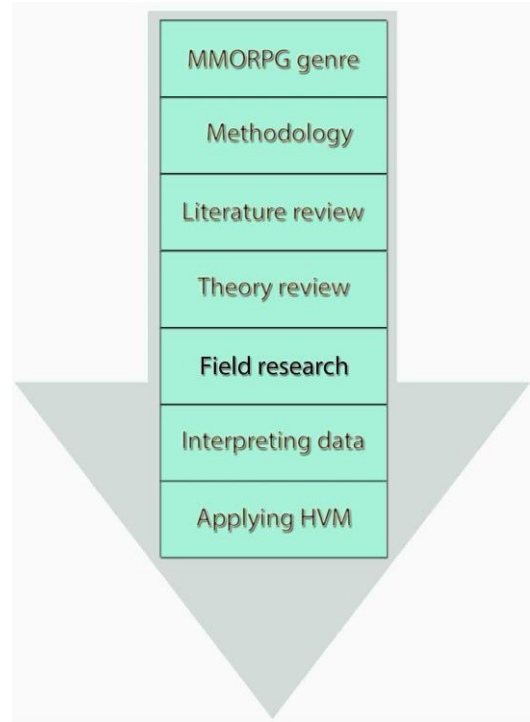
Data collection is vital to any research, one does not need previous research or statements to know that much. Equally important is the manner in which said data is analysed. In the following sub-chapters, we will present to you the tools with which we gathered our data and ensured its relevancy, we will also introduce to you our participants, and will then commence our analysis process.

Interview guide

As shown in the Methodology chapter, we have decided on collecting our data by using in-depth, qualitative interviews as our tool. We have built the interview guide around the research questions as framework, however, in creating the questions themselves, we used the knowledge derived from our literature and theory review.

As can be seen in Appendix 8 the first section of the interview revolves around women and their gaming experiences. We therefore inquire about what MMORPGs they played, as well as for how long they have been doing so. As shown in the literature review, Terlecki et al. (2010) found that women seek similar features and experiences in video gaming as men do. Although we are not interviewing men, and therefore cannot compare their opinions, we still find it interesting to uncover what attracts women to video gaming, in our case strictly MMORPGs. Thus we added the questions: Why did you start playing MMORPGs?, and what do you like about it?

Todd (2012) discusses the nature of identity and gender in gaming, namely the fact that due to customization, one can choose to be whatever (s)he wants. This



includes engaging in the game with a character of opposite sex. Due to this aspect of MMORPGs, we wanted to investigate more about the roles and types of characters that women prefer ingame. Questions were added to help us extract this type of information.

For the second part of our interview, we wanted to explore the notion of MMORPGs creating a globalized virtual space, as experienced by our participants. We believe that the manner in which they interact in this space is therefore essential for our study. In addition, it will be interesting for us to find out whether a distinction is made between interactions taking place in this space as opposed to the real world. For this particular aspect, we employed several questions, such as:

“What do you think about interacting with people online as opposed to people in real life?”

“Have you found new connections through MMORPGs?”

“Do you consider some of the people you met in the games as real friends?”

This is also related to what Bryce and Rutter (2010) identified as a creation of networks of social relationships, which in online gaming communities can be seen as clan groups and social networks.

Furthermore, as we argue for this space being a globalized one, we wanted to learn more about the degree to which interaction takes place across cultural and ethnical boundaries. In this sense, we also wanted to investigate whether these boundaries can create barriers, making the process of interaction difficult. Questions were added accordingly.

The third, and last, section of our interview guide was heavily inspired by the knowledge derived from our literature review. One such example is the aspect of anonymity that the virtual online space can provide. According to Bryce and Rutter (2010), this anonymity can help women in bypassing certain stereotypes and behaviours when interacting with other players. Because of this, we thought a first step would be in finding out more about their personality. Once this was done, we could ask

them more about how they react online as opposed to the real life, thus observing if indeed women chose to alter their personality online, and remain anonymous.

These questions can also reveal to us how they feel about their gender, whether they feel like and act like “real girls”. This was proven interesting since Cassel and Jenkins (1998) discovered that women within male dominated fields, such as engineering and gaming, have a tendency to think they are not normal girls, since they “hadn’t been raised as girls” and “real girls don’t like computers”. Thus, we want to identify whether this applies to MMORPGs as well.

The main body of our literature review suggests that online gaming is very aggressive towards women. Some of the most ardent researchers in this aspect are Fox and Tang (2013) and Salter and Blodgett (2012), who state the female and femininity are seen as irrelevant in the digital space, sex objects, invisible, etc. As we believe that in MMORPGs such stereotypes are not as pervasive, we wanted to test that belief by addressing these issues directly. We therefore asked our participants the following:

“Do you think being a girl has played any role in how other players interact with you?”

“Do you think there are any upsides and downsides to being a female gamer?”

“Have you ever been harassed in the game because of your gender?”

“Do you think women are put in a disadvantage when trying to fit in on a competitive level?”

The last section of our interview, although not related directly to either our literature and theory review or our problem formulation, is aimed at allowing the participants to share something they think we may have overlooked, as well as maybe gain further insight towards how they relate to gaming. We therefore end our interview with:

“Is there anything you would like to further share with us?”

“What kind of advice would you give to girls/women that are just now starting to play games?”

Although these are the main questions, as well as the main frame, during the interviews themselves, we will remain flexible, going through the questions in an order that can help our participants ease into sharing their experiences. Also, we will most likely follow up on some of the questions with other questions, depending on what we find interesting during the interview. Because of this, the possibility exists that we will gather irrelevant data.

Participants selection

In order to find our participants, we have used two types of sampling. The first type is known as Convenience sampling, as it implies using data that is closely available (Berg, 2001; Walliman, 2006). Thus, we posted a text on several Facebook groups, which consist of either internationals in Aalborg, or students in Aalborg. Some of these groups had as many as 3.000 or 4.000 members, however, due to the fact that such groups tend to share members, it proves difficult to estimate the number of people we actually reached using this method.

A personalized text was also posted on our private Facebook accounts. Furthermore, we appealed directly to students from Aalborg Universitet by sending, with the University's approval, mass emails to all students in the CCG department, regardless of their year.

Despite our efforts in finding candidates using the Convenience sampling, we were able to find only 5 participants, which we deemed as being an insufficient amount. We therefore decided to also include the snowball sampling method, which entails us approaching candidates or other gamers, and request we be introduced to others (Berg, 2001; Walliman, 2006). We therefore asked participants to connect us, if possible, with friends and acquaintances that share our requirements, and would be willing to participate in our interviews. This brought us to a total number of 9 participants.

Speaking of requirements, it was necessary we established some for our participants, due to the nature of our research. As such, our participants must have experience within the MMORPG genre, to the point where they have interacted with other players. The specific game is of no relevance, although we have shown in the chapter MMORPGs that games within the same genre differ among them. We believe however that even within one game, players can chose different play styles, which can be relatable to other games. Therefore, the genre is important when selecting participants, as opposed to the game. We also feel the need to stress the importance of

participants interacting with other players, as a great majority of our research questions depend on the interpretation of such interactions.

Furthermore, although we approached some of our candidates by using the snowball sampling technique, we tried to a large extent to ensure the fact that the participants do not know each other or play in the same guild, legion, etc.. We did so because we wanted to ensure the fact that the opinions we receive can by no means be altered by common experiences or events, and thus that we have original and personally held beliefs and opinions.

Next we will introduce to you our participants, which will be given the name Participant 1 to 9.

Participant 1: Our first participant comes from Denmark, and has 1.5 to 2 year of experience with playing Elder Scrolls and World of Warcraft. She admitted that she is a pretty open personality, that doesn't take things too seriously. She further said she has a rather mellow personality, as she doesn't get either super excited or super angry. Roleplaying is not something she usually does, but although she is not pretending to be someone else while killing monsters, she says she has no urges in doing so in real life.

Participant 2: Our second participant has had extensively more experience with playing games, having done so for over 5 years. She is also Danish, and has experience with games like World of Warcraft, Elder Scrolls, Star Wars, Rift, and Guild Wars. She has a playful and honest personality, which she also preserves ingame. While playing she admitted to being more immature, as she believes the environment allows it, but does not become more competitive. Furthermore, she added that she sees herself as "forever a gamer"

Participant 3: The third participant didn't share as much on her personality, as she admitted to the fact that while she is playing, she prefers to role-play, thus her personality does not influence her gameplay, game experiences, etc. Because of this,

her personality would be of little consequence. She is a 21 year old student from the Netherlands and has experience with games such as World of Warcraft, Fly for fun, Endless online, and her personal favourite, Star Wars. She has been playing MMORPGs for the past 4-5 year, and said she considers herself a female gamer.

Participant 4: The fourth participant is also an Aalborg University student, 24 years of age, coming from the Czech Republic. She has been playing AION, Guild Wars and Diablo 3, to the point where she admitted to having been addicted to games. Although she no longer plays some of these games, she sees herself as “forever a gamer” as well, saying that she is always trying to find some new games. Furthermore, she said she maintains the same personality, open and friendly, outside as well as inside a game, with the small difference that she is more prone towards swearing ingame.

Participant 5: Our fifth participant comes from Hungary, and has been playing MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft and Star Wars for the past 7-8 years. Despite playing games within this genre, she admitted to not liking playing with other people. From a personality point of view, she sees herself as a kind, cheerful and playful person. She added that she could never bring herself to play an evil Sith, murdering and torturing people, even though they were Non-Player-Character.

Participant 6: Our sixth participant is Romanian, and although she has been playing games for over 10 years, MMORPGs were newer to her. She has experience with Diablo III and World of Warcraft, and added that she likes to carry out support roles. She also stated that she is very open and friendly, and that she presents herself as she is in both the real world and the virtual one. Furthermore, she does not feel the need to pretend to be someone else in the virtual world, as she feels that living in Denmark allows her to be true to herself, with no constraints.

Participant 7: Our seventh participant is also Romanian, and has played Diablo II and Minecraft. She presented herself as a fair, honest and generous person, stating that she is also generally more adventurous in games than in the real life. She also sees herself

as a flexible person, and although her core does not change, she admitted to behaving differently in different encounters, in both real life as well as ingame, depending on the circumstances.

Participant 8: The eighth participant comes from the Czech Republic, and has played only AION, which she has done for the past 2 years uninterrupted. She admitted that before playing games, she had always been interested in books, films, fantasy in general. She also sees herself as an extrovert, being always very honest with who she is. She also admitted to being very sensitive and emotional, thus also having difficulty with handling rude behaviour online. However, she is very aware of her role ingame, realizing when she makes mistake and taking account for them.

Participant 9: Our ninth participant, also Danish, hasn't shared much personal information, although she informed us that she sees herself as a poor gamer, in the sense that she is not very open to many genres. As it is, she has experience with playing Guild Wars 1 and 2, World of Warcraft and Mythos. Other than that, she added that she tries to be the same person in real life as well as in games.

This concludes our introduction of the participants, and we will now begin our analysis process, starting with coding the data.

Coding and creating labels

In a way, it can be said that coding started as early as doing the interviews themselves, as we were mentally taking notes on what is being said and their relevancy. From the first interview, hearing the participant respond to our questions, we could identify interesting experiences, opinions, etc., further questioning her about them. Transcribing has helped us to get more familiarized with the interviews, better seeing some connections and common ground between the participants.

As can be seen in our previous chapter, the interview guide was heavily influenced by both the reviewed research papers and theory, as well as our research questioned. Therefore, when approaching the coding process, we will be filtering the statements based on predetermined categories, which were also inspired by the aforementioned. The six categories we looked into were Globalization, Gaming experience, Character development, Stereotyping, Social aspect and Interaction. An explanation of how these categories were chosen will be given in each individual section.

Once the statements will be categorized, the next step will consist of boiling them down to labels, without losing meaning. So as to not lose the meaning found in longer phrases, some labels will be formed around 2, 3 or more words, instead of just one. In creating the labels, we will focus on each category at a time, summing up all statements into one sheet, and then taking each statement at a time, giving it a label, or attach it's meaning to previous labels.

In the case of conflicting statements, which will result in some labels being conflicting as well, we will keep them as they are. We believe this will better showcase the difference in experiences that our participants had. We believe this kind of approach is also loyal to the qualitative approach, as we aim not at showing a generic kind of experience, but the entire range of them. This being said, we will now begin our coding process.

Globalization category

The first category of statements we are looking into are those relating to Globalization, as it is one of the main focus points in our research questions. Furthermore, we want to firstly explore and understand how our participants perceive the globalized space in which all of their interactions and experiences take place. Thus, the category Globalisation is built around statements that described this online environment, and is receiving the colour green. The items selected for this category are also chosen based on their capacity to describe the globalization aspect of online gaming within MMORPGs (see appendix 9 - 17).

An example of how this virtual space is defined by the people that joins it, can be found in the statement “also homosexuality, I never experienced any problems with that ... on the forums in Elder Scrolls, that, there are actually guilds that are advertising , that they are friendly to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and stuff like that” (Participant 3). This was labelled as “LGBT tolerance”, where LGBT is the common acronym for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender.

Another example of how globalization affects this virtual space, is found in the following statement: “we managed to communicate somehow, like even if it was, ughm, really bad English, but still we could understand each other” (Participant 4), with one participant adding that “the only exception is the bad grammar, in English ... everybody talks English” (Participant 6). Because of this, the label “No language barriers” is created.

Interesting though, is the fact that we have also had participants stating that language has proved to be a barrier, for example: “in a legion of, it was Greek, yeah, it was Greek legion. And, yeah, it was great, but, you know, they were talking mostly in Greek ... they were speaking English, but, you know, they mainly used their own language” (Participant 8). This we labelled as “Language barriers”.

When looking at these two conflicting labels, we believe they suggest that, although through Globalization more and more people are starting to use English to communicate with each other, there are still those who feel more comfortable with maintaining their own language. Because of this, those who do not want to follow this Globalization trend create a language barrier, which distances them from the others, despite playing in the same virtual space.

An interesting discovery was that according to our participants, there are rules in the fictive, virtual world of gaming as well: “if the game has some rules, everybody follows that rules, it doesn't matter where you come from, or ...” (Participant 6). We believe that this can be linked to globalization, because when looking at the world, countries are becoming more like-minded to what is seen as right and wrong behaviour, and this has extended to MMORPGs too.

Also similar to the real world, is the inclination people have to joining groups of people, communities and societies, which in MMORPGs can be seen as guilds mainly: “I love a very social guild... you know where the the chat is active and . ughm .. you do stuff together and.” (Participant 1). These two concepts are translated into the labels “Rules” and “Guilds”. The end product of selecting sentences and phrases, condensing and labelling them, can be seen in the following figure:

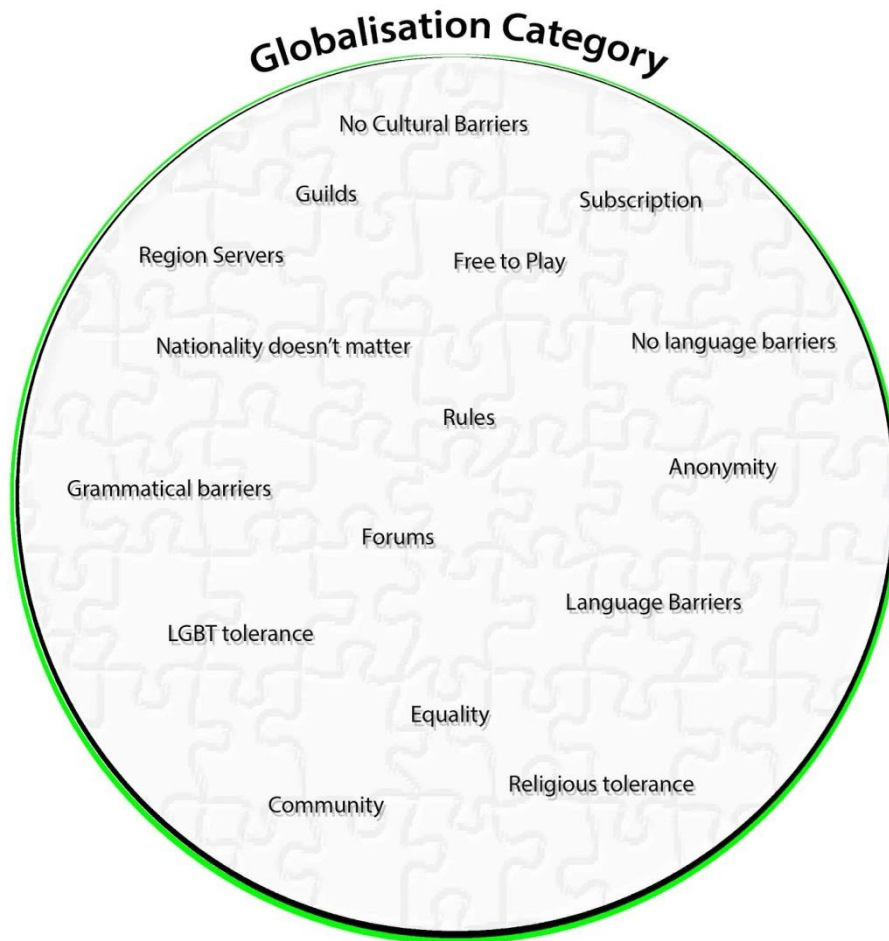


Figure 3 - Globalisation Category figure (own model)

Gaming experience category

The next type of statements we want to look into, are those that relate to women and their gaming experience. We are keenly interested in these types of statements, as they can help us better understand the female consumer behaviour in regard to gaming. The blue highlight (see Appendix 9 – 17) is therefore associated with experiences and feelings that relate directly to how the participants feel and/or play the game, what engages them in this activity. It is one of the categories that ended up having varied answers, if not opposing one, such as:

“I really fell for the dresses, the character she had, wore, so I was like, oh my god I love the dress, I want it too, so I started to play it because of a dress” (Participant 8)

“I liked that it was puzzle type, so you can use you mind, it was more than just kills” (Participant 6)

“I’m a huge fan of fantasy, and science fiction and stuff, so that, it was more the, story line and the genre that really attracted me” (Participant 3)

This category has some of the most numerous items, as we were provided with a lot of data from our participants, when we asked them about what attracts them to gaming. From our point of view, this is due to the participants being highly passionate about gaming, which is possibly one of the reasons they agreed to being interviewed. It is interesting to see the varied aspects that initially drew their attention, and what continues to do so.

We can see that one of the main elements that attracted our participants to gaming is the roleplaying aspect, the idea of joining an imaginary world. This can be seen in statements such as:

“at first it was the roleplaying element acted as well as one could as characters in an imaginary world” (Participant 9);

“I’m a huge fan of fantasy, and science fiction, so that, it was more the, storyline and the genre that really attracted me ... character building and role-play, that’s what I really enjoy” (Participant 3);

“I’ve always liked to play for some characters, like just roleplaying, you know, to be in there, in this skin of feeling, this feeling that you are a hero” (Participant 4.).

From these we were able to extract several labels, which were found throughout the statements of our participants, such as “Role playing”, “Imaginary world”, “Storyline”, “Character building”.

In relation to “Role playing” and “Imaginary world” we also identified labels such as “No constraints” and “Escapism”, as our participants stated that these are some of the aspects that attract them to gaming.

“It’s just a way to, you know, immerse yourself in this worlds that you’ve seen in movies, or you’ve read about in books ... typical escapism I guess” (Participant 3);

“all these constraints make you want to go home and just, yeah, escape, and escaping your mind, your fears, and become this, I don’t know what reptile woman that fights everybody” (Participant 6)

We feel the need to reiterate that the participants were very vocal in regard to their attraction to gaming, which is most likely the reason for which even in smaller quotes, they are capable of adding up a lot of elements they enjoy about games.

Another aspect that we found interesting was the sense of accomplishment they got from questing and achievements. Like with the previous labels in this category, we discovered that some labels are closely connected to each other, thus some statements contained several of them. This bundling up is something that we will most likely exercise more during the creation of themes.

Some examples for statements with this type of labels, “Accomplishments”, “Achievements”, “Questing”, are:

“I liked the fact that I was achieving my goals, and it gave me a sense of accomplishment” (Participant 7);

“I really liked, like, playing the, according to the game, like doing the quests and following the campaigns ... I really was satisfied with the way I was doing it, because I really achieved everything on my own” (Participant 8).

In the end, the labels we gathered under this category are:



Figure 4 - Game Experience Category (own model)

Character development category

The third category is inspired by Todd (2012), who approached the concept of gender bending in her research, but it is also related to one of our aims within this project, which is understanding how women express themselves ingame. We can observe that the participants give special consideration to the manner in which their avatar is either created, or how it evolves. For example, we can see that some of our participants insist heavily on how the character should look, their gender, as well as how it should be dressed, while others chose function over form, focusing more on the skills of the character. All comments are highlighted with purple in the coded transcriptions, and placed under the category Character development (see Appendix 9 – 17), which encompasses elements such as:

“It's always a girl, I'm, I'm always playing a woman, and I usually, something, like ranged, like a ranger, or an archer, and ... or mage they sort of get a personality, by themselves” (Participant 3)

“there is possibility of 8 characters, and i have all of them females ... From the beginning, I tried to make the characters to look like me, because, I don't know, I just wanted, if I'm playing the character, it should look like me” (Participant 8)

“I like to evolve like a character that is, ughm, sexless. You know, like, it's, it's some energy there that does stuff and I just look at it and give it some characteristics, ” (Participant 6)

This category also proved to have contradicting statements, which in turn provided us with contradicting labels. It also gave us an idea of the character preferences of female gamers, as well as how they relate to it.

On one hand, we have had participants that were adamant about the gender of their character, namely that it should be a girl like them, whilst other participants saw no importance in the gender of their character.

“I will only play female characters” (Participant 4)

“it's always a girl ... I always call them my girls” (Participant 3)

“I always have female” (Participant 8)

These are some of the examples in which some of our participants have shown their inclination for female character, which we labelled as “Female characters”. Through some of their statement, the participants have also shown a strong attachment for their character, which we labelled accordingly.

The other participants either saw no difference between male and female character, or they attributed gender depending on the race, as seen in the following statements:

“if for example I'm playing a Tauren I rather play a male Tauren than a female” (Participant 5)

“depends on the race, I mean if I am playing an elf type of thing I also make them female, if I play like an orc or a goblin type of thing it is always a male. So basically if it’s the ugly races ... like that I find ugly it has to be male, and if it is the pretty ones it has to be female” (Participant 2)

“I like to evolve like a character that is, ughm, sexless” (Participant 6)

“I’m more interested in the skills, in the class and the skills rather than the gender” (Participant 7).

This has created several labels in fact, namely “No gender preference”, “Role above gender” and “Race above gender”.

An interesting finding was that most of the participants, with the exception of one, have stated their preference for ranged characters, such as mages and rangers, when discussing DPS, with other preferring healers. Almost all dislike playing melee characters, or tanks.

“I would always pick mage there. Whatever I would play, it’s, it’s always non-warrior” (Participant 7)

“I don’t like that much physical” (Participant 6)

“I don’t prefer the characters, or the roles which are for combat, and I just don’t enjoy it. I like supporting others” (Participant 8)

“DPS mostly ... I like DPSing” (Participant 5)

This has created labels such as “DPS”, “Support”, “Healer”, “Ranged”, etc.

As it can be seen in the following picture, this category ended up containing a large number of labels:

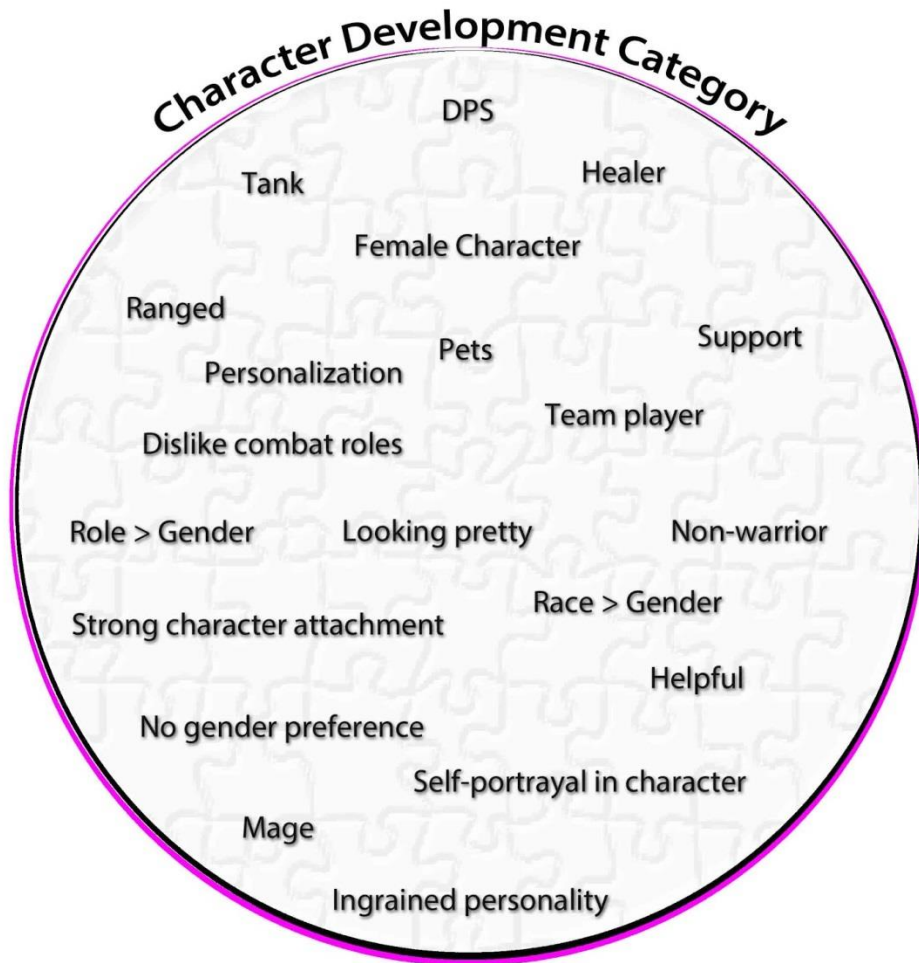


Figure 5 - Character Development Category (own model)

Stereotyping category

The third category was influenced mainly by our reviewed research papers, as many authors, such as Salter and Blodgett (2012), Todd (2012), Fox and Tang (2013) and Bryce and Rutter (2010), suggest that there is a pervasively sexist and stereotyping attitude in gaming towards women. The large number of yellow highlighted statements (see Appendix 9 – 17) has turned Stereotyping into one of our most extensive categories, as it incorporates in fact several types of experiences.

As coding progresses, we include stereotypes regarding gender, as well as ethnicity and social groups. We are also including in this category opinions and/or

experiences that disprove stereotyping takes place in gaming. Therefore, the stereotyping category has items such as:

“some flirt, or having like dirty jokes or something, you know. But, but, no .. ughm, no abuse or No, no, no, no bad, bad harassment or ... Only, only, only jokes.” (Participant 4)

“you're a girl, is the staring and the stalking, and the invite into your group all the time” (Participant 3)

“Sometimes i am really surprised how many girls play the game. Because i really felt it's like, more boys playing the game than girls, but now it's like 50/50” (Participant 8)

“male friends, they were always saying, ok, i will pretend i'm a girl, and people give me gifts, and do things for me, like they do for you” (Participant 8)

“I played in a Hungarian.. on one of these hacked servers, and well... there people were rude! ” (Participant 5)

As previously mentioned, within this category we included statements that displayed cases of stereotyping, as well as statements that disproved stereotyping within MMORPG's, whether said stereotypes were about gender, ethnicity, etc. Because of this, the emerging labels are also at times contradicting, and cover more concepts.

One of the things that we discovered was that when questioned, most of our participants stated that they had not experienced cases of gender stereotyping, sexism, or harassment. This, in combination with other statements, we turned into labels such as “Equality” and “Gender neutral”.

Apart from never having been harassed, some of the participants had, in fact, received gifts, or special attention due to them being a girl. For example:

“I guess they would be a bit more protective, of my character, cuz they know who I was in real life” (Participant 7)

“everyone give me gifts, and you know, took me to instances, and all this stuff there, I was honoured to being a girl, because they treated me so well male friends,

they were always saying, OK, I will pretend I'm a girl, and people give me gifts, and do things for me, like they do for you" (Participant 8)

This resulted in the creation of labels such as "Protective", "Benefits" and "Receiving gifts".

As we closely analysed labels such as "Benefits" and "Receiving gifts", we realized that these were labels denoting a negative aspect associated with gender, namely that being a girl suggests some sort of differential, special treatment. Because of this, we decide to include labels that suggested some sort of differentiation between genders being made into the Stereotyping section that reinforces said behaviour.

Another interesting discovery was that although most participants claimed that they had not had negative experiences in relation to either stereotyping or sexism, the labels with a negative meaning outnumber the ones with a positive meaning. This happened as we gathered labels from two types of statements. The first kind of statements came from those participants that had experienced some kind of sexism or harassment. For example:

"he wanted me too, and I refused him, and then he started to be rude, and insulting me, and telling others that I'm a whore, and all this stuff" (Participant 8)

"you got a lot of comments about, you know, wanna fuck me, and stuff like that ... if someone is, is stalking me in the game, I feel like I'm being, I feel like I'm being rushed, and hurried, and there is someone stalking me" (Participant 3)

This lead to labels such as "Rude comments" and "Harassment".

In several statements, the participants also mention that in their interactions with male players, they have noticed them either flirting or taking it a bit further with sexist jokes:

"There is always the flirting, you know, the innocent flirting from guys ... ehm, ... but I think it is just fun and banter really" (Participant 2)

“sometimes there was a guy who was being funny like ‘hahaha go to the kitchen’”
(Participant 5)

This we turned into the labels “Guys flirting” and “Sexist jokes”.

Some of the labels in the negative section however, were created based on the statements that our participants gave when elaborating about women in gaming. For example:

“girls are just different” (Participant 4)

“(on women and advantages) I did hear and read about things like this happening where they abused this advantage” (Participant 5)

“(on women being competitive) maybe they are not as competitive because it is not in their I don’t know ... in their personality” (Participant 2)

“Women are more, ughm, we have more, let’s say feelings, I mean we can get easily hurt” (Participant 6)

These types of statements lead to labels such as “Girls take advantage”, “Emotional” and “Girls are different”

Another set of interesting labels were extracted from the statements some of the participants made about playing with others from their own nationality or specific game genres. Thus, based on their experience, we created the labels “Romanians are mean”, “Hungarians are mean”, “Czech are mean”, or “Call of Duty players are rude”, “World of Warcraft players are douchebags”.

All labels taken together have created the following figure under the category Stereotyping:



Figure 6 - Stereotyping Category (own model)

Interaction category

As globalization, sexism and harassment are mainly manifested through interaction, we want to further investigate this area. We are therefore looking at statements that reflect the idea of interaction to add in this category, to which we are giving the colour light red (see Appendix 9 – 17). Here is an example of the types of interactions that takes place in this space:

“when you wanted to go some dungeon, to kill some boss, and every, everyone else from your guild or legion was, busy, so you just tried to find it through common chat, so yeah, sometimes I was just grouping like random” (Participant 4)

In relation to this category, most statements show how the participants had positive experiences when it comes to interaction in MMORPGs. For example:

“In Elder Scrolls people are much more ... They see you are in trouble when you’re questing, then they will jump in and help you” (Participant 1)

“you’re in the same area and you ... me or another person ... ask the other to group up ... so it is easier” (Participant 1)

These statements we translate into the labels “Receiving help” and “Joining quests”. Some labels are also closely related. For example, we have identified statements that show how some participants like the anonymity provided by the virtual world of gaming, which we labelled as Anonymity, and some also added that because of it, they considered it easier to approach people online, which became a label on its own. For example:

“it is more anonymous and you have that thing to talk about in the beginning and then you can slowly progress it into a friendship or something” (Participant 1)

“you are hidden behind your character, no one can see you, and it's easier” (Participant 4)

Although we decided on keeping them as distinct labels (Anonymity; Easier to approach people online), we recognize that they are closely linked, and might be later on combined.

What we find interesting about this particular category is that the negative feedback within it is only partial. For example, some participants mention that some people are jerks, or some can be assholes if they want to, but they also make sure to clarify the fact that it is only a fraction of online players that do so. We therefore created a label “Some people are rude/jerks”.

The final labels for the category Interaction are as follows:



Figure 7 - Interaction Category (own model)

Social aspect category

Many of our participants, when discussing how they interact online, mention that they enjoy being able to do so with their close ones, be it family or friends, which is also one of the reasons they are attracted to MMORPGs. This is also similar to what Winn and Heeter (2009) and Terlecki et al. (2010) suggest in their research papers, namely that women are attracted by the social aspect of games, therefore our sixth category is created around this notion. The red highlight was associated with this category, as can be seen in the Appendix 9 – 17.

Examples of statements within this category are:

“we could talk together, and we were playing together, and it was like amazing, because I wasn't alone, like everyday I could log in and be with them. We also used, ughm, the program for talking, something like Skype. Yes, so I really appreciate it, because it was something different” (Participant 8)

“I did have some friends come over, and kicked their asses and corpse camped them, so it was nice” (Participant 5)

As with interaction, this category did not have opposing statements, and most participants had similar thoughts and experiences. One of the similarities is that, as mentioned, gaming has been used by our participants to socialize with close people, such as family members, friends, or significant others:

“started playing because my boyfriend or girlfriend at the time , ughm, was playing it, and it was kinda like, a way to do something together” (Participant 1)

“I have two brothers and they play, they both play MMORPGs, so I kinda rolled into it that way” (Participant 4).

This has been converted into the labels “Playing with friends”, “Playing with family”.

Furthermore, another social aspect within gaming is that according to our participants, it has allowed them to stay in touch with close ones as they had to move to different regions. One of our participants elaborated quite a bit on this subject:

“I was in Romania, my fiancée right now, at the time he was in Canada, and we would play Minecraft together, we both loved the game, and we would play Minecraft because of the time difference, seven hours time difference between us, I would stay up all night long, and play Minecraft with him, and we were both depressed, because we were unable to be together, we had no idea where our future would be, and Minecraft represented the only world, the only way for us to be together, our characters to be together, and have a little garden, and build a house and everything” (Participant 7).

This social aspect of gaming was labelled “Staying in touch”.

When looking strictly at connections made through the medium of gaming, we can see that many of our participants believed that ingame friendships can be considered as real friendships. For example:

“she knows more about me than a lot of my friends do” (Participant 3)

“Some of them became my real life friends too. Ughm, actually one of them is my boyfriend now” (Participant 8).

This provided us with one of our longest labels, namely “Ingame friends equal real life friends”. The final labels within this category are:



Figure 8 - Social Aspect Category (own model)

Creating themes

As previously mentioned, based on the knowledge gathered from the reviewed research papers and theory, as well as our research questions, we developed six categories, with their respective labels. In this next step, we want to create themes based on our research questions, as they will aid us in answering them. These themes are: Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs, Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs, and Gender. However, we decided on adding a fourth theme, Communication, which isn't included in our research questions. This was done because, as our reviewed theory and literature shows, as well as our participants revealed, many aspects of globalization, stereotyping, and gaming, are done through, and made possible, by communication.

For example, within gaming experience, as well as our reviewed literature, it is shown that women enjoy the social aspect of gaming, which is done solely through conversing. Displays of sexism and stereotyping are also done through these types of interactions. Therefore, although Communication is not covered as an essential part in our problem formulation, we believe it is an intrinsic part of, and can affect, our main themes, without being incorporated in them completely. As such, in our data interpretation, it will be discussed only in relation to our main themes.

Thus, the final step in our field research requires us to further refine the categories into said themes. This has entailed either merging categories into one theme, or reshaping categories to create themes. Also, upon further inspection of our labels, we have discovered that some can be relevant in two separate themes. In the light of this discovery, we have decided on keeping said labels in both categories, as it would help us better define and understand each of the created themes.

Creating the Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs theme

The present theme emerged from the category Globalization, which we used as framework. It is created as means to help us better understand the MMORPG space in which female players act, reason for which we named it Globalised virtual space of MMORPGs. It contains the initial labels within the category Globalisation, however, we find that various labels within other categories are also relevant here. Labels such as “Imaginary world” and “No constraints” for example, which belong to the Gaming experience category, are included in this theme as well.

When looking at the category Stereotyping, we can see that some of the labels it included were in fact describing some aspects of the virtual world, such as the fact that some players are rude or sexist, the fact that they engage in sexist jokes, or even the fact that players within certain genres, or coming from certain cultures, were perceived as rude or douchebags. These aspects of Stereotyping can be found in labels such as “Sexists”, “Rude comments”, “World of Warcraft players are douchebags”, which are consequently added to the current theme.

However, as previously mentioned, within the category Stereotyping, we decide on adding not only those labels that show how it is reinforced, but also labels that disprove stereotyping takes place. Out of these, we perceive labels such as “Equality”, “Gender neutral” and “Increasing female players” as also defining this theme, and are therefore included. As all additional labels are added, the Globalized virtual space theme looks like this:

Imaginary worlds
Gender neutral
Religious tolerance
Unpredictable
Gender not important
LGBT tolerance
Rude comments
Immersion
Guilds
Call of Duty players are rude
Equality
WoW players are douchebags
Forums
Guys stare and stalk
Free to Play
No constraints
Rules
Guys initiate conversation
Hungarians are mean
Supportive
Time consuming
Czech people are mean
Community
Romanians are mean
Anonymity
WoW players are douchebags
Equality
Girl players are rare
Sexists
Language barriers
Increasing female players
Escapism
Region servers
Sexists jokes
Harrashment
Guys flirting
No Cultural Barriers
No language barriers

The labels were transferred in the theme with the colours from their original category, therefore you can see three colours, green for the Globalization category, yellow for the Stereotyping category, and blue from Gaming experience. Furthermore, the labels extracted from the Stereotyping category are shown in two shades, a lighter one for positive labels, and a darker one for labels having a negative connotation.

Creating the Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs theme

As the name of the theme itself suggests, this theme is created with the purpose of helping us better understand the gaming behaviour of female gamers in relation to MMORPGs. We start by further examining the categories Character development and Gaming experiences, as we believe that the labels within them are instrumental in helping us better understand the gaming behaviour of women that play MMORPGs. Because of that, we have decided to merge both categories under the same theme, which was named Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs. In the following figure you see how the categories are merged, with character development labels having a purple colour and game experiences a blue colour, so it is easier to identify the origin.

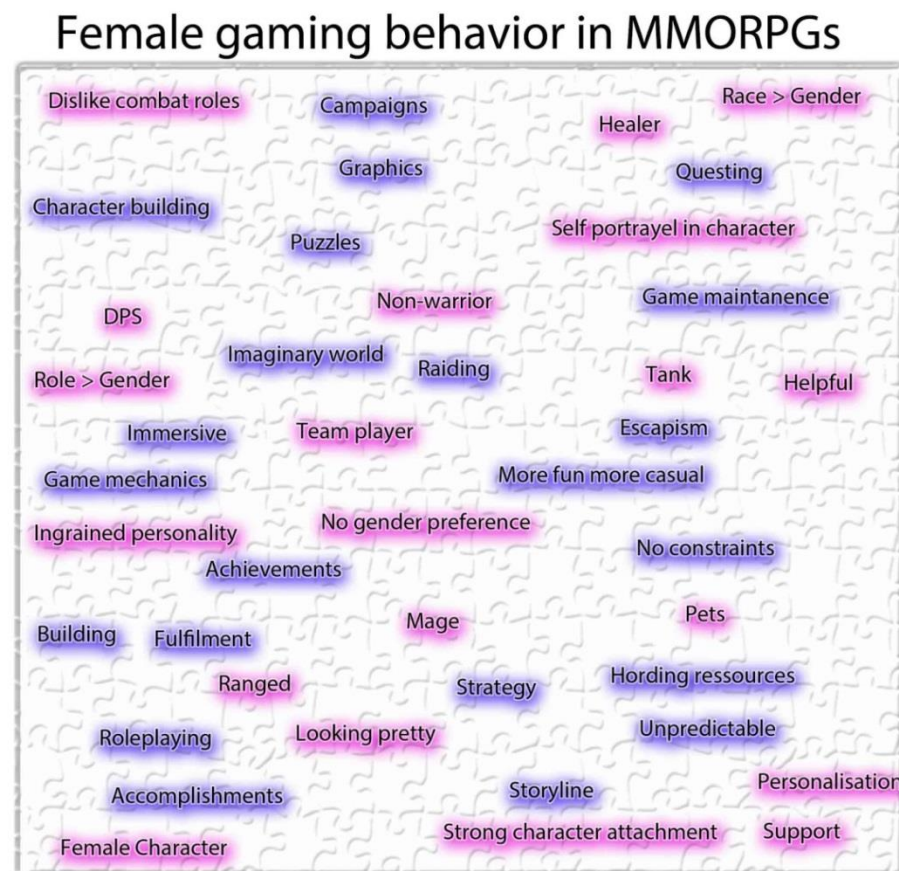


Figure 10 - Female gaming behaviour in MMORPGs theme (own model)

As can be seen, all labels from the two previously mentioned categories have been integrated in their entirety in this initial phase of creating the theme Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs.

Creating the Gender theme

In creating our third main theme, we are focusing mainly on labels within categories, as opposed to building it based on one category, and then potentially adding labels from other categories. We do this because within the Stereotyping category, we decided on adding not only labels showing gender stereotypes, but also those that portray cultural or ethnic ones. As a result, it was decided to fragment the category Stereotyping, instead of completely absorbing it into the current theme. This furthermore resulted in the labels being divided between the themes Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs and Gender, with some now inhabiting both of them.

Since the category Stereotyping initially contained labels that had positive as well as negative connotations, the theme also reflects it. Some of the labels with positive meaning are “Equality”, “Gender neutral”, but it was interesting to discover that most of the labels adopted in this theme had negative meaning, such as “Vulnerable”, “Emotional”, “Physical limitations”, or “Benefits”.

In creating this theme, we realized that the participants were imparting their perceptions about gender also when creating or choosing a character ingame. Whether they preferred female characters, or stated that they have no preference for gender, it showed an approach to gender, reason for which we included both as labels. We are therefore including in this theme labels from the Character development category. We also included their statements that the race or role dictates the gender, labelled as “Race>Gender” and “Role>Gender”. As a result, the Gender theme is shaped as follows:

Gender theme

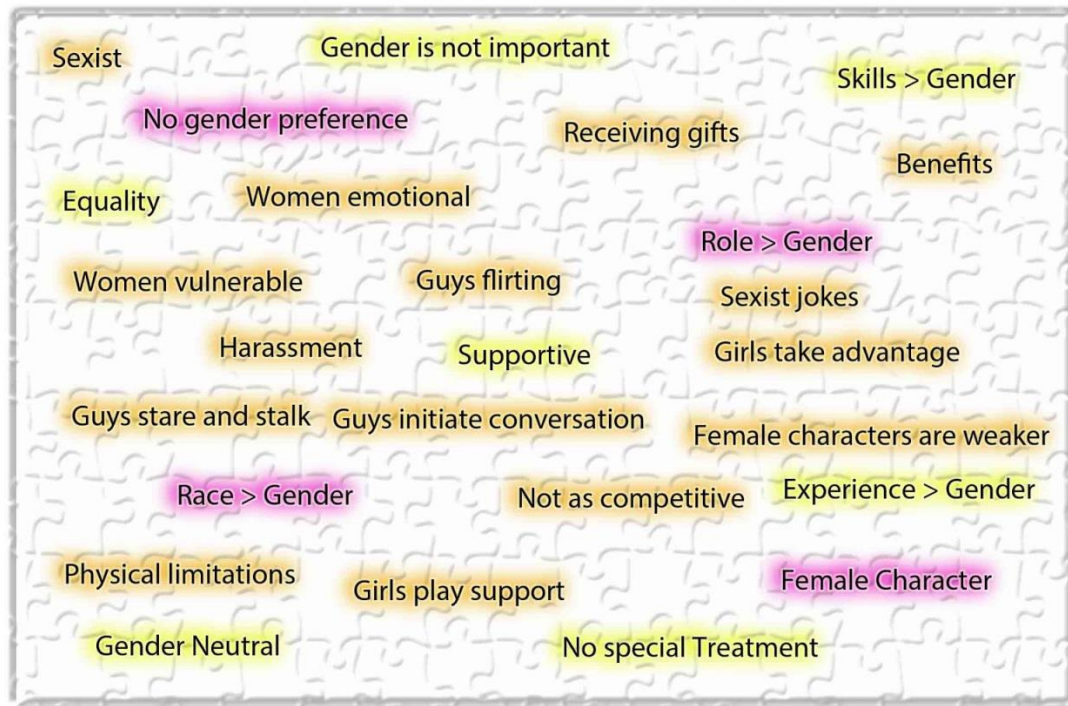


Figure 11 - Gender theme (own model)

As with the previous themes, the figure allows us to also see the category from which the label was extracted, and it therefore contains labels coloured yellow and purple. The labels with negative connotation are given a darker hue of yellow, whereas labels with positive connotations are lighter.

Creating the Communication theme

Although we acknowledge that there are three main focus points in our research questions, we consider that adding the Interaction and Social aspect in any of them would be a forced process. It rather seems to us that together they create a separate theme, one that influences or acts as a medium for the other themes, which we named Communication.

It stands to show how gaming became a globalized space, namely by people working together to complete quests, randomly grouping, which at the same time

describes some of the game mechanics within MMORPGs. It also shows how it acts as a tool for people to stay in touch with each other, or to make new friends, which influences both the Female gaming behaviour in MMORPGs theme as well as the Globalised virtual space one. It is also through interaction that sexism is displayed, and it is a medium through which gender can manifest itself.

As already mentioned, we decided to incorporate both remaining categories into this theme, therefore it encompasses the following labels, coloured red and light red, according to the categories they derive from:

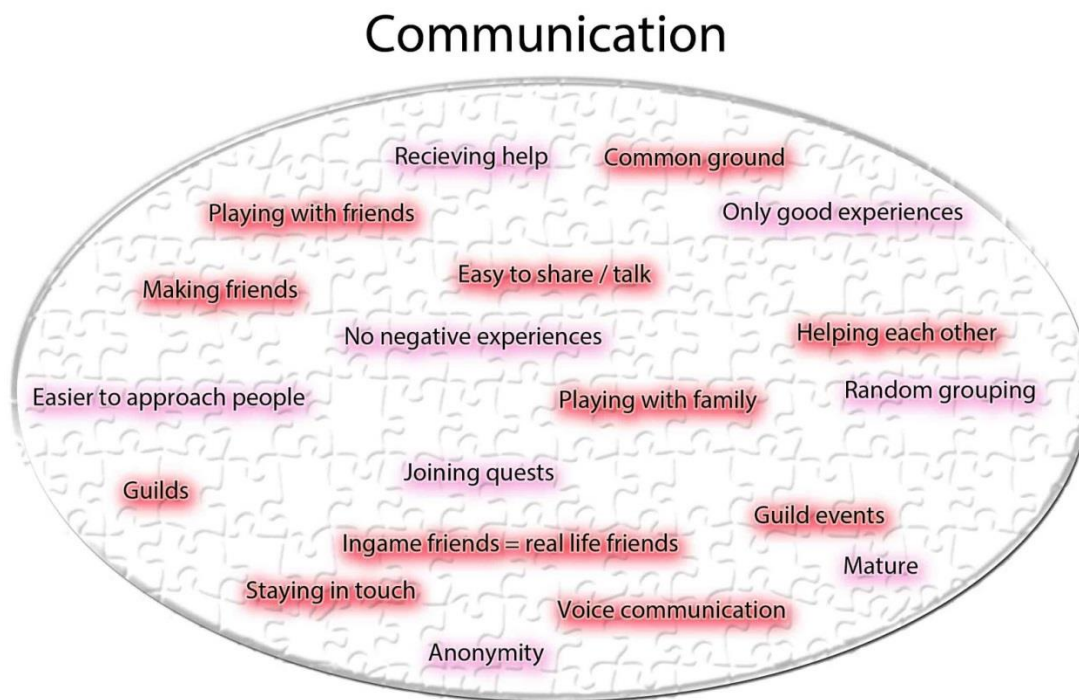


Figure 12 - Communication theme (own model)

Connecting the themes

As our four themes came together, we have already discussed how some labels can be relevant for different themes. We believe this further demonstrates our initial premise, namely that the three main focus points in our research questions are closely related to each other, to the point where they interlink. In order to better depict this, we present you the following figure:

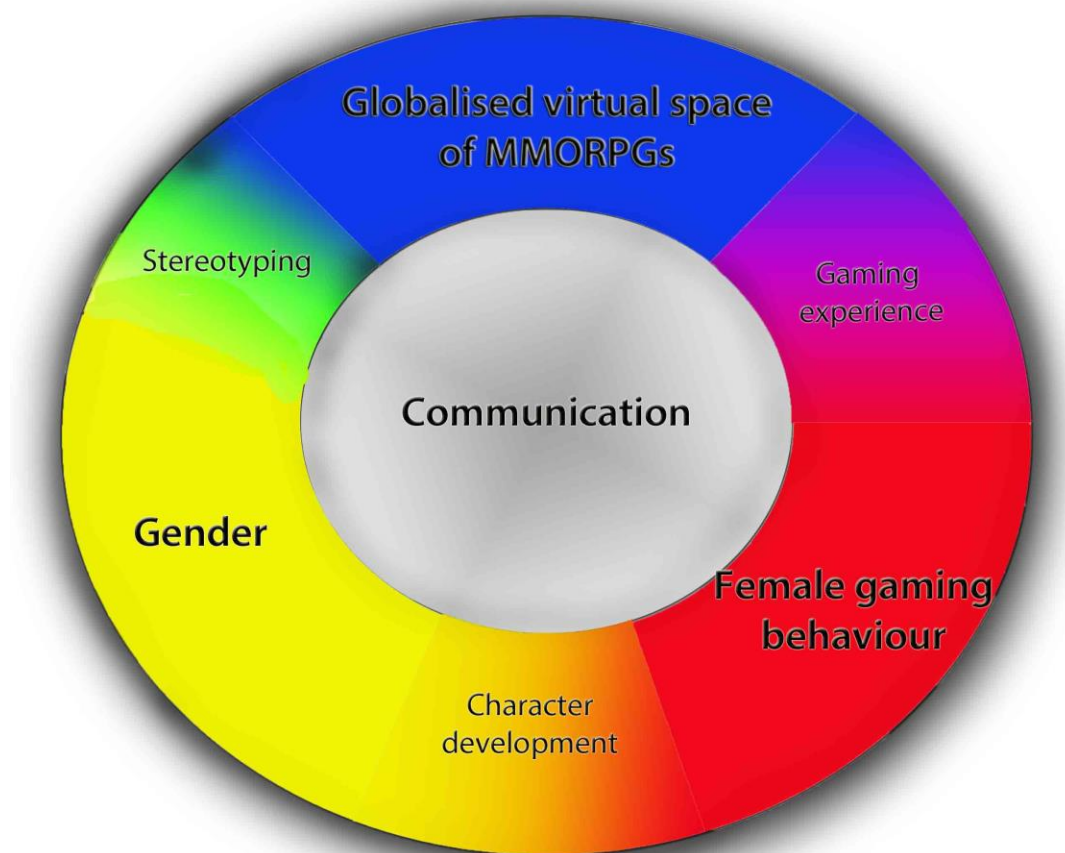


Figure 13 - Representation of how the themes affect each other (own model)

The way we envisioned it, it presents the three themes as overlapping pieces within a circle. We decided on assigning the main themes primary colours, as can be seen in the figure. Therefore the theme Globalized Virtual Space was given the colour

blue. Gender was given the primary colour yellow, while Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs was assigned the colour red. As the theme Communication influences all three themes, it can be found in the centre of the circle, and was kept colourless.

The sections where the themes overlap have been coloured in secondary colours. Thus, the section where the Globalized Virtual Space meets Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs has been coloured in purple, as it is a combination of red and blue. Within it we can find labels from the category Gaming experience, which can be found in both themes.

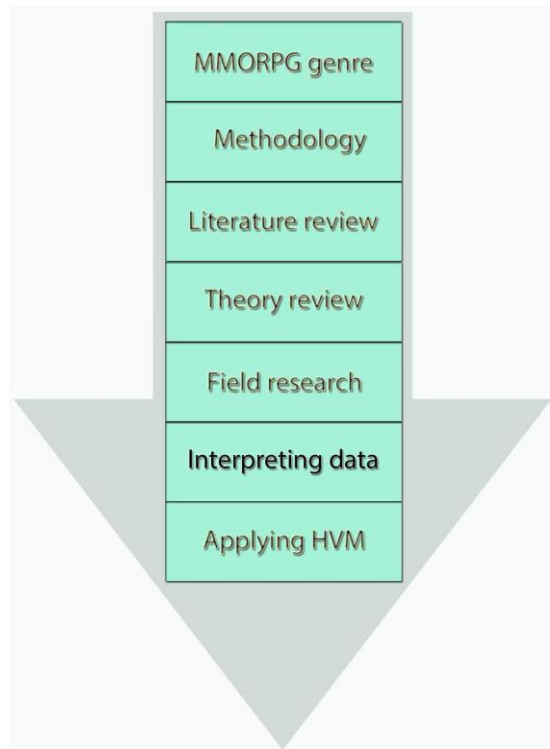
The section where the Globalized Virtual Space meets Gender has been coloured in green, based on the same principle, that it is the combination of both primary colours given the themes. It contains labels from the stereotype category, which defines both themes.

Last but not least, the section where Gender and Female Gaming Behaviour meet has been coloured orange, as can be seen in the model. It contains those labels from the Character Development category, which were found relevant for both themes. This concludes our first half of the analysis, as we move towards discussing our findings, and analysing them through the perspective of our theories.

Interpreting data

As the first stage of our analysis is completed, we have managed to apply a set of processes to our data, which has brought us to our final themes. As we applied the procedures, we identified, based on our coding, some of the similar concepts, or at times contrasting concepts, which ran through our participants statements, and categorized them. These statements were then turned into labels, and the categories were further processed into themes.

This stage can also be seen as a process through which we map out our field of research. Once this has been done, we want to take it a step further, as we approach our data and themes, and interpret them.



Firstly, we believe that the process of condensation can be applied on more time. Doing this will further refine the meaning of the labels within each theme, thus creating sub-themes, which will help us better understand them.

In reapplying this process, we firstly take labels that have certain similarities, and place them in bundles. This process will be better explained as we apply the process within each theme. We also decided on using two procedures which will show how the labels are connected, thus creating sub-themes. The first one implies identifying the main label within a bundle, and positioning the other labels in a subordinate position. Therefore, the main label within a bundle becomes a sub-theme. The second procedure consisted in giving a name to the bundle itself, as it was discovered that all labels hold the same position in relation to each other, which became another sub-theme. As we

applied this process, some labels were also merged in a single label, while others have been discarded. Each theme, with its sub-themes, is then interpreted and explained.

Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs

As previously mentioned, now that our labels are discovered, we re-apply the process of condensation. We want to reiterate the fact that through condensation, we do not mean discarding or extracting only part of provided data, but rather distilling it. Since this theme has labels from three different categories, a first step in identifying sub-themes was to try and separate the negative and positive labels into two separate bundles. The remaining labels will be subsequently processed.

The first bundle we sort through was that of negative labels. As we do so, it is noticeable that they all describe negative experiences that occur in an online environment. We therefore believe it is best to rename some of the labels, as well as group some labels under a new heading, and created a sub-theme named 'Negative experiences'. 'Sexists' and 'sexist jokes' are thus transformed in the label 'Sexism', 'Guys stare and stalk' is transformed into 'Starting and stalking'. Labels such as 'Wow players are douchebags' and "Call of Duty players are rude" are grouped together in the label 'Rude players'. The same process is applied to labels that show stereotypes against nationalities such as Romanians and Czech, which were grouped under the label 'Mean nationalities'.

Some of the labels in the positive bundle show positive aspects about the main theme, however, we could not identify a larger theme. Because of this, we name the bundle 'Positive aspects', which consequently becomes our second sub-theme, keeping the rest as subordinates.

The last step is sorting through the remaining labels. By doing this, we can see that they represented features of the Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs. By features we understand the ways in which it is organized (guilds, legions), the way in which it can be reached (free to play, subscription), as well as its rules and barriers, or

lack of. Thus, the remaining labels are grouped under a new sub-theme, 'MMORPG features'. After this further refining, the theme presents itself as follows:

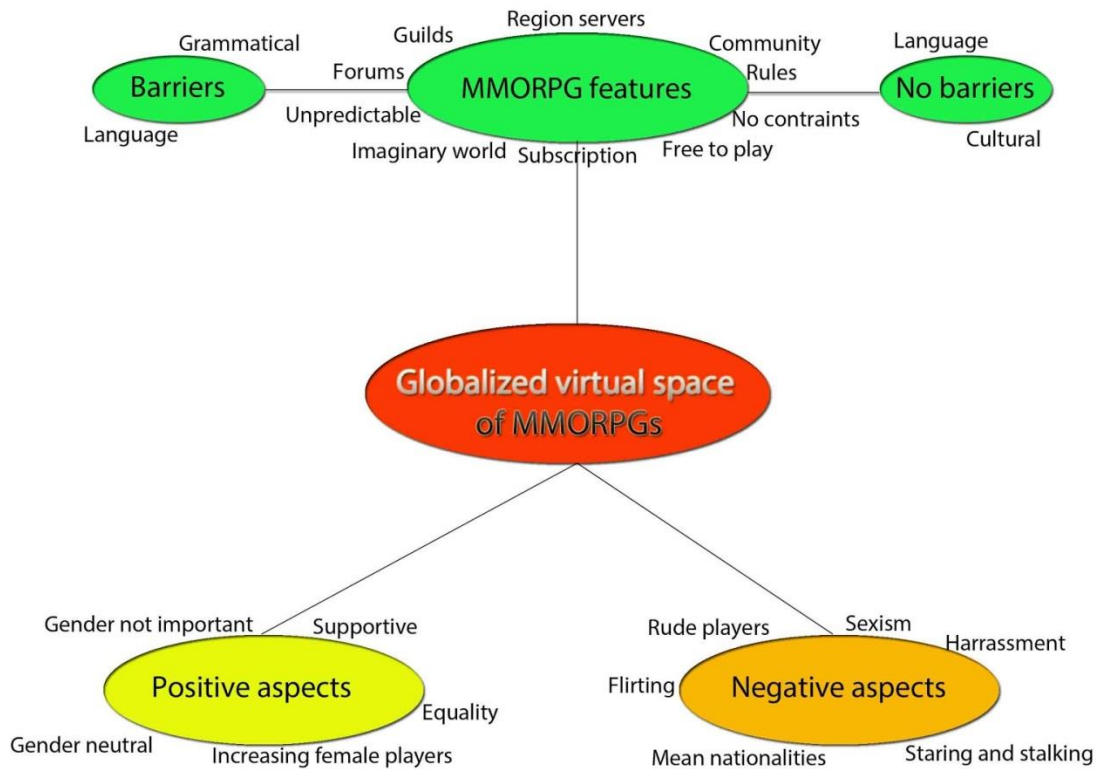


Figure 14 - Final theme of Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs (own model)

As we have already argued for MMORPGs creating an online virtual space, which is globalized, it is in our interest to find out more about what defines the space, as well as the nature of the interactions which occur here. In doing so, we approach each sub-theme and analyse it.

MMORPG features



Figure 15 - MMORPG features sub-theme

Looking at our first sub-theme, MMORPG features, we can see that according to our participants, the space this genre creates is defined by numerous aspects. One of the first observations we made, was that our participants see the world of gaming in general as a community.

“in Elders scrolls I was kinda baffled actually the first time, because I wasn’t use to it from World of Warcraft ... but it was nice.. it was ehm.. it gave me a little faith in the game community” (Participant 1)

“I also know some people from Egypt, or this, this African country, and yeah, they acted like they were Europeans, so maybe it's just the game community” (Participant 8).

However, the concept of community is also something they relate to groups of players within online gaming, players within a certain game or genre. For example, Participant 7 makes the following statement: “But the community was nice for example, in Ikariam. The community was, was rather OK. Travian, I think it was actually better in Travian. But I liked the community”. She also states that “if you have a close community for example, it's kind of peaceful”, which suggests community can also be seen as a narrower grouping of people.

In this regard, communities can also be seen as guilds/legions/etc., which our participants perceive as being a very important aspect of MMORPGs. Participant 1 for example states that she loves a social guild, and Participant 8 also states that her gaming experience changed for the better as a consequence of her joining a different legion. Interactions, socializing, these are aspects found in the theme Communication, and as was discussed, and can be seen, they strongly influence features and aspects within the present theme.

Guilds and Legions are also responsible for part of the rule creation and enforcement process. The space itself, as defined either by the game or the genre, is the main rule enforcer, as Participant 6 states that “if the game has some rules, everybody follows that rules, it doesn't matter where you come from, or ...”. As can be extracted from the statement, this also shows a globalization trait, as people coming from different geographical positions have to follow the same rules, as they are presented by the virtual space. An example of how the rules are enforced is given by Participant 8, who describes an incident in which another guild member “started to insult me, he was telling everyone that I'm a whore, and I'm all this really really not nice stuff, so they kicked him”. Thus, breaking conduct rules results in social exclusion.

An interesting set of labels are those relating to barriers, as they present conflicting perceptions over them. For example, some of our participants believe that there are no barriers when interacting with other people online, whether cultural or lingual: “I didn't really noticed that there were any cultural barriers ... I never thought about it and I never noticed any difference” (Participant 5). Even more interesting, Participant 4 stated that “In the real world I think there are a lot of, a lot of, kind of barriers”.

Another participant, although she does not perceive language as a barrier, she does consider grammar has the potential to act as one: “the only exception is the bad grammar, in English..everybody talks English, but that is the only barrier” (Participant 6). From the perspective of another participant, the fact that language sometimes acts as a barrier can also affect how a player perceives herself online: “in a legion of, it was Greek, yeah, it was Greek legion. And, yeah, it was great, but, you know, they were talking mostly in Greek, so I didn't understand them, like, yeah, they were talking, they were speaking English, but, you know, they mainly used their own language, so, I felt like outsider there” (Participant 8).

Barriers can also be created when looking at this space as one that can be reached only through paying a subscription. Some participants attempted to bypass this barrier, by joining illegal servers. However, by doing so, they discovered that this world lacked rules, and the other players were also more unruly: “I played in a Hungarian.. on one of these hacked servers, and well... there people were rude!”. Some games within this genre however, require no entrance fee, therefore, as with the language barriers, they might not materialize.

When looking at the space created by MMORPGs in its entirety, it is compared to an imaginary world, one without constraint, and which proves unpredictable. In this sense, Participant 6 further details, saying that “in regular life you get to follow rules...you're a bit constrained by society ... all this constraints make you want to go home and just, yeah, escape, and escaping your mind, you fears, and become this, I don't know what reptile woman that fights everybody”.

The freedom MMORPGs offer is only on positive aspect of this virtual world. In the following subchapter we will discuss more about positive aspects in relation to our theme.

Positive aspects

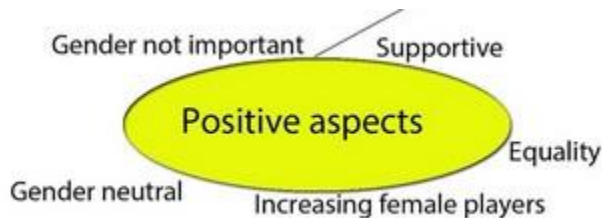


Figure 16 - Positive aspects sub-theme

These labels relate mainly to positive aspects of this space, as seen in relation with gender and online interaction. One interesting finding is that, according to our players, the number of female players is on the rise: “Sometimes i am really surprised

how many girls play the game. Because I really felt it's like, more boys playing the game than girls, but now it's like 50/50" (Participant 8).

Also, when interacting with male players, most of our participants felt that either their gender was not important, being treated like equals: "Everyone treats you the same. Only in accordance to, your playing skills ... everyone is like acting, treated me like equal" (Participant 4); "People have helped me in guild and such, if it has been because I am a girl or it was because I was only a little bit behind everybody else *laughing* I don't know ... they helped, but I think it.... that it should be due to my gender? that thought hadn't occurred to me" (Participant 9). This shows another aspect of this space, namely that people are support and help each other. Participant 1 for example, says that "in Elder Scrolls people are much more.... They see you are in trouble when your questing, then they will jump in and help you". This is yet another example of how the aspect of communication affects how this space evolves and is perceived.

Negative aspects

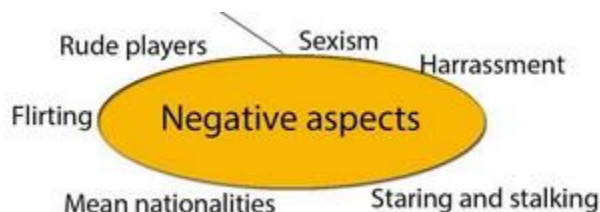


Figure 17 - Negative aspects sub-theme

With the good comes the bad, and the virtual space of MMORPGs is not different in this aspect. Most of the negative aspects within this genre relate to forms and sexism and harassment, but as our participants stated, they only seldom occur. Participant 6 for example state that "I think there are people that, are a a bit sexist", but then she also adds that "they can be as wild as they want to... inappropriate as they want to. So don't let that spoil your, your universe ... harassment comes everywhere on the internet. Whenever you have internet". Others can feel it more intensely though, Participant 3 for example, gives this example of a negative aspect in regard to online interactions "It's

usually people that don't say anything, and just stalk you for a while (laughing). That sometimes happens, that you, that you just walk and you're questing and everything and someone is just walking behind you all the time”.

The earlier quote taken from Participant 6 is also related to the label Rude players, which are considered to be part of this space as well, much like they are in other area. Participant 5 adds that “obviously online, people can be a lot more... not nice ...”, to which Participant 9 bluntly says “Sometimes people are jerks because there is no real consequence when people are rude, and then they can just log off and then that's that”.

An interesting aspect within this theme is that three of our participants have also complained about players coming from certain nationalities as being mean or rude, however, it was their own nationality that they were referring to: “ I would say this is one of the problems in the Czech community, because, I don't know, they are, they are greedy and envy, and all this stuff” (Participant 8); “I played in a Hungarian.. on one of these hacked servers, and well... there people were rude!” (Participant 5); “ I haven't played that much with Romanians for example, but I heard that Romanians are kinda mean” (Participant 7). It should be reiterated though, that some of the negative aspects within the space of MMORPGs were found to seldom take place.

As the three sub-themes come together, what we have found is that the space created around MMORPGs is mainly defined as being open and free, with little to no barriers existing between its players. It is also hospitable towards women, at times quite favourable for them. Negative interactions in regard to gender seldom occur, and flirting and male attentions are generally perceive as being harmless, if not encouraged. We therefore conclude our analysis of the Globalized virtual space of MMORPGs, and move towards Gender.

Gender

As we further analysed our theme, in order to identify sub-themes, we can see that the labels obtained from the Character Development category can be placed in a single bundle. However, looking at the labels, we found that they are all equally positioned, and so it was decided to give the bundle a name, Character creation, which became our first sub-theme.

The remaining labels were found to have three different characteristics. We firstly had the labels that disproved gender stereotyping, such as Gender neutral and equality. As with the previous bundle, we could not identify a label under which we could position the rest. We therefore created the sub-theme Positive beliefs.

The remaining labels were all referring to negative aspects of gender, although from different perspectives. The first set we identified referred to stereotypes about female players, while the second set referred to actions and behaviours that female gamers encounter. Thus, the first set was named Negative Beliefs, becoming our third sub-theme, and the second bundle was placed under the sub-theme Negative Experiences. The final labels and sub-themes composition within the theme Gender is the following:

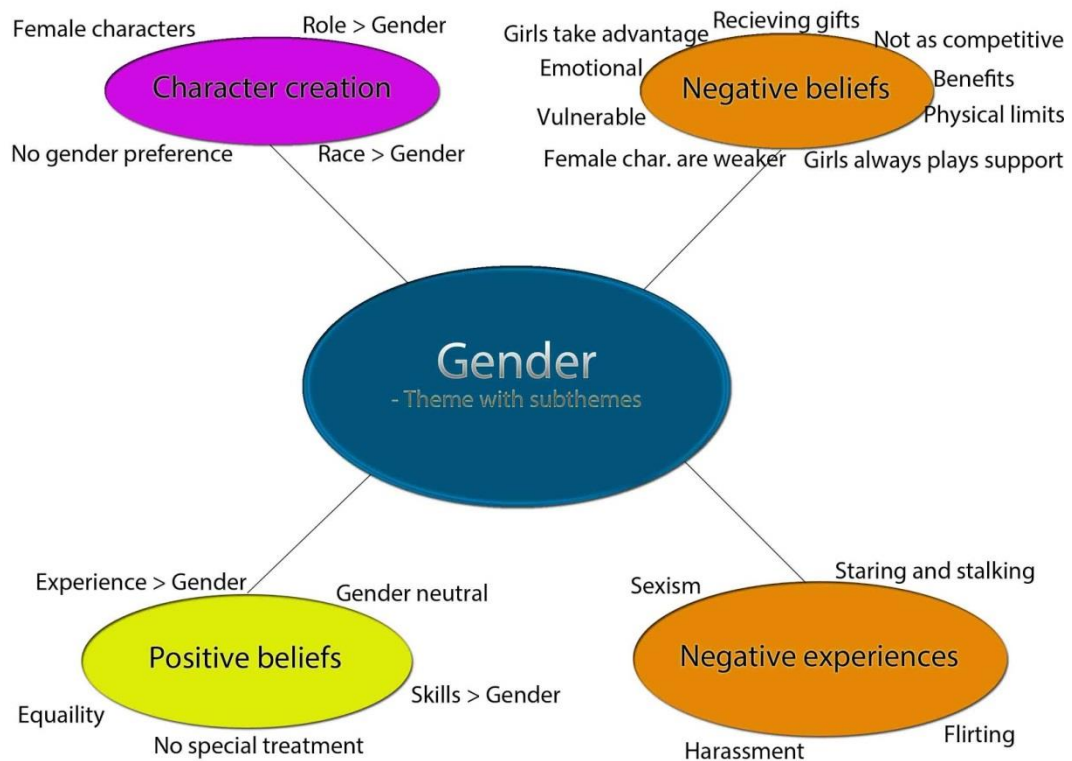


Figure 18 - Final theme of Gender (own model)

Since we are investigating women playing MMORPGs, it is essential for our research to approach the issue of female gender. In this respect, we will now approach this theme and present our notes and observations on how women define their gender within this space, the importance it is given in their online interactions, as well as some of the drawback it comes with.

Character creation

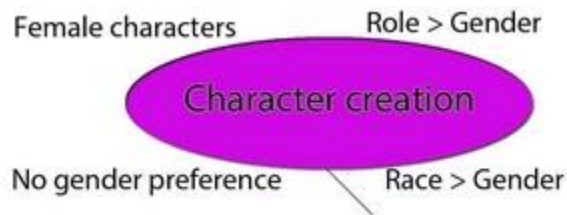


Figure 19 - Character creation sub-theme

Our first observations are made on how women approach the gender of their avatars, or ingame characters. Some of our participants were quite decided on the fact that their characters should all be female, in certain cases resembling them as much as possible, and sharing personality traits.

Participant 3 for example states that she tried different type of character roles, but the characters themselves have to be girls. When trying to play a male character, she found it hard to connect with it (Participant 3). Furthermore, she refers to her characters as her girls, which shows the strong connection with them (Participant 3). She is also one of the participants who found it hard to answer some of our questions, as she could not dissociate from her gender, thus further showing how strongly embedded her gender is in her who she is as a person (Participant 3).

Participant 4 follows the same path, as she also strongly prefers playing with girls, to which she also borrows her appearance, albeit she tries to “personalize it, to some ideal self, like some ideal type of beauty”, and her name. Participant 8 follows the same line of thought. As she states: “From the beginning, I tried to make the characters to look like me, because, I don't know, I just wanted, if I'm playing the character, it should look like me, because it's actually me. And then, when I had more, I was kind of, I don't know, fed up with the, my appearance, and I tried something different” (Participant 8).

Participant 5 on the other hand, although admitting that she prefers female characters, is also influenced by race in her choice of character: “ I .. don't know I don't really gave it that much thought, I just want to look pretty I guess ... if for example I'm playing a Tauren I rather play a male Tauren then a female ... else for example i rather play female”

The remaining participants are better described by the remaining labels. Participant 1 for example, puts more emphasis on character roles rather than on gender: “depends on the race, I mean if I am playing a elf type of thing i also make them female, if i play like an orc or a goblin type of thing it is always a male”. For participant 7, gender also loses ground, as she gives more consideration to skills: “ I don't really care. I'm more interested in the skills, in the class and the skills rather than the gender.”. As for Participant 6, her approach to character gender is even more neutral, as she adds that “I like to evolve like a character that is, ughm, sexless”.

Positive beliefs

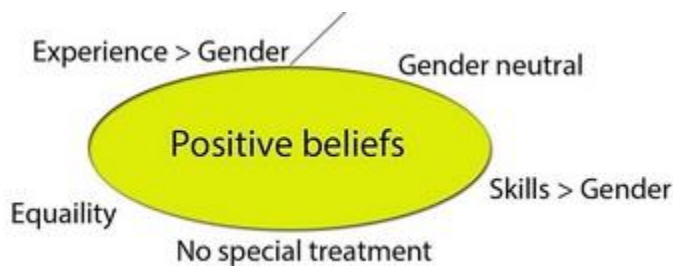


Figure 20 - Positive beliefs sub-theme

As previously stated, in regard to stereotyping and sexism, we have identified plenty of statements disproving that such incidents occur. Therefore, in regard to their ingame interactions and gender discussions, most of our participants have had positive experiences. For example, although being helped with questing, Participant 3 states that “I don't think they help me because I'm a girl. I've never seen it that way. I don't get gifts or anything ... I would find that very creepy, if people started trading with me, and

wanted to give me gifts”. Participant 4 reinforces the idea, as she says that she receives “no special treatment. No, no, no, just normal player, like they treated me in order to the class, or the character, because of my character ... Everyone treats you the same. Only in accordance to, your playing skills”.

Participant 5 admits that differentiations between players can be made, but are generally done so based on experience and performance, and states that “anyone with the same experience.. Yes I guess we'd perform the same, but generally well... if.. if...when I played with my friends they were better because they played a longer time had more experience with it, but I wouldn't say that there is any difference between me or someone who has the same experience with it”

Participant 7 recognizes the fact that gender can be an issue, however she states the following: “I know it's, it is possible to experience that, I am very aware of it, but, I have personally never experienced it ... read online mostly, stories, or complaints, or like, on forums, for examples”. Also, when discussing about one of her friends who complains about this type of behaviours, she adds that “you should take it with a grain of salt”, implying that she may at times be too eager to label experiences as misogynistic.

Negative experiences

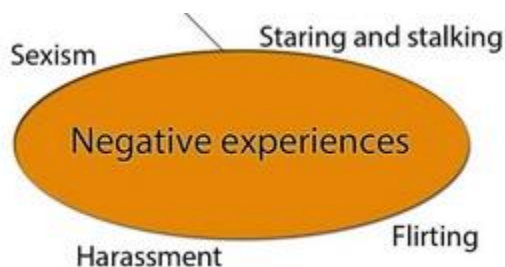


Figure 21 - Negative experiences sub-theme

Despite most of our participants claiming that they have not encountered any form of sexism or harassment, it was interesting to see that upon further inquiry, they provided us with such examples. Another discrepancy is the high amount of labels with negative connotations, as opposed to labels with positive connotations. This comes as a surprise when taking into consideration the fact that most of our participants consider the virtual online space of MMORPGs as supportive and promoting equality. The first sub-theme with negative connotations relates to ingame experiences.

Flirting is, according to our participants, one of the lesser forms of sexism. Participant 2 for example states that “There is always the flirting, you know the innocent flirting from guys”, to which she also adds that she sees it as “just fun and banter really”. Participant 4 agrees, saying that “some flirt, or are having like dirty jokes or something”, adding that it never lead to abuse or harassment. Participant 5 has a similar experience as she told us that “there were a few guys who then.. "hey are you single" are you.. you know.. "how old are you"... yeah but no not really... they weren't really rude about it”

Participant 3 on the other hand, addresses a type of harassment that involves characters: “you're a girl, is the staring and the stalking, and the invite into your group all the time, and, ughm, that's what some people do when they stalk you, they just add you to your group, and at some point you're like, I'm gonna ignore you now”. She also “got a lot of comments about, you know, wanna fuck me, and stuff like that”.

Participant 8 shared a more extreme case of harassment: “he wanted me too, and I refused him, and then he started to be rude, and insulting me, and telling others that I'm a whore, and all this stuff”, but adds it does not commonly happen.

Negative beliefs



Figure 22 - Negative beliefs sub-theme

Although sexism and harassment should rightfully be considered as abhorrent, we discovered another troubling trend in regard to this theme. There are specific prejudices within the space of MMORPGs, regarding women, which are sometimes also shared by the female gamers.

For example, some of our participants believe that due to their nature, some women are too emotional, have certain limitations, or find different negative aspects to comment upon:

“maybe they are not as competitive because it is not in their I don't know.. I their personality” (Participant 2)

“I don't know, girls are kind of ... I don't know how to call it, or, ... But yeah, girls are just different” (Participant 4)

“physically men have faster reflexes, like it's, it's proven like scientifically that you have faster reflexes ... Well, women are more, ughm, we have more, let's say, feelings, in mean we can get easily hurt. ... in a fight, girls are more defensive. Guys are more like, so what, you know, it's like they don't care, but girls are like, you know. They have more, more vulnerable. ... if you yell at a girl, and she would feel way worse, than if you would yell at a guy, with the same tone and the same, if you say bad things .. I think a girl would react in a different way” (Participant 6)

“didn't talk to the Czech girls. I don't know, they were a bit strange. The one, she was, she was like a puppy to her boyfriend. She was always with him, spoke only to

him. And the other one, she was, she was, I don't want to say crazy but she was kind of different. She didn't really belong" (Participant 8).

Another participant believes that this might be a result of women putting pressure on themselves and other women, as they believe women have to compete and put more effort into proving themselves: "I think maybe that the women are putting it on themselves..... maybe it's just because they are still in whole geek community and there is still a lot more men than there are women, and it is been brought up with the whole notion that women have to prove themselves" (Participant 1)

There is also the reverse of the coin that has to be taken into consideration, when discussing gender and abuses, namely that of women taking advantage. For example, Participant 1 mentions that "there is not that many women playing MMO's", reason for which female gamers are still seen as a sort of mythical creature.

Furthermore, "if they know you're a girl, there might be a tendency to people wanna play more with you" (Participant 1). This lead to female gamers often taking advantage of their position, and benefiting from help and attention. One of our participants for example states that: "I felt, I felt really like honoured, because they were, they were giving me gifts, and they were really friendly with me, and they, they treated me really, really nice. ... male friends, they were always saying, ok, I will pretend I'm a girl, and people give me gifts, and do things for me, like they do for you ... they always envy me for being a girl, because, yeah, everyone give me gifts, and you know, took me to instances, and all this stuff there, I was honoured to being girl, because they treated me so well." (Participant 8)

On the other hand, some participants do not agree with this type of behaviour, stating for example that: "I would find that very creepy, if people started trading with me, and wanted to give me gifts" (Participant 3). Participant 5 states that this type of behaviour is not as common: "I did hear and read about things like this happening

where they abused this advantage but in generally I didn't see this happening. I don't have any personal experience with this, but I did hear about it.”

With this last mention, we believe we have managed to present to you to a large degree the female gender dynamics, stereotypes and behaviours within the virtual space of MMORPGs. First off, the relationship between female gamers and their characters varies from player to player, as some women prefer solely female characters, and others are more comfortable with gender-bending. Secondly, although women are strongly inclined towards the idea of their gender not being seen as an issue, or them being treated as equals, they admitted to the fact that they have experienced gender related offenses. Furthermore, certain stereotypes exist, that have been found to be perpetuated by female gamers themselves. We believe this sums up our findings within this subchapter, and we therefore move towards our next one.

Female Gaming Behaviour within MMORPGs

Because the labels originated from two categories, it is easy to initially bundle them in two initial sets. As we tackle the bundle of labels under Character Development, we notice that they could be further divided into two sets. While one set of labels relate directly to how a character is created, the other set relates more to how the character is assigned a role ingame. Thus, two sub-themes are created, one keeping the name of the original category, Character Development, and the other being named Character Roles.

The second set of bundles is also found to contain two distinct types of bundles. While some of the labels are referring to gaming as a space in which the adventures of the females' characters unfold, the other set point more towards aspects of the games that they enjoy. Within the first set, we consider that the label Imaginary world is the main label, as the rest of the labels describe or present an aspect of it. Thus, our third sub-theme is Imaginary world. The labels within the second set are placed on matching positions, we therefore believe it is best to rename the bundle Game Aspect, which represents our fourth sub-theme. This concludes our refining of the Female Gaming Behaviour in MMORPGs theme, which now has the following frame:

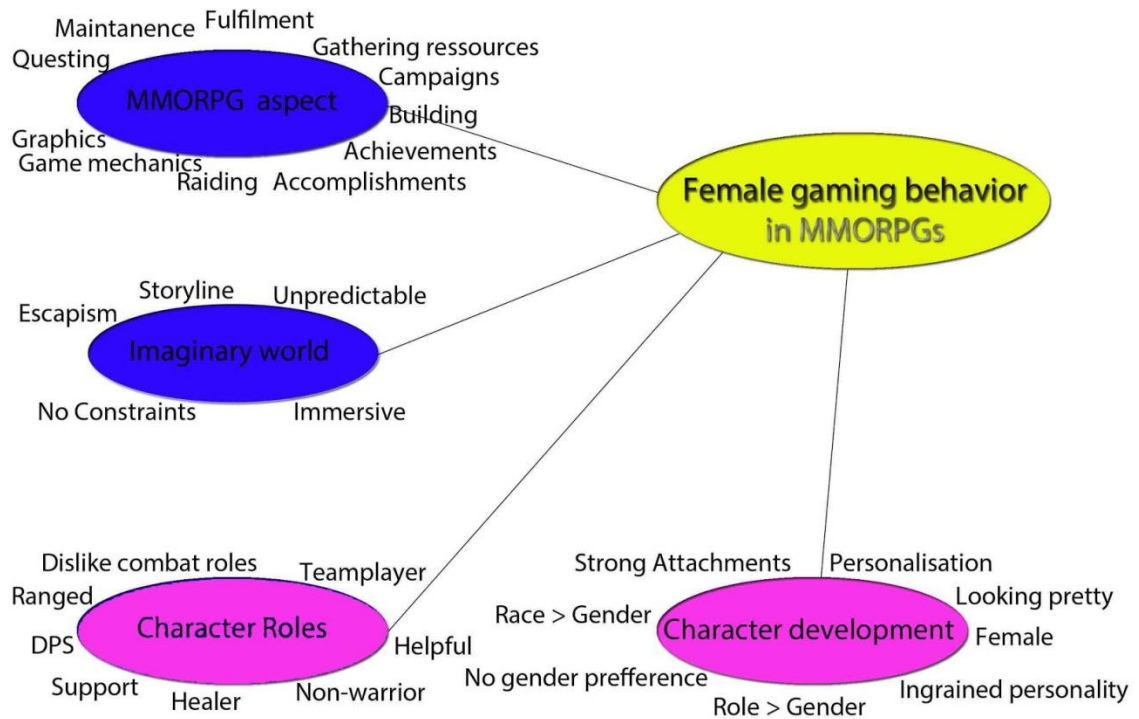


Figure 23 - Final theme of Female gaming behaviour (own model)

We will now approach this theme, and present our notes and observations on the gaming behaviour of women playing MMORPGs.

Imaginary world

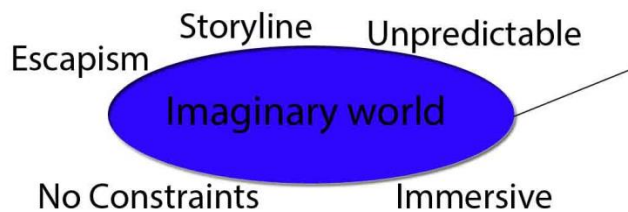


Figure 24 - Imaginary world sub-theme

What we discovered was that the participants had a fascination with the imaginary world, which often is based on fantasy and science fiction. They liked the break from reality, and having instead an option to fight dragons, fly around in space, or just have the chance to be somewhere else in another world. Examples like this are confirmed by Participant 3 for example, which said “I’m a huge fan of fantasy, and science fiction and stuff”, or Participant 5 saying “I really like fantasy”, as well as Participant 8 mentioning “I’m really into fantasy”.

For example Participant 3 mentions that “Storyline is important” for her, and elaborates that it is crucial that “you can make a lot of choices in your conversations”. Participant 8 adds that she finds MMORPG as contrasting the real world: “it’s, unpredictable, you don’t know what will happen in the next second, and yeah, I really like it”. Participant 6 further adds that “All this constraints make you want to go home and just, yeah, escape, and escaping your mind..”, which refers to the fact that she feels more free when exploring the game genre MMORPGs, and that sometimes it can be very liberating.

Most of the participants were aware that playing those games is a form of escapism, and Participant 3 describes it as such, saying that it is “just a way to, you know, immerse yourself in this worlds that you’ve seen in movies, or you’ve read about in books, and the, playing in game, feels like you’re much more in it. And then you can just be whoever you want, and that’s, well, yeah, that’s just typical escapism I guess”. The previous statement puts a positive spin on escapism and is a good example on how female gamers experience this imaginary world through their eyes.

Character development

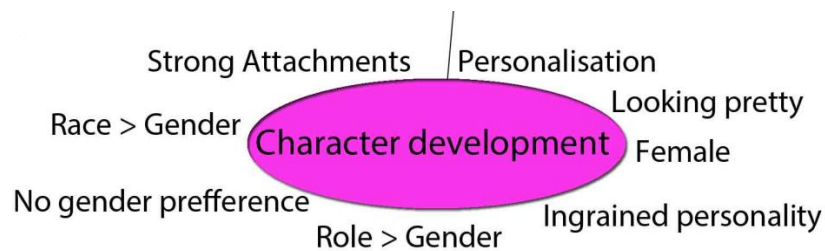


Figure 25 - Character development sub-theme

One very important feature that we discovered female consumers of MMORPGs were attracted to was character development. The in depth ability to customize your character plays is really important for some of our participants, such as the option to choose gender, race, eyes, hairstyle etc. In fact, Participant 3 said “if you have a character in front of you that's a boy, I, I cannot have, connect with that character”, while Participant 1 said “you usually have characters in each gender”. On a more interesting note, Participant 6 added on two occasion the she likes the possibility to “become this, I don't know what reptile woman that fights everybody”, which really shows that female gamers have different preferences in relation to characters, so the ability to choose and customize is one of the aspects that draws women to this game genre.

When it comes to developing characters, personalization is one of the really important things for women. As participant 3 formulates it; “I always try and pick the name that fits the best for how I, how she looks, and, I don't know, how she feels...they sort of get a personality, by themselves“ So she feels on one hand that her characters get a life on their own, while also mentioning that she “always feel like there's a part of me inside my character.....I'm not there to be myself, I'm there to be someone else”. As researchers we have discovered that this is one of the reasons why female gamer has strong attachments to their characters, one even refers to them as “my girls, my characters” (Participant 3).

However, not all women make female characters, and actually the sex of the avatar is not always important to them. Instead we discovered from our interviews, that sometimes the race matters more than the gender. This is due to the attributes, bonuses and features that come from picking a certain race. Therefore sometimes, depending on what race they play, their choice of gender depends on it. Participant 2 said that it "depends on the race, I mean if I am playing an elf type of thing I also make them female, if I play like a orc or a goblin type of thing it is always a male. So basically if it the ugly races... like that I find ugly it has to be male, and if it is the pretty ones it has to be female". Furthermore, depending on what role they played, gender was decided. So if they had to play a melee or a warrior-type character, they preferred it to be a male, because that they associated with more of a "manly role".

So even though we have participants that only like to play a female character and like to look pretty, it was far from representing all of them. In fact Participant 2 said that she had no gender preference and that "it is just a game, and what your doing is you're moving around a lot of pixels it doesn't really matter what gender you are" while another said "No, I don't really care. I'm more interested in the skills, in the class and the skills rather than the gender" (Participant 7).

Character roles

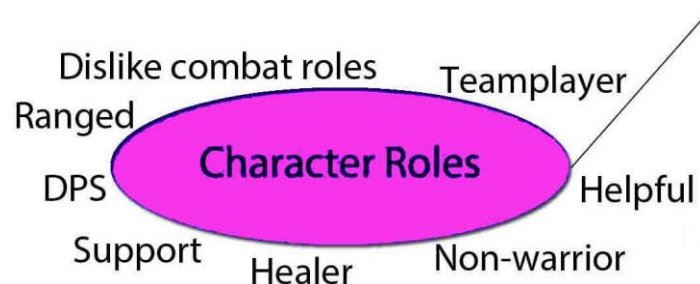


Figure 26 - Character Roles sub-theme

The Sub-theme Character Roles was created because it gave us an insight on how women choose to play in the MMORPG genre, which also gave us the further knowledge on how they like to express themselves.

Eight out of the nine participants disliked having a combat role that requires being upfront, close and personal with the enemies within the world of MMORPGs. Participant 5 even said “it seemed more comfortable to do the whole thing from ranged attacks to everything, than going up close and no I didn't like that.”. Furthermore when asked if it was because she liked the safety in the distance from the monsters, her answer was yes (Participant 5). Another example of one our participant disliking combat roles is from Participant 8 who said “I don't prefer characters, or the roles which are for combat, and I just don't enjoy it.”, and the comment “I don't like that much physical, like click click click,” from Participant 6. The last comment referring to the endless spamming of buttons as you often do in a melee combat role.

The opposite role to melee combat is the ranged role, which most of our female interviews preferred regardless of what type of MMORPG they played. For instance our participant said the following:

“in World of Warcraft it is my shaman, that i played a lot, shaman and moonkin druid, and in Elder Scrolls it is the sorcerer. they are like the ranged“ (Player 2)

“ranged, I ehk usually play hunter.” (Participant 5)

“usually, something, like ranged, like a ranger, or an archer, and ... or mage” (Participant 3)

It seems that from our extraction of data these women really like being ranged, a bit away from danger and fight at a distance.

When interviewing these female gamers, we also encountered things they had in common. Eight out of the nine women we interviewed, said that they liked to also play support, healer or at least be helpful, in addition to being at a safe distance when it came to playing these MMORPGs.

Participant 4 explains that “I've been mainly playing for something that's been mage and healer....it wasn't DPS, like the mage ... but it was kind of, support mage for healer”, she also explains that “I like to help others, like, be helpful, to heal them” which her reason for picking those roles. One of our participants said “I like supporting others, and be there for them, like be there for the team, not as a single person” (Participant 8), which can be considered a female trait. Also worth noticing was that Participant 6 mentioned that she practiced a lot because “I wanted to be good before other people count on me”, which indicates some interviewee's have insecurity to their own capabilities and want to make sure they live up to the expectations of the roles they play.

MMORPG Aspect



Figure 27 - MMORPG aspect sub-theme

Our last created sub-theme within our female gaming behaviour main theme is the MMORPG aspect. Many of the labels surrounding the theme comes from game experience which is why it is blue, but more importantly we believe that the MMORPG aspect theme can further help us understand what attracts these women to the genre.

When looking at the MMORPG aspect of the game genre, it is easy to see that the world is huge, and the amount of things that you do in it can be various things. Many of our female participants liked that it wasn't necessarily focused on just one thing, that you could be a part of something bigger and not just do the same things. That is why

some of the interviewee preferred to run around gathering resources and build things. As Participant 2 said about the game mechanics: “I got really hooked when I discovered the mechanics of the auction house. Farming and gold making”.

It was also important for some of them that graphics were up to date, and as one of the participants said about World of Warcraft: “I couldn't handle that graphic, you know, old, old school graphing, and AION was kind of, new one....Like this graphics were fucking amazing”. This is most likely due to the fact that some like to have a character that looks pretty, and updated graphics help them associate better with their avatar.

Questing is a big part of MMORPGs and as Participant 5 said; “you know we just played together so usually we went questing together”. We included this because many of our participants like to quest with someone else, like a friend, partner or a family member rather than doing it alone. They use the social aspect of MMORPGs to keep in touch and socialize, because the genre enables them to do just that, in a more realistic way than other games.

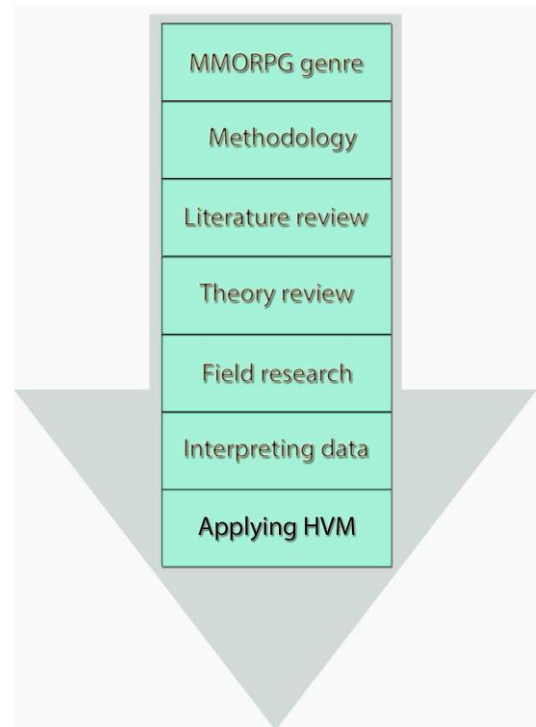
Besides the different elements that reside in a MMORPG, what really got our participants hooked on playing was: “I liked the fact that I was achieving my goals, and it gave me a sense of accomplishment” (Participant 7). Furthermore an interviewee explained that “I really was satisfied with the way I was doing it, because I really achieved everything on my own”.

What we have learned from analysing the female gaming behaviour in MMORPGs through our field research, is that there are four elements that they love. Namely that character development is a crucial part of the game. That they love to play with the characters gender, that the role they have matters more than whether it is male or female.

Also, the fact that everything takes place in an imaginary world, and that the MMORPG aspects that define the game genre are so versatile that there is room for everyone, and therefore there are many different ways of playing the games.

Applying the Hierarchical Value Map

In order for us to further understand Female gaming behaviour within MMORPGs from a different perspective, we choose to use the Means-End theory developed by (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988). The reason for us to make use of this additional perspective is that it can help us to understand the reasons for why the female consumers spend time in the imaginary worlds of MMORPGs, what they like about the MMORPG aspect, why they develop their characters in the way they do, and explain their choice of character role.



The Means-End theory takes all of the possible meanings that is associated with MMORPGs and put it into a conceptual framework, with the purpose of deriving meanings between the different Attributes, Consequences and values. Therefore the Means-End model will help us understand how to identify the values the female consumers of MMORPGs get.

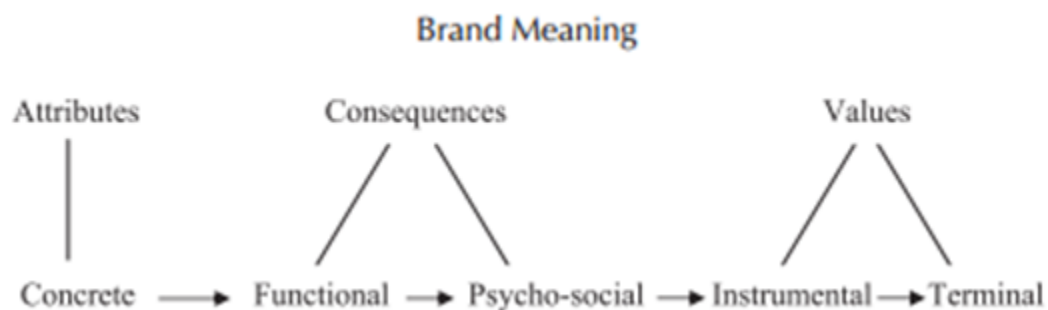


Figure 28 - Batey (2008): Brand meaning

While interpreting the data for female gaming behaviour within MMORPGs, we ended with 4 underlying themes; The MMORPG aspect, Imaginary world, Character Roles and Character development. As a part of the Means-End theory, a tool called Hierarchy Value Map which is a cognitive structure that can help us grasp how attributes are connected to the values the women get from playing MMORPGs.

Mark Batey (2008) wrote a book called Brand Meaning where he gives a good example to how a Value Map should be used and understood:

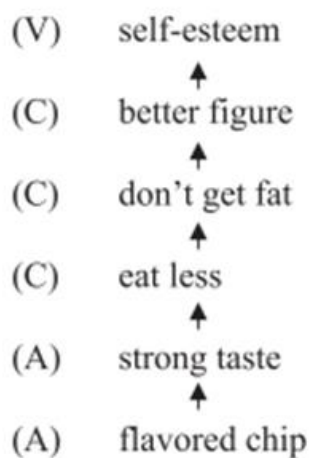


Figure 29 - Batey (2008): Hierarchical Value Map

HVM on The MMORPG aspect

Looking at the sub-theme MMORPG aspect, we have noticed that there are two types of activities, those that imply working with others, and those that can be done as a single player. Therefore we have decided to make two hierarchical value maps for this sub-theme.

We firstly take raiding and pvping, which are both attributes. As can be seen in the chapter presenting this theme, these are both ingame activities which our participants consider as one of the important aspects within MMORPGs. Due to the fact that these are multiplayer activities, a first consequence is the fact that our participants

are Working with others. In order to perform well as a team, Good communication is key, which is our next consequence. This can further lead to a victorious outcome, whether battling a boss or another group of players. In the MMORPG world, these victories are acknowledged by rewarding players with items, which is our final consequence.

Due to the participants emerging victorious and receiving rewards, they get a sense of accomplishment, which is one of our first values. Second of all, playing with others, and managing to coordinate with them, which leads to victories, also give our participants a sense of belonging to a community, as our participants have mentioned (See Appendix), which becomes our second value. Based on the interviews, and our interpretation of them, we believe this gives our participants a sense of fulfilment, which becomes our final value. Thus, the first HVM connected to this sub-theme is the following:



Figure 30 - HVM 1 on the MMOPRG aspect (own model)

Quests and Auction house, our second set of attributes, refer to single player activities. A first consequence of questing is that it allows the players to gather resources, a first consequence, which can then be auctioned, thereby participants gaining ingame currency. Another consequence of questing is that it helps the player reach her objectives. As a result of this consequences, the players receive Achievements, which is the value of the present HVM. The second HVM we have created for this sub-theme is:

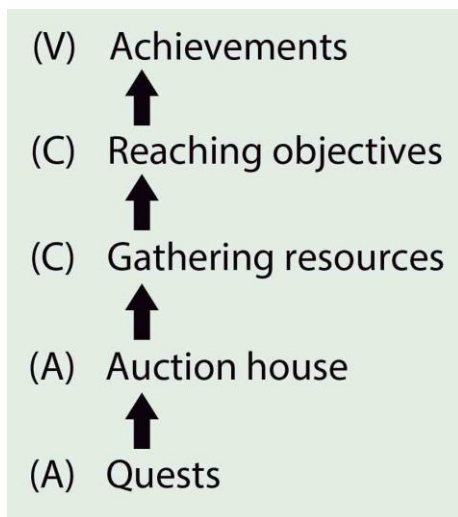


Figure 31 - HVM 2 on MMORPG aspect (own model)

HVM on Imaginary world

Within this theme we created a single HVM. When looking for attributes, we noticed that our participants would define the world created by MMORPGs as having No constraints, and being Unpredictable. They therefore became our first attributes. The participants also gave a lot of consideration to the Storyline which became the third attribute. As a consequence for the virtual world of MMORPGs having the above mentioned attributes, it becomes immersive. As the participants have mentioned, the fact that it is immersive, leads to them spending a lot of time ingame. Thus, as a consequence of the world being immersive, it also becomes Time consuming. We believe that the reason they spend so much time ingame, and immerse themselves in it, is because the value they achieve from it is escaping into another world, where there

are no limits, and as shown above, they can accomplish and achieve so many things. Thus, the value of this HVM is Escapism. In the following figure you can see the HVM for the current sub-theme:

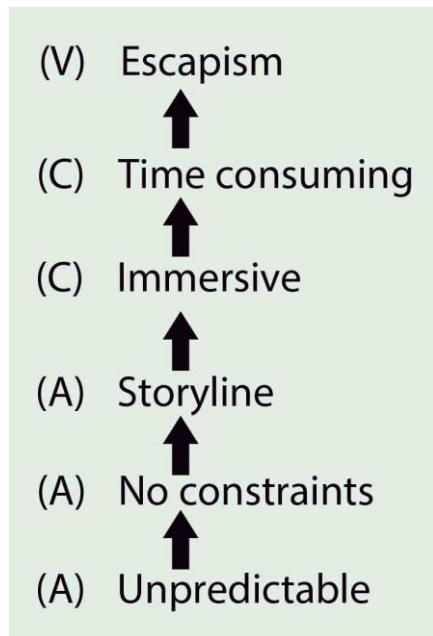


Figure 32 - HVM on Imaginary world (own model)

HVM on Character Roles

During our interviews, we have noticed our participants have a predisposition towards certain character roles, namely that they have to be ranged, DPS, or healers. Although a few of our participants showed an inclination towards other roles as well, the above mentioned three are representative. They therefore become the three attributes within the present HVM.

Due to the nature of these roles, a first consequence of female gamers choosing them, is that they become Support characters. This further leads to them being Helpful, as they perform well in their role, which becomes our second consequence. As they become helpful, thus performing well and aiding their team-players, they get a feeling of appreciation from them, which becomes the first value. The fact that they feel

appreciated, and perform their roles properly, also gives them a sense of Fulfilment, which is our last value. The attributes, consequences and values connected to this sub-theme can be seen in the following figure:

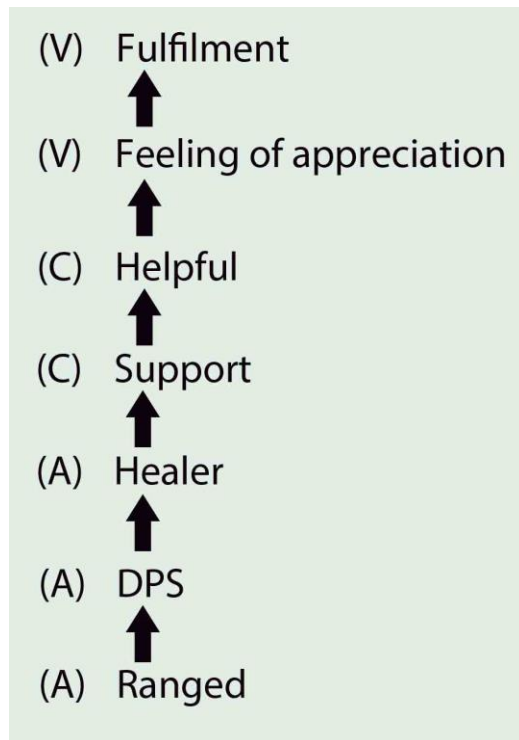


Figure 33 - HVM on Character roles (own model)

HVM on Character development

When looking at our fourth sub-theme, we believe that the attribute that defines it is the possibility to customize your character, whether a player prefers female characters, or is equally comfortable with playing male characters. A first consequence of customization is that each player can personalize their character. In the case of our participants for example, this further led to them being able to transfer parts of their personality to their character. This lead to our second consequence, Ingrained personality. A consequence of female players putting so much effort and thought into the creation of their characters is that they develop a Strong attachment with them,

which becomes our third and last consequence. We believe that as our participants go through these processes, the value they receive is the possibility to reinvent themselves. Looking at the figure below, you can see how they are all connected:

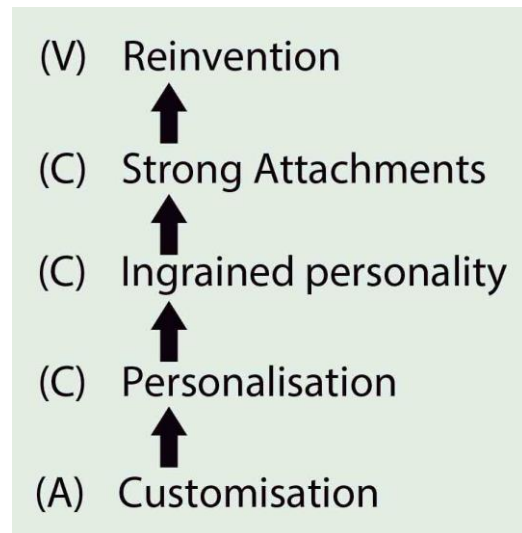


Figure 34 - HVM on Character development (own model)

Outcome

The main purpose of applying the HVM model to the experiences, feelings and choices of the female gamers within MMORPG was to better understand their consumer behaviour, by better conceptualizing the data we received from them. As the model was applied on the findings within each sub-theme, we discovered that through their ingame experiences, the female gamers not only escape their own reality and reinvent themselves, but in doing so, they receive achievements, as well as a sense of accomplishment, fulfilment, and appreciation. When put together it can be seen as follows:

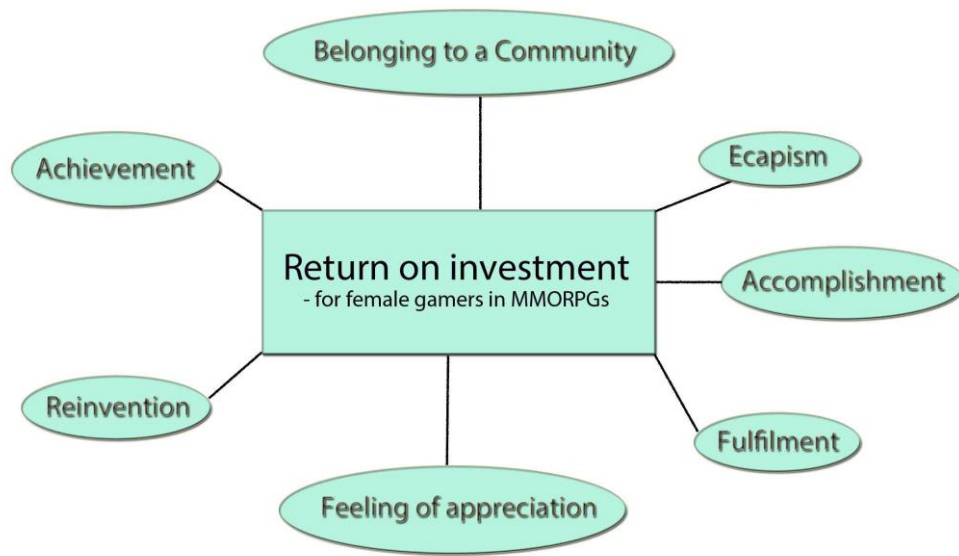


Figure 35 - Return on investment (own model)

With this we conclude our analysis, the findings of which will be discussed and summed up in the following two chapters.

Discussion

As the name of the chapters suggests it, within this chapter we aim at discussing our findings, as we compare them to what has been found throughout our literature and theory review. The findings will be discussed in connection to the research questions, as it is their purpose to aid us in answering our main question.

Through our first research question, we aimed at identifying how the virtual space of MMORPGs is defined when approaching it from a globalization perspective. As previously mentioned, by doing so, we could better understand the space in which female gamers act and react, which we believe influences them. The first step in this direction was identifying previous research papers, from which we extracted findings which were relevant for our own research. To this we also added globalization theories, once more chosen based on their relevancy.

As we reviewed both sources, certain concepts regarding the globalization of online gaming were discovered. First of all, several researchers refer to the virtual online space created by online gaming as a virtual world, displaying social dynamics, rules, cultures, etc (Todd, 2012; Evans, 2011; Fox and Tang, 2013; Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Bryce and Rutter 2010). Evans (2011) further suggests that this space can be seen as encompassing several worlds, as they are created around different mediums and games.

This was also confirmed by our research, as the participants brought forth the notion of community, which in our case is built around MMORPGs, and encompasses the players within this genre. Our participants further confirmed that the space is globalized, as its players come from different geographical locations, at times from different continents. Apart from the standard rules, such as maintaining a civil demeanour, this space also presents specific rules, such as warning their faction when opponent players are intruding and killing their own within a game region. The MMORPG world is also perceived as having a unique culture. In this sense, one of our

participants stated that although she had interacted with people from African countries, she did not perceive any cultural differences, but rather feels like within this space all players adhere to a similar culture. This was confirmed by other participants as well.

Bryce and Rutter (2010) present anonymity as an aspect of the globalized online space. They suggest that it is due to anonymity that female gamers might feel more encouraged to join this space (Bryce and Rutter, 2010). We have also found evidence suggesting that anonymity plays a big role within MMORPGs as well. For some of our participants for example, anonymity is vital, as they completely emerge into role playing, and are therefore apprehensive about sharing personal information. However, for some of our participants anonymity is not all that appealing, as they are usually the first to share and request personal information about themselves and the others.

Furthermore, anonymity was found to not be linked with female gamers being uneasy at the idea of people knowing their gender. Rather it comes out of a need to not involve personal aspects within gaming, as it is their purpose to reinvent themselves and get immersed into another world. As already mentioned, it is a vital part of role playing.

We wanted to reiterate that idea as another theory suggests that globalization often acts as an enhancer (Horton and Patapan, 2004). Therefore, Horton and Patapan (2004) believe that gender stereotyping and sexism would be intensified within globalised spaces. Fox and Tang (2013), Salter and Blodgett (2012), and Bryce and Rutter (2010) already argue for online gaming being highly patriarchal and sexist. However, within the online spaces created by MMORPGs, it was found that equality and gender neutrality are fairly more spread and acknowledged. Our participants themselves account for it as promoting these concepts, as they also admit to the fact that whatever negative experiences they might have had, they represent only isolated cases.

To sum it all up, only part of the findings and theories on which we based one third of our interview guide and research framework apply to the virtual online space of MMORPGs. As such, we have found evidence that the space itself is globalised, however, we found no evidence suggesting that sexism and harassment constitute major issues. Furthermore, although anonymity can be perceived as a vital part in MMORPGs, it is seen so only as a result of role playing, as other female gamers easily dismiss it.

The second research question had in fact two objectives, to identify why women are attracted to MMORPGs, as well as how they express themselves ingame. This question is linked to two separate set of reviewed research papers and theories, namely those focused on gaming and consumer behaviour, and those that deal with gender. In discussing this theme, we will firstly focus on gender, and last but not least, gaming behaviour.

One of the first things we discovered was that according to Knudsen (2006), it has become a custom to associate women with gender, and men with human beings. What this implies, is that gender awareness is equated with the study of women, whilst gender neutrality is associated with men. However, during our research, some of our participants have often said that gender does not play a role in how they interact with others, or how they perceive themselves or are perceived. They often claimed that they present themselves as gamers. However, some of our participants also mentioned that it is important to them to be seen as female gamers, or have heard of women presenting themselves as such.

In building the theme gender we were able to employ a vast amount of findings and theories, covering aspects from how women are perceived within gaming to how they perceive themselves. The first aspect regarding gender that we wish to discuss relates to ingame genders. Todd (2012) presents the idea that gender bending is a common practice in online gaming, adding however that male players are generally more comfortable with it. "a lot of guys play female characters. Maybe because they are

prettier to look from behind, I don't know.... “laughing” I have heard that excuse before anyway, from my male friends” (Participant 9). Sundén and Sveningsson (2012) argue that women prefer female characters, adding that the different types of races and roles allow them however to express different types of femininity. Although we cannot account for what is true or not in the case of male players, we believe that within MMORPGs, female players cannot be placed into a single category. We have found that some of our participants are comfortable with playing male character, just like other participants chose only female character. Furthermore, certain female players create characters with different physiognomies and personalities (more feminine, more violent, more helpful, etc.), whilst others chose one typology and stick with it.

Also in regard to character roles, Knudsen (2006) suggests that gender duality is seen as a fundamental norm, thus women naturally gravitate towards femininity and motherliness. This translates into online gaming as women adopting roles that fit a motherly, protective roles. This is partially confirmed by our findings, as most women opt for healer and support roles. However, we have also had participants comfortable with playing roles that imply more physical attacks, as well as portraying a male character.

A more troubling finding suggested that women participating in online games are given specific parts to play within the gaming scene, which they are forced to assume, lest they be punished for not doing so (Salter and Blodgett , 2012; Fox and Tang, 2013; Bryce and Rutter, 2010; Sundén and Sveningsson, 2012). These roles include being a sex object, the enemy, inferior players, or non-existent entities (Salter and Blodgett, 2012, Fox and Tang, 2013, Sundén and Sveningsson, 2012). However, Bryce and Rutter (2010) do suggest that different game genres may display different gender perceptions and norms.

Our findings agree with the latter, as we discovered that our participants have had mostly good experiences with male players, and do not believe that their gender played a role in how they interact with other players. As was mentioned above, although

they have had negative experiences, they were not perceived as being the norm. Thus, we believe that MMORPGs represent the black swan within the online gaming genres and community.

This type of experience also disproves the theory presented by Horton and Patapan (2004) which suggests that women have to always recreate the process of affirming and asserting their gender, whenever entering male dominated domains. However, it can also be argued, that by the time our research was conducted, this process had already taken place. On the other hand, evidence suggests that RPGs have always had a strong female presence to them.

In regard to gender stereotyping, Cassel and Jenkins (1998) suggest that most women playing games, or joining male dominated fields, often do not define themselves as normal girls. Throughout our interviews however, our participants have not given the impression that they perceive themselves any other way than girly. In the case of one participant for example, being a woman and being feminine was deeply connected to who she was as a person. Also when meeting our participants, we found them as being at times very feminine, often seeing them wearing makeup and dresses. One of our participants, who was also an engineer, is the best example in this case, as she came to the meeting in a dress, with makeup on, and having an overall feminine appearance.

The concept of women and video gaming, or gaming behaviour, was seldom encountered during our literature and theory review. In a research conducted by Thornham (2011), it is stated that women actively shy away from the competitive scene of gaming, refusing participation. Competitiveness itself is seen as not feminine (Thornham, 2011). However, as we conducted our own research, we discovered that although this stereotype does exist, according to which women are by nature not competitive, in reality women enjoy competition, and as our participants have stated, they pride themselves in achieving things on their own, or being helpful during raids, pvp battles, etc. It can be argued however, that in general women are not as competitive, when compared with men, although it is hard to measure such concepts.

In a different research, Søndergaard (2013) studied the manner and degree to which boys get immersed in virtual worlds. She discovered that in their case, the boundary between real and virtual almost gets dissolved. We decided, based on this research, to also explore the degree to which female players immerse themselves in MMORPGs. What we discovered was that although women do immerse themselves in this world, they do so consciously, always being aware of the fact that it is only a virtual world. This however does not prevent them from experiencing escapism, as they sometimes reinvent themselves.

In Evans's (2011) research, we also found a concept relating to the creation of characters, stating that players "pick the gender they wish to perform almost as lightly as they pick the colours of their garments, their beard particularities, or their shoe styles" (Evans, 2011:⁶). This was only partly confirmed throughout our research, as some of our participants opted solely for female character. Other participants on the other hand, opt for the "emotionally rich, age[less] and genderless game experience" (Kafai et al., 2008: 170, as quoted by Evans, 2011:⁷), as described by Evans (2011).

⁶⁻⁷: The online version of *Information Dynamics in Virtual Worlds. Gaming and beyond*, by Evans, written in 2011, and published by Chandos Publishing in Great Britain, does not include page numbers.

Conclusion

As we conclude our research project, we also look back upon the way in which our project was carried out. We chose to do a qualitative study, as it was our interest to find out more about the experiences of women playing MMORPGs. We therefore interviewed nine participants. Based on the amount of data retrieved from our interviews, we believe that in this case, nine was a sufficient amount of interviewees. The data was then run through several analysis processes, from colour coding it, to interpreting the emerging themes.

When looking at the virtual space of MMORPGs, from a globalization perspective, we discovered that it is perceived as being a unified community, as it displays a specific culture. It was also found to not be altered by the ethnical/regional culture of those that join it. Furthermore, it presents a set of rules and norms regarding appropriate behaviour and conduct, similar to that of the developed and globalized countries. In this sense, it was also found that this virtual space promotes equality, whether between genders, sexual orientations, etc.

However, it was also discovered that despite the place being more gender neutral, instances of harassment and sexism still occurred, albeit in isolated case. Furthermore, our research revealed that as they become more exposed to this globalised space, some individuals develop a different sense of their own nationality, as they can distance themselves, and see it more objectively.

In our research, we also looked at the impact gender has on how women express themselves ingame and how they are being treated. What we discovered is that female gamers are very diverse in the manner in which their gender is displayed. Some use their femininity as a front page all the way to how they create their characters, while other female players consider gender to be less important in portraying themselves ingame, being comfortable with creating characters of opposite sex.

However, regardless of the manner in which their characters are created, female gamers within MMORPGs feel comfortable with their gender, and do not see it as a catalyst for ill treatment. Despite it, a degree of harassment does occur, however only in isolated cases. Furthermore, sometimes, female gamers just see it as fun and banter, and do not take it seriously.

Our research also showed that women are exposed to certain stereotypes, of which some have been adopted by the female gamers themselves. This suggests that some barriers still exist in presenting their gender as equal in MMORPGs.

The last aim of our research was to learn why women are attracted to MMORPGs, as well as understand their gaming behaviour. In this regard, through our research we discovered that women highly enjoy the imaginary worlds on which MMORPGs are built, as it allows them to escape a normal, ordinary world. In this regard, they also enjoy becoming someone else, be it a man, a woman, or an alien, or simply create a replica of themselves, with which they can explore this world. They enjoy interacting with others, as they journey and complete quests for achievements, as much as they enjoy helping them. As can be seen, there are various aspects within MMORPGs that attract women.

When it came to why they like MMORPGs, our use of the Hierarchical Value Map model showed that, what women got in return from spending time on the different aspects within the games was the following: a sense of accomplishment when working with others, the feeling of belonging to a community, a sense of fulfilment, the satisfaction of achieving things within the virtual world, a feeling of appreciation from others, and the option to escape from their normal lives.

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Appendix

Appendix 1



This picture shows the different races in World of Warcraft and their respective sigils, divided in the two opposing factions.

Appendix 2



Picture showing the Pandaren race in the character creation screen, within World of Warcraft.

Appendix 3



Picture showing the classes within each World of Warcraft faction.

Appendix 4



Picture showing the three factions and races within Elder Scroll Online.

Appendix 5



Picture showing the five races within Guild Wars 2.

Appendix 6



Picture showing the two races within AION.

Appendix 7



Picture showing the two factions within Star Wars the Old Republic, each with its classes.

Interview guide

“Introductory questions”

1. Age:
2. Occupation:
3. Nationality:

“Why are women attracted to MMORPGs and how do they express themselves ingame?”

1. Which MMORPGs have you played?
2. How long have you been playing MMORPGs for?
3. Why did you start playing MMORPGs?, and what do you like about it?
4. What role do you like to play? What kind of characters do you like?

“How is the virtual space of MMORPGs defined when approaching it from a globalization perspective?”

1. What is your experience when interacting with other players?
2. What do you think about interacting with people online as opposed to people in real life?
3. Have you found new connections through MMORPGs?
4. Do you consider some of the people you met in the games as real friends?

5. Do you get to interact with people from different countries?
6. Do you feel there are language or cultural barriers that make these interactions difficult?

“Why are women attracted to MMORPGs and how do they express themselves ingame?”

1. How would you describe yourself (personality) in real life versus virtual?
2. When looking at yourself, do you behave differently in real life than in the virtual world?
3. Do you think being a girl has played any role in how other players interact with you?
4. Are you always upfront about being a female player, or do you think that it is something you hide in the beginning?
5. Do you think there are any upsides and downsides to being a female gamer?
6. Have you ever been harassed in the game because of you gender?
7. Do you think women are put in a disadvantage when trying fit in on a competitive level?

Final thoughts?

1. Is there anything you would like to further share with us?

2. What kind of advice would you give to girls/women that are just now starting to play games?

Appendix 9

Participant 1

Firstly introducing purpose of interview to participant.

Interviewer 1: So, what is your age?

Interviewee: uhmm 32

Interviewer 1: Okay, young girl... And occupation?

Interviewee: retired

Interviewer 1: and Nationality?

Interviewee: Danish

Interviewer 1: okay..

Interviewer 2: we need to have this recorded, that is why are also asking....

Interviewer 1: We are done with those questions now.. So lets move on to uhm the MMO's.

Interviewer 1: So which MMO's have you played and are still playing?

Interviewee: uhm, ive played World of Warcraft, and i'm playing elder scrolls online.

Interviewer 1: okay.. And øø for how long do you think you have played?

Interviewee: øøø world of warcraft ive played for 6 months, øøøøø along time ago, and then a couple of months long time ago, and then for like 6 months last year, and Elder Scrolls i've played for around 6 months as well.

Interviewer 1: So that is around 1½ year or 2 years or something on and off?

Interviewee: Yeah, something like that.

Interviewer 1: *laughing* okay, uhm so why did you start playing MMO's and what did you like about it?

Interviewee: øøø i actually started playing because my boyfriend or girlfriend at the time, øøø was playing it, and it was kinnda like, a way to do something together, cause world of warcraft has a tendency to take over people's life

Interviewer 1: *laughing*

Interviewee: And then me and my girlfriend started playing Elder Scrolls, because we wanted to try something new cause all the players in world of warcraft are kinda douchebags. ØØØ *laughing* So ØØØ we tried that and stopped playing world of warcraft, cause Elder Scrolls was more fun more casual. and the players are.... There is not that whole thing about there is a way to do it "best" cause you can kinda do whatever you want with your character, other people can't really have opinions about it. Sooo.. and you can't like in dungeons and stuff you don't get epic loot by killing monsters.. so there is not that whole ... They want you to be your best and all that...So it is much more casual when playing with others..

Interviewer 1: Okay.. So ermm... we touched upon it a little bit about the social aspect.. but What is your experience when interacting with others in MMO's? In general .. if you do ?

Interviewee: erhm.. it kinda depends on the game.. øhm.. In Elder Scrolls people are much more.... They see you are in trouble when your questing, then they will jump in and help you.. And then sometimes you will group up and do something together.. øø otherwise it is mostly in the guild the social is there.. and that kinda depends on the guild and how you are yourself. I think a lot of people play without being that social indirect.

Interviewer 1: Okay, so would you say... Do you Choose not to socialize as much with others? like, the people you don't know? as apposed to real people you play with?

Interviewee : Noo, i .. i love a very social guild... you know where the the chat is active and . ØØØ .. you do stuff together and..

Interviewer 1: Okay.. do you have anything?

Interviewer 2: hmmm, not at the moment..

Interviewer 1: okay, so what do you think about interacting with people online as opposed to people in real life? Maybe people you never met before? like.. the.. yeah..if you get what i mean?.

Interviewee: yeah, well in MMO's you kinda... ØØØ.. like the ØØØ... the first is more like talking about the game.. And then maybe you will start talking more privately..erhm... In general in real life you will talk about other stuff, than just one game.. So it takes a while to form a connection, but then again i know a lot of people who have met their wives and husbands on.. *laughing* hehe world of warcraft and stuff like that.

Interviewer 2: would you say that also depends on how much of an extrovert or an introvert you are? like if your more expansive like like talking with other people... do you think that influences?

Interviewee: Yeah.. but i also think that it can be like øø a good place for introverts to øøø to connect with other people, you know... it is more anonymous and you have that thing to talk about in the beginning and then you can slowly progress it into a friendship or something..

Interviewer 2: oh okay.. interesting.. yes

Interviewer 1: So have you found any connections through MMO's or friendships or?

Interviewee: ehmm.. Not really but then again i haven't played for that long a time.. like continously..

Interviewer 1: yeah

Interviewer 2: uhm.. okay... going back to the first question about your experience when interacting with other players.. erhm... did.. How did that take place, in the sense that erhm.. Where you the one approaching them? Did they approach you? or how would they.. how would they, it usually be initiated?

Interviewee: øøø usually its just... øøø... your in the same area and you .. me or another person... ask the other to group up... So it is easier øhm... and then sometimes you add the person as friend and play together in another time or... i think it is pretty 50/50..

Interviewer 2: okay...

Interviewer 2: and erhm... i am curious because.. okay.. for me for example when i first started getting those erhm.. you know when people would ask me to form a group with them, i was like kinda of a excited about it, and i was like really erhm... idunno happy and stuff like that.. Did you have kinda those feelings or was it just more like normal or usual you didn't really?

Interviewee: Well, in Elders scrolls i was kinda baffled actually the first time, because i wasnt use to it from World of warcraft cause you know.. again.. i kinda think people are douche bags from world of warcraft.. *laughing* hehe øøø... but it was nice.. it was ehmm.. it gave me a little faith in the game community. In that game...

Interviewer 2: aha.. okay.. that is nice to hear...

Interviewer 1: erhm.. so since.. we have this question.. where we want to ask you.. if you consider people you met ingame as real friends, erhm.. idunno.. you seem to have not bonded that particularly well yet.. but people... but could you imagine it atleast.. that you could say that someone you met in real game could be like a real friend?

Interviewee: Yeah.. definitely.. i have friends that i have met.. i dont even know where probably at chat or .. or *mumble*..... that i have talked to for 10 years.. never met them.. but i have helped them through loss of parents or... stuff like that.. definitely consider them a friend.. øøø

Interviewer 1: okay,

Interviewee: cause you're not actually sure, that the people are who they say they are, but still...as long as there is no money involved it doesn't really matter.. *laughing* hehe...

Interviewer 1: okay...erhm.. So eh.. So have you encountered people from different countries? Have you got to interact with people from .. that is not from denmark?

Interviewee: øø ingame?

Interviewer 1: yeah.

Interviewee: yeah, øøøø the the guild i am in now is kinda spread all over Europe and Asia and.. Australia...

Interviewer 1: oh, okay that is pretty big...

Interviewee: yeah there is like a US server and a .."Other countries" server.. So..

Interviewer 1: ahh okay, that is definitely something that is different from Wow, you would normally see like... people only from Europe or something in the guild..

Interviewee: yeah..

Interviewer 1: okay... So do you think there is like erhm.. or do you feel when you interact with people from all these different countries, if there is like a cultural barrier or a .. erhm.. lets say a language barrier?

Interviewee: nooo... not really.... well there is kinda in ESO.. cause you can get the game in both English, French and German.. So sometimes when you are running around in towns, the chat will come up in German or French.. øhm.. but you usually pick a guild that is english speaking so it is not really a problem in there.

Interviewer 1: And people coming from different cultures is no problem to.. when you cooperate and stuff for...

Interviewee: no, i dont think so.

Interviewer 1: okay.. erhm..

Interviewer 2: Now, since you already said about the fact that there erhm.. Wow pretty much gathers a lot of douche bags *laughing* hehe.. We are actually going to start talking now a bit more about ehm... you know.. Sexism and Stereotyping in MMORPGs...

Interviewee: yeah

Interviewer 2: Okay, but before we do that erhm... when looking at yourself... do you think you behave differently in real life then in the virtual world?

Interviewee: øøøøø.. Well sometimes my character but.. i really don't role-play that much.. øøø *laughing* but i wouldn't go out and killing people, so ... there is that.. *laughing* hehe.. But øøø

Interviewer 1: so your not a PvPer?

Interviewee: hehe.. but erhm.. no... i don't think i change that much...

Interviewer 2: Okay.. erhm... could you give us a short description about how you think your personality is?

Interviewee: erhm.. i am pretty open, ehhe i don't take things too serious.. øøøøø.. i don't get like super excited or super angry... so i am kinda Mellow..

Interviewer 2: So then, regarding your gender.. Do you think the fact that you are a girl, played any role in how other players interacted with you? in erhm... you said that in Elder Scrolls and Wow tend to be different.. has there been differences? you know in these two games?

Interviewee: Noo.. i don't think so but unless you talk to people and tell them that you are either a man or a women, they don't really know cause you usually have characters in each gender.

Interviewer 1: so do you do that? do you tell like your a girl or do you just stay neutral..

Interviewee: Noo, its mostly all in the guild because we have to apply before joining the guild... But other than that.. i don't think so.. maybe people ehm... if they know your a girl, there might be a tendency to people wanna play more with you cause you know.. there is not that many women playing MMO's ehm... So we kinda still this mythic creature sometimes *laughing*

Interviewer 2: ehm... we do have a friend who has regarded women playing MMORPGs as the holy grail..

Interviewee: yeah hehe

Interviewer 2: Okay... so your not ehm.. Do you have a problem with ehh saying that your are a female player, or do you just don't think that it is something necessary you know ... a necessary detail in the conversation....

Interviewee: uhm... Noo.. I think, if it comes up naturally.. Thats cool .. it is not like a run around screaming "i'm a women" "i'm a women" ! but.. *laughing* hehe.. but erhm... no otherwise i don't really.. if people take offense to it.. øøø ... thats a problem..

Interviewer 2: okay..

Interviewer 1: okay, so it is not something that you feel is important to ehm.. tell someone that you met initially.. it not.. gender is not important?

Interviewee: no, not really.

Interviewer 1: okay.. So the question is.. Have your ever been harassed due to being a girl, like some being maybe a little too overeager, or maybe a negative experience as a girl gamer?

Interviewee: I don't think so

Interviewer 2: okay, so the fact that wow players are ehm.. tend to be douche bags.. it... do you think it has more to do with the fact with that it is a very competitive environment? or what do you think thats...

Interviewee: yeah, definitely.. øøøø... its.. World of Warcraft is so competitive it's crazy.. uhm.. i know that it is kinda what sucked my girlfriend in, cause she would like do raids all the time to get that epic something.. erhm... so that she could be better than the others.. ehm.. and that will create this environment where you have to be the best... otherwise other people won't have you in their raids.. or whatever.. cause they want to get that stuff..

Interviewer 2: okay...uhmm.. so you think that they are equally douchy to both man and women, you know... *laughing*

Interviewee: yeah i think it is the same, its a matter of personality i think.

Interviewer 2: okay... uhm.. talking about, a little about stereotypes.. uhm.. Do you think that the fact that you are a women has ever... Actually i, no .. i think your previous question answered that.. but just to make sure... erhm.. do you think women are put in a disadvantage when trying to fit in on a competitive level?

Interviewee: hmm... maybe if you're in that part of your life where you have kids.. cause you wont have as much time to play.. ehh.. where i think today most men will have more like free play time, even when they have kids then a woman will have. erhm.... or maybe

the women just... just will have more like... øøø things that they shouldn't be playing as much and actually take care of the kids, øøø idunno.. but maybe then.. but otherwise i don't think so...

Again i think it is more of a personality thing... how much you want to play and.....

Interviewer 1: so what about maybe the other way around... how do you think men øøø look at women in the sense of erhm... for instance raids.. "okay there is this women in raid" do you think maybe women have a harder time.. you know fitting in... or..

Interviewee: ehheh, you probably have to.. not be a prude, hehe *laughing* ehheh.. cause i imagine.. i haven't done much raiding but i imagine that sometimes the... when the heat is on, that stuff will be said *laughing* ehheh.. where men will probably more.. it is more their like way of talking.. then a lot of women.. but then again i don't think that the the... prudish women will actually play MMO's or computer games ... i think that they are in a different category.

Interviewer 2: okay..

Interviewer 1: what about proving stuff, do you feel maybe there is more pressure on women to prove more, than men?

Interviewee: maybe, but i think maybe that the women are putting it on themselves..

Interviewer 1-2: ah okay.

Interviewer 2: why do you think that is?

Interviewee: i don't know, maybe it's just because they are still in whole geek community and there is still a lot more men than there are women, and it is been brought up with the whole notion that women have to prove themselves and blblalbalbal.. all that feminist crap.. ehheh.. But like our parents are this wierd feminist group that kinda men are evil ehheh...

Interviewer 2: oh, but it is so funny cause actually that is not what feminism stands for...

Interviewee: i know *laughing* yeah but, but that is what... our parents generation kinda calls feminism so....

Interviewer 2: okay.. i think that actually closes the set in stone if we should call them that ehheh questions.. so now we would more like to ask you, if there is something you think that you would like to share with us? or something you think we might have overlooked?

Interviewee: i think you cover pretty much the basics :)

Interviewer 1-2: okay

Interviewer 1: cause we are really interested in in... in knowing about how women act in this ehh.. lets call it social world of MMO's and.. and if there is stereotyping or sexism and stuff like that..

Interviewer 2: but but.. and other than that its also more about how you enjoy... no actually i don't think we had enough questions about that.. like how you enjoy the game...maybe we have.. not sure... You are lucky person number 1 interviewer so *laughing* so ehm.. yeah.. it also *mumbling*..

Interviewer 1: we are evaluating our questions to improve on that..

Interviewer 2: yeah...

Interviewer 1: its because we are not 100% sure what we are looking for really... like.. everything is interesting.. and can be put into context..

Interviewer 2: yeah exactly...

Interviewer 1: but yeah that is it.. and thank you a lot for your help!

END OF INTERVIEW

Appendix 10

Participant 2

Introducing the participant to the study

Interviewer 1: What is your age

Interviewee: ehh, 34

Interviewer 1: okay, and your occupation?

Interviewee: ehh, kitchen manager

Interviewer 1: okay, and you are ? ehh your nationality?

Interviewee: Danish

Interviewer 1: okay, so.. What kind of MMORPGs have you played or are you still playing?

Interviewee: ehhe, i started on ehh world of warcraft, played that for a while, and then moved on to try different stuff like guild wars ehm.. Rift i think it is called, and ehhe went back to world of warcraft.. and now i am playing Elder Scrolls like your brother. Star Wars the old republic i tried that as well, but that was right in the beginning and i didn't like it so i never really went back..

Interviewer 1: okay, what attracted you, you know in the beginning to MMORPGs?

Interviewee: ehhe, i think that i got really hooked when i discovered the mechanics of the auction house. Farming and gold making. and then moving on from there it was the.. the raiding. it was the endgame raiding in world of warcraft. In Elder scrolls it is a little bit different ehh.. because i think the game is setup differently so it is basically just exploring, obviously auction house and crafting is really nice in the game, and then ehh.. yeah i like the social aspect.. I recently just joined the guild that your brother is in, up until then i been playing ehhe basically just soloing around.

Interviewer 1: and how long have you been playing MMORPGs for?

Interviewer 1: Do you.. Does it help you express yourself easier the fact that you are hidden behind a screen?

Interviewee: Sometimes.. I think that when you're, when you're chatting to people behind their screens that have a tendency to open up.. faster than ehhe than in real life like ehh you know people that you.. you don't really know them, you know them by their

character name and what they do ingame, can tell you about this depression they had for years and years, don't think that is going to happen... if .. if you meet people at a bar or something.. oh well.. maybe if they are really really drunk.. But then you don't want to hear it.

Interviewer 2: so you played a lot of different kind of MMOs so have you established any.. lets say connections through them, are there people that you maybe... you don't play with them anymore but you still chat with them, every now and then?

Interviewee: ehh.. yeah i had a.. i started a guild in world of warcraft, and i still have contact to a.. by the core of that guild which is really nice. They still play in world of warcraft, but now they are scattered all around the place.
Interviewer 2: okay, so you keep in touch..

Interviewee: yeah only through the battlenet thing, it is not like.. i have a few on facebook i can't remember if i deleted them. but yeah as i said before, what we mainly had in common was the game and since i don't play it anymore then we don't have that much in common. But we do know what... a little bit about each other so it is pretty interesting.

Interviewer 2: okay, so do you consider some of the people that you meet in game as real friends or how would you describe them?

interviewee: ehh.. i think there is 1 only that i talk to that much that i would consider him a real friend, the rest is more or less in game or online friends.

Interviewer 1: okay, erhm.. do you get to interact with players from different countries?

Interviewee: yeah honestly i don't know where people are from, but yeah i assume they are from different countries.. Since it is an international guild..

Interviewer 1: but you never.. have you ever experienced any kind of difficulties in talking to people from you know, different backgrounds.. not necessary knowing their backgrounds but have you seen any kind of difference?

Interviewee: ehm... do you mean like language wise?

Interviewer 1: yeah language, cultural....

Interviewee: yeah the culture... maybe a bit of the humor because i am danish and you know the humor in denmark.... *laughing* not all people understand that so... sometimes can offend people.. but it is not that bad..it's more if.. if it's kids that's online.. they don't understand that humor.. especially if it is regarding sex or something..So i try to find people around my own age to play with.

Interviewer 1: okay, but that is kinda the only problem that you have encountered when it comes to things like this?

Interviewee: yeah i think so.. There was one guy who ehh.. back in the guild in world of warcraft who was... he was a muslim, and he was very ehh.. VERY muslim ehh.. really pointed it out that he was a muslim before joining the guild, so ... but we never had any problems with... i never experience any problems playing with muslims, but apparently he had..

Interviewer 1+2: oh, okay..

Interviewee: So that was a big big issue, also homosexuality i never experienced any problems with that either, they are pretty "large" in this game. and i noticed on the forums in Elder Scrolls that there are actually guilds that are advertising, that they are friendly to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and stuff like that. I have never seen that in any other MMO... *mumbling*

Interviewer: I have actually heard that there is a at least one guild in world of warcraft as well that is known to be more open towards LGBT people, but yeah.. i personally haven't interacted with them so, again.. i don't really know advertise this..

Interviewee: yeah i don't know.. i think they just shout it in trade chat. or something.. But here it was on the forums. But there was a lot of them..

Interviewer 1 introducing the genre of the next set of questions...

Interviewer 1: First of all, have you encountered any kind of sexism or stereotyping?

Interviewee: There is always the flirting, you know the innocent flirting from guys.. ehm.. but i think it is just fun and banter really. and if you help people out, and they find out you are a girl, they insta-friend request you.. *laughing* cause they find out your a girl. erhm.. But as i said i ehh.. i don't talk to anybody and i don't.. don't think that sex is necessary to name... i don't think that your gender in... is necessary to tell people... In this.. in this game, its because it is just a game, and what your doing is you're moving around a lot of pixels it doesn't really matter what gender you are...

Interviewer 1: okay, so talking about this.. do you think that it is appropriate for people to refer to gamers and then female gamers? or do you think they should just view everyone as gamers?

Interviewee: ehh... i think they should just view everybody as gamers, but i know that there are some females that have the need to be known that they are female gamers.

Interviewer 1: Why do you think that is?

Interviewee: i think its... well maybe they have had bad experiences, and they need like the community to back them up or something...

Interviewer 1: when looking at yourself, do you behave differently in real life as opposed to the virtual world?

Interviewer 2: Maybe in the things you say or...yeah.. or if you have a temper in game and stuff like that?

Interviewee: yeah.. no.. i think i am a little bit more immature in game because you can be, and in you know my work life i have to be this authority telling people what to do and stuff, so i prefer to be layed back in game and just relax.. But as regarding to what i am talking about it is pretty much the same.. speak my mind..

Interviewer 1: So since you said that you tend to be ehh immature, i am assuming that would consider yourself as having a very playful personality?

Interviewee: oh yeah. definitely..

Interviewer: Do you think that being a girl, has played any role in how other players interact with you?

Interviewee: ehm... Maybe i don't know, i mean i think first time i went PvP in Elder Scrolls i was crap.. but i was on TeamSpeak so people could hear i was a girl, so the leader kinda went easier on me.. But i don't know if that was because i was new or because i was a girl

Interviewer 1: okay, but other than that you haven't had... you haven't noticed any kind of differences..

Interviewee: Well i think that... a lot of people think that gamers say that girls can't play, but the most of the people that i have met really... maybe they think it, and that is why they want to help me so much. but i think it is fine.. they want to help me, thats good.. show me where i can find this stuff and help me get this stuff... But i don't know if it is because ehh.. just the gender thing or it is because of prejudice that girls can't play or maybe it is just me, because they think i am a bad player... i don't know.. But i like it... i think it is nice..

Interviewer 2: Are you always up front that you are a female player, or is it just something you don't feel the need to share? until they actually ask you?

Interviewee: oh no, i mean if i am applying to a guild i am up front.. ehh telling people.. but if i am just randoming help somebody out killing a world boss or something.. i don't whisper him btw i am a girl. I don't think that is necessary.. it doesn't matter.. I mean i don't care what gender he is or she is.

Interviewer 1: Do you think there are any upsides or maybe downsides to being a female gamer?

Interviewee: well, i never tried anything different.. So i have nothing to compare it with... But i don't see a problem.. and i .. i enjoy it. I enjoy just being a gamer..

Interviewer 1: have you ever been harassed in the game because of your gender

Interviewee: noo...

Interviewer 1: have you ever maybe heard of things like that happening to your friends or...

Interviewee: oh yeah for sure it does happen... I had a friend again back in world of warcraft thats the game where i have been most social.. interacting with different players... yeah where this one guild mate had to quit the game cause he fell in love with another guild mate, which is sad, i don't know... they had known eachother for a week so... you go figure.. ehm... and then ehm... he felt that shes been harassing him an you know the other way around... but yeah.. stuff like that.. i think it is more about...it's not... so much people... this is also just a prejudice... erhm.. but there are many lonely gamers out there, so when they hear that there is a women.. they tend to maybe get this i don't know.. Seen a boy and princess fantasy you see... especially the young guys.. i mean that is my experience.. that is why i try to keep the young guys out of any guilds that i have been in.

Interviewer 1: So you think that the way you approach the game depends from a age to age...

Interviewee: oh yeah definitely....

Interviewer 2: okay, you said that you have been raiding as well in world of warcraft, ehm.. do you think that women are put in a disadvantage.. on a more competitive level maybe not skill wise but more how others see you or ? something like that ?

Interviewee: yeah, i think so.. but ehm.. i think its entirely down to each individual woman, because some women have a... they .. i mean a lot of guys ehm.. they really.. i mean that is what they do. you know they raid..ehhh for women i think that is what they do because they enjoy it, maybe they are not as competitive because it is not in their i don't know.. i their personality.. So they do raid, but they also have different commitments ehh.. hence they will be put on the B team because they cannot make the commitment. .maybe they have kids ehhh... and then you know with all the male and female roles in the families that are still there... and... but i don't think i mean.. if you can put out just as much as the guy that you are up against for the same role, i don't think you have any disadvantages.

Interviewer 1: would you consider yourself as being a very competitive person?

Interviewee: yeah i was in world of warcraft, but it kinda... it was becoming too much so now.. now i am not that competitive..i mean i always aim for the competitiveness but time wise i don't want to spend that much time doing just that.

Interviewer 1: So i remember you said that your are not playing world of warcraft that much anymore.. What made you switch from world of warcraft to Elder Scrolls for example?

Interviewee: ehhh, it just happened gradually ehh... i started Elder Scroll right before Warlords of Draenor came out i didn't like it that much, but then.. then i just ehh.. played a bit more and my girlfriend was playing it, and she told me about it.. ehm.. and then yeah i got sucked into it.. ehh it was more pretty .. the quest lines were better. the crafting was better.. in my opinion..ehh.. and then i just quit World of Warcraft all together.. because world of warcraft started to feel like my second job.. With the bloody gardening, and the garrisons *laughing*

Interviewer 1: So the last question is as follows: Is there anything you would like to further share with us? from your experience, feelings thoughts?

Interviewee: about being a gamer or female gamer?

Interviewer 2: as a female gamer

Interviewer 1: or just as a gamer

Interviewee: erhm... Well as a female gamer or to young female gamers and new female gamers.. not.. not young age wise...just ehh.. don't let people put you down because of your gender.. The good thing about Elder Scrolls is that there is a lot of older players, ehh... room for everybody.. and..

Interviewer 2: So you would say it is a more mature game then World of Warcraft?

Interviewee: oh yeah definitely.. definitely more mature..erhm.. and people don't care.. what gender you are, the is my experience from Elder Scrolls.. ehh.. or as in World of Warcraft there is so many young kinds playing it.. So yeah that is it, just have fun and ehh.. well proud about your gender.. *laughing*

Interviewer 1: actually i do have one more question, do you think that gaming is something that will always be in your life? is it something that you always find yourself coming back to?

Interviewee: Oh yes, yes for sure.. i was really bored with World of Warcraft before i tried this, and i was jumping around from game to game, desperately trying to find a hobby.. So yeah.. definitely..

Interviewer 1: Okay..

Interviewer 2: Well this was nice

Interviewer 1: yeah, and i think we have all we need

Interviewee: Okay, i hope that was helpful

Interviewee 1: it was, thank you so much for your time.

Interviewee: your welcome and good luck with your assignment.

Interview over

Appendix 11

Participant 3

Interviewee: I don't consider myself very hardcore gamer, but I do have my fair share of experience I think (laughing)

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: First of all.

Interviewer 1: How old you are ..

Interviewee: I'm 21, almost 22.

Interviewer 1: Very young.

Interviewee: Yeah, I would suppose so, I don't consider myself very young. I hear it from a lot of people, but it's apparently very young to be doing a master.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: So you're a student.

Interviewee: Yep.

Interviewer 2: OK, and nationality?

Interviewee: I'm Dutch, I'm from the Netherlands.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: OK. Which MMORPGs have you played? Or are still playing.

Interviewee: Well, right now, I'm, I've been playing Star Wars The Old Republic, for two years now. And, before that, I've played Guild Wars, I've played WOW, for like 1 or 2 months, and, ughm, I've played a couple of smaller one, like Fly for fun, I don't know if you know that.

Interviewer 1: No.

Interviewee: And, ughm, what's the name of the other one ... (n.r. Endless Online)

Interviewer 2: You don't have to remember all of them.

Interviewee: No, I just, it's, (mumbling). But the main one right now is Star Wars The Old Republic.

Interviewer 2: When did you start playing games?

Interviewee: I must have been 10 or 11, I think. Yeah, I have two brothers and they play, they both play MMORPGs, so I kinda rolled into it that way.

Interviewer 2: OK, ughm ... But other than your brothers playing it, is there something that attracted you to playing games?

Interviewee: Well, I'm a huge fan of fantasy, and science fiction and stuff, so that, it was more the, story line and the genre that really attracted me, rather than the, the fact that you are playing with a lot of people on the internet.

Interviewer 1: So that was initially what drew you to the game, and then, and now? Is it still the same or ..?

Interviewee: Well, I mostly play with my brother, on the internet, and sometimes I do play by myself, and then I enjoy interacting with people, but when I play with my brother, we're sort of a group together and we don't really interact with anyone. But if I'm alone I open up more for that kind of stuff I guess (laughing)

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: So, playing with your brother is, I'm assuming that is definitely one of the highlights of playing MMORPGs.

Interviewee: Yeah, yes, it's sort of like a thing that I have with, especially my, my .. I have two older brothers, and the youngest one is the one that I play with the most. It's sort of something that we just share.

Interviewer 1: And do they live in Denmark?

Interviewee: No, ughm .. they live, both, both my brothers live in the Netherlands. So right now ..

Interviewer 1: It's a good way to spend time with ..

Interviewee: Yeah, staying in contact. We actually play more games now than we did when I still lived in the Netherlands.

Interviewer 2: Nice. What does, like, what kind of features do you like in a game? How do you decide what kind of games you wanna play together?

Interviewee: Ughm. This could be a difficult question.

Interviewer 1: You already said story line. That's important.

Interviewee: Yeah, **story line is important**. Like, I love the Star Wars universe, that was one of the reasons why, especially Star Wars The Old Republic, but they have a lot of, where **you can make a lot of choices in your conversations, so that's something I like more than just, you know, killing monsters all the time, and, and doing quests that you don't really read, but you just do them.**

Interviewer 2: Yeah, we know that.

Interviewee: Yeah, you should, oh, I have, I have to go that way, I don't know why, but I'm just gonna go that way. No, I like, **I like the conversations. And, I also like when you can make your own, you can make your own detailed character, when you have a lot of options in that.** Ughm. Other than that.

Interviewer 2: So, this whole idea of achievements, killing monsters, slaying, this is not really .. it's more like the story line ..

Interviewee: Well, **I enjoy doing it, obviously, otherwise I would get really bored.** No, it's, it's not my main reason for it, that's **character building and role play, that's what I really enjoy.**

Interviewer 2: OK. What roles do you usually like to play?

Interviewee: It depends, especially with Star Wars the Old Republic, because I've been playing it for so long, **I'm kinda trying out all the different, different characters.** But usually I start with something... **It's always a girl,** I'm, I'm always playing a woman, and I **usually, something, like ranged, like a ranger, or an archer, and ... or mage.** Something ...

Interviewer 1: So no Jedi

Interviewee: Well, right now I do play Jedis, but **my first Jedi was a consular, so that's like, you don't have to stand close to people.**

Interviewer 1: That was the one I played as well.

Interviewee: Yeah?

Interviewer 1: Yeah.

Interviewee: But a guy obviously.

Interviewer 1: No.

Interviewee: No? A girl? Oh, that's cool. (laughing)

Interviewer 1: For me it's more about the function of the character, so if it's support or range, I like it to be female, and if it's more melee, it has to be ..

Interviewee: Sort of like gender roles. I don't really have that. I think you can be a strong woman and be a jedi and guardian or whatever

Interviewer 1: I completely agree (laughing). I of course agree with that. And also, like, when naming characters, I have like two names, one for the female, one for the male, I stuck with that for more than 10 years.

Interviewee: Really? I always, I always have different names. I always try and pick the name that fits the best for how I, how she looks, and, I don't know, how she feels. You only really know after you play for like an hour with your character, then you sort of, they sort of get a personality, by themselves. I always feel like it happens, but of course you control it, but I always feel like it happens, by themselves, they get their personality, and then you know if your name fits after that.

Interviewer 2: OK, that's really nice.

Interviewee: Yeah, it sounds kinda weird, doesn't it, but .. (laughing). I've had this, I've done text based role play for a while, where you like write stories and people react to that, and, ughm, then i always feel like, if you write your character, they sort of react themselves. Like, you can, you control them. You write it of course, but they sort of, they get their own personality, and then you don't really have to think about what they're gonna say. It sounds a bit weird maybe.

Interviewer 1: No, we can definitely relate, we actually tried, once, playing dungeons and dragons, so that's kinda like .. it's character creation, and making up stuff and ..

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: So you would say that, for example, you like this whole idea of building yourself differently in games, like different personas, and acting up on that.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: OK. Do you think that there is anything else that attracts you to games, other than what you have said so far?

Interviewee: Ughm, for me it's just a way to, you know, immerse yourself in this worlds that you've seen in movies, or you've read about in books, and the, playing in game, feels like you're much more in it. And then you can just be whoever you want, and that's, well, yeah, that's just typical escapism I guess. (laughing)

Interviewer 2: OK. Ughm, have you, ok .. other than your brothers, you said that you don't interact with other players that much, but is there an interaction with other players.

Interviewee: Well, when I'm playing alone, I do it a lot more, when I see someone role playing, like, I like to join in and .. if, if someones role play is not weird to join in, if you have a good reason to, you know, act in the story. Ughm. And other than that, I sometimes like teaming up with people that I don't know, if i'm playing by myself.

Interviewer 2. Has this kind of interaction ever take, have you ever taken this kind of interaction further than just in role interaction? Like starting to talk with them more..?

Interviewee: I've had one, woman, that I interacted with in a game and we ended up adding each other on Amazon, we still used Amazon, in those days (laughing). And we ended up talking and we're still friends actually, but we've never met in real life. We've seen each other on like Skype, and stuff, but we haven't really met each other in real life. But I, I really, she's just a friend. She became one of friends. But other than that, not really. I always find a bit, I don't know. You never really know who's behind that avatar. So..

Interviewer 2: Yeah, it's a bit trickier.

Interviewee: There's a big step between becoming friends with someone in a games, and, I don't know, becoming part of their guild or something. And, adding them to something personal like your skype account, or meet up. That's a pretty big step.

Interviewer 2: But in this particular case, do you feel like, although you have never actually seen her,

Interviewer 1: She has seen her on Skype.

Interview 2: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, but that was after.

Interviewer 2: But after, yeah, talking about after, do you think it's like, a kind of relationship take you can compare to how you react, talk with your real friends? Like ..

Interviewee: I think the beginning is different. Because obviously you meet in a world where you're both not really yourselves, and then you realize that you like each other as friends, because of the way that you talk, I don't know, the way that you play. And then, once you add each other to something personal, you actually get to know each other. But it's always different when you talk to someone online, than when you talk to someone in real life. You always .. I always feel like you can tell a bit more about yourself, and people, like, she knows more about me than a lot of my other friends do. Not my best friends, but just like normal friends. I don't tell them all that stuff that I tell her. Because it's just easier to tell someone online. And of course I was really careful in

the beginning, but now i've known her for seven years, so .. (laughing) I kinda trust her, and, yeah ...

Interviewer 2: That's a lot.

Interviewee: It's, it is a different relationship i guess. Just because there is a lot more, you can tell a lot more about yourself.

Interviewer 2: OK. So you can actually be a bit more open.

Interviewee: Yeah, which can be dangerous in a way. If you're not careful in the beginning. But I think, if you've seen, if you've know someone for so long, it's not...

Interviewer 1: Because establishing the connection, I could assume is fairly easy, in the sense that already have something in common from the beginning. You like the game.

Interviewee: Yeah, well yeah, in the beginning, most of what we talked about was the game or other fantasy, fantasy things, and I used to go to, or still go actually, to fantasy festivals, so she would like to see pictures of that and everything. So that was something that we shared in common, but, now that we've both grown up, and, we talk about school and university, and, you know grown up stuff (laughing). She's a bit older than me, she's starting to get into like children and everything, so that also something that we now talk about.

Interviewer 2: Ok, that's very interesting. Ughm. OK. Did you get to interact with a lot of people from different countries while playing?

Interviewee: I don't know. usually I'm just in the European server, so I guess, I guess there must be a lot of people from different countries.

Interviewer 2: OK, but this idea of the country of origin, hasn't really, you know, come into conversation, like. Has it been something that matters? I'm assuming that not since you didn't exactly talk about that.

Interviewee: No, I don't think it matters, no. Not at all. i think sometimes you see peoples speaking Dutch in the main chat and they, ha, they are Dutch people, but I don't approach them because they are Dutch. Or, or, for other languages or countries for that matter, It just, it doesn't really matter. What matters to me is the way they speak. If they, if they're right in a really, I'm, I'm grammar nazi in a way, that want everything to be capitalized, i want punctuation to be right. If they speak in a way that I feel is, is sloppy, then I won't interact with them that easily, if I think they're like, they're writing very neatly and correctly, then I will approach them sooner. That's for me more of an indicator, and not exactly, not what country you're from, that doesn't matter to me.

Interviewer 1: So you say you play on an European server. Do you look at it more as a, like, so it's Europeans, you don't think about, are they from Denmark, or Sweden, or the

Netherlands, or.. for you is it more like, this space you live in, which is the European server, do you, do you see it as like one nationality, more like ..

Interviewee: Ughm, I, I wouldn't say, no. I wouldn't say one nationality, because we, of course you have.. especially when people speak their own language in the main chat, which is always a big annoyance to other people, i don't know why, I don't really mind. But that's when you notice that there are different nationalities, but, I don't know. I don't really see us a nationality per se. I don't really have a connection with people at the European server as a whole.

Interviewer 2: OK. However, do you think that this space, they create through games and stuff like that, do you see it like, indeed like a virtual world, you know, like, how should I put it, ughm, kinda like a small country on it's, on it's own? Like a virtual one, not necessarily a geographical one, do you think that that might apply?

Interviewee: Ughm, I don't, I think that in order to be a country, you need to have some sort of connection. I guess you do have a connection, with everybody on the server. I don't know

Interviewer 1: Well it is a tough question, but..'

Interviewee: Yeah, it's .. I guess if you look at nationality, or a country as in the way you all share a common thing, belonging to this one place, then yes, I would say you are a country. But I've never really looked at it in that way.

Interviewer 1: But maybe country is also the wrong word. Maybe it's ..

Interviewee: It's more of a .. culture, I would call it a culture, probably. Not a country, because a country, I would imagine, has some sort of borders, and, it's virtual, so it doesn't have any borders, in a way. I don't know (laughing). I would see it as a culture.

Interviewer 1: Yeah, but also when it comes to like, rules and things that you should do and should not do..

Interviewee: Yeah, than it's definitely a culture, yes. There are a lot of unwritten rules about what you're allowed to do, especially in, in the main chat and everything.

Interviewer 1: But there are actually this kind of rules, like you do know that if you are to play in this server, then there are certain rules you have to respect.

Interviewee: Yeah, well yeah, I've, especially if you talk your, if you speak your own language in the main chat, that always angers a lot of people. if you have server lag, and you're actually, I don't know, I always feel like you're supposed to say it in your main chat, because then you can see if other people have it too, so you know if it's the servers, or your own internet, so that's sort of, I don't know if everybody feels it that way, but I always feel like that's something you have to say in the main chat, like yeah, is

everybody, is anybody having lag? If, if, well if, I don't know how much you know about the game, but there is like two sides, and there's the Empire and the Republic, and if you're, Republic for example, and the Emperor happens to be in one of your areas, which sometimes happens on some planets, that it's nice to say in the chat that there's an Empire person running around killing people, so, yeah that's something that you're supposed to say, and if you don't say, then, sometimes people get angry in the chat, why didn't anybody say that there was someone walking around there.

Interviewer 1: Or, please someone, help me, getting killed all the time.

Interviewer 2: Oh my god. Actually yeah, that's

Interviewee: And the a few minutes later you see, I'm still here, being killed, nobody is helping me. It sometimes happens.

Interviewer 2: Really? OK. I think we can move on to the third section. Have you ever encountered any kind of sexism or stereotyping?

Interviewee: Ughm, yes. I think, especially if you always play a girl, and I like to play girls that are perfect in my opinion, because then at least in the game you can be perfect, you know. And, ughm, I have a couple of characters where, I felt, ughm, their personality was such that they could wear clothes that were more revealing, in a way. Ughm, and then you do get comments sometimes, or people, like standing with their character right in front of you and just standing there for a while, that you just know that they are looking at your character, and that sometimes goes a bit, ughm, harassing, even though it's your character, but it still feels like, like it's you that they're looking at, you know? Ughm, and other than that, I've had, one of the games that I don't remember the name of (n.r. Endless Online), i was, i also, i was a girl, and then, that was a community where there was a lot of people that just needed to vent their frustration apparently on the internet, so they, yeah, you got a lot of comments about, you know, wanna fuck me, and stuff like that (laughing). So yeah, but I've, I've never ..

Interviewer 1: That's definitely harassment.

Interviewee: Yeah, but I've never considered playing a boy because of that. I always wanted to play a girl. Even if you get those comments sometimes. It, it also depends. I mean, if my brother's with me, I always feel like it's less, because we just don't interact with people that much, we're just sort of our own group, and i don't think they do it if they can see that you are in a party with, someone .. and my brother always plays the buff big guy, so maybe that matters, I don't know (laughing). But yeah, I've never considered playing a boy, but we do, I do get, you know, comments, sometimes. It's not as bad in Star Wars the Old Republic as in some of the other games.

Interviewer 1: That's also something we've heard from other people, they say that in different games, there are, like some games are more mature than other games, so .. I think

Interviewee: i would definitely say so.

Interviewer 1: Some say that WOW is a place where ..

Interviewer 2: There are a lot of immature ..

Interviewer 1: A lot if immature people, because it's such a big game, so there is a lot of young players. So..

Interviewee: Yeah. I don't really remember how it was when i played WOW because i was 13 or something, i think, and my brother had a subscription that he shared with his, with his friend, because it was quite expensive if you're, like in your teens, it's quite expensive to play WOW, so I played on his account, and i don't really remember if i got any, any comments. I don't really remember, but, i don't know. In Star Wars the Old Republic, it's not, you know, that bad. It's usually people that don't say anything, and just stalk you for a while (laughing). That sometimes happens, that you, that you just walk and you're questing and everything and someone is just walking behind you all the time, and just, doing, i don't know, god knows what.

Interviewer 2: OK, I'm curious, if you were a boy and you would have a female character, how would you react to this kind of behavior.

Interviewee: Then it would be extra weird maybe.

Interviewer 2: Yeah, it's like ...

(not relevant)

Interviewee: I guess it also depends on how you see you character, because I always feel like there's a part of me inside my character, and then, if someone is, is stalking me in the game, I feel like I'm being, I feel like I'm being rushed, and hurried, and there is someone stalking me, and I guess if you don't really have that connection, maybe with you character, because you don't role play that much, then, ughm, it might not feel the same way.

Interviewer 2: Has this kind of behavior affected your, affected you through your character, or has any kind of behavior like this directed, was directed towards you. (not relevant). Was it, you know, aimed at directly at you? This kind of behavior, like when they found out that you are a girl, or was that some ...

Interviewee: Like, personally at me you mean? No, I'd, I never talk about myself on the games, so they would have no way of knowing that I'm a girl, actually a girl.

Interviewer 1: OK, so you're not, like, it's not something you share with people.

Interviewee: No

Interviewer 1: What if they asked? And in a bad grammar .. would you ... ?

Interviewee: (laughing) In a bad grammar I would definitely not reply, if they ask in proper grammar, i would probably not reply.

Interviewer 2: OK, so you don't .. Why is that, why don't you talk more about your, when asked?

Interviewee: Because I'm not there to be myself, I'm there to be someone else. With part of myself in it, and that's what i enjoy about it, and then if someone, you know, drags me back into the real world, and wants to talk about me, then (laughing) i, know, i don't, i don't .. I also, i don't think that's something you discuss with people you don't know at all. That's something that you discuss with people that you know.

Interviewer 1: So is it more like, it's something that you don't wanna reveal because you don't like being harassed, or is it more because it's, the concept of staying in character, and ...

Interviewee: Well yeah, I guess, that as well, because if you are, you know, a role player, that you don't want, you always get annoyed when people get out of character all of a sudden. But, yeah, it just, i don't think, i think there is, there is a wall between the game and real life, and that is a wall that you cannot cross unless you actually have long term interaction with someone in a game, if you're like part of a guild and you've been there for two years, then maybe i would consider, you know, having a more personal relationship with someone.

Interviewer 1: Ok, so then another question, ughm, you have this female friend, that you've had through the game.

Interviewee: Aham, well not this game but another game.

Interviewer 1: Another game, so if she were to write something out of character, in the game, to you, how would you respond?

Interviewee: Well, yeah, she did, eventually, of course, cuz that's how we ended up adding each other. It was, I played Lord of the rings online, that's where I met her, that was a long time ago. I played LOTR online in three beta version month, and then i met her, and then we ended up like subscribing a couple of times, so we played together a couple of times, and then, she said that she was writing on a text based role play forum of LOTR, so i subscribed there as well, and then that's why, that's how we interacted more personally, because that's, if you're on a forum, you have, like in character places, but you also have out of character places, so then i, you know, i first started in the in character places, but you want to introduce yourself as well, if you're on a forum, so

that's how i started introducing myself, and that's sorta how we got to interact that way. So it actually went via a different medium.

Interviewer 2: It wasn't in game.

Interviewee: No, we didn't talk about, we didn't really talk about ourselves in game, just that she was gonna subscribe. She said that it was like a bit too expensive to keep LOTR online going, so she said she was gonna subscribe to the text based forum thing. And i like writing so I said, oh let's do it.

Interviewer 2: Nice. So, when you interact with other players online, it's strictly through typing, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. Well yeah, well now with my brother, I also have skype on at the same time, but with strangers, yes.

Interviewer 2: OK. Ughm. OK, next question, do you think that there are any, when you think about interacting with other players, in any kind of MMORPG games, do you think that there are any upsides and downsides to being a female gamer?

Interviewee: Ughm, I don't know, really. Maybe if. I've never played a male character, so I wouldn't really, I wouldn't really know how it works if you're a male character, but maybe it opens up conversations a bit easier, I don't know, Maybe it's, it's a bit normal for a guy to start talking to a girl, then for a girl to start, I don't know. I've never felt it myself that way ..

Interviewer 1: But maybe it's also because, as you said, you stay a lot in character, and you don't reveal your gender as much. So, maybe you don't experience some of the things, maybe our other participants have experienced, (not relevant)

Interviewee: Well, I've never had that before, so. That would be creepy (n.r. people giving her gifts, etc).

Interviewer 1: So for you that's creepy, right? So, that's where there are different experiences.

Interviewee: Well, I've had people wanting to help me with quests, but that's usually when, it's like a very difficult one, and they need help themselves, and then ... You're both sort of waiting at the entrance. Is there someone who could help me? and the you sort of help each other, i've, i've never felt like that was because, i was a, i was playing a girl or not.

Interviewer 2: OK. So, not.. OK, other than people sitting in front of your character and staring, ughm, you haven't felt any kind of difference, like, just, the gender doesn't really play a role from your point of view.

Interviewee: Well it plays a role for me. Because I would, i cannot imagine playing, I've done it in text based role play, which was fine, but, in, if you have a character in front of you that's a boy, i, i cannot have, connect with that character, in the same way, so for me it matters. I always call them my girls, my characters. (laughing) But, what was your questions again? Sorry.

Interviewer 2: yeah, if the way, other people interact with you, it's the same. You think that whether it's man and man, man and woman, it's like, the same kind of interaction, it's not about the gender, but it's more about helping each other, and all that.

Interviewee: Ughm, yeah. It's, the difficulty is I've never played a male character so..

(not relevant)

Interviewer: Like even with the character, like if you have to do a quest, like you said before, they do the quest with you because they need help with that quest as well, and not because ..

Interviewee: yeah, i think it's, it's not because i'm, i'm a girl. I think what happens when you're a girl, is the starring and the stalking, and the invite into your group all the time, and, ughm, that's what some people do when they stalk you, they just add you to your group, and at some point you're like, I'm gonna ignore you now. Luckily there is an ignore button. But, no, I don't think they help me because I'm a girl. I've never seen it that way. I don't get gifts or anything (laughing). That would be very, I would find that very creepy, if people started trading with me, and wanted to give me gifts, that would, it would be a lie for me (laughing).

Interviewer 1: But you know, it's like, how do i say this without sounding ..

Interviewer 2: Creepy?

Interviewer 1: Not creepy, condescending, or .. I don't know, but there are women in real life that act in a certain way, and they also have the same tendency, to act the same way online, like they're true who they are, both in the real world and the virtual world. So, they are upfront right away about them being girls. Some might even, hey, i'm a girl, to get attention, and, and, so this kinds of personalities, in game, they receive a lot of .. interaction, attention, and so on and so forth, and they kinda, that's what they like about it. So their focus is more on the social part of the ... it could have been any other game as well, their, for them maybe the game does not matter so much and the story line, it's more like, I'm in the center of attention..

Interviewee: Yeah, well I guess you can get a lot of attention if you, if you say I'm a girl, but i've never, i've never asked anyone else if they were really a girl or a boy. I always assume that if you play a boy you are a boy, and if you play a girl then you are a girl. I don't know, I just never thought about...

Interviewer 1: Do you think, have you ever reflected on, if that's true or not?

Interviewee: Well , yeah a bit. but it doesn't really matter to me if you, if you, it you're a boy playing a girl, then, I don't know, i don't care. If you role play as a girl then I'm fine with it.

Interviewer 1: So do you feel like, in this virtual space that maybe you, or people in general, the tolerance is higher, for, you know, be who you are, play the character you wanna play, or if you are a lesbian, or a transsexual, or any of that, doesn't really apply in..

Interviewee: I've never had any, have heard of any problems with lesbians, or transsexuals in any of the games that i've played, even the ones that were more, sexually frustrated. I have to remember the name (not relevant) But even then, there was a lot of, there was even talk in the chat there, about what was, about, lesbians and if that was right and wrong, and there was a lot of tolerance for .. for this kind of stuff.

Interviewer 1: Do you think the reason, ok, so, you say you think there is a high tolerance, for people being different, and .. maybe it's a result of, you know, it's a globalized space, in the sense that many different cultures, and all that. Do you think the reason why that is, is because the passion for the game itself is so high, that the other things doesn't matter that much?

Interviewee: Could be, yeah, but at the same time, if i would see, i don't know, two girls role playing that they're having a relationship, I would only find that very interesting. And that would, I wouldn't even think about that, that it might not fit in the story. I don't even know, i don't think they ever paid any attention to that story, universe, so that might probably be cannon, i don't know. But, I would only find that very interesting actually, and if someone would hate on that, they would just be out of character probably, and if they're in character, then they have the right to hate, and then they can, interact with that, and, and you know, continue with that. But if it was out of character, then, you, you would just get, annoyed people, on the fact that he was out of character, so .. I don't really see that there is any problem with that kind of stuff. If you make it work, in a role play context, then it works.

Interviewer 2: You said previously, that when you create your character, you like giving her her own personality, but do you think that there are parts of your personality that you can find in ...

Interviewee: Oh definitely

Interviewer 1: OK, what are these ... personality traits?

Interviewee: I, I don't know .. I just, I have, I feel like I have characters that represent every bit of my personality, so i have some that are quite angry, frustrated, i have some, i have one that is really egotistical, and very, self-centered and narcissistic, yes, i have

one that is like, really sweet and does everything for everyone, and i have one that is, like more fierce, and strong, and does what needs to be done, you know, i have, i have characters that i recognize in myself, on occasions, in every, in every, ughm, character, i guess. They all look different, they have their own .. I don't really, usually, when i create a character i sorta think about the direction i want the character to go in, and then i make the appearance look like it would fit, and the race and everything, cuz you also have to choose race, which is always quite difficult, and ...

Interviewer 1: So if you have a bad day, and you come home, what character do you then play?

Interviewee: Probably the narcissistic, egotistical one, yes. Yeah. Because that makes you feel better. I don't know, it makes you feel better if you play ..

Interviewer 1: Being worse, or ...

Interviewee: Yeah, no, playing a character that will only do stuff for people when they praise, when they praise her, you know, when someone says, ah you're so good, i could never have done that myself, then my character is like, yep, yep, I'm so great (laughing).

Interviewer 1: Thank you, I know

Interviewee: And when someone says, you will never be able to do that, and then my character is, well then i'm not gonna do it for you (laughing). It's, it's a great feeling to have, that, control in a way, over people, even if they are just NPCs

Interviewer 2: Doesn't matter. Ughm, when you look at the competitive scene of video gaming, ughm, i think we can all agree that there aren't that many women in it, but, ok, do you think that that's because there are certain disadvantages to being a woman in a very competitive environment?

Interviewee: Social advantages?

Interviewer 2: No, no, no, no, disadvantages.

Interviewee: Oh, disadvantages. Ughm... I don't know. Sometimes I feel like people take me less seriously, like, they, when i play something that is not a support character, like you said, like a Jedi guardian or something, then i feel like they watch you first, they watch you fight, before they invite to a group, or ask you to do a quest with them, they sort of need proof that you are actually capable of doing this, whereas my brother, who always plays the big buy, i don't know. Sometimes he gets invites while we are playing together, and i don't get one, and then i was sort of, offended. The person sends him the invite and not me. So yeah, I feel like they take you a bit less seriously when you play a role that does not fit in the women, female gender role or something. And they need sort of proof before they, before they acknowledge you, that you can play this character.

Interviewer 1: When it comes to performing, like doing, actual stuff, not so much the role playing part, but performing ingame, do you think there is a higher pressure on women, that they have to do even better in order to be accepted, or, taken seriously, or something like that.

Interviewee: ughm, yeah. I, I think it depends on the character that you play. I think if you, for example, in guild wars, if you play a monk as a woman, that is a completely normal choice. And, I don't think I've ever seen a lot of monks that were male, because it was just something that women would choose, because then they wouldn't have to take the leader or something. Ughm, I think I forgot your question again (laughing)

Interviewer 1: It's more like, do you, do you, or do, women in general have to prove more in order to be accepted as equally good?

Interviewee: Yeah, well, yeah. I think..

Interviewer 1: When it comes to performing stuff, like, you know. DPS, or do you heal well, or do you die often.

Interviewee: Yeah, well yeah, what i said. If you play a close combat character, then, i do think you have to, that they watch you fight, they watch you, if you, if you walk into a group of enemies and you kill all of them fairly quickly, then, and someone is watching you, then you get an invite. But, it's, it's like, as if they need, as if they need proof first. But not if you play any supporting character. I don't feel like that's .. then you need to...

Interviewer 1: So it differs a bit on the role?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I would say so, yeah.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: Is there anything that you would personally like to share with us when it comes to gaming? Something that you don't think that we covered.

Interviewer 1: A good experienced, or something fun you once.. you killed a boss and it made you feel awesome, or something like that

Interviewee: Well that happens occasionally (laughing) Ughm, I don't know

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: If you are to, you know, talk to new girls, and, wanting to join games, and stuff like that, what would you say to them, what kind of advice would you give them.

Interviewee: You mean, talk to girls ingame?

Interviewer 1: If there are girls, at campus, thinking about, hmm, maybe we should try this MMORPG, and if, like they're women, and if you had some advice to them

Interviewee: Ughm, would I know them?

Interviewer 1: You would know them.

Interviewee: Yeah, if i, i don't know. It depends on how well i know them (not relevant) I never put the focus on the games. And I only, in the, like the past couple of months, now that i, i really feel like they've become my best friends, that's when i start talking about what i really enjoy about playing video games, because they don't play video games themselves, i know they don't, so it's not something that i can really share with them, so i always feel like ..

Interviewer 1: They wouldn't understand.

Interviewee: No, they wouldn't, and i was trying to make them understand, but it's always difficult if you've never played anything like that before. So i've, one of the friends, she really likes hearing about it, because she likes fantasy and sci-fi as well, and the other one is not really into that kind of stuff, so i usually talk with the one friend, about what i did in the game. But it's only when i really know them very well. And, ughm, otherwise, i never really mention it when i meet new people, or anything. I never really talk about it, unless, they bring it up first, and then i can talk about it, or if it's something, like I'm at a festival, of course, then, when you share something that big with people, then of course you talk about that first. But no, if i meet new people, i always try... It's always, it feels like

Interviewer 1: it kinda makes me wonder, never thought about actually adding this as a question for the interviewees, but do you feel, ashamed isn't probably not the right word, or it's definitely not the right word

Interviewee: A bit embarrassed maybe.

Interviewer 1: Yeah, it's not something, like you want people to know right away because they might judge you, or ..

Interviewee: yeah, i think if you tell people right away, they put you in a box, of the nerdy, geeky, kinda video game girl, you know ..

Interviewer 1: more like negative association.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I want them to get, i know, I think that there is a lot more about me than just the part that plays video games, even though i do enjoy that a lot. I always, i also enjoy a lot of other stuff, and i feel like, if i tell them first that i like playing

video games, then, they put me in the box and they don't listen to anything else that i say. Well, that's what i feel like anyway, so ... ughm, (not relevant)

Interviewer 1: Do you think, over the past, i don't know, 10 years, since you've been playing for a long time, do you think, there are, the understanding is now a bit better towards gamers, like it's ok, it's more allowed now? or how do you feel? It's the same, it's still a little ..?

Interviewee: I think people are less judging, in general, they don't judge you as much anymore, about your sexuality, or, or, i don't know, there's a lot of weird hobbies out there...

Interviewer 1: So it's more in general

Interviewee: It's I think it's more, accepted any, everything is more accepted, so i think people don't think it's that weird anymore, if you say you like video games, but still, i kinda, still i don't really tell people right away, right off the bat. No.

Interviewer 2: I actually have one more question. When you think about yourself as a games, do you view yourself as a female gamers, or you just, you know, think of yourself as a gamer, period?

Interviewee: I see myself as a female gamer. I don't know why but i feel like, being a woman is so much a part of my personality as well, and my identity, that i could not not have that in a video game. So i, i don't know, i see, **i really see myself as a female gamer**. Even though i've done, even in text base role play, i've played boys, but that, it never really felt, i always had to make an effort to write those stories about the boys, and if it was a girl, then it just sort of happened. You know? It's just more, more me. I guess.

Interviewer 1: But it also comes down to gender creation, in the sense that often you, you say that male and masculinity go hand in hand, and maybe they do often, but you, you can be a male character and have maybe, a bigger feminine side, which doesn't necessarily mean that you are not big and strong, and slaying monsters, and anything like that, but maybe you are more, more protective, like, the real meaning of being feminine, and you know, being support, taking care, or, not being weak, and stuff like that, or .. yeah

Interviewee: Of course you can play different types of guys, i wouldn't say you had to play the stereotypical guy ..

Interviewer 1: It's just often people confuse it with, being opposites, rather than being something, can have both.

Interviewee: Yeah, but still, (laughing), i don't know, still i would call myself a female gamer.

Appendix 12

Participant 4

Interviewee: (mumbling) ... on the highest level.

Interviewer 1: Oh, you were playing high competitive, on a high ...

Interviewee: No, no, no, like ughm ... it was like standard, like for everyone but, on the top levels, when you're like master level, you know, like ... when, when you're only like playing for having better and better ughm ... armor and stuff, so yeah. So **there wasn't so much fun anymore, playing on the highest level**, you know. So I skipped it and I tried to keep it for something other, so I played Guildwar for a while, and ... but now I play only like 1 or 2 times a month when I'm in a mood, you know, like ... not this kind of person anymore, but I'm glad for it (laughing) ... People like, thinking about me back then ...

Interviewer 2: Why?

Interviewee: Yeah, because I was playing like, **I was addicted**. Like, really, for almost 5 years playing everyday, three hours every.

Interviewer 2: Wow! OK.

Interviewee: Yeah (laughing). **I was really nervous when some bad wifi connection happened or something**. (mumbling)

Interviewer 1: Do you have a lot of bad memories?

Interviewee: Bad memories, yeah.

Interviewer 2: (Explaining details about the interview and project to the candidate, not relevant)

Interviewee: (after Interviewer 2 mentioned gender issues) **No, only like when, yeah, when, when I met someone or get to know someone, every time there's a guy, they're surprised I'm actually a woman**. Like, like, usually, when they meet some female character in a game, you expect that it's a man, because like, majority of, of, players are men, yeah. So they are like surprised that I am a girl, and I am also 24, like I, like yeah, and (laughing)

Interviewer 2: OK.

Interviewee: (mumbling) **sometimes they try to have something, some date**, or yeah.

Interviewer 1: They're flirting.

Interviewee: Yeah, some flirt, or having like dirty jokes or something, you know. But, but, no .. ughm, no abuse or No, no, no, no bad, bad harassment or ... Only, only, only jokes.

Interviewer 2: OK. (Resumes explanation about project and point of interest in the interview)

Interviewee: OK.

Interviewer 2: OK. Your age?

Interviewee: 24.

Interviewer 2: 24, Occupation?

Interviewee: Ughm, occupation like ..? Or...?

Interviewer 1 and 2: Like student. or ..

Interviewee: Oh, student actually, yes. Student at AAU, yes.

Interviewer 2: OK, and you are from?

Interviewee: Czech Republic, from Prague.

Interviewer 2: OK. So for example, what MMORPGs have you played or are you playing?

Interviewee: Yeah, I played for almost 5 years AION, a Korean one, on an illegal server, like free, free servers, but then it like three years ago maybe, it went to free-to-play so i started to play on a legal one, and ... but, and, but I stopped, because of bad application, and I didn't like it anymore, like the way the game was evolving, so ... and, yeah, like recently, I played Guildwars 2, like, I started maybe one year ago, but it didn't get to me so much, so I just played like, I don't know, one time per month. Only MMOs, and I don't know why, any other ... I played Diablo 3 in multiplayer, so ... yeah, so, yeah .. Like online. basically normal RPG but it has to be (mumbling) so you can chose if you want to play only on your own or join someone.

Interviewer 2: OK. (Mumbling). What do you like about MMORPGs? What attracted you to this types of games?

Interviewer 1: Why did you start?

Interviewee: Why did I start? Ughm ... I've always like, I've always like to play for some characters, like just roleplaying, you know, to be in there, in this skin of feeling, this

feeling that you are a hero, and that ... I had to admit I love killing monsters, you know, to have some (mumbling), armor, and badass weapons, and yeah. Why I chose this game AION over World of Warcraft, was that my friends showed, one of my friends showed me AION and yeah, he said me that I should try playing, that also his friends, that ... So, yeah, and then I was thinking like, about, changing, like moving to World of Warcraft because it, it's more developed and older, but i couldn't handle that graphic, you know, old, old school graphing, and AION was kind of, new one, like I just know from 2009, or something, so yes.

Interviewer 1: It was prettier.

Interviewee: Yes, it was prettier. Like this graphics were fucking amazing. Yeah, yeah, it was also nice to change your appearance and everything like, there was more options to develop your eyes, your character, you know.

Interviewer 2: OK. One question, I thought about it now, what kind of characters do you like playing?

Interviewee: Ughm, I, I've been mainly playing for something that's been mage and healer, like, it was some, it wasn't DPS, like the mage, mage like, but it was kind of, support mage for healer. I (mumbling) I like to help others, like, be helpful, to heal then, and but I, wanted to do some good heals, and good damage.

Interviewer 2: OK, let's go more, a bit into this whole scene. What do you think when you are talking to other players?

Interviewee: Usually, they were, like from the beginning they were helpful, like, nice guys and ... yeah, and, it's true it depends on how, ughm, who you meet, you know? If you ughm, are part of a good community, if you found you are both from the same, I don't know, guild, or legion, or some bunch of guys, you know. First I was playing with some Czech and Polish guys and they were like teenagers, kind of immature, so they were kind of arguing all the time, so I left them, for, for some, really good, good group of people, best players on their server. I went once dungeon with them and they asked me if I would like to join them, cuz I'm good, and ... yeah ... so this was definitely (mumbling) invitation, and I was glad to know, like, like 'Come on, this guys want this to me, come on'. Yes, yeah, it, like that real (mumbling) But, but, yes, usually, I had only the good experience to be as a player.

Interviewer 2: How do you get in contact with them, like through the Guild, or did you also meet other players in the game, did you start, you know, grouping up, or .. was it just like .. ?

Interviewee: Ughm, mostly from the guild, but, but, sometimes like, when you wanted to go some dungeon, to kill some boss, and every, everyone else from your guild or legion was, busy, so you just tried to find it through common chat, so yeah, sometimes I was

just grouping like random. And this guys were usually OK, but not so, not so funny, or so (mumbling), you know, like ...

Interviewer 2: OK. Have you meet, find some new people by playing MMORPGs like online?

Interviewer 1 and 2 give examples

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I've got some friends from, yeah, we met in the Super Legion, in the (mumbling) and yeah, we didn't know about, that we are both Czech, and we didn't even know that we are from the same city. And he was only 1 year younger than me, so, yeah so, we added each other on Facebook, and write, and not only about the game. Yeah, so I went this relationship further, but only with him because he was the only Czech guy, I ...

Interviewer 2: It was easier to maintain.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's .. but, yes, I also had like international friends, from Belgium, but the conversations were mainly about the game, no more about personal stuff. Even the, ughm, they invited out like members of the Legion for Legion barbecue in summer, in their home, but I didn't have finances, or ... But, yeah ... there was that opportunity but ...

Interviewer 1: Would you go there if you had the money now?

Interviewee: Yeah, of course, yeah, I would go there because I've been abroad only once and it could be fun.

Interviewer 2: OK. Do you consider this kind of interaction, online, just as important or as normal as the one in the real-life?

Interviewee: What do you mean, like...?

Interviewer 2: If you met someone online, the way you talk to them, if you make a friendship, could you say it would be the same as meeting someone in real life, or ?

Interviewee: Hmm, yeah, I was acting or talking to them like normal friends, like to face.

Interviewer 2: So it doesn't really matter the medium through which you talk?

Interviewee: No, no, no, no, ughm, ughm, it's, only, you know when you meet some, some, ughm, I'm sorry, some idiot, some not very clever guys, in person, you are also nice to him, you know, in real life, so yeah,. When I met someone who was like dumb, so yeah, I wasn't nice to him. But yeah, I would, I think, act myself in a normal like, no difference.

Interviewer 2: OK, so you said that it easier for you to know, to start a relationship with this guys, that you are open from the start. But when interacting with other players, of other nationalities, did you feel that the cultural or language aspect was a barrier, or do you think ... ?

Interviewee: Hmmm, not really, usually we managed to communicate somehow, like even it was, ughm, really bad English, but still we could understand each other.

Interviewer 2: OK; but do you think that there are maybe differences, (mumbling)?

Interviewee: I ... I don't know. I really don't know. I don't think it was like, from my personal, like.

Interviewer 2: (mumbling) Do you think you behave differently in real life than online?

Interviewee: I really don't behave like differently from online, like, normal.

Interviewer 2: (Mumbling)

Interviewer 1: The same personality?

Interviewer: Yeah, the same personality, maybe sometimes I, I bad word more often, in online games.

Interviewer 2: But maybe that also has to do with gaming.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah yeah, yeah .. when somebody kills you for no reason, you know, like ..

Interviewer 2: I know, everyone knows here. It's like ...

Interviewee: (mumbling) of course it was like, PvE, but it was mainly about PvP, like ... (mumbling). Of course you have your profession, like mage or warrior, or whatever, but, even like, competing, I, any competition has been like, (mumbling) and we were fighting against the opposing race, like knights, and (mumbling) white men. You know like.

Interviewer 1: You were basically evil.

Interviewee: What?

Interviewer 1: Where you evil?

Interviewee: Uhh, yeah, I am. But I do prefer, this, this bad race only because I like the appearance more, you know, like, the dresses, and (laughing).

Interviewer 2: Tell us about your personality.

Interviewee: Ughm, yeah. Ughm, what do you want to know exactly, like?

Interviewer 2: Do you think you are more of an introvert, or extrovert, do you like meeting new people ...

Interviewee: Oh yeah, I like meeting new people, but sometimes I have like problems with finding common ground. Like, not here like in Aalborg, but, in Czech, back at home, people are kind of .. I don't know, different. So, but, but when I am surrounded by my friends I'm just as open. I can enjoy my, my time, ughm, in home, like alone time. I sometimes, want to have some peace in life, you know, especially for couple in the evening, not be disturbed by anyone. But, but I need friends, I need people around myself. So, yeah. I'm something in the middle, yeah.

Interviewer 2: You already said, for example, when they find you are a girl, they tend to get more flirty with you. Could that be the only type of difference you noticed? Like, apart from them flirting, have you noticed any other differences, in the way they treated you?

Interviewee: No, no, no, no, no, no differences, like, when I'm a girl I have to be a worse player or something, no. Nothing at all.

Interviewer 2: So overall good experiences

Interviewee: Yeah, overall yeah, like. (mumbling)

Interviewer 2: Ughm, you being a girl, is that something that you generally bring into discussion or is it just, maybe, you know, comes naturally, if it occurs?

Interviewee: Ughm, no, no, no, only naturally, like, someone who is talking about me in the group chat, and I hear him talking about me like, referred to me as him, I correct him, corrected him, that I'm a her, cuz I'm a girl, and now everybody started to wonder, 'oh really?' (laughing). 'And what's your name?' (mumbling) and then it's normal again.

Interviewer 1: But, but the chat explodes, in the sense of activity?

Interviewee: Yeah, (laughing). And sometimes they completely forget about why the previous conversation, or what is our task, or goal (laughing)

Interviewer 2: Do you feel that there are any upsides or downsides to woman? (mumbling)

Interviewer 1: When you play MMOPRGs, maybe more on a competitive level ...

Interviewer 2: Are there any upsides to being a woman?

Interviewee: Like outside ... I'm sorry, I don't know what you're

Interviewer 2: Sometimes, do you think that people are nicer to you, or, I don't know, that they protect you better just because you are a girl, or (mumbling) normal behavior?

Interviewee: Ughm, I don't think, no ... no one (laughing) ... no one (mumbling) just because I am a girl, or something like, no special treatment. No, no, no, just normal player, like they treated me in order to the class, or the character, because of my character, yes.

Interviewer 2: So, they didn't treat you, like you said earlier, no upsides or downsides.

Interviewee: No, no, maybe yeah, maybe once or twice, but I don't remember it.

Interviewer 2: (Mumbling)

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, (mumbling) from some unknown, maybe people, like, in a some random group, you know, only for ...

Interviewer 1: Let's say you are in a raid, or a group, and, you die, and someone else dies, and the other die, died, died, like you all died, but you are not, because you are a woman, or...

Interviewee: No, no, no, no, we were like arguing, because someone wasn't doing their job, you know, or, yeah.. but not because ...

Interviewer 2: (irrelevant) What is one of the most amazing things you think you have experiences because of gaming?

Interviewer 1: It can be a feeling, or ...

Interviewee: OK, I don't know, the freedom, that you can do everything in the game, you can discover so many things, you can, yeah... you can achieve, like some, I don't know ...

Interviewer 2: Would you say you are definitely and adventurer?

Interviewee: Yeah, you can have a lot of fun with this

Interviewer 1: Do you think there are any benefits to this virtual world, as opposed to like the real world?

Interviewee: Benefits? Yeah, could be that everyone, ughm, everyone is like acting, treated me like equal. I, really, I can, I can play this in the normal world, a lot of people think that I am really young, sometimes this really bother me (laughing)

Interviewer 2: Well playing games does make you, keeps you young.

Interviewee: Oh yeah (laughing), but, but, so, yeah, but in this plain, this world like, (mumbling) equals everything depending on how good you are, how you can take advantage of that character of your, but in the real world, it's, yeah, a lot of, I don't know, criticism. Like, yeah ... maybe, it's just good online gaming, that you are hidden behind your character, no one can see you, and it's easier, you can kind of, anonymity ... maybe in the real world, when you meet some really big fat guy, you wouldn't speak a word with him, and didn't care about him at all, but in a game he is a good player, but yeah ... and he, because of the game you actually discover that he is a nice guy, and everything ... yeah, it's .. In the real world I think there are a lot of, a lot of, kind of barriers.

Interviewer 1: Do you think that that changes perspective, in the sense of how people often realize that it is all in their mind, that if you see a fat guy, he might really be nice, and good at something. Have you learn something from, you know, your entire universal world when it come to people (background noise to loud).

Interviewee: I don't know, I ughm... I think I had a good approach even before playing, but ... but maybe that playing only

Interviewer 2: How about another questions. OK, so (background noise to loud). You didn't get any negative experience, but for example if you guild, or your legion, found that someone was behaving rudely, do you think they would be reprimanded, for that, or would it just be acceptable as, you know, as normal behavior within playing? (background noise to loud)

Interviewee: I think that in our guild it was not allowed, and no one actually behaved like that. When some, only like nasty or bad jokes, when it was like, marked, over some level, I think we were able to break it out. Like come on, it's enough, stop it, bad jokes are that only one topic jokes, you know.

Interviewer 2: So you went on the idea you don't punish you communicate.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, no punishment, like, OK, you're banned, like, we are not talking to you, or not playing with you, or something. No, no, no, we ... because mainly we were adults, like over 20, some of them were around 30 .. Very mature

Interviewer 2: This should be one of the last questions, you know, more from out themes. When you think about women at a competitive level, do you think that their gender, you know, makes it difficult for them to compete, in sense of how other players treat them, or stereotypes. Or do you think that it's not actually something that matters that much?

Interviewee: I think that really, doesn't matter much, because usually when you meet some girl character, it is played by men, so ... So like, so... When you're not telling

anyone that you are a girl playing a girl character, no one know, everyone treats you the same. Only in accordance to, your playing skills, like ...

Interviewer 1: Have you ever playing with other girls?

Interviewee: With other girls? Yeahh, I like it. We had the best healer, was a girl, yeah. And yeah, and, she was like amazing, she could do so many things at once, and she was, even though she had a healer character, she could heal anyone, anyone, any guy. He could have like the baddest dps, like bla bla bla bla, and she was really dangerous. And also, when I was playing, like, maybe two years, I convinced one my friends, a girlfriend, to play, to try and play with me, and she is still playing.

Interviewer 1: Thanks to you.

Interviewee: Yeah, thank to me, she is still playing, and she even, ughm, found a boyfriend, like Czech boyfriend, yeah. We are just, OK man.

Interviewer 2: OK. Have you actually mentioned what kind of character you like to play? Do you like, like, both male and female characters, or do you have a preference?

Interviewee: I will play only female characters, because usually female are more, better looking, and also I, yes, I like some magic characters, not only warriors, like only having swords or something.

Interviewer 2: Do you also like the idea of a female character looking more like you, or do you like to play with that?

Interviewee: Ughm, I always try to, like, ughm to personalize it, to some ideal self, like some ideal type of beauty, or something, yeah, to Yeah, yeah, I wasn't, I wasn't able to, like create it, in a, according to my face, you know. It's unmanageable, like ...

Interviewer 2: Something like hair...

Interviewee: Oh, hair.. no, no, no, no ... I would, like, sometimes, she has like grey hair, sometimes blue, it was like it depended on ughm ... on my mood, but I give them like name, my name, because I'm Linda, I usually keep that name, and add a letter at the end like I, LindaI, or Linda something something something

(irrelevant)

Interviewer 2: Is there something that you would like to add? Something that you would like to share with us?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I don't know (laughing). Maybe, if it hadn't been the update, like the better update, I would be still playing, the game, but I'm really glad that I stopped.

Interviewer 2: Do you think that gaming is something that will always be in your life?

Interviewee: Yeah (laughing). Yes, I played two days before. Yes, I recently purchased the Witcher. Yes, I'm looking forward for the upcoming ... So yeah, I'm always like searching for this kind of games, so I'm not playing, like recently, like the new one. Like Diablo, I was really looking forward to it, because, after such a long break ...

(irrelevant)

Interviewee: So I'm always trying to find like some new games, or something. But it's not about playing like regularly, like on daily basis.

Interviewer 1: Do you think like, what is your feeling, do you play more and more games, or like, is it becoming more allowed to .. ? What are your opinions? Do you have friends that look at you, why do you play ..? That don't understand.

Interviewee: Nooo, I don't .. actually I'm really happy that I don't have , like, friends who would like to have, point fingers at me, ah, you're playing games .. like, come on guys. Except for this one, one, one, friend of mine, who is also playing, I don't have any other friends, and .. not even like, like, that I could ask them to play with me on like, I don't know, xBox, or something, you know. No. And I, in common friends, I don't know, like ... I, I just think that here are gonna be the majority of men playing. I don't think that there are gonna be some upcoming trends, of girls playing. I don't know, girls are kind of ... I don't know how to call it, or, ... But yeah, girls are just different.

Interview end

Appendix 13

Participant 5

Introducing the interviewee to the project

Interviewer: Just so we have something in which we can identify you, ehm... one of them is age?

Interviewee: yeah i am 27

Interviewer: Occupation?

Interviewee: eh hh i oh dear.. ah hh hh... lets say i am working in I.T.I.S....

Interviewer: okay, and nationality?

Interviewee: Hungarian

Not relevant...

Interviewer: What kind of MMORPGs have you played or are you still playing?

Interviewee: well, ive played world of warcraft, eh.. but that is quite many years ago, i think i played it for 1 or 2 years, and again sometimes for a year or so, but i always stop because i just...i dunno i didn't get hooked so much, and i don't like playing with other people..

Interviewer: so you are more of a single player kind of person

Interviewee: yeah, yeah.. i did single playing also in World of Warcraft i sometimes help out others or when i did have some friends online i played with them, but for me it was more for bother *laughing*... i rather play alone..

Interviewer: so.. well then, since you are more of a single player kind of girl, what got you into trying MMORPGs?

Interviewee: eh h, a friend got me into World of Warcraft and later on when Star Wars the Old Republic became an MMORPG and free to play, then of course because its Star Wars i had to try it out. *laughing*

Yeah so we got into that with one of my really good friends and since we always played together it was good like this, and that i never really played with anyone else..

Interviewer: How long have you been playing games in general?

Interviewee: oh dear..

Interviewer: oh long time then?

Interviewee: yeah... i ... uhh... that is a hard question... *laughing*.. But we did have this ehh... Nes back then the first Nintendo console.. we had that.. We played Mario on that... i think we only had Mario for that.. And we had a really old PC with really stupid games... I remember playing Heroes of Might and Magic 1

Interviewer: wow really ?

Interviewee: yeah *laughing*

Interviewer: wow okay i am impressed now, only one i can remember is like... i remember playing 2, but i kinda remember it back as 1 so..

Interviewee: i don't remember 2, i remember 1 and 3.. i guess 2, i wasn't really that into 2, or i never had maybe 2. the fact that everything was on floppy disks and so.. *laughing*

Interviewer: yeah i remember those..

Interviewee: So yeah, its its .. been a long time i guess, since i am like 7 or 8 years old i always played with games, maybe younger..don't know

Interviewer: So you.. for more than 20 years?

Interviewee: *laughing* yeah.

Interviewer: What got you into games in the beginning? Was that something your family liked to do? or did you get into it because of the family, or was it something you liked from the beginning?

Interviewee: i .. i actually don't really remember, i mean it was so long ago that i just remember we played it.. I think it was ehh... There was a family friend who could get us games on floppy disks and he always brought us a ton of games, and i think we once got 200 games and we started playing that with my little brother. So yeah... oh yeah.. We also played what was that Alone in the Dark 1, but i got really scared of that..

Interviewer: That was a creepy game back then..

Interviewee: yeah! it was really creepy and i didn't know what to do, because my english wasn't good, i didn't speak english back then and... i Remember that i got stuck in a corner because it glitched out... And *mumbling* it was so shit. *laughing*

Interviewer: Going now back to MMORPGs, ehmm.. other than you friends persuading you to try it.. Do you remember... is there.. what you liked about them? Like the game itself?

Interviewee: i remember.. i really.. by that point i think i was.. what.. 19 or 20 when i first played MMORPGs so i started that really late.. and i've been playing before that it was these fantasy RPGs Baldurs gate and Never winters night **i really like fantasy**, and then one of my friends who was hardcore wow player showed me.. like.. Hey look there is this game, and you know **there is this huge world and....it seemed really fun so i checked it out** and got the trial version.. and like a month later or week later, i already bought the game and subscribed.

Interviewer: So it is definitely more to do with this whole idea of fantasy and role playing?

Interviewee: yes, yes definitely...and and **with Star Wars it was.. well it was because it was a Bioware game, to begin with and i loved bioware so i played basically all of their games** and ehheh i really wanted to.. oh my god Bioware and Star Wars, that can only be good, but it wasn't that good. but... yeah that is a bit play to win...

Interviewer: So you don't necessarily go for this idea of achievements and completing quests?

Interviewee: well.... its a bit hard to say, because i did the quests.. **i wanted to level up but i was not really that into the games, i didn't go raiding.. or anything like this,** because you can't do that alone..

Not relevant ...

Interviewer: What kind of roles do you like to play? Ingame?

Interviewee: ehheh.. in the MMOs?

Interviewer: yeah.

Interviewee: ehheh **DPS mostly.. I like DPSing**

Interviewer: okay, melee or ranged?

Interviewee: **ranged, i ehheh usually play hunter.**

Interviewer: Do you... is there a specific reason why you have that preference? or it just comes more natural to you?

Interviewee: well, i tried out basically all the classes that were back then, and ehheh.. **I could have a pet so that seemed good for me *laughing* i don't know... it.. it seemed**

more comfortable to do the whole thing from ranged attacks to everything, than going up close and no i didn't like that.

Interviewer: You like that safety that distance?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: The fact that you have more space to move in?

Interviewee: yeah, definitely..

Interviewer: When it comes to character creation, do you like it to be as close to you know.. your ehh.. appearance as possible or do you like to play with their appearance?

Interviewee: ehhh.. I rather change the appearance.. I... i .. don't know i don't really gave it that much thought, i just want to look pretty i guess *laughing*

Interviewer: Does it matter if it is a female or male? Or can it go either way?

Interviewee: Well in MMORPGs it depends.... but i rather sometimes play.. like if .. if for example i'm playing a Tauren i rather play a male Tauren then a female, because.. just.. no.. i don't know..

Interviewer: It makes more sense to you

Interviewee: yeah *laughing*, else for example i rather play female.

Interviewer: So for you it is more this idea of playing a role, rather than you know.. You getting the chance to be you know... ehhh.. Getting the chance to do something that you couldn't do in real life.. Like expressing yourself virtually.. So..

Interviewee: No it is a game, i just play...

Interviewer: So, for you gender doesn't matter, when you play the game, like if it is a male or female, it is more about... what you think comes natural?

Interviewee: ehm... yeah yeah, like i don't know.. well sometimes i do enjoy playing female roles, if i don't dare for example romance opportunities in the game, then i obviously rather play a female.

Interviewer: Have you ever tried Dragon Age?

Interviewee: yeah of course, it is one of my favorite games, i just finish Inquisition twice..

Interviewer: really already?

Interviewee: Yeah

Not relevant.... talking about a single player game..

Interviewer: What is your general experience when interacting with other people online MMOs?

Interviewee: Well when i was on the payed servers of World of Warcraft, they generally really nice i.. i didn't bump into people that were really rude. Obviously when there were some idiots who were like really high level and came into the low level and just killed everyone, and i hated it. But ehh.. sometimes i did have some friends come over, and kicked their asses and corpse camped them, so it was nice. But other than i don't know, and on the payed servers people were generally nice..
When i did play on.. what is it called hacked server or what?

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee: i played in a Hungarian.. on one of these hacked servers, and well... there people were rude!

Interviewer: oh really so is that a Hungarian thing? or what do you think?

Interviewee: Well i think it was because it was for free, and you know everyone could play and they didn't, i mean there you don't really get banned that easily as in real playing game.. and it doesn't even matter if you get banned then i mean.. it is just a hacked server you can go to any other..

Interviewer: So do you think maybe one of the reasons in ehh.. you know.. the original ehh.. games,, erhm.. they are ehh.. more polite to each other? or nicer to each other because there are actually certain rules or regulations against bad behavior?

Interviewee: yeah i think that is one, that is.. i think a very important factor there, and also that ehh... i don't know.. its just that i think.. that they actually pay for it they.. you

know not everyone gets in there playing it. So so... you have to have financial background, are usually more sophisticated i don't know..

Interviewer: So what do you think about interacting with people online as opposed to people in the real world, when it comes to communication?

Interviewee: well... obviously online. people can be a lot more... not nice.. *laughing* depending like i did try out once Call of Duty.. Multiplayer... Oh my god those are just no... People are not nice..

Interviewer: yeah i heard they can be quite aggressive..

Interviewee: yeah, and thats ehh... I ehh.. in contradictions to RPGs i noticed that in FPS mostly player thing is that the people are not.. like more like jerks like.. and and.. in RPGs they are nicer. They seemed to be a bit more calm, then again i never went to raids.. so i don't know how they react there, and i didn't play LoL where i heard that people are really not nice there either..

Interviewer: Do you think that erm.. i don't know... have you found out a lot of information about the ones you were playing with that we're not your friends?

Interviewee: yes yes... well ... in wow generally people were really helpful when ehh.. well depending.. not in the biggest cities, because there sometimes they just tell you oohh just fuck off, but ehh..if you ask like in the general chat.. you ask someone "hey where is this, can someone help me, then they did actually help out.

Interviewer: Do you think eehh.. For example when you played with your friends, do you think that they are like maybe more mature, is that one of the reasons they were more helpful towards you? like or were they more teasing? like when you would do something.. would they tease you about it or you know? just help you when you needed help?

Interviewee: ehhh.. they didn't tease me.. they helped me if i needed help, i helped them, if they needed help, and you know we just played together so usually we went questing together so it .. it was good it was.. it was nice working together with them. And also i did notice that sometimes working together with strangers was also quite... nice.. though then again when you help someone you know, you boosted someone through a dungeon, and they ran ahead and got killed, then that was annoying.. *laughing*

Not relevant information about sharing experiences between interviewers and interviewee.

Interviewer: Do you think that people that says they have real friends that they met online, but never i really met in real life.. Do you think you can have that?

Interviewee: yeah sure, yeah.. yeah i think that it is possible.

Not relevant.. talk about dungeon experience..

Phone call interruption from participant

Interviewer: While playing game, Did you get to interact with people from different countries?

Interviewee: Yeah!

Interviewer: Have you noticed if there are any kind of barriers or you know cultural barriers, language barriers? any kind of differences?

Interviewee: erhm... I don't really notice that so much i mean, we were just chatting in the general chat, eh.. then again i usually played Horde, and i have.. i were not really sure how the Alliance side was like...

Interviewer: The way you feel it, that the people who come there you know, they are just themselves and not bringing you know...

Interviewer 2: you can turn it around, and say: Do you feel like there was some people that didn't fit in as well as others? In the sense that maybe they were from a different country or they had some sort of different cultural background? or was it something completely else, you know do you have any experience?

Interviewee: eh..not like that no, i didn't really noticed that there were any cultural barriers or that there was some people who like... i noticed that they didn't seem to grasp the concept of the game, but i guess either because it was their first time they played anything, or first time they played RPGs so they were a bit confused.

Interviewer: So do you think culture has a if any impact when you play a game online? if you come from different cultural backgrounds?

Interviewee: i don't know, it is actually a good question, i never thought about it and i never noticed any difference.

Interviewer: asked to elaborate..

Interviewee: I didn't notice that in WoW nor in eh.. SWTOR but maybe more idunno i guess in Call of Duty yeah, there it would come out.

Interviewer: Because it is more aggressive games?

Interviewee: yeah..

Interviewer: When you look at your self. Do you think you behave differently in the online gaming.. in the online space of gaming, as opposed to the real world?

Interviewee: Well that depends on what you're playing, because like in Wow.. No not really, because i just play whatever....In the Star Wars game you could be damn evil, so you can be the evilest Sith, and and.. i am not going to Murder and torture people for fun * laughing * outside of games so No. There i do behave differently if i am playing a sith.

Interviewer: So you like this idea of role playing? and ehmm.. you know expressing certain parts of yourself? Do you think that this kind of role playing actually does mirror a certain part of your self?

Interviewer: i don't necessary think so, though then again i was never able to play really really evil people, i don't know i just, i just think they were npc, so i just go kill you now.

Not relevant.. thinking back on whether or not a question was asked before...

Interviewer: How would you describe your personality?

Interviewee: ohhh god... This is a question they also ask you in every damn interview you go to, and i really hate this question *laughing*

Interviewer: We can just skip this question. if you don't feel... we can just skip it.. it is not a problem..

Interviewee: ehh i don't know what to say, i would say i am a cheerful i don't know.. i like kidding and joking around, and i am generally kind..

Interviewer: So definitely a very playful ehmm... personality

Interviewee: yeah well, my ehmm... girl friend.. does say that i am sometimes you know childish, because i like playing with games i like kidding around, and more of a playful type.

Interviewer: So when you talk with others, have you ever maybe been upfront with you gender, or have you ever told anyone that you didn't know in real life, "oh i am a girl" or something?

Interviewee: Well, if they asked then i'd answer because why not?

Interviewer: So you wouldn't lie, you would just be upfront with it?

Interviewee: yeah, i mean i don't see the point in lying, because it is not like we will ever gonna meet.

Interviewer: So do you think ehm... So once they knew you were a girl, did ehhe that affect in any way in how they talk to you or interacted with you?

Interviewee: well.... not on the paying servers.. No... and ehhe on the Hungarian cracked server there was.. there were a few guys who then.. "hey are you single" are you.. you know.. "how old are you"... yeah but no not really... they weren't really rude about it, then again.. like in Call of Duty yes they are rude.. But i didn't notice that it would affect my game play in anyway.

Interviewer: But maybe like receiving gifts, or money or nothing like that either?

Interviewee: No not really..

Interviewer: So no special treatment?

Interviewee: No i didn't get any special treatment *laughing*. I didn't ask for it either, i guess i don't know, maybe if i would have asked like "hey you know help me more" than maybe i don't know...

Interviewer: so do you think that you could have abused that fact that you were a women? for instance in MMOs?

Interviewer 2: Maybe not abuse, but take advantage over..

Interviewee: I did hear and read about things like this happening where they abused this advantage but in generally i didn't see this happening. I don't have any personal experience with this, but i did hear about it.

Interviewer: Maybe you can expand on that, you also felt like they just treated you the same but also when it came to your skills and everything right? so they didn't.... They didn't start thinking that you were not as good just because you are a girl?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: They just treated you the same?

Interviewee: No, they just treated me the same.

Interviewer: Do you think that you perform the same as anyone else that had the same experience being a guy would?

Interviewee: well, anyone with the same experience.. Yes i guess we'd perform the same, but generally well... if.. if...when i played with my friends they were better

because they played a longer time had more experience with it, but i wouldn't say that there is any difference between me or someone who has the same experience with it.

Interviewer: So gender doesn't play a part on how skilled you are? it is more about the time you have put into becoming so skilled?

Interviewee: yeah, cause i did have an acquaintance with a girl, and she was really really really good, i mean she owned the people who just came, and she went and massacred them...

Interviewer: actually yea ehheh... Have you also felt, you said that you prefer more DPS right actually?

Interviewee: yeah

Interviewer: And did you like to be more like in the middle being the one that does the damage or did you prefer to just try and support the others, when playing in groups?

Interviewee: hmmm well, ehheh.. i think i don't have that much group experience. I .. i kinda was like i'd dealt damage but i tried to pay attention that i don't you know.. get the aggro, and also that i use my supportive specs if i had any.

Interviewer: We talked about some of the upsides about being a female gamer, which you don't do, but some get gifts so on and so forth, and ehheh... do you think there are any downsides when people found out that you were a women? would there be any downsides to it?

Interviewee: I didn't i... i don't have any personal experiences about it... i did hear also from you know others that yeah, sometimes there was a guy who was being funny like, "HAHAHA go to the kitchen" but eh.. *laughing* but yeah i don't know.. This is very rare, at least to my knowledge. In MMORPGs yeah.. And i am not talking about LoL here... i don't want to talk about LoL... I never played that, and i heard that that is cruel..

Interviewer: So you would say that it also depends on the game, and the game genre?

Interviewee: yes yes, definitely

Interviewer: When you look at the competitive level, do you think that there are any disadvantages you know being a women on a competitive level?

Interviewee: I have no idea *laughing* i guess.. i mean.. i would say no but, i don't know anyone who are in the competitive area so i have no knowledge about that.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to share with us, maybe a good experience from the MMO world or something funny that you have witnessed?

Interviewee: well.... i don't know *laughing*.. I just remembered this.. this very distinct thing that i played through the same things obviously on the original i mean the payed servers and the cracked one, and i remembered this one time, i went through the same area on the cracked one and i think i killed the boss there, well i needed to kill him anyways there was another guy waiting for me, and since he was horde as well he, you know... couldn't really hurt me or anything, but i killed the boss sooner than he could and then followed me around for a really long time telling me to go fuck myself *laughing*

not relevant back and forth experience on the same matter.

Interviewer: The last question we have is: If you were to talk to girls that are now starting to get into games, and MMORPGs, or thinking about starting, What kind of advice would you give them?

Interviewee: i don't know.. don't be an ass.

Interviewer: you say you don't play as much now, do you think it is still a good genre or do you think like, if you had a lot of time on your hands would you still be playing it?

Interviewee: well... the problem is that.. since i did check out World of Warcraft now a days, i like it better when it only had the burning crusade, ehhe expansion.. i don't... for me this is just too much now you can have like these pets and pet battles.. like a game in a game.. and do this as well while being competitive with those.. its just too much, i think and then with.. well.. the Star Wars one would be cool but its not.. its not that well executed so i would say... that the genre is kinda losing it touch... and since now everything gets multiplayer in it, its just no... I don't know i think single player games are better anyways *laughing*

Interview over

Appendix 14

Participant 6

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: OK, so where were we? Yeah. Age actually, we have to start from the beginning.

Interviewee: OK, so I'm 28, I'm from Romania, and ..

Interviewer 2: And you are an engineer.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer 2: OK, soo, first questions: what MMORPGs have you been playing or are still playing?

Interviewee: Yeah, so, I've been playing Diablo 3 a lot, and World of Warcraft, I just started, so I'm new at that.

Interviewer 2: OK. And you started playing in...

Interviewee: Since high school, yeah.

Interviewer 2: OK, so what attracted you to this genre. Actually, lets try that from (mumbling). You said that you started with the, Siberia, how did you discover it?

Interviewee: Well, there was just, the only CD that I got from my parents, and I loved it, so I think it was a good combination, I, I might have gotten everything, right? Because that was the first CD, so I was lucky that I got the super nice game. So the reason was simply materialistic. But the, yeah, **I liked that it was puzzle type, so you can use your mind, it was more than just kills**, like, how to, how fast you can curse the most, or ...

Interviewer 2: Challenging

Interviewee: Yes, I liked that.

Interviewer: OK, and later you found, how did you find other games. How did you evolve from Siberia to other games?

Interviewee: Well, I guess **I wanted to try more than puzzles**. I wanted to try.. I was my friends playing these, games. For example how I started Heroes 3, **I saw a friend playing it and I thought this would be interesting because it was strategy, and I liked chess before that**, before I had a computer, so I said, OK, it's like strategy, you have to think about your moves, it's turn based, it's super nice. So yeah ..

Interviewer 2: So definitely the intellectual stimulus was ..

Interviewee: Really important, yeah. Of it's intelligent, not just fighting, or.

Interviewer 2: OK. Moving from this, what attracted you to games such as Diablo 3 and World of Warcraft.

Interviewee: So first of all, I think that it was Diablo 2, **the story that attracted me**, and when I saw Diablo 3, I said OK, it's a culmination to the story, so I would like to know what happens, and then also, it's different, it's something, **you can play with people, it's more interactive**, it's not just yourself, it's interesting.

Interviewer 2: You said something earlier that sounded really nice, about the fact that it blows you mind, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I was saying that, regular, **in regular life you get to follow rules**, and you're, maybe don't let you imagination go, so **you're a bit constrained by society**, and you age also, so .. for example, I'm turning almost 30, people start to look at me weirdly, that I'm playing that, or whatever. So, **all this constraints make you want to go home and just, yeah, escape, and escaping your mind, you fears, and become this, I don't know what reptile woman that fights everybody.**

Interviewer 2: I can relate to that. Have your friends been any influence in what you played, or was it ..

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely, I think so. Ughm, I saw, if I see something interesting, I also take it and try it. I think, so, it matters a lot that ambiance, what they were playing mattered. I tried also games like Need for speed, or other stuff, so.. Basically I tried the whole types, and figure out, what I like, because it matters a lot what people you have around you at that point, what they are playing, what they are talking about, so you can have a conversation about what you are doing, (mumbling), maybe you can say OK, so I did this, and I did this, what so you think. It's way better when you have somebody that also plays.

Interviewer 2: So friends are important, what they play.

Interviewee: Yes. Makes sense.

Interviewer 2: Do you think that you would, maybe be less inclined to play if you didn't have these friends who also played? Would you maybe feel misplaced, not misplaced, but ... you know, not belonging as much.

Interviewer 1: Or maybe just your activity as a gamer, would it fall if you didn't have friend that also played, that you could interact with.

Interviewee: No, i don't think I would have stopped. Ughm, but it's, for example if I got stuck at something, ughm, if i had no idea how to fix, if it was a puzzle for example, or if it was a boss that i couldn't kill, right? It's one thing to google it and another thing is to actually talk to somebody like, that had the same emotions, and the same, went through the same stuff, so, yeah.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: So maybe I wouldn't have stopped, but it definitely made it easier, to continue it, because you had the stimulation. Go, go, go, it's very nice afterwards, an encouragement and everything.

Interviewer 2: Yeah, nice. What roles do you usually like to play, in either Diablo 3, or World ... or maybe, do you have like, different roles, no, play styles in each of them?

Interviewee: Yeah, I almost never go with the barbarian, I don't like that much physical, like click click click, ughm, I like more to go with magic, so I'm into combinations, and , OK how am I gonna do now, oh OK, this lightning would be perfect, and stuff like that. I like to combine it a bit, like to think about it a bit, than just physical, I have like, I don't know what damage, and just hit that guy forever. So yeah, I guess I'm, I always choose either magic or.. I choose to be a bit distant, or for example.

Interviewer 1: So like a ranged class.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Interviewer 2: Ok, and is it the same for both Diablo 3 and World of Warcraft.

Interviewee: Yeah, apparently, I didn't think about that, but yeah, I guess I have ...

Interviewer 1: So you are playing a mage or ..

Interviewee: Yeah, I guess I have a .. this thing, yeah, I'm not that much into barbarians.

(Not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, that one I started also (n.r. Demon Hunter). I think, it might be a girl thing, it might be a bit that you don't like that much physical, yeah, because you being a girl, you know that the body is not that important, you can do stuff with your mind also. You can compensate with your brain. So maybe you chose that in the games also, I don't know.

Interviewer 1: So do you play a male, or a female. or do you mix it up sometimes.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't care that much, I mean i'm not that much into, if it's a female, because I'm female.

Interview 1: So if you can chose yourself and build a character yourself, is it a male or a female?

Interviewee: It's a male I think.

Interviewer 2: Ah, OK. Why?

Interviewee: I don't know

(not relevant)

Interviewee: You need to think about that, it's your part

Interviewer 2: OK, so for example, when you start playing the games, do you like this idea of role playing, do you think yourself in your character, or do you see yourself more as a puppeteer, you know ...

Interviewer 1: You almost answered a little bit, the fact that you do not, the sex doesn't matter that much. So maybe it's more like personalities, that ...

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, you're right, you're right. It's, it's, I don't ... I don't care that much, so I guess that I like to control the mind more, like to .. to .. I like to evolve like a character that is, ughm, sexless. You know, like, it's, it's some energy there that does stuff and I just look at it and give it some characteristics,

Interviewer 2: OK, so it's just an object through which you express you will.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer 2: Ok, that's very interesting. OK, again looking at how you play, do you like to e more the person in charge, or do you like to be the one who supports other characters, or, like for example, in World of Warcraft, where you also get the chance to play with other people, so you like to be more the support, or do you like to be there in the front line, and like ...

Interviewee: I like to, like to support people, I like to leave the othler ones fight, like .. kick their brains and everything, and I just chose the right moment, OK, now, OK now. I like that.

Interviewer 1: So in World of Warcraft, have you tried dungeons yet?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think it was, I'm super new at that, so I keep on dying super fast, but I guess the (background noise too loud) it does, I think it's a bit annoying that you

start with a level 90 character, because you know what they did now. And, because I'm such, at the beginning, I should be like, level 1 or 2, or minus 10 actually .. I started now, with the, how it is now.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, because I get to, when they, when you start fighting, I get to be with people that are way more better than me, and, you know, I die very fast, and then I get disappointed, and .. It's hard.

Interviewer 2: You start out with 30 different spells, and you've never played before.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I was like, what, what, what: and my boyfriend does it like, ok, 1, 2, ughm .. OK, I'm lost let's try something else, usually goes like that

(not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, and make your own combinations, and do you own stuff.

Interviewer 2: How was the first dungeon for you?

Interviewee: Hard, super hard. I think I never got good at it. I guess I didn't invest enough time, because I see, I see my boyfriend, he's playing for years not, so he has developed, like, it's a skill to play World of Warcraft, it actually became a skill for him, I think you should build this, because it's so complex. It's super super complex. It's not just .. You have to think as a team, and, it's not just you, it's completely as a team, and the thing is that everytime there are new people that you don't know, because we don't have our own groups, we don't have, we don't know each other, it's completely unknown, and you have to figure out if it works, from the beginning, somehow, so you know exactly, ok this guy is weak so I should help this guy, or this .. and you don't know that in the beginning, right? So it's all, it's completely random. Somebody makes a mistake, you make, you make a mistake, ,, it's a bit hard I think.

Interviewer 2: It's chaotic.

Interviewee: It's a bit chaotic, but you have your own team, right? You have developed, if you've been playing for a long time, you have your .. And then you know each other, and then you can actually ... yeah...

(not relevant)

Interviewee: And they already know that, that certain boss for example, everything follows a certain rules, so if you already played it, and, or you've already beaten that guy, you know how to react.

Interviewer 1: So have you, then you have quested instead, right? You've run around and done quests. And gotten rewards. Do you like this, or .. I don't know, I get the feeling that maybe you are not so fond of World of Warcraft anymore, or ..? Are you starting to play other games

Interviewee: Yeah, I think actually, I just .. It's, it just, it's how my life is right now, because I've, one, one month and half ago I got employed, so I've been a bit busy with this. So, it changes a bit, everything, like your habits and everything, so I think I didn't have so much time to ...

Interviewer 1: And it's very time consuming.

Interviewee: It is very time consuming, so I guess that was the reason, not that I don't like it. I like challenges a lot, and if I cannot do it, OK, i get pissed off very fast, because yeah, thats my, chara.. that's my personality, but then, the next day, when i chilled, i'm like, ok i have to do this, seriously, it's like personal, i take it very, yeah. So I will definitely try to be better, and i, i like, i like doing quests because i like, i like rules, which is kind of weird in this kind of games. Uhgm ... i also played a bit of Skyrim, so i didn't like that it was an open world, that you have endless possibilities, everything is endless and can take like 1000 missions and not finishing, finishing none of them. I didn't like it that much, the type of, the type of game. Because i like to follow a bit rules, i like to have a beginning and an end.

Interviewer 2: You like having a purpose, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. So if a game has an awesome story, and I have this to do, OK, and I will do this and then, this ends, and I will do something else, then, I like it more. I mean, this is how my brain is ...

Interviewer 1: You're closing chapters.

Interviewee: Yes, yes, yes.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, so I, I like that a lot, I like to finish something if I start, I like to go and finish the mission, and then move on. But it's not possible all the time, because it takes a lot of time, a long time to get from a to b, and find what you want.

Interviewer 1: Have you had some good or bad experience with interaction then, with other players?

Interviewee: There are people that try to be, like, ughm, to be a pain in the ass, this sort of thing, but I always stay out of this kind of things because i understand that it's, it's not something personal, they don't know me, i would never know them, it's completely .. it was a bit, a bit, weird in the beginning because i was, i was taking it a bit personally, if somebody was saying something, are you stupid player, why did you do it or something.

Of course i felt super bad, like oh my god. And when, then (mumbling) OK but, i mean, they have no idea who i am, i will never ever face them. It's like, come on, just enjoy it. So I had to go, to get through this moment, i felt a it judged, you know, that i was letting people down, or ... But yeah, it's just a world. It's a virtual world, it's not real.

Interviewer 2: Yeah. OK, i have a question. You said that you are an engineer. Do you think that you liking game and all this puzzles had something to do with you taking that path?

Interviewee: well definitely, i think that everything that yuo do, influences your, tour, the way you are, everything that you .. influences what you do anyway, so maybe at some level. I always liked to fix things, so i guess that relates to the puzzle type of games that i played, because you know, i like to have, ok i have this brick and i have this brick and i put them together and i make this, and .. whatever. I like to get solutions for problems and stuff. So i get that relates to puzzles. And the with other types of games, i like, i like, ughm .. ilike to ask myself a lot of questions, so, like to know, so why is this like that, and why is that like that, so i guess the world of, for example, World of Warcraft, where you have all this worlds that you discover, and mysteries that you solve, and mission ad everything, that's why i got so interested in that, because i, I always seek for the next big question to answer, or whatever. Maybe it relates ..

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: You already touched the subject a bit, but what can you tell us more about how you interact with other players.

Interviewee: OK, so I never, i never go more that chat. I never skype or, whatever, they ask, sometimes they ask for more info, so they can contact you or whatever. I never do that. I like to have this private space. Of course, if for example i play this game on my telephone, which is the hobbit, i don't know if you know it. It's more like Travian, if you played Travian. So it would be boys, it's kind of, you know. You have your alliance, and you have to be online, like everyday, and do stuff, and attach armies, and whatever. (not relevant) Yeah so, I played that one, and for that one, because in the alliance we are like 90 people, and we, now we have like a few months since we done stuff, i went, the first time i actually went and installed the line, which is an app on your phone to actually talk to people, like shype, whatever. So we all have that. We don't know each other of course, ut still we installed that one and we talk instead of talking on the alliance chat, which si kinda visible, for our enemies or whatever. We have that one, which is private, so we say, ok lets attack that boss or whatever. So this is the first time i actually went a little bit more personal. But i still leave, not my id, like facebook or whatever. I still use completely random names, and random ...

Interviewer 2: But what was the responses when they heard your voice.

Interviewee: No they didn't. It's just writing.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: It could be voice, but we never called each other. Maybe they call each other, like (mumbling), but i didn't, i didn't try that. I think it doesn't make sense a bit, because we are from completely, from all the, from all the globe. And we will never meet each other, and never. Different ages, we have like, we also have kids who are like 11 or 12 and they are playing, so what would you talk anyway. And it's just a game and you should keep it like that.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 1: So on that note, you've never taken it further than the chat, there is not a single one you meet online that you still talk to through other mediums. None, none what so ever

Interviewer 2: Why is that?

Interviewee: I like privacy in general. So maybe that's way. I don't know, I, I never thought about this, like, very seriously. Usually i like privacy, i like to, even on Facebook, i don't post, or, you know. i keep things for myself, and maybe that's why.

Interviewer 2: So you find yourself more of an introvert.

Interviewee: Yeah yeah yeah, but, it's not like, i mean, with my friends, or when you talk to me, i am super open, or super friendly, it's not that, it's just that you know, that world is, is kind of my, my mind, it's my imagination, i keep it like private. So i don't let other people spoil it for example, if they are, if they are not, if they are in a bad mood or something. I don't let them make my day bad, or whatever.

Interviewer 2: You like to keep that place, that space clean.

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly.

(mumbling)

Interviewer 1: I have a question. OK, so, have, do you say that you are a woman, or, do you just If the ask ...

Interviewee: Yeah, if they ask I say, but I don't start with that, yeah. I mean, i don't think it's, it's that important.

Interviewer 1: So is it often they ask if you are a woman. Do you think they can, they know somehow?

Interviewee: Yes, sometimes they ask for a description, like a short description, sometimes. But otherwise, maybe they are people like me that don't care that much.

They, they care more about your skills, what you can do. Sometimes, you know, like, how long have you been playing, it's a way more important question than, ok, so, do you have boobs? So ...

Interviewer 1: Cuz that could totally be the first whisper. Do you have boobs?

Interviewee: Yeah, I want to know.

Interviewer 2: A lot of weird people out there.

Interviewee: Yeah, and also because, because they know that they can hide behind the computer, so they can be as wild as they want to, and they can be as impertinent, i don't know how to say, inappropriate as they want to. So don't let that spoil your, your universe. That is your universe. They have their own, right?

Interviewer 2: Have you noticed any differences, did they, did their chat behavior change, when you, you know, said that you're a girl? have you noticed any ...?

Interviewee: Not yet, not yet. Or not, not to my knowledge. Maybe there was something, i don't know, between them, or maybe they were, maybe they had thoughts about it, but i think nobody told me or, I had no ...

Interviewer 1: So they didn't start rapidly writing you more often, or ...

Interviewee: No, no i was lucky with that.

Interviewer 2: OK. Actually i have a .. you said for example that in the other game you play, that there are people from all over the world, right? Have you managed to see any kind of barriers, when it came to, like the culture, the language, did you find any differences between you and them. or ... did the interactions feel different because they came from ...

Interviewee: No, actually, the only exception is the bad grammar, in English, because everybody talks English, but that is the only barrier i think, that sometimes you don't understand what they're saying because, purely, grammar is, their grammar is really bad or something. But I think that everybody, if the game has some rules, everybody follows that rules, it doesn't matter where you come from, or ...

Interviewer 2: And in the dungeons, in WOW for example, or .. OK, when you play Diablo 3 actually, do you also play with other people, or do you prefer the solo missions?

Interviewee: Well i started with solo missions, then when i started to be a bit better, i knew that, ok, it was the first game like that that i played, so i wanted to be good before other people count on me. So I waited to get to some level, and then i started playing with my boyfriend, like, his computer is here, and my computer is in the other room, so,

that's, that was super nice, but then i, i had some confidence to actually start playing with some people and, ughm, it went really well. I had actually, i had good experiences. And didn't find weird people.

Interviewer 2: Ok, and when talking with them, online, via chat, did you find it easy, did you find it, maybe some slang, or anything, or did you think ..

Interviewee: About that, I mean before i was, I was always, I couldn't concentrate at the game, and also writing, right? Because it's like, I was asking my boyfriend for every small detail, like what was that, I was seeing so many letters that shouldn't be there. I couldn't understand it, what are you talking about, and i couldn't write myself back, so i was asking him all the time about the shortcuts, you know, to write something.

Interviewer 2: Like want to sell, and want to buy. And looking for raid

(not relevant)

Interviewee: That one was a fun experience. (laughing) with the short version.

Interviewer 2: Do you, OK, actually mentioned it before, and you actually used this word, world, so do you see it as a virtual world, do you see it like .. virtual world in what sense? Like, do you think it's like a new space build with it's own rules and regulations, or...

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that every person has his own imagination, but then there is this one guy who is super smart, and thought that, ok I'll make this a game, so i take my imagination and i put some rules to it, so guys, you are the other one million persons, follow my rules, because it's mine, my imagination. So that's a game, so then you connect to that sort of reality. And of course you have your own, meaning that you have the choice of character, how you develop him or her, what you wear, what you do, but yeah, the general rules, it's that guys imagination right? So I think it's like, it's like a certain world, and you just contacted, you know, from time to time, for ...

Interviewer 2: This is something I actually wanted to ask you in the previous section, but I don't know why it slipped my mind: So you already said that when you create your characters, it's not that much about gender, but you know, them as a means to express your will and so on and so forth. But do you also give them certain personalities?

Interviewee: Yeah but I think that one develops without you even knowing. If you play a lot with a character, it grows, it's like, becoming sort of, not your child, but more or less your child.

Interviewer 1: But do you consciously say in the beginning, OK, I want to be this really good person, or ..

Interviewer 2: Or I want to be more, narcissistic, or I wanna be more angry, or ... Like this?

Interviewee: I think that that character is natural as, as you feeling that day. Meaning that, I don't chose like, today I'm a bad ass, or, ok this character will try to kick everybodies ass, and .. I think that it just, it reflects what you feel that day.

Interviewer 1: So you don't feel the need to customize your character in a specific way, to appear in a certain way.

Interviewee: No, I think that, I think that I'm actually, I hear a lot about this, that people are using this kind of world and this kind of games to be what they cannot be in real life. Maybe that's what they do, i don't know, but in my case, i just take it more relaxed. I'm not trying to, to, maybe it's also because I, in my normal life i express, **i don't have too many barriers that i put to myself, and maybe that's why i don't feel the need to escape.** Maybe for other people it's different, of course. Each of them is, you know, different. But with me, it's exactly, i feel like, super upset today, and when I play, I would definitely be more violence, so i think it's just. If girls like, (mumbling).

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: Have you experienced any kind of harassment, like relating to your gender? You already said that for ...

Interviewee: Yeah, i didn't.

Interviewer 2: You didn't?

Interviewer 1: Or heard about something like that? Like maybe a friend has had some experience, someone had some bad experiences, or funny experiences?

Interviewee: Ughm, Not really. I mean, mostly my friends that play are also guys, and they don't have this sexism thing, they don't even think about it because it's normal. I know that my sister doesn't like to play because she just doesn't like to lose. So basically she's the only girl that tried, that i know of tried, and (mumbling). So I haven't heard about situations like that. I guess, you know, **harassment comes everywhere on the internet. Whenever you have internet.**

Interviewer 1: There's no filter.

Interviewee: No, there's no filter, so it can happen, if it didn't happen until now, it can happen every day, at every ... It's just, it depends who you meet and their mood, **if they want to be assholes they can be.**

Interviewer: OK, you've said that you play with a friend, and you sometimes, you know, play with other people online. And I'm not sure how much you know about random

players, but, have you noticed any kind of differences, in the sense of older players being more mature, and playing differently, as, whereas younger ones are more, immature, more temperamental, stuff like that.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know if it's an age things, but it's definitely how much you played. But people that played more, you can see how, they talk less on chat, for example, they get, they are more relaxed, even how the they move, what they do. They don't get so pissed of when they lose. Yeah, so of course it comes with experience. I don't know about age though. I cannot tell if somebody is 12 or somebody is 40. I cannot tell. Except when they say, OK, I have to put my kids into bed, then, then I understand, OK. But, otherwise. English, i mean just writing, it can be super deceiving. It can be, you know, any kind of age.

Interviewer 1: It might be also because some countries have not so good grammar, and other countries have really good grammar, but they're just very young, so you wouldn't know if it's a 12 year old kid from London, or it's a 40 year old from Pakistan.

Interviewee: So I think it's a, this is, kind of a language barrier, because they all use English, so they could know it more or less, so you don't know what age they have.

Interviewer 1: So you actually think, when it comes to cultural barriers, not so much, but more like language barriers.

Interviewee: Yeah maybe, because maybe, the only language that we know, is spoken, is English, and maybe somebody doesn't know so well English, and that's maybe a barrier. They cannot express themselves so well. And because it's not their natural language it takes more time to write something down, and (mumbling), while they are writing, you miss the change to kick the last, I don't know, and then everybody gets upset, but you were just writing guys help me here, or whatever, right?

Interviewer 1: So you are put at a disadvantage.

Interviewee: Maybe, maybe it is, yeah. It's way better, of course, when you actually have a microphone, and .. But then there is a problem when you don't know people, that there is no order, so who talks now, who talks and says something important, because sometimes you just hear random swearing or whatever, and it's super chaotic if you don't know each other and you try microphone.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: Do you act differently online than in the real life?

Interviewee: Yeah, I was saying that, i try not to, I don't have the need so much because i'm, i'm lucky enough to be able to express myself, maybe also, you know, the culture, and where i am in Denmark, it's kind of a free country, and you, you are respected as an individual. I think if, if i would be in, i don't know, in Irak and who knows where, and

there is just the barrier of, like, humans are treated differently, and women especially, right? So, i guess then i would if i would play, it would be also to express myself, because i would have some personality that i wouldn't be able to express. So then i would, i would try to, have my, to escape i that world. But I'm lucky enough to, to live in Europe, and Denmark, and ..

Interviewer 1: So to sum that up, it's more like, what attracts you to MMOs is that you can be in a different world, and explore a storyline and a universe, but it's not so much to be someone else.

Interviewee: Yeah, because i', lucky enough to live in Europe, and have civil rights, and ..

Interviewer 2: But would you say that you are a bit more adventurous in the online world?

Interviewee: I am also adventurous in my normal life. So ..

Interviewer 2: You're pretty much stable, you keep the same ...

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm, I'm any way crazy. So in the virtual life, normal life, I keep the same face. But i like that world because it's, it has other physical rules, like, you can fly for example, that is awesome. That you will never be able to do in the normal live. Or you can be, you can be a reptile, and whatever, that you cannot do in real life. So ... super nice, that it's a imagination, that you, you can be whatever, you can do whatever. It's pretty cool. And you can save the world. I have a, of course, a saving the world complex, like everybody, so ..

Interviewer 1: You want to be important, you want to be the hero, the ...

Interviewee: And it's so nice when it says mission completed, and I helped this guy find his dog (laughing). Cuz in real life you don't need that much, i mean they have their own stuff. I like to help in a way, so I can do that.

Interviewer 1: That was a really good answer.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: You don't think that your gender is something that you should hide, or something that you should not reveal, you just, that's just another, you know, trait? It doesn't really change anything?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think that it doesn't matter. My personal opinion. Of course there are other people who think that, you know, girls, because ... Maybe because we started behaving differently only a few years ago, maybe a few decades ago, we started to be more free, maybe that's why they don't trust us yet. But we can be as good as them in

doing stuff, and .. I guess it shouldn't be a difference, it shouldn't matter, if you're a girl or a boy. If you go there and you want to find a boyfriend or a girlfriend, if you want to flirt, then ok, i understand, it should be possible. OK, I'm a guy, don't flirt with me, right? But otherwise, no, it's a game, we're not there to flirt, it's not, it's not, how is it called .. ughm .. dating line, so it shouldn't matter.

Interviewer 2: OK, but looking at it from the outside, do you think that there are any upsides or downsides to being a female gamer? Or do you think it's fair play for everyone?

Interviewee: In my, in my particular case, it didn't matter, so i guess i was lucky. Because, of course i, i think there are people that, are a a bit sexist, or (mumbling), or i don't know what ..

Interviewer 2: And do you ever take into consideration, you know, just being a little bit flirty with someone, just for them to help you with the quest, or giving a, i don't now, a gear or something?

Interviewee: I did that actually, i did that when i started playing Travian, and (mumbling) having some villages, and then, yeah, a click thing. And, i remember i was back in Romania, and I, i had somebody that was farming me, like .. I couldn't do anything, he was farming me every day, and I couldn't get more resources back to build anything, cuz he came, and he took everything every day. So i was super stressed, what should i do, what should i do? And then a friend came with the idea, ok, play stupid, play the, say that you are, to your alliance, that wasn't, they weren't helping me, and she said, ok play the girl that is stupid, and oh my god. oh my god, i need help. And it worked. So i said to my alliance that hi, i'm a girl, and i (mumbling). I played a bit stupid, like what should i do guys, and i'm so vulnerable, and .. and then i started having help, and i was like i can't believe it (laughing)

Interviewer 1: Where you surprised that it worked that well?

Interviewee: I guess so, because i took it as a joke, but it worked so well. They weren't hearing me before. Maybe because they were, all around a certain age, i was in high school, so i was 16 right? And maybe the other guys were the same alliance, so it worked, because when you're so young, it matters that, you know, she's a girl, and she needs my help. So it worked. But I don't think that it would work now. I think that it was just, i think it was just a funny game. Of course, it would work maybe if those people were there to flirt, and date, or whatever, it would, but otherwise they would be like, so what? You know. Ok, nice, so what.

Interviewer 2: OK. I don't know how much you know about the competitive level, but do you think that when you try to play this games at a competitive level, do you think that there are any disadvantages for women, for a woman?

Interviewee: yeah, yeah, i actually thought about this at one point. because, physically men have faster reflexes, like it's, it's proven like scientifically that you have faster reflexes, just the way you are built anatomically, so maybe at a certain level, somewhere, depending on every person of course, they could do things faster, they'd be. Well, they are better at driving in real life, for example, because they can, focus, you know, better and react better, and see .. think about.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: It's the same thing in games, depending on the mission, or whatever you do, because they are able to work better, you know, doing this. But we think at the food that is in the kitchen at the same time, and the fact that i didn't iron my shirt for tomorrow, to work, or whatever. We have this stuff at the same time in our minds, while doing so many things. This is a skill or not. I mean it could be taken as a skill, or it could be in some cases really detrimental, because you cannot do, you know, you're not the best, 100% there.

Interviewer 1: But also about, let's say you are in a high competitive scene, or you're a bunch a guys, trying to accomplish something, and the heat is on ... people are starting to blame people, do you think that, women have it harder to defend themselves? Or do they have and advantage?

Interviewee: Well, women are more, ughm, we have more, let's say, feelings, i mean we can get easily hurt. Guys are more, i don't know.. Maybe in case of an argument, if blame is, you know, people start to blame each other for things, i think if you, if you yell at a girl, and she would feel way worse, than if you would yell at a guy, with the same tone and the same, if you say bad things .. I think a girl would react in a different way. Because we tend to be like that, it's just our nature that we kind of take it personally. So, yeah, i guess, i guess in a fight, girls are more defensive. Guys are more like, so what, you know, it's like they don't care, but girls are like, you know. They have more, more vulnerable.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: Then we have one, two more questions. First off: Is there anything you would like to particularly share with us?

Interviewee: About the ..?

Interviewer 2: Being a gamer. You don't have to..

Interviewee: Yeah, I think, I think I said it all, yeah. I cannot think about something now.

Interviewer 2: Then the last one is: What kind of advice would you give to new female gamers?

Interviewer 1: Trying to, try out this bigger worlds, with other people in them?

Interviewee: You mean like, accessories or ..?

Interviewer 1: More like, so if you were to try WOW now, there are some things you probably should know, or .. is there any advice or ..

(not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that is exactly what I was thinking also, that, only know, at the end of the day, what matters is how you felt, if you had fun, they, they don't know you, they will never know you, so just have fun with it. If you have a weird talk on your mind, don't, then you say it, or you act, don't ever regret it, just.. yeah.. i guess that's it.

End of the interview

Participant 7

Introductions and project presentation are made

Interviewee: Can I ask you guys, like, why, why have you chosen this specific theme, like, what are you, is there something, is there a conclusion, or is there something that you would like, to ... what do you want to achieve with this?

Interviewer 2: No, no, no, no ... the literature we have found so far suggests that there is actually sexism and stereotyping in games, MMORPGs as well, ughm, so we are kinda trying to find out more about that, if there is indeed such prevalent sexism and stereotyping in this type of games, but also we were very interested, we have found a lot of studies about gamers, but it's mostly about what men want, we have not found out so much about what girls enjoy about this, kind of games. Because there is this whole literature that suggests that men and women, they like, although they like the same games, they like different aspects of them. Also, although they want to reach the same goal, they want to do that following different paths. So we are interested in finding out more about the, ughm, female consumer, but at the same time, we couldn't just ignore the fact that, you know, there are, these papers that suggests that there is stereotyping and, so on and so forth. On the other hand, with the interviews we have had so far, we have actually found out, we have either been lucky, or they have been lucky, but we have not found any, what's the word in English, evidence, that there is any stereotyping, or sexism in MMORPGs. So either way, no matter what conclusion we draw, whether we confirm it or infirm it, it doesn't, you know.

Interviewer 1: It's not the purpose of our study to ... to determine whether or not it's true or false.

Interviewee: That's pretty cool, thank you for answering my question.

Interviewer 2: Not a problem.

Interviewee: That's about that.

Interviewer 2: If you have any other questions, feel free to ask them, we'll be happy to , ughm, answer them.

Interviewee: Awesome

Interviewer 2: OK. So first of, age?

Interviewee: Age, 27.

Interviewer 2: And your occupation?

Interviewee: Translator resources specialist.

Interviewer 2: And nationality?

Interviewee: Romanian.

Interviewer 2: OK. So, the questions are, we have very few yes or no questions, but pretty much, feel free to expand as much as you like on each and everyone of them, or be as strict and succinct as you want to, it all depends on you. Don't feel forced into anything.

Interviewee: Awesome.

Interviewer 1: OK, So first of all, what MMORPGs have you played or are you still playing?

Interviewee: Oh my god, actually I'm not that, playing that much nowadays, lack of time and age, but in the past I actually used to play a lot. Ughm, there was, there was this one that I played for a lot of time, not Travian, but the other one, Ikariam. OK, so does that count as MMORPG?

Interviewer 1: I don't know the games.

Interviewer 2: Oh OK, let me see.

Interviewee: I used to play Ikariam 2 actually, both Travian and Ikarima.

Interviewer 2: Oh OK, it's a browser game.

Interviewee: Do they count? I'm actually not sure.

Interviewer 1: I think they do, not so .. Yeah, it's a massive multiplayer online role playing games.

Interviewer 2: As long as it's a, ughm, you know, with a lot of other players, interacting together, always good.

Interviewee: That's, that's pretty much it, yes.

Interviewer 2: OK, then yes.

Interviewee: the other one, like, I also used to play the settlers, but online. What else, what else, what else, does Diablo count.

Interviewer 1: Yes.

Interviewee: OK, cuz i used to play Diablo 2 which sucked, but ...

Interviewer 2: OK, which one, 2 or 3? Which one.

Interviewee: 2. You didn't like it that much?

Interviewee: No, I really didn't.

Interviewer 2: OK, but then why did you start playing them? Diablo 2 for example

Interviewee: Which one?

Interviewer 2: Diablo 2 for example, if you didn't like it that much, what convinced you to start playing it?

Interviewee: Actually my partner, my fiancée right now, he was, he was into that a lot, and he was like 'I wanna, I wanna get into this, you wanna play with me?' and I said OK, let's try it, but I found it kind of frustrating. Actually all of them are frustrating. God damn it. It takes so long to reach your goal and shit.

Interviewer 2: Oh, OK.

Interviewee: But, I don't know, I found, I finished like the whole thing kind of fast, and it wasn't as challenging as I wanted it to be, to be honest, but then again I'm no expert so, I don't know.

Interviewer 2: It doesn't matter, it's your feelings for it, so. OK so ... with your Diablo 2 it was you fiancée, but with Ikariam for example, and the other one, Travian I think you said.

Interviewee: I think I've always liked games, where you, where you build things from scratch. So you just accumulate, it's, it's like a little bit like a hoarder, you accumulate things, and you build, and you just pile and you stack up certain things, up until you reach a specific goal, but, that goal actually never arrives, never actually, I don't know. It's, it's just super super difficult. You have a lot of patience in the beginning, and you think that you are going, cuz it's faster, you know, in the few stages, it's actually faster.

(Interrupted)

Interviewer 2: So hoarding stuff.

Interviewee: Hoarding stuff, yes, just building things in the beginning, cuz you know it goes really fast, and you achieve your goals, like kind of fast. But that's just this scheme, to like attract you, to keep you hooked and addicted to the god damn game.

And then of course, as you, progress, you actually start learning that you, it's not that those goals are very hard to achieve, they start becoming harder and harder, and especially in real time. And at that specific point you just realize that, yeah, it's not working anymore, and you lost interest. Complete interest. But the community was nice for example, in Ikariam. The community was, was rather OK. Travian, I think it was actually better in Travian. But I liked the community. I liked the fact that I was achieving my goals, and it gave me a sense of accomplishment. I think this is a big part in games like that actually, because sometimes, you know, in real life, you don't really, things are not really going the way you planned them to. And you, I don't know, it gives you this false sense of reaching a specific goal, even though it's completely meaningless. Like oh my god, I'm stacked up on, on this raw material for building I don't know what, or, I've, I was able to get to that level and have this specific skill. Ugh,. you know. Researched into and now, now I can go further up.

Interviewer 2: So achievements, achievements, achievements. That make, makes a girl gamer very happy.

Interviewee: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer 2: What other things do you think might interest you in a game?

Interviewee: Ughm, oh, by the way, does Minecraft count as a...?

Interviewer 2: It does. It's not a role playing game, but ...

Interviewer 1: It's massive multiplayer games

Interviewee: But if you have mods, if you have mods for example

Interviewer 2: That's true.

Interviewee: There you go. OK, so, I can talk about Minecraft, cuz that was actually, Minecraft, for me, it played a very significant role in my life. It actually sound kind of, kind of silly, but it really did. I was in Romania, my fiancée right now, at the time he was in Canada, and we would play Minecraft together, we both loved the game, and we would play Minecraft because of the time difference, 7 hours time difference between us, I would stay up all night long, and play Minecraft with him, and we were both depressed, because we were unable to be together, we had no idea where our future would be, and Minecraft represented the only world, the only way for us to be together, our characters to be together, and have a little garden, and build a house and everything. It, it has a special role in my heart, Minecraft.

Interviewer 2: Aham, OK, that's really nice. But I can see a pattern, again, it is building stuff that you like, you enjoy.

Interviewee: Yes, yes. Building. Hoarding and building.

Interviewer 2: Hoarding and building. OK, ughm. I don't think I have asked you this, but how long ago do you think you have started playing games. Like around what age...

Interviewee: My first rigged console, bought from a Chinese store when I was 7 years old. So, I started playing like, games, back then, but yeah. Oh, and then I had this, I bought this game boy, although it was super late in the games, it was from the 80s, but I got it in the late 90s. I got that, that game boy and I used to play Lion king and Ghost busters on it.

Interviewer 2: Ughm, OK, I think we have already started, talked about what you like about this kind of games. In this, I'm not very, used, not used, not very knowledgeable, with Ikariam and Travian, but what is the mechanics, what exactly do you, it's about building your city?

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: And do you have like, different types of leaders, like you can be more of a warrior type, or more of a diplomat, merchant.

Interviewee: Exactly yes.

Interviewer 2: OK, which roles did you like to play?

Interviewee: Ughm, I think I would always pick the diplomat. Yeah, or whatever it is that is not necessarily the warrior type, even in, even though it is not MMORPG, but in Dragon Age for example, I only played Origins, I don't know about the rest, but I only played Origins, and, I would always pick mage there. Whatever I would play, it's, it's always none warrior.

Interviewer 2: Why is that?

Interviewee: I don't know. Yeah, I think, I don't know, I think discovering other things that are not necessarily just buffing up, and improving your stats and you armor is more attractive, I don't know.

Interviewer 2: Again, you like things to be more complicated in a certain way.

Interviewee: Yes exactly. Exactly.

Interviewer 1: What about the gender? Did the gender of the character, would they be female?

Interviewee: No, not really.

Interviewer 1: So that isn't something that plays a role.

Interviewee: No, I don't really care. I'm more interested in the skills, in the class and the skills rather than the gender.

Interviewer 2: OK. Ughm, we are going to talk now about the social space of online gaming. We are gonna try and see how you relate to that. OK. So first of all, what is your experience so far when interacting with other players?

Interviewee: Ughm, actually kind of positive, to be honest. But then again, I wasn't, I did not continue playing the games, all this games, I did not continue playing them on a public open server. And trying to interact with everyone, and I didn't actually go, I didn't take this route very deep, very far. I just kinda like stopped at a specific point, because, out of boredom mostly. But, if you have a close community for example, it's kind of peaceful. I've never encountered any, I don't know, mean things said, or, I don't know. I mean, people are people, there, of course they would send their troops to ravage your city, but, it doesn't matter who you are, they are still gonna do that.

Interviewer 2: OK. How would you usually come to interact with people? I'm assuming that depending on the game, or type of game also, this interactions differ.

Interviewee: Exactly, it does.

Interviewer 2: For example with, ughm, Ikariam, how would you get in touch with other players.

Interviewee: If I remember correctly, you would have to, well of course they would attack you, cuz, they would, you would receive a message in advance, like, I don't know who's troops are gonna arrive at you city in this time. Prepare yourself. And then you would actually, ughm, be able to send that person a message, so yeah. That's true, I remember, I would trade. I would trade things with them to, kinda like get me off the hook, in a few situations. In Minecraft, when i was playing, a few times when i was playing on public servers, I would actually create tiny shops where i would sell like, at that point in time you could make cakes, you could make , ughm, all this, this types of food, I don't remember exactly, specifically what, but I would sell that. I would put like, i don't know, edible good in there for everybody to come and trade, so they would leave me certain goods that i was missing, and i was trading to that. So every single time, this interactions were decent, they were OK.

Interviewer 2: OK, so no meanies.

Interviewee: Noup, no meanies.

Interviewer 2: Did you, in Ikariam, I thing it was the same, you could join tribes, or, I don't know.

Interviewee: That was Travian I think.

Interviewer 2: Ah OK, but you could join like, make alliances with other players.

Interviewee: yeah yeah, alliances, for sure. I was in alliances. You had to protect yourself better. But it was difficult when you were a beginner, nobody wanted you in an alliance, cuz you were kinda sucky, so you had to grow on your own, and then you would be in an alliance. But you would also had to pay attention, cuz a lot of players were kinda inactive, so, your alliance was not very, I don't know, consolidated that well.

Interviewer 2: OK, sooo, yeah, not a lot of interaction this way.

Interviewee: No, but, messages .. oh, also, on Minecraft, you know you have to, you can send messages and stuff. Yeah, it's a .. you could also do that with players that, ... no, that's. that's mostly closed, that's closed, yeah.

Interviewer 2: Well, it happens. In Diablo for example, ughm, you said that you also played that, would you, I think it was still, even in Diablo 2, you had battlenet options, you could play with other players. If you'd like. Apart from your boyfriend, would you do that with other, yeah fiancée, did you do that with other people.

Interviewee: Yeah, random people. For sure. Also that, but again, super cool. I mean, no, just going, doing stuff, positive experiences, nothing, nothing bad, nothing like backstabbing, or .. I don't know.

Interviewer 2: OK. Do you think that you have managed to take any of this interactions further, towards more, I don't know, sort of a friendship? Do you think that is something, that's something you can do with, ughm ..

Interviewee: Yeah, why not? Why not? I've never played, what's, what is that games, that people go to rehab because of ..

Interviewer 1: World of Warcraft?

Interviewee: Yeah, (laughing), I've never played World of Warcraft, but I know that my friend would play that a lot, were saying, yeah, I know this guy, and he met this girl from Finland, I think, he was from Romania, and she was from Finland, and, she came down to Romania, to meet up with them, and they actually had a love affair and what not, I don't know what happened. That's unimportant, what matters is that they actually met in World of Warcraft.

Interviewer 2: So you have definitely heard stories where this things are common.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer 2: It's not that much of an, you know, exceptions nowadays, or abnormal.

Interviewee: Not at all. I think in gaming, it's pretty much like any online medium, any online community, where it's like, it's the same, you do stuff with people together, even if you comment on reddit for example, you meet people by commenting, and sharing passions, different interests, it's the same in gaming. You meet people, you like them, you start, like Oh I like you character, or thank you for having my back in that situation, and then you just get it off.

Interviewer 2: Nice! OK, soo, when you've come to meeting people online, you think it's easy to make new friend, like just, just like meeting people in the real life, the same thing can ... OK

Interviewee: For sure.

Interviewer 2: Did you get to interact with people from other countries.

Interviewee: Absolutely, yeah. I mean, I know for a fact they were from other countries, but I don't know specifically, if you're gonna ask me, I, like, what is the percentage, or, like.

Interviewer 2: No, no, no, no. Ughm, our question is more like: do you think that, do you feel any differences, like from a language or cultural perspective?

Interviewee: I haven't played that much with Romanians for example, but I heard that Romanians are kinda mean. But, I've played the public servers.

Interviewer 2: Yeah, we have someone here who has also had experience with that.

Interviewee: Yeah? I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. But, for example, I've played a lot with Canadians, because of my friends, that were from Canada, they were very nice. But, yeah. I don't know about the rest. Cultural differences, that's a good one, that's a good one.

Interviewer 2: You haven't found anything like that. Or language barriers, or anything.

Interviewee: Well, if you know English, you're gonna be OK.

Interviewer 2: OK. So we're gonna move to the third part of our interview, which deals more with stereotyping and harassment. So obviously the first question is: have you experienced any kind of stereotyping or harassment.

Interviewee: No, but I know it's, it is possible to experience that, I am very aware of it, but, I have personally never experienced it.

Interviewer 2: Have you heard of people who, you know, have gone through this.

Interviewee: Well, not heard personally, but read online mostly, stories, or complaints, or like, on forums, for examples.

Interviewer 2: OK, but nothing, you know, direct.

Interviewee: No, no.

Interviewer 2: OK, when looking at yourself, do you think you behave differently in real life as opposed to how you behave online?

Interviewee: For sure.

Interviewer 2: For sure? OK

Interviewee. For sure, definitely.

Interviewer 2: Can you expand a bit on that?

Interviewee: Sure, I think, of course you can, it's based on the game, mostly, based on what exactly you are doing there, ughm. But, yeah, depending on the atmosphere in the game, who you are playing with, it's exactly the same as a social situation, in real life, where you would adapt your personality, and you would adapt what you say and what you do, based on the context, i guess. So for example, it's not the same, I wouldn't be the same in Ikariam as Minecraft or Diablo. It's not the same. So I would have to give it specifically, based in the game, and what the prerequisites and requirements are within that context, and that game, or even servers for example.

Interviewer 2: So you like to immerse yourself in the whole idea or role playing.

Interviewee: Yeah, for sure.

Interviewer 2: OK. Ughm, when interacting with other players however. OK, how would you describe your personality, let's start with that.

Interviewee: Uu, I don't know, I haven't thought about that. In the game? My personality in the game or in the real life?

Interviewer 2: Ughm, first of all in real life, and then in the game. If you think that they are different.

Interviewee: OK. Ughm, I don't know. I guess they're not specific.. the core is not different, it's really not, but again, ughm. I would, I guess I would be generous and fair in the game, especially when it would come to trading. I actually never tried to rip off people, or try to like, ambush them, based on absolutely nothing, or, go for, in Minecraft, go for their, go for their things and just steal things from their chest. So, or stab

someone in the back because, I don't know, I just feel like I have to run, and leave that person to deal with everything. No, I never did that, no. So...

Interviewer 2: So I'm assuming it's, your core: Fair, and always trying to do the right thing.

Interviewee: Fair and generous, yes. Let's put it like that, yes.

Interviewer 2: OK. But other than the core, what are some of the slight differences that you think exist between how you react in real life and .. you know, ughm, online, in the virtual world.

Interviewee: I am more adventurous in games, than in real life, I like to take a bit more of a chance, more of a risk. Whether it comes to like, your finances for example, like investments, risk your investments within the game, ughm, or you would venture even like, your character, even though you know you are gonna get killed, or there is this situation where you shouldn't be going alone, or whatever. You, you still do it. I would still do it, I would still venture. So I would say more adventurous for sure.

Interviewer 2: OK. In you interactions with other players, like, have you mention that you are a girl, would this kind of topic come into discussion?

Interviewee: Sorry, I didn't catch that.

Interviewer 2: When interacting with other players, would your gender come into discussion, that you are a girl, or is that something that most of the people would not know for the, you know .. whole period of ...

Interviewee: I don't know. I would always, I think my, ughm, my name was kinda girlish evocative. Kinda like, feminine, so I would guess that based on my name, they would understand that I'm a girl. But, nobody asked me, are you a girl. Or, hey you girl, or what gender are you. No, the gender never came into play.

Interviewer 2: OK, because the next question was more like, if you think that people interact with you differently because you're a girl. But, OK. Let's put it this way then. Do you think that your gender would have played any role in this interactions? Do you think they would have behaved different with because you're a girl?

Interviewee: Maybe, maybe. Maybe sometime, for example, they, I don't know. I guess.. you know I'm trying to think of examples where I would play with other friends, let's say, male friends, cuz you use mostly male friends. And, I guess they would be a bit more protective, of my character, cuz they knew who I was in real life. But, I don't know if they would be the same if does people, ughm, like unknown people, from other countries, other culture, if they would know I'm a girl, I'm not sure they would be as protective.

Interviewer 2: OK, but as far as your friend are concerned, you have noticed that fact, this, that they are more protective towards you.

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm trying to rack my brains for specific examples, but .. I remember when we would venture out, in a group or whatever, I, they would always go in front, for example, and I don't know, if danger would approach, or whatever, I would be kinda on the side.

Interviewer 2: Do you think that has anything to do with your, the type of character you prefer as well, for example if you're a melee, obviously, you would be ...

Interviewee: Not necessarily. For example, the, when venturing out in Minecraft, where you have absolutely nothing, yeah .. it's, there you have no special protection, unless you have like a cool armor, or whatever. Yeah. Even with an armor, yeah, you are right, they would be more protective, in Minecraft for example.

Interviewer 2: OK. Other than that, have you noticed any other, I don't know differences? For example, when it came to your skill, did they maybe tease you about not being as good, or anything like that? Or do you think that they regarded you as equally skillful?

Interviewee: It depends on what you were doing. For example, my friends in Minecraft, they would build .. I had this friend, super smart guy, and he build this like, really long rail, and all the mechanic systems, you know, with the red thing, I forgot the name, redstone, it's actually redstone, and he would build this really cool, complicated mechanisms. And yeah, I mean, he, he did that, he would have fun and I would always tell him like, I would never thought of putting things there, or doing it like that, cuz I don't really understand the mechanisms. So, yeah but, he never, teased me, or say things like, oh my god you don't know how this works, or .. I would just admit it on my own. I don't know. Even when playing other games for example. I'd be like, hey, can you help me out with this, or can you help me out with that, cuz I don't have this, I don't have that. Ughm .. No, no. I, if I, I wouldn't be .. I remember when I was playing, I would ask for help. I wouldn't be like, afraid of asking for people's help at all. And sometimes I would get it, sometimes I wouldn't, but I would know my suckyness, my limits, for sure.

Interviewer 2: But have you seen this reciprocity, like, other people asking you for help.

Interviewee: Yes, for shizzle. For shizzle it happens. And I would help them, absolutely, And they would actually, my male friends, they would help me, they would ask for help with stuff. so yeah, for sure, I would help them.

Interviewer 2: OK. So that was actually.. I think that the term is, tit-for-tat, they would give you something, you would give them something, so there's always this kind of, ughm ..

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: OK. Ughm, Did you ever feel, while playing games, that you being female is something that has to be hidden, or do you think that's ... Like have you ever had this impression? That being a girl is something that you should not be upfront with?

Interviewee: No. Not at all. But then again, I didn't play the other games, that mostly come into, you know.. On forums, there are specific games that people say you should not play it as a girl, or you should hide the fact that you're a girl. But, like I said, I've never played, for example World of Warcraft. I, I know my friend who used to play, was like, yeah if we were to have in our guild a girl, everybody would be on, like, oh can I do this for you, can I help you out with that, or yeah ..

Interviewer: OK, but.. OK. Do you think there are, that there are any upsides and downsides to being a girl in the field of gaming?

Interviewee: I guess so. I really do. I guess.. But it also depends on how you take it. If you just wanna play, and not, you know, play, that's it, the only thing you care about. I don't think you should have a hard time doing it. But, I know, I've, I know specific girls that just, wanna rant about this. They wanna, they're feminist, but at the same time they want to rant about the fact that, oh I'm a feminists, and I'm a gamer, and I go online and .. I have one friend who does this .. I go online and I play this games, and you should see this guys, and how they do this, how they do that, like stop discrimination. I don't think, necessarily, you should take with a grain of salt. That's all I'm saying, whatever their comments are, take it with a grain of salt, cuz that's not necessarily the reality. If you really, I believe that if you really wanna play, and you're there for the game, the game experience, you will not have a , you know, fucked up time. You won't.

Interviewer: OK, nice. Good to see that, good to hear that. Ughm, OK. This is the last questions when it comes to stereotyping and harassment, and it is: do you think women are put in a disadvantage when trying to fit in on a competitive level in video gaming?

Interviewee: Disadvantage. I don't know, I don't think so. No. I don't think so.

(not relevant)

Interviewer 2: Out last question is the following: Is there anything that you would like to further share with us?

Interviewee: To share, share, share, share .. (laughing) Not, not necessarily, I think I've covered pretty much everything there was to cover, to be honest.

End of interview

Appendix 16

Participant 8

Interview starts

(not relevant)

Interviewer: Your age?

Interviewee: 24

Interviewer: OK, and occupation?

Interviewee: I am a student.

Interviewer: OK, and nationality?

Interviewee: Czech.

Interviewer: OK. So the first question, we're interested in knowing what kind of MMORPGs have you played or are you still playing.

Interviewee: Yeah, I've been playing, it's called AION, if you know it, maybe you know it from (participant), because she played too, and I've been playing for two years, or so, yeah, nearly two years.

Interviewer: OK. I know that, ughm, she mentioned at one point she started, she stopped playing it, because all the new add ons, after it became free to play, she didn't like that much the direction in which it was going. Do you feel the same way, or?

Interviewee: (mumbling) I started with the game when it was free to play, so I never tried, the pay version, but .. I like it. Like, the updates are quite, I don't know how to say it, it's, I don't like it too, because, ughm .. i don't know. It used to be better in the past. And now, yeah, I don't play now because i have some school issues, finishing my thesis, and everything, but, yeah .. I pretty much enjoy it. I think the free to play version is still good.

Interviewer: OK, so overall, very happy about it.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What got you into it?

Interviewee: Actually, I'm interested in fashion, and she showed me, just, she came over and she said, can i just do stuff in the game, i need to do something, and i was ok, just feel free. And i was looking, and i really fell for the dresses, the character she had, wore, so i was like, oh my god i love the dress, i want it too, so i started to play it because of a dress.

Interviewer: OK. So you're , what are you majoring in right now, if i'm not too personal.

Interviewee: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: What are you majoring in? You said that you're working on your master thesis as well.

Interviewee: Bachelors.

Interviewer: Bachelors, what are you majoring in?

Interviewee: Like what the topic is or? What?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah

Interviewee: It's about Tolkien's books.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Yeah. Like I study, it's Anglofon studies. (not relevant)

Interviewer: So you are really interested in this whole idea of fantasy.

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm really into fantasy, and, like, books, films, everything.

Interviewer: OK, that's very nice. (not relevant) You said you started playing two years ago, and you started playing because (participant) showed it to you. But before that, have you ever had any kind of interest in games

Interviewee: Like before, i, i never played, ughm, any RPG or MMO, or something, i just played like the normal games for pc, like the prince of persia, and those, like, you buy the cd, and you put it in there, like nothing online. But i was always interested in games, because my father, he's an IT worker, and he really enjoys playing video games, and all this stuff, so i was in the, ughm, in this kind of, entertainment, the home. So yeah, i think i have some good relationship with the games, and with this whole genre

Interviewer: OK. What roles do you like to play?

Interviewee: You mean like the gender, or ..?

Interviewer: No, no, gender as well, but mainly, do you prefer to be out there in the front line, or do you prefer to be more..

Interviewee: Healer. Because, I don't know, it's like, i don't, i don't prefer characters, or the roles which are for combat, and i just don't enjoy it. I like supporting others, and be there for them, like be there for the team, not as a single person.

Interviewer: So you're a single player, uhh, you're a team player.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: OK. And when it comes to characters, like you mentioned, gender. Do you prefer certain kinds of characters, like more girly, or, you like playing men as well, or ..

Interviewee: I've never had a female, uhh, male character, I always have female. I have, in AION, i have, there is possibility of 8 characters, and i have all of them females. And, i like, i really enjoy creating the characters, because i like, you know, make them pretty, like, i don't know, blond hair, long hair, nice eyes, and everything, i really like this creative side of the game, where you can play with the character, with appearance, with the dress, and everything.

Interviewer: So character creation is definitely one of the highlights of the game.

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely, and in AION you have, ughm, really, really, like the, you can choose whatever you want, because I saw some games where you have the character, the characters appearance given. Like you can choose from, i don't know, three faces, and four hairstyles, and that's all, but here you can choose everything. Like, you can ..

Interviewer: It's more like Sims, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, I would say it's like Sims. Yeah.

Interviewer: OK, great. And, when you create them, do you try to make them resemble you? Or do you have this kind of idea, like for example, do you think, that ah, today, i don't know, i'm feeling more feisty, so i'm gonna make her more, you know, like very tall, and very feisty, and so on and so forth, or do they, .. you know, have this kind of personalities?

Interviewee: From the beginning, i tried to make the characters to look like me, because, I don't know, I just wanted, if i'm playing the character, it should look like me, because it's actually me. And then, when i had more, i was kind of, i don't know, fed up with the, my appearance, and i tried something different, and i saw, i saw some different characters from someone else, and i was like, oh my god, i love, i love this face look, and the hair style, so i had to try it too. So yeah, it was, it's like, it's like yeah, half of them are like me, and half of them are like, according to my mood, or whatever.

Interviewer: OK, so it's you playing with them.

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: OK, and when you play in the game, like, do you put yourself out there, is it how you would feel and act, or do you try to give them their own personalities?

Interviewee: I would say that it's definitely me.

Interviewer: OK, so it's you all the way.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Would you say, now that we've hit this, ughm, subject, that you're also very honest? Like, i don't know. You just, you keep true to your personality throughout the game. You don't hide anything.

Interviewee: Yeah, I would say i'm just 100% myself.

Interviewer: OK, that's very interesting, and nice to know.

Interviewee: I don't see any, i don't know, any reasons to be someone else. Like, why to hide who i am, and why act differently?

Interviewer: Would you say that you are more of an introvert, or more of an extrovert?

Interviewee. This is really a hard question, because, I'm thinking of this quite lately, and, it's like, i don't know, it depends on the situation. For example, when I'm with friends, or people I know, I'm more like an extrovert, but when I'm alone, like somewhere, I don't know anyone, I'm more like introvert.

Interviewer: OK, so you can find energy and you are very calm with yourself, no matter where you are.

Interviewee: ughm , yeah, could be.

(not relevant)

Interviewer: When you talk, let's talk about the world a bit, instead of just the characters, and .. Are you also attracted, ughm, you know, to this kind of world, the idea of exploring something new, and conquering something new, and ...

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I wasn't like, for example, when i started to play the game, i was always alone, i didn't have any friends, because (participant), she, it was, it was when she started to quit the game, so she wasn't there for me and she was on the

highest level, and i was somewhere at the beginning, so she didn't have the opportunity to play with me, or maybe i didn't have. Aaand, so i was there alone, and i really liked, like, playing the, according to the game, like doing the quest and follow the campaigns, and all the, like the story behind the games, so yeah, i really liked, like, i don't know, the quests said go there and do this, and i enjoyed doing this, and i didn't like the pvp and all those, ughm, all those areas where you had to cooperate with people. I just enjoyed being alone and doing my own stuff. So yeah, I was, I really really liked this.

Interviewer: So did you get this sense of, you really achieved something. You know, like completing this quests, and...

Interviewee: Yeah, and, I, I did everything on my own, i didn't need any help. Like, I know there are some people who are always asking for help, I cannot do this, can you help me, and i always did it alone, so yeah, i felt, i felt like i really, ughm, i'm looking for the right word, like i really was satisfied with the way i was doing it, because i really achieved everything on my own.

Interviewer: Yeah, i can imagine that must be a very nice feeling

Interviewee: Yeah, but then you feel maybe a bit lonely, because you know, you are alone, and all other peoples are in groups, and playing together, and i was just, ok, i'm alone (laughing)

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. So, you didn't really get the chance to interact with other players all that much.

Interviewee: I'm sorry, again?

Interviewer: Does that mean that you didn't get a chance to interact that much with other players?

Interviewee: ughm, I eventually got, it was, i don't know, after a year or so, i met some Czech people, and started to play together, and then ...

(not relevant)

Interviewee: So we could talk together, and we were playing together, and it was like amazing, because i wasn't alone, like everyday i could log in and be with them. We also used, ughm, the program for talking, something like Skype. Yes, so i really appreciate it, because it was something different, like after a yeah, the game has different, like, purpose, because i wasn't there just for me, but i was there for them, and was helping them. and yeah, i think i, i maybe was happier, while playing with people then being alone.

Interviewer: How did that happen? how did you get to that point where you started playing with others?

Interviewee: It was, yeah, i reached the highest level, and then, there is nothing you can do alone, because on the highest level you have no other goals, you know. You can't go higher, so you just have to go the instances, and pvp and everything, and you need other people for that. So i went, i went some instance, and the people, they were talking in chat, and i think they said something in czech, so i asked like, guys are you from czech or what? and they were like yeah, we are from Czech, so we, we were friends from then, and yeah, i think this is how it started, like just, i met them.

Interviewer: Ok. What, what do you like more, the, do you like the pvp part of the game, or do you prefer the instances?

Interviewee: I think it's equal, i like, when i have the group of my friends, and we can go for pvp, it's really, it's really great fun. Because it's, you know, it's, unpredictable, you don't know what will happen in the next second, and yeah, i really like it. But, sometimes when i'm not in the mood, or maybe i'm tired, i just prefer to go for some instance, or just do something not that, ughm, not that, like, i don't know the word.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: For example when you are healer, you have to, keep them alive, and when someone dies, they are like, oh my god, you let me die, why? I'm so .. yeah, it's stressful, for me yes.

Interviewer: But how about that feeling when you know you just defeated other people, like you group managed to win, and you, it's like, do you get a sense of high, or do you feel bad about killing them?

Interviewee: No, I'm like proud we managed it. Because the server we are playing at, i don't know if you know, AION is divided into two fractions (not relevant) they're Elyos and Asmodians, and they are against each other. Like the ones are, like angels, with white wings, and the other one had black wings, and they fighting each other, and on the serve we are playing at, there is, it's not equal, like there are many more Elyos than Asmodians, so usually when we go PVP we are one group of 6 people against, i don't know, three times more. So, yeah, it feel, you are able to kill people in the three versus one, then you are really good, so yes, you really feel great when you manage to win PVP.

Interviewer: Nice, OK. I can imagine. Why did you, how did you choose your faction?

Interviewee: It was because of (participant), because she told me she tried the white side, and she was like, i don't like it, they are all like, i don't know, like nazies, they have, for everything so pretty, and they are snobish, she didn't like it. So she said she went to the other side, to the black one, and she said it's more, it's, like, it's better in every way. so yeah, i said i wanted white wings, but if you are there, i will follow you. And i really like it, i think it's better to be on this side, because it's liike, ughm, how to say it, like,

they are less people than on the other side, so i don't know, you are maybe somehow closer, and more friendly, and yeah, i think this, like, the people, they are better.

Interviewer: Nice. OK. Ughm, so once you met this people, did things like really hit it off, you started just talking more and more, all was it all like a longer process?

Interviewee: Ughm, i think i'm quite a friendly person, so, i don't have problems to be talkative a lot, at the first, i don't know, at the first meeting or whatever. Like, before, i am, i met the czech group, i was in a legion of, it was greek, yeah, it was greek legion. And, yeah, it was great, but, you know, they were talking mostly in greek, so i didn't understand them, like, yeah, they were talking, they were speaking english, but, you know, they mainly used their own language, so, i felt like outsider there, and ... yeah, it really turned when i met the czech people.

Interviewer: OK, ughm, how did they react, both groups that you were part of, when they found out that you're a girl?

Interviewee: ughm, let me think about it. Ughm, i don't know, about the greek, but, yeah, they were, it wasn't as, as special to have a girl there, because there are many girls, like.. Sometimes i am really surprised how many girls play the game. Because i really felt it's like, more boys playing the game than girls, but now it's like 50/50, like, there are, there are as many girls as boys. So, i think they were used to, so they just, they just, ok another girl in our legion. But with the czech, it was different, they were like really surprised, because they, there was like one or two girls, playing with them, and i was the third one, so they didn't expect to meet another girl. Yes, so, i felt, i felt really like honoured, because they were, they were giving me gifts, and they were really friendly with me, and they, they treated me really, really nice.

Interviewer: That's very nice to know. And i think it helped, you know, not being the only girl, in each group. Did you feel like, just because you were girls, did you feel like, closer to each other, or was it, you know, you talking to the other girls, was the same as talking to the other members, the male members.

Interviewee: Actually i didn't talk to the czech girls. I don't know, they were a bit strange. The one, she was, she was like a puppy to her boyfriend. She was always with him, spoke only to him. And the other one, she was, she was, i don't want to say crazy but she was kind of different. She didn't really belong. She was like, playing, and she was in her own world, she did not talk to anyone. So, I was, i was only talking to boys. But yeah, i know (participant) and i, i knew some other girls, and they were, they were just normal, like we ... yes, sometime we're like, talking, just girls, and it was different, because we were talking about the boys, and all this girl stuff, you know. But yeah, i think they were, like normal, i think they would talk to me as a, they would talk to me in the same way if we meet in the real ..

Interviewer: (not relevant) How did it feel, when you were either in pvp, or in an instance, you know, when you all the same, like, had the same kind of status, in the group, or did you feel like there were any hierarchies?

Interviewee: You mean me and the boys or me and the other ..?

Interviewer: No no, all around. Did you feel like maybe you and the girls are given special treatment, or did you feel it was, everyone at the same level.

Interviewee: I think it's, ughm, like every girl, if she proves she's girl, she has benefits, from guys, because, i don't know, i know my friends, like male friends, they were always saying, ok, i will pretend i'm a girl, and people give me gifts, and do things for me, like they do for you, because they felt like, like being a boy there means being something less, then being a girl. So, he always, they always envy me for being a girl, because, yeah, everyone give me gifts, and you know, took me to instances, and all this stuff there, i was honored to being girl, because they treated me so well.

Interviewer: Ok, so, how did that, you know, when it comes to actually fighting, did you feel that you are treated the same, like your skills were not, you know, they didn't think you were as skillful just because you are girl?

Interviewee: Oh this, ugthm, yeah, at the beginning, i know, i was a noob, when i started, because i didn't know how to play, and i didn't know, i should use the keyboard and not the mouse, and all this stuff, so i was really bad, i know. And yeah, people didn't like me for it, because i let everyone die, and it was really hard. But then i met a friend, or someone who became my friend eventually, and he taught me what to do, like how to be a good healer, and from then on, i think people started to like me and take me more, because they knew i'm skillful and i can do really good, or really well. Yeah (not relevant)

Interviewer: So as long as you learned and as long as you evolved, it was all good.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: I just, if you wanted to know, i don't think that people would discriminate someone for being girl. I think there are so many girls that, i would even say that, they think that being a girl is even better, like, nearly every healer i know is a girl, and i think that people really think that girls are better healers, than boys.

Interviewer: When you look at how you interact with your group, have you made friends from this group, from you second group?

Interviewee: Yeah, yes.

Interviewee: OK, and whenever you talk to them, do you feel that it's the same as if you were to talk to a friend in real life?

Interviewee: Actually some of them became my real life friends too. Ughm, actually one of them is my boyfriend now. We met just through the game, he was... Yeah, i met two guys from the czech republic, and , then they took me to the czech community and yeah, here comes Peter, who's my boyfriend, and he was, yeah, we tried to, we talked, and we were playing together, and then we were skypeing, and then we met each other, and yes .. (laughing)

Interviewer: So it's, pretty much the same thing. So it doesn't ... there isn't actually any difference from your point of view.

Interviewee: No, I wouldn't say, like i have many friends from the game in my Skype contacts, so we usually just call and talk, and yeah .. Like, we don't meet because some of them are from different countries, but yeah, i think we are like, from the game friends, we became normal friends.

Interviewer: Maybe it helps, the fact that you have this common interest, from that point on you just have to find different common ..

Interviewee: Something to talk about ..

(Not relevant)

Interviewer: So you said that you interact with people from different countries, right? Have you noticed that there are any kind of differences from a cultural or a language point of view?

Interviewee: Let me think. It's like, noo, i think since we are all from Europe, because this is, the servers are European, so we are all from, i don't know, i know people from Britain, Spain, Portuguese, Netherlands, Greece, like all, this are all countries which are in Europe, and i think, like, people in Europe have same mentality, or the way of thinking, so i'm, it's pretty much the same. Only language differs.

Interviewer: Do you think that it's the European mentality that is the same, or maybe that those who start playing this game, and joining this community, have the same the mentality?

Interviewee: Oh, maybe, this is a good point. Yeah, it's maybe this. Yes, because i also know some people from Egypt, or this, this African country, and yeah, they acted like they were Europeans, so maybe it's just the game community, so they say, like the same, in the game, maybe (laughing)

Interviewer: OK, so no actually, apart from, you know, this first group that tended to talk a lot in greek, other than that there weren't actually any kind of problems.

Interviewee: Ughm, no. Like, not with this, but i have different problems because, ughm, i would say i'm really sensitive, and when, for example, i was in one of the hardest instances, and i was there for the first time, and i told the group i'm there for the first time, so, just don't expect any miracles. And, we went there, we went to boss, and we failed, so we went there again, and we failed again, because i didn't know what to do, and people were dying and i really, i didn't have good gear so, yeah, i was dying too. And then, after like two of free failures, they just kicked me, with no reason, like not saying, like, i was so, so upset, and you, i was crying, and everything like, it really touched me. And this is the thing i don't like about the game, because i put too many emotions in it. Like, I take it personally, when someone insults me, or is rude, i take it personally and i'm really sad then.

Interviewer: So it's actually, you really do connect with that world, you really put yourself .. it's not just a role to you.

Interviewee: Yeah, because the people... yeah, when they are rude, they are rude to me. I know they don't, maybe don't, they don't mean like that, or they just think, yeah, it's a game, i can be rude to anyone who i want, but yeah, it touches me, they are to me, and, it hurts me. This is something i don't like about the game, so i'm always trying to be as good as i can, and if i do something wrong, i always, i always apologize, and everything so, i'm really trying to be nice and, like, to act to people like i want them to act to me.

Interviewer: It's like, there is this word, don't do to other what you wouldn't like them to do to you.

Interviewee: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, because, I'm just afraid of being hurt again. I cried so many times because of the game. I know it's silly because it's just a game, but yeah,

Interviewer: (not relevant)

Interviewee: Like, my male friends, they don't understand it because, if someone insults them, they are just like, one of ..

(not relevant)

Interviewee: I know girls that, you know, sometimes something happens, and i tell it to other girls, and they are like, aww, just don't take it that seriously, it's ok, like .. They wouldn't even cry for it, but yeah, i'm different, i guess, then my friends, they're ..

(not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, but i still say, i still tell to myself i should be stronger, at least for this, like, not being such a weak.

(not relevant)

Interviewee: Yeah, it's coming back because there are people who like me, like the support me, when something happens they are there for me, and yeah, they really help me a lot. For example once, yeah, i actually found out that **the czech community, they are not as good as i would want them to be**. Because they are, that many boys, they all, like kind of fell for me, and yeah, i ended up, like ... So i was dating one of them, eventually, and the other one, **he wanted me too, and i refused him, and then he started to be rude, and insulting me, and telling others that i'm a whore, and all this stuff**, like .. i don't know why, just went crazy. And now, it's, now it's like a year ago, and I, i'm not playing with those people anymore, i'm with, new community, and they are really nice to me, and one day, i came in the game and i saw that they invited the person to the legion, and i started to tell them, like people, can you kick him, or something, i don't want to be with him, he was rude to me, and they were all ok, if he says something we'll kick. And then **he started to insult me, he was telling everyone that i'm a whore, and i'm all this really really not nice stuff, so they kicked him, and they were like, ok, it's ok, it's ok, just, you know, don't take it like that. He's gone**, and yeah, they were really, really helpful.

Interviewer: Ok, that's really nice. They supported you, when you needed it, and they were there for you.

Interviewee: Yeah, like, i can say **i have really good friends there**.

Interviewer: And, previously to what you were talking, you also did improve, so no matter what kind of bad comments you received, you still pushed yourself to improve, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, i would say in the end, i was kind of, not well known, but **people knew me, and it was like, ok, i want you. because i know you are good healer**, and you know, i don't know how, but somehow people started to know me and recognize me. And they knew i'm good, i'm really good, so yeah .. i really felt flattered.

Interviewer: OK, so that's really nice.

Interviewee: yeah, I've, like, eventually in the, i don't know, six months, i came all the way from being noob to being like, super star or something. I was really, really nice.

Interviewer: OK, so would you say that has definitely made you more competitive?

Interviewee: Aham, yeah.

Interviewer: Ok, so when we talk about your personality then, so firstly you said that you are open, seeing how you play games, i'm assuming you're also very playful, right? OK,

and competitive. What else would you, you know, do you think that you put in... what traits of your personality do you put in your games as well?

Interviewee: I don't know, maybe, ughm, i have some for perfection, and ughm, compassion, and yeah. I think i'm just, i'm just **trying to take care of people** there, for example, there is the chat of all people on the server, and when some asks for help, like he's on the low level, and he cannot make some, i don't know, quest or something, i just go and help him, because i, i know, i know when i was in trouble no one liked to help me, so i just feel i should help them when i can. Because, because sometimes i have nothing to do, so i just want to help others. So maybe this is something (mumbling).

Interviewer: OK. Ughm, going back to some of the nastier experiences that you had, so you said that there was this boy who got mad when you refused him...

Interviewee: Yeah, and he was not alone actually. There were two, yeah, they were friends.

Interviewer: OK, so, but other than that, have you ever experienced anything like that?

Interviewee: No. No, i was, it was just those two guys because they were friends, and the one, he as disappointed, and then he started to, to tell people some lies about me, and then came the other one, who, yeah, he felt refused to, and, yeah, he was kind of crazy persone, because he was always changing minds, and he was, like, one day, he was great friends, and on the other day, he was talking nonsenses, and i don't know, he was really crazy. I don't have words for it. But other than this, i, i've never met such persons there.

Interviewer: Ok, so you would think, it would be, would it be for, not ok, right for me to think that this are two of the extreme cases, but not something that, it's not the norm, it's just the extreme, and something that very rarely happens.

Interviewee: yeah, **i think it happens rarely**, but i really think it's only the matter of the czech community there, because for example, when i met those guys, like my friends, they wanted me to go to their legion, and i was like, no, i'm in the greece one, and they are nice to me, i don't want to leave them, they help me a lot. And so, there were like fighting for me, because one legion want me, and the other one wanted me too, and i really didn't know what to do. So in the end i asked if i can leave the legion, and go the czech one, and eventually i ended up there, but the leader of the legion, he did not like, hang on, i'm thinking how was, like, he did not like me or something, i don't know why, he just didn't like me because i was playing with them while i was in the other legion, and they, they had this motto, like the legion members first, and i wasn't the legion member before, and i was playing with them, and they didn't like it, like, i took the stuff that should go to the legion, and, he didn't like me from the beginning, and when i answered his legion, he started to kind of hate me, i don't know why, and in the end, he kicked me and some of my friends, and just, like we were like only 6 people out of the community who were like, really kicked, and they didn't tell us, and they blocked us, and

everything, and this never happened to me in any other legion. Like I would say this is one of the problems in the czech community, because, i don't know, they are, they are greedy and envy, and all this stuff. I don't know why. I really don't understand it, but other people, other nationalities are open minded and friendly and everything.

(not relevant)

Interviewer: Maybe it depends on the game as well.

Interviewee: Yeah, maybe. Like here, the people i met were really, really great. I just, i just really think that only czech people, they are the worst one.

(not relevant)

Interview: Well i was alone with other European nationalities, it was ok, they were all friendly, great, everything. But the czech people, they are just ...

Interviewer: OK, so do you feel like it might actually be the case that when you are only with your nationality, you feel the freedom to express yourself differently? Maybe, i don't know, if there were, if there had been greeks with greeks, or, i don't know, lithuanians with lithuanians, romanians, with romanians, or do you think that maybe they would act differently then they would with other internationals?

Interviewee: Like, to me, it's the same, I would act the same with czech people and same with the rest of Europe. But, I think it's sometimes depends. If you're in the community, you belong to, and you use your language, you can, you can tell more things that in english, because sometimes, i know people who are, who don't speak english that well, or they cannot understand as good, so, if they are among their, ughm, the other people from the same country, they are kind of different, because in english they cannot express, as much as they can in czech. So maybe this can be a difference, like, they are limited, when they speak in english. But i don't think there is, there is, some difference between how you act with your friends and with others.

Interviewer: OK. Let me see. When for example you talk about your gender, is that something you feel like, whenever you're in a new group, do you think like that's something that you should tell them, or is that something that just, you know, you bring up if you are asked directly

Interviewee: Actually, I am the one who's asking because, i don't know, i'm just really curious, so when i'm with the, with the strangers, i'm always, if they are talkative, i'm asking them like, where are you from, are you a girl, and this stuff, so i want to know something about the people i'm playing with, soo ..yeah, i'm actually the one who's asking.

Interviewer: OK, so another trait of your personality, you're very curious.

Interviewee: Yeah, I can say it.

Interviewer: OK. Ughm, do you feel like there are any, OK, actually you have mentioned some upsides, about being a girl, the fact that you receive gifts, and players, you know treating you nicely, but how about downsides, do you feel like there are any?

Interviewee: Like, about being a girl?

Interviewer: Yeah, in a game.

Interviewee: Ughm, i don't know, like i said, i think this people, if they know you are a girl, they treat you well, and i don't think they really think that girls means bad player, i really think, .. in this game, actually, it means being on the same level as male players. So, i can't think of any downsides.

Interviewer: So you haven't experienced anything like that.

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Ok, that is obviously preferable. How about, you said that you are a very curious person, so maybe you also, you know, have some idea about the age of some of the players you've played with?

Interviewee: yeah.

Interviewer: Have you noticed if maybe the older ones are more mature, and, you know, in the way they play and react to you, and maybe the boys you've had problems with were a bit more younger and therefor immature .. have you noticed any kind of difference in that ..

Interviewee: Yeah, i would say you can tell from the way the, the player plays the game, if he's older or younger. because yeah, the younger players, they tend to, i don't know, be loud, and, i don't know, laugh at everything, and have comments, sometimes really inappropriate ones, and yeah, i know for example we have there, there's like, they, people call her the mom of the server, because she's, she's an old player, and she's been playing for, i don't know, 5 years, like since the game started, and she, i don't know, she's 45, or something like this, and she's, she's really nice, she ... I used to play with her, and she always comes on TS, and she talks about her cats, and about her work, and she' really really great,she's like, really literally like a mom. Because she cares about others, and yeah, she, you really can tell she's more mature than others. But on the other hand, i have friends who's one year older than me, and, yeah, because maybe he's my friend, and i know more about him, i can say he's more mature, than other people at his age. But, yeah, he's, he's the leader of my legion, and he always takes, takes care of others, and he helps other, he gives advices, he's like the, the one you come to when you have problems on everything. So i think really, it depends on

person to person. Because you can be a younger person who is mature, more mature than a someone who is older.

Interviewer: So again, it's more about their personality and how they see things, rather than their age.

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely. Like, i can say that there are people who are older, like, let's say 30-40, and they just came to game, to be like kids again, and they really act like kids, because they want to, like, feel the relief, because, i don't know, they can have hard work or something, some stressfull work, so they just play the game and they can be kids again, and act like kids, and they really like kids, so... Yeah, i really, it's, it depends on the personality and the person.

Interviewer: OK. I'm not sure how much you know about the competitive, like tournaments, and so on and so forth, different games, but do you think that when it comes to the competitive level of a game, do you think that women are put at a disadvantage, or do you think there is fair play for anyone?

Interviewee: Ughm, it what way you mean it?

Interviewer: like for example, i don't know if you've heard of stracraft, but there are for example, starcraft tournaments, or all kind of tournaments where they come, where different players come to, you know, compete. Do you think that being a woman means that you are, you know, you have certain disadvantages? Or do you think that it is just the same no matter what your gender, race, ethnicity is, so on and so forth?

Interviewee: I think it can be just an assumption, like, that men tends to think that women, that women are not as good players as they are, but, i don't think it's, that much a problem. Like, i've never, i've never faced this problem.

(not relevant)

Interviewer: If there is anything that you would like to share, and experience, a though, a feeling, or anything like that.

Interviewee: Ughm, i don't know, i think i said a lot (laughing)

(not relevant)

Interviewer: The last one is: if you were to talk to a friend, or just, a colleague, or anything like that, and she would say that she's interested in starting to play some games, and she would like to go into this world and explore it, and she's never really tried it before, what kind of advice would you give her?

Interviewee: Ughm, yeah, i would simply suggest, that not being like me, like, not, not take it as personally, just take it as a game, and not, not being hurt, or sad because of it,

because it's not real, like .. you should be sad for things that are real, not for something, what happened in the computer game. And just enjoy it.

Interviewer: So just enjoy it, that's pretty much the idea.

Interviewee: Yeah, because yeah, it's just, it's for fun. Yeah, i do play the game for having fun, having a good time with my friends, for relaxing, when i come from school and i'm tired, i just want to do something, relax, don't think, and just have fun. So yeah, i think that's why, that's what the games are for.

(not relevant)

Interview ends

Participant 9

Introducing her to the project

Interviewer: What is your age?

Interviewee: I am 26

Interviewer: What do you do for a living?

Interviewee: I am a student, and i study sociology at the University at Copenhagen and then i have a part time job about once a week in a Game Stop

Interviewer: Nationality

Interviewee: Danish

Interviewer: So which MMOs have you played?

not relevant conversation

Interviewee: Oh.. ehm.. Guild Wars 1 and 2, i have played World of Warcraft, the majority of my MMO time spent in World of Warcraft, ehbbb and i played a small game called Mythos which came i believe a few years ago.

not relevant conversation

Interviewer: How long do you think you have played MMOs for? if you like added it all together? How many years would you say?

Clarifying question furthermore

Interviewee: Let's see.. ehm... *long pause* . . About seven years in total i would think so. It been hard since there has been breaks in between for about 4 years, but it has been as you can tell a part of my life previously.

Non relevant talk about that it is normal to take breaks in MMORPGs

Interviewee: My longest period was World of Warcraft period, which was from ehbb... from danish high school, from that and until 1st / 2nd semester on the university. So yeah thats me, i guess that is the longest period. where i didn't have a break.

Interviewer: So, when you look back and think about, Why did you start playing back then?

What was.... What attracted you to the genre? if you can recall.

Interviewee: It was the eh.... at first it was the role playing element, i have other interest in role playing as LARP. Live action Role Playing.. and my friends in that community played these games, and then we had.... we played on a.. in World of Warcraft, i don't know if it still exists, but back then there was these ehbbb very dungeon raid focused servers, the more combined normal servers, and then the Role Playing servers, and we were on one of these role playing servers. And acted as well as one could as characters in a imaginary world eh.. more a less *mumble* spend around the game set world... if you can say so.

Interviewer: So just for the record, when you play on a roleplaying server, you have to stay in character and act like the person you play

Interviewee: yeah, or at least don't spoil the role play experience for other people, so you can stay silent, but don't scream "Justin Bieber" in the middle of the server. And that was what attracted me, and of course the social aspect. I think that... I've been jumping on and off these Role Play games ehhrm... primary because eh.. because of that, at some point there was people that i know... face to face in real life that i knew played and i played with them, and then its been down and people got other interest and and so on and so on... and then i did quit as well. Because it wasn't that interesting... sorry that was a bit off topic.. ehbb..

Interviewer: To sum up, its mainly that you start playing because you have some friends, and then if they move to a different game you would follow them or stop if they stopped?

Interviewee: Sometimes i would just stop, its not that i would always, move with them to another game, i have not been ehbb... i am a poor gamer in the sense that i am not that open to that many genres so if they start playing starcraft i haven't followed them into starcraft i have been okay.. They are not available for my MMO experience then i don't maintain it.. eh.. but yeah of course i made contacts which are ehrrm.. solely through the game but it has always been in connection with my ehbb... relations to real life contacts, if you can say so. It has always been.... i have my real life friends in the guild, and then there are some nice people that which we don't know face to face in the guild as well and then we all kinda talk in the guild chat, and so on..

Interviewer: So you socialize with all of them?

Interviewee: yeah, yeah in guild i have.. very very very little outside guild, ehbb its just you know being polite "thank you because you helped me with this quest, or whatever you know... Over the years World of Warcraft.. ehrrm.. became more and more possible to play without knowing people.. ehrrm with all these...

Explaining the "queuing up with randoms system". Not relevant..

Interviewee: So i socialize a little bit within the guild, and a little bit outside, but that was mostly just being polite, if you can say that.

Interviewer: When you were playing eh, what role did you like to play and what characters did you like to play?

Elaborating

Interviewee: Primary either eh... DPS role damage dealer, or eh... later on the healer. Erhm.. First the damage part because i don't know, of course everybody has their responsibility in a guild in a raid and such but *laughing* if the tank doesn't wait the rest have to keep up with him.. So it is not... there is ... the amount of responsible isn't balanced.. eh... the DPS has maybe some responsibility as a group, as a tank has as individual, if you can say so and *mumbling* Later on it was the Healing, and of course that is responsibility as an individual, but in a more "soft" way... i don't know how to describe it but it is just ... it is more soft than the tank role..and don't know.. maybe... i don't know.. if it classical for girls to like the healing? it was just more appealing.

Talking a bit about other participants answers so far.

Interviewer: So what is your experience when you interact with other players, if you have any like negative or positive experiences?

Interviewee: In regards to what?

Interviewer: lets say when your being approached eh.. in chat, or if you approach someone yeah... it could be an eh... if you're forming a party or they were looking for a player or maybe just talking with people in guild.. How are these players behaving?

Interviewee: I would say in general, and of course... * laughing * i am searching my mind for experiences because it is a while back, but as i remembered it, the more you knew people or the more time you spend together like in a guild, eh the less goal oriented was the talk as well, it could be you know about, shitty weather in England or eh.. i like this.. or .. How are you today, and small talk and stuff.. But if.. and and of course with my real life friends that as well even more maybe. * mumbling * But when i talked to people i didn't know like random people in dungeons and stuff... i was always... i mean people was mostly polite, but goal oriented it was like "you do that" "you do that", "I do this"... the purpose for the relation was the center of the conversation..

not relevant...

Interviewee: The more time i invested in the game, yes the more connections i would grow.. not always quantity, sometimes just the same people but but.. deeper understanding.. ehhrm... and the random people.. the interaction with those didnt change, in in... no matter how much i played because we still... like... "i am a player, you are a player", "how can we make use of each other in this situation, like a dungeon or a raid or something like that.. And again, thats... and and i think.. drawing a little perspective to the outside world ehhrm.. you don't just walk up to a complete stranger or how are you? if you walk up the stranger, maybe the one behind the counter of a shop, ehhr.. what you're buying or want from that person is the center of the conversation.. it is like you are this person, you sell.. maybe you will sell me a cd and then thats what i am asking about, not asking about the person's personal life or something like that..

Interviewer: So, What do you think about interacting with people online as opposed to people in real life? like what are the differences to you, or is there any?

Interviewee: I should warn you, that i study sociology and my thesis my my field of interest is media sociology... So i do have opinions about that matter *laughing* i am sorry.

Interviewer: Well please share, you're the last participant

Longer Random talk..

Interviewee: The fact that you don't see or maybe even know the person thoroughly and vice versa, can be as liberating as ehhr.. what is it called.. liberating as limiting actually because you can be yourself but, on the other hand, when it comes down to it, you and the one you have been talking too on the internet.. or let me rephrase that... When you're talking to people on the internet that you don't know outside the context of eg. a guild or something like that it can be liberating because you have some kind of control of what, they know about you, what you say and what you do.....

You can easily control how much you share, because you do... they can't see you, they don't know who you are and and the social context...unless you let that on of course.. But at the same time, because your actually being ehhrh.... just a part of what you are in real life and they too, its hard to make a connection..

its like.. its like if your only your opinions and your voice in small bits of time, on small bits of matters, in a context very focused on mutual views of each other, erhm.. you get to know parts of a person really well, but if you get to know the person well that is the question then?

Interviewer: So what about the people in your guild or that you spend more time with?

Interviewee: hmm.. i.. i got a feeling of them, and that was when.. it became closer to i don't know friends, but real life connection the more we knew about real life. i have an example; i had a boyfriend back in high school or the gymnasium, and we played this game together with a group of friends the one that i referred to earlier... erhmm.. I

actually had both him and another boyfriend before that both playing the game..
mumbling

anyways, erhm.. and what was it... sorry..

We both talked to an older couple, i believe we were in our early twenties and they were in their 40's and they were from England and we talking to them, and talked about our personal lives and erhmm... and created a relation and and ended up sharing an address so.. our home address so at one point when the older couple traveled ehheh on vacation we got an old fashioned postcard from them.. That was a form of social action you would expect for a more traditional real life relationship. And we haven't talked to them since and it was very sad because we broke up.. my last boyfriend..

Not relevant..

Interviewer: Do you believe can have meaningful connections through MMORPGs?

Interviewee: oh yeah, i do believe, and then again they may be.. not that there is a recipe for the amount of personal information that you share and then when is it a real relationship and when is it not real relation.. i am not that square *laughing* ehheh but, again.. if .. if they have logged a lot of hours and shared a lot of information with each other about themselves outside the context of the game, i would think it was a very meaningful ehheh relation..

The fact that i didn't get to that point was that for me, the.. the... solely the world of warcraft relations were always an extension of my "Me" and my real life friends playing World of Warcraft relation. if you get what i mean, it was always, a ... just a supplement if you can say so. ehheh.. i don't know if it is a danish way of saying it, but....

Interviewer: So you never found any new connections through MMOs or are there still someone you write to or? something like that?

Interviewee: I have lost contact with those.. erhm... i can't say ehheh.. there was one time, when i had.. they weren't close and they were not that ... it was close to me quitting WoW because it took my time and energy actually... but i had... i had this episode that ehheh,, the boyfriend who ... we decided to split up and we were... and we had mutual friends and he was in a guild, and i wanted to be in the guild as well because of our mutual real life friends and we decided ehheh.. more or less that.. us not being together... we didn't ask each other to choose, who to socialize with..."okay we are not together but we have mutual friends and lets not give up any relationships with our mutual friends, because we are not together anymore.. So i wanted to be in the guild as well, not because of him.. he could be there of course i didn't mind, but because of our mutual friends. But actually one day over night, when i don't know who said it, or how it was even a problem, but the guild master out of fear of a "post relationship" drama, he.. he.. ehheh... kicked me without my consent.

not relevant...

Interviewee: So i found a new guild totally independent from real life friends and all the others, and there, there was some beginnings of relation formation if you can say so, unrelated to my real life, ehm...but i don't remember much, but i remember being some... but then again it was at that time WoW became more and more easily to access as a single player you know with the random tool, and we can put you in a dungeon without you having to know five people and participate as a group. I think because of the game mechanics it wasn't really necessary for me too.. to get the bonding on... *mumbling*

Not relevant, her perspective on creating relationships from her perspective as a Sociologist time stamp: 36 mins in. to 40 mins in.

Interviewer: Do you think there are any cultural or language barriers in these MMOs, when it comes to Socializing?

Interviewee: Yes and No, sorry i can't give a straight answer. If you're really bad at English, you have some difficulties but then again, with the chat, and the chat language which is in a way its own language or foreign dialect of English, if you learn that, either if you can't write Oxford english but you can type; you with a "u" and are with a "r", you can connect as well, as any professor at Oxford. ehhe... So it is something like understanding the basics of English but mostly ehhe... its not learning the chat, then at least understanding the chat language, so your not staring at the screen when there is only a "u" and only a "r" then... what the... *mumbling...

asking to Elaborate more on culture aspect of it.

Interviewer: What about the cultural aspects of it?

Interviewee: What do you mean?

Interviewer: The fact that there are some coming from Romania, other from Scandinavian region other from the Czech republic so on and so forth? Do you think all these Cultural background are felt in online gaming, do you think it influences in any way, the way communication takes place?

Interviewee: Yeah it does, because people have certain associations about you, when they hear that you come from a specific country.. When i tell people i am from Denmark, they say "oh, you have nice bacon and those twirling things in the middle of building".. the windmills.. that is the main things that i was always met with. it was the bacon and the windmills, and it had squat to do with me as a person. *laughing* nothing at all but that was like, you're a Dane, you have something about bacon and windmill.. And from a... that was a funny episode... in a raid with a guild.. our guild master it was high British, i can sound a little posh now i know, but he was British to the toes.. So he.. I had to turn off my mic. to not be rude... he was like...

she gives the example referring to Monty Python movie

It was english but it was with the cultural aspect as well, of course you can't all respond over that, it is not always possible to hear each other this was Ventrilo i think, like a skype like program so i could hear how he sounded like, but mostly you.. you only see English or the chat English or sometimes just poor English depending on age, and where people come from education and .. and such..

I always played on the European servers, not on the American servers so yeah..

Not relevant talk about why she picked that server, which was cause of no specific reason....

Interviewer 2: First of all can you please tell us a bit about your personality?

Interviewee: In regards to what?

Interviewer: Do you think you're a bit more competitive? or do you just prefer to take the playful part of games? are you more of an extrovert or an introvert?

Interviewee: hmmm...

Interviewer: What we basically want to know is if you behave any differently in real life as opposed to in game?

Interviewee: I don't think so, and that's a two edged sword, because i remember, i am a perfectionist i like to do things right, and if i, if i am bad or something at the game, it bugs me as well, even though it isn't serious or anything that people would expect me to care about that much. It wasn't maybe shown in the game, but i remember talking to my boyfriend that the time, "uh i can't do this" and he was like "relax, it is a game". So eh... i .. i .. try to be polite all the time, and that kind of person hopefully shines through the game, even though i don't eh... because of the more vague connection between me and especially people i didn't know IRL, i couldn't be as friendly or polite as caring towards them as in compared to my in real life friends. But i was always kind polite, and eh... and and i wouldn't say that.... you hear those stories about people, you know just.... eh... because there is no or very little consequence when you're rude to somebody online, then people sometimes are more rude, than in real life because they can't as easily knock on your door and say "what?" "why did you talk to me like that?" eh... its an old theme, if you know this... But i didn't.. I have never been rude to people like that, i have always been or tried to be as i am in real life of course with a less eh... full relation.. I didn't share as much, but there was nothing that i... How should i describe it.... If if you take the word kind or polite, maybe i am on a scale from 1 to 10, i am like 8 towards my real life friends, and 5 towards people that i didn't know, but it never checked in the rude part, just on a smaller scale. If you know what i mean..

Interviewer: So basically you wouldn't become someone else. Some have those urges to eh... you know be a little sassy or you know someone else, just to get that out of the system, or something like that.

Interviewee: No no, i wouldn't say so, i try to be the same person in real life as in game.

not relevant...

Interviewer: So do you think being a girl as played any role in how others treat you, if they knew you were a girl? Maybe you have noticed any kind of differences, like someone talking to you in a certain tone, before finding out that you are a girl, and afterwards started to behave differently?

Interviewee: I remember sharing a picture of my self on a guild forum, ehm.. when someone mentioned that they thought i looked good and it was nice, but i didn't eh... i just said thank you and then moved on.. i didn't follow up on that or anything because it was just... it was a thread where people could show how they looked in real life, you know to get the feeling of each other. And i remember at one time i talked to as it appeared a younger boy, i don't... i think he was around 12, or something like that when i was around 23 or something like that, 21 or 23. He thought at first, that i was a boy because i was very serious because at his age he was used to that the boys were more straightforward and you know not that giggling and girls were more giggling.. But but he thought that i was a boy, and then "ohhh you're not a boy", "then you must be an adult" *laughing*. But me being a girl and serious at the same time then he understood "okay", maybe he could look around other adults in his life and "okay" they get more serious when they grow up, eh... even as girl..

So yeah that was funny i didn't think about that.. At first yeah of course girls in his age aren't as mature as i showed.

I didn't know his age either, he was just player A and i was player B in in some situation you know.. eh... yeah..

Interviewer: So no one has ever bought you gifts or something, or flirting with you, or help you get this mount just because your a girl, or something like that?

Interviewee: hmmm, People have helped me in guild and such, if it has been because i am a girl or it was because i was only a little bit behind everybody else *laughing* i don't know. Eh... i was never... i liked to be, but i was never a pro player.. I was just you know medium at raiding and medium at that and really slow leveler and you know everything. I needed a little boost once in awhile, that was a combination of real life friends and people that we didn't know in real life from the guild, and and... they helped, but i think it... that it should be due to my gender? that thought hadn't occurred to me. I thought it was more because i was a bit behind and needed a push and help sometimes to.. i don't know .. to be able to include me in raids and such. I remember one time when i was really low level i logged on and say "Oh get over here, it is the guilds birthday, and we are going to choose a guild event" so everyone could participate.. and they would say "go back! go back!, and smash" and then i was dead, because the boss had taken me, i just stormed into the Cave".. I think i was more like the little one in the guild, than the girl in the guild. if you can say such..

Interviewer: Have you always been upfront with being a female player?

Interviewee: I don't recall any questions about it, but no.. i have never said "that i wasn't a girl, and i have always played female characters, then again a lot of guys play female characters. Maybe because they are prettier to look from behind, i don't know.... *laughing* i have heard that excuse before anyway, from my male friends.

Not relevant.....

Interviewer: So do you think there is any upsides and downsides to being a female gamer? lets say in general, if you have any opinion on that?

Interviewee: I actually just heard and it is hilarious that in eSports they have female teams and male teams, because women should according to their adjustment grab and hold the mouse differently than men, and that should be the argument for having separate teams.

not relevant.... talking about psychical sports. ..

Interviewer: So do you think that women are put in a disadvantage, when they try to fit in competitively?

Interviewee: I think there is still some stereotypes about women, not fitting into the game when it comes to hardcore gaming and in that sense eSports. I don't know much about eSports, it is sad to admit, i should. anyway.. but yeah.. it is my understanding that it is primary a male dominated sport. On the more casual gaming side, i think it is becoming more even, statistic shows that women hold *mumbling* has grown... There are a lot of women, but then again if you exclude these social casual games, then it is still the men, because then you have the "Call of Duty" games, and the eSport games and so on.. and again my personal experience... I wouldn't say it is the opposite of these society erhm... i don't know. what i just said..ehm.. but being a female gamer ehm... connects you with other female gamer, a new people as well from *mumbling" and and... school and such and connected with them in real life. I was maybe.. being a part of the minority maybe feel like "not a minority"... if you get me.. its like "if you stand in the little group, and that's your world, then it doesn't seem little to you, it is only little if you stand outside of it, in a way.

not relevant talk about boys and competitive gaming level.

Not relevant talking about female gaming teams and why they form..

Interviewer: have you ever been harassed in the game because of your gender?

Interviewee: I don't know maybe as i mentioned before, the guild master kicked me because i was a girl, or maybe same thing would have happened to my boyfriend if he

was the one joining later, i don't know that. He was there first i wanted to join and was then kicked because he was like the is oh my god they are two, and they were together and now we gonna have this guild drama in the guild, so i don't know it it was... i think i recalled it now, it was because he was there first, so they thought it was most fair to kick me. Than to just kick us both.

Not relevant discussion about being a guild master.

Interviewer: So lets say for instance that you have a friend outside the gaming community or a colleague or whatever, and she starts discussion with you the idea of maybe starting playing games and that she started to get interested in this genre. What would you recommend her, what advice would you have for her?

Interviewee: She or he ?

Interviewer: only a she.

Interviewee: She would come to me and say "hi, i am thinking of playing MMOs, but what do you think?"

Interviewer: yeah exactly

Interviewee: eh... oh... I said before i work with games as well i sell games and i have been.. i have had an internship at game reactor as well, so i .. have so many games in my life *laughing* So i would answer her both personally but also i think i would switch to i don't know "service mode" in in .. some way...

not relevant...about her passion about games being higher than her boyfriend.

Asked to elaborate more on the question.

Interviewee: Sometimes people are jerks because there is no real consequence when people are rude, and then they can just log of and then that's that. So sometimes people will be jerks, and then let them be jerks, don't... *mumble* you can make a report ticket to the guildmasters and report them and say "This person is a real jerk, can you please ban him from the game" because he is bothering my game experience.. But other than that, let fools be fools and jerks be jerks, because hey this is something that you do in your spare time and for your own money and and... don't let it... you share it with other people, but don't let other people determine your experience.