

An investigation into the virtual self, purchase
behaviour and simulated gambling in video games.



A thesis submitted for the degree of Masters By Research
(MbR)

by

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Declaration

Candidate's declarations:

I, Cecilia Bayne, hereby certify that this thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Masters by Research (MbR), Abertay University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This work has not been submitted for any other qualification at any other academic institution.

Signed....Cecilia Bayne.....

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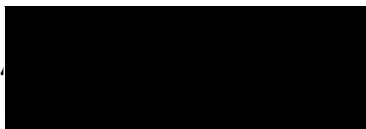
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Abstract

Simulated gambling has been observed in over 100 video games as early as in 2012 (King, Delfabbro, Derevensky & Griffiths, 2012), however, the implications of participating in this activity are poorly understood. In the first part of this study, 10 participants were interviewed to investigate the influence of the virtual self in video games on spending habits and risk-taking behaviour in-game. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using interpretive phenomenological analysis. No influence of the virtual self on spending behaviour or interaction with simulated gambling was found. In the second part of this study, 52 participants (25 non-gamers, 27 gamers) were invited to complete an online card gambling task and a personality questionnaire that measured risk-taking behaviour. It was hypothesised that regular gamers would turn over more cards and therefore take more risks than non-gamers. This hypothesis was not supported, non-gamers turned over significantly more cards than gamers. Implications for future research are discussed.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Micro-transactions and simulated gambling.....	1
1.2. The virtual world	9
1.3. Theoretical framework	14
1.4. Methodological approaches	15
1.5. The current study.....	21
1.5.1 Guild Wars 2	21
1.5.2 Research design and hypotheses	22
2. Study 1.....	25
2.1. Method.....	25
2.2. Ethical Considerations	27
3. Results.....	27
4. Discussion	34
4.1. Limitations and future research.....	38
5. Study 2.....	39
5.1. Outline of study 2.....	39
5.2. Method.....	39
5.3. Power analysis.....	41
5.4. Ethical Considerations	42
6. Results.....	43
7. Discussion	56
7.1. Limitations and future research.....	60

8. General Discussion.....	62
References	64
Appendices.....	71

List of Figures

Figure 1. CCT hot version interface	17
Figure 2. Hyperbolic discounting equation	19
Figure 3. Delay discounting example	20
Figure 4. Mean number of cards turned during a rigged win and participant type.....	43
Figure 5. Mean number of cards turned over after a rigged loss and participant type.....	44
Figure 6. Participant delay discounting scores and participant type.....	45
Figure 7. Delay discounting value and the difference in cards turned over between win and loss conditions in the CCT	46
Figure 8. Mean scores for BAS drive, BAS fun seeking, BAS reward responsiveness, BIS and participant type with 95% confidence intervals	47
Figure 9. Mean number of cards turned during a rigged win, age and gender with 95% confidence intervals.....	48
Figure 10. Average number of hours spent on playing video games per week and the number of cards turned over during a rigged win	49
Figure 11. Average number of hours spent on playing video games per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged loss	50
Figure 12. Average number of minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over during a rigged win	51
Figure 13. Average number of minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged loss.....	52
Figure 14. BAS drive scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win	53
Figure 15. BAS fun-seeking scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win	54
Figure 16. BAS reward responsiveness scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win	55
Figure 17. Showing the difference in cards turned over in rigged win and rigged loss conditions.	252

List of Tables

Table 1. Overview of categories.....	29
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1. Introduction

1.1. Micro-transactions and simulated gambling

During 2018 and 2019, the global debate surrounding fiscal models in video games has received great amounts of attention in the media (Macey & Hamari, 2019). Micro-transactions and simulated gambling in video games have become more prominent and easily accessible to consumers and were observed in over 100 video games as early as in 2012 (King, Delfabbro, Derevensky & Griffiths, 2012). A micro-transaction is a virtual purchase made with real currency, for example, in a video game there may exist a function to convert a specified amount of British Pounds to in-game currency, such as gold, gems or a similar trading currency to purchase additional features or cosmetic upgrades for the player account. This can allow additional avatars to be created and customised with exclusive upgrades on the account in question. This business model permits the developing company to continue to earn revenue post game release and is currently the most widely used business model in the video game industry (Davidovici-Nora, 2014). When micro-transactions are the major or sole source of income in games that are otherwise free to play, it is logical that companies design their game around them to increase the appeal to spend money on their product.

Simulated gambling has historically been defined as a digitally simulated gambling experience that often resemble features of real gambling but does not require real monetary investment, such as the Euro or the US dollar, for the player to partake (Griffiths, 2003). Generally, for a game to be considered a gambling game, it should involve monetary investment and the chance to receive a reward, which, according to a recent review, should be monetary in nature in

order to be classified as real gambling (Nielsen & Grabarczyk, 2018). A loot box or a loot crate is a virtual item that is usually purchased through micro-transactions and subscribe to a randomised reward system. A loot crate may contain cosmetic upgrades in the video game (skins) or other items that enhances the account in some aspect, however, the desirability of the items that the player has a possibility of obtaining varies, from very common, undesirable items to very uncommon, exclusive items that are sought-after in the video game community. The more exclusive items can sometimes be sold in the game, or outside the game for either in-game currency or real currency, depending on the specific video game mechanics. In short, the odds (drop rates) of the items in these loot boxes are not known in most Western countries, therefore, it is unclear to the buyer what the chances are of receiving the desired, rarer item from the purchased box. It has been argued that the term loot box is not sufficiently precise, and instead suggested that the term random reward mechanism (RRM) should be utilised by scholars (Nielsen & Grabarczyk, 2018), however, it is possible that different RMMs elicit different psychological responses, therefore, it is not yet determined whether the proposed terminology will alleviate scholarly confusion.

It is largely because of these random reward mechanisms that the concern for simulated gambling elements in video games has been raised in earnest over the last year. Nielsen and Grabarczyk (2018) identified simulated gambling as either embedded or isolated, depending on whether the currency earned through simulated gambling was virtual or could be converted to real currency, for example, through selling rare skins in a real marketplace online. However, this definition does not fully account for the influence of the underlying mechanisms

of the simulated gambling activity on the individual, but rather focuses on the outcome of the activity at that point in time and whether said outcome involves the possibility of financial gain. This is a potential oversight when considering the influence of simulated gambling mechanics, as despite the lack of monetary rewards available upon success, extensive literature draws conclusions around how the simulated gambling and the random reward mechanisms found in games may familiarise or desensitise players to gambling mechanics (Dussault et al., 2017; Gainsbury, Hing, Delfabbro, Dewar & King, 2015; King, Delfabbro, Kaptsis & Zwaans, 2014), and has further been suggested to correlate with migration to other gambling platforms (King et al., 2012).

The video game industry came under recent scrutiny of business practices in 2017 (Gerken, 2018), due to the widely employed system of loot boxes that is implemented in several games developed by well-established companies. Furthermore, simulated gambling received attention in new gambling legislation in several European countries in 2018, as a result of this, in-game stores that allow for currency conversation have been disabled to users in affected countries (Gerken, 2018). Currently, the increased accessibility of virtual entertainment and the opportunity to successfully market the video game industry to a wider public has allowed for an increased player base, as it is estimated that 135 million people worldwide play at least one hour of a chosen video game per day, with an additional estimation of the global game audience to consist of 2.2-2.6 billion people in 2017 (Davidovici-Nora, 2014). Because of this fast-paced development, psychological research has struggled to keep up with advances in the video game industry. Simulated gambling is particularly difficult for researchers to investigate due to the large variation of activities across platforms, and due to the rapid

expansion of digital content available to minors. It is important to note that social casino games vary greatly from video games, and in particular massively multiplayer online video games (MMOS) and massively multiplayer online role-playing video games (MMORPGS), where the player customises an avatar and experiences an often large and elaborate game world where social bonds and avatar attachment is formed (Van Looy, Courtois, De Vocht & De Marez, 2012), sometimes over many years where the player is invested weekly, or even daily in the game and its activities. The Interactive Games and Entertainment Association; an organisation that serves a spokesperson for the industry, supports the implementation of loot boxes in video games, and compares them to collecting football cards or kinder surprises, and puts emphasis on the “surprise and delight” element of these sort of items (The Interactive Games and Entertainment Association, 2018).

Much research has been conducted on online gambling habits among youth and young adults, King et al. (2014) found that 31% of Australian high school students had engaged with simulated gambling at least once, and 25% reported that they primarily engaged with simulated gambling games in video games, compared to 6.3% who reported their primary engagement to be with simulated gambling apps. Considering that types of gambling activities in video games were not investigated in this piece of research through qualitative measures, it is possible that participants did not accurately gauge what may and may not be classified as a gambling game within a video game, as researchers and industry professionals are still debating this topic four years later. Therefore, the true number may be even greater than reported by King et al. (2014) and may have increased considerably as the business model grew and

gained sophistication in implementation worldwide, particularly through streamlined online pay models like PayPal and saved credit card details.

Gainsbury et al. (2015) demonstrated that there is a subset of social casino gamers who report that they engage in gambling as a result of social casino games, predominantly motivated by the prospect of winning money and to experience more excitement. It was further suggested that players may possess irrational beliefs regarding the association between simulated and monetary gambling because of the perception of increased gambling skill after practicing in simulated games. However, the majority of social casino players did not engage in monetary gambling because of previous exposure to simulated gambling. This highlights the importance of individual differences in decision-making, reward sensitivity and susceptibility to gambling mechanics. Recent research that investigated micro-transaction purchase motivators for social casino games online concluded that players who engaged in micro-transactions reported higher levels of impulsivity, reward sensitivity and problem gambling severity (Kim, Hollingshead & Wohl, 2017). However, research has so far been unable to provide causal evidence for loot boxes promoting pathological gambling symptoms in players, although many correlations have been suggested (Armstrong, Rockloff, Browne & Li, 2018). Therefore, it is not yet clear whether people who are prone to gambling also play video games and purchase many loot boxes, or whether simulated gambling in video games cultivates a gambling problem. There is further a need for scholars to explore the tendency of video game players to purchase micro-transactions to accumulate more in-game currency to be used for gambling elsewhere in the video game, purely to gamble with increased sums of currency to experience a greater rush (Bayne, 2018).

Furthermore, people who are highly invested into their free to play game spend more time playing and purchase more micro-transactions (Gainsbury et al. 2015; King, Russell, Gainsbury, Delfabbro & Hing, 2016), which is supported by previous findings (Lovell, 2011) (as cited by Davidovici-Nora, 2014). A review on how simulated gambling may promote real gambling conducted by Armstrong, Rockloff, Browne and Li (2018) concluded that young people are highly exposed to simulated gambling elements and that those who engage in this activity are more prone to monetary gambling and gambling problems. There is further a significantly increased risk of migrating to gambling with real currency if previously exposed to simulated gambling (Armstrong, Rockloff, Browne & Li, 2018), importantly, virtual currency, in-game events and gambling themed content appear to desensitise consumers to financial losses and promote gambling biases. These findings are further supported by a longitudinal study into adolescent gambling where it was reported that there were increased risks of engaging in gambling behaviours if previously exposed to simulated gambling (Dussault et al., 2017). Earlier work by King, Ejova and Delfabbro (2012) supports this argument, video game play, inaccurate gambling cognitions and risky gambling behaviour were investigated. Whilst video game play was not significantly associated with gambling involvement or problem gambling, video game play was positively associated with perceived control over chance-based gambling elements in participants who both gambled and played video games. An additional risk with simulated gambling in video games is the combination of skill in fast-paced gameplay and chance-based nature of the gambling, as concerns have been raised over how this combination may create false expectations about the player control involved in gambling activities. For

example, players may wrongly assume that with enough practice, they can overcome the challenges the gambling poses and master it (Griffiths, King & Delfabbro, 2012). This indicates that these individuals do not possess an accurate estimation of their personal control over gambling outcomes, or the risks associated with this activity. Because of this, player perception of the chance of being successful in simulated gambling may be greatly distorted due to their previous experiences in the video game, and may cause individuals to overestimate their winning chances and chase losses to make up for an unlucky streak.

It has also been noted that whether the player wins or loses in a gambling venture is irrelevant for the development of unhealthy gambling patterns in games (Larche, Musielak & Dixon, 2017). It was demonstrated that near misses are psychologically and physiologically arousing and appear to invigorate urges to play despite frustrating outcomes. By measuring player heart rate, skin conductance level, subjective arousal, frustration and urge to play when playing Candy Crush, it was found that near misses where participants just missed out on levelling up were more frustrating than clear losses, and the urge to continue playing was stronger when near misses were experienced than when wins or clear misses occurred (Larche, Musielak & Dixon, 2017). Additionally, the physiological arousal peaked in near-miss situations, as both heart rate and subjective arousal increased. Near miss outcomes play a role in player commitment to the game and may contribute to players engaging in the game longer than intended.

The responses to near miss situations illustrate how pervasive simulated gambling in video games may be in encouraging future participation, particularly

as randomised reward tables in loot crates and simulated gambling activities often contain a range of common, semi-rare and very rare items or amounts of currency. It could be speculated that receiving a semi-rare item or moderate gain of currency could spur the player into trying again for a rarer item or more currency. Furthermore, near miss outcomes in gambling have been associated with the development of disordered gambling. Real gambling on slot machines was investigated using heart rate monitoring and electrodermal activity, perceived personal control was also manipulated, and it was found that in trials involving a personal choice of gambling icons, near misses produced the highest ratings of urges to continue to play than clear misses (Clark, Crooks, Clarke, Aitken & Dunn, 2012). Winning and near misses both increased heart rate and electrodermal activity, with near misses producing the highest heart rates, despite near misses objectively being classed as a loss. It was concluded that near misses can create changes in physiological arousal through the subjective excitement of the player. This could indicate that the differences in simulated and real gambling are minimal in terms of the physiological arousal the activities evoke, which may make the implications of simulated gambling in video games more serious due to the poor age restrictions implemented.

A substantial focus of gambling-like mechanics tied to microtransactions in games is centred on mass market games aimed at younger, casual, or mainstream audiences, from Fortnite and Battlefield in the action shooter genre, to FIFA in sports, or the excess of casual mobile games that utilise free to play/pay to win business models. Nevertheless, for this study an MMORPG has been chosen as the game to undertake investigations into. MMORPGS are recognised to inspire much longer periods of play than other types of games,

more social involvement with the game community, virtual identity crafting and a prolonged relationship with the game world (Smahel, Blinka & Ledabyl, 2008), therefore, it adequately fulfils the criteria for the aim of this study; namely to measure the prolonged involvement with a video game containing gambling mechanics on gambling behaviour. To investigate a game in the shooter or mobile genre would create difficulties around controlling for the type of video game environment the participant engages with, as players of these genres often switch between titles and are engaged in multiple games on a weekly basis. Therefore, it would be difficult to understand what particular game that may cause a potential effect in measuring gambling behaviour. Invested MMORPG players spend more time in their chosen game, which means these players have less time to involve themselves in other games and genres (Nagygyörgy, et al. 2013). Furthermore, the MMORPG audience tends to be slightly older than the shooter/sports genre audience, which is ideal as the scope for the current study is to test for potential effects in adults. Additionally, the media response to the matter of loot boxes and gambling in video games have primarily been focused on the shooter/mobile games genre, although the free to play business model has since long been implemented in the MMORPG genre, along with loot boxes and gambling mechanics, and in many cases completely replaced the previously common subscription based model (Davidovici-Nora, 2014). Therefore, it is important to scrutinise this genre to better understand the various influences a MMORPG player encounter in their chosen game environment.

1.2. The virtual world

Loot boxes and other gambling-like mechanisms in mainstream AAA and casual mobile titles are often well understood as they exist in the front end or point of

payment, however, virtual world games can integrate many layers of gambling into the fabric of the world itself, through underlying drop rates of desired items and the in-game marketplace itself. Therefore, players may not knowingly engage in gambling mechanics and activities with a variable reinforcement scheme, which may have underlying cognitive effects through the anticipation of a reward. Because of this, players may not be aware of any potential risks or behavioural changes as a result of the gambling activities. Video game players do not solely engage in the video game for the gambling activity, rather, they engage in a network of activities with acquaintances and closely knitted social groups. Importantly, the experiences in the game have meaning to the player, they invest time and energy into the game world for a wide range of reasons and personal motivations, such as escapism or creative outlet (Nagy & Koles, 2016). Thus, if game currency is used to participate in simulated gambling and the in-game currency has a perceived value to the player, the likely loss of the venture could be experienced as profound and shape the individual's self-perception and alter mood. It should further be noted that loot boxes are rarely the only random reward mechanism present in a video game, in MMOS and MMORPGS there may also exist in-game casinos, random item generators, casino merchants and other seasonal rewards that work similarly to loot boxes.

The video game is also likely to have an implemented marketplace, where players can trade items and materials with each other and earn large amounts of in-game currency by "playing the stock market". This is achieved by buying large amounts of materials and manipulating the sell and buy price of said materials in the game until profit is generated. The risk element here is that players do not necessarily possess knowledge about what items will become

sought after by the community in the next game patch, where new items that require assembly through in-game materials are released. Therefore, the pre-emptive purchase of these materials is a gamble. It has also been widely speculated in the video game communities that players are matched with each other in play instances in the video game based on the level and prestige associated with their armour and weapons, so that the player will be more exposed to people of a higher, more desired ranking to feel socially motivated to achieve these cosmetic upgrades in the game, be it through micro-transactions or through extensive gameplay (Cleghorn & Griffiths, 2015). The latter has been observed to increase monetary investment in the game, and, therefore, increase the chance of the player feeling motivated enough to obtain the item to engage in micro-transactions to afford it, which could be part of the developer strategy to enhance profits (Kim et al., 2017).

Several similar strategies to encourage micro-transactions exist, amongst them are time limited discounts on store items in-game with real time countdowns to introduce a sense of urgency, rotating available cosmetic items and only keeping them available for a limited time to increase the exclusivity of the items, value packages that contain a number of items but usually demand high prices, and opaque conversion rates between real and in-game currency to avoid players working out the real value of money spent. The in-game currency serves as a layer between the user and the purchase, and that layer makes it more difficult for players to assess the value of the currency, particularly in situations where impulse purchases are tempting (Davidovici-Nora, 2014). There is added complexity to this situation through the uneven exchange rate, as it may cost £8.50 to buy 400 gems, and the player has to

spend 160 gems to unlock an upgrade, it is then likely that the player does not immediately know what amount of money has been spent on that item. Loot boxes usually operate on variable rate reinforcement (Castillo, 2019), which means that the outcome is unpredictable in a similar way to how slot machines are programmed. Loot boxes further come with a variety of visual and auditory feedback upon opening, which serves to excite the player and build expectation. The interest for opening loot boxes in video games is widespread, as there exist numerous videos uploaded on YouTube where the sole content is a player opening various loot boxes, the most popular of these videos have millions of views (Overwatch Moments – Gaming Curios, 2017). People who gamble frequently are at risk of developing addictive gambling behaviour, which tends to display itself after a period of controlled gambling (Volberg, 1994).

Pathological gambling has a range of consequences for the individual, which is characterised by a loss of control over the behaviour, withdrawal symptoms from not engaging in the gambling activity and increased tolerance, which is normally displayed through a need to gamble with greater amounts of currency to experience excitement. The social consequences of maladaptive gambling include disruption in familial and professional relationships that may create dysfunction through financial pressure and inability to adhere to daily duties and work commitments. For these reasons, it is important to investigate the content available to consumers in a virtual space.

For over two decades, the desire to transcend reality through the medium of video games have spurred people to leave the physical body behind in exchange for a virtual body (Murphy, 2004). The virtual body often takes the shape of a customisable avatar, which exists in a realm that frequently exceeds

what is offered in the real world. For example, when the player's identity is masked behind an avatar, social realities and inequalities regarding class, gender or race become irrelevant (Smyth, 2007). Individuals may adopt and develop a virtual identity and a virtual concept of self when engaged in a video game, and there are reports of players perceiving the social world in-game as more important than relationships formed in the real world (Smahel, Blinka & Ledabyl, 2008).

Players often possess a profound emotional connection to the alternate world due to its role in promoting escapism from real life, offering compelling narrative, customisation, social networks and creative freedom where real currency and in-game currency has an intricate personally perceived value that enables all of the above. Players establish an emotional connection with the video game and, by extension, the virtual self. This indicates that there is emotional value in every in-game interaction and development, which creates personal significance in the challenges and successes experienced in the virtual world (King, Delfabbro & Griffiths, 2010). Concerns have been raised in regard to the inclination to be persuaded by video game companies to purchase substantial amounts of cosmetic items to enhance the status of the virtual self in-game, which also appears to influence the social status in the video game, recent research indicates that both economic and social motivations contribute to purchases of virtual goods with real currency, due to the strong player interest in obtaining rare and cosmetic items to personalise their avatars, which serves as a means of self-expression, creative expression and self-enhancement through possessing and displaying sought after items in the community (Hamari & Keronen, 2017). Additionally, the player is influenced by community trends and values on a greater

scale outside of the video game, through community forums and developer statements.

1.3. Theoretical framework

To what extent the desires and impulses experienced in the video game translate to behaviour that may have real financial implications is yet unknown. For example, the possibility has been raised that the individual is motivated to enhance the virtual self through the purchase of in-game goods with real currency or engage in simulated gambling activities to try their luck at profiting in-game to accelerate earnings. Nagy and Koles (2016) investigated creation, consumption and motivation in a virtual space, and found that video game players achieved self-actualisation, self-expression and psychological empowerment through the virtual self. It further allowed players to achieve gratification and recognition from other members of the community, and for new identities to be manufactured. The main factors associated with allowing for the creation of a virtual self were usage, time and overall membership in the community, but other significant influences included behavioural patterns and individual motivations. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of the video game allowing players to escape their problems and realities outside of the video game, which supports the notion of escapism within the video game, as mentioned by Hitchings (2016). Therefore, it may be argued that the virtual self is a powerful driver in securing resources and cosmetic items online, as a means to further enhance the virtual identity. Simulated gambling may serve as a shortcut to achieve the goal of an enhanced virtual identity. It has further been argued that simulated gambling in video games can offer a positive first experience with gambling without barriers like money and age restricting access (Griffiths et al., 2012). The lack of real money to gamble

with is perceived as irrelevant, as it is recognised that there are other additional motivations for gambling than financial reasons, particularly to provide excitement, relief from boredom, avoid coping with problems and a means of social interaction. Therefore, the motivations for simulated gambling in video games may be physiological, social or psychological, for example, to receive rewards like admiration or acceptance (Griffiths et al., 2012). Because of this, investment in a virtual world could impact upon financial investment in gambling to acquire items to enrich the in-game experience, and may contribute to more persuasive gambling behaviour compared to games where elaborate game worlds are not as salient.

1.4. Methodological approaches

Pathological gambling is classified as an impulse control disorder in the DSM-IV and is characterised by a need to gamble with increasing amounts of funds to achieve greater excitement, a series of failures to stop gambling and regularly chasing losses, which is a strategy to keep gambling in order to make up for lost money (Strong & Kahler, 2007). A large variety of questionnaires and experiments have been used to measure reward sensitivity, delay discounting and pathological gambling symptoms in the last decade. This makes the task of identifying appropriate measures for investigating simulated gambling, addiction and micro-transactions in video games more difficult, as the scope for this task has been significantly broadened by the development of these instruments. The BIS/BAS measures individual behavioural activation and inhibition, and is a suitable measure to acquire the baseline of an individual's proneness to risk-taking behaviour, to ensure that differences between participant groups are not due to individual differences in baselines (Carver & White, 1994).

Many experimental tasks that measure fiscal decision-making are ambiguous in what aspect of decision-making that is measured, for example, the Iowa Gambling Task, the Columbia Card task (CCT) and the Balloon Analog Risk Task (BART) are all poorly correlated with each other despite measuring risk-taking, and has therefore been proposed to measure unique, non-overlapping decision-making processes (Gambino, 2018). The Iowa Gambling Task (IGT) is a widely used, clinically developed tool that measures disordered gambling importantly, pathological gamblers have been shown to be deficient in decision-making on the Iowa test (Bechara, Damasio, Tranel & Damasio, 2005). However, there are three critical issues that affect the validity of the IGT: the lack of a concise definition as to what aspect of decision making the IGT measures, the lack of data regarding reliability of the IGT, and the influence of personality and state mood on IGT performance (Buelow, & Suhr, 2009). Additionally, the IGT consists of over 100 trials, which risks participant disengagement.

The Columbia Card Task is a shorter task that measures affect based risky decision-making (Figner, Mackinlay, Wilkening & Weber, 2009). At the start of each trial, the participant is presented with 32 cards arranged face down in a grid made up of four rows and eight columns. On each trial they may turn over cards one at a time, thereby revealing either a win or a loss. They may decide to stop turning over cards at any time for a given display with the goal of maximising their earnings. Each gain card turned over adds to their total earnings. Each loss card turned over subtracts from their earnings and terminates the trial. As more cards are turned over, the probability of encountering a loss increases for the next selection. To maximise earnings, participants must weigh the probability of a loss, the gain amount, and the loss amount as they make each decision. The game

can run under two conditions: the "hot CCT" triggers affective processes through immediate feedback on performance, whereas the "cold CCT" delays the feedback. The optimal decision-making strategies are the same for the cold CCT as the hot CCT. Crucially, pathological gamblers consistently perform worse than controls on this task, as they showcase worse decision-making strategies when posed with increasing risk as more loss cards are added to the deck. Therefore, they show increasing losses overall compared to the control group as they turn over more cards and are more likely to eventually encounter a loss card that subtracts from the overall gain amount. Whilst other experiments are available to use, the CCT is a non-intrusive task that may be suitable to introduce to the gamer population. Moving away from card tasks to measure decision-making, the BART has been used extensively in substance addiction and risk-taking (Hunt, Hopko, Bare, Lejuez & Robinson, 2005). The task produces highly reliable results (Ronay & Kim, 2006) and is therefore worth considering in the current study. However, the CCT is more suitable to measure loss-chasing behaviour.

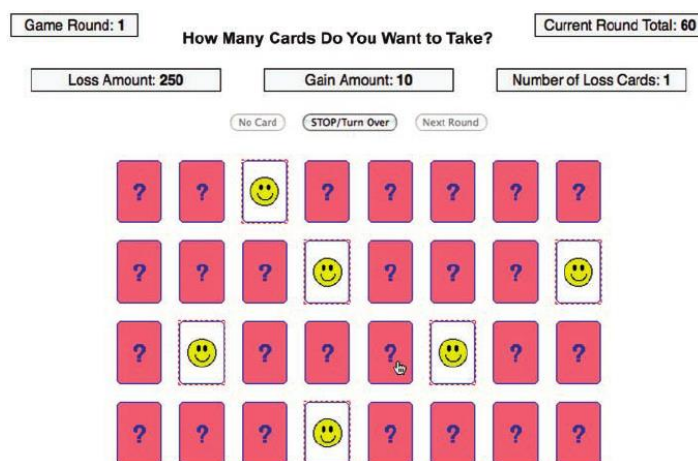


Figure 1. CCT hot version interface

A different option to consider when investigating risk-taking behaviour is prospect theory and delay discounting, and how perception of value decreases over time between sample groups. Prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) aims to evaluate real-life choices and involves making decisions between two types of rewards, the theory is based on the findings that individuals make monetary decisions based on the potential value of gains and losses rather than the final financial outcome. Delay discounting can be described as the overestimation of value in outcomes that are closer in time than objectively greater outcomes that are more distant, therefore, the smaller reward that is obtained sooner is more desirable than the larger reward that is delayed. This has been demonstrated with children as well as with adults (Mischel, Ebbesen & Raskoff Zeiss, 1972). Furthermore, individuals who discount delayed rewards more steeply appear to be more prone to problem gambling and substance abuse (Koffarnus & Bickel, 2014).

There are two tasks that are suitable for gambling research, the first one is a binary choice (BC)/fill in the blanks task (FITB) and the second one is an experiential delay discounting task (EDT). Discounting tasks are used to evaluate whether gambling and non-gambling participants differ in the degree to which they discount delayed rewards. Hyperbolic functions fit individual discounting data better than other decay functions (Holt, Green & Myerson, 2003; Smith & Hantula, 2008), which makes it a suitable approach for mapping fiscal decision-making processes. Hyperbolic discounting involves only a few factors, which makes it different from most psychological constructs. These factors are: a reward or reinforcement of some nature, a time delay, and a mathematical decay function. In the equation below, V is the time-discounted value of the reward, A

is the subjective present value, D is the total delay to delivery and k is a discounting coefficient (Smith & Hantula, 2008).

$$V = \frac{A}{1 + kD}$$

Figure 2. Hyperbolic discounting equation

The binary choice task presents the participant with hypothetical monetary choices (HMC), where the participant has to make trade-offs between two rewards, one reward is immediate but contains a smaller amount, whilst the other is larger but delayed by varying time periods. The binary choice task usually demands over 100 trials, which introduces the problem of participant fatigue, inaccurate responses and the likelihood of the participant being alerted to a pattern in reward increments over time, which may contribute to the participant making the decisions before the stimuli is presented. In the FITB task, the context is the same as in the BC task, as participants are presented with a reward scenario where the rewards are linked to various delay periods. However, in FITB the participant is asked to fill in the sum of money that they would require immediately in order to not feel it worth the wait to receive a larger reward much later in time, this allows for the calculation of a participant's individual discount rate.

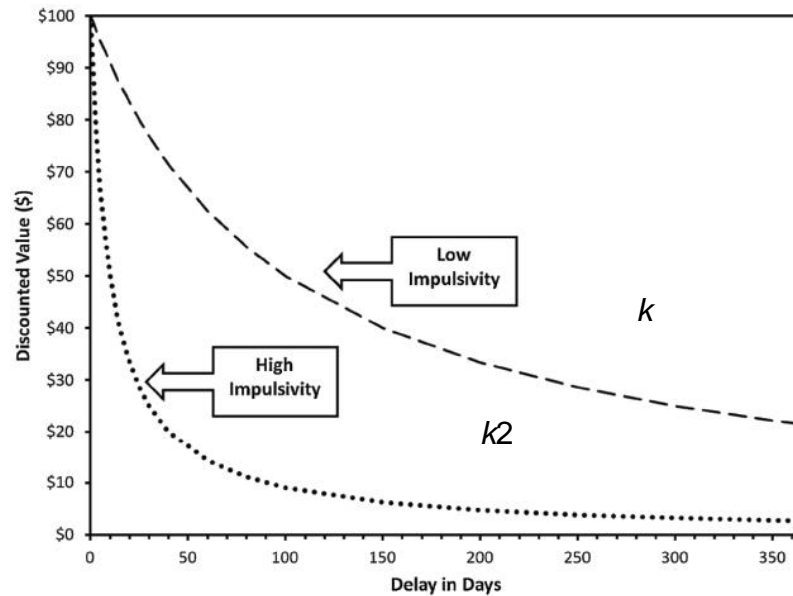


Figure 3. Delay discounting example

The FITB task possess several benefits over the binary choice task, as the FITB task is much shorter and therefore controls better for participant fatigue. However, the FITB task also place a much greater cognitive demand on the participant and requires detailed instructions for the participant to comprehend what is being asked of them, as previous research notes that participants felt the task to be very complicated and encouraged them to insert undesired contextual variables in their own analysis of each decision-making scenario (Smith & Hantula, 2008). Both the binary choice and FITB task can be administered online, which has been found to allow participants to reveal more personal information or stigmatised behaviour, and further avoids the participant masking undesired behaviour such as impulsive or irrational decision-making (Duffy, Smith, Terhanian & Bremer, 2005). This makes the BC and FITB task appropriate for gambling research, as the topic often involves monetary choices and socially sensitive information.

The 5-trial adjustment task (Koffarnus & Bickel, 2014) is a method that accounts for many of the weaknesses found in BC and FITB tasks. The 5-trial task assesses the participant's delay discount rate much quicker than either of the previous tasks whilst maintaining accurate and viable results. The task consists of five questions that measures delay discounting through a series of monetary scenarios where the participant has to indicate how much money they would require immediately in order to not wait a specified amount of time to receive a greater reward. Over the five questions, the delay is increased systematically to accumulate the individual discounting behaviour over time. This task has successfully been used to compare discounting between gamblers and non-gamblers (Koffarnus & Bickel, 2014), and has not yet been employed in video game research.

1.5. The current study

The aim of this research is to explore the role of the virtual self in facilitating purchases and gambling urges in-game, more specifically, to understand how virtual worlds influence tendencies to display increased risk-taking behaviour in a gambling scenario. The aim is also to investigate whether gamers who regularly participate in simulated gambling in-game display a higher prevalence of risk-taking behaviour than the control group in the experimental task.

1.5.1 Guild Wars 2

Guild Wars 2 is a MMORPG developed by ArenaNet and published by NCSoft. The game was released in 2012 and has since sold over 5 million copies, upon its release the game was met with worldwide acclaim, the entertainment reviewer Metacritic gave the game a score of 90/100, and Time listed it the top video game of the year in 2012. The game takes place in a persistent world where the

narrative arc of the game in on-going and takes place in instanced environments. GW2 features a storyline that is unique to player actions, which is an uncommon feature for multiplayer games and often more commonly found in single-player games. The combat system is also fairly unique, it promotes synergy between professions and exists in a dynamic development process, and has since the game's release seen several profession and ability revisions. The game primarily promotes PVE, PVP AND WvW play, PVE (players vs. environment) is designed to allow players to take on designed challenges, such as world bosses, raids or dungeons in a large-scale open world, typical for its genre. PVP (player vs. player) allows players to test their skills against other players, and WvW (server vs. server) allows large scale PVP fighting in an instanced open world strategy-based map. All game modes have access to micro-transactions and the in-game store, but loot drops with a randomised reward table can primarily be found in a PVE AND WvW environment. There are several underlying simulated gambling mechanics in this game that player of all game modes are likely to encounter and engage with regularly, which makes it a suitable environment to recruit video game players from for the purpose of this study.

1.5.2 Research design and hypotheses

The current study will consist of two parts. Initially, a qualitative investigation will be performed to explore players' perception of their attachment to their main avatar in the MMORPG Guild Wars 2 (GW2), their social environment in-game and their spending habits. This will inform the design of the second part of the study, which will consist of quantitative measurements; therefore, an exploratory sequential design will be utilised to determine the best experimental task based on what sort of gambling behaviours participants in the qualitative study report

engaging in. The research will focus on one well populated MMORPG with many known simulated gambling activities in-game, due to the time constraints of this research, however, it should be noted that many other MMOs and MMORPGS would qualify for the same research and comparison between titles should be encouraged to filter out what may and may not be perceived as harmful content. The proposed research searches for explorative evidence for avatar identification in video games as an influence on subsequent purchase and risk-taking behaviour in game, and empirical evidence for difference in loss-chasing behaviour between players and non-players. For the qualitative part of this research, statements from the standardised Player Identification Scale (Van Looy et al., 2012) will be converted to open-ended questions to be used in the initial interviews, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) will be used to analyse the transcripts. The quantitative part of this research will utilise the CCT to measure risk-taking behaviour and adaptive decision-making in a gambling task between GW2 players and non-players, the CCT is a suitable experimental measurement as it is designed to detect loss chasing behaviour; a common symptom of pathological gambling behaviour. A five-trial adjustment task will be used to obtain participant delay discount rate, finally, a BIS/BAS questionnaire will be administered to obtain participants' reward sensitivity baseline. The hypotheses are as follows: video game players with a strong emotional attachment to the virtual self and the game world will spend more money on their chosen MMORPG and engage in more simulated gambling, and: video game players will turn over more cards in the CCT task compared to controls, in order to make up for losses in previous trials. The research questions are as follows: First: Does avatar attachment influence

spending and gambling habits in-game? Second: Do participants who regularly engage in simulated gambling in video games perform worse in decision-making and delay discounting tasks compared to the control group?

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

Participants

Ten video game players who regularly played the massively multiplayer online role-playing game Guild Wars 2 and were over the age of 18 were recruited using a convenience sampling method. Eight participants were male and two were female. One was British-American, one was Swedish, one was Dutch, one was Belgian, one was Swiss, one was Chinese, one was Portuguese, three were German. All participants spoke fluent English.

Materials and apparatus

The semi-structured interview consisted of 25 questions and was created based on statements posed in the *Player Identification Scale* (Van Looy et al., 2012). Examples of questions asked were “*Tell me about your avatar in Guild Wars 2?*“, “*Does your character have a personality/characteristics that you would like to have?*” and “*Tell me about what you spend your gold on in Guild Wars 2 and why?*” (see Appendix 3). The chat application Discord (<https://discordapp.com/>) was used to conduct the interviews. Further apparatus was a voice recorder, a headset and a microphone. A program developed to automatically translate the transcripts (see Appendix 4) to text files from the audio files was utilised. A participant information and a consent form was also utilised (see Appendix 1 and 2, respectively).

Procedure

Recruitment messages were sent in the general channel of two Guild Wars 2 Discord servers, members of the server could then contact the researcher if they wished to participate. Participants were sent the participant information form and consent form over the application, asked to read and sign the documents and then return them to the researcher before interviews could begin. Interviews were conducted over audio call to allow for an international sample. The length of the interviews depended on the participants' experiences and ranged from 30 minutes to 3 hours. The interviews were recorded through a voice recorder application, automatically transcribed by a speech to text program and verified by the researcher. Transcripts were then analysed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). IPA focuses on the lived experience and is a suitable approach to utilise due to the researcher's past experiences and preconceived notions of video game communities and MMORPGS. The use of IPA further allowed each participant to share their unique and subjective experience of the game world, their avatar and their motivations for purchases and simulated gambling involvement.

Procedure of analysis

The transcripts were analysed using a machine learning algorithm that transformed audio files to text files. Text files were then individually split into three parts; the virtual self, the social world and spending and gambling habits in-game. Transcripts were analysed one by one, then the three parts were compared across participants for similarities and differences in narrative in order to create comprehensive themes and subthemes.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the School of Social and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Abertay University. The sensitive nature of investigating addictions is cause for ethical consideration; however, it was not anticipated that any harm would come to participants in this study as they were asked about their experiences and made aware that participation was voluntary and confidential. As per standard procedure, participants were also made aware that they had the right to decline to answer questions or fully withdraw their participation at any given time without explanation if they so wished.

3. Results

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) of the qualitative interview data yielded five superordinate categories:

- Avatar attachment as a determiner of value constructs in-game.
- The visual experience as a main factor in fiscal decision-making in-game.
- Simulated gambling and in-game purchases as a strategy to save time obtaining items and currency through play.
- Ambivalent feelings around the simulated gambling activity and losing.
- The effect of the researcher's previous experience with the game community on data collection.

A detailed account of the themes that emerged within these categories is presented below. The titles of the subordinate themes contained within the main categories are highlighted in *italics* in the text. The categories and subcategories are detailed in Table 1.

Avatar attachment as a determination of value constructs in-game

Participants spoke extensively about their avatars, their achievements, traits and characteristics and how the avatar allowed them to express themselves bodily in the virtual world through *customisation*. More than half of participants stated that their avatar or game account was priceless to them ('I would never delete my main character. That's just something I couldn't do because I feel really attached to that character. I guess it's the time I've invested into that character'. P7). The same participants also described their avatar attachment as being strong, or taking shape through personal self-expression and *creative outlet*, rather than as a tool or utility with which to access the game. Half of all participants stated that their avatar had personal *traits and characteristics* that were separate from their own.

When I made her I wanted her to be strong and fierce because I think that is not how I view myself most of the time, so I quite deliberately made her something I was not. (P3)

I was very, very shy and a very closed person. Not anymore as you can see. I'm getting closer to her personality. ... It's kind of a role model, something I wish I was. (P10)

Two participants stated that how other players presented themselves through their avatars influenced the subsequent behaviour in *social interactions* in-game

I have tried to use my characters to create a sense of freedom. I like having fun with identity. I do think a lot of my relationships with people in-game are shaped by the characters I play... because a lot of my characters are ... made with a ... sense of humour ... I think I approach other characters in game with that humour ... So, with that also comes how I view other

people's characters, if I can say they made this with sense of humour, I know that we will have something in common. (P3)

Table 1. Overview of categories

Main Category	Subcategory
1. Avatar attachment as a determiner of a value constructs in-game	a. Customisation b. Creative outlet c. Traits and characteristics d. Social interactions
2. The visual experience as a main factor in a fiscal decision-making in-game	a. Visual appeal
3. Simulated gambling and in-game purchases as a strategy to save time obtaining items and currency through play	a. Cosmetic upgrades b. Social status c. Social context
4. Ambivalent feelings about the simulated gambling activity and losing	a. Regret b. Disappointment c. Relieve boredom d. Positive reinforcement
5. The effect of the researcher's previous experience with the game community on data collection	a. Understanding of the game world b. Trust

All participants stated that the visual experience in the game world and the *visual appeal* of their character held importance for game investment and enjoyment.

I always loved RPGs with big open worlds. Online RPGs, MMOs, or just single player RPGs, I love to explore new worlds. (P2)

... It looks pretty, they intentionally make the maps pretty big, at least in the last few releases. So, there's always something going on ... There's always something you find that you didn't know was there before. (P6)

A minority of participants also stated that their main incentive for completing in-game exploration targets was due to the possibility of receiving a loot box key for their efforts, suggesting that the play was mainly reward focused.

Well if I do it again and if it is easy, I would do it for the chance of a Black Lion chest key. (P7)

Participants also stated that a majority of purchases of in-game currency with real currency and engagement with simulated gambling was to obtain valuable weapons with graphic effects or to afford *cosmetic upgrades* in the in-game store. Accumulated in-game currency collected through playing the game was also often used for in-game store purchases, but was somewhat undesirable due to the time it took to accumulate compared to the instant purchases with real currency. There was no difference in desirability of cosmetic items between players who identified strongly with their avatars and players who did not, nor was there any difference in purchase habits or tendency to spend real money on the video game. A minority of players stated that they enjoyed obtaining rare cosmetic items to compete for *social status* in-game. Overall, a majority of players preferred to use real currency for purchases in-game.

I have a lot of the black lion skins, but I think that's mainly because they were quite prestigious in terms of rarity. Not a lot of people use them, the skin costs like 250 gold off the Trading Post. So, it was nice that I have something rare that no one else use that also looks nice ... But ... then

the skins went out of style and everyone had them. And so for the longest time, I just kind of spent my money on skins. (P5)

All participants had engaged with simulated gambling at least once, furthermore, all participants brought the word “gambling” to the interview when prompted on their spending habits, which suggests that it is a culturally accepted term for the in-game activities. Participants described feeling conflicted around their simulated gambling experiences in-game. A minority of players felt that the risk of losing large amounts of in-game currency was not worth the reward, a minority of players also felt *regret* after participating in simulated gambling and expressed *disappointment* that they had not been able to resist. A minority of players also expressed disappointment over the outcome of the gambling venture, but clarified that they did not regret the activity, as they still received enjoyment from engaging with the gambling activity.

A minority of players (2/10) gambled as often as they could afford to, a minority of players also invested amounts of real currency into the game on a weekly basis to afford to take part in the simulated gambling activity of choice. A minority of players (3/10) reported spending substantial amounts of real currency on items or virtual currency in the game for as long as they had been engaged in it (5.000 – 30.000 Euros).

Half of participants mentioned that the gambling experience often occurred in a *social context* with guild members or friends.

I won the 2000 gold and I was really happy and actually kept- I kept away from ectoplasm gambling for about three or four days after that, but then I

started to see- like, people I know started to gamble again and then I'm like, okay, you know what, if you're gambling I'm gambling with you. (P1)

I went into a state of mind of chasing my losses. I felt like, you know, I lost five hundred gold, I can gamble again and win back the 500, which never happened, and then I lost I think about six or seven thousand gold in that process because I thought of, you know, winning back what I had ... I feel like it is really something that I should not be doing, but it is because it's something that I keep thinking of, you know, gambling to get back my losses that I've lost so much money ... I feel like my chance- my gold should be evening out whenever I gamble but this is not the case. (P1)

A majority of participants explicitly stated that they engaged in the gambling activity to experience *positive reinforcement* through an adrenaline rush, excitement and the possibility of winning desirable items or currency. Participants also mentioned participating in the simulated gambling activity to *relieve boredom*. Importantly, this was not an included question in the semi structured interview sheet, therefore, participants brought the experience of adrenaline and excitement to the researcher's attention on their own accord. This indicates that this theme was not fully explored with all participants, and it cannot be ruled out that the participants that did not mention changes in affect did not experience any of the altered states described by the majority of participants, as they may simply not have thought of mentioning it.

I guess it's that feeling I was talking about earlier, that little adrenaline shock ... I guess I just really enjoy it. I like what it feels like. (P7)

I'll sit there looking at the item for five minutes and I'm like, oh, my heart is starting to pump. (P1)

I think it's more of an adrenaline thing. You know that adrenaline of winning ... If you win then it gives you some adrenaline, then you like that feeling, to win, you don't play to lose. (P4)

The final main category identified was the influence of the researcher's experiences with the game community. The researcher was acquainted with most participants due to having at least one game interaction together in a group orientated context to discuss participating in the interview. It is believed that this aided feelings of the researcher being "on the inside" or part of the community in a way that may have assisted, or possibly hindered, participants in exploring personal experiences, however, a majority of participants were comfortable to discuss personal events and steered the interview in personal directions without any prompt. All participants were comfortable to disclose private details such as their monthly wage when posed with the question regarding what proportion of that wage they would require in order to delete their avatar or account. It is believed that the researcher's *understanding of the game world* aided a majority of participants in their narratives, as they were reassured that basic concepts would be described by the researcher in detail at a later stage when disseminating the interviews, so that they could focus on retelling their subjective experience in-game at that time without getting hindered by setting the scene of how the game world worked or explaining details. Participants also stated that if they had not previously known the researcher, they would not have taken part in the research due to the nature of personal exploration in interviews and the

reluctance to expose thoughts and feelings about the personal attachment to the avatar or in-game gambling habits to strangers, for fear of being judged or ridiculed. Several participants also queried about what would happen to their personal data, which highlights a certain weariness around disclosing personal information online, possibly because video game players spend large amounts of time online and are familiar with possible dangers in this space. Therefore, a certain level of *trust* through reassurance around anonymity and compliance with GDPR and data storage laws was necessary to raise, in order for the interviews to be successful.

I tried to be neutral and ignore that I know you. I don't talk to strangers.

So, if it wouldn't have been you I wouldn't have done it (participated) at all, so I would actually say it helped. (P7)

Definitely made it easier to conduct the interview itself, having a familiar presence there to have the interview with. (P9)

4. Discussion

The first study aimed to investigate the role of the virtual self in facilitating spending and gambling behaviour in a MMORPG. The qualitative part of the research also aimed to inform future quantitative testing. This was achieved through explorative evidence for avatar identification in video games as an influence on subsequent purchases and risk-taking behaviour in-game. No influence of the virtual self was found in connection with spending habits, preference of currency or gambling habits in-game. Participants reported high engagement with simulated gambling activities, importantly, a minority of participants also reported altered emotional states resulting from the activity,

such as adrenaline and excitement leading up to and for the duration of the activity. To partake in a gambling activity to experience a favourable affective state can be classified as seeking out positive reinforcement, in contrast, to engage in the gambling activity to avoid boredom in the video game is classified as negative reinforcement, as the individual seeks to escape a negative affective state through the gambling activity. It is the latter behaviour that is more commonly associated with disordered gambling (Mann, Fauth-Bühler, Higuchi, Potenza & Saunders, 2016), and could be observed in participants' responses in this study. Feelings after participation in the gambling activity mostly consisted of regret. The findings of this study support the findings of Wolfendale (2007) who argues that avatar attachment is expressive of identity and self-conception. All participants in the current study expressed that the appearance of the personal avatar held some importance, varying from somewhat important to extremely important for the gameplay enjoyment.

The conceptual classification of avatar attachment as developed by Banks and Bowman (2013) describes four categories to concisely map avatar attachment: identification, suspension of disbelief, sense of control, sense of care and responsibility. In the present study, participants displayed high to low emotional intensity in all categories, suggesting that the sample is more likely to have held sufficient range for truthful representation of the greater game community associated with the MMORPG chosen for investigation. Very few studies exist on the relationship between emotional attachment to the virtual avatar and the purchase of virtual assets, therefore, it is difficult to relate the findings of the current study to those of previous ones, however, Cleghorn and Griffiths (2015) investigated motivations for in-game spending and found similar

reasoning around purchases as reported in the current research, particularly with regard to item exclusivity and cosmetic appeal. Importantly, the current research found no discrimination between high and low character identification on the likelihood to spend real currency on virtual assets, as it was recognised that all participants had purchased additional content, however, the decision-making surrounding the behaviour was mainly informed by real life fiscal situations, as participants reported abstaining from real currency purchases if they experienced a lack of available funds. This contradicts the findings by Cleghorn and Griffiths (2015), as they noted a clear pattern of increased spending with stronger character attachment. There are a number of explanations as to why this study did not find any link between stronger character attachment and a higher likelihood of spending real money in-game.

Over the last couple of years, payment methods in-game have become more sophisticated and easier to utilise by the consumer, similarly, the marketing strategies employed by video game companies have evolved into highly persuasive tactics to increase profits, their success can be observed in free to play games that utilise micro-transactions, counterintuitively, this payment model is the most profitable to employ in games, as the consumer is more likely to make many small transactions over a longer period of time, which outweighs the potential profit of selling the game to the consumer just once upon the initial purchase (Davidovici-Nora, 2014). This payment model has been around for a number of years, therefore, it is possible that players are more familiar with this payment method now compared to in previous literature, and the video game community overall may be more comfortable in making many small purchases than to commit to spending a more substantial amount at any given time. Whilst

it is possible that emotional attachment to the virtual avatar used to guide spending habits, it is now possible that online payments through technological advancement have become such an integrated part of the video game experience that the behaviour has grown in scale and the majority of the community is now persuaded to part with their money to maximise in-game enjoyment. However, as previously reported by Cleghorn and Griffiths (2015), the present study also found supporting evidence for a positive impact of the gaming activity on psychological well-being, as participants described their experiences as meaningful through achieving social and creative fulfilment in an environment free of real-world consequences.

The present study also noted that character attachment had no influence on participation in simulated gambling activities in-game. All participants reported that they had at some point opened loot boxes with random reward mechanisms or visited the in-game casino. It is of note that all participants also brought the word gambling to the interview, as the researcher deliberately did not use the word gambling or gambling terminology to allow the unique experiences of the individual participants to emerge. This suggests that the terminology is deeply ingrained in the video game community, and therefore the behaviour might be more likely to be normalised. Participants also reported experiencing an adrenaline kick, excitement or a thrill when participating in their chosen in-game gambling activity, importantly, this element was not a part of the semi-structured interview, therefore, it is difficult to assess whether all participants experienced a thrill but did not mention it. Similarly, a minority of participants reported loss chasing behaviour upon unsuccessful gambling periods, however, this was not explored with all participants due to the unique experiences in-game and themes

that emerged in each individual interview, but may inform future quantitative testing.

4.1. Limitations and future research

From this qualitative study it can be concluded that virtual items enable players to express themselves, achieve creative outlet, build friendships and model social behaviour in a risk-free environment. However, it cannot be proposed from the findings of this study that the emotional attachment to the virtual avatar has a major influence on individuals' likelihood to spend real money in-game or participate in risky ventures to enhance in-game profits through simulated gambling. There were limitations with the study undertaken, the data collected were self-reported and it is therefore possible that various biases such as ability to recall information and social desirability shaped the answers provided. It is advisable that future studies employ larger samples and alternative methodologies to contribute to the overall understanding of modern reasoning around purchases in a free to play environment. Future quantitative work should seek to establish what individual factors are key in facilitating the likelihood to spend real money in video games and what elements promote extensive interaction with simulated gambling activities. The implications of problematic spending are particularly salient in video games, as a substantial part of video game communities consist of underage players. Minors may be more likely to be financially dependent and more receptive to impulsive purchases or distorted perceptions around gambling mechanics and how these translate to real world scenarios.

5. Study 2

5.1. Outline of study 2

Due to the exploratory sequential design utilised in this research project, study 1 was used to inform the design of study 2. From study 1, it could be concluded that GW2 players were likely to routinely engage in simulated gambling activities in-game, it could also be concluded that players experienced altered emotional states as a result of the activity and occasionally chased their losses upon unsuccessful attempts at winning. Therefore, the Columbia Card Task has been chosen as the most appropriate gambling task to be used in the experimental condition, as it allows for direct measurements of likelihood to chase losses upon manufactured successful and unsuccessful attempts. The hot CCT further allows for direct affective feedback on gambling attempts, which further aligns itself with the findings of study 1.

The hypothesis is as follows: video game players will turn over more cards in the CCT task compared to controls, in order to make up for losses in previous trials.

5.2. Method

Participants

52 participants over the age of 18 (31 males, 21 females) were recruited through Guild Wars 2 Discord servers and from Abertay University in exchange for course credit. 27 participants were regular players of the MMORPG Guild Wars 2 (www.guildwars2.com), and 25 participants were not familiar with the game. A convenience sampling method was used. Participants in the video game condition (4 females, 23 males) were recruited via notices in general chat application rooms for gamers (Discordapp.com), particularly related to the game

Guild Wars 2. The control group consisted of 17 females and 8 males, both groups had participants ranging from 18 to 35+ years old.

Materials and Apparatus

Materials were the Columbia Card Task (Hot Version) (Appendix 5), which consisted of 24 trials where the participant turns over cards with either a loss or a gain amount attached to them, until they either encounter a loss card which terminates the trial, or choose to stop the round and proceed to the next one (Figner et al., 2009). The card task was altered based on the reports provided in the qualitative interviews in study 1 to investigate the reported loss chasing behaviour amongst GW2 players. The trials were initially unrigged but were programmed to later only turn over gain cards or loss cards. This was to examine how participant groups altered their decision-making when they were allowed to keep turning over as many cards as they desired without being hindered by the termination of the trial. The rigged loss condition was introduced to measure whether participants would make conservative decisions post loss or try to compensate for their losses in subsequent trials. The rigged loss condition was followed by the rigged win condition, therefore, the rigged win conditions are of interest when interpreting the results, as it is in this condition where loss chasing behaviour may be observed. The Behavioural Activation and Inhibition Scale (BIS/BAS) (Carver & White, 1994) (Appendix 6), a 5-trial adjustment task utilised to map individual value over time discounting curves (Appendix 7) (Koffarnus & Bickel, 2014), and a short questionnaire designed to map Guild Wars 2 players in-game simulated gambling behaviour was employed (Appendix 8). The 5-trial adjustment task results were assessed on the rate of individual discounting, this

rate is labelled k , and is the result of the overall discounting curve of the participant where a larger k number indicates steeper discounting ($V = A/(1+kD)$). However, log transformed values of k should also be reported to provide a base value for comparison (Vincent & Stewart, 2018). Demographics collected included gender and age (Appendix 9). All questionnaires were administered through Google Forms. Additional apparatus included the participants' own computer and mouse.

Procedure

Participants accessed the experiment through a link (Appendix 10), where they were first presented with the participant information and consent form. The participants were then presented with a tutorial for how the CCT operated and a trial run, before the experiment began. Upon the completion of the task, participants were automatically redirected to the Google Form containing the questionnaires. Upon the completion of the questionnaires, participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed (Appendix 11).

5.3. Power analysis

Due to the time constraints of the research undertaken, no power analysis was conducted a priori to undertaking participant recruitment. The recruitment process took place for as long as was reasonable whilst still ensuring enough time for thorough data analysis and write-up prior to the end-date of the research undertaken. Additionally, there was no previous research identical to the current study, therefore a suitable comparison of effect sizes was lacking. The final sample size for study 2 consisted out of 52 participants. It should be recognised that for analyses of variance as undertaken in the exploratory results, a greater

sample size should ideally be employed to account for a sufficient amount of power in the analysis. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the exploratory analysis failed to find a genuine effect due to this weakness in design.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the School of Social and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Abertay University. Participation in this study was voluntary and confidential. Participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any given time without explanation. The debrief contained information for contacting counselling services should participants feel inclined to consult these. Contact details for gamblers anonymous and contact details for general financial support were also provided.

6. Results

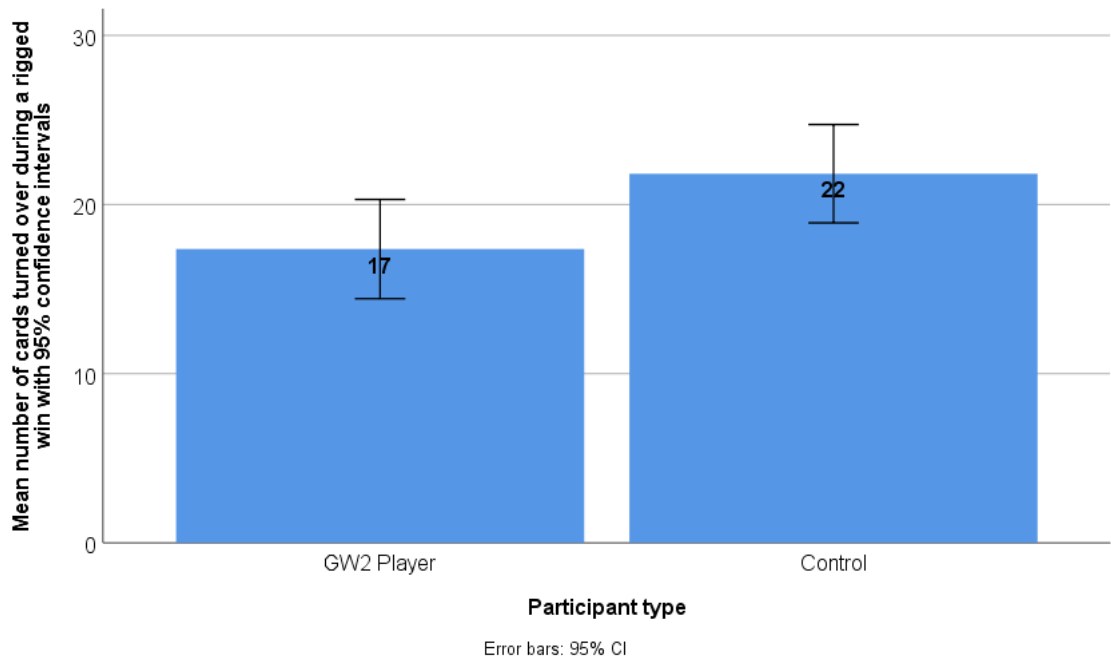


Figure 4. Mean number of cards turned during a rigged win and participant type

The rigged win is used to measure whether participants tried to compensate for a previous loss in the rigged loss condition.

The control group turned over more cards during a rigged win (mean= 22.1, standard deviation= 7.2) compared to the GW2 players (mean=17.4, standard deviation=7.4).

An independent samples T-test revealed a significant effect of participant type on number of cards turned over after a rigged win ($t(48) = -2.30$, $p = .026$), medium effect size ($d = .6$).

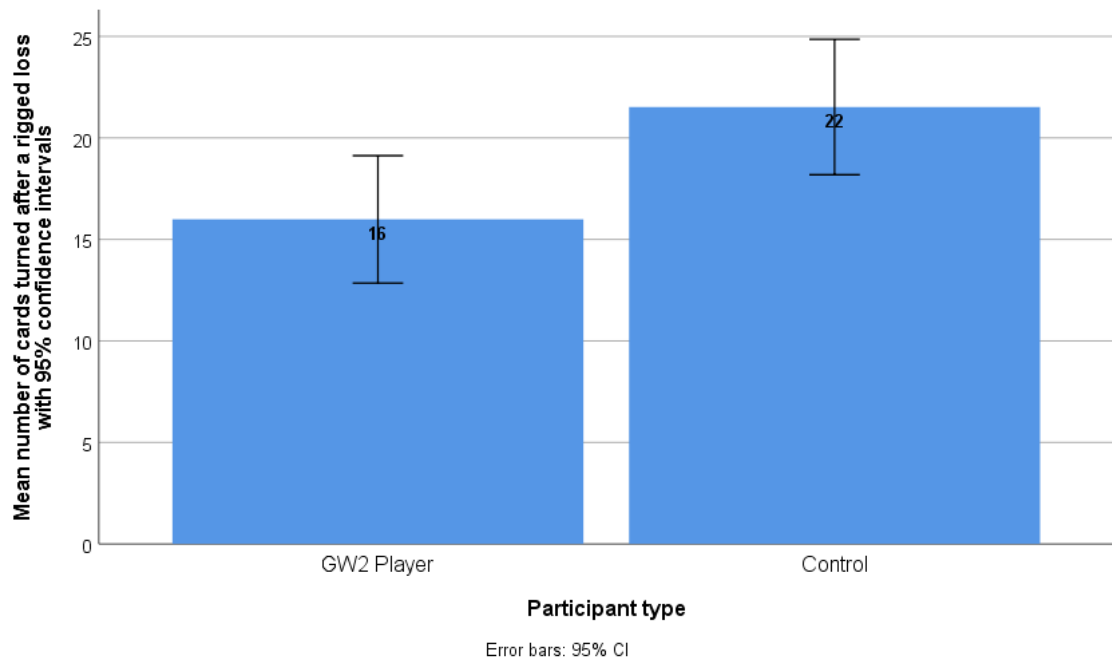


Figure 5. Mean number of cards turned over after a rigged loss and participant type

The rigged loss condition is used as a measure to investigate whether participants adjusted their risk taking based on the relevant information provided and assumed a cautionary approach to prevent further losses.

The control group turned over more cards after a rigged loss (mean=21.9, standard deviation=8.2) compared to the GW2 players (mean=16, standard deviation 7.9).

An independent samples T-test revealed a significant effect of participant type on the number of cards turned over after a loss ($t(48) = -2.6, p = .013$), large effect size ($d = .7$).

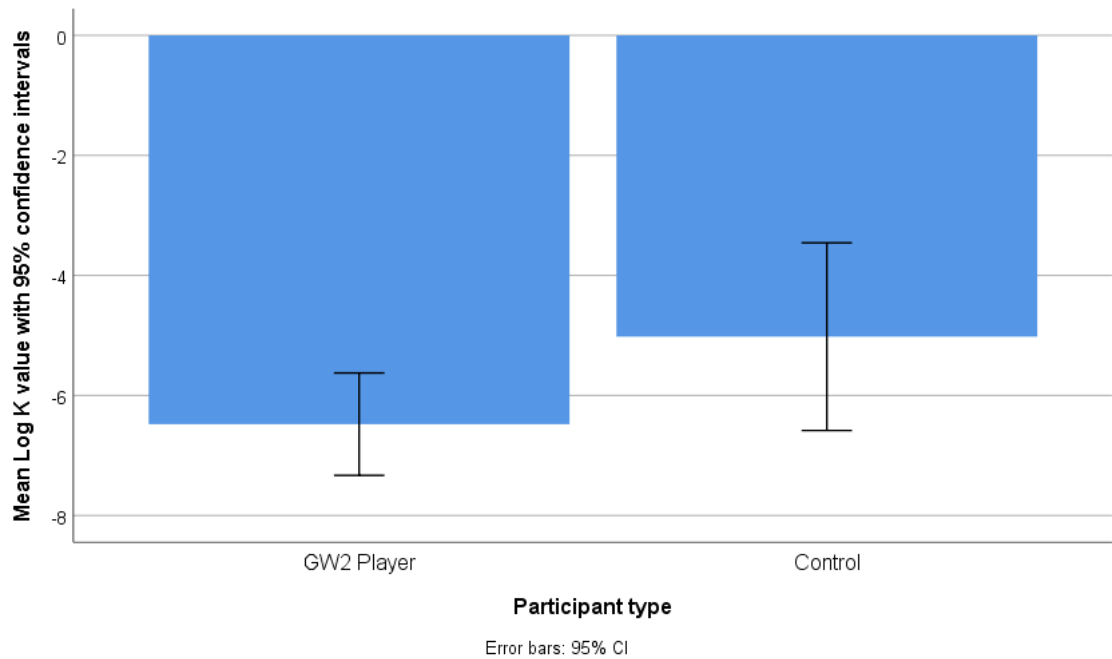


Figure 6. Participant delay discounting scores and participant type

A higher k value indicates greater discounting, the k value has been transformed to $\log k$ to allow a greater normal distribution of scores.

Video game players discounted delayed rewards less steeply (mean = -6.5, CI's -7.3 and -5.6) compared to the control group (mean = -5, CI's -6.6 and -3.5).

A Mann – Whitney U test revealed no significant difference in delay discounting between the video game players and the control group ($U= 396$, $N1=25$, $N2=27$, $p = .284$).

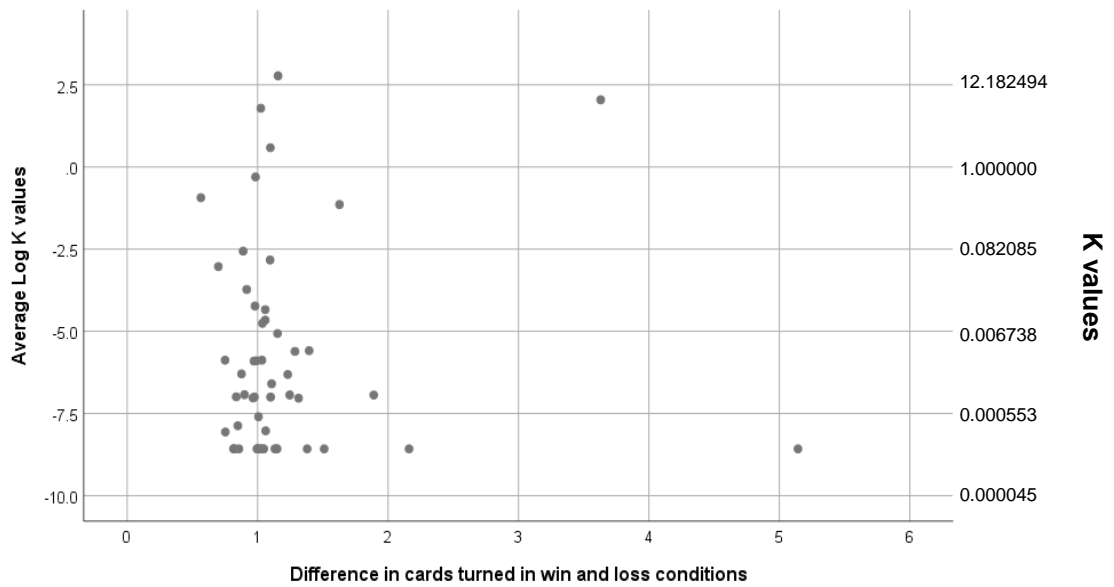


Figure 7. Delay discounting value and the difference in cards turned over between win and loss conditions in the CCT

The difference in cards turned over between win and loss conditions is of interest as it indicates whether there is a relationship between individual delay discounting curves and the tendency to chase losses in the rigged win condition.

The scatterplot shows no relationship between delay discounting scores and difference in cards turned over in the rigged win and loss conditions.

Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient revealed no significant relationship between delay discounting scores and difference in cards turned over in the win and loss conditions [$r_s(52) = -.025, p = .858$].

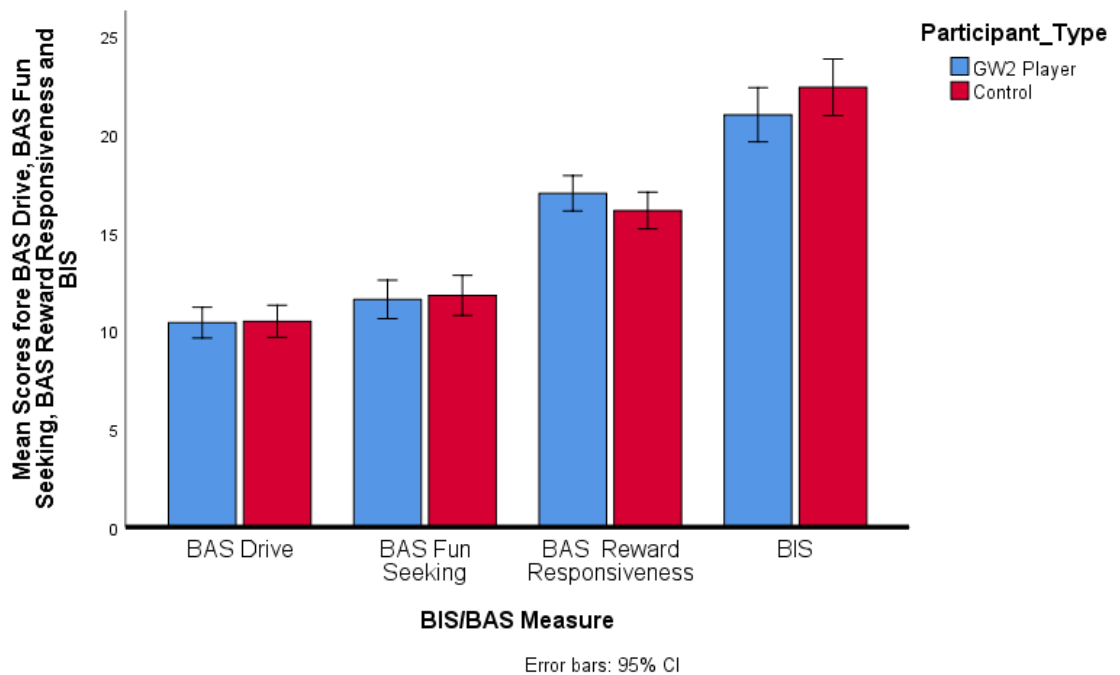


Figure 8. Mean scores for BAS drive, BAS fun seeking, BAS reward responsiveness, BIS and participant type with 95% confidence intervals

The BIS/BAS measures are used to gauge whether the difference in cards turned over is based on a difference in behavioural inhibition and activation.

The control group and GW2 players both reported similar BAS drive scores (mean = 10.5, CI's = 9.6 and 11.4) versus (mean = 10.4, CI's 9.7 and 11.2). The BAS fun-seeking scores were also similar (mean = 11.8, CI's 10.7 and 12.9) versus (mean = 11.6, CI's 10.7 and 12.5). The control group reported slightly lower reward responsiveness scores (mean = 16.1, CI's 15 and 17.2) versus (mean = 17, CI's 16.2 and 17.8). The control group reported slightly higher BIS scores (mean = 22.4, CI's = 20/7 and 24.1) versus (mean = 21, CI's = 19.9 and 22.1).

A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significant difference in BIS/BAS scores between participants. BAS drive ($\chi^2(1) = .111, p = .739$). BAS fun-seeking ($\chi^2(1)$

= .019, $p = .890$). BAS reward responsiveness ($\chi^2(1) = 1.676$, $p = .195$). BIS ($\chi^2(1) = 2.143$, $p = .143$).

6.1 Exploratory analysis

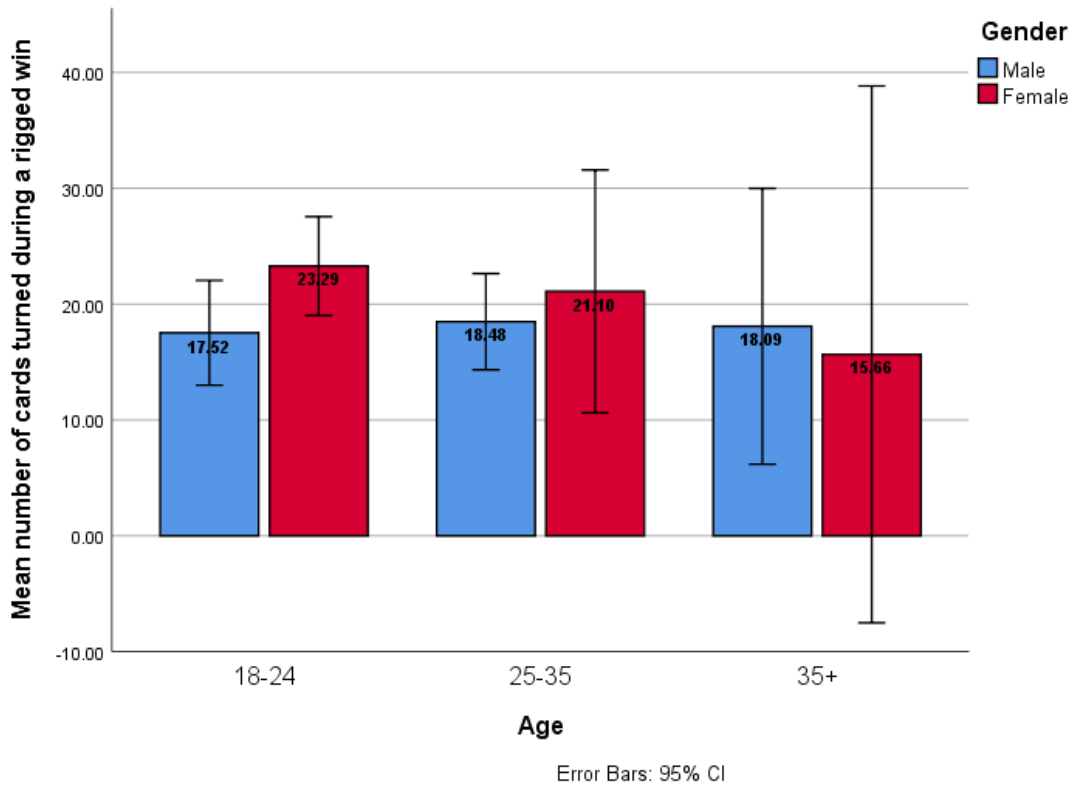


Figure 9. Mean number of cards turned during a rigged win, age and gender with 95% confidence intervals

On average, males turned over fewer cards (mean = 18, CI's = 15.4 and 20.6) than females (mean = 21.7, CI's = 18.1 and 25.2).

Participants in the 18-24 age group turned over more cards on average (mean = 20.4, CI's = 17.3 and 23.5) than participants in the 25-35 age group (mean = 19.1, CI's = 15.6 and 22.7) and in the 35+ age group (mean = 16.9, CI's = 9.8 and 24). A 2x3 between-subjects ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of gender ($F(1, 46) = .585$, $p = .448$), observed power (.08) and no significant main effect of

age on cards turned over ($F(2, 46) = .546, p = .583$), observed power (.269) and the interaction between age and gender was not significant ($F(2, 46) = .794, p = .458$), observed power (.120).

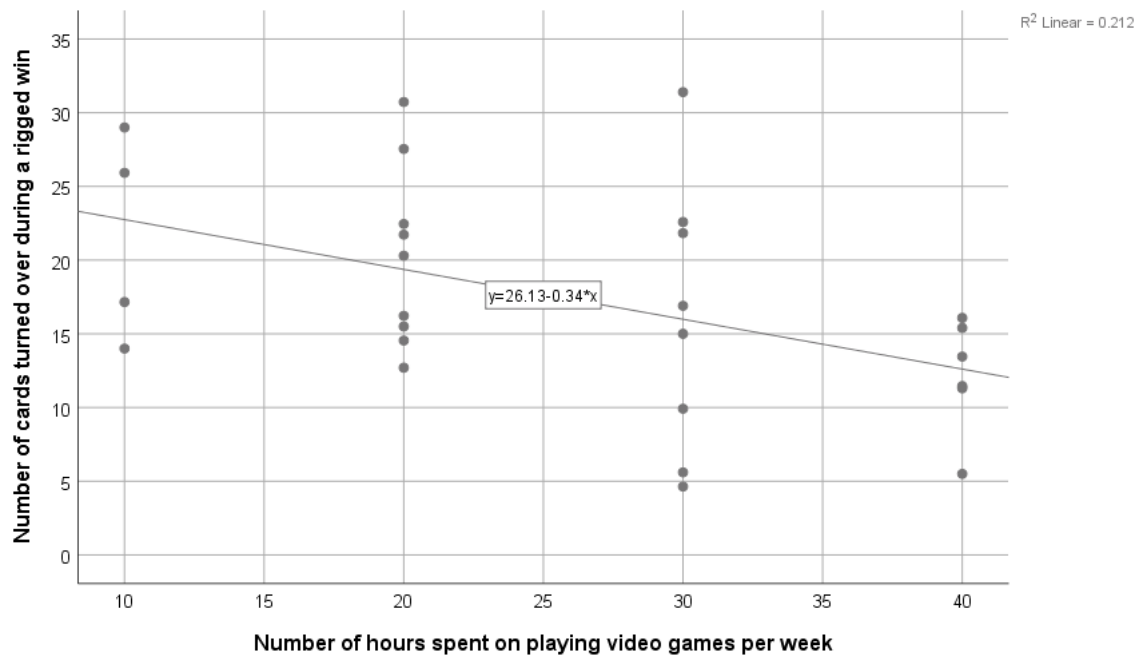


Figure 10. Average number of hours spent on playing video games per week and the number of cards turned over during a rigged win

The graph shows a strong negative correlation between the number of hours of video games played per week and cards turned over in the CCT during a rigged win, the relationship appears linear.

Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a significant negative relationship between hours spent playing video games per week and cards turned over during a rigged win [$r(27) = -.461, p = .016$].

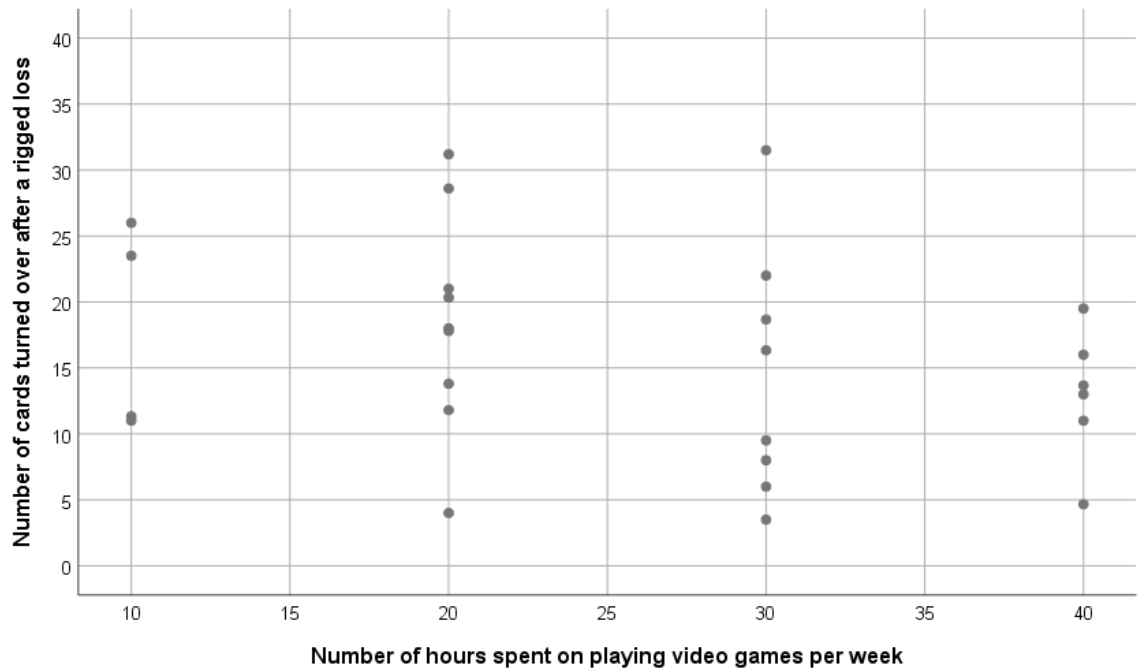


Figure 11. Average number of hours spent on playing video games per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged loss

The relationship is of interest as it may provide indications as to whether a cautionary approach to games of chance after previous losses is related to engagement with video games.

The graph shows no correlation between the number of hours of video games played per week and cards turned over in the CCT after a rigged loss.

Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed no significant negative relationship between hours spent playing video games per week and cards turned over after a rigged loss [$r(27) = -.271, p = .171$].

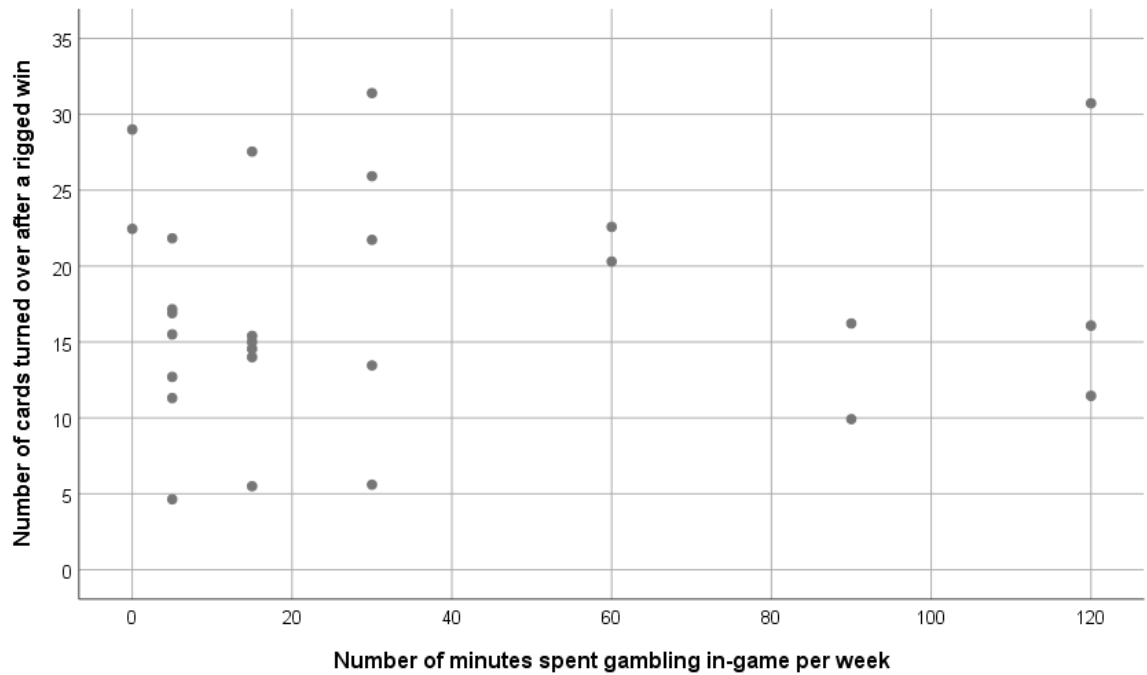


Figure 12. Average number of minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over during a rigged win

The relationship indicates whether engagement with simulated gambling is related to increased tendency to chase losses when given the opportunity to.

The graph shows no correlation between number of minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win.

Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed no significant relationship between minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win [$r(27) = .066, p = .742$].

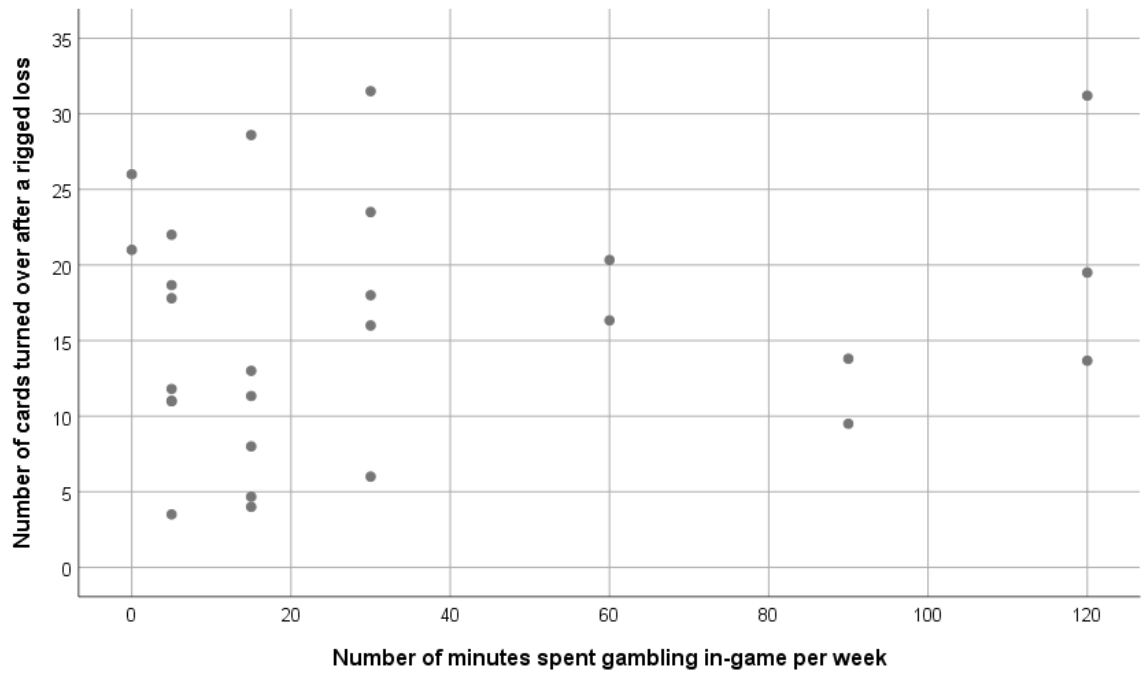


Figure 13. Average number of minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged loss

The relationship is of interest as it investigates whether engagement with simulated gambling promotes a more cautionary approach post loss.

The graph shows no correlation between number of minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged loss.

Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed no significant relationship between minutes spent gambling in-game per week and the number of cards turned over after a rigged loss [$r(27) = .178, p = .375$].

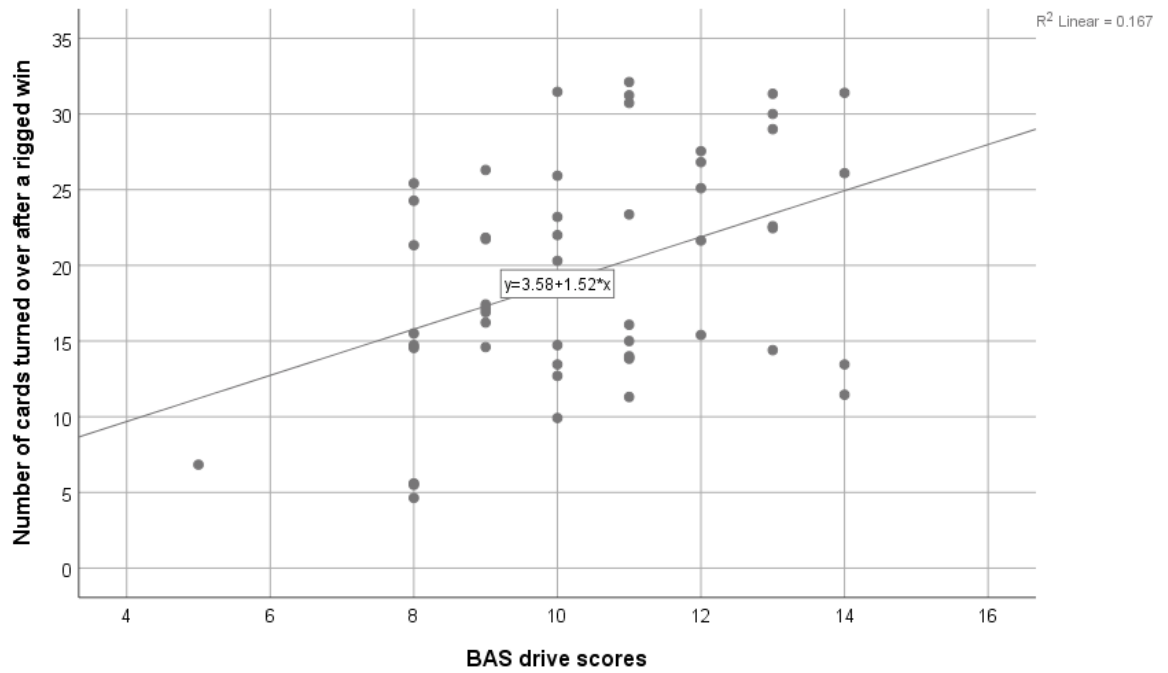


Figure 14. BAS drive scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win

The graph shows a strong positive relationship between BAS drive scores and the number of cards turned after a rigged win, the relationship appears linear.

The model prediction cards turned over after a rigged win included five predictors (BAS Drive, BAS fun-seeking, BAS reward responsiveness, hours of video games played per week and minutes spent gambling in-game per week), and accounted for a significant amount of variance (adjusted R-square = .406, $F(5, 46) = 7.969$, $p > .001$). The model predicted 41% of the variance.

The predictor BAS Drive was significant for the overall regression ($b = 2.300$, $t = 4.446$, $p > .001$), as did hours of video games played per week ($b = -.234$, $t = -3.144$, $p = .003$). The following predictors were not significant BAS fun-seeking ($b = -.490$, $t = -1.253$, $p = .216$, BAS reward responsiveness ($b = -.763$, $t = -1.897$, $p = .064$) and minutes spent gambling in-game per week ($b = .015$, $t = .506$, $p = 6.16$).

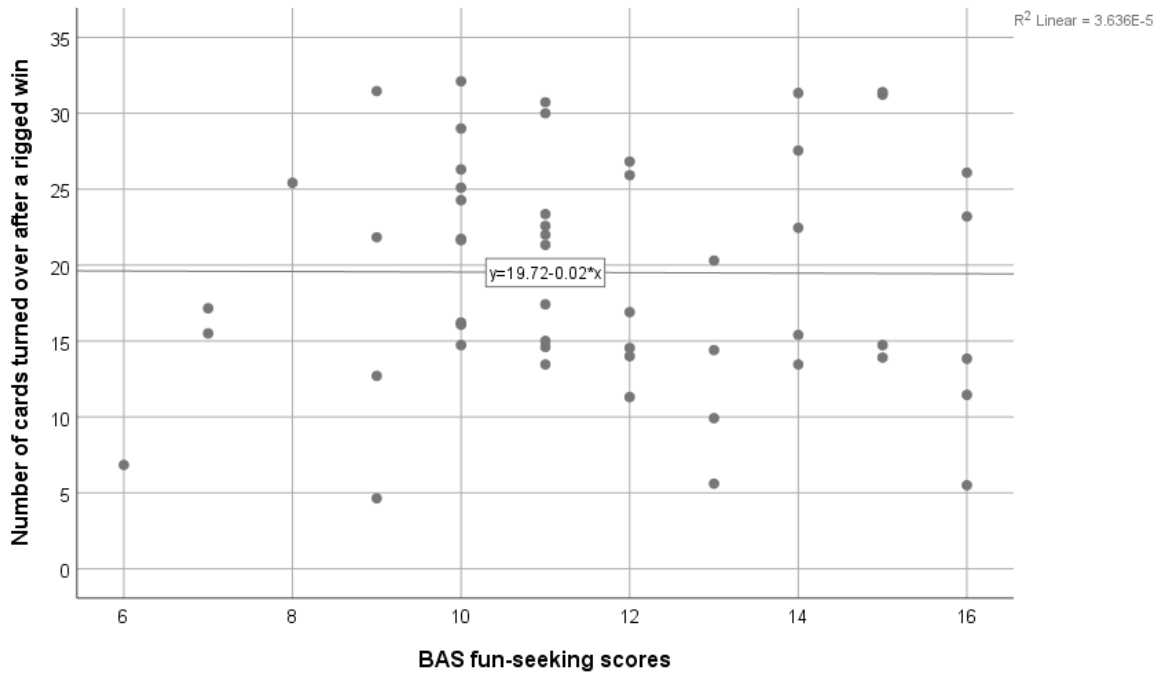


Figure 15. BAS fun-seeking scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win

The graph shows no relationship between BAS fun-seeking scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win.

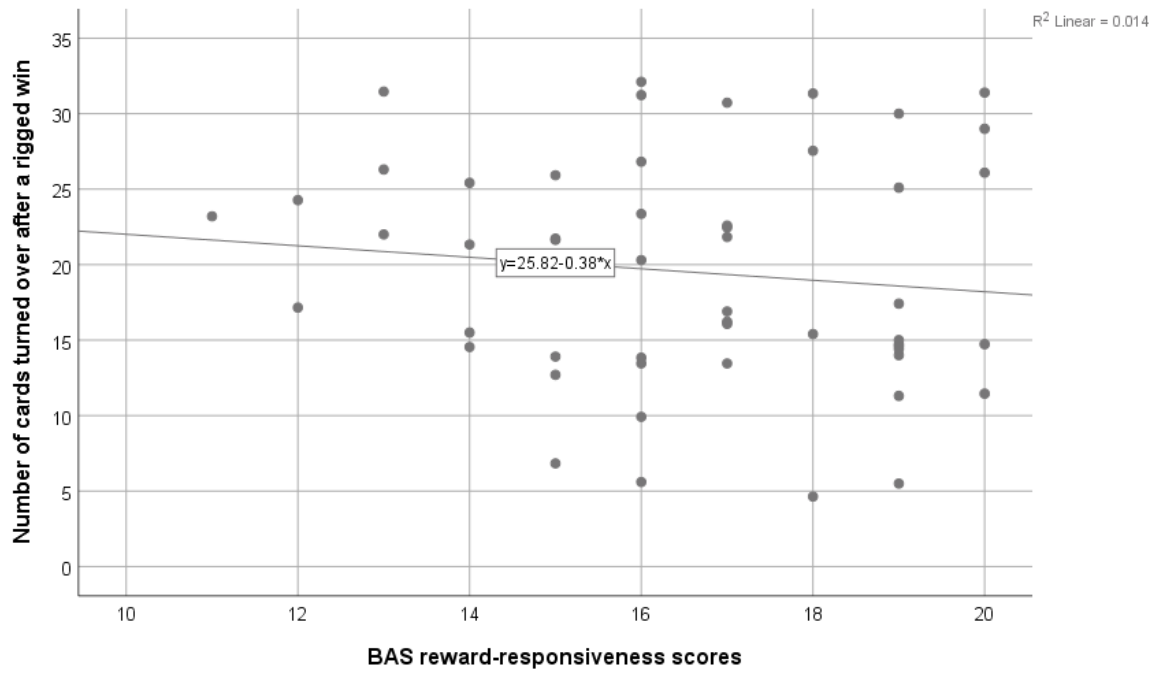


Figure 16. BAS reward responsiveness scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win

The graph shows no correlation between BAS reward responsiveness scores and the number of cards turned over after a rigged win.

7. Discussion

The second study aimed to investigate the effect of prolonged interaction with a MMORPG containing gambling mechanics on risk-taking behaviour in a validated gambling task. The hypothesis was: participants who regularly engage in simulated gambling in video games will perform worse in decision-making and delay discounting tasks compared to the control group. The hypothesis was not supported. No influence of interaction with simulated gambling on performance in a gambling task was found. However, a negative correlation between hours spent involved in video games per week and number of cards turned over was noted. These findings contradict the statements provided by participants in the qualitative part of this study, where reports of loss chasing, altered emotional states and impulsive spending were noted.

There are two main theories as to why the gambling task utilised in this study could have failed to find an effect of simulated gambling interactions on risk-taking behaviour. Firstly, it is possible that the task did not have sufficiently high stakes to engage a group that is familiar with regular, risky gambling mechanics in-game, explaining why the Guild Wars 2 player group as a whole turned over fewer cards than people who do not engage extensively in video games, regardless of age and gender. This theory is supported by a wealth of research concluding that younger males tend to make riskier decisions overall (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer, 1999), which was not noted in the hot CCT employed in this study. The task failing to pick up on a well-established occurrence in risk-taking research may elude that this relatively novel approach of measuring risk-taking needs to be used with caution or undergo revisions. Alternatively, the hot CCT should preferably be used alongside the cold version for a direct comparison

between participants in how individual decision-making changes between rational and affective conditions. Furthermore, despite the acceptable sample size, the observed power of the test that measured the influence of gender and age on the number of cards turned over in the CCT was very low, which indicates that there might exist a genuine effect that failed to be discovered in the current experiment, but this would have to be tested with either more participants or more CCT trials before conclusions can be drawn. Nevertheless, singularly using the hot version failed to find the expected differences in decision-making, contrary to what was hypothesised, the non-player group turned over significantly more cards in all conditions, which leads to the second explanation for why this might be. It is reasonable to consider, based on the previous qualitative reports, that video game players may be used to experiencing disappointment through losing large amounts of currency to in-game gambling, therefore, it is possible that this sample group prefer a cautionary approach in games of chance to limit losses, and employ a risk aversion approach in gambling situations. As the CCT has not yet been utilised with video game players in previous research, the present study is in need of future replication. Furthermore, the results of the behavioural inhibition and activation scale are of interest in relation to previous work, as conclusions have been drawn both against and in favour of the aspect of personality in decision-making (Buelow, 2015).

It was expected that participants who scored highly on the behavioural inhibition scale would experience a more negative reaction towards losing and adjust their strategy to minimise losses in the CCT, however, both BIS/BAS scores were almost identical in means across the two sample groups, and a significant difference in cards turned over in all conditions was still noted, with the

control group turning over significantly more cards than the video game players. Therefore, whilst BIS/BAS contributes towards the outcome of decision-making processes, it cannot be concluded that individual differences in activation and inhibition of behaviour singularly accounted for the difference found between groups in this study. The influence of BIS/BAS traits on decision-making have not been consistently observed in previous studies (Penolazzi, Gremigni & Russo, 2012), as it is recognised that personality traits interact with both the information relevant to the presented task and the context in which a choice is presented. Therefore, the context and available information of a choice may activate decision-making processes that are different in nature from the natural inclination of the individual.

Another unexpected finding was observed in relation to the individual delay discounting curve calculated through the five-trial adjustment task. Whilst the control group scored much higher values on average, which indicates steeper discounting curves, the difference between groups was not significant. This is of interest as it was predicted that the individual K-values would correlate with how participants perceived value in the gambling task, however, it cannot be concluded that the K-value was instrumental in manifesting the observed difference in cards turned over between groups, as no inherent difference in K-values was recorded, nor was the interaction between K-values and the difference in cards turned over in win and loss conditions significant. Therefore, it cannot be concluded from this study that individual discounting curves influence risk-taking or decision-making behaviour in a gambling scenario. This supports previous findings by Holt et al. (2003), who reported that gamblers discounted

delayed rewards less steeply than controls, although this finding was also not statistically significant.

Furthermore, it is recognised that reasons for engaging in gambling are complex and determined by underlying emotional, cognitive and financial factors that have not been considered in this study. In real-world gambling and simulated gambling alike, there are normally a wide variety of accompanying cues that elevate the experience and evoke stronger emotional responses than can be found in an experimental gambling task. For example, in video games the gambling activity normally has unique special visual and auditory effects attached to increase the excitement of the activity. This can most commonly be found with loot boxes, where flashing lights and the chime of coins become associated with the physiological arousal experienced from the gambling activity, resulting in the player becoming conditioned to the stimuli via Pavlovian processes (Clark et al., 2012). Notably, the experimental task did not have any such reinforcement attached, it could be beneficial to implement these in future tasks, to simulate an online casino experience and therefore potentially better engage gamers who are used to a high level of environmental entertainment during the gambling activity. Furthermore, gambling can also be engaged in to alleviate emotional states of boredom, anxiety or low mood (Clark et al., 2012), in these cases, the behaviour is fuelled by negative reinforcement, which plays a role in shaping future gambling behaviour and contribute to facilitating behavioural patterns that were not considered in the present study. These factors may have contributed to the discrepancy between results obtained in this study and in previous work on video game gambling, as a recent wealth of literature appear to suggest a strong link between video game involvement and pathological gambling symptoms (Macey

& Hamari, 2019; Molde et al., 2019; Zendle & Cairns, 2018). Notably, the previous work mentioned utilised surveys and correlational work, therefore, it would be beneficial to the field to explore direct behaviour in alternative gambling tasks to estimate how the observed positive relationship manifests in gambling situations.

7.1. Limitations and future research

There were several limitations with the present study, the sample was relatively small, although sufficient for the experimental design employed. The delay discounting task saw a number of difficulties around analysis, particular as it became clear through data processing that almost half of all participants either did not engage with the 5-trial adjustment task or did not understand the questions posed. This is of concern, as similar findings have been noted before in relation to this task (Holt et al., 2003), and it could therefore be beneficial to revisit the wording used in the discounting scenarios to make its employment more beneficial in future work. Furthermore, it is unlikely that participants believed that the theoretical reward posed to them existed or would be paid out, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that even if the participants understood the questions posed to them, there would be a conflict between belief in the authenticity of the reward and the optimal decision-making strategy employed. Therefore, to properly engage with the 5-trial adjustment task, the participants would have to engage in a suspension of disbelief regarding perceived authenticity of the task, meaning they would actually have to be convinced that an immediate and future reward physically existed to provide careful reasoning for analysis.

The present study holds several implications for scholars and video game players alike, due to the potentially harmful nature of gambling addiction and its

persuasiveness in engaging young people and vulnerable individuals. It could be greatly beneficial to utilise alternative tasks with a video game player sample to examine whether players exhibit similar risk-averse behaviour in practical measurements of gambling behaviour, or whether the behaviour changes as stakes are increased. It would also be useful to ask participants whether they stopped engaging in the CCT because of boredom, as this would confirm theories around the observed lack of engagement. Furthermore, to promote ecological validity, it would be interesting to develop an experimental gambling task that simulated an online casino gambling experience, with incentives, real reward, risk and the presence of conditioning stimuli. This would aid the overall understanding of the relationship between prolonged video game interaction and the likelihood of developing problematic decision-making strategies in games of chance.

In conclusion, the present study investigated the role of the virtual self in facilitating spending and risk-taking behaviour in video games, and further sought to establish whether a difference in decision-making behaviour in a validated gambling task existed between players and controls. The present study found no support for the role of the virtual self in increasing spending and gambling behaviour, nor did the present study find any difference in affective decision-making or sensitivity to reward between players and controls. Future research should seek to establish whether the findings in the qualitative section of this study are due to increasingly sophisticated marketing tactics to increase spending by all players in-game, and whether the prevalence in gambling is equally strong in new players. Future research should also establish whether similar results in a gambling task are achieved in a high-stakes scenario, as this

may be more beneficial to sufficiently engage the player group or confirm the risk-aversion theory presented in the present study.

8. General Discussion

The present study built on previous empirical work that focuses on correlational and qualitative methods (Armstrong et al., 2018; Gainsbury et al., 2015). Therefore, an important aspect of the current study was to expand upon the existing approach to investigate gambling in video games, to obtain novel insight in gambling and purchase behaviour in virtual environments. A sequential research design was used, and the information gathered from the qualitative approach informed the quantitative design of the second part of the current research. As previously discussed, the qualitative study in the current piece of research found no influence of the virtual self on spending or gambling habits in-game, which contradicts work by Hamari and Keronen (2017). No previous research has investigated experimental gambling with video game players with the purpose of detecting pathological behavioural patterns, however, correlational research utilising questionnaires contradict the current findings, as links between gaming and increased risks of pathological gambling patterns have been observed (Zendle & Cairns, 2018). This discrepancy in findings highlights the importance of transferring attention from correlational methods to more sophisticated behavioural measures, to further examine the extent of implications from the results presented in this piece of research. The quantitative findings are in need of replication and further refined testing, to fully be able to draw conclusions around the theories presented in relation to risk aversion, lack of engagement with non-sophisticated gambling tasks and the importance of

physical rewards in high stakes scenarios. As experimental gambling research with video game players are in very early stages in the field, it is reasonable to be cautious around interpreting the findings of this study when discussing implications and impact of the presence of gambling mechanics in virtual worlds on pathological gambling beliefs and behaviour manifesting in real life. Further refined experimental work in this field is encouraged, and may greatly aid the knowledge of risks associated with reinforcement schemes in virtual worlds.

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Appendix 1

Participant information form

The self and the virtual – an investigation into identification and fiscal decision-making behaviour in the simulated space of video games.

With the dawning age of streamlined business models that allow for easy spending online, micro-transactions and similar simulated gambling mechanics have been observed in over 100 recent video game titles and are particularly prominent in massive multiplayer online video games (MMOs) (King, Ejova & Delfabbro, 2012). However, the influence of these mechanics on video game players have remained largely unexplored by psychological research. The aim of this research is to perform a qualitative investigation into the reasoning around purchases of real and virtual currency (micro-transactions) in video games, participation in simulated gambling in video games and the role of the virtual self in establishing these behaviours. You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to investigate reasoning around risk-taking behaviour in video games and to explore emotional attachment to your in-game avatar. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. The interview is estimated to take approximately 45-90 minutes to complete.

By signing below, you are indicating that you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and that you are willing to take part in this research study.

Appendix 2

Participant Consent form

The self and the virtual – an investigation into identification and fiscal decision-making behaviour in the simulated space of video games.

With the dawning age of streamlined business models that allow for easy spending online, micro-transactions and similar simulated gambling mechanics have been observed in over 100 recent video game titles and are particularly prominent in massive multiplayer online video games (MMOs) (King, Ejova & Delfabbro, 2012). However, the influence of these mechanics on video game players have remained largely unexplored by psychological research. The aim of this research is to perform a qualitative investigation into the reasoning around purchases of real and virtual currency (micro-transactions) in video games, participation in simulated gambling in video games and the role of the virtual self in establishing these behaviours. You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to investigate reasoning around risk-taking behaviour in video games and to explore emotional attachment to your in-game avatar. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. The interview is estimated to take approximately 45-90 minutes to complete.

By signing below, you are indicating that you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and that you are willing to take part in this research study.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my participation without any explanation at any time, participants are advised that data may not be withdrawn from collection once it has been anonymised (as the researchers may not necessarily know what data belongs to you at this point).

I understand that I have the right to omit responses if I so choose.

I understand that my data will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity.

I understand that upon the completion of this research I may contact the researchers for further information about the purpose of the study.

Retention of research data:

Researchers are obliged to retain research data for up to 10 years' post-publication, however, your anonymised research data may be retained indefinitely (e.g., so that researchers engage in open practice and other researchers can access their data to confirm the conclusions of published

work). Researchers retain consent forms for as long as we continue to hold information about the data subject and for 10 years for published research.

I consent to take part in this study conducted by Cecilia Bayne, Dr Kenneth Scott-Brown and Dr George Lovell who intend to use my data for further research examining the influence of virtual identity in video games.

Initials:

Privacy notice and legal basis for processing

Abertay University (the “University”/“we”) is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (or any successor legislation) and (EU) 2016/679 the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”) (and any other directly applicable EU regulation relating to privacy) (together “Data Protection Law”). This research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Abertay University. The research team adhere to the Ethical guidelines of The British Psychological Society and the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). General information on Data Protection law is available from the Information Commissioner’s Office.

For research involving living humans, the Data Controller adheres to, and collects, processes and handles/archives data in compliance with:

Article 6 (1) e: processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller

Article 9 (j): processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) based on Union or Member State law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.

Where applicable, this form is prepared in consultation with Article 13 of EU GDPR legislation, detailing the information to be provided where personal data are collected from the data subject.

If you have any complaints/queries as a result of taking part in this research you may address them to the Researchers in the first instance: Cecilia Bayne, 1305746@abertay.ac.uk or supervisor Dr Kenneth Scott-Brown, K.Scott-Brown@abertay.ac.uk or researchethics@abertay.ac.uk if necessary. You can also contact the University’s Data Controller (the University) and Data Protection Officer (Graham McKay: DataProtectionOfficer@abertay.ac.uk).

Appendix 3

Semi Structured Interview sheet

The aim of this interview is to explore your relationship with your video game avatar, your social environment and your spending habits. Please be advised that you have the right to omit answers, your participation is voluntary and anonymous, and your identity will be masked behind a participant code (pp01, for example). You have the right to withdraw your participation without explanation at any time. Please try to answer the questions in this interview as accurately and as carefully as you can. Questions are adapted from the *Player Identification Scale* (Van Looy, Courtois, De Vocht & De Marez, 2012).

Section 1. You, your avatar and the game.

Tell me about your avatar in Guild Wars 2 (referred to as GW2).

(The questions below are to serve as prompts in case the participant does not share much initial information.)

1. **For how long have you played Guild Wars 2?**
2. **How often do you play?**
3. **How much do you identify with your character and what happens to him or her?**
4. **Would you become your character if you could, why/why not?**
5. **Does your character have a personality/characteristics that you would like to have?**
6. **How often do you make up stories and histories for your characters?**
7. **How long do you usually spend customising your character during character creation?**
8. **How much do you enjoy exploring the world just for the sake of exploring it?**
9. **How important is leveling up your character as fast as possible?**
10. **How important is knowing as much about the game mechanics and rules as possible?**
11. **How often do you play so you can avoid thinking about some of your real-life?**

Section 2. You, your guild and your social habits.

The next couple of questions are about your social environment in Guild Wars

2.

Tell me about your social life in GW2.

(See prompts below.)

12. **Are the members of your guild important to you, why/why not?**
13. **How important is it to you how your guild members see you?**
14. **How important is it to you that your guild members feel like they can count on you?**

15. How much do you enjoy getting to know other people in the game?
16. How often do you watch other people stream content in GW2?
17. Do you watch other people open Black Lion chests or play Sandstorm Flush in GW2?

Section 3. You, your funds and your spending habits.

The last couple of questions are about your spending habits in Guild Wars 2.

Tell me about what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why.

Tell me about a time that you have played Sandstorm Flush or equivalent in GW2.

(See prompts below.)

18. Do you buy items with real currency, in-game gold or both?
19. How often do you play Sandstorm Flush or open Black Lion chests per week?
20. Why do you think you play Sandstorm Flush or open Black Lion chests?
21. How much gold you usually spend on these activities per week?
22. What is your wage/income?
23. What proportion of your monthly wage would you require (if any) in exchange for deleting your main character in GW2?
24. How much do you believe your avatar influences your decisions in-game? Why?
25. How do you feel about similar activities in other spaces (other games, online or in a casino?)

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 4

Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcript

03/11/2018

Alias Neroby

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "Okay, we are good to go. All set, you got a drink with you?"

P: "Yes, is it okay if we take breaks like somewhere in between, if it takes a little long and you know-"

I: "Yeah absolutely. Absolutely. We can take a break at any point."

P: "Okay, let's do this."

I: "Okay. So tell me a little bit about your character in GW2, it can be your main character, if you want, just tell me a bit about them."

P: "Ehm... Okay, I'm already stuck at the first question."

I: "(Laugh) It might be that you have many characters. But if there's one that is particularly special to you."

P: "... Okay, I'll just give you a general overview of my characters. I have about eight characters and I've spent between 1,000 to 2,000 hours on the characters that I play the most. And on these characters, what I like to do is that I like to go around and collect items for these characters, collect in-game currency for these characters and... I do spend most of my money, most of my in-game money on two of my main characters."

I: "Okay, so tell me a little bit about those two main characters."

P: "Well the first- do I go into the main- into game terms or should I keep gaming terms-?"

I: "Yeah, as long as you think that I can understand what you're saying. It's absolutely okay. I will explain it to others."

P: "Okay, my main character is the first character that I ever created in the game when I first started the game and the open Beta which is my engineer character. I wanted to make an engineer because engineering was the main field that I studied in real life, which is aeronautical engineering, and my second main character is a mesmer. I first created my mesmer about after 1000 hours of playing on my engineer, I played mostly my engineer and I continue to play it as my main character most of the time."

I: "Okay. So how long have you played Guild Wars 2?"

P: "Guild Wars 2 I've played since the open Beta, which is... I can't remember which year is that, do you remember what year that is?"

I: "It's been six years, I believe."

P: "(Laugh)."

I: "Don't worry, I was there, too. It's been a long time."

P: "But the... Guild Wars I started, like Guild Wars 1 I started when the Nightfall expansion was released, you know nightfall, right?"

I: "Vaguely, yes. So how often do you play GW2, would you say? It can be weekly, or daily."

P: "On an average, I would say two to three hours a day."

I: "Okay. And what do you primarily do in those hours?"

P: "I log in and I do the endgame content, which is raiding."

I: "Okay, so moving back to your character, particularly then your main character so probably your engineer, how much do you feel that you identify with that character and what happens to that character in the game?"

P: "... You're tossing tough questions (laugh). Could you repeat the question again?"

I: "Yeah. Yeah. So how much- I'm interested in seeing whether you identify with your character, so probably your engineer, a: whether you and identify with that character and b: weather you identify and relate to their things like successes and setbacks and stuff like that in the game."

P: "Uhm... Well, you have to understand that my main character my engineer is of another race. It is a cat race, it's the charr. So if my- if I get shot at in the game, I don't feel like I'm getting hurt in real life if that's the question, or if I do like an achievement, but I do feel like "hey, you know, this is awesome", I feel the adrenaline especially if it's very difficult achievements such as raid achievements that we've done together, the "Voice in the Void" for instance, right, when we got that achievement I even have the video on YouTube, I was shouting, we were all shouting enjoyment after two weeks of hard work. But when it comes to like generally feeling attached to my character in the sense that I feel like I'm seeing through the eyes of my character, no, I do not feel that attachment."

I: "I see, so when you experience successes for example in the game, is that Neroby experiencing those successes? As in, they're your achievements?"

P: "It depends on the achievement. If I put many hours into it like into TVITV. I felt like that was an achievement by me, if it's like a general achievement like part of the storyline where my character, you know goes through to kill an elder Dragon. I think like that, there's more of him doing that."

I: "Okay. Okay, that's really good, that explains a lot. In terms of enjoyment, which one do you enjoy more or can you even then compare them are the two different areas almost?"

P: "I would say it's many different areas. I will compare them in the sense that if it is an achievement that is really easily done, like it doesn't really feel like an achievement of my part. If it's an achievement more related to the storyline, it's really easy to get I would say that achievement is more of a storyline achievement and it doesn't really concern me. I don't really feel an attachment to that achievement."

I: "Okay, I have another tricky question and you can interpret this one anyway you want, so in terms of your character, it can be a main character, it can be another character. Would you become that character if you could and why or why not?"

P: "Does your question mean like in real life if I'll become my character in real life?"

I: "Yeah, it can be interpreted that way for sure."

P: "Okay, that is the way I'm interpreting. There are some qualities of my character that I would like to have in real life in terms of how my character is driven by the story that arenanet created like there are some decisions that he's made that shows a lot of leadership qualities that I feel like it's a good trait to have for anyone who has a leadership role or for anyone in general who has a leadership role actually, that I do aspire to have. Otherwise that is the only thing I guess that..."

I: "That's great, that's really good. So in terms of going back and really focusing in on characters and this part of the interview is quite character heavy. Do you- are you at all interested in I guess you can say adding dimension to your characters in that you make up backstories or histories for your characters at all, is that something that interests you?"

P: "Role-playing?"

I: "Yeah, it can be, whether it's passive and it just exists in your head of whether it's active in the community."

P: "No, that is something that doesn't interest me."

I: "Okay. How come?"

P: "Uhm... Well, I have tried role-playing once, that's many years ago, I think sixteen years ago. It didn't quite work for me, I mean it it's just not my style. I'm somebody who's not very good at creating stories. Not somebody who reacts very well to somebody who's creating story unto his character and trying to you know, trying to react with other people who creates such stories because I'm not someone who's very good at storytelling himself."

I: "Okay, that makes sense. So in terms of character customisation, this is something that everybody gets the option to do at some point in the game, you know, when you're starting out or later in the game for makeover kits. How long would you say you usually spend customising a character?"

P: "Maybe once a month for 30 minutes. Maybe even less."

I: "Is it something that's important to get right?"

P: "I would say it is moderately important as long as you're not an eyesore to yourself and to others."

I: "Okay, I see, and that's a personal judgment, yes?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes, okay. I'm going to move on to something that I know might be quite sore for you. But how much do you enjoy exploring the in-game world just for the sake of exploring it?"

P: "Guild Wars 2? (Laugh)."

I: "Yes."

P: "Okay. I would say I would like to see- I would just go through the map and just go through the map once and not look at every nook and cranny of them. Just you know fly through it, generally, see "Ah okay, there's something nice for me or there's something not nice for me". I would never go back to this map unless there is something of great reward in that area."

I: "Okay, that makes perfect sense. So you're not- it's not something you would do over and over for the sake of it?"

P: "For the exploration? No."

I: "The primary focus is the reward?"

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay. How important is it to you to level up a character as fast as possible?"

P: "... Mmm... All of my eight characters I have, seven of them I've- Okay, not seven, I would say six of them I have leveled up as fast as possible."

I: "Okay, so it's quite important."

P: "Yes."

I: "Why is that?"

P: "Well... This is the way I see it. If I took my time to level it up that would mean exploring the maps and going through those low-level maps again from low-level to high-level going through all those maps is just... It's just no fun for me to do it over and over again."

I: "Okay, so then goal is to access the endgame content?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay and in your playstyle what is that endgame content, if you would list them?"

P: "Ehm... That will be just raids."

I: "Okay, so that kind of nicely leads onto my next question, which is how important is it to you to know as much as possible about game mechanics and game rules?"

P: "To me it is very important like, uhm... When you say to me, do you mean myself how important is it for myself to understand the mechanics? Okay. It is very important. Do I have to elaborate?"

I: "Yes, please do."

P: "Okay. What I do is I sell raids, I don't have to explain what that is because you know what that is, and if I don't know what the mechanics are I would not be very good at selling these raids and that is my main source of income in the game."

I: "Okay. So when you first started answering that question you made the distinction between you and I assume your character."

P: "Yes."

I: "How important is it for your character then?"

P: "... Through my character's eyes?"

I: "If you like, you have a lot of freedom with these questions in that they are so- they're quite unspecified purposely to make you answer them in a way that feels right to you."

P: "Okay, well, okay through my character's eyes. I'm looking at my character and I'm role playing right now. I'm a huge cat. I think it's very important for him to know these mechanics as well. Because if he didn't, he would be dead."

I: "Yeah, that makes sense. But if he were to die, that would be his death, I'm correct in assuming, that's on him?"

P: "Yes (laugh)."

I: "Yes (laugh). Okay, that's good, in terms of escapism and taking a break from life, how often do you think you play GW2 to just to kind of get away from your real life for a while?"

P: "Okay, this is a bit weird. I feel like I do play GW2 to get away from life, but when I do play GW2, sometimes I feel like it stresses me out more than life stresses me."

I: "(Laugh) Okay, I see, why is that?"

P: "Well, endgame content can be stressful depending on who you do it with or how you're doing it. They can be also things in the game that stresses me out like, you know, losing all my money, losing all my possessions in the game, that can stress me out as well."

I: "Okay. Is that something that happens regularly?"

P: "It has happened quite a bit (laugh)."

I: "We're going to move on and explore that in a little bit. I'm just going to ask you a little bit about your social environment first."

P: "Real life social environment?"

I: "In GW2, don't worry we're not gonna get too personal, I'm not gonna dig down deep in your personal life (laugh). Is your microphone going to be okay to continue, do you want a break at all or are you good to continue?"

P: "Okay let's go."

I: "All right. Okay. So the next couple of questions are about your social environment in the game. So could you tell me a little bit about your social life in GW2? Just whatever comes to mind."

P: "My social life..."

I: "Yes, the people you surround yourself with."

P: "... Well my social environment right now it is such that I log in and check my schedule if there is anything lined up for me to sell in the raid environment, in the raiding scene. The people that I hang out with are the people I feel like I'm doing business with, do you know what I mean? And I don't really hang out with them, I feel more like it is a... it is a business relationship. I just log in I do my job and then I leave. I get my money of course and then I log off."

I: "Okay. So in terms of guilds, if you pick the one that's sort of the most dominant one for you. Would you say that the members of that guild are important to you?"

P: "I would say they are fairly important."

I: "In what way?"

P: "Well... This is a tricky question again, because I have to think of which guild, right?"

I: "Yes, you could explain a little bit about every guild if you wanted to or you could stick to one it's up to you how you answer it."

P: "Okay, if that's the case, I would like to explain a couple of the guilds, an overview of them. Like the guild HC like we're both in HC so I can explain this to you, right?"

I: "Yes yes."

P: "Yeah. It is fairly important to me in the sense that okay, we all started quite a while ago together. We have known each other since I think since I joined was in December of last year, how many months is that now, that's eleven?"

I: "Yeah almost a year."

P: "And through knowing these people I still play other games apart from Guild Wars 2 with some of the members, so my relationship with them is fairly important because you know, if I ever did something bad to these people I would feel bad about- or if I said something nasty, I wouldn't say something nasty. Right? Do you understand? Am I making sense?"

I: "Yes, you're absolutely making sense. Yes, I get the sense from you that they are important to you as friends and not as business people."

P: "Okay, then I have my other two guilds which I sell raids with the first one is called QQ and that is purely on a business level. If we sell raids, I login, I'll sign up to the raid, I will sell the raid, I will log (off). And then comes the other guild that I'm in for the purpose of selling raids and it's the same for this one, but this one I have invested a little bit more time into it. So I feel like it is also, okay, business and almost... I would say it's a business level that I've invested a lot of time into, and the people there are well, they are also on a business level but I would say we are almost on a friend level but I like to keep a little bit more of a business perspective to it."

I: "Okay. Why do you think that is?"

P: "... Well... I think it's because the nature of raid selling, you know. We have to point out mistakes in each other quite often that we see. And if you start to take things too personally or if you start to you know, look at someone as a friend, I guess it is harder to point out what he's doing wrong. I don't know actually, it doesn't make sense because maybe for other people it's easier for them to point out if it's a friend if you tell him as a friend that you know, "hey you're doing this wrong", but for me, it's easier to point out for somebody who is on a business level that I see eye-to-eye as a business partner "hey, you know you're doing this wrong, you need to be more objective focused, you understand you're doing this wrong?" so that you improve."

I: "Yeah. I get that. So along that note, how important is it to you how your guild members you?"

P: "Uhm... It depends. Okay, like for the guild HC the one that we are in, right, it is important to me that they see me as someone who is friendly. Even though sometimes you know back in the past I used to shout (laugh)."

I: "Yeah, I wouldn't call that malicious in any way."

P: "(Laugh) Yeah like in HC I- you're really tossing difficult questions. I was not prepared for such level of difficult questions. In HC I would say that it is important that other guild members saw me as someone who's friendly because I saw them- I saw the guild as something that was friendly because the main reason I was in that guild was because of the friendliness of the guild. Well, okay there's two things I liked about that guild that because we were efficient and we were friendly, right, and it's very hard to get a guild of a combination of both efficient and friendly, it's usually a trade-off between the two."

I: "Okay. Why do you think that is?"

P: "Well it goes back to my explanation of I'm seeing other guild members of the other guild as a business level because you know, you have to take things and see things at an objective level. Often times people can get very heated up when they feel like the objective is not met, right? And for my other two guilds that I sell raids with it is important to me that they see me as someone who takes things professionally. So I would say that is important. I think it is important what people in my guild think of me, yeah I think it's quite important."

I: "Okay in a similar kind of vein, how important is it that your guild members feel like they can count on you?"

P: "Uhm... I would say it is very important... Yeah."

I: "Okay. Is it similar reasoning as before?"

P: "Well... Yes."

I: "Anything you'd like to add it all?"

P: "Well, I would say if I was- if people couldn't rely on me that that would mean that we cannot get the job done, right, or I'll feel like I'm a burden to the team when I'm selling raids and that is not good. If I was a burden to the team in HC then I would have, you know, a terrible person that at endgame content and that would have- that would have been bad because I go around and I'm shouting at people like "you got to use that, you got to do this, you got to do that!" (laugh) and if I'm then the one that's not reliable then that's not good (laugh). Then I'd be a hypocrite."

I: "Yeah that makes sense, so it's about integrity. Okay. In terms of other people moving about in the game participating in similar activities to you. How much do you enjoy getting to know these people?"

P: "Sorry. Which people?"

I: "Other people in the game, other people that move around in the game with you? They might- you might not know them, but do you enjoy getting to know new people in the game?"

P: "It depends on who I'm meeting. Usually I don't really care, but if it's somebody who can help me meet certain objectives, or it's people who I can learn from then it's nice, or people are friendly and you know... the people who I generally enjoy playing with, and I guess I do enjoy time with them. But if it's strangers like complete strangers that I do not know, unless it is the strangers that I know through friends and my friends are telling me "hey, this guy's a nice person", you know, we're going to have a good time together because we going to do a particular activity together, then I would enjoy the time if it's somebody who is, you know, a friend of a friend and I don't even know if you're going to do stuff together then I don't- I wouldn't even enjoy it."

I: "Okay, so it's about objective, a shared objective and it's about someone vouching for that person?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yeah, okay. Okay, last real social question here. How often do you watch other people streaming content in GW2?"

P: "Uhm... Not a lot."

I: "Okay, and why's that?"

P: "Well... The only reason why I would watch someone doing other things in GW2 is because if I can learn something from it and use it for my own play."

I: "Okay, so to master your trade in raids, for example."

P: "That is one example, or if I'm watching somebody streaming gambling, that is something."

I: "Okay. It's funny you mention it, cuz we were just going to move on to that. Yeah, literally the next question is do you watch other people open black lion chests or play sandstorm flush in GW2?"

P: "I've watched a *lot* of that. Yes. I have."

I: "Okay. Tell me about that."

P: "Okay. well, it started off with watching it because I was hearing a lot of things about gambling in GW2, opening black lion chests and gambling with the ecto gambling. I don't have to elaborate on what ecto gambling is as long as you understand?"

I: "Don't worry. I understand."

P: "Okay, and you will paraphrase this all for the-?"

I: "Yes, I will explain this to other people so they also understand (laugh)."

P: "Okay. So I'm just talking to you and this is like something you understand and I don't have to explain, okay. Ecto gambling, I heard about ecto gambling and black lion chests. Well, I wanted to understand the chances of getting certain items of this. So I watched a lot of people opening the chests and doing ecto gambling to have a better sense of what chances are. I actually watched I think for ecto gambling at least 40 people open and opening at least at least 100 I would say because most of the people doing the ecto gambling are there to get the achievement item, and for black lion chests, I watched it in the past if I wanted the particular item that was within that seasonal chest and I wanted to see how many on average people usually took to get that item so I could do it myself based on that average, I thought."

I: "So you are watching almost as a research activity?"

P: "Exactly. As a research activity, to research- ."

I: "Your chances, if you were to put your own money on the block."

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay, and you mentioned as well that people had told you about this, who introduced you to take Sandstorm Flush or the ectoplasm gambling, for example?"

P: "That would be the raid selling guild."

I: "Okay. Is it your experience that a lot of the people in that raid selling guild engage in these activities often?"

P: "Yes, and not in just my raid selling guild, but in other raid selling guilds as well."

I: "Okay, I see."

P: "It is a culture."

I: "It's a culture you say?"

P: "It is, it is."

I: "Okay. I know very little of that since I don't raid sell myself. Could you tell me a little bit about that culture?"

P: "Okay uhm, it feels this way. I speak for myself, but this is my perspective on the culture. It's because we earn so much gold in the game that you know, we feel like sometimes there's nothing better to spend the gold on if we are not interested in legendary items or if you're not interested in skins in the Gemstore, what else can we spend on? You know, we just, you know, throw our money into the Ecto gambling because it feels like this- when you win in the Ecto gambling, it is basically one hour of raid selling depending on what you get out of it. You feel like, you know, instead of, you know, "hey, why would I sell a raid for one hour when I could have just tossed-take my chances and win the amount I could have gotten in one hour?". Right, that's what I feel like the culture could have been, it also could be that, you know, when people go ecto gambling

they are like "Hey, you know", we call it "rolling one", "let's go roll one together". It sounds like we're rolling weed (laugh), but it's not, we're just opening an ecto gambling item, you know, "let's go roll one together".

I: "So it's a social activity?"

P: "Sometimes, it's also really interesting to watch each other. What item we get instead of you know, opening one by yourself and be like "aw I lost", you know, like "hey, we lost together. That's fun. Let's try one more again" (laugh)."

I: "Okay, so it almost softens the blow of a loss."

P: "Sometimes, yeah."

I: "Okay, I see..."

P: "I feel like your questions are making me think harder than I thought I would (laugh)."

I: "Well, you have a lot of interesting things to say and I'm just thinking about whether I would like you to elaborate a little bit on that. I think we're going to move in that direction. We're moving on to the third section which is the last section and it's about spending habits. Are you okay to dive right into that?"

P: "Of course."

I: "Okay, so could you tell me about what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why?"

P: "Okay, uhm... There's a couple of things actually I spend my gold on currently. First of all, I would say the most expensive thing I spend my gold on is gambling, whether it is to get- whether it's black lion chests or it was for ecto gambling, I would say ecto gambling was way more than the black lion chests, and the 3rd comes in to place is the Gemstore, I spend my money on. Yeah, these are the only three things I actually spend my money on right now, or have actually spent the most money on."

I: "And why do you spend it in these particular places?"

P: "I would say Ecto gambling because- is that actually part of your questions later? Can I leave out why I spend money on the ecto gambling because you're gonna ask that anyway, or should I just answer that now?"

I: "If you want we could focus on the gem store first and we can move on to the gambling."

P: "Okay, yeah, I'll focus on the gemstore first. I would say that's where the best-looking items are in Guild Wars 2. I would say that arenanet actually spends most of their time coming up with interesting and innovative items for the gemstore more than they do anywhere else in the game. I feel like money spent there is the most worth which is understandable to me because that's the main avenue of income for arenanet but I don't have to spend real life money to get the Gem Store items. I just use in- game gold."

I: "I see, so..."

P: "Also sometimes out of spite, you know, I feel like, you know, spite, like whenever I go ecto gambling and I lose all my money I always save a little bit of money, you know, just to spite arenanet "you've taken my money from me in GW2, you know, I'm gonna buy something that you've actually spent your working hours- your real life working hours on designing, and I'm not

gonna use real life money I'm gonna use in-game money so that it's worthless to you (laugh), if that makes sense, out of spite."

I: "Okay, so it's almost a way of getting even after not being successful at the gambling."

P: "Yes (laugh). It's like micro aggression."

I: "Okay. So in a way your gambling activity and the Gemstore that has some kind of relationship to you?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Explain that a little bit?"

P: "Uhm... Okay, like, if I win big in ecto gambling, sometimes I use my earning and convert it directly into gems, right? Before I ecto gamble more and lose more, I would ecto gamble into gems. And with these gems if I feel like you know, I can get something out of these gems, I would buy the item from the gem store or if I'm losing a lot in the ecto gambling and I feel like I've lost money. I feel like arenanet has taken money from me. Then I feel like you know, hey, I'm going to buy something from the gem store because that is something arenanet has put their work into like their real-life work, especially if it's a really nice item and I feel like hey, you know, they put in a lot of effort into the graphic design of this item, I'm going to buy it with in-game currency, it is something that doesn't really, pay them, with real life money."

I: "I see. Yeah, that's very interesting."

P: "Likely out of spite, I guess microaggression and all that (laugh)."

I: "Okay, I see, okay. Would you be comfortable to move on to sandstorm flush and explain a little bit about why you engage in that?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, tell me a little bit about that."

P: "Why I engage in it, it started off with, uhm... well, it started off with hearing about this item and you know understanding that the way this game works, there is the merchant that you can have-a permanent merchant contract that you can buy from the black lion trading post if you want for 1000 gold. And this thousand gold to me back then was a lot and I thought "okay why don't I try my luck at getting this item, or at least the equivalent of this item through gambling and possibly win money in the process?" So I tried my luck at it and the first time I gambled to get this item I actually started off with 1,000 gold and I won in the end a profit of 2,000 gold. Right, and then my thinking went on to this is "with 1,000 gold I won 2,000 gold, now that I have two thousand gold, why not win a little bit more?" And then I tried and then I started losing gold, and then I thought "oh, I'm actually losing gold now." But I started with two thousand gold profit now I'm at a net profit of 1,000 gold, I want to get at least back to my 2,000 gold profit and that never happened, I just kept losing and losing and losing."

I: "Okay, so you kept going?"

P: "Yes, I kept going. In hopes of, you know, catching up to what I had before."

I: "I see, I see. How often would you say you do this?"

P: "How often do I do what?"

I: "How often do you play Sandstorm flush or open black lion chests or similar?"

P: "Almost every day."

I: "Okay, how much gold do you usually spend? Per week or daily if you prefer."

P: "Uhm... Can I just say how much I've spent overall, would that help?"

I: "Yes sure, if that's easier."

P: "I would say about between forty thousand to fifty thousand gold."

I: "Okay, and that's purely on...?"

P: "Black lion chests and- that's including black lion chests."

I: "Okay, and you buy all of this with in-game gold?"

P: "Exactly, I would never spend real life money on that, out of spite, you know, "arenanet you take my money, if you take my in-game money I won't give you any real life money" (laugh)."

I: "I see. I really want to kind of narrow down on the sandstorm or the black lion aspect. Is there anything else you feel like you could tell me about that in terms of either an episode that you played that stands out to you in particular or even the first time that you actually won?"

P: "Well, there are two instances that I actually won something out of a gambling session. The first time was as I've explained before the first hundred times that I gambled in order to get that merchant item, right, I won 2,000 profit and then I kept going at it and then I lost, a week after that when I recuperated up my losses or at least enough money to gamble again I actually went at it, and I won the jackpot of the Sandstorm flush hand, I won 2000 gold, I don't remember if you saw that I posted in the HC channel a photo of it that I won the 2000 gold and I was really happy and actually kept- I kept away from ecto gambling for about three or four days after that, but then I started to see like people I know started to gamble again and they're like, "okay, you know what, if you're gambling I'm gambling with you" I thought and then I gambled then before I knew it I actually lost about five hundred gold in, and then I thought "okay, I've lost 500 gold now" I went into a state of mind of chasing my losses. I felt like, you know, I lost five hundred gold I can gamble again and win back the 500 which never happened and then I lost I think about six or seven thousand gold in that process because I thought of, you know, winning back what I had."

I: "I see, so in terms of your relationship with this activity, how do you feel about it?"

P: "I feel like it is really something that I should not be doing but it is because it's something that I have I keep thinking of, you know, gambling to get back my losses that I've lost so much money and I feel like the game is designed in the sense that from what I- from what I've seen from other people from what I've researched that my losses should not have been where they were, or most of the time they should not have been where they were because the average loss from what I've known is about- that is before I put my input into it was about seven or eight gold every time you gamble should have been a loss on the average. But when I calculated my losses, they were closer to forty or fifty gold lost every time I gambled so, I feel like my chance- my gold should be evening out whenever I gamble but this is not the case. It makes me feel very weird about the item or at least how it is implemented."

I: "When you say weird, I was hoping you could untangle weird for me?"

P: "Okay. This is like an essay question, isn't (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) It is."

P: "Well in GW2 there are no probabilities revealed in the game. They do not tell you on the wiki or in the game what your chances of getting a certain item are, although there are chances of getting a certain item. We just do not know, nobody knows for sure how- what is determined in order for a person to get an item of chance. Right, there are many instances where I felt like something is very off, very peculiar about the set chances in the sense like not just in terms of gambling but in terms of everything else. I would like to start off with the- with a drop called an ascended item you're familiar with that. Were you here when the triple trouble event was released?"

I: "Yes."

P: "Yes, when it was released there was this item- ascended items were the most sought-out items because that was the best items you could get in the game back then apart from legendary items, but they were of the same stat level which was the highest level you could get, and the only way to get them back then was through a drop, you could not craft them from what I know. I think you could craft them... No, you could not craft them I think."

I: "If we're talking about the green gooey ascended skins...?"

P: "Green gooey?"

I: "Triple trouble released exclusive skins that had almost like green poison dripping off them. Are those the items that you're talking about?"

P: "I'm talking about ascended items in general from what I remember. You could not craft them back then the only way you could get them was through drops. Yes, and they were really, really rare and when triple trouble was first released, for the first weeks or for at least for the first week, everybody was doing it every time the event was available and nobody was getting that item, nobody in the map was, at least nobody was shouting it out like "Hey, I got this item, yes I got the ascended item!". Nobody was and then I remember on one particular day that I did it, almost half of the map got the ascended item all together which leads me to believe like the way the game calculates chances are not really fair to everyone in the sense that, you know, maybe it says; okay the chance for this item to drop is 1% and then on a different time or day or particular event, it will give everyone that item."

I: "So the percentage varies you believe?"

P: "I don't believe it varies, like I believe if you were to take time gate and you were to say "okay at this particular time I'm going to block off this week, okay, maybe not this week, but I'm going to block off this day and nobody's going to get this item for this day. But the next day I'm going to give people this item and I'm going to calculate based on that 1%". So if you look at that day in particular when nobody's getting that item, you're going to have a 0% chance of getting this item, but if you look at this day and the day that people are getting this item, people are- you're looking at 1% overall. Do you know what I mean?"

I: "Mhm, I see."

P: "So anyway back to the topic on why I found that this is weird was because when I look at people doing these- this gambling, right, they have been getting- there are people who are really lucky and people who are not lucky but that's just how a game of chance works. But if you look at

the way the items are categorized, they are categorized as well as, common, uncommon, rare and jackpot, right? And if you look at other items in the game as well that you can open up just like the sandstorm flush they're categorised as common, uncommon, rare, but if you open these items which I'm talking about, not the sandstorm flush, you get common and uncommon items really often, but when you open the sandstorm flush you get common items and rarely, very rarely you get the uncommon items. So there's a bit of a divide in there and then common items in the sandstorm flush hand, you will more often than not get the worst out of the other items. Even out of the common items even though they are on the same level of being categorised. That's the first thing I think and why I brought up the Triple trouble thing is also because I feel like on certain days when I go gambling, I log in on a Monday and I do that gambling and the next week I log in on a Monday again and to do the gambling and I feel like my chances are the same during this time period. Whereas if I were to log in on a Tuesday and do the gambling and then the next week, I log in on the Tuesday and do the gambling I feel like you know, my chances are really bad. Yeah, I feel like they really bad like- I feel like there are certain days in particular, like Mondays are really good, but it just might be my gambling mind at this point of time."

I: "Okay. So when you say your gambling mind, do you think that there is- that your perception is trustworthy or accurate, or are you not sure?"

P: "Well, it is all speculation at this point of time because arenanet doesn't tell you anything about like what your chances are, yeah, it is all speculation."

I: "I see."

I: "Okay, let me just process all that so that I can ask you the right questions. So you mentioned that you raid sell a lot."

P: "Yes."

I: "Do you raid sell to enable you to gamble or is the gambling just a side effect of having too much gold and not knowing what to spend it on?"

P: "No, the gambling was a way of trying to win more money, but it was encouraged through the culture of people who sell raids."

I: "I see, that clears it up. Okay, so I have asked you whether you like to buy with real currency or in-game gold, and you prefer gold. I've asked you how often you play and why you think you play, I've asked you about your gold. Okay, I'm moving on to a question. That is the only real personal question that I'm going to ask you. The reason I'm asking is because I have a follow-up question that's related to this. So I'm curious- I'm interested in what your monthly income is in real life?"

P: "It's at zero. I'm a student."

I: "Okay, and the reason I'm asking this is because I would like to know what proportion of that income or essentially how much money would I need to give you, real money, in exchange for you deleting your main character in GW2? What would be fair compensation?"

P: "(Laugh)... I would say 100 euros."

I: "Okay. Why would you say- why would you think that number?"

P: "Because I don't really have a lot of- I don't feel like there's a lot of connection between me and my character. I don't feel like the hours I put into the game actually went into the character. So if

deleting the character would do anything it wouldn't be a huge loss of money, but I could just create another character and you know, with that 100 euros that I got I could, you know, probably get the items and make another character (laugh)."

I: "Okay. So you would put the money back into the game to recreate a new character?"

P: "Yes, of the same level. Yes."

I: "I see, that's pretty interesting. How about if I flipped it and said how much money would you want as compensation for deleting your account?"

P: "My account?! Mmm... I would say... ehm... My account is closer to 500 euros."

I: "Okay. Why do you put that number on it?"

P: "Well because I would take into account how much the game is worth right now if you were to buy it, isn't it about 80 euros?"

I: "I think it depends on whether it's a platinum edition or just standard and stuff like that."

P: "Yes, okay. I think mine is about 80 Euros if I'm not wrong. So 80 euros aside, and my account- the money I have that's left from all the damage and destruction from gambling if I were to take into account the currency exchange rate right now... Let me get a calculator here real quick... Hold on, doing mathematics is a little hard for me... I would say okay, I'm doing based on the calculation of my account value being worth, I think it went up to 50,000, it used to be 4,000 gold, but my account value is worth 50,000 right now, I think it's worth a little bit more because a lot of things aren't calculated into the website of gw2efficiency.com such as mount skins, they are not being calculated. But I would say, okay based on the number on gw2efficiency it's 50,000 gold. It's probably worth more. Let's say... Do you remember how much is it for 1,000 gold? How much is it converted into in-game gems?"

I: "I am not sure at the moment. I know it fluctuates."

P: "Okay, let's say 1,000 gems- 1000 gold converted to 2 Euros, okay... No, actually I think 1,000 gold is more like 8 Euros, isn't it? Yeah, that's about that. Yeah, I think 1,000 gold is about 8 Euros." *(Edit: 1000g costs roughly 45 GBP – 50 Euro).*

I: "I'm going to check it."

P: "I must say that the level of questions you're asking me are brain- I have to think."

I: "Yes I apologise, you're approaching this in a very logical manner in that you are actually, I mean, it's not very emotional, the decision you're making, it's very much "Okay, what is the actual worth?" Okay, I'd have to open up the game to figure out the money, but essentially what you're telling me is that you would calculate your account's worth and give me a number based on that worth?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes."

P: "Yes based on my calculations right now, okay, my account value is about 50,000 gold according to a website; gw2efficiency.com. But that is well- it used to be 4,000 gold and then you know, I used to store my money away somewhere else and then- but now I've taken that money and put it back into my account. But anyway, it is 50,000, it's probably worth at least 20,000 more

but based on 50,000 and at the rate of 1,000 gold being worth 8 Euros. It is about 400 to 500 Euros for my account."

I: "Okay."

P: "And if I were to be paid that amount, I would delete my account, yes."

I: "Okay, great. Okay, that sorts that. So in terms of similar activities to Sandstorm flush, for example, in other spaces, in other games or in online casinos, how do you feel about those kind of activities?"

P: "Well, I feel like Guild Wars 2 takes the cake. Because in other games that I have engaged in, you cannot do what GW2 allows you to do in the sense that you convert your real-life money to buy gems and then use gems to convert into gold, right? I don't recall any other game that allows you to do this. To convert real life money directly into gold through the official store. And with this gold in GW2 you can actually go gambling and you can lose money in this, like you straight up lose gold. And you can just keep pumping money into the game, buying gems converting into gold and then go into the sandstorm flush and lose your- they're effectively to me- they're effectively buying casino chips just in the form of Guild Wars 2 and then you just going into the casino and you're losing money."

I: "Okay. So do you believe that people do this?"

P: "Yes, in fact the first time that I lost all my money I actually in GW2 I actually looked up on Reddit like people who lose money as well, just to get a sense of feeling of how they felt and what I came across is that actually somebody has thrown in real life money into GW2 to gamble and he- I think he felt devastated. He lost 100 euros and he was like- I remember the Reddit post, he was saying about how he went in the shower just trying to fathom what he did and where he went wrong and that hundred euros just went by so fast, like within a few clicks and you know, all the money was gone. I would never do that in real life. Like I would never use my real money to go into a game to gamble and I feel like it's even worse in GW2 than in a real life casinos because you can't even cash out if you won anything, and in a real life casino, you know, I just bring twenty euros with me, I go into the casino, I don't bring my credit card, I don't bring anything else just 20 euros and if I lose that money I'm in a state of mind of "okay, that money is lost. It was well spent money" because at a casino you get free beer, you know, you drink and have a good time with your friends, that's entertainment, isn't it? But in GW2 like there is no such thing as a stop button for you. Like I can't just bring you know, twenty euros for me. There's a PayPal option. There is a credit card option there and I can't just block it off. I can just not- I cannot say "I'm not going to bring my credit card" because all my information is there, right? My access to real-life money is just so easily done in GW2. It's just a click of two, three buttons and hey, you know hundred euros is already gone to arenanet, but I don't do that because I don't use real life money for GW2, but I can imagine for the people who do, that it's quite easy for them to get lost in gambling like the guy who's post I read on Reddit and how he lost one hundred euros, probably was just like three clicks for him and 100 euros was already invested into the gambling."

I: "And to clarify there's no way to get that back?"

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay, so why do you think that the people do this? Is it because of a feeling they get? When they engage in this activity, what does it feel like?"

P: "Well, okay, this is- I can't speak for them. But when I speak for myself why I engage in it, I feel like, like I was saying earlier, if I was to engage in a raid sell maybe it takes 1 hour to earn 100 gold, right? But why would I do that when I can just take my chances and win 250 gold? I can win 400 gold."

I: "So it's about maximising profit?"

P: "That's the first one, and the second one is because well, the feeling of actually winning, it is really-right, just feel like hey, I won so much gold, you know, this feels good, I want to get that feeling again. I'm going to go gamble. Today I had a bad day and realized maybe I can have a good feeling in the game. I'm going to gamble and I'm going to win money, but usually that's not the case. Usually it makes you feel worse than you actually already do."

I: "Okay. So what do you believe as someone who actually engages in this, what do you believe the impact of that is?"

P: "Well, the first few times I actually, you know, I lost a lot of money. I felt devastated. I felt bad like, you know, I spent- I did so much work into this, but all my money's gone, but now I've gotten used to it. Like, I don't care anymore, you know money lost is money lost (laugh)."

I: "Okay, you've been seasoned (laugh)."

P: "Yeah, it's more for entertainment purposes now, you know, I lose money, yay (laugh)."

I: "Okay, so you've almost developed a sort of coping mechanism for dealing with it?"

P: "Yeah, but nowadays I try to like- nowadays when I'm gambling what I do is like I adopt the same approach that I have in real-life when I go to a casino. You know, I just bring twenty euros with me, but instead like I give my money and my ectos to somebody else and I'm like, "okay, I'm going to try my luck with I'd say 10 gold and 20 ectos" because instead of going for the big items nowadays, I go for the small ones, the smaller sandstorm flush hand that is really cheap and you know, you can go for it many times."

I: "Is the feeling with that item the same as with the big item for you?"

P: "Usually not. But... It's difficult to explain, when I went for the big item, sometimes you know, I'll sit there looking at the item for five minutes and I'm like, oh my heart is starting to pump. "Do I double click this?" Do I earn the money or if I will lose, my heart starts getting pumping when I go for the big item, but for the small item I'm like "ah, just going to double-check this. Okay I won, yay I won something!" If I lost I'm like, "okay, no big deal, it's only a little bit". It was more like a small... cheap thrills, I would say for the small item."

I: "Okay, I see. All right. Do you have anything else at all that you want to add or you want to tell me?"

P: "That was your last question?"

I: "That was my last question."

P: "Wow."

I: "Anything else that you have that's pressing on your mind that you really want me to include?"

P: "Do you feel like you have any more questions, do you feel like I have explained? Like the..."

I: "I feel like you've given me a lot of information, my head is spinning a little bit, but it's been really good. And I think you've explained everything really well."

P: "Well, I would like to just add on one more thing how I feel about the gambling in the game. Like when I said, you know, when people can put in real money and I feel like it's worse than a casino, another reason why I feel like it's worse than the casino, I've already explained to you that probability is not included in the game. They don't tell you what your chances of winning is or your chances of losing, which is really- which is- which I feel like they need to do. Because the way they categorize their items to common, uncommon and rare in the sandstorm flush and in the black lion chests, well, it is the same category as they categorize their other items that are also based on chance that you get but aren't really gambling because you don't buy these items, you get them for free. Most of them also have this common, uncommon and rare, but there's a huge discrepancy I feel between these items, between the different loot bags you get and within the loot bags themselves, like you categorize- let's say a 150 gold same as a 25 gold item as common, but they are not of the same chances, like you'll get the 25 gold probability item and I feel like this is very deceiving. The discrepancies between all these items, right?"

I: "So you feel that I guess you can say the practice isn't honest to the customers."

P: "No not at all, not at all. It's very deceiving."

I: "Okay."

P: "Very deceiving."

I: "If it was up to you, would you see certain of these activities regulated or removed?"

P: "... I would say... I would have them be honest about their probabilities. That's the first one, the second thing is they need to let us know what- how the chances are been calculated. World of Warcraft has actually done that I believe, many times, in fact. They let us know like how- they even showed graphs of- many times of how certain item probability was being shown and how many people actually deviated away from the average. Means of getting this item, not say the average means, the average amount of attempts of getting this item, they showed us like how many people got the item. Let's say a 1% chance, they took, most of the people took within that range of 100 to get this item, but there were a huge amount of people who did not get this item within 200 chances or maybe even three hundred chances and those people who got it within less, and they showed like the deviation was actually quite huge and that's why they updated their way of calculating your chances and I'm hoping arenanet can do that as well to show us like, to get a certain item, how many people did this amount of attempts and did not get this item or how many people did this amount of attempts to get this item, what are the deviations away from this and all that?"

I: "Okay. So you're calling for transparency?"

P: "Exactly."

I: "I see. I think that's fair."

P: "Do you really?"

I: "Yes, I do. Okay, I don't think I have anything else for you. So I just want to say thank you. I appreciate you taking part in this."

P: "You're welcome."

I: "Okay, we're going to stop recording, so have you said your peace?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes, okay (laugh)."

Interview Transcript

11/11/2018

Alias Janosch

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

Edit: Amount of money invested into video games

30 000 Euro – confirmed and validated by credit checks.

I: "All right. All right. So the first section is about you and your main avatar in GW2, and the game in general. So if you could tell me a bit about your avatar in GW2, your main avatar?"

P: "So my main avatar would be my thief. Because the thief class type was since forever always my favourite class. So I always stick with that, so it was my first pick when the game started and since then I played it definitely the most. Out of 4000 hours in the first two years I played him around 3,000 hours, I think."

I: "Okay, so you kind of picked that one from the start and just stuck with it?"

P: "Yes, most of the time, because the goal is to get as good as possible. So yeah indicate a lot of time spending on one character instead of a lot. I have a habit to still create a tonne of alts and play those as well just to learn the other classes so I can understand what is connected. What else about my character? Yeah, I prefer to play human, male as well. I know that it's always a big debate between female and looking at the butt or playing a male character."

I: "Yes (laugh) I've heard that before."

P: "(Laugh) Yes. It's something very much discussed. I think- I just I think to the Rogue archetype for me itself a male character fits more personally, so it's mostly a male character and I only go away from that when I'm forced to, in other games where they have classes locked to a gender. Only then I will decide "okay, I'm still going to play the class". I don't care what the gender or the look is."

I: "So the class is more important than gender?"

P: "For me. Yes."

I: "Okay, and you would say that you design your avatar around a pre-existing idea in your mind. So you said that you had the Rogue archetype in your mind."

P: "Yes."

I: "And you design based on that?"

P: "I do."

I: "Okay. I see, I see. So how often would you say that you play?"

P: "Guild Wars? Nowadays quite rarely cuz I'm just missing time, back then permanently (laugh). Back then when GW2 came out I was myself in university so I had to pleasure of a lot of time

because I was very lazy and blessed with, well, good grades with low effort (laugh) so we could even play in uni, that was even better. But then, times I played a day was... At least evening almost every day and longer on the weekends, nowadays, I play too many different games which is an issue. When I have time I basically do raid nights so that's eight hours in the week, but besides Guild Wars, I played three other games, which is more time investing."

I: "So you're kind of spread thin in a way."

P: "Yes, basically and yeah, else it's work."

I: "I see I see. Okay, so why did you start then, why GW2?"

P: "That's a long throw back. Let me- wait. I need to think about that. Why Guild Wars? I think there was- there was nothing optional besides GW2. I know that I- before GW2 I played around eight years of WoW. I started with one class and at that point I was just fed up with it. I didn't feel it anymore. And I played Guild Wars one from time to time. So I knew the game. I knew the world of it. So I started playing the beta from Guild Wars 2 with some friends from university and we ended up basically making our own guild with some Swiss people around and, yeah, then we had our twenty man swiss squad and we just ran with it. So yeah, definitely like having people that you know in real life definitely made it easier to decide to just quit the other game and switch to GW2."

I: "Yes, so you kind of almost had an existing social circle already waiting in that game then?"

P: "Completely. Yes. I didn't- I only expanded my social circle in Guild Wars 2 at the point where I basically joined RT. So that was like three, four months after, of course because obviously it's always the same game starts, everyone is fresh the people that didn't play much before is just joining for some weeks and then they are already fed up by the game and they're going to leave (laugh), kind of happened here as well. Some didn't have the time or didn't want to commit the time to GW2 because they were playing LoL or Counter-Strike, so we we're kind of thinly spread, and yeah we decided to go to other guilds, other ways."

I: "I see, that makes sense. So in terms of your male thief in the game, would you say- or how much do you actually identify with that character and what happens to him I suppose as well?"

P: "Hmm good question."

I: "Take your time, they're very abstract (laugh)."

P: "No I don't think they are that much abstract to be honest, because that's why people play games, right? At least- I think."

I: "Tell me about that. That's really interesting."

P: "For me- I think, like, many people play games, too play something else be something else, or try something new. For me, I can identify with my character in games, they have more decision-making though. I think in Guild Wars if you look into an RP perspective, you're limited to choices, very narrow given, so you don't really have a choice of building something for your own, so in a RP standpoint, I don't really see a connection but I definitely like my thief as an individual as what he symbolizes."

I: "And what is that to you?"

P: "To me, well, you know, it's the stealthy murderer hobo (laugh). Nah it's just, hard to describe. I would say... Proficient or very proficient or good at something. At what he does, being good in what he does. It's something I like to do in real life as well and I'm proud of so that reflects to everything in game as well."

I: "I see. The next question is interesting in that sense then cuz next question would be whether you would become your character if you could?"

P: "Hmm... I would say so, why not? Just for the (laugh). I think just out of the real adventurous thing to do, that would be awesome to just jump into something new and do something completely different that you did until now. I think that's something many should strive for and not be scared of. Because that's how you grow."

I: "That's very wise. Very good. That's really good."

P: "Yeah, that's things I like, I mean, I know when I have to do new things you're always a bit scared of it if but as soon as you've done it once or twice, you know, it's not that hard, you can do it, and you will have this feeling of accomplishment. I would definitely do it."

I: "Yeah, I think that's right. So in a similar kind of vein does your character then have any personality or characteristics that you would like to have except maybe the proficiency?"

P: "Well, hard to say of a non-RP character (laugh)."

I: "It really depends on how someone I suppose relates to their character. Some people said, "okay, this character is hostile", and-."

P: "Yeah, to be honest I never thought about that in GW2 because it was like, yeah, not my focus on it anymore, but I had those thoughts, definitely, at one point in World of Warcraft. Because back then I had a lot of friends that actually RPd. So they asked me to join along from time to time and I definitely had different characters with different traits, but my main I would always characterise around what I think I am and what I want to be."

I: "So it's about representation?"

P: "Yeah something like that but not exactly. It's something maybe like around it, what I think I am but a bit different, like a goal."

I: "Okay. Yeah. Yeah see. That's really good. So in Guild Wars 2 making up background is not relevant, but in other games maybe that allows more for that. You think the scope-?"

P: "I think it is- it can be relevant in Guild Wars. It was just not for me I think. I didn't come up with that mindset in GW2 specifically, but I think it's possible. Just not there for me. But even then when I will need to describe, how would I look at my character? I would still say exactly what I said what I strive for. So if I want to play him out, I will do it something of me and something of a goal, "I would like to be"."

I: "That makes sense. Yeah. So that's interesting then because my next question revolves around character customisation, and it's how long you would averagely spend if I gave you a total makeover kit right now or even at the start when you actually made your thief, how long would it take you to make something that you were happy with?"

P: "(Laugh) Actually, at the moment the game opened not a single second, as long as I know there is makeover kits because the goal at the start is to get in and get shit done fast so that

you've out of the starting zone (laugh). But I definitely will come back later with a makeover kit and that is all ready for spending, to design more to my liking- important part in customisation for me I would say is actually hairstyle. I think facial details in most games make a difference, but it's not as impactful because when do you look at the face of your character? It's the hair you see the most and if it's not good-looking or cool looking it's kind of disappointing, and you just always look at it (laugh). But yeah, but I have no preference in shape or form. I just look what I come up with. Oh, yeah. I like this right now, then I'll take it and it happens that I can roll with this forever or that after weekend I'm like "argh, what a shit decision was that" (laugh). Going to reroll again."

I: "Okay, I see. It's interesting how people kind of weight the importance in customisation because, you know, because some people all about the face other people are all about the clothes."

P: "Yeah, oh clothes! Definitely. That's even more important than hair. Yes, clothes definitely is the most important of all, probably because that's what the character looks like overall and the most thing that points it out, right? So- but I didn't take that into customisation because at the start you always look like a scrub, right? (Laugh) You're never good looking, but yeah in the end, I definitely wait for the armour and weapon skins, even a bit higher, a good weapon skin I can live with the longest definitely. And then the armour."

I: "Okay. So that is definitely important."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. So I'm going to come back to that later. So I'm going to I'm going to leave it for now because we will touch on that again, I think, so in terms of exploring the in-game world, just for the sake of exploring it, do you enjoy that?"

P: "Yes."

I: Okay, tell me about that?"

P: "I always loved RPGs with big open worlds. Online RPGs, MMOs, or just single player RPGs, I love to explore new worlds. I like to dive into the mind of someone else that had this picture and made it real for himself in a game. And I enjoy searching for hidden gems that maybe lay around, like, some little alcove where he put in some shit that you can explore but you don't see it when you just run past. I enjoy that, it is always a huge... Well not waste of time, but it uses so much time. So nowadays. I feel that I'm less exploring and more goal-oriented, but I definitely will take my time to just go around and explore if I feel like "oh, yeah, this is definitely worth it" the people that made this made it with love and you see the details are there, so why not just explore them?"

I: "Yeah, I see, that's really good. So on a similar note then, how important is it to you to level up a character as fast as possible?"

P: "Uhm... Well that's always a tricky one. I think leveling up comes... Not first, nowadays, because there are so many betas and alphas before a game releases, I will always explore those quite a lot, but at release I will then level up ASAP just to get through it and then go back to the new areas and then explore that stuff. So I would say I definitely prioritise leveling up fast. Out of multiple reasons, it's not cuz I think I need to, but I think it's just most effective (laugh)."

I: "Yeah, we're kind of coming back to the proficiency. I see."

P: "Yeah, I think when I level up the fastest I'm ahead of the curve. I don't have to fight for mobs at one point, well, which in GW2 is not a real issue, but in other games it is. You're ahead of the curve in making money because you may have access to stuff that others don't, and so like the first two or three weeks there's definitely a focus on getting up there, get your stuff together, build something, build a base that you can go with and then when that rush is done everything dies down a bit then I can go out and explore the rest or collect the rest."

I: "Okay Yes, so very kind of goal oriented."

P: "Yes. That's what you learn in programming (laugh). Always goal and object oriented."

I: "So once more this feeds very nicely into the next question, which is how important is it to you to know as much about game mechanics and the game rules as possible?"

P: "Very, as someone that's likes to rake game mechanics (explore limits) when possible I enjoy to know the most of it. And having no shame in using those as well. No, I think it's actually quite fun finding out mechanics of the world and how everything works together and sometimes as someone that knows a bit of programming it's funny to see how weird solutions can be. And you think it should not work but somehow it works."

I: "So it's almost about understanding how it all fits together?"

P: "Yes, how you can- it's not only about fitting it together, but giving me an advantage obviously as well, to exploit (laugh)."

I: "To beat the game?"

P: "yeah, it's something like that, it's to beat the game, find your way to not intended stuff and just have fun with it a little bit, obviously not too excessive because-"

I: "That's more like kind of exploring the boundaries then, what can you actually do in this virtual space."

P: "Exactly. And GW2 was a good and then a very bad example for this, I think. Because there were some easy breaks you could do in this game and they were never fixed for years. Did you play back at the start?"

I: "Yeah, I do recall- I do recall a lot of broken things at the start (laugh)."

P: "Not only- yeah that, and the code itself. They were in such a mess because you couldn't just, like, you code many pillate AIs because you just don't do anything anymore. I think it still works nowadays with the Hylek potions at Lupicus, because you just render him useless. He does not move. He does not attack anything. It's just there."

I: "There are still ways to do the unintended things."

P: "Yes, and those are not getting fixed. I mean, it's okay because most people do not know them you don't gain much of it. But it's still something, well, if there's a bug and it's known, why don't they just fix it, it can't be that hard, but then again I think about they could fuck it up even more so maybe better not (laugh)."

I: "That's the risk, yeah."

P: "And arenanet has proven they're not good at fixing a bug, they just put invisible walls over it."

I: "Yeah, I see, they fix one thing and ten other things break?"

P: "Yeah that's actually a thing. I remember when the- in Arah it took them over half a year to fix a spot where you could teleport under the map, and then you could just swim through the whole dungeon and get up at another part. They fixed one, but there were like five others."

I: "Yeah, that kind of sums it up. So in terms of playing as a sort of escapism, as a way to just take a break from real life for a while. Is that something that you enjoy or engage in?"

P: "I don't know actually, I will say I take gaming a bit too much serious, then you can say I try to escape and just, you know, want to forget about things. I think at a certain mentality it's kind of hard because you're still- you want to push yourself further. But it definitely has a part of it. I wouldn't say it's escapism, at least not in my case."

I: "I think maybe, you know, it depends on how you play, right, and since you're quite goal orientated, maybe both in real life and taking on those aspects in the game. You might see the two as the same kind of thing in terms of how you approach it. You know, it's not necessarily getting away from one."

P: "I would say so yeah that's quite accurate to say."

I: "Good-"

P: "Makes life not easier, though (laugh). It gives you no breaks."

I: "Yeah, well it's like a hobby really, isn't it, it's something that... Yeah, you know, you get home from work and you want to have fun for a while."

P: "Oh, definitely. Yes. And go flame and be toxic (laugh)."

I: "Yeah yeah sure, do you do that? Is that something you do?"

P: "Definitely not (laugh)."

I: "I don't know if that was truthful or not, but I'm gonna let you off the hook (laugh)."

P: "I only answer truthfully right? No, I would say I'm quite toxic in... a lot of ways (laugh) but most people don't know that because I only tell my really close people about my shit. They hear me flame all day, normally. In gw2 I was, well... Let's say I prefer to run solo because pugs were too stupid that I wanted to bother with them."

I: "So the group experience became something there was more frustrating than rewarding?"

P: "Yes most of the time it was, and yeah, that was something, gave me some toxicity there, from flaming some randoms who tried to do bullshit. And obviously, later I started PVP games, or more PVP orientated games, like Black Desert Online, and as part of one of the big guilds, well, you got- we had a bad rap from start so you gotta ride that train, you know (laugh)."

I: "Okay, that's interesting in a way, so you kind of already had an established group mentality and you kind of adopted that for yourself?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yeah, it's just very good because literally the next thing on the list is to talk about your social life, so this is great (laugh)."

P: "Go for it (laugh)."

I: "Do you have anything you want to add to that before I-? I did interrupt you I'm sorry."

P: "Yeah, but that- there's not much, I invented some toxicity against people that were just stupid and they tried to fight us with means that were just, well, not needed and then you get a bit toxic

at one point, but normally I don't speak out, out of the reason I think it needless, to waste my time raging at someone that's well, not worth the time."

I: "So is that about- you mentioned that you were kind of against other people, is that about competition then, in the PVP element of it?"

P: "No, not only, sometimes it was in PVP, sometimes it was politics, basically. People that didn't like how we handled stuff and they were just, you know, when you come with good arguments then sure, we can discuss about it, but you know how the internet works, you know, so... and I think everyone else know it as well that plays the game. So yeah, it was never a good argument, or almost never, so yeah."

I: "So if we focus on Guild Wars 2 either now or way back when you were more involved, it's up to you. Could you tell me about what your social life kind of looked like? In the game."

P: "So I basically had my speed run party which consisted out of seven to eight people, they weren't always around so that's why seven or eight, so we can always fill up five man to run speed runs, which was not just doing the dungeon but literally recording and doing the speed runs for the GW2 dungeon speed runs website. So we had those and the rest of the guild, as an officer I had to take over when our actual guild leader was away, for some months and then, well, you know being nice to everyone outside, animating them to guild missions, and so on and so on. So yeah, a lot of talking to guild members but mostly to those seven or eight, then outside of that I had like four or five German friends and Swiss friends, that's basically one of the Swiss friends that was with me in-game still from the original guild, he went to a German guild and I played with them for a while before I went to RT. So I kept always close to them. And yeah, that's about it, I would say, that was like the bigger social groups that was reoccurring."

I: "Since you seem to have been, I guess you can say more attached to that guild in a sense, could you talk to me about whether you perceived the members of that guild to be important to you?"

P: "Mmm... of which guild?"

I: "You can pick, if you have many just pick the one that stands out to you."

P: "Definitely RT, I thought they were likeminded. They wanted to push the boundaries in-game and from themselves. They wanted to find new ways to play the game or abuse game mechanics (laugh) and just, yeah, the whole playstyle. It was the more soloist playstyle just to improve yourself to a certain extent then fight the new way. It was always nice to see what they found what they did and some kind of learning. I definitely-"

I: "So it's more about being like-minded. Right?"

P: "Yes for me that made a big thing."

I: "Okay, I need to stop interrupting you, it's just that you say interesting things."

P: "(Laugh) Feel free I don't mind, just interrupt when you have questions, you know."

I: "Yeah, as long as you get to say what you need to say."

P: "I will, I will."

I: "So on a similar note then, was it important to you how your guild members saw you?"

P: "Well, I would say I have a good attitude of "I don't care" in real life and in-game, but obviously it's not completely "I don't care". Like I don't want them to think bad or- yeah, bad about me. So to a certain degree, definitely, but I did not sweat over it."

I: "Yeah, I see. So you mentioned the people soloed content a lot. But how important was it to you that your guild members felt that they could count on you back then?"

P: "Very, I think. It still applies today most of the time, if it's Guild Wars or any other game I try to be reliable, in any kind of life. So that's something I think is very important, I want that the people I play or work with can rely on me. That they know if they have an issue they can come to me and count on me."

I: " Yeah I see. We also spoke about toxicity, and stuff, as well, but how much do you enjoy getting to know other people in the game, new people?"

P: "Uhm... Good question. I somehow always run into people. I don't know how because I'm not really looking for it. I'm not someone that just start something up and then goes looking for a new guild or something. I mean when I run up to something and get engaged basically I'm not going to ignore it, but I'm not really looking after it. Cuz... Well, I'm lazy (laugh), I'm lazy in social interactions normally."

I: "Okay, so the social interaction is more of a by-product of things that you would engage with anyway?"

P: "Yeah, basically. I have to talk to them, oh no (laugh)."

I: "So do you then watch other people stream game content at all?"

P: "Almost not, besides there is a good reason for me to watch, basically, some of my close friends streamed PVP a lot, and then I watched because I think he's one of the best players I have met. So it was always good to watch him. Nice to see how he destroys like four people without issue. So yeah, I only watch streams when I have a reason to or think it's actually worth it. I cannot watch streams just for like, vanity. I don't understand people that can be in a streamer room for three hours and just chat, and they're just chatting. That's just boring to me."

I: "Yeah. Okay. So if there's a purpose to the stream that engages you?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. Do you ever watch other people open stuff like black lion chests or play sandstorm flush?"

P: "No, not at all, I think."

I: "I see, why not?"

P: "Well, I could just do it myself (laugh). I don't know. I have very twisted ways with RNG and gambling. I don't think watching it is any enjoyable."

I: "Okay, it needs to be done?"

P: "Either, yes, because then I gain or not gain something from it. But like just watching it, it's like, yeah, watch this guy opening stuff for 2 hours, and what did I do with my life (laugh)?"

I: "Yeah, I see, so it's not time well spent?"

P: "Yeah, basically, yes."

I: "Okay, so, last couple of questions are about spending habits."

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes. Could you tell me what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why?"

P: "Well, a lot of legendaries. I have 14. Four of them I made since I came back. So I did ten legendaries in two years around it. Back, then there was not that much gambling, and if we gambled with black lion chests we made it for free, because you could still get black lion keys without cooldown of a week. So making those fast characters was something to do, which I did sometimes when I was really bored normally I had better things to farm or attempt, so I didn't bother with that. I just bought them because selling Arah was for me more profitable than farming a black lion key. So yeah, but I opened quite some black lion chests, well, when I came back as well, just to see what's in them, basically. Oh yeah, there was this item. This one item was probably the reason why I opened quite a lot of them. Wait, how many did I have? I think I had around like 900 black lion keys – or chests, I think I opened them all, to- what was it? It was an item that gives you currency of the map, the geodes- ah, Dry Top! Because I was too lazy to farm Dry Top, I needed those geodes for my next legendary, let's roll with it, maybe I get something good with it, I didn't (laugh)."

I: "So you ended up opening 900 for the geode item?"

P: "Yeah, I at least have enough geodes (laugh)."

I: "That's true (laugh)."

P: "Yeah, I don't have that many though. I almost ran out of them again. I think I can do one or two more then I'm done."

I: "So... why legendaries?"

P: "Back then there was no options to get better gear, there was no ascended gear, so legendaries was the only way to maximise your character. So the goal was legendaries, and to have two of the same, as well, because daggers (dual wield) (laugh)."

I: "Yeah, okay."

P: "So yeah, I did... Can't remember when I did my first legendary... I think it was like four- six months into the game."

I: "Okay, so quite quickly."

P: "Yeah, I did three of them in the three months after that. I did two daggers and a sword, pistol I never did, it's ugly as fuck, that was actually the worst part of legendaries, I hate the dagger. I purely hate them, because I don't like red. So those daggers were the bane of my existence, but you have to roll with it, because of optimisation (laugh)."

I: "I see, so that was purely to enhance your character in terms of power?"

P: "Power, yes. That was the point, but there definitely are legendaries- I always wanted to make bolt, the sword, because it looks amazing and I think it's still the best design thing in GW2, I love the concept of that sword. Definitely one of my first picks when I see it, I was "Yeah, I need to have that, no questions asked" Even if it would have been useless for my class. I would still have done it. I have done that a second time which was less expensive because the spear, the underwater spear [Kamohoali'i Kotaki](#), aw, did this shark attack, got you. I love it. I hate underwater combat and the skills are so bad, but I love that spear, I'm gonna rock it forever."

I: "So it's about, it used to be about power, but there's a visual factor, as well, to the appeal?"

P: "I'd definitely say, yeah, the power factor was mostly on the daggers because they were the best way to go, though I definitely optimised for that first. And then I did choose after what I like the most. What do I want? And then I went there."

I: "I see, so we're going to go back a little bit to skins later. You mentioned about your 900 black lion chests and I'm just- I'm so curious. Could you tell me a time that you have either played Sandstorm flush or the Mystic Forge or black lion chests or something equivalent in GW2? Just tell me what happened?"

P: "I've done some ectoplasm gambling back when it came out. I can barely remember it. I just remember it was a flush (laugh). I think I got nothing out of it from worth. It was just plain wasted. I definitely didn't spend as much as others, I only spent like maybe 2,000 or 3,000 gold in that but I definitely played more in the Mystic Forge for precursors. I crafted weapons and I bought cheap weapons to just forge precursors. And I never was lucky with them! I think that always was a complete waste, the first precursor I ever got dropped, so yeah."

I: "Okay, so you told me the black lion chests were largely unlucky, the ecto gambling was largely unlucky, and the Mystic Forge was largely unlucky, are you generally unlucky? (laugh)."

P: "Huh, do you want to side-track a little bit from GW2, then I can- then the sob story comes."

I: "Oh no (laugh)."

P: "You know the 15,000 thousand that I mentioned, that was not gold... So in Black Desert Online you have this great enhancing system where you level up your gear to +15, and from 14-15 you have a, like a 30% chance maybe, still okay, problem comes after."

I: "Okay?"

P: "Because then you have five extra stats, and those chances start from 25-20 then 5 and 2 or something like that. And, well... Let's say, there's stuff that repairs your gear, it enhances to repair your gear, it gives you chances that you can just try enhancing more and more. But yeah, obviously enhancing is always RNG. It doesn't increase your chances to actually get it and there was some loot boxes in there as well for certain pets and mounts that had very specific skills and only those you could get and then the pool was like one of those and then 20 others. So you might have gotten one then it's a tier one and you can have a t4 pet that you need to enhance with the same pet. So to get the highest tier of pet you needed like five of them if you were lucky, 20 of them when you were unlucky. So yeah, there was a lot of RNG pet boxes and yeah, that's tiring, RNG loot boxes. And then the enhancing which I think is still worse RNG shit than loot boxes. That one cost me like 7,000 Swiss Francs, I think, purely on support items to enchant."

I: "Okay, so generally, you're not that lucky in game RNG."

P: "No, I'm not. Some say I am but I'm not, before I got the trait that I wanted it took me over a year of savings from in-game."

I: "Okay wow. So it's a very very expensive item."

P: "It's not, I'm just very unlucky (laugh). I failed more than anyone I knew in the whole game, by far, the only got past later like two years later and then someone else took that price but I was

very unlucky, I failed over... I think... what was it? It took like 60 or 70 tries to enhance just that one grade and I just failed it all the time."

I: "So... What goes through your mind then when this keeps happening, what's the knee-jerk reaction? You know, what's the emotion of the feeling, what are you thinking?"

"Uhm... Not much to be honest actually (laugh). In case of RNG boxes when I don't get what I want, then I'm annoyed. Because I only use them when I have a reason to, so when it's something that's kind of broke and you kind of need it then, well, I can spend it so I do it, but it's still kind of frustrating and annoying when you don't get it. So yeah, I got to try more I guess. In the enhancing part, in that way, same well, yeah, it was more like "do I have enough money to try again?" If yes, then go for it. If not, well go farm, back to the farm (laugh)."

I: "Okay, so giving up on the item is not an option, you know, if you want it you work for it?"

P: "Yes, giving up is not an option. If possible, get it ASAP, basically. That's the goal."

I: "So for example, if I released a new legendary tomorrow that you really like, would the goal be to get it on Tuesday?"

P: "Most likely, yes. If it's 100% the best thing I've ever seen, if it's worth the grind I will get it as soon as I can manage to get it, it doesn't have to be Tuesday, because well, you know, time limits and such, but I will definitely focus a good part of my play time on getting it."

I: "Okay. So just going to revisit the sob story for a little while, cuz I'm just curious whether it actually matters whether you win or lose in order for you to do it again? All right? So if you threw 100 weapons in the Mystic Forge and you got nothing, would you do it again, you know? Does it matter whether the RNG was bad in one instance for you to make a decision about the next instance?"

P: "No, it would not, because that's the very essence of RNG, you can't expect it to happen, which I don't, I don't wake up and like "yeah, it's going to happen", I might wake up with a feeling like, "oh yeah, today I feel lucky. Let's try it". If nothing happens I was like "well, tricked myself, gg (good going)" and if it happens then it's like "oh, yeah, it felt right". I definitely have those moments. Not in GW2 because that was a sad story of precursors not happening. But I definitely had- I remember there was one morning. I woke up quite motivated somehow, looked on my phone and saw a world boss spawned in Black Desert Online, I was like "huh, I really feel I should do it", then I went there and he dropped me his weapon chest, which was quite rare back then so I was like "oh yeah, it was definitely worth coming here". I have those feelings as well, I sometimes have feelings like "oh yeah, today I feel lucky" then I tried and "hmm, yeah tricked me again" happens more than the other way around. Yeah, it's more like that. But the end result doesn't matter to me."

I: "It's the experience?"

P: "Yeah, yeah."

I: "So you do it for the fun of it, you know, so... you open black lion chests and play the mystic forge and stuff just because it's a fun activity?"

P: "Not only, I obviously have monetary gains in mind or gains overall, on black lion chests, it was mostly the skins that I liked, or something that I thought would be interesting. The Mystic forge

was, yeah, I want those precursors to sell, or to use them for myself, I normally prefer to get it myself than just buying out of Trading Post because it's a bit more fun if you work for it yourself, but after you flush down over thousands of gold, and it's like "argh, I want this fast so I'm just going to buy it still from The Trading Post. I'm just going to try for something else from now on". But I definitely like it, I would say."

I: "I guess- maybe not fun engaging, what's the word? How would you describe it?"

P: "... Huh, hard to say, I think I have no real word for it."

I: "That's why I asked you I don't have a real word for it either (laugh)."

P: "(Laugh) It's gambling! Gambling needs no other words."

I: "It makes sense. There's a reason that casinos are in business. No, I get it."

P: "Yes (laugh)."

I: "So when you buy items, either items in the gem store or black lion chests, do you buy with real currency or in-game gold or both?"

P: "Yes, in- nowadays in real life currency, back then probably in-game made, GW2 was great back then as a poor student, because you could gain the gem store currency through gold, which happened, I could do quite a lot quite easy. So that was a blessed thing, nowadays it's kind of the opposite since I don't have the time to spend, I can just spend my money on it. Because that I gain anyway, well, it's the thing that limits my time so well, yes."

I: "Yeah. Yeah, I see. Okay. So how often would you say that you play Sandstorm flush or ecto gamble or open black lion chests, per week?"

P: "Say... overall RNG stuff in a week, about how many times or for what amount of money?"

I: "I have both questions on my list. So, go for it (laugh)."

P: "I would just, like, of all games I would just gather them together, I guess. Oh yeah, let's say... Let's say... Hm... Maybe 50 tries, maybe more, maybe less, but hard to judge."

I: "Okay, is that weekly?"

P: "Yeah, that's would be weekly, and the amount of money involved there... maybe 200- 300."

I: "Overall?"

P: "Yeah, overall."

I: "And what currency is that?"

P: "The 300?"

I: "Yeah."

P: "Swiss franc."

I: "Okay, I have to actually calculate how much that is if I want to make an analysis of that, it's fine (laugh)."

P: "No, I can just tell you in Euro, it's basically just take it one - one. It doesn't matter. Like when you take it- it's not the same but it's- it can be higher, can be lower. So if you go with 300 Euro it should be fine."

I: "Okay, and that's overall in all games."

P: "Yeah, I think so, because there's not much RNG games to play right now or did have a lot of RNG stuff, because in one game basically so far I don't need anything. So there's no gain for me

in RNG stuff in that game, in Guild Wars 2 I spend less and less time, and there's only one real game where there's a lot of RNG stuff that you still can do."

I: "I see, so you preferably just- since you have the real money to spend you prefer to just buy the item rather than buy currency and use the currency to try to get the item?"

P: "Well..."

I: "And do explain to me cuz I'm just guessing."

P: "Yes. Yes. Yes. I know what you mean... It depends, as I said, I prefer actually to do them myself, but if it's just- if there is some RNG involved in it and you need to do stuff after it to still achieve something I will do the RNG part to get the end. But if it's purely RNG and I know I have a 1/1000 chance to get that item or I invest a bit more then I'm probably going to go invest a bit more. And just gamble on something else that is more overall decent to get. Because the chance of gambling for one item is a bit too low."

I: "So if you would pick your preferred poison if you want, what would it be, would you rather ecto gamble or open BLC, or you know?"

P: "I would do black lion chests, I think. Because ecto gamble and sandstorm they might have the big prices in it. But looking at it, there's way more stuff that you can use in BLC even if you're not getting the main prize. There's more stuff that actually have use to me. Than just, well, 10 gold (laugh)."

I: "Okay, we're getting real close to- I know that I've had you for a long time, but we're getting real close to the last couple of questions and I have one question, that's the only personal question that I'm going to ask you, and the reason I'm asking is because I have a follow-up question."

P: "Just ask away."

I: "Okay, could you tell me what's your monthly income is?"

P: "Yes, I can, it's 8000 Swiss francs."

I: "Okay, so if I said what proportion of your monthly wage would I need to give you in exchange for you deleting your main character?"

P: "(Laugh)."

I: "How much money do I need to give you, essentially."

P: "No chance."

I: "No? No money can buy him?"

P: "Nope. Because that's something that I'm blessed with. Well, being born in Switzerland money is no issue in my life. Or, overall. And working in IT obviously helps even more, so money has- money is worthless to me in many cases. Like obviously you need it at some point but for something I worked that long on and invested that much time, there is no money I would actually accept, just to delete it. Obviously we- until we take like ridiculous amount of money where you can live forever, then obviously sure going to delete it and remake it in a year, but then I have like 70 more years to do nothing with, so that would be okay but else no, I wouldn't."

I: "Okay. Then is that because your character is almost like- so the way I understand it it's almost like an embodiment of all the time and skill building that you put into it, kind of?"

P: "Yes. It is, yes."

I: "So on a similar note then this is probably the most abstract question I have for you. So just think outside the box. How much do you believe that your avatar, so your male thief, actually influences your decision-making in the game?"

P: "Huh! Oh, well, I think quite some, cuz every goal you have is just- if you just take the need or the desire to improve power it will be to improve the power of your avatar, right? So I mean that's mostly the drive, but not only for the drive of power, as well as well, skins or items that make you go faster through the world. It makes it easier to go through it. Like all of that. Definitely all the drive links to increase your character's power, abilities, yeah."

I: "So let's say if you picked one of your alts and your alts had much better skins than your main thief, would that matter to you?"

P: "It's actually quite a thing that happens in Guild Wars, well, at least what I think, because male armour often looks quite worse than female armour. And that's the thing that is kind of annoying in GW2- it's something I'm very annoyed about, when it is one of the main critiques about it, then it's that for me. Cuz I basically since- what is it now six years of GW2? Yeah, I basically wear the same armour on my thief because the choice is limited and I think this one is the best looking one and I don't have much options besides if I'm going to be half naked, which is kind of weird, for an armour, and there's a million trench coats that look like shit. So that is very annoying. I really like my alt for having this awesome armour and I kind of envy them as I do not have them on my male main. But yeah, nothing game breaking in the end, but a bit frustrating."

I: "Yeah like a pet peeve, kind of."

P: "Yes."

I: "So similar activities in other spaces, and by activities I mean things like BLCs or Mystic Forges or ecto gambling. How do you feel about those activities in other spaces? So in other games or online or even in a casino? Is that something you engage in?"

P: "In other games? We already know the answer. So yes, I engage in that, whenever I see a use for it, so sometimes for fun sometimes for use. It's always mood dependent, sometimes when I see something pops up, did I think "oh kind of must-have" then I will go for it. But sometimes I just wake up with "yeah, I feel lucky. Let's try it."

I: "Okay, so there's no kind of pattern that "oh, I'm in a bad mood. I'm going to open BLCs to make myself feel better" or "I'm in a great mood, I'm going to treat myself to some BLC", it's not like that?"

P: "Not like, I would more say if I feel good and then feel it then maybe more like that, but never the other way around. I'm not going to think "urgh, I feel down. I'm going to open some chests so I feel even shittier with my good-luck" (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) Okay, I see that."

P: "But I'm not very moody as well. So that's hard saying I rarely are in well, in any mood I would say but-"

I: "Yeah. Yeah. It depends a lot on personality and good days and bad days."

P: "Yeah, but that's why you do this, right?"

I: "Yeah that's the problem with this, people are so complicated!"

P: "That's why you should just not talk to people, I tell you, it makes life easier. Just hire them, you know."

I: "Wow, well, you know, that's all I have for you. Do you have anything that you want to add, anything I forgot to ask you, anything at all?"

P: "I think that's quite wholesome."

I: "Yeah, we're been through a lot. But thank you so much for doing that. That was terrific. It was really, really good."

Interview Transcript

22/11/2018

Alias Gab

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "Okay. All right. So first of all, thank you very much for doing this. I was hoping that you could tell me about your avatar in GW2?"

P: "My main one or my harem of rats?"

I: "One or all of them, tell me as much as you'd like."

P: "So I started- I made my first character Gablies, I based her name off of my favourite play at the time, which was Hedda Gabler, Gabler - Gablies. And when I made her I wanted her to be strong and fierce because I think that is not how I view myself most of the time, so I quite deliberately made her something I was not, by giving her like, bright red hair and a very like strong build, which people quite often don't do in games, they tend to go for the slimmer builds and I wanted to fight that impulse, I think especially with women it's- when playing games it's easy to go for the slimmer build because that's how we're supposed to experience ourselves and that's sort of body we're supposed to want to have, so I made quite a deliberate choice of a fighting that impulse and going for something that was outside of the norm, by choosing to make a character that was very strong looking and very fierce and in all the like, options when it comes to dialogue you can go for like charming or sweet or like fierce and I have consistently gone for the fiercer option, so she plays as a very straightforward and fearless character and then that has been my main that I've played the most and then after that I've continued making the same kind of... species? Yeah the same kind of species, I like these that looks like small rodentish kind of beings that are called asuras and I now have I think nine of them and two of them are female and then the rest are male and I've named them "Tiny" something after so they're all "Tiny XYZ" or Tiny Taako or Tiny Taser or Tiny Zorro and I've made them all very deliberately, so there's a theme. The one who is an engineer's called Tiny Taser and his appearance is he has a scar on his face and he looks a bit crazy and I think I'm a person who characterises my- or like projects a personality onto them even though they are just you know, polygons and digital shapes. I project a personality onto them so that when I'm designing them there is a narrative for me. So Tiny Taser is this electrician or someone who's played a lot with electricity and has gotten a fair amount of electric shocks. Tiny Taako is based off of a- he's a necromancer and I based him off of a podcast

called The Adventure Zone that features a character that is called Taako and it's a podcast where they play Dungeons & Dragons and Taako is a queer wizard and because queer narratives are quite uncommon in fantasy media, I wanted to embrace Taako and so he has braids and a skirt and a crop top in-game and he's very flamboyant and on fire, literally, there are flames coming from his costume. And that's also been a deliberate choice of- I'm very aware of the norms that are existing within in gaming culture and it's sort of the preconceived notions of what a gamer is and I exist outside of those norms being a woman and being a career woman, so I have tried to use my characters to... To create a sense of freedom. I like having fun with identity rather than making a tall human woman who has short skirts and you know, behaves nicely, I've been able to make these fun characters that are crazy looking but still made very deliberately."

I: "Okay, that's very good. If I narrow in on Gabs, your main character for the moment, you mentioned that you deliberately made her very strong and we've kind of touched on why that was important, but I was hoping that you could go into more detail around why that was important?"

P: "I think, I think I've always... I don't want to say battled with, because it sounds very dramatic (laugh), but I think for any young woman appearance is important and you are whether you want to admit it or not, I think you are too a great extent influenced by media and by portrayals of women that you see and I'm very aware of that and because this is a game, because it is not real, because it doesn't affect me directly, I can also- it doesn't affect me directly in like how I exist and how my body moves in the in the real world. So I think, I think there's like 8 (body) builds that you can pick and choose from and I think I was looking at the thinnest ones and I think had I made that character earlier that's probably the build I would have gone for, the one that was the most slender and the most, you know. I mean, to me now, it looks very sickly thin even in this like rodent being and I look at that and I think I had a moment of like "I don't like that", which is nice. So I tried to operate on the other end of the spectrum and was sort of exploring different body types and viewing it more critically and like just because this is, you know, here's one end of the spectrum and I think a lot of people tend to create their characters on that end of the spectrum. It would be interesting to see statistics actually of like how many pick the thinnest frames even female, men or non-binary players. Like I think that's sort of what we tend to go for. I rarely see thick characters in-game and I think I had a moment of like, but this does not actually appeal to me. I don't like the appearance of these thinnest ones, what happens if I operate on the other side of the spectrum, actually this character now looks very strong and like it has been fighting like it's ready to fight and it's has a lot of, I don't want to say authority, but like it's a body type that is unforgiving and demands to be seen and I thought that was- it was very liberating to have that option, and to- it was nice for me to be able to make that decision of saying "no this is what I want my character to look like" and I think that has been consistent with all my characters. They're all on that end of the spectrum all of them have a bit of a tummy and you know, and they're not in any way like fat, they're just on this very narrow and like they're not none of them are overweight, they're just on the other end of the spectrum that's provided by the publishers and the designers and I think had there been like an even bigger option I think it would have been interesting to go with that."

I: "So is it more of a fun sort of exploration for the sake of discovering what you like or is it more of making a statement? Where do you fit?"

P: "I think- I don't think I want to change the world and like "this is how we should view our characters" it's not- I don't think it's a statement but I think it becomes a statement in a way because we're operating in this world of all these digital characters in this, you know, that we have designed so I think it in a way, it becomes a statement. I think I have probably made at least one person say "actually that's a very cute build for these characters, maybe I should explore that, I like that tummy, it's very cute, like it's a good look" (laugh), like above all, it's a good look. But from my viewpoint it has been- I never did it because I wanted to, you know, change the world. I think the game I play – GW2 is already, you know, of course, it has norms, but I mean I think everything operates within certain norms and like you can't pick- you can't create a character with a disability. You can't, you know, it's very, you know, they're all able-bodied characters that you choose from, I'm like, but you know, what would happen if my character only had one arm, nothing would change, you know. So I think that's there's still norms but I don't think it's the most normative of the games. But yeah, I never really set out to change anything. I think it was just me wanting to explore or like approach a game in a way that was... that came quite intuitively at that point in my life of not wanting to pick the skinniest character and not wanting to create the most normative looking character within the framework of the game and just sort of focusing on what I liked and working on creating a character that felt, I don't want to say that felt real, but that felt grounded in a form of reality and that like this is how a warrior would look like. It probably wouldn't be the skinniest character because, you know, that wouldn't make sense, if it has fought all these battles, why would it not have muscles?"

I: "That makes sense. Yeah, see. So for how long have you played Guild Wars 2 approximately?"

P: "Ehm great question, let me think, what year is it now? Golly, I started when I was- I think it was second year of uni, probably, which means that I would have been... what year would that have been? 2015? So three years? Would that- no wait, 2 and a half years."

I: "Okay. I see, that's good, that's a good enough approximation. And how often do you play?"

P: "It varies depending on how much time I have, I can go long stretches without playing but because I have a time demanding job I have to focus on that. But when I'm free I can easily pour 20 hours into the game in a week and I think that's like, on quite a mediocre week if I don't have anything else to do but as of right now I would say on a month probably 10, between 2 and 10 hours a month."

I: "Okay, and that's because-?"

P: "Because of obligations, yeah."

I: "Okay. So next question is quite an abstract one so feel free to have fun with it, how much do you identify with your character and what's happens to her or him?"

P: "I think- uhm... I don't think I identify with my character, per say, I think like I am obviously in control of her and I make her do stuff. I'm not really a person who invest too much time exploring like the narrative of the game and who's very invested in that but I think, I do think a lot of my relationships with people in-game are shaped by the characters I play, so because I have- it might

just be my personality too, I don't know, but because a lot of my characters are very small and like made with a great amount of sense of humour to it and are supposed to be fun characters, I think I approach other characters in game with that humour. Because I think it sort of sets the tone for how I want to approach the game. So with that also comes how I view other people's characters, if I can say they made this with sense of humour, I know that we will have something in common, in a way, like if I see a very serious- I have- this because it's- you know, like I think you can just pick up on the tone of like, is this a strict character, is this like someone who didn't mind to go with a mohawk in five different colours, you know, because then I think there's like- anything that borders on like the crazy or like half ugly or like when it's so exaggerated it automatically becomes something that's like comic about it, then I think it's easier to have a playful attitude towards that person from the get-go."

I: "Okay, so appearance communicates something to others?"

P: "Yeah, I think so. I think if I see someone running around without clothing with a stick, I'm going to be like "that person is in it to have a good time, for sure", you know, they're not there because they want to level up and gain experience and progress in the game and get the best gear. They are there because they want to have fun and I think it's easy for me to relate to those people and it's easy to have a conversation with them that is partly in character."

I: "And that would be because...?"

P: "Because I know they're not going to think I am weird. You know I think it comes down to like how I think you're still concerned with how people view you in-game. And I think the same fears of like, will they think I am weird? It's very much prevalent within the virtual world as well. And I think... because you don't- I mean there are no facial expressions and you don't know if people are going to have a bad day. Like I don't know these people that I'm interacting with. I think If I see that someone is taking this lightly, it's easier for me to assume that they're not going to be upset. You know, they're not going to be like "you are all extremely bad and I wish you would die" like it's not, that's not going to be the- that's not what someone who's running around naked with a stick is going to tell me (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) So, well, that's interesting cuz I have a question that's kind of revolves around personality and characteristics, and that's really whether your character has a personality or characteristics that you would like to have? And we did touch on this a little bit before."

P: "That I would like to have? I think they're very much a result of me, I don't think I look at them as like- well, actually, yeah, okay, maybe... Ehm... Let me think for a second here. I don't think my characters are like, "oh I want to be like them", I think they're made with my sense of humour, and with my- yeah, I think above all I want to like my characters and I want to make fun characters and I think I want other people to look at them and go "that's a fun character", you know, if they do pay any attention. I don't know how much time we actually spend looking at other people's characters. I think that's very individual of like, you know, look at them, or you know, I think- but I think we spend more time looking at our own characters, and admiring them. So, but I think with Gab specifically I think she could kind of comes across as very... just very sure of herself and I'm not certain if I always do that. So I think that's- but that's something I have, you know, decided."

I: "It comes from you?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "So in a sense the personality and the characteristics, they come from within you, but you are attaching them and building up the character with your own?"

P: "Yeah, like Gab would never have anxiety, you know. Like that, you know, and that's not realistic because everyone has anxiety, but I get to sort of pick and choose what I project onto her."

I: "I see, I see. So another abstract one for you, I hope you enjoy these. Would you become your character if you could?"

P: "Would I become my character? Ehm... No, I mean in like, in the real world or in the fictional world? If I had to like pick- cuz if I had to pick one character to be, if I had to like live in that world permanently, I would probably pick Gab because I feel like she's closest to me. But I wouldn't want to be her in the real world because I think ultimately those characters are not like complex human beings. They are very, you know, they don't have anxiety and I don't think, you know, they don't really- when they're sad it's because it's scripted that they are supposed to be sad. Like it's not- it I mean bottom line is it's not real and I think if I had to pick one character to be in that game, I would pick her but I don't think I would want to be her constantly."

I: "Yeah, that makes sense. So on a similar note, do you make up any backstories or histories for your characters?"

P: "Yeah, I have- I think there are a lot of like in-game, or like gags, like I once- so you can- the loot that you get can vary from very good to very bad. And at one point I looted a rock and I was like, this is bad, but it doesn't count as trash either, so it doesn't sell automatically. I don't even think it has to sell price. It's basically you double-click it and it's like, you have rocks, you run around with the rock and then it disappears. So I think this was like with the guild and we'd probably finished at boss, I'm pretty sure, perhaps Tequatl and I loot a rock. And so I make a joke out of that. Like look at my rock. I got a rock. This is my pet rock now. So now from that people in the guild has given me first a pet rock that's like a mini that follows me around the has googly eyes on it and then later I received bloodstone crazed pet rock, which is a pet rock, but it's angrier, it has these spikes. So I think, I can't remember the question for the life of me, but yeah, so that has become like a narrative arc of the pet rock, and I still have it in my inventory taking up space and I think I've had it there for like years. And then also because when I used to raid that was something we did every week so you kind of began to in the waiting time in between, you know, waiting for everyone to get there or like everyone to come back from break and there would be sort of mini narratives that came from that of like, let's jump everyone and we're going to get our gains. I'm working on my gains and just like pushing that of like the importance of working out and I'm so strong because I work out or me and another character like (laugh), "come let's walk" and I would walk off a cliff and because his character is shaped a bit like a cat I would say "I'm going to walk the cat" and then I'd lead him off a cliff so we'd die, essentially and that became like recurring things that would happen. And I think those were like many narratives and narratives about relationships with how these characters relate to each other. I think they're like ongoing

things. Like I always send- whenever I loot a mini that isn't worth anything that's like Professor Mew Mew or what it's called I send it to the same person in my guild. So I probably sent him 25 of those (laugh) and he keeps them all and so I'm like "here, for the Army". You know, "this is another one, another recruit for the Army". So yeah, absolutely. I think- and I think those things come from things that are- that should be boring, like if you- if I get that instead of something that's useful I have to make something fun out of it cuz otherwise I would be disappointed. Like if I get a rock instead of an ascended weapon, I have to make something useful out of that rock and make a joke out of it because then it will have a different worth so it won't be for nothing, cuz it's easy to be disappointed like "I got shit loot and I'm going to throw it all away" versus "look at my bad loot, let's make fun of it". And I think having playful characters helps me with that because it sets the tone of like this is not serious so, you know, sure I spent a number of hours doing this, but I'm also building all these friendships and that is just as important as getting the loot."

I: "I see. So still talking about the characters and what they're made of, how long do you usually spend customising your character during character creation or with a makeover kit?"

P: "I would say it varies. Definitely. I think if I look at a character and I say "actually I'm bored with this appearance now" or like "this is not the look I want to go for" I will definitely spend, you know, it can be up to thirty minutes at a time trying to find a better look and it's usually a process of going to get, like looking at makeover options before then buying a makeover kit, because it costs, you can't buy it for gold you have to buy for gems, gems are expensive in comparison to like relative to the gold. You can also buy gems for actual money. So if you want to buy a makeover kit, you usually spend all your gold doing it, so therefore it becomes more of a process of weighing my options. Like am I sure I want to do this? But even when it comes to appearance like I have bought outfits off of the gem store. So Tiny Taako has this flame kissed vest of flame kissed outfit because I wanted to go for a look of him being like on fire and so he has a back pack that's like a skull with lava and his weapons leave a trail of smoke and there are flames coming from his outfit and I bought that also from The Gem Store because that was the only look that I wanted that felt right, but I also don't play my characters if I don't think they look good, like, it's like, well, yeah, but I want them to look right before I- and then with that because you change something with transmutation charges, I also want to make sure I have the best gear before I change how they look and- so it's a process definitely and sometimes you know, I will definitely do boring things, the things I don't normally enjoy like World versus World, which is very time-consuming, not very rewarding, you have to put a lot of time into it for you to profit from it. So I will do that if that is the only way to get the gear that looks like what I want, that has a certain look that I want. Yeah, but I will also, now also like because you can see all the skins that are available in the game from your bank tab, you can sit there and try to puzzle up a good look and you'll ask your friends like, "what do you think about this look? Would this suit this character?" and then when you decide on a look it sort of becomes a task to get access to all these pieces and unlock them. Just so that your character can look a certain way."

I: "So when you ask your friends and they disagree with something you like, does that matter?"

P: "Yeah, I think so. Definitely. Yeah, if they say "no, that's not really how I view them" I would probably start looking for other options, because I'm asking them to begin with, it's, you know, I'm not entirely certain either, there's some things where I'm like "yeah, I'm wearing this" and that's just how it is cuz it makes sense, but other things- I think especially when I'm redesigning a character I like to ask for some input and be like, "what do you think about this on this character?" But you know, there are some- I think once they are- once they have their gear and are like, and you can just sort of change the skin, I think it's easier to do that a bit more light-heartedly, especially if like, no, I want my character to have sunglasses now, or I want them to have a hat or I want them to have something seasonal, I think that's whatever, but I think it's the major makeovers or when you've just made a character and you're still finding a look for them that I would ask for help and be like, ask for someone's advice.

I: "I see. So does it matter what you think of their characters when you ask? So would you ask someone whose character you are not that impressed with?"

P: "I mean, I'm not impressed with anyone (laugh). They're all inferior to me. No but I think I think we all have very individual taste. I think just based off of, like some people would never make a character in the race that that mine are and- cuz they don't like the appearance of them and you know, some people make characters- like I would never make a human character and play that seriously because I don't think they're that fun cuz it's just a human. But other people would only want to play humans. So I don't think, I think it's more like what my relationship to them is and how well they understand sort of the vision of what I want to do with my characters, which is just to have fun."

I: "I see. So how much do you enjoy exploring the in-game world just for the sake of exploring it, is that something you do?"

P: "Ehm, not really. I don't- I mean there are for example, there are Vistas. I'm quite impatient when I play so I don't really sit there and listen to the dialogue or stay through the cutscenes or view all the vistas that you can view. I'm more- I think for me what drives me is either having a semi-monotonous task to relax of just sort of exploring maps or like making progress in some way and finishing story or getting new gear or getting keys and sort of enjoying seasonal activities. Or interacting with other people like my friends that I play with but I don't think the game itself, like had I not had any friends in the game I probably would not have been playing it still because I don't think I would have enjoyed it as much."

I: "I see. So we're gonna move on to the social stuff in a little while, I just have a couple more questions about the game. How important is leveling up your character?"

P: "It's very important for me. All my characters are level 80 and I always have- I tried to always have all the masteries unlocked just because it grants access to things. I want to have geared characters that are able to, you know, perform in combat, because it unlocks content."

I: "Okay, so we're talking endgame content?"

P: "Yeah endgame content, and I want to unlock endgame content because all my friends have unlocked endgame content. So that means we can play together, even having just a fully explored

map is good because then you can, if someone's like "I'm over here, will you help me?" It means I can do that. Can we pause for two minutes?"

I: "Yeah, sure."

2 minute phone call break.

I: "Are you good to go?"

P: "Yep."

I: "All right, so we were talking about leveling up characters and accessing game content with friends, anything at all to add there?"

P: "I don't think so. I think as I said, I want to- it is important to me to access it because it unlocks you know new places to explore and that's always interesting. I think you sort of have a somewhat of a relationship with the development team and you want to see what they are doing and where they're taking the game, but it's also mostly the social aspect of it."

I: "Okay, so a similar note again, how important is knowing as much about the game mechanics and rules of the game as possible?"

P: "I mean, yeah, no, I think that is important to some extent I was lucky to find people who didn't really care about my skill level or my knowledge level when I started, which meant I could- I sort of just got to do things without really having to learn it first. So that was fun, because it gave me access to a group to play with."

I: "So that's kind of ties back into the social aspect?"

P: "Yeah, I think you always want to pull your... like do your best and be able to pull your own weight in group gaming, but I also think that after a certain point it doesn't matter because people would rather play with someone who's fun than someone who is very talented, but very mean or very like short-tempered or doesn't have the patience to sort of accommodate for everyone. So I think like up to a certain point it matters in that like, don't die immediately and don't try to, you know, don't ruin it for the group. But after that it's like, well, those 2000 damage points or you know, that 2000 DPS is not going to make a difference if you are liked and if you're fun to play with."

I: "Yeah. So how often do you play just to get away from real life or just to avoid thinking about real life stuff?"

P: "Uhm... I mean, I think I play- it's more- when I play it's more like a little treat cuz like now I don't have anything else to do, so now I can just do this. I wouldn't say that I use it as an escapism of like, oh, I'm very stressed, I'm going to do this instead. It's more like a oh, I have time off and I need to relax so I can play this game. But no I wouldn't say that I really use it as a as a form of escape or anything. It's more of a way of relaxing and socialising, it can almost become- and I know I can't put too much emphasis on the game because then because there's seasonal content that I'm missing out on because I'm busy with work, I can't care about that because that becomes like a stress factor. So I try to have a healthy relationship with the game and only play it when I have time and not think that I have any obligations to it. So it's a very relaxed relationship with it,

like ideally I would want to play more but the way my work situation is right now, it's a limitation in time. And I work at awkward hours and yeah, not realistic."

I: "Okay, yeah I get it. I'm pretty much done with prodding in your in the first section of this, which is your avatar, and if it's good by you I would like to move on to social habits?"

P: "Yeah, how many sections are there? We've been going for an hour, how many sections are there? (Laugh)."

I: "I reckon that the rest will take maybe 20 minutes?"

P: "Okay, that's fine."

I: "Okay. Don't worry I'm not going to keep you—"

P: "You're like "there's 10 sections" (laugh), grab a blanket."

I: "I assume that- the first one normally takes the longest so don't worry. So could you tell me about your social life in Guild Wars 2 and what it looks like?"

P: "I think it's very relaxed. I think I was more- when I had more time to play I think I was more invested in sort of what was going on in the guild, and so- but I think we all accept that people are, you know, have real life obligations and that comes first. So now I just like to hop in and- when possible and it's not really, you know, no one makes a fuss about that and then we also because we have a Discord channel, we all talk outside of the game too. And so I think even though we started out as like knowing each other within the like framework of the game and you know in that virtual world we (50.15 PSS?) moved to another platform. The game is just like one way that we spend time together online, but we're also talking in Discord and we're also, you know, doing other things and occasionally meeting up in real life, so. Yeah, I think it is- and I think everyone's very accepting of, you know, this is just a game and because someone's not playing doesn't mean that they're, you know, dead, just means that they are busy and that that's, you know, I think no one would want for anyone that the game was their like top priority in life."

I: "So would you say that the member of your Guild are important to you?"

P: "Uhm I definitely care about them. I don't think- I think they're like, I think we're all like acquaintances. You know, it's not- we have fun together. I think the interaction is very much shaped by a sense of play. You know, it's a very light-hearted and very- yeah, we don't- like in a group we wouldn't discuss big serious topics. I think you do that more one-on-one with people and yeah, I don't- yeah, it's very- I mean, we're just having fun together really and because it's that sort of the tone no one really takes anything too serious and doesn't matter if you don't like, if you don't show up for long stretches of time, as long as you've not promised that you would cuz that's rude. Like I think it's very much based off like mutual respect for another and just a playful attitude to it."

I: "Okay. So how important is it then to you how your guild members see you?"

P: "I think it's important. I think like there's something very liberating about people not knowing what you look like. Because everywhere else people know what you look like that's sort of- that's just the base line of things, like people will know your face, but here they only know your avatar and I think that shapes people's perception of you because that's the face we're attaching to the personality, but I think like their perception of me is important in the sense of me wanting to come

across as a nice person and wanting to like lighten the mood and be funny and just make it contribute to making it a fun space.”

I: “I see. So how important is it to you that your guild members feel that they can count on you, does that matter at all?”

P: “Yeah, of course that matters. I think there are points where I would have wanted to participate more. And I don't really think I'm- like right now I don't sign up for anything because I always have a lot of things that sort of just show up that I have to do, that is more important to me than the game whether it be work or like taking care of my social life with people that are in the real world. Like I don't think I would pick my guild over my like friends that have in the physical world.”

I: “So we touched on this one a little bit earlier. How much do you enjoy getting to know other people in the game?”

P: “Ehm... I think it's- I'm kind of shy, like I don't feel a need to like, I'm not really contact seeking in the game. I think like, and it's always you know, when someone joins it always changes the group dynamic, for good and for worse, but I think like the friends that I've made have been, you know, half by, you know, there has always been a linking person between me and them, like I haven't been like, hey, this is this new person that I met let's bring them out into the guild, but it's more, yeah, I don't really write to people either or talk to-interact with strangers unless they initiate conversation and even then I'm like, I don't know what to say, this feels awkward (laugh).”

I: “Yeah, okay. So when other people vouch for someone it feels okay?”

P: “Yeah. Yeah.”

I: “So do you watch other people stream content?”

P: “No, no.”

I: “Why is that, why doesn't that interest you?”

P: “I think like I don't see what I would gain from that with this type of game because it- I mean the fun that I have in the game is with my friends it's not really- and I think like if I were to look at a streamer and go, I really like them and their personality then yeah, but I don't see why I would take that- why I wouldn't take that time instead and look at- or like actually play the game myself with my friends because this isn't very- like it's not super skill-based like it's not- and because you often play as a team whether with strangers or with your guild it's not really like I can watch YouTube video or watch someone stream and go “Oh this is really smart. I'm going to have that in mind when I play later”, I think what I have watched in recorded content is I've watched people open black lion chests. I've watched that but I've also watched like a music guild trying to raid and their videos because I think there's a relationship and it's easy to understand the dynamics of the group directly and I think it's easy to recognise yourself in that cuz like at one point I was- or like my guild was trying to learn how to raid too and like we also all died several times and so it's easy to sort of see our group dynamic in their group dynamic and it's easy to understand it immediately.”

I: “So it's entertaining?”

P: “Yeah, I view that as entertainment. I don't see like if I were to watch, I think like- but a lot of things are happening in terms of like streaming, a lot of things that happen are boring. Like people-

I don't- I have a hard time to imagine that it's always going to be entertainment like throughout the, yeah, you know, someone's playtime and I'd rather then just watch like the highlights.”

I: “Yeah. Yeah, I get you. So why do you watch other people open black lion chests?”

P: “Uhm, I think it's sort of living vicariously through them, you know, because they- if they have like fifty black lion chest keys and if five keys costs like 400, 350-450 gold which in gems is like, let's say in between like around 150 gold for five keys. They have 50 Keys. That's 1500 gold. That's a lot of gold. I will never have that and I will never put enough real life money into acquiring that because it doesn't make sense to me, but seeing someone open like 50 chests is interesting just to see like what do they get and like... you know, yeah, I think it's like living vicariously and you know, it's easy to run off afterwards and like collect keys or you know, trying to- or buying five of them.”

I: “So you're in a way gauging whether it's worth your time?”

P: “Yeah I think so, but it's also- there's also something entertaining about it cuz it's you know, there is a suspense element of like, will they get something very rare? So I think that's easy too, well, it's more that it's easy to relate to it because you know, I too have opened black lion chests. I know what it's like to hope for a good drop.”

I: “Okay, so last section now, last couple of questions, could you tell me what you spend your gold on in the game and why, why these items?”

P: “Could I tell you what I spend my gold on? Probably not (laugh). It just seems to disappear. I don't- I usually just sort of save it for a long period of time, if I do spend it I usually- I think I mostly spend it on Gem Store items, or on leveling up skill levels in like crafting or possibly even gear. I think like Gem Store items in terms of, you know, here's- like useful gem store items, of like here's a- or cosmetic ones, like here's an outfit that I've been looking at or here's a glider or a makeover kit or a character slot or something that feels worthwhile.”

I: “Okay, so both utility as well as cosmetic stuff?”

P: “Yes.”

I: “And gear I will assume is to make your character stronger?”

P: “Yeah. Usually ascended gear.”

I: “Yeah. So my next question really, is whether you could tell me about a time that you have played something like either the sandstorm flush activity or opening trick or treat bags or opening black lion chests, whatever you like to do along those lines?”

P: “Yeah, I think, well, we can talk about black lion chests (laugh).”

I: “Okay, is that your favourite kind of random element in-game?”

P: “Yeah, I think so, because it feels like... the balance between good items and bad items is like pretty decent, like even if you get like a common item, like I think the worst things you can get from that is like minis, but the rest of it is going to be useful at some point. I've gotten a lot of hair makeover kits, which I think will be useful at some point. Especially if I make a new character, because the hair makeover kits that you buy for gems or that you get from a black lion chest have different hairstyles than the ones you can get from the character select screen. So that's always useful, but even just black lion tickets or black lion ticket scraps will be useful. I think I've gotten

a lot of good things from black lion chests, mounts and gliders and skins, yeah a lot of weapon skins and even just wardrobe unlocks that have given me gem store items and even if it doesn't- even if I don't- if I'm not going to use it, it still usually goes toward a collection that you know in turn is an achievement or it adds to my account value, or I can sell it."

I: "Okay, I see. So, essentially if you farm a key it's usually worth your time investment?"

P: "Yeah I think farming a key, because that's always like a hit-or-miss when you do cuz you have to like, I spend a lot of time doing map exploration which might give you a key might not and then you can do the weekly key runs where you do one character to level 10, do story and get a key, and I do both of them every now and then, but map exploration I think is quite meditative. Like I don't mind doing it. I know a lot of people hate it but I'm like, yeah, cuz I can approach it very methodically and I'm like, yeah, I'm fine, I'm fine with doing that. But, you know, it's always hit-or-miss because you could get a transmutation charge. But even then you also get map exploration which is useful to have on a character."

I: "So in a way, you're investing your time in a sensible way I suppose then?"

P: "Yeah, I don't feel like it's unreasonable to have an unlocked map which means that if there's an event happening or if I need to help someone out, I will be able to go on any character and help them."

I: "I see, I see. So, when you buy items from the gem store, or from the Trading Post, anywhere in the game, do you buy them with real currency in-game gold or both?"

P: "Both. I think when it's more entertainment items such as black lion chests or gliders or... what's it called, or like armour skins, I tend to mainly use in-game currency. But if it is sort of account upgrades such as character slots or bag slots, or you know anything that makes my account more useful, I don't mind spending a bit of money because I think because this game is like a one-time purchase and then you have full access to it, which is very rare for MMORPGs, if you take- like their biggest competitor being World of Warcraft, you have to pay monthly to play it. So I think me chucking them like ten euros, you know, twice a year, it's not going to damage my economy. I think it's worthwhile, I get something in exchange for it other than like being allowed to play and that makes my account more useful to me whether I buy a new character slot so that I can make a new character or so that I can key farm. Like I don't mind giving them that money, because it doesn't affect my economy in the, you know, grand scheme of things, and yeah. It's also like I also want to support them, you know."

I: "Yeah, that makes sense. So this one might be difficult to apply to you because of your flexible hours. But how often would you say that you open black lion chests per week or per month?"

P: "I think if I'm having, ehm, if I'm- I mean I'm trying to- when I'm doing play like when I'm in a period of playing then I try to key farm once a week. So at least once a week the goal is always more than that, of course (laugh). And then if I feel like I have some spare gold and if- I don't think- like this last time I bought a lot of chests and sort of spent all my gold on it, I did it with someone else in game, so it became more of a social thing, yeah, if I'm going to like do any form like gambling it's more of a social thing of like, let's do this together and see what happens."

I: "That kind of answers my next question, which is why do you think that you open black lion chests?"

P: "I think like, the way, when I farm for keys, it's because I think like there's always- the time invested is worth it because what I could get is potentially very great like a new mount or- and also because they change the content quite regularly. There's always something you can get from it or even if you get the statues that works as a currency to buy old items from that. It's still going to be worthwhile and that sort of accumulates until you can buy something, like I think I have like fifty or sixty statues and with that I could buy a super black lion key which gave me essentially 100 gold from selling one item in it, and then also some extra items. So I think like that is worthwhile. And when I buy keys it's just because I have spare gold."

I: "Okay, and how much gold would usually spend?"

P: "I usually buy 5 at a time, and at most I bought ten at a time."

I: "Okay, how much gold would that be, approximately?"

P: "Ehm, 120 to 240 (gold)."

I: "Okay, I see. Okay, next question. It's almost at the end. We're real close. Next question is the only really personal question I'm going to ask you and it's because I have a follow-up question that's relevant to it. So I was wondering if you could tell me what your monthly income is?"

P: "My monthly income is- does it matter which currency?"

I: "No, it's fine, whatever makes sense to you."

P: "So my monthly income is I have a base income from my job that is 15,000 Swedish crowns and then I freelance so it can be anywhere from between like five hundred crowns extra, to two to three thousand crowns on top of that so between I would say between 16 and 18,000 a month."

I: "So with that number mind, what proportion of your monthly wage would you require, so how much money would I have to give you, if any, in exchange for deleting your main character?"

P: "I don't think it would be... yeah, no, I don't, I don't think you could pay me any money for me to remove it. Like I don't, like I don't see- because I don't measure my characters in an economic system. You know, there's no amount of money, I mean, there's an amount of money of like, you know, here's a million, you know, pounds, I'd be like, "yeah, okay, I guess", but I also don't really value money that much. Like it's not really the most important thing to me. And I'd rather have the opportunity to play than having like an extra monthly income."

I: "Would it be different if I asked you to delete your account instead?"

P: "Yeah, I mean, yeah, like I feel like I have- my account and my characters, I think they are like very much one in a way, like I could delete the characters but they are also going to have soulbound items which won't transfer. But I don't think there's like any amount of money that would be like, this is worth it, because it is also a platform where I have social relationships with people, like, I have friends there, and I don't think I would pick money over friends. I think... I think had it been another game or like my Steam account, I would have been like, yeah sure do it, like that that doesn't matter cuz it's not, it's like not an ongoing game and it's not like social relationships. So like I would move like my entire steam library for a certain amount of money that was higher than the worth- what the individual games were worth together, because it doesn't

matter, you know, those are just games that I play, not to socialise but to, you know, have an experience with the game and I think the social aspect makes GW2 worth more than, you know, those other games."

I: "I see, I see. I only have two more questions. So we're at the very end. The next one is probably the most abstract one so feel free to interpret it however you want, okay? How much do you believe that your avatar, so how much do you believe that Gab, for example, influences your decisions that you make in the game?"

P: "Uhm, I mean to some extent I would be like no, they wouldn't, they wouldn't do that. Like I think it was, if it was like moral questions of like, you can either do this or that, I'd be like no they wouldn't do that or yeah, they would definitely do that, I think you do attach a personality to these- or project a personality onto the characters, but I don't think they're like, oh, my character would want me to spend money, you know, I don't think that's sort of how it works, but more like, here's a moral dilemma, what would you do? And I would be like, well actually, this character is a bit selfish and a bit no nonsense so they would probably go with this option, but I don't think there are that many moral dilemmas in the game, so..."

I: "Okay, I see. So final question, how do you feel about things like black lion chests in other spaces? So in other games or online, or- is that something you engage with?"

P: "Not really. I think I understand why it is being done, I also think, like Guild Wars has a very mature audience. I think the majority of the players are- like the majority of players that I socialise with are adults and I think it has a lot of adults playing it and they are, you know, fiscally responsible, I think. But I think like other games that actively target younger audiences in their marketing and in their- just how it's stylised. Like if we take fortnite, for example, like you don't die in fortnite, like it isn't- there's not really blood you just cease to exist, it's very colourful. It's very like playful and fun and I definitely see how a younger audience would engage with that content and want to buy- would want their parents to invest money into it and wouldn't see a problem with that. So, you know, I think there's always-there's a difference between I am spending my money that I have earned and I am responsible for that, versus younger people spending their parents' money and not having any relationship with that money, other than that the money is there and that's convenient and they are unlocking content. And I think that might potentially set off this idea that money will always be there and sort of enable a certain way of thinking about, regarding these loot crates for some people, I don't think all people would form an unhealthy relationship with it, but I think the way it's so normalised has the potential of being a bit of an issue."

I: "I see. Do you have anything else to add, anything I forgot to ask you, anything at all, or are you happy to end it there?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay, thank you very much."

Interview Transcript

06/11/2018

Alias Kintari

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "All right. Okay. So if you're good to go, could you tell me about your main avatar in GW2, anything that comes to mind?"

P: "My main avatar is a necromancer called Gwen Kintari, I think it was one of the characters, well necromancer was one of the classes I really liked, and then they decided to nerf it so... Yeah. Still like it, but I don't play a lot of GW2 anymore, so."

I: "Okay, how come?"

P: "Because the game is getting stale for me. I've been playing for five years I think, I took a break of one year, came back. Still not interesting to me."

I: "Okay."

P: "So I only participate in the raids if I have time."

I: "Okay. So at the moment how often would you say that you play?"

P: "At the moment probably only once a week."

I: "Okay, so in terms of your character, if you would like to focus on the necromancer. How much do you feel invested in what happens to that character, in terms of how much do you identify with the events that occurs with that character?"

P: "Can you elaborate a bit more?"

I: "So if we're going to pick raids as an example, for example, if you do something and you're very successful at it, if you have a particularly difficult encounter, and you're playing your necromancer, do you identify with that character in a way that that character owns a part of that success or is that success completely yours?"

P: "I don't see an association between the character itself and me. I think, well, maybe you know I mainly do DPS is because I practice. I'll pick up the class. I mean, you can give me any class and I will just practice and still get good at it. If that's what you're trying to ask."

I: "So if you were- if we said- when you practice, that is entirely that's you getting better at the game that's you almost learning how to use a tool?"

P: "Uhm use a tool... well it's more of adapting, to a certain class."

I: "So it's about mastery, in a way?"

P: "Yeah, I guess, it's like... I don't know, doing your job, or something. If you do it often, you are probably more experienced than someone who just started in the profession."

I: "Okay. Yeah, that's really interesting. So you're more on the utility side of the scale in terms of how you relate to your character?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes. Okay, it's funny, I've seen that a lot with raiders lately. Okay, so it's very much in a certain way going to work?"

P: "Well, technically you can look at it that way, cuz considering how raids are at the moment in Guild Wars it's feels more like a chore than having fun, would be my say."

I: "Okay, and why is that? I'm going to ask why a lot, I love elaboration."

P: "(Laugh) It's because it's always the same thing. It's like you know, Blue Collar work, right? It's like standing behind the what's it called? I have to Google translate this... It's like... assembly work! It's like an assembly line if you know what I mean, every person has a different job. So basically you have certain classes to do that, certain classes to do this, and you could say that the product is killing the boss. And you need your workers on the assembly line to succeed in getting the product, as in, killing the boss."

I: "Yeah, I would see how there's not much, you know, there's maybe not that much scope for living out your character there in that scenario, right, because your focus is on tasks."

P: "Nope, not at all."

I: "So in terms of your character, and this question tends to stump people, they're not really sure how to respond to this, so take your time. If you could, would you become your character?"

P: "One second, it's a bit laggy on the line."

I: "Oh, yeah, that's my connection that's really bad. That's strange."

P: "Yeah my connection is also getting bad."

I: "Could it be Discord that's breaking down on us?"

P: "... Can you still hear me?"

I: "I can hear you now. Can you hear me?"

P: "Yeah, cuz I see that you can select your region, maybe I can switch to Central Europe me."

I: "It's- my voice connection has been red for a while. It's back to green now."

P: "Yeah, it's also going red and green here for me, but I don't know if the server, but anyway, you were asking?"

I: "Yes. Okay, let's see how it goes. And if Discord quits on us, that's fine. We can postpone, I was asking whether, if you could, would you become your character?"

P: "Well, I mean if becoming the character means living in the world of GW2 then I'd probably say yes, GW2 is an interesting world, but... well, yeah. I don't know how to describe this, but I don't really feel associated with GW2 anymore."

I: "So it's almost, you can say maybe a relationship that's drifted apart?"

P: "Yes, you could say that."

I: "So on a similar line, do you feel like your character have a personality or any characteristics that you would like to have?"

P: "No, no, I'm really distant from a game and my life, if you know what I mean. I don't I don't make connections between my life and a game, if you see what I mean."

I: "They're two distinct entities that don't overlap?"

P: "Yeah, exactly."

I: "I see, so you don't fall into the category of making up stories or backgrounds for your characters?"

P: "No, I'm not a role player. Well, I mean, I mean for Guild Wars I'm not a role player. But in the sense of like a very good single player game I can get into the story. But not- Guild Wars is- I don't know. It's something I can't- I don't know, I don't have a lot of interest in anymore."

I: "Okay, it lacks something?"

P: "Yeah, it lacks something, content."

I: "Okay, it lacks content, that's good information."

P: "Are you also going to give this to Arenanet?"

I: "No, I don't think they- this is just purely my opinion, I have not asked, well, as a researcher I don't need to ask a company for permission to do research-"

P: "No no no, I know but they probably want to hear what their players are thinking about the game."

I: "That would be- I would probably offer it to them, but I would offer it to them post production, so that they can't in any way interfere, my assumption is that they don't exactly want someone to look into these kind of things."

P: "Yeah, I can understand that."

I: "I'm not certain, I'm just not taking any chances, not yet anyway, if they want the data, if they want the papers it's free Open Access, anyone can access them."

P: "Yeah. I would also like to read your paper when it's done."

I: "I will give it to you, there would be a whole dissertation on this. But if I if I end up publishing, the papers will be much more compact and at that point I will let you have it, okay? (laugh)."

P: "Sure."

I: "Okay, this is something that is quite prevalent in GW2 and that would be character customisation. How long would you say that you normally spend on character customisation?"

P: "Meaning fashion wars?"

I: "Yes, absolutely."

P: "Well, I think, do you mean in the beginning of making a character or afterwards? Or both?"

I: "You can tell me about both."

P: "Yeah, the character creation I usually don't really care about it. Cuz I have stuff to make my character look better afterwards. So let's say maybe 15-20 minutes."

I: "Okay, if I then hand you a total makeover get to really, you know, make it look good."

P: "Yeah, I mean- I mean that."

I: "That would be 15 to 20 minutes?"

P: "Yes. So basically making a character I don't really care I just click click click, and then afterwards with a makeover kit I would spend like 20 minutes or something like that."

I: "Why would you spend twenty minutes?"

P: "Because it's Fashion Wars."

I: "Okay, explain a little bit about fashion wars to me cuz no one's actually mentioned the term before even though it is being thrown around a lot. So just explain to me what fashion wars is?"

P: "It's the attempt at making your character look more appealing I guess or more- standing out more, I like that."

I: "Okay, and why is that important?"

P: "I don't know. Maybe it's something like status, maybe, something like that. It's not that I feel like it's really important, but I do like to have my characters look appealing cuz it makes me more want to play the game. If that makes sense, because you are looking at your character."

I: "So the visual experience is a definite factor."

P: "Visually appealing yes, cuz I don't think your character has an emotion. So let's make it visually appealing."

I: "I see. In terms of world exploration, how much do you enjoy world exploration just for the sake of exploring it?"

P: "Not at all (laugh)."

I: "Why is that?"

P: "Because again, it feels more like a chore. The first time I was probably thinking it would be cool and stuff like that, stuff you haven't seen, but I've been playing the game for five years and I think I've seen everything. So it's not interesting for me anymore."

I: "I see. So on a similar note then, how important is it to level up your character as fast as possible."

P: "The fact that I already have played this game a lot makes it a lot easier to level up. But I usually just level up to 80 immediately, because I have the tools to do it."

I: "Okay, so levelling is not of interest, what's of interest is accessing the end-game content?"

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay. I see. I'm not going to ask you why at this time, I'll let you get away with that. Okay. So if we go back to raids for a minute, how important is it to you to know as much as possible about game mechanics and game rules?"

P: "I think it's more important to achieve the end-game. So basically killing the boss than a knowing the mechanics, cuz I already know the mechanics, but I would think, I mean like if a pug would join us, I would assume they know the mechanics, and actually do a rotation or something."

I: "And if they didn't, what would your reaction be? For example, if someone joins, you don't know them, they don't know the mechanics, or it becomes obvious that they don't know the mechanics and they don't know the actual rules of the game. What would your spontaneous reaction be?"

P: "Well my first question would be what does the LFG say?"

I: "Okay, so what's specified in the search?"

P: "Yes, but for example if it's a 50 LI run or something, I don't really expect much from people and it could be new players cuz I have experience with new raiders. My old guild was, well, started as a training Guild. And people stopped, well, my guildies stopped playing because there's nothing interesting in the game. So I wouldn't really mind, but if it's like a 250 LI run I would expect them to know mechanics and do their stuff correctly."

I: "What emotion would be the most prevalent for you? Would you be invested enough to care as in would you actually get angry? Would you get annoyed? Would you be more cold in the sense that you wouldn't actually care? If someone joined and didn't necessarily know what to do in a 300 LI run."

P: "If you asked me this one year ago I would probably be more annoyed. But now, I really don't care anymore."

I: "Okay, I see. I think this one then doesn't probably apply to you, but I'm going to ask you anyway just to see what you say (laugh). So how often would you say that you play to avoid real life for a while, to just get away for a little while?"

P: "Getting away from real life- I can't really get away from real life, but I would, well-"

I: "Hang on, you're going really robotic."

P: "Oh sorry, hello?"

I: "It's going to be great to listen back though cuz it's quite amusing. Could you repeat that one more time?"

P: "Okay, do you mean in GW2 or a different game?"

I: "I'm going to expand this question since you said that you only play once a week. I'm going to expand it to video games in general."

P: "Well, I don't- I usually only play on Sunday now cuz I'm really busy now, but it's not like I get away from real life cuz some days there's nothing to do. I mean that would still- It's not like I just eat dinner in front of my computer or something, I can go without playing video games."

I: "Okay, so it's more of a hobby and less about escaping?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay. Well that answers it, that's good."

P: "(Laugh) Are you sure?"

I: "Yes. Yes, you're doing great. Okay, we've finished the first section. I believe I am finished poking into you and your character. Okay, so I'm, however, going to go on and poke into your social habits. Are we going robot-? Yeah, we're both going robotic, it's red again."

P: "I'm sorry?"

I: "Yeah, exactly (laugh). I'm going to just wait for the connection to get better."

P: "Hello? I think it works."

I: "It's green again. So that's good."

P: "Yeah, I swapped to Central Europe, Western Europe usually has problems."

I: "Okay. So moving on to your social habits, you're doing great. I really appreciate that sticking with it despite the connection issues. It's great. Okay, so next couple of questions- your social environment. So could you tell me a bit about what your social life looks like in GW2?"

P: "I was almost afraid that you were going to ask about my real life (laugh), no, in GW2, since I only log on once a week. I mean, I don't really have a social life there. I mean, I still have the (name withheld) and you guys when raiding, but you know, I don't really talk, I am more of an observer, so no social life."

I: "(Laugh) That's okay. I'm still going to poke into this. I'm sorry."

P: "No problem."

I: "So ignoring that I am part of that guild for a while if you can, you could exclude me from your thinking if you like, to make it more-"

P: "That's impossible."

I: "If you want so you don't have to feel like you need to censor yourself cuz I want you to be honest, but how important would you say that your guild members are to you or why or why not?"

P: "Well to be honest, the people in the guild are expendable, to be harsh. I think we're sticking together because of the atmosphere, the fun we have, or sometimes the not fun we have, but yeah."

I: "They're fulfilling a job in a way, there's a purpose?"

P: "Yeah in a way, they're- it's more bearable to raid with HC than it would be with pugs, cuz we have people who like to tell stories, you know, and like to tell them about their life. So we have some fun."

I: "I see, so would it be kind of correct to say that the guild itself is task-oriented, but the task could be completed with other people, but these particular people complete the task together because they know it's going to be a relatively smooth experience."

P: "Yeah, kind of, I'm going to go back with an example of like the blue collar workers. So would you rather work- well, do your work without talking, or would you rather do your work while you could talk to other people? I mean you would probably choose the second one because the first one is boring and tedious. Well, you're actually still doing the same thing. But the talking makes it more bearable."

I: "Okay. So the talking is almost like a distraction from game content that you perceived to not be that engaging?"

P: "Interesting, yeah exactly."

I: "I see, how important is it then to you how your guild members see you?"

P: "I don't really care about that because in a way they don't really know me. But they do know how- well technically, they know how I play. If that makes sense."

I: "So is it more important then how they perceive your skill rather than how they perceive your personality?"

P: "That is a good question... I mean I think they already expect a certain skill level from me, but personality wise I don't think they really know me that well, well except for a certain amount of people like (*names withheld*) cuz I talk to them more than the other people. So I think that's normal that they know me better, but I don't really think it's important how they think about me."

I: "I see. That makes sense. Okay, next one's interesting from a raid perspective as well, I assume, and it's how important it would be for you that your guild members can feel like they can count on you?"

P: "I think I'm expendable. I am only a DPS player, if I would be something like I don't know, a different class maybe like a chromancer or a druid or something, you rely on those classes to be... good. Like the same way you rely on your thing to work when you're working. Well, your computer to work when you're working. If you know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah I get it."

P: "So I rely more on other people than people rely on me."

I: "Okay, that's interesting. How come, because they have more important roles?"

P: "They have more important roles, a DPS role is not that important to me."

I: "Okay, okay. Do you think that you would feel differently about these things if the guild was a social guild instead of a task orientated guild?"

P: "What do you mean with a social guild?"

I: "A guild that didn't meet up every week to fulfil a goal. For example, a guild of people that stick together purely because of the social aspect."

P: "And just do stuff together whenever they feel like it? I wouldn't mind that but I will still- I would still have a guild to actually do the weekly raids, even though at the moment I don't really have interest in the raiding aspect. Like if I had- still had interest in the game and was thinking I would have a guild that is socially nice and have a guild that would just full clear stuff, weekly."

I: "I see, I see, okay. This kind of goes back to pugs again I guess, it's how much you enjoy getting to know other people in the game, so meeting new people?"

P: "Hmm... Meeting new- well, I tend to not have a lot of friends. I usually stick with like two or three really good friends. So I don't think it's that important for me to know other people."

I: "Would you say in general that you feel more like an extrovert or more like an introvert in how you approach people?"

P: "I'm more of an introvert"

I: "Okay, then that relationship makes sense. How often do you watch people stream content in Guild Wars 2?"

P: "Rarely."

I: "Okay. Why?"

P: "Because the game doesn't interest me. I'm just going to say every time you're going to ask why I don't watch- well, do a lot of stuff in Guild Wars 2 is because the game usually doesn't, well, it doesn't ground me anymore. But if you were talking like a year ago, I would probably visit the stream more often, but the only time I visit the stream right now is when someone sends me something or something like that, that's about it. For the rest, I don't really care."

I: "If you think back to a year ago. Did you ever watch people open black lion chests or play sandstorm flush?"

P: "Watch people? No, that's really boring."

I: "Okay, why is that boring? Why was it boring a year ago when you were more into the game?"

P: "When I was still more interested? I don't know, cuz I know Guild Wars- gambling is always disappointing. You know gambling doesn't make you money. It's just- I don't know. I just don't like watching people gamble. Well in the sense of GW2 because I do like to watch some poker games or something like that, but that's something different, in my opinion. Cuz poker is calculated gambling, well, in Guild Wars you don't know what you're going to get, if that makes sense. Does that make sense? That doesn't really make sense."

I: "Yeah, no, no, it does make sense. So for you, poker is more skill-based rather than chance-based?"

P: "Yes, because in poker you could actually calculate the chance of you getting something. So you actually know if you should bet or not, or if you should bluff or not, it's more of a skill-based game than gambling, I mean the black lion chest gambling. Because a black lion chest is truly random. And the chances of you getting something really rare is like, I don't know, under a half a percent even, or even lower than that. We don't even actually know the percentages."

I: "Do you think if you for example watched enough people gamble and recorded what they got, do you think it would be possible to calculate odds based on that?"

P: "Still think it's impossible. I don't think it would ever be possible until Guild Wars actually releases the drop rates."

I: "I see. So if we stick with one year ago, if you can try to put yourself in that mind frame, can you tell me what you spent your gold on and Guild Wars 2 at that point and why?"

P: "I think a year ago I spent more money on- more gold on black lion market skins and stuff like that, for fashion wars. I think I also did some gambling because I did have the money to spend so I didn't really care about the money. Was mostly black lion chests, not ecto gambling, because you could actually get skins from the black lion chests. So that's the reason why I would do it."

I: "If we stick with skins, can try to tell me why the skins are so important?"

P: "Cuz... again, because of the fashion Wars, I like to have- it also has a completionist feeling, if you know what I mean, so I like to collect stuff. Well, I think like a year or two ago my goal was actually to collect every skin there was in GW2, I don't know why but I just wanted to have everything."

I: "Not to use it, just to have it?"

P: "Mhm, just to have the option if I would want to change the skin, if that makes sense."

I: "Okay, so would that kind of fall under creative freedom?"

P: "Yeah, I would think so. Yeah, yeah."

I: "Well, you already mentioned about ectoplasm gambling and black lion chests, but if you could tell me about a specific time that stands out to you that you have played, either opened black lion chests or played ecto gambling or something like that?"

P: "So you just want me to tell something about it?"

I: "Yeah, just tell me a story about it."

P: "Well, at a certain point I had like I think 17 or 18k gold. I didn't know what to do with it, so I thought why not just waste it on something else, and the only money sink I found was black lion chest keys or ecto gambling. I didn't do a lot of ecto gambling cuz I know I wouldn't get anything from it, while black lion chest keys I could actually get something back, while still making profit."

I: "Okay, so it was about having an excess of funds, and wanting to get rid of it on something that- I mean, why would you engage in the activity itself? Is it because of the feeling or is it because of boredom, where does that kind of come from for you?"

P: "It's probably because of boredom and also the feeling of able to collect stuff, cuz the black lion chest keys you can actually get some nice skins and stuff like that. So maybe that's why it, but I also had the money to do it."

I: "So for you, you would have bought items purely with in-game gold?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes, you don't use real currency at all?"

P: "Nope."

I: "Why? It goes back to the why, I'm sorry (laugh)."

P: "Yeah, I know. I knew you were going to ask it's because I don't think you should spend money, well, it's micro-transactions technically and Belgium doesn't really allow it anymore. So technically I cannot buy any gems anymore."

I: "Okay, so you've actually been barred from the gem store?"

P: "Yeah, but that's not too long ago, so- well a year ago I still could, but since the you know, the whole microtransaction thing that's going on with Electronic Arts and stuff, but yeah before that period I wouldn't even consider doing it. Because first of all, I didn't have a job. Well now you have a job and you actually think about how hard you actually have to work to make a living and you have other obligations, I mean you have rent to pay and bills to pay so I would think that you don't have to spend that money on it unless you earn like a shit ton of money, but I don't earn a shit ton of money."

I: "So real money is- you're firmly grounded in that real money is something that's hard to earn?"

P: "Hard to earn. It doesn't come by easily"

I: "And it should be spent on necessities?"

P: "Yes. There's always a rule in my life that life comes first and not your game. Well, you have to do stuff to survive first. I don't want to- I mean, I don't want to drink (laugh), I don't want to become an alcoholic or something like drink a bottle of vodka and then that will be it, and spend the rest of my money on in-game stuff. I would rather have a nice meal every night than spending like, I don't know, a couple of 10 euros or something, I don't know how much it costs, on gems to gamble."

I: "That makes sense."

P: "I mean, you say it makes sense, but not for some people, it doesn't."

I: "That's what I'm thinking. I was actually sitting here thinking I was wondering- I don't- I can't ask you this really, but I was wondering whether you think that most people have those sort of rules and kind of morals that they live by, or people tend to kind of you know... I wouldn't say mess up, but more like side step."

P: "I think it's more of a nurture kind of thing. The way you were raised, I guess. Like I don't want to- I don't want to go- oh my god, English. I need to google this again, because hard words. Because I did study some psychology when I was... but I didn't study it in English, you know. I don't want to... generalise, I don't want to generalise but like some people, you know, those people who come from rich families like to spend their money on stuff that they actually don't need. And you think, well, you could use the money to give it to someone else or something instead of spending it on the car that's like, I don't know, 150000 year old or something."

I: "Okay. Do you think that that has something to do with the excess that you spoke of before and that you had so much gold that you didn't know what you wanted to do with it?"

P: "Exactly, that will be."

I: "So you think one could have similar situations in real life, but with real currency?"

P: "Yeah, but then again you also have people who don't have the money to spend on it and still spend on it. That would, well, that's not smart, I mean, I mean I say it's not smart, but sometimes people don't realise it."

I: "Yeah, do you think people get carried away easily with- when it comes to...?"

P: "Could be, yeah, I don't know how they think, but I mean, people are... complicated."

I: "Yes. Yes. That's the thing, isn't it?"

P: "And that's why there's psychology probably. You know, well you know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah yeah (laugh). So we kind of touched on this already in terms of how much gold you would spend. I mean, you said you had something like 17 or 18k?"

P: "Yes. I mean that's quite a lot. I mean, you can do a lot of stuff with that money, but at that time, I didn't know what to do with it. So I spent it all. Well, not all, I still have... investments."

I: "Oh, okay. Interesting. Yes. Tell me about the investments?"

P: "Well, I have a lot of bank tabs with skins. So that's some money, so I mean, it's just there for like a year or two and I do nothing with it."

I: "So it's almost like a rainy day fund in case you would be interested in the game again?"

P: "Probably yeah. If I would, but I don't think that's going to be for quite a while, looking at the path where it's going."

I: "I see. All right. The next question is the only really personal question I'm going to ask you. The reason I'm asking it is that I have a follow-up question. Once again, it's completely anonymous and confidential and I can't tell anybody. Okay, I would like to know what your monthly income is in real life?"

P: "It's about 1,700 after taxes. Yes."

I: "Euros?"

P: "Yes, correct."

I: "Okay, so going back to your necromancer. Yes, I know. This is- we're making quite a jump."

P: "You said these questions were going to be related, but I don't see the relation (laugh)."

I: "Yes the relation is coming, I promise (laugh). How much money in real life currency Euros would you like as a reimbursement in exchange for deleting your necromancer?"

P: "Reimbursement?"

I: "Would you like any money if any at all in exchange for deleting it?"

P: "I would like five years of my time back."

I: "Okay, how much money is that?"

P: "Well, you want me to calculate it?"

I: "Not necessarily, it can be, I have had people calculating it before, they got their calculators out and everything, you don't have to do that if you don't want to, you can just-"

P: "It's too late, I already did it (laugh). So, let's see... I'm sorry."

I: "No, go for it. This is excellent."

P: "1700 * 12 * 5 equals 100000."

I: "You want 100,000 euros in exchange for deleting your necromancer because of the time that you have invested?"

P: "Time and money, well not money. But time I've invested in it. I don't actually- don't know how much I've played on that character to be honest, I could check it if you want."

I: "It's about your time is valuable and the time that you've invested in that character if I was- if that was to be in reimbursed to you, that is the amount that you would want in order to delete that, the kind of- the sum, the product of all that time?"

P: "Yeah, sure."

I: "Okay. So do you believe in any way that this avatar, this necromancer influences the decisions that you make in game?"

P: "No."

I: "Why? If it was a year back when you were invested?"

P: "What do you mean with influence though?"

I: "What do you think it means? (laugh)."

P: "No no, that's not how it works (laugh)."

I: "Let's say you have your necromancer in front of you. What you're going to do in that game, is that anyway related to the character to you, or do you do whatever you please and what happens to the character, for example, if you acquire rare skins as a result of the activity, is that the goal or is that more of a by-product? How much does your avatar influence your decisions?"

P: "I don't think my avatar influences my decisions at all because I control the character, in a sense. I mean, like I said before I don't make any association between a game and myself. So it's still me in control."

I: "You are the agent."

P: "I am I am the brain behind the character. If you could say that."

I: "Yeah, always say no if it is no, but in terms of the character, is the character more like your... I don't want to say tool, but it's almost like a bridge, it's what enables you to move around the environment, right, and that's all it is."

P: "So could you say the- do you mean that like my character is a tool to get the thing I want in-game? Do you mean that?"

I: "It could be that, it's a very abstract question."

P: "It could be that yeah, I mean..."

I: "Is it like that for you?"

P: "Yeah. Yeah, I mean it's not the character that's doing anything, it's me behind it, right? Right? So in that way I would think that I'm getting the stuff, I'm using the character to get that stuff. Not the other way around. So for example, if we come back to the gambling, it would be my character that make- well I'm using the character to make the gold to buy the black lion keys. But if it were like me spending money on gems to buy keys that will be different. Then my character is not a tool, I am the tool then."

I: "Okay, interesting. So you would consider in a sense the control is with you until you give away some of your real assets and then the control is no longer with you?"

P: "Well it is still my control, but I don't need the character to do it. If that makes- do you know what I mean? So I am giving- well technically I am giving money to my character to buy black lion keys in the situation, and the other way around is I am using my character to make gold to buy the keys, there is a difference."

I: "And you are not comfortable with your character-?"

P: "No I'm not comfortable giving money to my character, you know what I mean?"

I: "No, no, I do I do. That's really interesting, I see. So, how do you feel about similar activities in other spaces, so similar activities to black lion chests or the ecto gambling skritt in other games or online or in an actual real casino? Is that something that interests you?"

P: "Casino is not- well, I wouldn't consider casino- well, hmm, it's again with the poker thing, like Blackjack you can still calculate chances, but I wouldn't go to a casino to gamble away my money, I wouldn't actually spend any money to gamble, I'm not a gambler, unless I have the money, does that make sense?"

I: "I see. So, if you can afford to lose?"

P: "If I could afford to lose then yeah sure. I mean, if I could..."

I: "They're very abstract questions, I apologise, it's just that I'm trying to get to the root of the why really, in that, is it fun?"

P: "I think it's not- I think it's more of an adrenaline thing. You know that adrenaline of winning. I don't know if you participate in any sports or something like that, yeah, or something like that. If you win then it gives you someone adrenaline then you like that feeling, to win, you don't play to lose."

I: "That's a very good statement."

P: "Hey people- you see some people say like the participating is more important than winning, but I don't agree with that, you play to win. You don't play to lose."

I: "So is that a personality aspect?"

P: "I don't know if it's a personality thing. But yeah, you can look at it this way, you participate because you want to be with the people you play with. But there's also the aspect of winning the game that makes you feel good. Guess it's just endorphins or something like that."

I: "I see. Do you have anything that you would like to add, anything that I forgot to ask you, anything, any statement at all that you want to make?"

P: "Not really. No. Are you going to ask me why again?"

I: "(Laugh) There's always a good time to ask why, there's always the possibility of digging deeper, no, I am not, that is actually everything that I have for you and I hope that I haven't completely scrambled your brain."

P: "No my brain was already scrambled so it's fine."

I: "(Laugh) It's okay, it wasn't my fault. Good. Thank you so much."

P: "You're welcome."

I: "That was really, really good."

Interview Transcript

30/10/2018

Alias Markus

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I – “Okay, I was hoping that you could tell me a bit about your main character or your main avatar in Guild Wars 2?”

P – “Aah... I think that’s interesting I guess the first character that I ever created was (*character named withheld for anonymity reason, alias chosen by participant*) Markus, my druid, aah.. that was my launch character – the character I had at launch, yeah, for the head start weekend, and... I guess I didn’t make a new character until I started PVPing.

I – “Okay.”

P – “So that was probably about, like, three months into Guild Wars 2 being around, [sigh] but I would say that I’ve had an interesting... relationship with Guild Wars 2, is that -, because I’ve PVPd so much, I don’t necessarily like, have a single character that I identify with.”

I - “Okay.”

P – “Like, completely, like, I would say if I had to pick one it would probably be my.. thief.”

I - “Okay.”

P – “Just because that’s what I’ve played the most.”

I – “Okay, so that has something to do with how long you’ve played, how long you’ve actually been, I suppose you can say engaged with that character?”

P – “... Yeah, it’s not my oldest character, but it’s certainly the character that I’ve... done stuff with the most.”

I – “Okay... I see. So how often would you say that you play?”

P – “Now? Or.. total? Cumulative? Or recently?”

I – “(laugh) It can be –“

P – “Recently I haven’t been playing much Guild Wars 2 at all.”

I – “Okay, it can be – yeah, I mean I realise that it goes, you know, in uh, stages and things change and stuff, so when you, when you were playing as much as you probably played, when would you say that was?”

P – “... Uhm, I would say my peak, my peak Guild Wars 2 play period was probably like, ..2 or 3 years ago.. maybe.. 4 years ago.”

I – “Okay, ehm, so is that – how - when did you actually start? For how long have you actually played the game in terms of, did you get it at launch or did you get into the game later on?”

P - “ Yeah I mean I’ve had the game since start weekend then I got to 80 before the end of the start weekend, so..”

I – “Okay.”

P – “I really rushed (laugh)”.

I – “(Laugh), okay, that’s interesting, so, ehm, I have a question here that’s quite, it can be a bit difficult to answer so feel free to think about it, eh, how much you identify with your character and what actually happens to your main character, so you mentioned you PVP a lot, do you in any way kinda identify with what happens to the character in the game, in that kind of game mode?”

P – “(long pause) ... Uhm, I’d say like from a role-playing perspective, I don’t really have any associations with my characters that’s not really how I approach video games in general, it’ not

like, it's my character, like, even when I was playing other MMOS, it was very much about, like, the role that I fulfil, it's like, whether you're.. a tank or a healer or in Guild Wars 2 specific PVP roles, so that you play a rotating – a rotating build like a thief or you just do a lot of rotating and you play a duelling build, or core guard or something like that.

I – “Okay, so the character is more of, more of as a type of utility?”

P – “Yeah.”

I – “Yeah, so it's a tool, in a way.”

P – “Yeah.”

I – “Okay, hmm, okay, that's good to know. So you don't really fall into the category of people who, you know, create elaborate backgrounds, and things like that for your character? The character is strictly almost like a work character, that, that fills a purpose in the game?”

P- “Yeah, yeah... I would say that my, like, association with my character customisation because that is a huge part of Guild Wars 2, especially like the whole reward scheme is kind of built around character customisation, it has always been about like... the swag, compared to other players, right. It's like... you know, you got to have your “Legendary Champion” title, because like not many people have that Legendary Champion title, it has value because it's rare, it has value because I associate it with a particular story associated with my character.

I – Okay, so it's almost more, so, even in PVP when you're actually engaging against other players there is still a case of ehm, social status?

P – Yeah, you got to swag other players when you kill them, it's not just about skill, it's about looking good while doing it.

I – Okay, tell me a bit more about that, that's interesting. Where do you think that stems from?

P – Eh, I mean, player versus player is a very, like, the core is like you're defeating another player, you know, it's not just pve where it's very much about your own skill, right, it's about your skill versus a preordained boss fight that the developers made, so it's like you challenging the game, whereas PVP has always been about you challenging another player, it's about like your skill versus someone else's skill. And because it's that dynamic setting, in my opinion it can have a much higher skill cap, right, like, your display of skill can be much higher, than your display of skill by defeating like a challenge mode or something, like that.”

I – So, so in a sense, it's about not only showcasing your skill then, but to actually seek out harder challenges? Would you say that's about correct?

P – No, but I would – Yeah, I wouldn't really say that it's about harder challenges, because, I enjoy pve content just as much as I enjoy PVP content, but I think it's less... A frustration comes with both pve and PVP, particularly related to your team, like, if you're raiding, and you got ten other people, as in GW2, or 25 other people, as in World of Warcraft, and, like, 5 of them are slacking, right, that's really frustrating because there's nothing you can do, you can be like the best player on your team, and be amazing, but you're not gonna carry those other 5 players, in PVP, there's a much bigger avenue, for 1 player or 2 players on the team being exceptional, and then carrying the rest of the team, so it's... more like, I find PVP interesting, because it allows me

to express my own personal skill, and that's much more relevant than my own personal skill in a pve environment.

I – Okay, so how important is it to you to know as much about the game mechanics and rules in the game as possible? So the more skill based –

P – Uhm, I would say that PVP has a much, much higher skill cap in GW2, because of the way that they've set up the game. Like, in WoW, like, character mastery is like, on a whole other level, right, you got like simulations, you're number crunching, you're trying to meet break points and stuff like that, in GW2, you don't really get that as much, so it's much more about, mechanics in the fight, positioning, doing your rotation, and stuff like that, but once you got that kind of figured out, it's kind of... it's kind of boring. Like a lot of the pve in GW2, like, once you've beaten a boss once, you can just kill it over and over again, there's not enough pve content to like, make that interesting, for me, uhm, you get bored as soon as you've killed a boss in my opinion, it's not dynamic enough every week to just keep bringing you back, but in PVP, like, there's things like, you have to understand not only your class but you have to understand every other class, right? Because lets say core guardian versus condition thief matchup, you'll have to play that differently, than like a core guardian versus a deadeye matchup, or core guardian versus a firebrand, all those different matchups will require you to not only have a very intimate knowledge of your own class, but a very intimate knowledge of every single other class in the game, right. And some of the exceptional PVP players in the game, like, lets say Cinder, who is, like probably, arguably the best PVP player in GW2, and he plays dagger/pistol thief, traditionally, but even when people said it was bad, he still played it and still stomped on everyone, because he knew exactly how every single matchup would go down, and how to play every single matchup. And that's like (impressed exhale), that's like... and it increases with every expansion, right, because then there's new classes that come out, there's new specializations, all of them have a different kit, and you have to play against that, and so... imagine you're not just playing core guardian, now you're playing, you have like, 5 or 6 different mains and roles that you play and switch between, you have to understand all of those match ups. So it's almost like an exponential amount of knowledge that you need to be like, very, very good at PVP. And there's other things to take into consideration, like, you have to understand what the animations of classes look like, so you can like, dodge skills based on the animation that is playing, and like some more intricate classes like thief will have things like animation cancelling, where you can animation cancel to like, save frames (per second) and stuff like that, and you can get very complicated very quickly.

I – It sounds like, ehm, if the goal of the player is to become very very good at what they do, especially in PVP they would need to put in a lot of time and a lot of effort and have to invest a lot to actually reach that goal? Is that about right?

P – Mmm, I think it's interesting, PVP is one of those things where you don't have to grind, GW2 has set it up in such a way that there is no grind in PVP, like there is, aah, let me rephrase that, there is still grind in PVP for specific rewards, like, you know, getting rank 80 requires "grind", but it's a grind that's achieved through playing the game, right, little by little, by doing PVP you get experience that levels you up and ranks you up. But, the entry point into PVP, there's no... there's

no... everyone starts off the same place and everyone is equal right it's not like in World of Warcraft where you grind rating, you get better gear, like your players at the top will have better gear, the players that have just started won't be able to do PVP, if you are completely new to GW2, you log into the mist and you will have a level 80 character just from the get go, you will be on the exact same level as everyone else, and the only thing that will separate you is skill. So it's like you're just like a god like you start the game and you're just really good you will be successful even though you haven't invested as much time that someone who's like tried to master something else, right? I think it's like very even playing field. It's not, like, your gear or your time investment.

I: "So say you're creating your character and your fully intend to go into PVP with it or some different game mode, how long would you usually spend to customise a character to make it look a certain way?"

P: "Oooh, haha, a lot. I think like one of the things about GW2 is... Even if you want to associate yourself with a particular character, and you're like role playing as a background, you want to look good, right? And then the I think the hilarious is not like in PVP and it's like a style meta there's like a style meta in PVP, sure, I think in PVP it's even more prevalent, like, everyone like top of the ladder on PVP is playing like a human female, you know with like and if you're at a point where you got those aetherblade leggings on, you know, you've got like a big particular look everyone at the top of the ladder. I think it is interesting cuz you spent quite a lot of times cuz you don't want to look like a scrub. Like I think the difficulty the difference is that like in PVP if you're fresh and you go in the default armour like is a clear indication of like, you're new right? It's like no one wants to be a noob, right, no one wants to be seen as being a noob it's like one of the big things in all of my games and like that default armour like marks you as like a noob, and then there's like more things that differentiate you right. So if you got, like, if you got the titles, you know, like legendary champion, or if you've got primordial legend or merciless legend or illustrious legend, like some of the like top 10 top 250 kind of titles those separate you right if you see someone with that title in PVP cuz it's important to be able to gauge someone's skill. All right, so if you were going into a match up, let's say like a thief vs thief matchup and you see someone who's, you know, wearing the default armour, wearing - has a default dagger skin, right has these default skins. Then you're going to assume that they know considerably less about the game, right? So you're going to make an assumption you're going to Maybe you play that match up really really greedy. You know, you try to go for super bursty, you're playing quite easier not taking it seriously as if you see someone that has like goddess of PVP title or God of PVP title, you see that someone in PVP you're like, holy shit this person is amazing, you're going to like adjust how you play. So I think the character customisation in PVP is almost tactical. You want to like, make it so that your opponent doesn't underestimate you and you do that by, like, swagging out, right?"

I: "Okay. How important would the game be outside of the PVP Lobby how important is it to level up your character outside the PVP Lobby and kind of engage in that part of the game, is it more the game-within-a-game in the PVP the completely interests you?"

P: "So I think that's kind of an interesting question like the first the initial aim of PVP for Guild Wars 2, especially in Guild Wars, Guild Wars was very heavily a pvp game when it came out that had PVE stuff attached to it when they designed and developed GW2, I think they focus much more on their PVE content. They wanted it to be about like the world, you know, character characterisation all that stuff so much so that like very early on making Legendary Weapons wasn't possible or still isn't possible unless you go out of PVP and this was like a lot of critique from early PVPers with that. They didn't want to like grind outside of PVP. They didn't want to like do boring PVE stuff. They didn't want to just like fucking grind Silverwastes. They wanted to be playing PVP, but they also wanted to be able to get rewards like Legendary Weapons legendary armor and stuff like that. And so I think that's like a really good example with legendary armour like with the raid stuff like PVPers wanted one of their own legendary armour for doing PVP, and eventually ArenaNet caved and put it in the game and I still think it's like the most ridiculous, like, like the legendary PVP armor, you can get one piece per season. So it will take you six seasons, ranked Seasons, which last like three or four months each. So it will take you two and a half years to get full set of legendary PVP armour and it does not have a unique skin. Like they just I think I'm not a big fan of the fact that there's like a split. And to do and to get like PVP or I would much prefer if they added like a way to get the legendary weapon in PVE and a way to get to legendary weapon in PVP. Right, or they added more like PVP unique weapons and stuff like that but they're never going to do it cuz they're like going to get rage from the community. So it annoys me, that I have to grind in both I much prefer if they were like two separate."

I: "Would you say that that's a pretty common view from PVP players? They would prefer to just stay in the PVP area, or do you think they would rather just engage in PVP or do you think that people jump a lot between different game modes, generally?"

P: "I think the top PVP players don't really jump a lot between different game mode. I think that's not so yeah they do but I think the reason they do that is because there's a lot of content in GW2 that's considered and game content that's very easy to do. Right? So like the hundred CM or your fractals, maybe just do like a raid clear like if you're a PVPPer that's like a one-night Commitment. If you're like a good guild you just clear everything and then you just go back to PVPing. Right now you do get pretty good gold just from doing PVP. It's interesting cuz like transmutation charges. Like PVE players constantly complain about the lack of transmutation charges in the game, but PVP players don't care because they just like throw transmutation charges at PVP players. Like at one point I have like fifteen hundred Transmutation charges cuz like you just get so many. Then you don't change your look that often."

I: "So I have a question here that might not actually apply to you just because your character as you mentioned is more of a tool. It's more of a kind of a gateway to engage with the content that you want to engage with. But how often would you say that you play just to get away from real life just to sit down and play to be somewhere else for a while?"

P: "... uhm... I wouldn't really say. That's interesting. I don't think I've ever used video games as like an escape like to me video games were always like... It was like a way to showcase like my skill in something. Like I always – like I think it's not just for me. It was not just the video games

that have that same allure. I think it's the same reason why I went into being a software engineer it was that like Getting something that I knew nothing about and then trying to master that is like the most exciting feeling in the world like there's a few things that are more exciting than not knowing anything and then learning about it. Right and I think video games were like *the* perfect Avenue for that and it's like you could master your character, you know, you could Min Max your character you could learn all these different intricate combinations of things that weren't common knowledge that people wouldn't care about like, how do you like - little tiny little tweaks and things that just made your character better and for me video games always have that allure because that's what they offered so, I think GW2.. I started pvping in GW2 explicitly because my then girlfriend at the time now wife didn't like me playing DOTA so I needed a new like PVP Outlet? Cuz I love playing like DOTA cuz it had like the same like PVPness. But then she banned me off DOTA cuz I got too mad, you know, shouting at the screen too much. So I started playing GW2 because the matches were shorter but I still got mad and raged at the screen.

I: "So it's definitely emotional, you get emotionally invested in in the game in the outcome of the game?"

P: "Yeah, I think it's easy though, right? If you get emotionally invested in winning or something and then it feels really shitty when like your teammates are the ones that are dragging you down or you know, they make stupid mistakes and there's nothing you can do about that. But I think that speaks wider to like maybe some weird like control issue on the fact that I can't like control all their players on my screen and that frustrates me because the only person I can control is myself and it's just like these people were just playing differently or just playing better in this game and kind of deal right but Yeah, I think definitely get emotionally invested in the game. I want to get emotionally invested, it feels good to be emotionally invested. If you're not emotionally invested, then it doesn't feel good to win."

I: That's very true.

P: And if it feels good to win then it's gonna feel shitty to lose, so...

I: "Okay, if it's all right with you we can move on to section two, which is about your social environment, which is going to be interesting. I think considering all the PVP you do so I want to talk to you a little bit about your guild if you have a main guild, do you have a main guild would you say?"

P: "Eh.. I mean, besides the guild that I'm in with you, no, not really, not anymore."

I: "You can focus on that guild if you consider those social connections to be of some value, no judgment if you don't (laugh)"

P: "I mean, yeah, I think I spent I spent a lot of my time PVPing not in a guild. I think that's cuz it wasn't really needed and I knew most of the people that I PVPd with in the ranked ladder because you just see them over and over again, so it was less like you needed to be in a guild with these people. Cause you would see them, you liked some of them and you didn't like some of them, some people you would flame, you know, like rivalries, well not rivalries but, but There was this one guy (sigh) this I went - so I played a lot of pistol/dagger thief. That was like all I played pretty much the only build that I played for the longest time I have like 900 games with P/D thief and I

for the longest time refused to change characters. I would just like queue in and refuse to change characters and then they went out to fucking change characters if there was another thief on the team. Except for this one guy, this other guy also only played P/D thief, and every single time we would get in a game together he would refuse to change and I'd refuse to change and then we'd just blame each other so it's like... not very - I mean he would flame me more than I would flame him. I was like "just play the game we could win with two thieves" and he would be like no we can't and like AFK and shit, but then I would get him like, I'd get like against him, like if I'd queue into him and he's on the other team, I would change class until I can D/P counter, and I would just camp him the whole game, you know, and he'd just be flaming in chat and stuff like that. He used to stream. I'm going to find his fucking stream."

I: "Okay but that's interesting. Why would you watch him stream?"

P: "I didn't watch him he fucking spammed – every single time we went into a game he would spam his twitch channel for people to watch not really sure why you know, he would also spam it in the lobby as well. He wanted people to watch his stream, and of course you know if someone is being stupid and they're streaming then you gotta, you gotta make a mockery of them."

I: "Okay, this leads very nicely onto my next question, which is how often do you watch other people stream content in the game? (laugh)"

P: "How often do I watch GW2 streams?"

I: "Yeah."

P: "I don't really watch GW2 streams that often anymore. I used to I mean I have two monitors, so I pretty much always have stream open, just cuz I don't know. I just like it's become like a force of habit this point like I guess when GW2 first started I was watching Kripparian cuz he was playing GW2, and I paid like, Kripperian used to stream a lot of Diablo. I played a lot of Diablo and then he started playing GW2 and I would play GW2 so I just had him open, that's kind of the most and I have like a following of streamers, or streamers that I follow. I just have their steam open. So how much time do I spend watching gaming content on the stream? A shitload, how much time do I spend watching GW2? Not very much anymore. I think it's mainly because the GW2 content creators, like, never stream PVP, anymore."

I: "That makes sense. Yeah, so we can we can stick with the PVP element here or you can think more broadly. It's completely up to you how you on this, but how much do you actually enjoy getting to know other people in the game?"

P: "I think that getting to know other people like - when I met you and you invited me to get guild and we started raiding together and stuff like that. Like that was one of my -I think that was a lot of fun. Not just because it's a game. Because it's fun being social like I don't think I spent a lot of time PVPing with the guild, like I don't think I have, done like a couple games which is surprising but I used to PVP a lot. I used to like be the only person that PVPd because you guys weren't as sadistic as me when it comes to like PVPing, but it's certainly fun to get to know other people in games and a lot of the – a lot of the people like I used to play Dota with where people that I played WoW with and then a lot of the people that I played Wildstar with were the people that I played WoW with so it's like I had a lot of like recurring friend groups."

I: "Are those friends that you made in the game and kind of moved with you."

P: "Yeah. Yeah. I think like WoW has got a much different dynamic to GW2. Maybe my approach to WoW is different. But because I had to like apply to guilds and there was like a whole application process and then an interview process and then you spent like four days a week on TeamSpeak or Ventrilo with these guys and then even when you weren't raiding you were grinding and they were all like – I think the attitude in like the guild in GW2 is much different than my guilds in WoW, like in WoW we would like, we would pretty much be on voice (call) all the time. Like if we were playing the game we were on voice together and that made it like really easy to like know cuz then the people who are on voice are friends cuz then if people didn't like you and people didn't like people on voice, they just didn't go on voice that every one of those on voice was like you were friends with so there was like five or six or seven people that were always on voice together when you were playing games and you just became like good friends with them and then eventually that like migrated outside of games because you know, everyone gets bored of the games that they're playing you want to find like a new gameplay. So you would just be like, you know, let's go play this game today or let's do this together and then you'd just be easy to like migrate."

I: "That's kind of leads into another question I have which is how important it actually is to you how your guild members see you how they kind of experience you as a person. Is that something you put any weight on at all?"

P: "(Laugh) I mean, maybe at one point, like, I think with age I've stopped like, caring. I've cared considerably less what other people think of me. In an effort to try to like mould my Persona or like transform my online Persona to be different than how I am in real life. I don't think there's any disconnect. I think the way that I am in games is very similar to the way that I am in real life. And since it's pretty much worked for me so far I don't actually feel the need to change. So in terms of like how does my - how important is it to me that like guildies see me in a good light or how they see me in general. I would say it's important in a sense that I would prefer if they saw me in like a nice light, I think they do that anyway, just because I don't - I'm not a weird person. I probably am a weird person but not a shitty person in real life, I guess that makes sense."

I: "That does makes sense (laugh). So on a similar note then how important is it to you that your guild members feel like they can count on you. Considering that you play a lot of PVP you play a lot solo. Is that something you put any kind of weight on?"

P: "Um... I think it's I don't I don't really mind like I don't want to be unreliable. But I think that's more like I don't want to make promises and then not keep them but I don't really mind if I'm not the one that particular people like go to if they have like a problem or something. I think that's just stems more from like the deepness of the relationship that I may have with the people online like because of my commitments in real life. It's much more difficult for me to be online all the time. And so when I do get an opportunity to play it's much easier now to play by myself, but it's still okay to like play by myself because I think the role that like the GW2 guild fulfils in particular is different. It's not like a group of people who are playing together, but rather it's like a group of

friends to socialize together through like voice chat or through Discord or something like that. So it's kind of like if it fills a different role, than my previous guilds have.

I: Okay, last social question for you, and it's going back to the streams that we spoke about a little bit earlier. I am curious whether you watch other people open things like black lion chests or play Sandstorm flush or similarly."

P: "(Laugh) Well I don't watch people do that, I do it myself. I don't I don't really care about watching people gamble. It's not really my thing.

I: "so then tell me a little about what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why?"

P: "(Laugh) I think. I think I don't spend my gold on a lot of stuff really, I used to spend my gold on that my gold on skins a lot. So like Black Lion skins. I didn't really gamble for them or open chests, but I would like just by this key off the TP. Eh... I did that a lot I have a lot of the black lion skins. But I think that's mainly because like they were quite prestigious in terms of like Rarity. It's not a lot of people like use them like it's like the skin cost like 250 gold off the TP. So it was like nice that I have something rare that no one else use that also looks nice. So for like a while like the super skins were quite cool to have just because we didn't know if SAB was coming back or not. Yeah, so they were like cool to buy and have. But then SAB came back so then the skins went out of style and everyone had them. And so for the longest time, I just kind of spend my money on skins on the TP. But I think that was when I did PVP a lot so I didn't really have a lot of gold, but then I started doing more stuff other than just PVP and then I started making like legendary weapons, and stuff and I spent a lot of my gold on like buying Incinerator and getting HOPE, spent a lot of gold to get HOPE, and then I never play any type of characters that use pistols anymore, it's like my curse. I always like fall out of favour, yeah I made like Incinerator and hope for my DP thief. And then I never played my DP thief ever again. It's like a curse, man. I guess I do, I have spent a lot of money on gambling.

I: I'm about to move on to your gambling (laugh). But if you're quite happy to tell me -if you feel that that kind of answers what you spend your gold on, I would like to ask you about the time that you played sandstorm flush or equivalent. It's up to you what you classify as gaming or gambling"

P: Yeah, I mean, I think GW2 is one of those games were like a lot of the game is specifically designed to feel like gambling. Whether it's opening loot chests, and then hoping that you get like a precursor or something like a lot of the Guild Wars 2 feedback loop relies on those like really rare valuable drops that you can get from anything. Do you keep playing the game? I think that's one of the interesting things that PVP never really had that like the rate at which you drop ascended rings doing fractals is like insane, right? You like get so many that you practically just vendor them, because you have nothing else to do with them. In PVP, getting ascended rings and getting ascended boxes was like, wow, you got really lucky to get like an ascended item doing PVP. Like that was like "wow, I got an ascended ring it's really rare", but you might get like, from the reward tracks, right? 300 chests from the reward tracks might be like 6 or 7 reward tracks and get like one ascended ring. Right? So like I said a ring every two or three weeks. And it would always be shitty stats it would never be berserker it would never be anything you needed. It didn't really matter because like you don't really need ascended gear but then you started doing like

PVE and then it was always like, you know, you could get like you can get a precursor. You could get like Heart Of Thorns was really bad for that. So HoT with their expansion with the like making everything drop like a thorn chest or a thorn loot box, and stuff like that. Like all the loot boxes they added and then all the rare skins that they added. In heart of thorns, that were like, you know, like 50 gold or 100 gold or 200 gold that you could get by doing Dragon's Stand and stuff like that. Like I think GW2 definitely have some targeted aspects of gambling. Like, you know, sandstorm flush or ectoplasm gambling, but I think a lot of GW2's feedback loop does rely on that, you know the same feeling that you get. You know, I might get lucky, you know I might beat the game I might beat the odds."

I: "So, in the game do you buy items with real currency, real sterling pounds or do you buy them with in-game gold or both? And why, why do you pick a particular currency to trade with?"

P: "I haven't really spent any money really on buying gems to convert to gold mainly because I don't need to or I found that it would like devalue the purchase. Like, if I bought like a 1,000 gems and converted that to gold to buy the thing that I wanted it would like kind of - it would make it seem less valuable. It wouldn't be as like cool, it wouldn't seem like as rare to me cuz like I just bought that cuz I wanted it. I was never really rich enough that I can just like by everything that I wanted, but I don't think anyone's really that rich, but -. If they bought everything they wanted then they wouldn't be rich in the first place. So I would say like my preferred currency is gold."

I: "okay."

P: "That I've grinded myself."

I: "okay. So if we hone in on the on the sandstorm flush, for example, or the ecto skritt, how often would you say that you actually play that or was there a time that you played more of that and then stopped for whatever reason?"

P: "Uhm (laugh) I think recently. I spent like all of my Gold On sandstorm flush. All of it (sigh) every last drop of my gold is gone to that game. I think that's more like there's not many things that I want in the game anymore and there wasn't really anything that I like want to grind like none of the new legendaries to me where that exciting like I don't want - like I don't really care about any of them and the old school legendaries that I want like zap, like I still want to make zap, and bolt but it's like they're really such low-resolution now and they just look so shitty. And it's like it just feels bad to make it and spend my gold on that when like there's like black lion chests or black lions skins that are like high-resolution and better-looking. It's like "argh this sucks". I think a lot of that is like I don't want like a war-horn. I don't really care about a scepter I don't care about a focus. I don't care about a torch. I don't care about anything I don't want a sword really like Save the Queen might be fun, but it's like whatever I don't really care. So I think because I don't really want to make legendaries anymore and I'm fully geared on most of the characters with like ascended gear. I just don't have anything to spend my gold on anymore (laugh). Yeah, so gambling was fun because it was like it's just like an adrenaline rush, right, like you could win you can just like "aah I won! Let's gamble again! Ooh I won!". I think that was really cool because there was no downside from losing. So I was like, oh, I lost all my gold, oh well, cuz I didn't - I just placed like zero value with my gold like there was a point where I was like like at 1.8 K gold and I

was like "what do I do with this?" and then I just gambled literally nearly all of it away until I had like 4 gold, and I was like "oh well".

I: "Yeah okay and afterwards you were completely okay with that?"

P: "Yes, cuz I don't have anything to spend it on. I think like if I have 1.8k gold just sitting in my inventory, it's like whatever like I can probably just like, mail it to someone else and I can not care. I think that PVP has kind of done that, like I don't need anything to PVP. Right? I don't need like, mats (materials) to raid. I don't need different part armour sets to raid, like raiding has like an inherit cost in a lot of games, and I think specifically GW2 like the inherit cost of raiding can get like really high, especially when you're doing progress you like just don't get anything with the bosses' drop, like, nothing and even if you get like an item you just don't get anything good or you do CMs for the first time and you get rewarded, but after that you just don't get rewarded at all. So you need to like grind as well and it's just, meh, but in PVP you just don't need anything. You literally just make gold cuz there's nothing to spend it on. No inherent cost."

I: "Okay, that kind of answers my question on how much gold you spend, you kind of accumulate gold and then you spend all of it in big gambling events?"

P: "I get like I get like 100 gold and then occasionally, I'll go on lucky sprees. And then, I would say that I wait until I can do a big gamble. Like I think even now I still have like I still have like 3k ectoplasm, cause I got quite lucky on the ecto gambling but I lost all my gold. So I just like, if I have like a hundred gold I'll just like gamble it and see if I get lucky."

I: "Okay. So in terms of the value of the gold preparing for the future in the game, it's not that important to you. It's that fair to say it's not important to you whether you're rich in two months time?"

P: "... No, I would say it's not, maybe cuz I just like like if a new thing came out like if they released like a new Hammer like I think I'd probably make like a new Hammer like if it was cool. Like, the problem is they've released two hammers. There's like the memory of arah or whatever the fuck that one is and like Juggernaut and they're both extremely meh in my opinion. They just extremely disgusting like juggernaut does not look good at all. And the other one is just like why is this even a legendary. So maybe if they came up with a really cool looking Hammer I would want to make it but then again there's like really cool looking black lion skin hammers that are like, you know, a hundred gold that I could just buy those. I have to grind for like a day. I wouldn't have to grind for like a month to get like the legendary so it's like I'm just so... I just have no long-term goals whatsoever in GW2 so preparing for the future is just like... There's no future that I want to prepare for. Like even if they came out with something that I wanted – that I would want, I don't want to grind now so that I can get that faster. I would just grind when it came out, right?"

I: "So - sorry, I interrupted you go ahead."

P: " Yeah, so I think it's more like "I don't want to grind my grinding in GW2 is just no fun for me at all. Right, I'll grind the verse. But if so, if I don't have to do it, I won't, kind of deal so that means that I will just assume that they won't have anything that I want to come out with so I won't grind and if they do surprise me and have something then I will that saves needing to come to like pre-emptively grind and then get punished when they come out with a new content round and there's

nothing there and then you're caught in this weird feedback loop where you're like always grinding for something that could happen, but it's not, instead of that I could be PVPing.

I: "So, going back to – I suppose this goes back to skins. How much do you believe that your actual character Avatar influences your decision-making with money in the game?"

P: "I mean like very early in the game when it came out. I bought Celestial dye for 114 gold. That was like – there's like two things that were like ridiculous purchases. I think in terms of skins. And that was I bought the celestial dye and I bought the full t4 set of human cultural armour, I think like within 3 months of launch and so that was like 250 gold at launch which was just absolutely ridiculous amounts of money, especially to spend like 114 gold on a fucking dye. But then I had, I had my human female and full cultural armour with Celestial in PVP and I looked cool man, then I think it was worth it. Then you could just like yeah that was like I was like a level of Swag that was good, you know."

I: "(Laugh) Okay. Okay. So if we're looking at gambling activities, how do you feel about those kind of activities in other games or other spaces online do they interest you at all?"

P: "Uhm... I think so. Let me think of an example. So, Dota 2 has chests and like tf2 had crates, where you could like buy keys and then you would use the keys to open the crates and the crates would have like, you know a rare... a rare item in it of medium tier rare item out of their various tiers of rarity, right? and then you would like gamble essentially to get the really valuable items. I think that was a bit different because like because the steam Marketplace you could sell those items and buy stuff that you wanted. So like if you got like a really rare skin or something, then you could sell that on the steam marketplace and use that to buy other cosmetics, right so it could be very valuable but you never, you never win, like you might buy the key and then eventually like they phased out that key system because people were using - people were buying and selling keys as like a way to like trade real money and then valve didn't like that. But I think it's in terms of like other games in the gambling space and other gambling games..."

I: "Yeah, It could be similar activities in other spaces I suppose, it could be online. It could be online casino games anything that comes to mind."

P: "I wouldn't say that... So I don't enjoy like gambling. I don't enjoy gambling for gambling's sake. Like I think it's like having like an online casino like that never appealed to me like I didn't. I didn't want to just gamble, right, I didn't want to gamble real money and didn't want to try to gamble to try to win real money, like gambling in video games to me was always like risk-free. Okay, like I didn't - it wasn't like I didn't want to gamble like real money and then lose real money and then be punished for assuming that I can like beat the odds because you're like not gonna beat the odds, but gambling in video games was much more like a chance to experience like The high of winning without getting like the negative effects of losing."

I: "okay. Yeah, that makes sense. So I'm going to ask you - this is the only personal question I'm going to ask you what I would like to know is what's your monthly income? And the reason I'm asking this because I have a follow-up question involving how much that you would actually kind of spend on the game. So if you're happy to answer that, it would be helpful."

P: "Okay, I make £2,750 a month."

I: " I have my follow-up question. So this this might be a particular interesting question to ask you since you perceive your character as tools, right? So but What proportion of your monthly wage would you require if any in exchange for deleting your main character in GW2? So how much is that character worth to you in your actual income?"

P: "Uhh, I mean, I've deleted my rogue like five times..."

I: "(Laugh) So, like you wouldn't want to be reimbursed for making that decision actually deleting that character."

P: "No, because I mean a lot of the stuff that I don't really care about the ascended gear is like kind of annoying yeah, like a lot of the things in GW2 are just like skins like the legendary items to me are much more valuable as skins than I think they are as legendary items. So if I deleted it like I don't really care because -"

I: "Because the account has still obtained and will still keep those skins available for all your other characters."

P: yeah. I can just remake my thief and You know, get back to play PVP."

I: "Okay, so it's not the character itself that matters to you it's primarily how you can make the character look and what that character can do for you for your game enjoyment. Yeah, yeah, okay. That's all I got, anything that you want to add anything else you want to tell me?"

P: "I think it's interesting to examine that like the idea of value you have in characters in games like GW2 where a lot of the rewards are account bound, or they're saved to your account versus my games like World of Warcraft where a lot of the value of characters are tied to a particular character, right? So for example, like my favourite title on my warrior – or not my warrior, my paladin is like the only character that has that that title. So like that character to me like I've invested much more time in that particular character."

I: "Would you want to be reimbursed in order to delete that character?"

P: "I mean, nobody's ever liked – but in terms of selling my account like I might sell my account like there was a time where I thought about selling my account because like if you have like some of the original mounts that are impossible to get any more from the original titles, like scoreboard people will buy your account and I think when I was looking at how much it would cost, like how much I could sell my account for it and it's like it was like \$6,000 something like that, which wasn't, like to me which wasn't that much money.

I: " Okay, that wasn't enough."

P: "Because think about it this way, the amount of time that I have invested in that is like something like thirteen hundred days played. Right, and all I get for that is 6000 pounds? Like that's really shit (laugh), it's not a value – is not valuable at all. Right, so it's like if I would want to be reimbursed for my time, right cuz my time has value, so if I would - what's going to be reimbursed for like one of my WoW characters, right? I would want like 200k, 250k something like that. I think I like calculated it how much it would cost if I was working like minimum wage on doing the character and it was like 425k or something like that. So I would I would expect like six figures for the amount of time that I've put in if someone was going to come and then capitalize on all of that, right?"

I: "Okay. That's really interesting."

P: "Like if someone's going to buy your account, you're like I'm selling my GW2 account and someone's like I'll pay you the going rate which maybe like two hundred and \$300. That's like not even that's not value at all. It's like your time is worth pennies. Less than pennies, I think that's my view, not just video games, but, pretty much anything.

I: Okay. I think that is everything. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it."

P: "No problem."

Interview Transcript

08/11/2018

Alias Hala

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "All right. So, the first couple of questions are about your main character, could you tell me about your main character in Guild Wars 2?"

P: "There's not that much to tell about. I mean, it's just, I found I enjoyed that class the most because I tried them all and that's what I stuck with. That is all there is to it."

I: "Okay. So you picked that main character based on the actual enjoyment of-"

P: "Yeah, basically on mechanics, yeah. I tried all the classes, decided that I liked that one the most so, I stuck with that. So I spent more than half the time in game on that particular class."

I: "Okay. Could you maybe try to summarise for me what you like about it? Why does it appeal to you?"

P: "Because it has way more utility than anything else. Any situation that the game throws at you, that class has something that can answer that."

I: "Okay, so it's well equipped to deal with challenges?"

P: "Yep."

I: "Okay."

P: "It's just the usual bag of tricks, like anything there is, you got an answer. It's not as straightforward as the rest, but there is an answer."

I: "Okay. Okay, that's interesting. So... it's- would you say it's a little bit then like the game poses you with- it sounds almost a bit like a mathematical challenge, you know, where the game hands you an equation and you pick the best calculator for the job (laugh). Okay-"

P: "Well, most calculators do the same, so... eh, just go on."

I: "It's a poor analogy but yeah, how often would you say that you play Guild Wars 2?"

P: "Pretty much every day or every other."

I: "Okay. How come?"

P: "Let me think about that for a second. English is fucking hard. Like, back a few years at this point, some friends told me they were playing this game and it's fun. So I tried it out. Thought it

was fun, stuck with it. Met a couple of interesting folks, turns out I like the company, and that's like the main activity to do with that crowd."

I: "Okay. So you mentioned a couple of years back. How long ago did you actually get the game?"

P: "I can check if you want me to, it was like two or three years or something. Probably closer to 3, if you want it exact I can check, if not."

I: "You don't need to give me this, in years is good, in years is fine. So in terms of your main character, how much would you say that you identify with that character and what happens?"

P: "(Laugh) Not at all, not at all."

I: "Okay. It's- so how would you describe it then, if you don't see it as a person in itself. How would you describe it?"

P: "I mean, it's a fictional character after all, I like what the class does. I like the mechanics, that doesn't mean that I want to be able to do that or some shit like that."

I: "Okay, that's interesting cuz it leads on to the next question, which is would you become your character if you could?"

P: "Hell no."

I: "Why not?"

P: "I like the way I am right now."

I: "Okay, so it's more about where you are right now or"

P: "Yep."

I: "And also maybe it's just not part of your personality?"

P: "Eh... Like can you rephrase that cuz I don't get where you're trying to go with that question?"

I: "Okay. Yeah, so when I asked you whether you would like to become your character you said "hell no", is that the purely because you are content, or is it just something that is difficult to imagine?"

P: "Yeah, a little bit of both. Like I can't actually imagine cuz my imagination fucking sucks and I like my place in life right now. Like, it's pretty standard nothing special, but I'm working towards a goal, I like what I'm doing. So, I'd rather stick with that."

I: "I see, that makes sense. So in terms of character personality, does your character have a personality or any characteristics that you would like to have?"

P: "I mean, it's an MMO, by design choice. They can't actually give the character personality because they expect that multiple people will try to identify with that. So they just hand you a blank slate that in story doesn't really react to anything. So no, no personality at all. That is purely again design choice, I guess."

I: "Yeah. Okay, and that's- you haven't in any way created your own and attached to a character?"

P: "Not really, no. I mean, not in MMOs at least, like in other genres... Like if you're playing Dishonoured or something you're expecting Corvo Attano doing Corvo Attano things, if you're playing Tomb Raider or something, you're expecting Lara Croft, those have established backstories, characters, whatever, MMO, nah, not so much."

I: "Yeah, I see. On a similar kind of vein you don't make up stories or histories for your characters at all then?"

P: "Eh, not in MMOs. I'm pretty big into pen & paper games, there I do it a lot, but in digital terms, no, not really."

I: "Why is there a difference to you? What makes it, you know, interesting in one aspect of you know, with pen and paper but not in MMOs?"

P: "It's a different activity with different crowd. Like MMOs are well, a game with certain mechanics designed to keep people busy, and pen and paper has the role-play in mind as its forefront goal. Sure, if you're reading through the rules, the combat rules usually take up a majority of the pages, but you don't need them as much as you think and yeah, it's like the focus of the two things are different."

I: "Okay, I see. So in terms of customising your character in the game during character creation or a later stage with a makeover kit, how long would you say that you normally spend there?"

P: "I have never actually looked at the timer or something, like estimate like, an hour or two, whenever something new cosmetic drops or something. Yeah, nothing more than that at least."

I: "So in terms of areas, what's important to you with your character?"

P: "In terms of what? I didn't catch the word."

I: "Areas, so are the facial features more important than the outfit for example, or the other way around?"

P: "I've never actually thought about that... A little bit of both I guess. Like facial expression I've never paid that much attention to it, but yeah, probably a little bit of both."

I: "Okay, I'm going to stop prodding you about your avatar. I'm going to move on to the game in general. How much would you say that you enjoy exploring the world just for the sake of exploring it?"

P: "That's like the main focus of the game, I think. Like, I mean, you know how I spend the time in instance content cause we're raiding, but other than that, I'm usually just running around for the sake of it."

I: "Okay. So you'd say you enjoy exploring the world quite a lot then?"

P: "Yep."

I: "Yeah, okay. you want to tell me why?"

P: "Quite honestly cuz it looks pretty, cuz they intentionally make the maps pretty fucking big, at least in the last few releases. So there's always something going on, there's always an event you didn't know about that's happening somewhere or some NPCs doing some comedy skit or whatever or just some pretty places or something. There's always something you find that you didn't know was there before."

I: "Okay, that's interesting, that's a very unique answer in that it's- so even if you play it for two or three years you still feel as if there is I guess you can say life, in what the game offers, yes?"

P: "I guess you can phrase it that way, yeah."

I: "If you have a better way of phrasing it please do."

P: "Not in English, so we just keep with you unless you want to go for German."

I: "No, no, it's just so- I just want to make sure that I kind of get it."

P: "Yeah, what you said sounds right."

I: "Okay. So how important is it to you to level up your character as fast as possible?"

P: "Depends on the kind of content releases, if it's something that needs me to level up to do certain things then I would probably rush a bit but in general I like to take my time a little. I mean, I still probably do it faster than some idiot that just runs around doing nothing. But yeah, it's somewhere between "I like to take my time and I want to get it done"."

I: "Okay, so leveling to you isn't really a grind it's more about you know, since you do enjoy exploring. That's something that you can-"

P: "Yeah, if it turns into a grind I'm more likely to just stop for a day or something and come back tomorrow or the day after or something."

I: "Okay, so you kind of- you found techniques to keep the enjoyment there for you?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes, okay. So moving on to things like the game mechanics, is it important to you at all to know much about the game mechanics and rules?"

P: "Yeah, I'd say so."

I: "Okay, why's that?"

P: "I like to know what I'm up against and I like to know what I have in my bag of tricks to deal with those situations."

I: "Okay, I see. And is this important at all levels to you?"

P: "At all levels, no, it is important in end-game to me. Because I don't want to be that idiot that drags the whole group down cuz he doesn't know what the fuck he's doing, so I like to keep my understanding of the game like somewhere in decent levels."

I: "Okay, that makes sense. In terms of playing as escapism playing to just get away from real life for a while and avoid thinking about it. Is that something that you engage in?"

P: "Oh, definitely."

I: "Okay. Tell me a bit about that?"

P: "Quite frankly. I don't want to."

I: "Okay. All right. It's just something you engage with."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. So if you're okay to move on to social habits, I was hoping you could tell me about some of your social life in GW2?"

P: "Just in GW2, or in general?"

I: "It doesn't have to be real life at all, it can be in the game."

P: "Alright, yeah, in the game, like, I got, well, dragged is probably the wrong word but it's the only one I can think of right now, in a guild with the folks that I interact with the most. I talk to them a fair bit, not just in game, just discord or texting or whatever is just available, but that is pretty much the extent of my social life in GW2. It's the guilds I'm in, not map chat or random people running around. I like to keep it in contained guilds."

I: "Okay, so you moved with a social group into the game, you didn't create this social group in the game?"

P: " I moved with one into the game, and then they sort of stopped, and by chance I found a different group and I stuck with those guys in GW2 and I'm meeting up with the other folks whenever I see them in real life."

I: "Okay, that makes sense. So if you think about your main guild would you say that the members of that guild are important to you?"

P: "There's some that I've grown quite attached to, there are some that I don't really care about to be honest. That's just people I think, you like some better you like some worse, I talk to some more I talk to some less. That's pretty much it."

I: "I see, so on a similar note, is it important to you how your guild members see you?"

P: "... I'd like to say no, but I don't think that's honest, like I see the game as a way not to put on a mask and just go no further, say whatever I think. But I probably do care what they think about me. More than I want to".

I: "Okay, does it vary, so if someone is more important to you in the game, does it matter more what they think compared to someone you don't care about?"

P: "Definitely."

I: "Yeah, okay. So how important would you then say it is that your guild members feel they can count on you?"

P: "Nah, there's just too much space between us in terms of actual distance. It's not that likely that I'd ever meet them because well travelling is expensive and crossing an ocean for no reason is not on everyone's agenda, so I doubt that they would count on me or I would count on them for actual life stuff."

I: "Okay, that makes sense. You spoke about this briefly before about you know, how you engage in map chat and things, but how much would you say you enjoy getting to know other people in the game just randomly?"

P: "It depends on the people. It's takes me a long time to completely open up to someone and it takes even longer in, well, the different circumstances. So I'm not very keen on meeting new people, to be honest."

I: "All right, in terms of streaming content, is that something you do or often watch other people do?"

P: "No, cause of the nature of MMOs. It's no fun to watch someone else play, it's usually more fun to play yourself. Like if you ever watched an MMO stream, it gets really fucking boring after some time, some take more, some take less, some take minutes some take hours, but- I don't know, streams are generally boring to me."

I: "Okay. Do you ever watch other people do things like play sandstorm flush or open black lion chests on streams?"

P: "No."

I: "Why not? Same reason?"

P: "Why would I watch someone gamble when I could just play the game myself and do something else?"

I: "Okay. All right. Good. Good. So moving on to spending habits, we're flying through this but your answers are very concise, so I don't think that's a problem. Could you tell me about what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why you spend it on that particular thing?"

P: "I like to mess around with builds that are probably subpar, but could probably also work, so most of the gold I earn in-game goes into gearing new sets, trying out new stuff, just messing around with builds. That is the main bulk of it."

I: "Okay, so your focus is maybe in a way more skill-based?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes, and that is—"

P: "Like, just, okay, go on?"

I: "No, no, please, because I was just going to summarise, you go."

P: "Yeah, like, I like to know what I can do in the boundaries of the game with like, stats that people don't usually think about or using mechanics people write off. I like to get creative with that stuff. So most of the gold goes there."

I: "Okay. So do you at all play sandstorm flush or anything equivalent or the Mystic Forge in Guild Wars 2 for any reason?"

P: "I've done it a handful of times, but over the course of those few years, no more than 20 times, I think, like the last time I checked the achievement I was on 16 or 17 out of 100 ectoplasm thingies opened, so I've done it a very small amount of time."

I: "Okay. Could you tell me what spurred you, I guess you can say, what spurred you to do it? What was the incentive?"

P: "Can you rephrase that because I don't know what spurred means?"

I: "Okay. What was your reason? What was your reason for doing it?"

P: "Okay, because it's gambling after all, the odds are stacked against you. It is more likely that you will lose more than you would make, sure there's always that small chance of just hitting Jackpot and getting way more than you had before but it's just that, it's very fucking small odds and I will hoard more gold overtime if I don't do that. Like it's way more likely that I will lose more than I would get back."

I: "Okay, so it's more efficient for you to not engage in these kind of activities because you know that your goal will build up over time, so for you the risk is greater than the reward?"

P: "Yeah, like, you know that probability is always stacked against you in that kind of stuff."

I: "Okay. So when you have done it, what caused you to do it?"

P: "I was bored, I didn't have anything to do so I was like "let's do this once, okay, I confirmed my suspicions. I lost everything. Let's not do that again"."

I: "Okay, so it's just trying out a theory, almost?"

P: "I'm sorry what did you say?"

I: "Would you say that it's a bit like trying out a theory?"

P: "A what?"

I: "Maybe I'm not pronouncing that right, but so you have a- You're going to see- check the outcome almost, so you have suspicions that it's not going to be worth it. Then you're confirming it?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay. When you buy items in the game, do you buy them with real currency or in-game gold, or both?"

P: "Both but more in-game gold, I have a set amount of money I can afford to spend each month. And if it turns out that I spent less or have some leftover like ten or twenty Euros or something, I'll see if there's anything interesting there and maybe change that into gems, maybe not, it really depends on what in the gemstore most of the time."

I: "Okay. So in terms of items that interest you in the gem store, what are those items usually?"

P: "The convenience once like the- that world boss portal thing that was on sale recently or bank slots or shared inventory slots, stuff like that."

I: "Okay, I see. When you have- so for example if we take sandstorm flush as an example, when you did gamble those couple of times, how much gold did you spend on those activities?"

P: "Given that the achievement only ticks if you spend 100 gold and I was on 16 or 17 last time I checked, it totals up to 1700 gold or something like that, over the years."

I: "Okay, my next question is the only real personal question I'm going to ask you, you are completely free not to answer it. The reason I'm asking is because I have a follow-up question that-"

P: "Go ahead."

I: "Okay. I'm wondering what your monthly income is, if you have one?"

P: "I don't have one right now. I'm a student. I usually work full time between semesters when there's no lectures. I am not earning too much there, but I have a relatively safe space, they take me every time I apply, basically, and they pay me about 2500-3,000 Euros a month. So I just try to save up a little between semesters so I can-"

I: "Is that in Euros?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. So follow up question then, how many Euros, so what proportion of your monthly income, if you would, or you know, semester income, how much would you require in exchange for deleting your main character, if any?"

P: "... You mean how much someone has to pay me to just stop or something, or what's the question?"

I: "Yeah, how much would I have to pay you in Euros for you to delete your main character? For it to feel worth it, like a fair trade."

P: "I have no clue how much that account is worth. I will probably check what it's worth, convert gems to Euros and like take that sum out of it. And yep, build it back up because I have more than I started with."

I: "Okay, so you take a very logical approach to how you value your account, I guess you can say or even your characters, so you would calculate based on how much time you've put in?"

P: "Yeah like, how much time it took me to get there, how much gold was spent, how much actual money was spent, then add a little bit on top of that, and ask for that sum and delete it and start back up again."

I: "Okay, so okay, this is interesting. You got me thinking, so when you say add a little bit?"

P: "I mean time isn't exactly free, when someone wants to pay me for something like that, I expect my time to be worth something. So I'll just see how many hours I got there, then, well, add a little bit per hour. Yeah, that is pretty much it. No one likes to give that stuff away for free."

I: "I see, would it be different at all if, I suppose if it was your entire account- you were giving away your account, you would just start again because you enjoy the game?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yeah, I see, okay. So if I- so if we did calculate all the hours you've spent in the game and I gave you that sum of money that you required, would you invest it back into the game?"

P: "A portion of it probably, yes, not all of it, hell no, but a portion of it."

I: "Yeah, I see. So in terms of decision-making and the decision-making here is it quite broad in what that can mean and that's intentional. How much would you say that your avatar or your main character influences your decisions in-game if at all?"

P: "I don't have a grasp on what do you mean by that, quite honestly, like the main character and in terms of class, sure you're going to have to take a little different approach on every class cuz, well, things work differently."

I: "But in terms of decision-making with gold, for example, or what you spend your gold on, that is completely up to you? And it's not something that is determined by your characters?"

P: "I quite honestly don't get the question. I'm confused what you're trying to get me to say?"

I: "It is super abstract. It's half the problem with these because I don't want to lead you down a road that you wouldn't go by yourself, you know."

P: "Like influence gold spending, like sure, I'm not going to invest into weapons that the character can't use but I don't get where you're trying to go with that question."

I: "No, no, it's absolutely fine. In terms of, if you think of things like black lion chests or sandstorm flush or anything like that, is that something that you engage in or similar activities in other spaces? So in other games or in online casinos or anything like that?"

P: "No, not at all. Like if there's gambling somewhere, I'd probably try it once or twice or something, but I'm not going to spend major amounts of time there."

I: "Okay, and you would try it once or twice why?"

P: "Quite frankly because it's there."

I: "Okay. I see. Well that's everything that I have for you, is there anything else you would like to add, anything you feel like I've forgotten to ask you?"

P: "Given that I don't actually know what you're doing with those questions other than what was written in that consent thingy, nah I don't really have questions."

I: "Okay, great. Okay, then."

Interview Transcript

13/11/2018

Alias Gordy

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "All right. Okay, so I think we're good to go. So, the first couple of questions for the first section is about you and your avatar and the game and this particular instance it would be Guild Wars 2. If you feel that questions apply better elsewhere then you just tell me. So I was hoping that you could tell me about your main avatar in GW2."

P: "Okay uhm, well what exactly do you want to hear, do you want me to describe him or-?"

I: "Yes, sure, everything, anything that comes to mind when you think about him."

P: "Okay, shit, where do I start, he wasn't always my main, but he's now so I'm just going to just going to talk about Gordam now. I made him in 2013. Because I was tired of people kicking me from dungeon runs because I was a ranger. And... I don't know, I just kind of stuck with warrior and never played anything else. So today, I'm here only playing him kinda, never really switching to another character. And, hm... I don't know. I guess I just really like him."

I: "Okay (laugh), why?"

P: "That's a hard question."

I: "Take your time. We have plenty time."

P: "He's big, he's strong. Hm... I guess it's kind of also because he's a charr and I never really liked humanoid races. I think that began with Skyrim actually, but that's a different story. Uhm... Why do I like him... I guess that's it, he's a charr, I like charr (laugh)."

I: "Okay. So does that have something to do with the way it plays weight place or is it more of a racial thing?"

P: "Uhm, I guess it's like because I'm already human. So why would I want to be human in the game when I can be something else?"

I: "Makes sense, could you tell me how long you've played GW2?"

P: "Uhm I started in, well I was in the beta, so... 2012? But I skipped the first 15 days of the game actually since the actual release. So at 15 days after release I started playing GW2."

I: "Okay, and how often would you say that you play?"

P: "... Oof. Back when I started it wasn't that often. I also had some pretty big breaks. For instance, I completely missed the battle for Lion's Arch thing, but pretty much ever since I met my friends the friends I have now in-game, I've been playing... Yeah I guess every day for at least two hours."

I: "Okay. I see. As you mentioned when you play you mostly play on Gordam."

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay. So in terms of identification, how much do you feel that you identify with your main character and what happens to him in the game?"

P: "Hmm... Well, I wouldn't say... No. Let me think about this... wooh... I don't really identify that much with him, but even when I'm not playing the game, like for instance, I'm watching videos or

something and I see someone do something dumb, I would say "Oh, yeah, that's- that's totally something Gordam would do."

I: "Okay, yeah, okay. So, is he a separate entity from you in a way?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, that's good. So would you then say that's he has a personality or characteristics that you would like to have or that you wouldn't like to have?"

P: "Ehm not something that I would like to have but he definitely has characteristics that are different from me."

I: "For example?"

P: "... He's very daring I guess. Like I wouldn't jump down a cliff (laugh)."

I: "That makes sense (laugh)."

P: "Uhm, hmm... I don't really know."

I: "It's fine. Normally people don't really think about these things, they're questions that tend to stump people, right? And then they go "ah I need to really think about this" (laugh). So that's absolutely okay. So this is going to be an interesting one then for you. Would you become your character if you could?"

P: "... Oh shit, depends would I have to be him forever, or just for a day?"

I: "Oh, okay. That's interesting. Could you explain your reasoning around each of the two? So if you would prefer for a day, why is that?"

P: "Because then I could still go back and have my old life. Also, I would live in a video game world, that would be pretty bad."

I: "Okay, why is that not desirable?"

P: "I mean, that would probably sound weird, but what happens when I'm not there what happens to Gordam when I'm not in."

I: "Hm, okay."

P: "Like would I just be disabled standing somewhere, or...? You know."

I: "Yeah, that's a really interesting- it's a very interesting way to look at it... So it depends on the amount of personal control that you will have over that situation?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay."

P: "Sure, if it's just for a day, I would *love* to run around as a giant cat person with the pockets full of gold."

I: "(Laugh) Yeah, that makes sense. So, I mean you've pretty much identified Gordam as he's separate from you.

P: "Yes."

I: "He's different from you."

P: "Yes."

I: "Does he then-."

P: "But probably not better."

I: "No (laugh). Okay, that's good. So how do you then have things like backgrounds and stories for your main character? Do you have an idea of where he comes from and what's occurred to him?"

P: "Not really where he comes from, but here's a thing you might not know, I role-play a lot with my girlfriend, and these are actually our characters, like Gordam and (*name withheld*) they belong to each other. And there are a lot of stories about them that we made up."

I: "Okay, so that is relevant, then. He has depth that you have created I suppose you can say."

P: "Yes."

I: "I see, I see, in terms of then world exploration. Is that something you enjoy, just running around the world just for the sake of exploring it?"

P: "No."

I: "Okay. Why not?"

P: "I hate it cuz it takes forever, I think Gordam is the only character I want to do every map on, like every map that comes out that Arenanet releases. But after that, I probably, I will never touch these maps again with another character, unless they're super easy to complete."

I: "So what would the incentive be for completing a map a second time then? Would it be about the map reward then for the sake of achieving a goal, rather than for just enjoyment?"

P: "Well if I do it again and if it is easy, I would do it for the chance of a black lion chest key."

I: "Okay."

P: "But there is no other reason."

I: "Okay, I'm going to put that on ice for a little while cuz I'm going to prod you a little bit more about your character before we move on to the black lion keys, but it's good to know (laugh)."

P: "Okay (laugh)".

I: "So in terms of character customisation. How long would you say you normally spend customising your character?"

P: "Hm... Maybe 10 to 15 minutes."

I: "Okay, and what would you say you focus on?"

P: "... Hm... I guess it's how things fit together like eye colour and hairstyle and stuff like that. And the accessories... I guess there are games were it takes longer for me to create a character, but I think that is because Guild Wars doesn't have like a big character creation thing going on. Like there are games where I can change in what direction the nose is pointing and stuff like that. This is not possible in Guild Wars. So it doesn't take that long there."

I: "Okay, so it depends on how many options the game gives you."

P: "Yes."

I: "I see. All right, and if you can- In terms of areas, so would you say that... I get very different answers on this, right, so I'm trying to establish whether the face is something that's more important to you than for example, the clothes or the hairstyle or vice versa."

P: "Yeah, I think it's definitely the face."

I: "Okay."

P: "There's another funny thing because I really want to change what Gordam looks like, but I feel like that would change him too much, like he would be... it wouldn't be Gordam anymore. So I just keep his vanilla face."

I: "So in a way, then you're almost safeguarding his identity."

P: "Yes. I guess that's how you can say it."

I: "Yeah, correct me if I'm- cuz I'm prodding in the dark here, so you just you just tell me if it's wrong or if it is right, okay?"

P: "Okay, no but that's probably exactly why I can't change him."

I: "Mhm."

P: "I *really* want to (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) Okay, that's interesting cuz there's almost a bit of a discord in terms of wanting something to appeal to you visually, but at the same time almost respecting that that particular character belongs to himself in a way. So if you would compare that to other characters, why don't they get special treatment if you would?"

P: "I honestly have no idea. I tried many times to play other characters and the one time I actually managed to get some play time on the character is when I made another charr warrior and did world exploration, and even then it was for getting the gift of exploration and not really for the sake of playing that character."

I: "Okay, so why warrior?"

P: "Hm... I think it's because it's very easy to play. But then again, I don't know how other classes are to play cuz I never really tried them."

I: "So is it then for the sake of enjoying how it plays?"

P: "I think it's also because the warrior has the most weapon combinations and can use the most weapons, different weapons, and because I like legendaries a lot I guess I just like to play warrior cuz I can have all my legendaries on one character."

I: "Okay so the class has the potential to be visually appealing, compared to other classes."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. I see, so I guess we can stick with Gordam here, but how important is it for you to level up your character as fast as possible?"

P: "Uhm... I think it depends on what I want to do with that character. For instance with my latest... what is he- engineer, exactly, with my latest engineer I just wanted to level him up as quick as possible so I can put gear on him and I guess put him to good use which he didn't get yet. But I also created a character that I want to level up with my girlfriend and we just want to explore and level up slowly. So I guess it isn't really important for me unless I want to use that character for something specific."

I: "Okay, so-"

P: "If that makes sense."

I: "Yeah, it does, it does. So getting to level 80 is more important if you need the character to access some kind of endgame content."

P: "Yes."

I: "Yeah, and if that's not the purpose of that character then you can essentially run around, be social with that character."

P: "Yes."

I: "I see, I see. Interesting, that's good. So how important is knowing as much about the game mechanics and game rules as possible, and why?"

P: "Oh that changed over the years. Cuz when I started playing GW2 I just used a completely random build, I just clicked on things and thought "hey, that's it, that's how I'm going to play the game now". But now there is this- (laugh) I guess ever since I have the DPS (damage per second) meter there is this pressure to just be on top of it. So I want to have the best build I could have, or I guess the build that I enjoy and still deals damage. Uhm... Hold on I completely forgot where I was going with this... (laugh)"

I: "I'm sitting and I'm counting my questions on my fingers so I won't forget them (laugh)."

P: "(Laugh) Wait, can you repeat the question?"

I: "Yes. So how important is knowing as much as the game mechanics and game rules as possible, how important is that to you?"

P: "I guess that it also depends on the character, if it is the character I'm leveling up slowly and just exploring it's not important at all, cuz I will kill enemies eventually. But if it is Gordam, it is very important to me or like any character I for instance go to fractals with because we want to kill things as quick as possible. So that would be important to me, yeah."

I: "Okay, so that is about efficiency."

P: "Yes."

I: "And beating the game kind of thing."

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay, so you mentioned the DPS meter and I'm holding that question on my fingers so I won't forget about it, you said that there is a pressure, where do you think that pressure stems from, so a pressure to perform because there is now a meter that assesses you. Is that pressure then only available in groups, or is it available all the time when that DPS meter is active?"

P: "I think is only available in groups like sometimes on a world boss for instance I join the commander just to see how their DPS is and how far up the DPS meter I am. Uhm, sometimes in fractals I get a little annoyed if I'm on top, because I feel like- that only happens with pugs (pick up groups), but I feel like they are not carrying their weight."

I: "Yeah, so it's about- it's almost a tool then to assess the competence of your group members then in a way."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, I suppose as a warrior you shouldn't necessarily be on top."

P: "Well not on top, I think necros and maybe elementalists should be on top, but like I said, I get annoyed if I see myself on top and there's a dragon hunter or something under me, like, uhm, how do I say this, like if I have three times the DPS of the Dragon Hunter, I feel like I shouldn't- I shouldn't be on top- like, oh man how do I- this is very complicated."

I: "It's fine (laugh), it's an interesting string we've gone down, yes."

P: "Yeah, I just feel like I shouldn't be up there when there's someone who can deal more damage than me, but he's under me, like that shouldn't be the case."

I: "So that's about you know- that's about showing up, you know, bringing your best to the fight or to the group and actually offering something to the group in terms of, yeah, in terms of what you offer."

P: "Now that I think about it, there's more."

I: "Good. That's good."

P: "I think that only happens when I feel like I'm not dealing enough damage, but I'm still on top, like for instance, let's say 16K is what I would usually deal and now let's say I'm only dealing 9k but the Dragon Hunter is dealing 3K, like that is something that would annoy me. Because I'm not doing enough, but he's doing even less. And that's the shitty thing when I'm thinking about it, yes."

I: "So, if you bring your B game and someone else brings their D game (laugh), then that's an issue. If you're bringing your A-game, it's different."

P: "Yes."

I: "Because...?"

P: "Wait, is it different?"

I: "(Laugh) Did I confuse you now? Did I bamboozle you? (laugh) It's very interesting it's nice when someone really kind of chews into the question, you know, it's good, it's very good."

P: "I guess I just dislike when pugs are really bad."

I: "Yes. I suppose if you are dealing 9k instead of 16k you are actually actively giving that person a chance to beat you and they're not taking it."

P: "Or maybe I'm just tired. I would not deal less damage just to give someone a chance. That's not something I would do I think."

I: "Okay, so is that a motivational factor then so if you are less motivated by the DPS meter one day and there's actually more scope for someone to get higher than you and they're not fulfilling that potential that is worse than if you are very motivated to go in and do your best?"

P: "Yes. Yes. (Laugh)"

I: "(Laugh) Good job. Yes, good. Okay. If anything comes back to mind, right so I've had this a couple of times where people will ask me post interview, they say "oh, I forgot to mention this, I forgot to mention that, could you just add that in?" if that happens while I'm droning with other questions and you say I want to revisit something you just tell me and we'll do that."

P: "All right. Okay."

I: "Okay. So in terms of playing video games as a hobby, as an escapism- playing to avoid thinking about real life for a while- just parking real life and escaping that for a while, is that something that you engage in?"

P: "I am afraid it is. Yes."

I: "Why? Why do you think that's a bad thing, I assume?"

P: "I think right now I'm in that kind of shitty position with my real life, where I'm really looking for a new job in anything, but I can't find anything. So I start up a game and I kind of forget what's happening in real life in this moment. So yeah, I think it's just kind of an escape. Yeah."

I: "Yeah. Do you think that has to be a negative thing?"

P: "No. No, I don't. I guess if I would just think about my life all day long, I would probably get heavy depressions."

I: "Okay."

P: "(Laugh) Yeah, so-"

I: "I think people need to keep themselves sane and that's normally what hobbies are for, so-"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. Okay. Don't worry. This is the first section over with. I'm now going to stop prodding into your avatar for a little bit and we can move on to-"

P: "Wait, wait wait. Let me add something to that, uhm... I kind of wish I could play more games even, but for some reason I'm really stuck on Guild Wars and Overwatch, like these two are the games I keep coming back to."

I: "Okay, that's interesting."

P: "And as soon as I start another game, like I tried to play the game called Night in the Woods the other day, but I kind of just played five minutes of it and then just turned it off like for some reason. Then I'll just go back to Overwatch or GW2."

I: "So why do you think that those two games have, I guess you can call a hook, they got hooks in you."

P: "Yes."

I: "Why do you think these particular- do they have anything in common that comes to mind, or are they completely different?"

P: "They are completely different but I guess Overwatch is just more of a fun game where I can, where I can just do my thing, you know, I can just play without having to care about anything or anyone, which kind of sounds bad but, it's just something I can play and GW2 is more like I kind of play it for my friends, I guess, because I really enjoy playing with them, and I feel like if I don't play GW2 I would miss out on things."

I: "Okay, and that's because of the social events?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. I see"

P: "Like, fractals are like a tradition for me, or, a daily ritual, a daily ritual you can say, it's something I really enjoy doing with my friends, but I wouldn't really do it without them."

I: "Yeah, see. It's a very nice segway into section two social habits (laugh). Okay, anything you want to add to that?"

P: Uhm, no."

I: "Alright, cause I'm mindful that I don't want to cut you off."

P: "I feel like that was really confusing about Overwatch, it's just a game I can play."

I: "No, I don't think that's-"

P: "But that's all that came to mind right now. I don't know how else I could explain it."

I: "From my point of view the way I interpret that would be that in Guild Wars 2 it is very much dependent on personal goals and those personal goals tend to revolve around acquiring items or

achievements in some kind of way. I don't personally play OverWatch, but for me the way I perceive it as an outsider would be that it is more about going in, fast-paced, enjoying it, I suppose it's player versus player as well so there is some skill element in there-

P: "Not that I would have any but yes (laugh)."

I: "No, but in my- not opinion, really, cause I can't have an opinion about a game I don't play, but from my point of view, I guess it feels more like a stress reliever the way that you go in and you kind of take out your- yes, I suppose you can actually kind of offload in a way on other players in that, you know, you can kill them."

P: "Yes. Oh. Okay, that's gonna be weird, when did I stop? I think in 2015 I stopped playing a game called Team Fortress 2. And that game kind of combined Guild Wars and Overwatch, it was still a shooter- it is still a shooter, but you could get something that was called "unusual hat" and think about it as a legendary because it was just a hat with a nice effect on it, but they were extremely expensive. So my goal was to be good at the game, but also get these hats. Kind of like how I want to be good in Overwatch, but get nice items in GW2. Does that make sense?"

I: "Yeah it makes sense you have in a way different- you have different enjoyments and you split them up over different games."

P: "Yes."

I: "So GW2 is more about almost like visual satisfaction whilst Overwatch is, um, more play, I guess, more testing your skills others."

P: "Yes more competitive."

I: "Yes, okay. I see. So, hats."

P: "Hats. Still have some."

I: "You still have some? Okay."

P: "But I don't play it anymore, I don't know why. I guess I know why, it's because I started to play Overwatch because Overwatch is just a lot smoother than Team Fortress."

I: "Do you think that has something to do with game age? So are you more likely to play a relatively new game that uses-"

P: "No, no. Because Team Fortress 2 has this comics style, that ageless comics style, I would still play it but it just feels a lot different from Overwatch. I think- I feel like it's lag but If I look at my frames for instance, I don't see any lag, but it's still feels like it's not as smooth as Overwatch."

I: "Okay, so why would you say the smoothness factor is important here, what does that let you do in the game or how does that change the way the game feels?"

P: "Well, both games are shooters, so it's very important for me to be able to aim properly which is something I can't do if the game feels just a little bit laggy."

I: "Okay."

P: "So yeah, that's the competitive side of it again."

I: "Yeah, so I guess there's more scope to actually measure skill in a game that works with you as, you know, opposed to against you."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. I see... Anything to add to that before I move on?"

P: "No, I think I'm done."

I: "Okay (laugh) we're doing great. So could you tell me a bit about what your social life in GW2 looks like?"

P: "Uhm... Well it's not that big actually I just log on and I interact with the friends that are online in the guild. I'm not really someone that types a lot in map chat, for instance, or in pug groups or any other maps, groups, commander squads... But yeah I really enjoy talking to the people I know from my guild. But that's about it."

I: "Okay. So... now it's my turn to think about how to phrase this question, what makes this group of people different I guess, is that because of similar values or similar play styles, etcetera, what is it that keeps these people, you know, almost like a separate group?"

P: "I guess, I guess in a way they kind of feel like family. Uhm... Yeah, how do I say that? ... It's just like talking to someone you've known for a long while. That's completely different to talk to someone you've just met."

I: "So is that then more about how much you and how much these people have invested in getting to know each other and actually-?"

P: "Yes and I guess the adventures we all went on together."

I: "Okay, so it's also about history then, I mean, there is-"

P: "Yes."

I: "I would assume that there is emotional attachment."

P: "Yes. Definitely."

I: "To what you have experienced together in the game."

P: "Right."

I: "Okay. Then this kind of segways very nicely again, are the members of your guild important to you?"

P: "Yes, very, pretty much all of them."

I: "All of them? Okay."

P: "Except for maybe two or three. Like I- Yeah. Guess I'm not going to say any names (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) It's fine, I would edit out names. I am more interested in how big your social group is, then."

P: "I guess there are two or three people that are always there. And then there are people that I still really like but they're not there as often or not as active as others. For instance, I really like (*name withheld*) but he's just not there as often or not interacting with us that much."

I: "Okay, so it is a matter of what you have been through together, how long you've been through things together, and, I mean, I suppose there's the factor of personality as well, whether personality clashes or not."

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes, okay. So- you're segwaying this so beautifully (laugh), how important is it then to you how your guild member see you?"

P: "Well, I guess it is kind of important, but I wouldn't be mad at them if they were talking behind my back. Like talking shit behind my back. I am a pretty big idiot to be honest, and I guess I kind of do the same to some of them (laugh)."

I: "Okay, I'm going to poke around in this a little bit cuz I would love for you to clarify (laugh). So it's somewhat important how they see you, but if they see you in a negative light, you can justify that to yourself?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Why is that?"

P: "Maybe- maybe I would get a little sad, but I wouldn't be like "aw yeah, come on, this guy hates me, I'm just gonna leave this guild now ", no, that's something I wouldn't do."

I: "Okay, is that to do with skill then? When you say that you're an idiot (laugh)."

P: "No, when I say that, I'm talking about the things I might say, I guess that's- (sigh) I guess my anxiety is kind of responsible for that. Like, how something in my head tells me that "Oh, man, that's something dumb you just did, you should be ashamed of yourself" or something like that."

I: "If that's something that's confirmed by your guild members then I suppose you can say?"

P: "Not really no. I never heard them say anything like that. But then again, the guild member I'm thinking about right now probably never heard me say something bad about him. But I say a lot of shit about him."

I: "Okay, so that is then in a way venting... Would you say that that is about venting frustrations? Like, are they game related or are they more- you know, are the comments more about how they perform in the game which is more about- or personal flaws?"

P: "It's more about personal flaws."

I: "Okay, but you don't want to hurt them and you value the friendship."

P: "Yes."

I: "So you'll find almost safe spaces to vent the frustrations that you get?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. I'm interested in where the frustration stems from, but I think we might be going off topic (laugh)."

P: "I mean we can talk about this after the interview (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) Sure. No, I think I understand. I suppose when you play with people over many periods, or years, as you have, you do get to know both their character strengths and their character weaknesses. And if you then are engaged with them on a daily basis, you are kind of confronted with them. You have to kind of deal with them and I suppose that you have- anybody would have different levels of how receptive they are for that, depending on how the day has gone and things like that. You know, it's- yeah, yes, I'm thinking out loud now, ignore me."

P: "(Laugh) No, it's okay, we have time."

I: "(Laugh) So yeah, just to summarise that question, it's somewhat important how other guild members see you but it depends on the guild members and it depends on your personal opinion of the guild members."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. Anything to add there?"

P: "Uhm... No, I think that's it."

I: "Okay. So how important is it to you then that your guild members feel like they can count on you?"

P: "Well... Oh man, let's just say I feel really bad when I have to let's say skip fractals. Because I feel like I'm letting my friends down."

I: "Okay, so you have identified- or you do identify as an important part of that group. You mentioned earlier that if you didn't have the friend group doing it you would be less likely to actually engage in the activity."

P: "Yes."

I: "So do you then think that that goes both ways?"

P: "Ehm... No."

I: "Okay."

P: "But I think my, uhm, see I have this huge problem with social anxiety. And I just don't really want to interact with people I don't know."

I: "Okay."

P: "So I think that's why I don't like to pug fractals alone."

I: "Okay, I see. So it's important that your guild members feel like you are a solid- you're a person who is going to be there."

P: "Yes."

I: "But you don't think that this is as- Okay (laugh) this is getting complicated even for me now. That's fine, it answers the question. You mentioned that you don't like to pug alone. My next question is actually how much do you enjoy getting to know other people in the game (laugh)?"

P: "(Laugh) Uhm... I don't really enjoy it. That may be the reason why I am kind of dropped out of raids right now. Because I don't really feel comfortable around the people from The Mist guild."

I: "Okay, I suppose it would be difficult for- if you have a very closely-knitted group like you described your guild I suppose there would always be the possibility of tension when you take a closely-knitted group and introduce it to other- to another closely-knitted group and expect them to mingle I suppose that- yeah, it would make sense that some anxiety would stem from that. Okay. Okay, so in short then the social factor is important to determine what kind of gameplay you engage in?"

P: "Yes, definitely."

I: "And that's just because you enjoy it more with people you know."

P: "Yes, that's also why I prefer 5-man content over 10-man content, but then again like world bosses I don't really mind, I can just- I don't have to be in the group to do them cuz there are other people that I don't have to care about that will do them, and I can just like, pitch in."

I: "Okay, is that something to do with mechanics then, so for example in a 5 man or a 10 man party you have more responsibility as an individual compared to if you are 50 or 100 players."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, you don't have to trust the people at the world boss, but you need to trust the people in your group."

P: "Exactly."

I: "Okay, so do you watch other people stream content in GW2?"

P: "Not in GW2, no."

I: "But in other games?"

P: "Well, actually it is more the streamer that I'm watching, not the game specifically."

I: "Okay, so it's the-"

P: "Like I have two or three favourite streamers and whatever they stream I would probably watch it." I: "And that's because they're entertaining as individuals?"

P: "Yes, exactly. Well it still is kind of about the game but not... Well, it is about the game but more about the streamer, I guess."

I: "Okay, so in terms of GW2 do you watch other people open black lion chests or play Sandstorm flush or similar?"

P: "(Laugh) That's actually, the only thing I watch videos off, not streams, but videos."

I: "Okay, why? (Laugh)."

P: "I just want to see people gamble. I like to see what they get and- but I don't really... I don't really watch these videos of them and think "Okay, I can do that, too". I just watch these videos to see... Maybe I just want to see them like reacting to it, to what they get. I don't really know."

I: "Okay. Does it matter whether they win or lose? Do you feel differently about it depending on outcome?"

P: "That depends on how much gold I have myself. If I'm super broke and I see someone win I get kind of sad, but if I have a lot of gold and I see someone else get a lot of gold I feel happy for them."

I: "That's interesting, so it really depends on the person's state."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay,

P: "... Unless it's Choxie."

I: "Okay. Tell me about Choxie, who's Choxie?"

P: "Well, someone who opens a lot of black lion chests, or ecto gambles a lot."

I: "And he's- where do you find him, is he a friend in the game or-"

P: "No, he's on- he's a YouTuber. Or actually a streamer but his highlights are on YouTube, history highlights. And at one point people sent him like a shit ton of gold and Ecto just so he can gamble. And I wish someone would do that to me."

I: "Okay, why would you want to engage in this activity?"

P: "Because it's fun."

I: "It's fun. Okay... So it's more about doing it then what happens afterwards whether you win or lose? It's more about doing it for the sake of seeing?"

P: "Uhm... How do I say this? Doing it is really fun. I enjoy clicking those little things and seeing other things pop up, but the feeling you get when you actually receive something good, like let's say a precursor, that feeling is why I'm doing it."

I: "Okay. Could you describe the feeling? Try, it might be difficult."

P: "It is really difficult... (Laugh) It's like, it feels like a tiny bit of adrenaline, I could say... and warmth in the chest area."

I: "Okay, that's good. That's good. That's really good. Okay, so opposite to that then, when you lose, how is that different?"

P: "(Laugh) Well when I lose I'm just... I guess that I just turn off the game. I don't feel anything. I don't feel regret. I'm just a little bit annoyed by not getting anything and now not having any money. I guess that's regret."

I: "(Laugh) Okay. Okay, so there's definitely a reaction to the outcome but the activity in itself is also engaging."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. All right. I never actually asked you this question, I should have, I think we got side-tracked with the watching other people. Could you tell me what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why you spend it on these items."

P: "Again I think it depends on what I'm doing at the moment, like when I'm crafting and legendary I'm obviously spending my gold on materials. But when I'm not doing anything like a legendary or something else, I'm probably just going to spend my gold on trick or treat bags or mostly rare weapons, so I can then throw them into the Mystic Forge."

I: "So you would say that if you have a surplus of gold and you could do anything in the game, but you're not working on legendary, the Mystic Forge would be your go to?"

P: "Yes, unless I have enough gold to buy an infusion I really want, like one of the 10k gold infusions, but that's probably never going to happen. But if I like- if I had 1,000 gold in my pocket right now, I would probably spend at least 400 gold on rare weapons and throw them into the Mystic Forge, the rest of the money uhm, I guess I would save it, or at least try to save it."

I: "Okay. So what makes the Mystic Forge more appealing?"

P: "... I guess it's that feeling I was talking about earlier, that little adrenaline shock. When you get a precursor. Because I don't get that when I use the ecto gambling."

I: "Why do you think that is?"

P: "I have no idea. It just feels better to get a precursor than to get let's say 500 gold from ecto gambling."

I: "Do you think that has something to do with receiving currency instead of receiving a weapon or vice versa? Do they feel different, so let's say if a precursor is worth 500 gold and it feels better to get a precursor than to get 500 gold, where is-."

P: "Well technically it's even less gold if I get a precursor, it's not 500 gold, but it still feels better. And I don't really know why. I guess it's the- maybe it's the icon of the precursor."

I: "Okay?"

P: "Because it looks very shiny."

I: "So it's when- when you get that visual feedback that you got an extremely rare item out of your rare weapons, that feels- that is more exciting than if you-."

P: "Yes. Like if I just buy the ecto gamble thing, I will double click it and instantly get the money. And if I throw four- let's say I throw four rare swords into the Mystic Forge and I get a Zap out of it. I get that- like I see how these four swords combine into the Mystic Forge and then the icon pops up with like glitter around and stuff like that. So it just feels better."

I: "It's visually pleasing as well then, there's- I suppose you can say that there's almost bells and whistles around the activity."

P: "Yes, exactly."

I: "Okay. I see."

P: "And the text that says "Zommoros rewards you with..."

I: "That's interesting. So could you tell me a little bit about Zommoros, does he have any meaning to you?"

P: "Well, he's an asshole."

I: "(Laugh) Okay, that's excellent."

P: "Actually, oh man, does he feel like a friend? Not really, no."

I: "Not a good friend."

P: "He feels like someone I gave a lot of gold to, but someone who also gave me a lot in return. So I guess he's kind of neutral... But then again with the last raid wing we've finally seen him for the first time. Which was *very* weird."

I: "Why was that weird? What's it somehow different to how you imagined it if you imagined it?"

P: "Well, he looked different from than what I imagined him. And also I think his personality was a little different than what I imagined."

I: "Okay, did that in any way affect your enjoyment?"

P: "No."

I: "Okay. So I mean if I present you with Zommoros, the Genie in the Mystic Forge, the first thing that comes up for you isn't hostility, you know, "this is the bastard who took all my gold" (laugh). It's more of a... almost a bit of a traitorous friend or... sometimes an ally sometimes an enemy."

P: "Yes, actually, actually no. No, I don't see him as an enemy... Maybe some shady guy in some back alley, but not an enemy (laugh)."

I: "Okay, okay. So could you tell me about a time, any time, a particular time that stands out in your mind that you have played sandstorm flush or visited the ecto skritt or play the Mystic Forge or the trading post or opened trick or treat bags, anything... Or black lion chests, anything that comes to mind and stands out. Just tell me about a time."

P: "Uhm... Well it's all the same really... I can't really think of a specific time... Pretty sure I enjoyed it every single time. Actually one time I almost choked when I got a precursor whilst I was eating."

I: "(Laugh) Okay."

P: "But that's it."

I: "Okay, I'm going to use some of my questions then and see if we can untangle this kind of enjoyment. When you buy items in the game- so we spoke about legendaries, for example, I

mean, I guess the appeal with the legendaries would be the visuals, right, how it makes your character look?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Anything else that makes the legendary so... I guess coveted, attractive, there's a reason"

P: "Well there's that achievement of owning that legendary item that not many other people have. I think that's why I made Eureka. Actually no, I made Eureka because it was part of my build. But, uhm, yeah I just like that- I just like to achieve things in this game when it comes to legendaries."

I: "And why is that, is that because it is rewarding in some aspect?"

P: "Uhm... I guess yes. But I don't know do I like the attention it gets me? Because I'm not really someone who wants attention, I think... But having people look at my weapon and seeing them being impressed. That's something I enjoy."

I: "Yeah, that's a type of social confirmation, right? That's- someone noticed you for the way you made your character look."

P: "Yes, I do get a lot of backlash for what my character looks like (laugh)."

I: "Okay. So could you give me an example of that?"

P: "Well one time I was told to delete my character because he's eye cancer."

I: "Okay, so where do you think that comes from? Is that jealousy or is that just people with different taste?"

P: "I guess it's just people with different taste."

I: "Okay... Cuz I mean, it's quite an extreme thing to go up to a random person who has equipped their character in a particular way and tell them that they look terrible. So that would have- I mean that would have been spurred by some kind of"

P: "But I guess that's just a thing in GW2, cuz something like that would have never happened in Team Fortress, I guess. There where a lot of effects in Team Fortress."

I: "So why aren't visual effects necessarily as accepted in GW2 by some players, do you think?"

P: "I have no idea. I think everyone should just be whatever they want in that game. They can choose what their character looks like."

I: "I mean I suppose it's not really their business necessarily what someone else looks like, but there's still some sort of incentive to make it their business."

P: "Yes, and that's something I see lot on reddit, especially in the GW2 reddit. As soon as someone posts a character with maybe three infusions people get mad at this person, a certain group of people gets mad."

I: "I am wondering whether you think that has something to do with social status or, what do these infusions represent?"

P: "I guess they represent wealth. But then again, it could be pure luck to get one. I mean just because someone is wearing- I guess because someone is wearing 3 10k gold infusions they have 30,000 gold, but maybe they just got them from a boss... That makes no sense (laugh)."

I: "Yeah, okay, so it might- may be more... So you don't get this with legendary weapons?"

P: "Well, maybe you get this in the first... few days after the release of the weapon. Then you get people saying "oh, that's a no life. He already had so many materials. He just made it instantly." Which is something I plan on doing but (laugh)."

I: "Yes, okay, so when it comes to acquiring rare and expensive items by luck, do you believe- to the community that is more annoying than someone who worked for their shiny items?"

P: "Yeah. Yes."

I: "Okay, because it's unfair?"

P: "Uhm, well not to me, I don't really care. But I guess that's what they think. But then again, some people even do that to people that work hard for their infusions."

I: "By assuming they haven't."

P: "But maybe these are just the jealous people."

I: "Yeah maybe, it's hard to know, I'm just speculating. It is hard to know how players think about these things. So going back on to my questions. When you buy items in the game, do you buy them with real currency in-game gold or both?"

P: "Both."

I: "Okay. Why both?"

P: "because sometimes I really feel like gambling but I don't have any gold in my wallet. So there are moments where I... Well, not anymore, but I guess that's because my Paypal is broken (laugh)."

I: "Okay, so it has disabled you in terms of you can't actually-"

P: "Yes, yes, but there are moments where I... I had went to buy 800 gems, convert into gold and then just gamble it all away."

I: "Okay, and is that normally on the Mystic Forge or elsewhere?"

P: "That's the Mystic Forge, yes."

I: "Okay. All right, so..."

P: "I have never spent real money on ecto gambling."

I: "Okay, so it's mainly Forge. So how much in-game gold do you usually spend on these activities per week? That might be a difficult estimate, because-."

P: "That depends on how much I have. If I had... if I had enough it would be probably around 300-400 gold per day... Actually, I don't think I'm that weak, no, it would be maybe- let's say it would be 600 gold per week."

I: "Okay, so you would engage in this every day if possible."

P: "Yes."

I: "But in reality, how many times would you say you do it per week?"

P: "Also every day, at least once or twice. I throw a couple rares."

I: "Just not with the amount that you would like."

P: "Yes exactly."

I: "I see. Why does the amount matter?"

P: "Well, I guess the more often I do it the bigger the chance of actually getting it, I guess."

I: "Okay. So does it- is it different throwing twenty weapons into the Mystic Forge compared to two hundred weapons into the Mystic Forge?"

P: "Not really, no. I just prefer using more weapons. Maybe because I get to enjoy it longer."

I: "Okay, so you can extend the play period?"

P: "Yes."

I: "So almost like the enjoyment lasts for longer."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. We kind of touched on this already, why do you think you play it- I mean you mentioned, you know, the visual feedback and you know, "Zommoros rewards you with..." and it's appealing, it gives you a bit of adrenaline."

P: "Yeah, I guess just really enjoy it. I like what it feels like."

I: "I think that's- I mean, I think we kind of answered that one before anyway, just automatically."

P: "I think I rarely gamble to get money from it. Like right now, I don't really need any money. But I would still gamble. Just for fun."

I: "Yeah, I see. Okay. Next question is the only really personal question I'm going to ask you. The reason I'm asking this personal question is because I have a follow-up question that I would love to ask. So, what is your real-life monthly income at the moment?"

P: "Eh, not a lot, it's 470 Euros."

I: "Okay."

P: "Which is..."

I: "Yeah that's fine. I will convert that to a currency I understand some point (laugh). It's fine. So, okay, next question, the follow up question, how much money or what portion of your monthly wage would you require, if any money, in exchange for you deleting your main character in GW2?"

P: "I would never delete my main character."

I: "Okay, there's no sum that I could offer you that would-"

P: "No, no, that's just something I couldn't do because I feel really attached to that character."

I: "And is that because of the experiences you've had with him or the time you've invested or just- I want to get to the root of why the character means something."

P: "I guess it's the time I've invested into that character. Because there are- and does that make sense, there are actual items in his inventory that are soulbound, that might not even have a use, but I still want to keep them."

I: "And are those his possessions?"

P: "I wouldn't say so."

I: "They're yours?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay. I see."

P: "Like even if I could use all the money I would get from that, to completely rebuild that character, I wouldn't do it."

I: "It wouldn't be the same."

P: "It wouldn't be the same."

I: "I see. So this- I have that question followed by one of my more abstract questions. So feel free to interpret this however you like, how much do you believe that your avatar- How much does Gordam influence your decisions in the game?"

P: "... Hm. I guess a lot."

I: "Why?"

P: "Uhm... That's a hard question."

I: "It is a hard question, it's quite abstract and it covers a lot of different areas."

P: "I guess because in a way it's- because we are two different personalities, but I am still controlling him, uhm... how do I say this... it is still his... his life, you could almost say."

I: "Yeah, so is there some sort of responsibility of doing right by him?"

P: "Yes, well, not always... Let's be honest, it is clearly wrong to... mmm... to wish for quaggan genocide (laugh)."

I: "Is that the way you feel about it, that's not how Gordam feels about it?"

P: "No, no, no, no, no, I hate them, and Gordam hates them too, but I guess... Ah, man."

I: "It's very difficult to untangle because the answer depends a lot on how you relate to your character and that will also change between people."

P: "I'm trying to figure out what I was trying to say right now, uhm... Like I still feel like it is his life that I could ruin if I would do something that is not how he would do it."

I: "Okay, so it's actually a little bit about being true to your character and what he would like, what he would want."

P: "Yes. Yes."

I: "So he's almost like an invisible hand. That's almost kind of on top of your own in that he's there in the back of your mind when you are making decisions."

P: "Yes. exactly. I don't even know where I was going with the quaggan thing but, no, fuck them (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) I'll just make a note of that. If you- I mean you can always get back to me and just say "hey put this into the interview" and it's fine, I've had that before "I forgot to tell you something!" it's absolutely fine. So final question, this has been good, but final question."

P: "We're already done? Sad."

I: "Don't worry. If you have anything that you'd like to add we will get to it. But how do you feel about similar activities in other spaces? So how do you feel about Mystic Forge like activities in other games or online or even in a real Casino?"

P: "Uhm, I never really experienced this in other games, I think, because GW2 is really the only MMORPG I play. And other than that apart from OverWatch, I only play single player games that don't have that, if I play other games."

I: "I see, so it doesn't really interest you."

P: "Not really. No."

I: "Okay. I have one final question that just came to mind particular to the Mystic Forge. Compared to-

P: "Actually, let me add something to that. In OverWatch there are loot boxes that give you different skins. Usually I don't really care for them, but during events they release new skins that are only obtainable during those events, similar to the mount skins in the black lion chests. These boxes I really like to open and I would sometimes buy boxes with real money, but last Halloween event I didn't, mainly because my PayPal was broken."

I: "And it has something to do with..."

P: "Having something that not everyone has."

I: "Yes, the rarity of just being able to get it in that month, for example."

P: "Exactly."

I: "I see, okay, so it's about almost empowering you character in standing out from the crowd with something different."

P: "Yes."

I: "So skins are important. We've established that with legendary weapons and also in different games. The visual feedback is important. I mean, that's a big part of video games."

P: "Yes."

I: "But I'm thinking, particular to the Mystic Forge-"

P: "No there is no such thing in any other game I ever played."

I: "Do you feel like it is of any relevance that there is lore attached to this forge, that an entity supposedly lives in it. Does that matter?"

P: "Well I guess it was more fun when there was not a lot of lore. But when I still knew "okay, there's something in there and I really want to know what it is". But now that I know what he looks like and what it is and what the Mystic Forge looks like on the inside. It's not that, uhm... It doesn't feel the same, but I still really enjoy gambling."

I: "So it's almost like they ripped away a bit of the mystery."

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, and the mystery is desirable?"

P: "Yes, I guess you can't call it a Mystic Forge anymore."

I: "Yeah, it's not that mystic, now it's just a forge."

P: "Just this "Hello"."

I: "Okay (laugh)."

P: "With some enemies in it."

I: "Yeah, okay. I see. Is there anything else you would like to add, anything I forgot to ask you?"

P: "No, no. I think that was it."

I: "That is everything I have for you. Thank you so much. That was really terrific."

P: "No problem."

Interview Transcript

15/11/2018

Alias Chise

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "All right. Good to go. Okay. So the first section of this, there's three sections, the first one is about you and your avatar and the game."

P: "Oh God, that's going to be a long one, I think (laugh)."

I: "That's good, that's excellent. Go for it. So could you tell me about whether you have a main avatar or many main avatars, could you tell me about them?"

P: "Uhm, I do have two kind of ish main avatars in GW2 at least. It's Chise and Felis, a Mesmer and a necromancer, but I think I'm playing Felis more. Because you know, she's you know, she's like my first character in the game, and I also kind of like the mechanic (laugh), I do like to play the other characters as well, but I think I spent the most time with these two. Because, maybe I have a lot of history with it, but, yeah (laugh)."

I: "Okay. So the reason that you're focusing on these characters are mainly because you like the way they play and the amount of time that you have played with them in the past?"

P: "I guess so, I'm not that much into mesmer, so I'm like, I think I have geared her to play fractals, but I have no idea how this class works (laugh) So I'm like, I'm not doing any damage (laugh), no, what is happening? And every time I try to get into it, I'm changing everything and just, I don't know, the next day a patch is out and it's like, yeah, all of these things you've chosen, are now worth nothing and they do nothing anymore. I'm like, well, I think I'm going to save- stick with necromancer."

I: "Yeah sounds like it's quite hard to keep up then."

P: "Yeah. But I still like to play her, so... but like I'm doing all the story and all the collections and everything, I'm just doing it with my necromancer because it's just easier sometimes. I mean I have explored the world on both characters. Well, you did the (laugh) part on Chise, also I think I did not explore the world once with my necromancer, it was (*name withheld*) he explored it, it was a long time ago. I think you still had to explore the world versus world map and all of this, I'm like, okay, nope. I'm out of this. He's like, god damnit, let me just do it for you now, like okay (laugh)."

I: "That's really interesting. So, why was world exploration important enough that you needed or wanted someone to do it, but you didn't necessarily want to do it yourself. Why did that matter?"

P: "I think I wanted shinies (laugh), I just wanted- I think the first legendary that I made for myself was- which one was it? Uhm, was it-? Shit, I forgot the name, the greatsword, the day version? Is it Sunrise? I think I made this one first. And the second one was just like, yeah, I have this, what was it, the gift of exploration, is it this? I don't remember anymore, the thing you get after you explore the world, and I had this and I was like, well what am I going to do with this now? And I just made the stupidest legendary there is, the mace, just for fun (laugh). Just because I could and (*name withheld*) didn't even know I made it, I was like, I just- it was done like one day after I decided I really wanted and I just have this just to come online with my revenant, with Gandalf, excuse me, just to dance around with it and do absolutely nothing else. I'm not using mace on any character."

I: "Okay, it's purely enjoyment?"

P: "Yes! And then I'm like, well, maybe I shouldn't have spent- (laugh) because I really want another legendary. I can't remember was it the-? Was it actually the greatsword? I mean I have the greatsword as well, but I'm thinking I have made four legendaries, but I have the mace, the greatsword, I made the staff and gave it to (*name withheld*), but I can't remember what the fourth one was, shit (laugh)."

I: "The longbow?"

P: "Oh, right! No, that was my first one! Oh my fucking god, that was the first one that was still in the old Lion's Arch, and I was just running to that stupid Mystic Forge. I was- the story is very funny of how I got the precursor, I was showing my grandpa how the Mystic Forge works. He's also playing the game. Well, right now he's playing Neverwinter, he's like super into this now I guess (laugh), but he's like very hard into just grinding and farming and I was just watching him a few times and was like, no that's not for me, but he enjoys it. I mean, what can I say (laugh), and I was showing him, I was like: look if you take four yellow items, and I picked bows, just random, I just picked the cheapest item and just picked four and was like, look, if you (laugh) like put four items, four yellow items into the Mystic Forge, you get a precursor, and as soon as I hit the button on the Mystic Forge the precursor came and I was like, oh no, what? And he's like: oh that's very easy (laugh). And yeah, I think he had like one hundred gold and it was very important to him and he was so proud of it. I think he just spent it all at once (laugh). I was like, okay, you know, before he went even back to his computer I was like: maybe you shouldn't try (laugh) because it's not that easy. And he was like: what do you mean, it looked really easy to me? And he tried and he failed every time and would get nothing good. I think back then there was no wardrobe unlocks so it was just getting random yellows and maybe exotics. And just like, you're not getting any wardrobe unlocks from that. I mean you had to buy these, what's it called, the transfusion things and you had to put the item that you're wearing right now and the armour that you're wearing, the armour piece, and you had to put them, the armour piece that you wanted to make your armour look like, in there, so basically you're just wasting one good armour piece and I think it just vanished. It just fused. I mean, there was no wardrobe unlock and if you really wanted a fucking exotic chest or something you just bought like the one that you should be wearing, and you just geared that and everything, and then you had to buy the exotic chest piece, for example, and if is there something new you really want, you just basically threw one exotic chest piece out of the window because I think it was like that. I'm pretty sure it was like that. And I was like, oh look at this, oh look at this chest, or look at that leg armour, and I'm still very hot into just dressing up. It's basically just dress wars at this point for me and I'm like, well if I'm mostly doing this with my mesmer, I also do it with my- with every other character, basically, but I'm like, okay, I'm going through the actual main story of the of the game and I'm like, okay at the beginning she wore that and after she got into The Priory she wore that and I actually wore the armour she would have worn if she was in that time. And even if I if I had to-, well, you could have- I think that was back at the time where you could, like there were not level to quest, it was not like, okay, level 10, now you can start your quest until you're level 20. I think it still was this: hey, you're level 2 now, you

can start your quest and I think you could just play through it just with a level one character, you could play through the story if you really wanted... where was I going with that? (laugh)."

I: "You were talking about how you were dressing up your characters to kind of fit with where they were in their personal story."

P: "Oh right, and I was very low like I had a very low level with her and I did absolutely no damage and she was the second character I did story with and I'm just like, you know, very heavy into like, if me and (*name withheld*) are playing, well his charr is not his main, well it's his main now but it wasn't his main back then, it was his ranger and I was like, okay, how is the character he's playing now with the character I'm playing, how are they related to each other? And then you just start spinning the story and like okay his charr went to the Durmand Priory because I have no reason why he shouldn't have but (*name withheld*) picked the story because he's like, okay, we're just going to pick the same story, it's easier (laugh), and I'm like, okay, but then I was like, yes?"

I: "So that's more of a practical approach while you're more almost weaving a web around the character?"

P: "Yeah, exactly. I was like, well, maybe his charr went to the Vigilant- I don't know what it's called, The Vigil, but he kind of went to The Priory but I still have no reason why he should, why he would have, because there's antique shinies, I have no idea!"

I: "(Laugh) That was my first guess actually, they dig up a lot of treasure."

P: "Because she's very, well, I'm talking German here (laugh) because my character Chise is kind of very hard into history, and then they kind- well, you know I didn't plan for his charr, well, for (*name withheld*) and for Chise to be a pair but it kind of, I was like, but they could have and you know, I mean, it's not like this relationship does not exist, you know, I'm just going to go with it and then it kind of ended up, like the main story came up after The Priory where you meet Trahearne and you go to Orr and everything that is related to that, and I was like, well, they would be second-in-command because the already Commander we have is my necromancer and her husband the ranger of (*name withheld*) and I was like, well, they wouldn't be Commander as well because it doesn't work that way so they were kind of helping them sometimes out and they kept became friends and there's also this tiny web, in my characters where they kind of are related to each other, like, these are friends. They have seen each other. They know of each other, or like, this is his sister. This is his, I have no idea, cousin-in-law or something. Yeah."

I: "Okay. Okay, that's really good. That's probably the best answer I've ever received in the first question. So for you there's definitely value and importance in the character story and who the character is?"

P: "Yes, of course! It's mainly as soon- well, now mainly after I made like a few characters now as soon as I hit the create character button, I'm already like, okay, I picked a race and I'm like, okay, who is this character? What is he doing? Is he working in The Shining blade? My guardian, Fenris, his first approach was to, well, he's working in The Shining blade. So I gave him the exact copy of a shining blade guard and I coloured it and I tried to match these fucking colours and it was very hard (laugh). But it well, if I didn't stand like exactly next to that NPC I totally looked like one of them, but now he's just like this edgy kid and that's fine, the story he has it's- it fits him

kind of, it's a long story and I would have liked to explain a bit of GW1 as well. So I'm just- should I do it? Do you want me to do it?"

I: "You know what, sure. I mean, I'm fascinated that it's so comprehensive, right?"

P: "Well, yeah, my main in GW1 was a Necromancer as well, a male one though. It's very rare that I play male characters. I don't know why, well, I like playing them. It's not like I can't look at males from behind. I don't care. I don't care about this. It's like either the character has a nice story or like something I can relate to or like, or I'm not going to play the character as much as the other ones. And he had a nice story. I made him with an old friend of mine. I didn't talk to her in a while, that's a nice reminder for me (laugh) and she made his little sister which was also a necromancer and she was a bit of well, she wasn't a sane person, the character, and he was like this calm dude and he always tried to: okay, let's go somewhere else before you kill someone, and they had like this, the story that he killed their parents and then, because he was kind of influenced by a demon, and the demon, well, he became the host to the demon. And then his story went on and on and on. And he was kind of immortal because of that demon, so he's still in Guild Wars 2, but well, he got married and he had a child, the sister died. Well, I mean if you kind of live forever, you know, but the demon just one time was like, yeah, you know what, your son seems like a pretty good host, and that's Fenris, that's his son, his real son, and he just jumped from the Necromancer to the Guardian and I was like fantasising about, well, they could just- so my guardian could just like travel the world after working for The Shining blade, I guess, and it's just like he's just traveling through the world and he's just, he himself is just seeing it for the first time, and the demon is just like, yeah, I was here already, looked different back then, looks very different, and just shit like that. And it was like, yeah, that's a good idea (laugh). And as soon as I tell people this story about this demon they're like: well, but that's not canon. There are no demons, well, not this type, but it's like well, I just made up a story, can you just leave me alone, please? Just like with the other characters as well. I could just go into every character story as soon as I hit create and I'm like creating this character. I'm just like really just, hmm, do they have a long nose, do they have a small nose, how does this impact them? (Laugh). While I'm making the character I'm just like already, I already came up with the story. And as soon as I come to the names I'm like, okay. Well, I also have trouble naming them but it's a bit easier. It's like, okay do I pick German names? I mostly pick German names, I don't know why, well, last names, and the first one is like, okay, is it going to be a fantasy name or is it going to be a real name? Okay, it's a real name, let's say, and I'm just going through this baby name site that- my favourite one where you could just look for names or you could just look for meaning of a word or just a word, it's like: Moon, and then you come up with all like, they come up with this list of all the names they have related to the moon, like just the translation of them of moon or it's just like moonchild or like something like that and it's just like Arabic, English, German and all the names and I'm like, I'm going to pick the one I think it's the most- is the coolest (laugh) and fit the character and then I'm just going to- the first name is the easy part, just type in a word and I'm going to pick out the name I like the most that sounds the nicest and the last name is like, okay, I pick two words that fit to the character. Like my yellow sylvari with the blue, she has Kudzu I think, my Iri. she has Spring

Wind. So it's basically just a win in spring, it's just like, okay, I'm going to take spring because I mean she looks like it. She's very colourful and I really like her because she's, well, usually you see these mainly these two typical sylvaris and like they're either white or black and they have this one colour they stick with, additional, and they maybe have a glow or is hair just like black and red and then their armour is black and red and the hair is red and they glow red in the night. I have to breathe (laugh) I'm talking so much."

I: "It's great, it's really good, just make sure you have a drink with you (laugh)."

P: "And I'm like why I made her was actually like, I also made these kind of sylvaris the black ones and white ones and at one point I made a white sylvari that had this teal colour. And every time it was dark, it just it just looked like toothpaste. You know, I also picked these streaks in the body, I also used teal, I don't know why, and this one teal colour just looked exactly like the stripes in the toothpaste, at one point I was just like: I can't play this character anymore."

I: "It's ruined (laugh)."

P: "Yeah exactly, this also happens a lot if I just make them and I'm like: that's a cool name. I like this this look or something and (*name withheld*) is just coming along like he's like making fun of it. I'm like, you know, it's ruined I don't want to play them and I delete them, you know."

I: "Oh, wow. Okay. So when you create a new character, is it normally the case that you have an idea waiting to be realised or does the idea come because you feel like creating a new character. It's not really fully fleshed-out yet or is it completely fleshed-out?"

P: "It's both. Sometimes I'm like, I was like, okay, I'm going to make the sister of my Necromancer because she's in my fantasies at least from a very wealthy family that only has these mesmers and necromancers in the family and nothing else. And her sister is going to be a mesmer. And I made the, well, her sister I made her in Skyrim. Like back when I had this big modded Skyrim that actually worked. Yeah, and it's a bit- you have more freedom with Skyrim if you have it like heavily modded than in Guild Wars 2, in GW2 you have this type of face now change bits of the parts of the face that we chose and like in this heavy modded Skyrim you can just- it's like, here's a model, a 3D model of the face, sculpt it as you want (laugh). Or you just play with the sliders and I'm like, I'm going to make her and then I asked (*name withheld*) like what should I name her? I had no idea what name she could have it was like, well, I took Felis because it had this meaning of a small seed growing, like starting to grow. And the last name I have no idea how to say it in English, I'm just going to say it how I usually say it in German, it's Irien, and it's from Cindirien, this last name stuck a long time with me. I think it meant daisies, like small flowers, something like that. I can't remember if it was this- or no, I think it was the flower one, or that something small growing and I also took that name for a role playing character I had that was like this website and in German, that's like based kind of like DND. Well, you can choose your race and everything like that, but they're like heavy role play and it's all in writing style and I really love it and to read it and to make the character, but I don't like to play them. I like to talk about this character, and I like to talk about other characters. How could they meet, what are they, are they related to one another? This is okay for me. I also would like to role-play but this kind of thing was very heavy. They had like this big chunk of text, that was like, I have no idea, like thirty or forty rows of text, which you

had to read and respond and I think I tried it a few times and it's like, you have this big chunk of text you get it and then you answer and you have like two- okay, it's a bit exaggerated, but you just write two words because like, how am I going to do this in my head? I see perfectly fine in my head. I see exactly how it happens, how they talk to each other. I'm like, how am I going to write this down now?"

I: "Yes, so making it translate in reality?"

P: "Yeah (drinks)."

I: "Yeah, take a sip (laugh.)"

P: "I want to drink my chocolate milk (laugh). I like to role-play. Actually, I really do, that's also why I like DND. I fell really hard into this as soon as I heard about it. I also did like normal role playing with (*name withheld*), I still do, we have this one big Discord server where every time I come up with something new he has to follow up and I'm like: I have this idea of this couple for example, and they live in this world and it's like this and this and he's like, all right. He's basically just playing the same character with a different look and a different name in a different world. But the way they behave is always the same. I know exactly, they're going to be chill, they're going to be like grinning a lot and like, stuff like this, you know, it's like this cool person. And I'm like: I just want to be this. And it's a bit easier for me to write in this one specific style we have it's like this, with the stars, but you're write a lot more in it. Now it's just like, you describe exactly what's happening. Maybe- what I'm doing a lot with (*name withheld*) and the role play is that I'm writing a lot of what's happening in the background, you know, wind blowing through the- shit, I forgot the name (laugh)."

I: "Okay, so you really add a lot of layers, right, it's not just story, it's environment and it feels extremely complex, you know, it's like a fully realised creation, almost."

P: "Yes, as soon as I'm like, well I'm going to make the daughter of Chise now, (*name withheld*) is like: wait a minute (laugh). Did we skip a few steps there? I'm like, I'm already creating her, and I was like, and then I asked him: what would they name their child? And (*name withheld*) he's just like, he didn't even think, it's like: Dusk and Dawn. That's the only reason why I called the human daughter they have Dawn and the charr son they have Dusk because- these are nice names and you would never guess it but he's like, well, you know my character likes shinies and these are precursors, that's the only reason why he said that and I'm like, well, it worked. I was like, I couldn't be mad at him (laugh), but you know, he ran out of precursor names that actually sounded nice. Well, you can still, what's bolt? No, bolt was the legendary, wasn't it."

I: "Zap is the name of the precursor, I think."

P: "Yeah, see, call your child Zap, he's not going to like it, and also like the sister of this and all- the daughter or son or something, I also have this- oh, yeah, the family of my necromancer from GW1, the one with the demon, it was actually a small farmer family, and they had one half-brother and that half-brother was a lot- well, he liked sleeping with women a lot, and he didn't really care if they got pregnant or anything. So now it's this big family. It's like in the Southsun Cove, there's like a little family living there. There's a big family in Cantha. There's one in Elona, also in the

different regions of Tyria. And there's like this one big merchant family now and they're rich (laugh) so I have one that's sprung from one of these from Elona, but they came to Tyria to establish their trading line a bit better and he has a daughter and he kind of wants to protect the daughter. I think I made both, but I deleted the daughter again because I really wanted to make another character (laugh)."

I: "I see, okay, so that was kind of needing more character slots, I assume?"

P: "Yeah, how many do I have? I think 31 or 32 slots and they're very expensive. So I'm like scrolling through all the characters like: this is my main, I'm not going to delete her for sure. But then I'm like coming to the smaller characters I just made because I had an idea for this, let's say for this norn who has like this cool armour and he's cool, I was like, do I delete him or do I delete the daughter of Felis, which I also made in the game, and she's also working in the Shining Blade and I'm like I'm never going to play her because she's a mesmer, so I made screens and everything and I screened the armour if I ever wanted to put that armour combination back on and then I just deleted her and (*name withheld*) was like: she's level 80, you can't just delete her! And I was like: I just did. I didn't do much with her, only thing I did was level her to 80 with tomes, mostly, and then just give her like, full level 80 gear and then just slap that transmutation stuff on her so she could look exactly like I wanted to and I'm going to colour it and get new armour pieces, I'm like, I bet that fits very well with that character, and it's the only reason that I come back to these characters, either because it was their birthday, or it is because I found a new armour piece I really want on the characters. And on my main it's very, there's a new armour piece coming out, well, I'm going to centre the whole outfit around this now. And there was this- the few weapons that came out, these were you had to get them through the collection, with the greatsword and the torch, and me and (*name withheld*) got the greatsword and Chise is very heavily focused mostly around stars, which I think both her names mean stars or something like this. I think Chise means Little Star and Tinuril also means something star in Elvish or something, and I was like: oh that's a moon sword, oh my god. And I gave it to her and it absolutely did not fit with what she had on at the moment. She had this blue outfit, I think I gave her the Zodiac pants and it was like, it was blue and not purple and I'm like, I'm not one that likes purple that much and I really wish we could colour weapons like we could in GW1, where you could- okay, I don't like the purple tint, I'm just going to make it blue, you know, but then I'm like, everybody would just colour their weapons black and it'll be boring, some I definitely know some would because they're like: I'm going to make my character all black. That's it. And then I had to- I tried to colour it but the Zodiac pants is this zodiac part, the star part is still blue, with stars. So I had to make a complete outfit and I took armour pieces that had this, I have no idea what the real word is but that ombré and then I made the exact colour transformation that is on that cloth part of the sword, like this dark blue almost black that is going to a normal purple then a kind of ish light purple and then into white so that's why her boots are white and it's like this light purple and then it's just like dark on top. And (*name withheld*) is like: well it's not the same colour and I'm like, duh. I know, like I know exactly what I'm colouring and I'm also getting sometimes mad at people that just like slap this one colour in there, like at their armour, and that's it."

I: "Oh, I'm very guilty of that (laugh)."

P: "You know, just like make the metal gold or silver or like a different shade or something, it would totally- like, sometimes it looks good. But sometimes it just looks like ass, you know what I mean? And it's just like yeah, I get it. You're edgy (laugh). Like it's either this shadow abyss, or it's that very bright white. It's very rare that it's like this one vibrant colour like red or green or something like that. It's- I don't know why and people also like to combine the wings with that, like the black angel wings and white angel wings and it's like (sigh), you know, I was thinking about buying them and you see them, not on almost everyone, but you see them and it just looks like shit and: would my character look like that? I'm not going to buy it. I mean I have the golden wings and all of that but that's just like, I never wear them like openly somewhere, I like to use them-"

I: "(Laugh) You wear them privately?"

P: "Yes exactly, and I like to put them as gliders but not like- I also don't like the way they behave in-game, like it just feels stiff. It just feels like one of these strap on things- that sounded wrong (laugh), but you just strap them around your shoulders, and then you're like: I have wings now! Like in the theatre or something, and I'm like no, and if it looks wrong and it behaves wrong in the game, you know what I mean? When it doesn't- I have this this big conflict with that, with the backpack you got for your birthday, the sylvani backpack, where it's like this flower, and it looks really good if you stay still, but if you move, you know, the backpack moves normally, but the butterflies are just like stuck in one place and they're moving with the backpack. It's not like you leave a little- well, you don't have to leave big trail of butterflies, but just make it look better, please! I don't want to run around with it, please!"

I: "So it's- what is it exactly that's-? I can sense that there's a frustration when your almost fashion choices don't really work with you, you know, they kind of work against you. What is the result of that, so you don't enjoy it because it breaks immersion or, what is the frustration exactly?"

P: "I mean, it's sometimes breaks immersion. I don't know why I have this, like these meta human girls, they look terrible. I mean there's like this, you know, medium armour meta girl and the light armour meta girl. It's like, this, I think it was the first armour piece you get, the chest- not the chest, the legs was just like this very short skirt. And then you pick the T3 armour of humans, and then you just pick like, either the first armour set you get, the legs, or you just pick like, flat shoes, you know what I mean? Just like simple things. And I'm like, well if I want to look like an everyday girl, I'm just going to go outside and look at people, you know, some people like it, and then they have like either the hipster glasses or the bunny ears, both of like medium armour and light armour, or something else just like this, and it just doesn't fit. You know, I look at the character, I'm like: oh alright, you're another meta girl, I suppose."

I: "So it feels almost uninspired?"

P: "Yes. I'm just looking at them. It's just- they just get it out of the factory, the character, you know what I mean? I like looking at other characters and I'm like, well, that's an interesting combination of something, right? Or the character's interesting or like the way they colour the armour or something, or just like, what the character represents if you get like this edge lord characters, it's either going to be like this one dude or girl that's completely dressed in black and it has like this

black what's it called, the infusion, and you just don't see anything anymore basically, or it's like this hand-picked outfit they have with the weapon that fits and maybe they have a fitting name as well, you know, and it's like, that's very interesting. You know, I just like looking at other characters, looking at other people in this world and you see like one of these let's say girl that look like all the other girls, they're not that interesting at first glance. You know what I mean? It's just like another one of those. I'm just going to look at someone else, you know. I just I really love sitting somewhere and just people-watch you know what I mean? The way they behave or the like standing or walking or talking or something like that. I just like to look- I don't see it as creepy, I'm not like staring at them for five hours, I'm just looking over them and notice things and then just like go to another character almost, another person, yes."

I: "So, if you were- so in terms of- yeah, we established that you like looking at them, does the way they look determine whether you actually speak to these people or befriend them? So if you like a character a lot, are you more likely to talk to that person than someone that's just playing a meta girl?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Yes?"

P: "Yes. Mhm. I also have like this, it goes a little bit easier to talk to them and not like to stereotype them, because most meta girls are like these typical gamer girls, or just dudes, that like looking at the character and just gave them the shortest skirt, you know."

I: "I wonder why you did that (laugh)."

P: "Exactly (laugh), I mean if there was an option where you could wear this like not only the invisible slippers, where everything is invisible, they would wear it. They would farm it. They would 100% get it, you know, and I'm like looking at these invisible slippers, and I'm like: I wish I could have them, I have an idea for a character (laugh), oh, man."

I: "I see. Okay, have another sip because I have another 25 questions for you (laugh)."

P: "Was this the first one, was it?"

I: "Yes (laugh)."

P: "I think we're going to be here for a long time. We already got an hour, you know (laugh)."

I: "As long as you are okay with that, otherwise we can do a part two if you need to go, but could you tell me how long you've played GW2?"

P: "I played it in the closed Beta. I think I was invited to the last closed one. And I just looked into it and I was like, got to wait for the open one, you know, and played the open Beta, I think a few of them, not all of them and I also made friends in the Beta, that were also- I think back then you had the choice of like in World of Warcraft where you could choose like this normal server or this Role Play server, and I think GW2 had this in the closed beta as well. They wanted to implement it and I was in one of those because I really- if I catch some dudes or something role-playing, I'm not like: oh shit, they're role-playing. I'm like, first I'm going to just take a look as careful as possible, you know, you don't want to break that immersion by just like standing there and looking at them. It's just like, hiding behind something and then just turning the camera and looking at them, but I'm not like, I'm reading a bit what's happening, but I'm not like standing there and

waiting for them for like 5 hours to complete the role play and then leave, I'm just like, oh, okay, That's what it's about. Like just as you would like walk past someone and they talking with someone else and you're just listening into it just like for a few words and you're like, okay, they're talking about this or this and that is happening to them, but you're not like, I'm going to just creepily lurk around the corner and listen to them what they say, you know."

I: "So do you then judge the quality? Whether it's actually well-written and well-acted out or not?"

P: "It depends, there are a few role players that are like very edgy. You know what I mean, these edgy role players like: I'm so sad and I want to kill everyone in the game, and I'm like, I'm playing a very insane murderer, you know, like if it's not played well, you can play these well, but mostly they're like these edgy types that are like: I'm going to kill you, and then they become friends. It's like, one of these things where like: I thought you wanted to kill- what's happening? I don't get it, like if you say you want to do something and then you just don't act on it, it's just like this (sigh). My character is very silent and doesn't speak and when you role play with them, it's just like this, they're just talking all the time. And I'm like, I thought they didn't talk that much?"

I: "Yeah, they're not really true to the identity that they created."

P: "Yes."

I: "So how often do you play?"

P: "GW2? Right now, not at all. I'm just coming online for like, oh there's new armour or there's new items. I'm just looking over them, like would they look good on any characters. Do I have any ideas, no? Well then I'm going to leave again or if there's like a story update or something that I'm interested in. Well, it's very rare that I just come online like, hey, I didn't play this game in a long time, I'm going to play it, no. I'm just looking through all the characters, running around looking at the characters themselves placing them somewhere making a few screenshots and that's it."

I: "Yeah. Okay. So you have I guess you can say other forms, other games or DND that kind of fulfil almost the game play aspect that you enjoy about GW2?"

P: "Yes. I played it a lot back when I had fun at playing it, but it just becomes like this, it just becomes the same thing over and over again. If you make a new character, you're just going to explore the same things over and over again. I know the first human map right outside of Divinity's Reach. I know I could explore it blindly, I think, I could be blind and still explore it and I know exactly what's missing if I'm looking at like, I'm missing a point of Interest. Oh, it's this one over there. And if I do it on like another map, I'm not that often on I'm like where the fuck is it? What's happening? Where am I? You're mostly just stuck with the starter maps and like after a while, like after the 30th character you make and you run through it with them. It just becomes this chore, you know what I mean? It's just a chore and I was just like, I wish there was an option or something where I could just make a level 80 character just for role playing reasons, you know? And there's like a fully unlocked wardrobe and fully unlocked colours and all of that and you don't have to pay for the exclusive hairstyles and for the colours and all of this and I wish you could just make this character and make it look like exactly like you wanted to. I'm looking at armour pieces that you can unlock with collections, like these big collections from Path of Fire, and I'm like, I really want

them because they look good, but I don't want to spend time in that game anymore. I just want them on my character, that's it. I'm not using the stats or anything, I just want to have the skin, and if you could buy the skins with something, I would totally do it. I would, I would sell my soul for some of these skins (laugh)."

I: "I see. Okay. So we're actually now moving into the more role play questions. So I'm interested to just narrow down how you would answer to these. So how much do you identify with your character, or main characters, and what happens to him or her?"

P: "Well I do like to think about my own stuff, the main story- I don't know. I'm like, my character wouldn't say that. Like in the story mission or something, my character wouldn't do that, my character wouldn't say that. It's just like this cookie cutter hero they have as the commander. And it's just like every other hero you have in any other RPGs is like this: I'm going to help everyone and I'm going to do this. I mean that's okay, and that's nice. I mean, it's nice helping other people, but it's like this typical-."

I: "There's not much depth."

P: "Exactly, I mean, well, I think that the problem is the main story they have and they wanted to implement these charisma and the thing you chose at the beginning when you make a character the three traits or something and I think back in the day you still had a little bar for that. Like you have very high charisma, because you picked a lot of these choices and you had like a few words or something like, very charismatic, like when you have two of these traits kind of levelled up but other one is like a zero, you had like a mix of it. It's like- I can't remember. I think, I really played it only in German and it was nice to have these, know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah. It was more customisable, maybe?"

P: "I think so, yes, and I'm kind of glad they brought it back in Path of Fire. I think they talked about it a lot and also with the game designer and someone that makes the stories and all of this, and they asked, why isn't it used anymore? It was used in the main story and then they just dropped it. It doesn't exist anymore. And in Heart of Thorns, was it? I don't even remember the DLC name, there was no sign of this. There was no like, how do you answer to an NPC? Are you going to be charismatic to them are you going to be like, come on, just do it, you know straight forward to them. Are you going to try and calm them, it's just like, okay you have to do this and this when you're telling a character, for example, what to do, an NPC what to do, just like, do it. I'm like oh, no, I mean, well you had to, like when I'm playing through the- and I'm thinking about it. I'm not really playing it, I've tried it once and I'm like I'm not going to play it again, like for the whole DLC, the whole first DLC was not enjoyable for me, and I don't know why. It also the maps and then it was just like (sigh), you're under constant stress and you're supposed to be, it's logical for you to be under constant stress, like imagine you have like this ticking time-bomb of an elder dragon that wants to destroy the- that eats the ley energies and all of that shit. It is it is stressful. I'm like, as a player, I'm like, I don't want to be stressed, you know. Stress is okay and if you do it right, it feels okay, but I'm not- (*name withheld*) said to me when I said I wanted to have Nevermore, he's was like: you have to play all the HoT maps, and I'm like, well, I'm not going to do that, fuck this legendary then. I mean, I really wanted it and I wanted a few others of this

collection, of this legendary collection, and I'm like, they're saying you have to do this. And I'm like, I'm out. Sorry. Sorry, dude. I am out. This is nothing for me. You lost me. I would have done like something. But this is like, no. These maps, no. Also the way they're structured especially the one with the 1 million underground maps under the others and I'm like, oh my fucking god, what? Who made these?!"

I: "Yes, yes, the difference is that they now have levels, you know, yeah. Yeah, they're much more complex and difficult to navigate."

P: "Yes, and then PoF came out and I was like, is this going to be the same? And I loved it so much, it was- like you could just stand somewhere and be safe, you know? You're going to stand in a city and your safe, do that in Tarir, you're not safe. You're not safe at all! I mean, it's okay, you have like- but just make this one safe haven in a map that's not being fucking attacked. Like there's a meta, there's a fucking meta in the big city, in the big Golden City. I just want to look at it and I really like the place because for once you're not getting attacked and raped by fucking pocket raptors, you're like: oh man, I can chill, oh look there's something underground, you know, and then you try to get up the city itself like on the big golden things. And then you just walk outside and you just get just insta killed, you get sniped by one of these fucking mordrem. You can't even dodge it. What the fuck is this shit?!"

I: "Okay, so it's a disconnect between I suppose individual goals in the game and game enjoyment?"

P: "Yes."

I: "And the difficulty of the expansion, I assume you can say?"

P: "Well, it wasn't difficult, but it just felt..."

I: "Stressful."

P: "Yes. It felt like another game. It felt like another game. I know they were trying something else and they were trying to go with this story. But I was like (sigh)."

I: "There was a disconnect?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, so next one is interesting. Would you become your character if you could?"

P: "Depends which one (laugh). I would totally slip into the role of Felis, my necromancer. I would try to not get into like being Chise. Because I think she had a very stressful life. When they first got the child, the first one, they didn't have enough money. She still worked at The Priory, the Durmand Priory, and she had to take care of the child, so she had to give the child away to someone to look after it while she's at work and they didn't have enough money and she's like, well, I'm just going to do something then. I mean she had connections to a niece and she was like, maybe I can do something for the crown or something to get money, and I think we role played that and (*name withheld*)'s character, it's basically (*name withheld*), he is the character, and he was like, no, I'm going to look for something else. He worked for the blood Legion then, after The Priory he worked for the blood Legion he was something there, I can't remember anymore. He's like, no, I'm going to look for something else additionally to get more money and shit like that and I'm like, I wouldn't want to be in her position right now, and also, with the other

child and Felis had this easy life, you know what I mean? Because it's a rich family and (*name withheld*)'s ranger also came from a rich family. We took the aristocratic option in the character creation and this kind of led to it. Well, any others, maybe a sylvari, one of my sylvaris, because they kind of seem always so cheerful and happy."

I: "Yes, they're happy aren't they?"

P: "Yes, and the other ones are like, oh no, life is so bad. The gods are so mean to us and then sylvaris are like, wow, a flower! They pick it and bring it to the Grove and show it to the Mother tree, like look, a flower I found! And she's like, that's very nice. You know, it's like, you can't do that with humans. Try to do that with the queen, you get kicked out."

I: "Yeah, that's true. So do your characters have personalities and characteristics that you would like to have yourself, or do they mirror you in some kind of way?"

P: "I really would like to have the personality trait of Felis, the not giving a fuck. She sometimes has this ability, where she's like, I don't care, I'm going to do it, or like, I'm not going to do it, or I'm going to ignore it, or something. I'm just like, I can't ignore this and she would totally be like: What? I don't even know what you're talking about. I already forgot it."

I: "Yeah, I see, so very decisive, almost."

P: "Yes. And other character traits and other characters I have where I'm like, man, I really wish I had those, I'm going to implement them. It's easier to role-play them than to act them, like to have them in real life. I don't know why, it's just easier to role-play, there are no... what is it called? Shit, I forgot the word for it. I have it on the tip of my tongue. Shit. You don't regret doing something. Like, if it's role-play it's just role-play."

I: "Yeah, so there's no consequences."

P: "Yes. Exactly. That was the word I was looking for (laugh)."

I: "Excellent."

P: "There's no consequences if it's like, well, it happens and it's not real, you know, maybe it's shit for the characters at this time, but like it's not real. They will get over it, done. But in real life, it's not so easy if you fucked up, you fucked up."

I: "Yeah, there are real consequences."

P: "Yes, you can already feel this tell-tale thing where it pops up in the upper left corner saying "this will have consequences", and I'm like, oh my fucking God. What did I just say?"

I: "Yeah, I think there's a reason why people, you know, save the game before big dialogues and when they see the "they'll remember this" they'll go back and change it because of the consequences, right?"

P: "Yes, also, when you talk to people it's like, you say something wrong and you can see this minus thing that pops up in The Sims over a person's head when someone says something wrong to them and they don't like it. It's just like this big red minus showing up where it's like decreasing the friendship value. I'm like, oh my God, I can see it in my head, I can see the big red minus when you really say something like Saddam shit they don't want to know, if you're fangirling over something they have no idea what you're talking about, it's just like this, oh, no, what did I say? Shit."

I: "I see. I see. Okay, I think that explains it very well. It kind of clears it up. So this next one I'm almost afraid to ask. How long do you usually spend customising your character?"

P: "Oh my fucking god."

I: "During character creation or afterwards."

P: "It depends if I already have, like, the daughter of Chise or the daughter of Felis, I have like the facial structure in my head, kind of what they would look like, not exactly, or like they would totally have, like Chise's daughter has white hair and Felis's daughter has black hair because both of them have black hair. So it's either like a dark brown or red, or a black and it's going to be black. And if I'm just having this idea, I really want to have, I can spend like almost an hour in the character creator where I'm like: no, I don't like this colour. And I'll go back, especially with sylvaris, these are the worst to create because you're like, shit, I like these colours, oh man these other colours look great too, shit, you know."

I: "Yes, a lot of good choices."

P: "Yes, and you're like, I can't make a character with all of these things, it doesn't work. And you know, I wish they had like this season thing in-game where it is like actual spring and summer and autumn and something, like you don't have to make it go fast or really slow, just like a nice pace, and I would love it if sylvari had these different kind of looks, like in summer they're very vibrant like if they're not black or white, and then flowers and petals and all of this showing and leaves, I mean, and if you have like one of these twig sylvaris and just like bit of leaves showing and then in Autumn they get a bit, they lose the colour, but they get a bit gold, yellow, orange, red, and in winter they just lose the flowers and the leaves and everything and they get like this very greyish tone and in spring it just comes back to life. It would feel very immersive and great. I'm trying to remember what game- there was a game that had this but I can't remember which one it was. Oh it was Pokémon (laugh). It was black and white, they had this season thing and the seasons changed, they were looking, well, the game was looking at the internal clock of the system you were playing on, the game system. And the seasons would change every month. So may was spring, April was summer and so on, and just continued and there was this one Pokémon they had and it was a deer, and these big antlers would look different, it was a plant Pokémon and they would look different in the different seasons, so in spring they would have like these cherry leaves, cherry blossoms on their antlers, in summer they had like this big leaves just hanging down on their body and in Autumn they just became like yellow and red, and in the winter it was all gone and they had like this big white fur around their necks and something like that, and it looked very nice and I'm like, I'm missing that in some games. And all this where it changes and you character changes with it. It's just something normal, seasons are normal, you know, it's not like this one season they're stuck with and I think, well, they're trying to do it with different maps. Like the..."

I: "Yeah, I guess you always have snow in certain maps and always desert in others."

P: "Yes, exactly. Yeah. Or like Ascalon is just this one autumn forest. Divinity's Reach and all the human maps are spring or really summer. Like it's spring, it's nice, I wish they also had this weather system that wasn't dependent on where exactly you are in the map or if there's a meta

event it just starts raining (laugh), and I imagine the NPCs that live there are like: oh shit another meta event again, it's raining. Like hey, in 15 minutes is this meta event, can you bring me bring the clothing in I hanged up outside to dry? Before it gets wet again (laugh). Sometimes it's just doesn't-

I: "It's not very convenient to live there."

P: "(Laugh) Yeah, they just know already (laugh). They're like, oh not this again. I's like – it feels a bit like the NPCs and all of this, it feels a bit dead, in my opinion. Because it's just like, well, they're here and they get sometimes attacked. That's it. Sometimes you can talk to them, but no one does it. If it's just like this- I know and I think it was in the first human map, there's like, up on like a little hill, there's Ranger NPC sitting with her pet and she's just sitting there, you can talk to her and she's like saying: Well, you should take a break too, and it's nice, and if you actually sit next to her you get a buff for ten minutes, like a regeneration buff. It's actually nice. There are a few of these in the normal maps and the main maps they have. Well, not in the DLC maps, I didn't see it again. But like also the- if you kneel in front of shrines or like the old statues of the Gods, the avatars come out sometimes or the ghosts of the animals, the spirit animals gets- no, I think- no, no, no, you get a buff if you kneel in front of certain spirit animal totems or something? And I think that's very nice, not all people do that, you know, it's just like, oh, there's a statue, I'm going to kneel in front of it. No, you don't, if you're really playing it and exploring it you're just looking like it like, hm, cool, and you just go. There's just secrets like this, it's like, yeah I want to know what's happening if I talk to this spectral thing of Grenth, I want to know what he's saying, he sounds dope! (Laugh). And it was actually kind of nice, and they had this back in the day of GW1 as well, where there was this extra instance if you were going outside of a city and they had these resurrection shrines. And there were like one specific God, of Grenth or Dwayna or something, and if you had, I don't know what it was called, well, they had like this PVP event where you had to play in the Hall of Heroes, and if your guild won, they would like add one bonus to that, and like after a certain amount of bonus points the shrines would activate and like for example the shrine of Dwayna was like this one angelic figure, they were just stone pieces if you didn't have the bonus points, it was just stone pieces laying on the floor, and if the bonus, when you had the- I really don't know what it was called, I would have to look it up, but if you had the bonus it just would pick itself up and float and you would see the actual statue."

I: "Yeah, so it would start building?"

P: "Yes, or like the Melandru thing, it was just this stone tree if you had no bonus, but if you had the bonus, it would just become this real tree and there was like a little river flowing, adding all the buffs and the statue would start burning, you know, something like, it doesn't make a difference in the game, but it looks cool and it looks nice and if you would kneel in front of those, the avatar of the gods would show up and they would give you bonuses for a small amount of gold. It's like Dwayna had a bonus of like attributes of like for air elementalists or healers or something like that. And it depends on which God you were like praying to or something like that, you get different bonuses. It would be like, I know the gods in GW2 are not there anymore. But you still got these speed boosts in Divinity's Reach if you talk to one of those priests and I'm like,

how exactly are they giving you them? (Laugh). The gods don't exist anymore, and I was shocked when the living story came out with Balthazar and I was like, what?! Because it was clearly stated in the beginning when you start the game, the gods have left Tyria. They are not there anymore, you know what I mean? The priests are there and they still pray to it and they made the world, but it's not like they could look at the world or something. I don't know what happened. It was just like they left the world, like where did they go, are they coming back or something? And then it was just like, Balthazar just shows up, just kicks in the door and is like: what's up fuckers? I want to destroy the world! (Laugh). Just like, the god of war that actually swore to protect humans, it's just like, I'm going to- I don't know, what did he want to do? I think he wanted to kill the Elder Dragon."

I: "Yeah and absorb the energy, I think, or magic."

P: "Yes and I'm like, something happened to him, and I still want to know what exactly happened because the same thing happened with Abaddon, where he became increasingly interested in power, and absorbing things and then in GW1 you kill Abaddon when he comes back and Kormir takes up the energy and becomes this new God, like the same thing Aurene did with the energy, with part of the energy of Balthazar, because you never killed a god, and I think this was very epic, like not this, well, we're going to try to fix Balthazar so he's going to be nice again. And I was like, this is big dick energy (laugh), you're sitting around with friends and you're like, well, what did you do? Well, I killed two elder dragons and I killed the god of war. You know, nowhere in no MMO you're doing this, you're not going to do this. And that's something I think is great about guild wars, like these things that are not that explored. I mean, there's a lot of stereotypical fantasy story things in the game. In the story and something, but there's also a few twists that are pretty nice, which like the elder dragons they seem like the bad guys, but they're just something ancient and they're not really trying to be bad, they are not inherently bad. They just wake up after a certain amount of magic, I think it was, magic energy is spilled and they just absorb this energy and they destroy everything with it and they absorb it, and then they just go back to sleep until this limit is reached again. It's just like this cycle. It's too much, then it's like I don't know how to explain it, the cycle of rebirth. It's just too much, it's too powerful. It's like you can see like with our world at the moment, it's like at its peak. And someday something is going to happen that just sets us back again. And now we just have to continue to rebuild it. You know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah, I get you."

P: "I guess it's just like these small things- well, it's not small if it's a fucking Elder Dragon, but it's just a cycle of destroying and rebirth and it's just this- it just repeats, which is kind of nice, I think (laugh). Well, I'm fangirling a bit too much sometimes."

I: "No, no, it's good. It's good. I mean this is why we're here, it's to get insight into how someone who knows about these things think and reason around it, so it's really good. We've kind of touched on a lot of these but I I'm going to ask them anyway just to get like a decisive answer so that I don't interpret. So, how much do you enjoy exploring the world just for the sake of exploring it? We touched on this a little bit."

P: "Well, it depends, like I said, these- if it's new I like to look at it. I like to explore it. I'm not like, I have to look at this point of interest. I'm not exploring the map, you know what I mean? The *map* map. I'm just looking around, like doing the story meanwhile I'm doing other things and I'm just like, wow, where does this lead, and I'm just going to follow it, you know, curiosity. And one day I think (*name withheld*) showed me this sand portal thing where it leads to this flying platform with a chest and if you are on it at night, you can see like the constellations of other platforms, I would have to look it up. It was in PoF and I didn't know it existed. You know, you just usually come up here and go through all the portals to get the chest."

I: "Yeah, but then at night it kind of illuminates."

P: "It's amazing and it looks good. I would have to look it up where it was, or what it was, I think you would recognise it. I think?"

I: "Possibly, I've seen something like that with the invisible sand pathways."

P: "Yes, exactly! That's it."

I: "Where they become visible at night. Yeah."

P: "Yes. I think they were also visible during day."

I: "Yeah, in certain lights, probably."

P: "Yeah, but if you're like on this platform and you just looking, like if you, for example if you just get up to the chest if it's day in the map and you just AFK there for a while and it's getting dark and you just come back to the PC and you just see this thing and it just looks amazing. It's like very breath-taking. It's like very rare that you're in a game and you're like, WOW. You know, like if it's not like story related or anything, if it's just the map, if it's just something that you see, and it's just, wow, it's like awesome, and in Skyrim or in other games, like when you just go somewhere, and you see this amazing- like if the lights just hit it right or just- I have no idea how to explain it."

I: "No, I get you."

P: "It just looks nice and it's like I want to be there. You know, I really would want to be there and see this with my own eyes."

I: "Yeah, so it's almost like you have these little Easter eggs of really inspired design in the game."

P: "Yes, and I'm like, I'm always seeing those and I'm like, I'm going to implement this in my own stories."

I: "Yeah, like inspiration."

P: "Yes, exactly. And it's like, it just looks good. Sometimes if it's like, if it looks very good and you're like on the verge of tears because it's like so breath-taking and it's very nice and pretty, you know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah. So there's an emotional response?"

P: "Sometimes, like if it's like- I have no idea."

I: "Well, I suppose art does that, right, you know. The same way art elicits a reaction out of people."

P: "Well, if you're going to see it that way, games are a piece of art, basically, it's like this mind of multiple hundreds and thousands of people that were trying to create this one artwork and it's just like ever-growing, it's not stopping, it's not like okay, we're done. This art work is done. It's like

painting a picture and you're like doing the finishing touches and all of this and then you just sign it and it's done. And like with some games, well some games is like, one day it's going to be done, but a game like an MMO or something, just take World of Warcraft, for example.”

I: “It's like a living picture, you know.”

P: “Exactly. It's like- GW2 is the same, just look at Lion's Arch, there was this original Lion's Arch and then in Halloween the fucking mad king just fucking exploded the lion statue (laugh), he just let it explode and then I think you had to put a bit of gold you could put a bit of gold in it and they wanted to rebuild it. And then Lion's Arch gets attacked. And it's destroyed, like it was- I don't know how long it was destroyed. I think one or two years, and then it was just rebuilt like in this very pretty- it looks pretty, I don't think it's fitting but it's just something new, it gets destroyed and it gets a rebirth. It doesn't have to be the same thing. Now I have to remember the video of that Spanish dude telling his story, he was laughing so crazy, do you know which one I mean?”

I: “Yeah I know which one you mean.”

P: “And then they just gave it the sub-titles of the dude that just made the models for these buildings, it was very funny.

I: “I have to look that up, I think I'd enjoy that.”

P: “It's very funny (laugh).”

I: “So, how important is then leveling up your character as fast as possible. Is that something you care about?”

P: “No. I would have to tell you about the story, how long it took me to get my main to level 80. It took me two years to get her to level 80 because I was not interested (*name withheld*) was like: okay we're going to play these characters together. I was like yeah sure, we're going to do this together. And at one point I was just like, nah, I'm just going to do something else. I was still playing it. You know what I mean? It's not like I was just setting it aside and playing something else, you know.”

I: “You weren't actively leveling it, you know? It was more like a-”

P: “I was playing something else and I was exploring and stuff like that and I'm just- armours, man I really like these armours, you know? And he was like level 80 for a long time and I was like, level 50 and it was very slow and I really don't like the natural levelling up, it just takes a tonne of time, if you don't have boosters, if you don't have the boosters and all the other shit that gives you the bonus experience. I know I did with the alternate universe Felis on my account, that's an elemental. I did level her all by myself, no tomes or anything and I had like the birthday boost and like this other birthday boost, you could stack them. And like they would give like double XP not just like this one birthday thing or two and then extra XP things. And it took me a week to level her to level 80 I was like, okay, that was a nice journey (laugh), it was a nice journey, I'm not going to do it again. And I think I also levelled her a bit with the jobs, like cook and the jeweller and that.”

I: “Yeah, the professions.”

P: “Professions, jobs, they're just jobs, in German they're actually called jobs, like not jobs, but like the German word for it, that's why I said jobs, because that's what they basically are. Do you

want to become a cook? It's a part-time job your character takes, just imagine (laugh). I'm a cook in the Lion's Arch restaurant. Come on, everyone, does that if they don't have money (laugh)."

I: "So, a similar note I suppose, how important is knowing as much about the game mechanics and game rules as possible?"

P: "I don't really care about this. This is like, I remember I was playing the necromancer, the patch came out and everything I had like for this, they were just like doing no damage anymore and I will be just like actively- I think it was when HoT came out and the greatsword thing came out and was like, what could I do? Like, I really wanted to have a staff because of the range you have. And I was like unlocking all of the abilities and I was looking at them. I had like, I put them to the side and I read every single little thing, you know, I was like, okay, I want to have a staff so I have to look what's good for staff. And then I just read something about these wells, and I really like the wells now because if you stand in it with the greatsword and you- I put usually two wells down and you just become this undying force (laugh), you just don't die because I have this ability that if you're standing inside of a well and you attack someone, you get part of the damage as health back. Well, additionally to the damage and condition it does to the enemy. Well, that's why I use the wells with the greatsword and if other like melee players are in there I'm just going to throw it in even if I have the staff because I know they're standing inside of it. I don't know if it heals my team (laugh) I don't need to know, I'm just going to place it there. It's like a bit of damage, it's fine."

I: "It's more about what you enjoy rather than anything else."

P: "Yes. That's why I don't like to play the Meta because it's like memorising which spells you have to press and all, like I just want to play whatever I want okay, please leave me alone with this. If it doesn't work, I'm going to have to come up with something else, you know."

I: "Yeah, I get you. So, how often do you play so you can avoid real life for some time or just escape and just take a break from real life for a while?"

P: "Oh, I'm doing that all the time (laugh). Not with GW2, not anymore. I did this a lot, like, I'm doing it a lot when I get a new game. And it's like completely new. And I know when Stardew Valley came out, I played this- it was a very stressful time for me, and I started this game and I kid you not, I played it for forty-two hours straight. I made food and I just came back and I played it, and it was- it's just- it's not like it's very anticipating or something, it's just like- do you know the game?"

I: "I haven't played it but I know about it, yeah. I think I know what the- I've seen gameplay of it."

P: "It's so chill, it was also- the story is basically you are working in this terrible job, which keeps you like almost fourteen or fifteen hours in the office, and it's like this- oh yeah, and you're like this long time in the office, and you're really dragged down already, you know. And then you visit your dying grandpa and I know I streamed it. I bought it and I was like, should I stream it on Twitch? Because I was kind of active back then and I was like, you know, fuck it. I'm just going to do it. I have no idea what this game is like, I like the graphics a lot because I'm a big fan of these RPG Maker games and it had this RPG Maker graphics, I was like ah, what? I was just buying it, downloading and as soon as the download was done, I was streaming it. And I remember, like I

have this very deep connection with my grandpa, and I know it was like in-game and your grandpa was dying and he gave you this letter, and he said when you really don't know what to do anymore, right, you just open the letter. And then he just died and it was very sad music and I know when I streamed it, I was almost about to cry, I was like, crap, it was sad, but it's not like real life, it wasn't like this real life graphics like this- all of the new games have, it's pixels."

I: "Yeah, but it's about the story."

P: "The story and music and everything and like the way you connected, I think if I wouldn't have like this connection, the connection with my grandpa, I would have just said: Yeah thanks, you know, but this way it's like, aaah, it just felt- it was just like this heart-warming thing. Just this feeling and the: oh yeah, he cares about me, and gives me this on his death bed and then you see like, you're back in the office again. It's like the intro, and you're like really worn out, and you just, you see as the character just opens a little cupboard on the office desk and the letter is in there. And you can just actively click it to open it, you know, like what would happen if it would just ignore it? Right, and it's just like- it's not going to happen, the game just waits for you to click it, but it's like this, you have to actively click the thing. That's something-."

I: "Yeah, it's in your hands."

P: "Yes. Exactly. And you just open the letter and it's like, if you're feeling very worn out and you don't know what to do anymore you need a time out and he just inherits you his little house and his farm in Stardew Valley, and then you go there and you're going to live there and you just- first of all you need to clean, all of this like, this big space, this big farm space, and it feels like cleaning up your life. You know what I mean? It's like this very big space you have, and you have to cut down the trees and you have to pick up the stones and like with the pickaxe and stuff like that, and there's like a few stones and trees you can't break yet because your items are not good enough and it's not like, you can't cut it because it's bad enough, because I think it has a bit of a deeper meaning, not only because of the items they drop, the higher quality items but it's like, there's a lot of stuff in your life, that you can't deal with at the moment. And after sometime after you basically upgraded yourself, you can finally deal with it, and you just have to clean the thing then you just start building. Well, you're just planting some stuff, you can plant different things, it's not like, where that you have some turnips and stuff. Well, it's the beginning, parsnips and turnips, but you can like, depends on the season, you can put flowers there. You could just basically have just animals or just crops or just have fruit trees or something."

I: "It sounds in a way incredibly therapeutic, like it's good for the soul."

P: "It does, and it did! It was very nice and the music was soothing, and it like had this system. It was a very small town and they had like a few NPCs and you can build friendships with them. There were like different things they liked and they disliked like items you can give them, you can give them an item two times in a week and after that they are not going to take any items anymore. And if you give the wrong item, well, you're not going to let the friendship grow, you know, it just slowly grows by talking to them and every time you talk to them they have something new to say, it's just like little things, there's like this dude, I actually married, you can marry in-game, an NPC, and he was just- he seemed like an emo, and I remember I really wanted to date him and he liked

a few gems and I know for a reason he hated eggs. Absolutely. It didn't matter which ones, they were like different kind of eggs. But he also loved green beans, just raw green beans and you would just give him this one green bean and he would like it, and I know I remember I was staying in- you can't enter a room of someone if you didn't reach that particular level of friendship, and I didn't have this particular level of friendship. And he's one of these guys that stays indoors all the time and doesn't leave his room. And I know I was getting mad at him because he didn't leave his room and I was standing in front of the store with the green bean above my head and I waited for the whole day until he moved out of his room. And as soon as he opened the door, which is like very comedic, he was on the computer the whole day, I'm not kidding you, he was on the computer and then he stood up and I guess they have like this internal clock, the NPCs, and like, hey, it's going to be dinner time soon, you know, it's going to be evening and they going to have dinner, and then he just stood up and went to the door and he had like this, you know the sound SpongeBob makes when he walks, like these squeaks, NPCs have this, like the small squeak and you would just hear a squeak squeak squeak squeak and the door opens and he just would stand right in front of me because NPCs cannot pass you if you stand in their way, they would just walk, like stand in front of you and can't move until they're getting annoyed and they just walk like straight through you, but it looks very funny to me. I think I made a clip of that. I was streaming at the time and then he would just like open the door and right in front of his door is this, like this crazy farmer lady that just moved in a few months ago with a green bean in her hands and just gives it to you and just walks out of the house (laugh). I was waiting the entire day to give him this stupid ass bean, and I think it happened a few times because he only gets out at night to smoke. Like he's walking actually outside of the house. Like at 10pm or something and he takes a smoke for an hour and then he just goes back in, and on Fridays he meets with the other young people in the town and they go and meet up in the tavern. But it's like if you have friendship with these people they're just going to say nice things and they're going to send you letters and there's like recipes or they give you items, like this grandpa, it's like this really (sigh) if you would start the game you would absolutely hate him because he's just grumpy and he doesn't like anyone, you know, but if you're going to know him better, all of them have like these deep, rich backstories. And he would like- he was in a wheelchair, so he was pissed all the time. The doctors would like say, well you have to do something- you have to move a bit, you have to go outside, and he was like, no I don't want to, and he was just like yeah, he would send you letters like, yeah, I was cleaning up the backyard a bit and I found a few building materials, maybe you can do something with that, or the grandmother sends you her recipes of the cookies she made, you know, it was very nice, like reading these letters and you actually read the letters, it's not like you're skipping through all of them and get all the items and recipes, because they all have something else to say. And it's like, if you get also to a specific point of friendship, they start having cutscenes, like the story cutscenes. And I remember there's like this one homeless person. Like this is basically I think it was everyone's first friend because it didn't matter what you gave to him, you know, he was happy and grateful, especially if it was food, and he would just like, at first he would be very shy and he's like, are you going to mock me or something, and then after while he says, yeah,

the young people were here again to throw stones at my tent in the night, you know, he just tells you something a little bit heart-breaking and then I think his first friendship event I think they are called, it's just like, if you're going into town at night, you just get teleported to a specific point. And I know you were like walking behind the tavern. And you saw like how he was coming down the road, the homeless person, and digging through the trash of the tavern trying to find something to eat, right. And he was trying to oh- no, no, no, first he would try digging through the trash of the dude with the wheelchair, and he came out like, Linus, his name was Linus, the homeless person, and he'd just hide very quickly and you would just come by and the guy in the wheelchair would be like, these damn raccoons, can you take care of them? You're like, yeah sure, or you can say: it was this homeless person. You have actual dialogue where you can choose what to say and you get a plus or minus depending on what you're saying on the friendship. And then he just goes back and Linus is like, yeah, I'm sorry. I'm not going to do it again. I'm going to leave the trash alone. And then he's just walking to the next trash bin of the tavern and you see the tavern, the dude that owns the tavern comes out and Linus can't hide like in time, and he just gets surprised by it and he's like, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm going to go, I'm not going to do it again. I don't want any trouble, and you see the tavern dude he's like, don't worry, like, come in. I'm going to give you something real to eat and not like the trash, like the rest of the trash I'm just throwing away. I was just- it just felt good. There's also backstories where characters that you don't like at all and you just see them and it's just tragic and sad and you see what they become because of that, and it's just- I don't know, the game- if I really want to chill I'm playing this game, because everything it's just chill, you just do your daily chores, it's like, waking up, doing your daily chores and then you're just going to do the rest of the day what you want, right? It's like in real life too, well in the game you just wake up, you water your crops, you feed your livestock and all of this shit, then you can do whatever you want. You can go fishing. You can go foraging, you can talk with NPCs. You can give them presents. You can go to the mines and kill some monsters, you know, it's like these endless things you can do. And it's like not pressured, like you have to do this to continue, and I remember at the farm of the grandfather there was a shrine in the upper left corner, and there was a letter from the grandpa, like another letter or like just a piece of paper that he just wrote something on and he was like, yeah, I will come back and, like, I will come back, something like that, I don't know what exactly it was, but it was basically it said like, I will come back and just judge you by what you've done, like what you... not like what you've done, like you did bad, but like this, what you reached, which goals did you reach, I'm going to judge your progress, and I think the first day of the year three. This skull just pops up and it's like, it's just listing all the things you did in-game like the friendship with these people and like buildings like crops and other things like taking care of the livestock. And how far are you in the mines, are you in the extra forest yet or something, and he just gives you like encouragement and it's like yeah, that's very nice. And if you didn't, he, I think there was like, you had to reach a few points, where he's like, yeah, that's very good. And he gives you like a bonus. It's just something small and it felt so good because I know the first day I was just looking through the farm and everything and I just found this and I read something about three years and then my mouse miss clicked and the paper went away,

and I have no idea what it said, you know, it was just like about something three years and I was like, what's it going to be in three years, I'm afraid, cuz you see this shrine and you're like what the fuck did my grandpa do? What is going on, did he sacrifice chickens? Am I supposed to do that too, you know? Then I just woke up at the third year and like, the first day of the third year and it just was the ghost of the grandpa, you see his sleeping hat, you know, I was just like: oh grandpa! (Laugh) You know, I talked to him, I was streaming, you know, I was trying also to entertain the people but also like, grandpa you will not believe what I did, you know, I just talked to him. I was like so happy and then he just said yeah, I'm very proud of you. I think I reached almost everything by year three and he was like, yeah, very proud of you. If you didn't reach anything he would just come back after a year, you know, I think that they had like this thing where he would be very angry if you didn't do anything but they fixed it, they were like: we think the grandpa was a bit too angry. So we fixed him to be like a bit more gentle or something."

I: "Just disappointed."

P: "I'm disappointed, go back to work, what the fuck (laugh). But I was so happy, like, you know, I was like, year three you already built everything, you married, you completely built the house, like you have two floors and then you have two children and you're like, I don't know what to do anymore, you know. Year three is like, all right, you're just going to do the things for the collection for the achievements and then you just one day you just wake up and you're like, okay, it's spring again, right? I'm going to buy these and these crops, and then you just wake up and then just grandpa's ghost is there, I was like wow!"

I: "Out of nowhere."

P: "Yes, because I was like, third year it's going to happen. I think after a while I forgot it. It was like oh, yeah, the three years! And it just felt so nice, yes."

I: "So I guess having some or even- I guess it's cultivating an emotional connection with the game is important for enjoyment. It needs to matter in some way?"

P: "Yes, it's very rare for me to like get captured by a game. I like to play games, yes, but if a game captures me, it captures me, you know, and I'm going to stay up very late and I'm going to play it and I am only going to play this game, I am not going to play anything else and (*name withheld*) is like every time I have these phases he's like: I don't know what to do. And I'm like, I'm playing. You want to watch a video, watch a video, I'm playing. It's like, I'm trying to think what game it was, Fallout 4, I played Skyrim and Oblivion, right? But I was like, Fallout, you know, I'm not good at aiming and this is like a shooter thing, should I try it? I just bought it. Just like, I bought it. I was like I'm going to try it and if I don't like it, I'm just going to give it back and it started and the story was amazing and I love the post- I don't really like the post-apocalyptic thing. And I remember it was very bleak and it had this yellow orange tone everything, but after I downloaded this mod where like, where they put all the greenery back and the green grass and trees and all of this shit. It's like a game I would love to go back to, but I'm too lazy to update it, and it's also like, I'm going to make characters again and they're all going to have different stories, you know? And I'm like, yeah, I need to go back, the same thing as with Skyrim, but I think Skyrim is becoming too... I don't know how to explain it, you already know everything in Skyrim, and I wish it was like

an option where you could just delete this part of the whole game, you know about the game, but you don't know what it's about. You never played it. I wish there was a thing in your brain that was just like, okay, I'm going to delete all the files my brain has about this game and I would love to play it again like I played it the first time. Exploring all this stuff, going everywhere, dying, but you know you're going to respawn and you're just going to do it again and try it again in a different- and it's nice and it's good and it feels good just this playing and- it's just, I don't know how to explain it, just like, yeah."

I: "Yeah. No, I think it's a little bit about discovery, as well, and seeing something for the first time, you know, it is interesting the first time."

P: "I know I usually don't like post-apocalyptic things if it's like very bleak and very, you know, there's a difference between the Fallout post-apocalyptic setting and The Last of Us apocalyptic setting because first of all, Fallout is basically a fucking nuke that just burned down everything, or multiple nukes, and it just like- it actually burned down like trees and the greenery and everything and in The Last of Us, it's still green. You know, but it's the people that were sick, kind of, it's a zombie apocalypse. And you see like these big buildings that are real buildings and they just get overgrown, like there was actually this one office building they had, and it was very unstable, and it was at the verge of just falling, just falling down. Like just toppling to the side because it wasn't cared for and maintained for like twenty years, you'd see like all the poison ivy and all the shit just growing at it. And I love the scene where- it was very breath-taking at that moment, when you go to another city and you like go around a corner and you see Ellie, the girl, right, and you just see her, wow, what's this? And she just throws the fucking letter down and your character, like Joel, your character is like what's going on? Can't you like give me the letter like a normal person and you're actually getting a bit mad, you know, because why the fuck is she running away now, what's so important? And you just get up and you follow her and you see like there was a zoo and all the animals just would run free now. And there was this giraffe scene, where this herd of giraffes was just strolling by and you actually could pet them if you want and it was like, they were strolling by, there were two giraffes just walking past that knew you were there and you were just looking in and you could pet them. It was like amazing because I didn't think of that. Because I think you were like always against these aggressive humans and always wanted to kill you, because they also want to live, you know. And also like, they also have dogs and they were trained but you never really saw what would happen to the zoos? You know, to the lions and penguins and all of this."

I: "Yeah, so the developers really thought about the big picture, I suppose."

P: "Yes, exactly. And I think The Last of Us is one of my favourite games, it's linear and you know exactly what's going to happen and it doesn't change, you know, it's not like in Skyrim, where it's completely random what's going to happen sometimes and it's an open world. Well, The Last of Us is just a straight line. You're just going to go there. And after you leave this area, you're not going to come back, ever. And it's just like this, it's- I don't really like these kinds of games but, TLoU it's like this masterpiece. and the story is great and I remember seeing the first scene, the intro scene. I just- I don't know if you watched it?"

I: "I've seen it and I also listen to the soundtrack of it (laugh)."

P: "And like the first scene, I was not- I was like, that's not the girl from the cover. Well, maybe she could be maybe she dyed her hair, you know, I was like coming up with these things and I did not expect her to die. I really didn't, and I know as soon as I watched- I didn't play it, I watched it and I just cried, and it's very rare where you're like, a games is like, okay, I guess I have to care for these characters. Like usually it is that way, you're like, well, maybe you're sad but you're not crying, but this is like- that's- I don't know what they did, but-."

I: "Yes, I remember that it was very emotional."

P: "Yes, exactly and I remember- I bought it for the PlayStation and I played it, because I really wanted to play it myself. My grandpa was watching, and he didn't know about this game at all (laugh) and I just started and I was like: do you want to watch me? And he was like: yeah sure, I'm going to watch you. And I was like: hehe, I'm going to fuck this man up. I just started playing it and then the scene came up and he really tried so hard not to cry. He's like (deep breath). You could see you know, you could see like the water in his eyes, like the very watery eyes, the redness in the eyes, I was like: so how do you like it so far? (Laugh). And he's like was that- is that the game? And I'm like: no, it's starting now. And I remember the time like, you see like her dying and this is the last thing you see and then it fades to black, and then it's like twenty years later and you're like: what?! Like I expected it to be like five years after that or something like that, but twenty years?! It's a good game and I really like the story, and it looks good too ad it feels good, you know what I mean? If the game feels good while you're playing it, it's like not about the mechanics or anything, but the story and like just the feeling you get from the game, if that's good, it's like jackpot, whatever they did, they did it right. I know the old Telltale Games did have that, like after they were like: we're going to bring out the 20th part of this series now, and I'm like (sigh), I was playing it, it's not like I wasn't playing, I was playing it but it didn't feel the same. The first season of The Walking Dead, it's like this untouchable thing, and they tried to reach it over and over again, but they couldn't! I know The Wolf Among Us was like another awesome piece. It was not- well you can't just say: well, it's not the same as The Walking Dead, well, it didn't try to be the same as The Walking Dead. You know, it was a whole different- it was a different universe and it also- I don't know what they did. I think they always bought like the rights to do a game about this kind of comic or game. Like they did it with The Walking Dead with the comics and then they did it with the Fairytale Comics. I don't know I would have to look it up. I looked the comics up and the story is very intriguing, actually. And I was very- I would have been so happy if they would have brought- like if they would have not be so shitty, and like- what did they do? They just- they announced it at GamesCon or somewhere. I don't know at Packs, or something. Like the second season, I was so hyped and it should have come out in November, like this month, the first episode, and then like TellTale, they just disbanded."

I: "Yeah, I think they essentially spent all their money in the wrong places, and they went bankrupt."

P: "Yeah. Yes, and I think that's the problem about- they were always trying to get these licenses, like this license of this comic or this game. They never did their own thing. Like there's always

like, what did they have- the Minecraft story, the Borderlands Story The Walking Dead and all these other things, you know. And some of them were good. I didn't try all of them, but it's like, well, I bet they're not that cheap, these licenses. And also if you like spending a lot of things on all these licenses like- Batman they also did Batman, didn't they, they did a lot of stuff and I think it's like, we have to make more and more and more, you know, instead of just finishing like one or two things. Yes exactly, and people were crying for a second season of The Wolf Among Us, they were crying for it because it was a good story, and they were like, yeah, but Borderlands, but Batman, the Batman thing got two seasons in a row, like imagine that, it went well, I mean I didn't play it. You know, it wasn't for me. I really like Batman and I like the universe, but it wasn't for me. Maybe it is, but it's like at first glance, it's like, no I'm good."

I: "Yeah, see, I think even those games had some issues with mechanics and stuff. They weren't really well-made."

P: "Yes, it's just, you know, basically it was the same. The only difference is the story. You know what I mean? It's just like QuickTime events sometimes and then you just walk somewhere, and you talk to them and you have these different options and then all of these have consequences. It's different from Life is Strange, Life Is Strange is a very good game, but basically all the things you did didn't even matter at the end."

I: "Yeah, that's the issue with a lot of them, that they're not coded correctly, so the choices you make don't actually matter and that influences your investment."

P: "I mean, they did matter like when you played all of this through, but in the end when she just- I don't know if you played it?"

I: "I know the ending."

P: "Okay, she just goes back, like completely back in time, and just lets her die. I remember people speculating about all these things, right? What could happen, blah blah blah, right, and I just like, well, she has- I think one person said it, like she's going to go back in time and let her die, right, and I think everyone knew that was basically what's going to happen, but they all were like, no this is not going to happen, they were trying to deny it, like no, no, no, they're going to come up with something else, that is like stereotypical and that's old, no one does this anymore. They did it, they did it, and I remember I did not like Chloe. I did not like- I mean the character was nice, but I did not like the way she acted around Max and how she talked to her. I mean I get it, I would be mad too if I was like, my dad died and my best friend like at this time just moved to another city, and she wouldn't talk to me anymore. I get it. But she was like all like, oh you're back. She was mad at her, right, and then she was like okay with it again, but at the same time she wasn't, and she was like- all these problems she had were apparently Max's fault. Right, and I'm like, soon I was like- I did play it blindly. I also streamed it and I know the moment she said like, what were- the option was like go back in time and kill her or just don't do it. I didn't even think about it. I was like, I'm going to kill her. I'm sorry. I didn't- especially like the scene where you go through time and you just relive all the things they did, you know, this path. Where they have like these stills of what happened and when they talked, and I was like, yeah, can I get just through this? I don't need this. I made my mind up a long time ago. Like I remember I actually did care about

anyone else, like everyone else, I did care about them, but Chloe was like this (sigh), you know, it was like this, she's very annoying and she's like, it's like, why do you have to do this? Why do you have to say it? And it's like, after a while, it's just too much and you're just fed up, you know what I mean?"

I: "So you kind of make decisions that you wouldn't- you would, I guess the character drives you to make decisions that you wouldn't normally consider, perhaps?"

P: "Yes. I'm like I imagined myself, like I'm not Max at this situation. I'm like the shoulder angel, like the angel on her shoulder like, no, fuck her (laugh), fuck her! No, I'm sorry but, she had a rough time and it was not easy, but she had other people as well, first of all. Well, not for long. Well, basically, I think the before the storm thing they had with Chloe, the thing, it felt weird, like a cash grab, you know what I mean? Like they knew each other for how long?! A few days. And then they become best friends. I mean it happens. Sometimes it happens, right, but like when she just- and she falls in love with her, and then just she vanishes. Right. She just vanishes, like after a few days. And then you just meet Chloe for the first time like with Max and she's like, yeah, she was my angel and I'm trying to find her, and I'm like, bitch, you knew her for a few days! You know, this girl has issues and she knows it, she knows she's broken, but she's not doing anything to fix herself. She wants other people to fix her. She was trying to- she was looking to Amber to fix her, but Amber was broken herself (laugh) you can't expect for another person to fix you. It just- it doesn't work. There's like- I am getting mad at this game again (laugh). I absolutely cared for Kate. I could not stand what was happening to her, right? And if I would be Max, I mean I would have thrown Victoria through the fucking bathroom and then just ripped her hair out. I don't care. I'm going to get detention for that, but I don't care, she's going to learn, you know. It was, whew."

I: "Yeah, that was a ride (laugh)."

P: "Whew! (Laugh)."

I: "Ehm, Chise, I realise that it's lunchtime where you're at, and I have a lot of questions left, are you good to continue?"

P: "No, I'm good, I really have to pee though."

I: "Please do, because I've had you for over two hours now and I'm- I don't want to take your whole day away from you, but I do have more questions."

P: "Sure I'm just going to go to the toilet real quick."

I "All right."

5-minute break.

P: "I'm back."

I: "Okay, do you have a drink?"

P: "Yes, I have chocolate milk."

I: "Very nice, okay, the next section is about social environment and your social life in Guild Wars 2. So if you're good to continue my first question is whether- so in GW2 you have a guild environment often, if you are part of many guilds you can just pick your main one. It's up to you

which one you pick when you keep these questions in mind. So are the members of your guild important to you and why or why not?"

P: "I mean not all of them, I'm not playing that much at the moment. You know, it's like a few of them. I know a few of them, I know (*name withheld*) and I know you and (*name withheld*) and (*name withheld*), and then I just have like, I talked a bit to (*name withheld*) but that's about it. You know, I mean I could talk to them if they would just- if I was online and they would just write something in guild chat, I would probably respond to that, but anyone else other than everyone I just said, not that important. And also (*name withheld*), not that important, because you just text him and he's like, yeah, whatever, you get this vibe he's like, yeah, whatever, I'm going to forget it anyways, you know, and I'm like, bitch, why do I have to listen to your problems? And if I'm telling you something, you're like, whatever."

I: "Okay, so it's not give and take, equally?"

P: "No, not for everyone."

I: "Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you, you can ignore than I am in this guild, right? Because-"

P: "Yeah, yeah sure! (Laugh). I specifically didn't mention all the times I would just write you and you would just look at it a week later."

I: "Yes. I am horrible for that (laugh)."

P: "Like I'm a busy person, woohoo, look at me, I can play video games, I can text in the guild Discord, but private chats? Oh no, I have a- it's like Saturday afternoon. I have ten minutes of my time for that (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) Yes. Yes. I admit I am terrible for that, but you can just ignore that I'm in the guild and just-"

P: "No, I'm not going to (laugh)."

I: "(Laugh) Fine, that's okay, so how important is it to you how your guild members see you?"

P: "I don't give a shit, it's like different if it was my next-door neighbour and he would be in my guild, that would be different. You know, but like you don't see me in public and I think I can be whatever, like, how I feel, and if I'm in a bad mood, I'm just going to be in a bad mood and you all know and you're not like, oh what happened? and I'm just going to lie to you or like oh, like, how are you feeling? And I'm just going to lie to you like, yeah, I'm good. No, it's okay, you know. I don't have like- if it's in real life you're like (sigh), when you get these questions, like these questions a lot, you know, you look a bit tired today, like no, I'm just not wearing makeup, just leave me alone."

I: "So is that about being able to be more yourself?"

P: "Well, it's- I don't know how to say it. Like I do not care about what they think, if I have an opinion, I'm going to say it whether you like it or not, but I'm going to respect your opinion. If you don't want to hear something specific, I'm just not going to say it, like the cancer thing we had in the guild chat, well, I mean, I was angry, I really wanted- I was really tempted to do some shit where I would just say cancer in the same sentence or something, but I was like, you know, I'm trying to avoid conflict, but I just don't give a shit, like if something happens, I'm just saying oh, that's nice."

I: "Yeah, I think the problem in that case partially at least was that someone almost imposed real-life manners as opposed to normal guild interactions?"

P: "Like seriously, who cares?! Like, how can you say like, please don't say cancer because what was it? His mother had cancer, I don't know. I would have- I'm not kidding with you, I would have written like, I don't give a shit, I really don't. I mean, I'm sorry for that. But you cannot tell me what to do and what to say, you can't do that, it's like "it's triggering me. Please don't say it". Like I'm going to say it double, twice as much if you're going to say-."

I: "Is that different then in the game to how you would react in life, in real life?"

P: "I mean if I know someone and they're like, yeah, my mother has cancer, I am not going to talk about cancer. That's it. Like, what was it? I don't remember but I bet if we would have talked about like zodiac signs or something and the word cancer would have popped up or just like, you know, just not about this type of cancer, you know, whatever his personal family relations, whatever had, he would have still said it. He totally would have."

I: "And why do you think that is?"

P: "I don't know, I always had to- I don't- who was it again? A friend of?"

I: "I'm not sure, a friend of (*name withheld*), as far as I know."

P: "I think it was the best friend of (*name withheld*). Excuse me. We're trying to be professional here, no smack down."

I: "Yes, we're trying to answer the question: how important is it to you how your guild members see you? (Laugh)."

P: "Like, I don't care, I don't know him. He doesn't know me. He doesn't know anyone else besides (*name withheld*) and maybe (*name withheld*), I don't know, but you know what I mean? He can't just come in a conversation- he didn't say anything else! He just popped up, was like, oh that's cancer, or whatever, this behaviour is cancer. Can you not say cancer, please? It's like begging to say- like begging me to say this word, you know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah, so I'm wondering if that is something to do with not necessarily conforming to- so the social norm in that guild would be- that you are- free speech, right?"

P: "Well there's a few things where you're like, you don't have to talk about that, that doesn't have anything to do with the game or with the guild or whatever. Like, topics you would not talk about, there are a few topics you can talk about and yeah, it's okay, but there's just some things you better leave untouched. You know? You can say what you want, but it doesn't mean I care, or whatever, right?"

I: "But when someone else imposes rules on what a guild can and can't discuss, that's a problem?"

P: "Yes, exactly. It's not because like we cannot do that. It's like I understand if he would have said it a bit different. Yes, but not like "can you not say cancer because my mom has cancer", come on! Just phrase it differently. It almost sounds like I would have laughed when he would have said "the word cancer triggers me". I know if you get triggered it's very hard, but I'm sorry, no, this is not what's a trigger, that's not a trigger. That's what I'm trying to say."

I: "I guess it wasn't really a place to look for sympathy."

P: "Yes exactly. I mean if he would have told us about it, maybe, like a normal person or like just talked about it. Not just like to lay it out. No one would have said cancer at all. Like maybe they would have just avoided that word or the topic or whatever."

I: "Okay. I think that answers the question, so next one is on the same line, really. It's how important is it to you that your guild members feel like they can count on you? Is that's something important at all?"

P: "I mean, I'm not that much into the game. So I'm asking myself, what do you want to count on? Yeah sure if you want someone to talk to, I guess I'm here. That's about it. I mean, it's like, I don't care if you want to count on me or not. If I'm there I'm there if I'm not I'm not. It's like, being a human being, you know. If I want to listen sure and if I don't want to listen, I'm just going to pretend I'm listening. You know and if they're going to talk a few days later about I'm just going to scroll up and look at it or trying to remember what this person said. Maybe I care a bit more about it then."

I: "Yeah, it depends on your state of mind and everything."

P: "Yes, and if I'm busy, I'm busy, but I'm still going to try to like listen or whatever. Or play with someone else, and I'm going to be there on time. You know, I'm German. I'm going to be ten minutes like, before that, I'm going to be there. I'm not kidding to you. I'm going to tell you something-."

I: "You know what, this is something that I have seen as well."

P: "This is like- we had the solo sessions for our DnD and I had like every person solo and it was like, yeah whatever, and we made the dates like and the time and I was a bit earlier there, I was like figuring out the music box and everything and I kid you not, every time- we were four person-like four people, everyone is German, like no Austrian or something, or no Swiss person. Everyone was German, and I kid you not, they were all there 10 or 15 minutes before the time we set it, like before what time we set, they all were, and I'm like, I'm right there as well, I'm not kidding you, we were like being taught that way, that if you come a bit early, it doesn't matter. But if you come too late, it's going to be a bad taste in your mouth."

I: "Yes. It's a cultural thing then?"

P: "Well it's not a cultural thing, if I say those are the closest thing it's if I say 10 a.m, for example, I'm going to be there a bit earlier because I don't know, I'm just going to be there earlier like you can count on me, I'm here, you know. And if I come ten minutes later, what are you thinking about me then like, you know what I mean? It's like, well, you can't really count on her, can you?"

I: "Well, there's something similar where I'm from, so I can relate, being late is something that-."

P: "It's just I think it's just a bit disrespectful."

I: "Yes."

P: "If you're like planning like bit of time out with a friend and you want to meet up at 3 pm in the city. And he just comes like 15 minutes, or maybe half an hour later. It's just like, I just- it's irritating, you know, you counted on this person and he kind of let you don't well he arrived, but he was too late, you waited for him. If it happens once, it's okay. It happens, but it's like, always and with this person, and you're like (sigh)."

I: "I guess the issue there might be that, you know, the prioritisation isn't similar in that maybe that person doesn't- I think the implication could be or it can be perceived as if that person doesn't care as much about you as you about them."

P: "Exactly, I mean that might not be true and he's just a lazy bum and he's like not looking at the time. But-"

I: "But you still made the effort to look at the time."

P: "Yes exactly. I care about this. It just seems to me like this person doesn't."

I: "And that's annoying?"

P: "Well, it's not annoying. It's just like I mean, it happens. Like what is this feeling? It's not annoyance. It's like just being let down. You know, it doesn't feel good."

I: "I see. Yes."

P: "Yes, betrayal (laugh). Well not betrayal, but do you know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah. I am with you. I do believe that it differs a lot between cultures."

P: "Yes."

I: "So how much do you enjoy getting to know other people in the game or in video games in general?"

P: "It depends. I can be a very open person, like, in the online world, I'm actually a very open person. But if you would know me privately, I absolutely hate it. I don't like to go out and meet people or something like that. But I don't mind chatting with some random dude for a while and then just never see him again. You could not do that in real life. Just imagine just stopping by the fucking lights, you know, and you're just waiting for it to turn green and you're just looking out of the car and there's like a dude next to you and you just start talking for a few seconds or something and then you just never see each other again. I know we when I was back in school and when I was trying to get the higher- the very high school. What is it, grade? No, we have like this very complicated school system where it's like the quality of the schools matter. And if you want to study you have to get this test or else- you can't study if you don't have it? And I was trying to get it because I was like on this very low school and you can get it if you have like a job, you can like have the special education for two or three years I think and then you going to have to write the test. And I remember there was this one dude I had in my class, a class mate, and we went to like a city for like, you know, what is it called, a road trip, and we were like in the city and we were on the train back to Old Town. And I remember we were sitting together like in these four person booths, you know, like not- these cabins or something like that. They were sitting next to like, what is it called? Opposite of each other, like two-two. And then like there's a little table in the middle and so on, and I remember we were four at one table and on the other side like on the left side of the train was two of us and one random lady, and we were all listening to music or something else. We didn't even talk with each other, right, and this dude was sitting with us at the four people table, whatever, and he just takes his headphones out and he just starts talking with this lady. And they just talk about traveling and about all like, he did travel a lot, and they talked about travelling and they talked about like just things, you know, nothing personal or anything but they just talked and they talked for two or three hours and then they never see each other again,

and I think this is very admirable. Because it's something not many people can do, sure you can strike up a conversation like, weather is nice isn't it? But that's about it, but not go into this fully fleshed conversation and talk like normal humans, you know what I mean?"

I: "Yeah, I get you. Are you okay?"

P: "Yeah I'm fine, grandma brought me soup."

I: "Don't worry. We are almost on to section three, okay, we're almost there. So, how often do you watch other people's stream content in Guild Wars 2 or elsewhere?"

P: "GW2, I don't care about streams at all. I think it was like not a game I would like to stream or watch. I would love to play it, like it's boring if you're watching it, you know, it's not the same, because I know the game, and it also depends what game and who I'm watching. I do have a few people I have in my follow list on Twitch, for example. And there's like maybe one I watch once a month or something. He streams regularly, but I'm not- I don't know, I don't know why I don't like watching this. I mean I kind of like it but at the same time it's kind of stressful. It's different when you watch and when you stream yourself. I like streaming very much, but sometimes I'm just lazy and I just don't want to, like I want to, but I don't want to, if it makes sense."

I: "I guess you can say that the effort is sometimes not worth the enjoyment."

P: "Yes, exactly because it's nice to talk to other people while you're playing the game and you're enjoying this game with these people and these people just talk about normal stuff, for example sometimes- or just sharing something with you while you're playing and it's nice. And it feels good. And I don't care if it's like a hundred people in my chat or if it's just like five."

I: "Yeah. I get you."

P: "I remember I usually have around 5 to around 25 viewers, but I have one loyal viewer who always talks to me. And I know many people just watch me just because of my voice, like if I'm streaming very late, they just tune like- they just put me on their phone and they just sleep. I don't know why, many people do that. I'm not kidding. I have like 10 people or something that just join, just like, yeah hi, trying to sleep. They're actually saying it, like hi, trying to sleep, just like okay, (laugh)."

I: "That's really interesting. I mean it would be very interesting to see who they pick based on what criteria and what kind of voice quality and tone and stuff. That would be interesting to know."

P: "I know- I mean, I don't get it. I don't hear my own voice, like, the way they do. I can't- if I'm looking at stuff where I'm talking I'm like, oh god, I don't want to listen to that, well, maybe, I don't know, but there's like actually a friend of mine that's like, I'm trying to sleep, like randomly when I play he's just like texting me on Steam, he's also watching my streams, he's like, can you just do the Steam streaming for me? While I'm just talking to you and eventually, he falls asleep and is just gone after a while (laugh). I don't know what- I mean I can't- if I want to sleep it has to be silent, I don't like music and I don't like people talking or noises or anything. I don't mind rain or anything like that, but I'm talking about, I don't know what, like if you're playing a game you hear consent noises of clicking and of the keyboard and maybe for interfaces, you know."

I: "Yeah, it's more disruptive noise."

P: "Yes, and I'm not kidding you, people are going into my stream and I had like this time where I was only playing horror games and they would still come to sleep and I'm like, what? They're like these typical RPG Maker horror things, there was like this one, I'm just going to say like franchise, like by one person and they made like ten games or something and I was just playing them and eventually they were like, I was just playing them, they were nice, you know, they were nice horror-y, like, you know, it's like, some of them were a bit more horror than the others and there were jump scares and everything and loud noises and loud music and stuff like this and I'm like, I could not sleep. You know, I get it, people just like someone talking in the background maybe with a nice voice, but, maybe ASMR. I mean, I like, I get ASMR. And I get the tingles. I'm not kidding like with these kissing sounds and these, like know what I mean? These things it gets the tingle but it's not- I don't like it, it's a weird tingle, what I do like what noise I like- soap carving. The sound of this- I can send it to you later. You can listen to it."

I: "Yeah, I have never ever heard of this (laugh)."

P: "It sounds nice. It's not like, ah, it sounds so good, I'm going to go to sleep to it, it just sounds nice, you know what I mean? it's just a nice noise. Other people like ASMR where some dude or girl is eating pickles, like very crunchy pickles and I'm like, I don't like to hear people smack with their mouth. I really don't. I get it, it's okay, but I mean my grandparents both have this problem about like slurping and smacking their mouths and I'm like, I don't want to eat at the table anymore, please, and I'm eating very fast so it can just leave because it's like, you can't talk to them because it's like, it's already, I mean, I don't want to say they're old, they won't change. You know what I mean? They're not going to change, if they were like maybe fifteen or twenty or something, they might change it. It might take a while, but they're not going to change."

I: "I see, so do you ever watch other people open black lion chest or visit the ectoplasm skritt, or the mystic forge?"

P: "No, I don't care about that. I like to do it myself, but I don't like to watch other people do it. I don't gain anything from it. I know (*name withheld*) loves it. He's like, every time he's on Youtube he's like typing in black lion chest, and he just sorts by new and he just watches everything new that's there, if it's Christmas or it gets updated, for example, Halloween black lion chests, or just Halloween like these trick or treat bags, he watches these videos! And it's like, I'm like, why don't you watch an unboxing video of some dude unboxing this horror pack or whatever, and he's like, yeah, I don't like these, and I'm like, you're basically watching a fucking in-game unboxing video. You know what I mean? He doesn't like the normal videos, but in-game? Yeah, sure."

I: "Interesting. Okay, so tell me about what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why?"

P: "Oh no."

I: "Yes, let's get into it."

P: "I mean, the most- I like- in-game gold? I spend on buying gear for my characters."

I: "To improve their power?"

P: "No, no, I have like, my mains and everything I already have armour for them. I'm talking about the new characters I make when they reach level 80 they need armour and they need runes and they need sigils and everything. You know what I mean? If you have a lot of characters and you

delete a few of them every now and then and make new ones, you're going to spend a lot of money. Eventually I also spend money on sometimes gambling, but it's only like very rare that I gamble, like Mystic Forge gambling. I don't do other any other gambling thing."

I: "Okay, so you gear up your new characters. Why is it important to you that they are geared?"

P: "I mean I'm just going to die eventually if I really go out and do something or I explore a level 80 map or something, so I'm just going to die if I still have my level 1 armour."

I: "It's just to make them more capable when you play them?"

P: "Yes, exactly."

I: "Okay. Could you tell me about a time that you have either played the Mystic Forge, you mentioned you only really play the Mystic Forge, could you tell me about a time that you've done that, opened black lion chests or anything equivalent?"

P: "I mean I open black lion chests a lot. I mean (*name withheld*) was yelling at me a few days ago because I have like over a stack of teleportation to a friend (laugh). I was- I'm opening chests like, a few chests with these characters and this, and on every character I have like ten or fifteen, and then I have like, in the shared inventory slot I have like over seventy or something (laugh). And he's like, why do you have so many-?! He was looking it up in GW2Efficiency, right, and he was like, why do you have so much?! I'm like, I'm opening a lot of black lion chests, okay?"

I: "So, teleport to a friend."

P: "Yeah, I open a lot of black lion chests, but it's not like oh, hey, there's a really nice- sometimes it's an item I want, sometimes, but sometimes it's just like, I'm going to see what I'm getting. Mostly it's just shit (laugh). If I really want something I'm not going to get it, except- like, I would have to open at least like a hundred chests to get that item if I really want it. And I did this a lot of times. I'm not kidding, when I really wanted something, and I think I lost that interest in the game so much that I'm like, well, another item I'm not going to get, it looks nice, but I'm not going to get it. That's it."

I: "Okay, last stretch, you're doing amazing. Okay, so we've covered what you spend your gold on – mainly gear, you have told me about the black lion chests. You've told me that you have a lot of teleports because you do open a lot of these chests and you mainly do it for items."

P: "If I'm like- it's mostly just armour pieces, like if it's like, new back- like the puppies or something, then that-."

I: "So, skins?"

P: "Mostly yes. I'm not like into colours. I mean if I get them, that's nice. I'm getting- I'm not kidding, I'm getting the colour packs a lot more often than the other things. I'm also getting a lot of these wardrobe unlocks. I'm kind of happy, because if I mean, I never have enough of these, you know (laugh)."

I: "So when you use the Mystic Forge, what's the goal there?"

P: "I mean, sometimes I just have so much gold. I'm like, I'm going to see if I can make more and I'm going to try to get a precursor to sell it, but mostly I'm just going to lose all of my money and start a new game."

I: "Okay, so it's about having an excess of money and not really being sure what to spend it on and just engaging in an activity for fun?"

P: "I mean I know what to spend it on and I would totally be better off if I would just buy something else, something I would need, but sometimes I'm just like, I'm going to try. It's not like that I want to try, I'm just going to try."

I: "I'm trying- part of what I'm doing is I'm getting to the bottom of why people do this. So whether it's a feeling they get or it's just something you know, the thinking of, you know, I might win."

P: "No, it's just like, I mean if I get it, I'm going to get a bit more money. But that's it. It's not like that I want it so I can have more money. It's like, if I get it- it's like playing-what's it called? Like all of these lottery things, like people do it because "oh, I want money" and like I'm just trying, like I'm just going to try it out and if it doesn't work, well it doesn't work. I'm not mad about it because I didn't get the money. It's like, sure, happens, I'm pretty chill about it, I'm just going to be like- after I just spent all of my gold I'm going to be like, I know, I knew exactly that would happen."

I: "But it's the possibility of maybe that's attractive?"

P: "Yeah, maybe."

I: "Okay, so do you buy items in the game with-?"

P: "(Laugh) I don't know how much money I already spent."

I: "Real currency or in-game gold or both?"

P: "No, I don't have enough gold to get it with in-game currency. Oh my God, yes."

I: "Yes with real money?"

P: "Yes. I have no- I don't know if you can look it up in GW2Efficiency how much money I've already spent in this game, like about how many gems I already like bought and used. But it's going to be a lot. I think me and (*name withheld*) looked it up, and I think it's about 5,000 Euros."

I: "Between the two of you?"

P: "No, it's just me! I don't think it was five thousand, like three thousand or four thousand, between that kind of sum, but it's not like, I'm going to buy for 100 Euros, like gems and I'm going to spend- it's like, this item is nice, and I'm going to spend 10 Euros on this, you know what I mean? And if I want to like buy chests, I'm going to have to buy a big pack of gems so I can get all of the chests- the keys I mean, the Black Lion keys. And if there's like, shit, you already spent a lot of money and then like the next day there's a very nice skin you want and you're like (sigh), you know I'm not that hard into like the chairs or the toys or anything like that. If there's like a new- like the new shoulder piece with the feathers, I'm like, I'm a bitch for that. I would sell my kidney for that, (*name withheld*) was like "but look at the helmet" but I'm like, no! no! Have you seen those feathers?! I'm going to build a whole new outfit around it, you know. And I also do buy a lot for other people. I know that I gave (*name withheld*) the wings. I mean these, I don't know what they're called, like these dragon wings they have from The Gem Shop. I bought him that, I know that I bought (*name withheld*) a lot of things. The last thing I bought him was the griffon, the cat. That's the last thing I've bought him. Because he really wanted it, he's going to cry if it's not in the shop anymore so I'm just going to buy it for him. He didn't stop talking about it too. He was like almost like, asking me to buy it, right but he didn't ask me, he was like talking a lot about it. He's like "look at this

boy!" (Laugh). And if somebody else would have him he would just stand around and zoom in and look at everything and he's like, still looking at it sometimes like when he's sitting on his cat boy, he's like "look at the little teethers", I'm not kidding, he says this, he's like "look at the little teethers" (laugh)."

I: "So he's really appreciating the gift, essentially."

P: "He is, he just loves it. He's also, you know, you know him as like this, you know him as what you think he is. But if you would hear him talk when he's with me, he's another person."

I: "That's normally the case, yeah, I mean, people are different in relationships compared to in friendships, you know (laugh)."

P: "He's saying words like toothers and he, like, he knows the right word, but he's just like cutifying it (laugh). I also realise we talk a lot of English, like sometimes we just switch the whole conversation from German to English, and I think we both won't even notice until someone is like, "fuck, what's the word for it?" And we're just going to continue in German. I don't know why, I think it's because we're already using so much English words, so we could just talk in English. And sometimes these words maybe sound even better than the German ones, maybe English words don't have like the meaning of the words, like German words. It's very complicated, I'm glad I know a lot more."

I: "I understand, I mean there's a couple of German words that the English language has adapted for themselves because they don't have an equivalent. Like I don't actually know the German word but I know the Swedish word for it and there just isn't one in English. So it happens. Yeah."

P: "Kindergarten, for example. And what else, I think nightmare is also like, it was German, but they transformed it so much that it became an English word."

I: "Yeah. Is it nattmara, or something like that?"

P: "Nachtmahr, it's the same thing."

I: "Yeah. Okay, next question. We teased out why we open black lion chests, we like the cosmetics, we like to give it to friends and the Mystic Forge is about the possibility of getting more money. So, how much-."

P: "Oh! I forgot something, I forgot to say, if someone like- I also buy gems and transform them into gold to buy things like infusions, for example, like the infusion I bought you, I think it was, and I bought (*name withheld*) also the- what's it called, the blue one, the blue fractal infusion, I bought this for him and I bought winter infusion for him."

I: "I'm very happy I held on to that infusion, still have it. So that's good (laugh)."

P: "I think I spent like thirty or forty Euros on it."

I: "Wow. Okay."

P: "Yeah, well, gems- you don't get that much money out of gems, you know, you have to buy more gems (laugh). It's very hard."

I: "Yeah, I get you, I've been in that position too. So, how much gold do you usually spend on these activities, per week, or per month, if that's more applicable."

P: "For what?"

I: "So if you were to throw weapons in the Mystic Forge, for example, how much gold would you throw?"

P: "I mean it depends how much I have, it usually is everything I have. It might be fifty gold, it might be one hundred gold, might be 300 gold. But in the end, it's all gone. I probably have a few silvers left and I'm going to have to beg (*name withheld*) to give me three or four gold so I can fast travel (laugh)."

I: "I see, okay. So, next question is the only personal question I'm going to ask you, and the reason I'm asking is because I have a follow-up question that I really want to ask you. So the question is what your monthly income is, if you have one even?"

P: "It's 800 and something, 850 Euros. And spending 300 Euros, I'm giving them to my grandparents, like for the rent, and for the food and in the internet and all that shit. So basically, it's a bit over 500, right? What I have to spend, can spend."

I: "Okay. So, follow-up question. What proportion of your monthly wage would you require as a reimbursement, so how much money would I have to give you in exchange for deleting your main character?"

P: "(Laugh) You know, sure, just give me a million dollars. I'm just going to make her again (laugh). Like I'm just going to delete her and make her again. I do have- I need a bit of money for deleting her because I did spend a lot of time with her. But if it's enough money, I can just make her again. It's not like that I can never make her again."

I: "Okay. So how much how much money would I need to give you in order for you to delete your main character?"

P: "Sure. Just give me 500,000 Euros."

I: "How about if I asked you to delete your account, would it be different?"

P: "(Laugh) I think I wouldn't delete the account. But I'm not against like the characters, like I can delete characters, but the account it's like, from day one, you know, beta, and all of this shit, and all of these gems shop items and like, where I spend real money on- if I didn't spend any real money on it, I wouldn't have a problem, you know, but I did, and this is where the problem is, I can't."

I: "Okay. So, the account, the price tag on the account is definitely more abstract?"

P: "Well, I think I wouldn't. I just wouldn't. I mean you can give me- I think you can give me as much money as you want, I'm not going to delete the account. I'm okay with the characters, but no."

I: "And only because you can remake them?"

P: "Yes, exactly. Like if I delete the account all the things I had are gone. All the skins, all the items, everything."

I: "I see, I'm with you. So how- this next question- we're very close to the end, this next question is the most abstract question I'm going to ask you. How much do you believe your avatar influences your decisions in the game? Does it matter, is your character there in any capacity when you make your decisions, in the game?"

P: "I mean sometimes when I play my main, my necromancer Felis, I can almost hear her in the back- when I do some shit, when I like, not only when I spend a lot of money or something, but also when I just fail at doing something or just die or just fall down somewhere, you know these the old mountain slide thing they had before gliders, where you would just fall down a mountain, like slide down and still get damaged until you die?"

I: "Yes."

P: "Yes, and sometimes that would happen and I would just lay down, not lay down, but like the character would just flap onto the ground at the end and I would just hear the voice of my character in my head, like "that was a good job you did back there" (laugh). And also when I spend a lot of money, it's like "really, what?". Like a little voice inside of my head, or in the back of my head, but nothing like, oh no, what would Felis do? (Laugh) If it's not like role play or story-wise, I'm not thinking about that. It's just like "that's a great job you did back there, fucko", you know."

I: "You mentioned earlier in Life is Strange that you're kind of the angel on the shoulder, in that kind of game, is it reversed for you in GW2 at all, or is it not similar at all?"

P: "No, I think at this- when I play GW2 it's like, I'm a normal person, and there's like an angel and a fucking devil on my shoulder. And it's like I see an item and the devil is like "buy it, you know you have the money for it" and the angel is like "no, you wanted to save the money to buy something else" and the devil's like "you can buy the thing later anyways", you know, and I just listen to them, like to the inner conflict in my head."

I: "So where does your character place in that, does it matter if this item would look really good on the character?"

P: "Oh my fucking god don't start with that (laugh). I mean if it's the thing like the shoulder piece right now, Jesus, I would just buy it instantly. I don't care how much- if it would cost a thousand gems, I would still buy it."

I: "Okay, because your character needs this?"

P: "It doesn't need it, but it does look damn good! (Laugh) No, it looks good and that's why I want it, I'm not like that at all in real life with the real life clothing or anything. It's like, I want my character, I want my baby to look good."

I: "Okay, I see. So when you think about similar activities in other spaces or in other games or online, do you engage in anything like black lion chests or the Mystic Forge elsewhere?"

P: "like gambling inside other games?"

I: "Yeah, sure."

P: "I did this a lot with Path of Exile, there's like this item that if you get a white item, you can use this orb and it gets you a random item of a random quality, and always I'm just looking at it and I like get this orb, and I'm having like this little bank tab where I usually store them, and there's like this one orb sitting there, they're very rare, at the beginning where I am, at least, and I'm like looking at this, looking at the white item I have and I'm like, I mean, I'm fully geared and I don't need- I'm going to use it (laugh). And there's like other orbs like this, to like orbs of chance, or other things where it just randomly pops up some things or gives you random bonuses on the armour or something. It's really random. It's not like where you can, yeah, okay, the head dress

is going to have extra Mana or something. It's really random what's on there and you have to like, I mean, I do have a lot of these orbs, but you're still going to spend a lot until you get what you want. I'm thinking- oh, oh, oh! My girl (laugh). Overwatch loot boxes! I would spend 50 Euros every month to get, how many loot boxes was it, 100? Especially when it was a seasonal event. That's why I have like almost everything for every character in the game. Usually you have like around, the characters have around 90 to 100 items and if you don't buy- like, you get loot boxes when you level up or something, but it's a very slow process, so you can buy one loot box or just two, or maybe ten, fifty or a hundred, guess what I'm going to buy know. I had them- back then I had the money, now I'm like, are there any skins I want? And if not, I'm not going to buy, but I think I would if there were like a lot of things I want. You know, I'm thinking if there's like any other things."

I: "So mainly loot boxes and mainly for the cosmetic items?"

P: "I mean, you're not getting anything else in Overwatch really, from these loot boxes, you're just getting cosmetics. I do also open a lot of card packs for Hearthstone, but not as many as like, I didn't play this game as long, as other games. I'm thinking about- I also spend- that's a bit from the other question, I also spend a lot of money on The Path of Exile cosmetics, but these are pricey, I'm not kidding you, for- you've got to spend like ten Euros on a helmet skin if you want it, because it makes sense because this game is free-to-play and it uses the money you gave them in this micro-transaction things to finance everything. And they also brought it like to the Switch now, was it? or the Xbox? They brought it now to consoles, and it's impressive, to get a free to play game that's mainly sponsored by players who buy in-game skins, like for a very hefty price. Like when I was looking at all these items, I didn't look at the price at first. I was like, well, it looks so nice. I bet they're like- I was expecting GW2 prices, you know, and then you just get hit by 10- these were low-quality, like low skins, like not that good. But if you wanted like a nice complete outfit like with the footstep trails and like weapons and everything, you would have to- I'm not kidding, you would have to pay 50 Euros or something."

I: "Yeah, it gets expensive fast."

P: "And people buy it! Because they want to- I mean first of all, it looks good. But if I was a sane person, I would say it's too much for me, 50 euros for an in-game outfit, you know, but if it would- like, for example in Path of Exile, benefit the company, and pay everything, like pay the expenses, the servers, the workers, everything, that's- I think I would buy it once or twice, but not more than that."

I: "So do you think that these items matter in the bigger context? Does it matter- if you're standing next to ten other players, does it matter what outfit you're wearing in their company, if you know what I mean?"

P: "I don't really care about that. I just want- if like for example in Guild Wars, if I want my character to look a specific way, I don't care what others think. No, I might change it, I might like be, my necromancer is going to travel Elona now and she's going to like not wear too thick clothes and then she's going to be a Durmond Priory something, you know, I'm going to fix it. I don't care or when there's like a new weapon set coming out, and I'm like, oh, like the alchemy thing with the

purple and the pink and the gold, man, I was all over this shit. I bought like I think the axe, no, the scepter and the focus, I bought these two and I gave her another outfit and I coloured it perfectly, like perfect to the weapons, for a while. Also, with the daydreamer set, where I got the backpack, you know, and the weapons going on and then I coloured like all the- I gave her the- was it the carapace, is it called like that? Like the butterfly skirt? And it kind of fits the daydreamers thing, and I just used this and some other things and then I just gave it the colours like, I was wearing it for maybe a week and I played it like two days. And then I just gave her something else, you know."

I: "Yeah, so it's very much about realising your creative-."

P: "Yes, and if I like- I'm very into these skins that you get from PVP. They look a bit like voodoo-ish."

I: "Oh, the tribal skins?"

P: "Yes. I have the skirt now. It looks like shit if you don't have the top with the white markings, you know, it's also like the tops and skirts where there's like tattoos on both of them and it doesn't look good if like, maybe on the top, like if you have the top and it doesn't interrupt, sometimes it's just cuts there and the rest is on the skirt, for example, of the tattoo or of the markings, or whatever, and it just looks like shit. I'm very frustrated sometimes because the top or skirt would look very nice, but I'm like (sigh)."

I: "It's a lot of work to get the full sets."

P: "Yeah, I mean if I would get the invisible slippers, and I think maybe the tribal top. I think I would wear this for a long time, like the- and with- like doing a bit of the voodoo thing for the necromancer especially, man, that's my shit. That's my shit."

I: "I see. I agree. I don't have any more questions for you, Chise."

P: "Nice."

I: "You're very welcome to add anything if you feel like I've forgotten something or if I just missed something?"

P: "I have no idea."

I: "Okay, in that case, thank you very much. You have been incredible."

P: "Oh, I know (laugh)."

I: "And I can say that because this recording is over 3 hours long, so you have been incredible, thank you."

Interview Transcript

02/11/2018

Alias Presler

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "Okay, so everything's looking good. I have read you your rights (laugh)."

P: "Yes, I am now informed."

I: "Yes, exactly. So, okay, let's jump right into it. So I was hoping that you could tell me something or tell me about your avatar in Guild Wars 2?"

P: "My main Avatar... Yeah, where do I begin. It's been like- I made her because I played Guild Wars 1 a lot. And I felt like it was time to make something kind of brutal, kind of daring, and just kind of fun to play instead of the usual warrior or melee class, and engineer just really felt natural to me. It was like it instantly clicked with what I wanted out of this game."

I: "Why is that?"

P: "I think cuz it just handles really fun. And it plays really nice in a way that nothing else does."

I: "Okay."

P: "Yeah, so I kind of dedicated my time on that character as much as possible because it's just fun to run around and gun things down (laugh), you know."

I: "Yeah. So how long have you actually played GW2?"

P: "Since the beginning of the game which is six years. I took a one-year break after an emergency hospital situation, and the game wasn't really polished yet. So I was like "I'll wait a little bit" but since then it's been many, many hours."

I: "Do you know how many?"

P: "About 8500 hours."

I: "So it's safe to say that you have a pretty good grasp of the game by now."

P: "Yeah. Yeah, definitely."

I: "So how often do you actually play?"

P: "I play about two to three hours every day on average, last few weeks have been a bit less, but that's okay."

I: "Yeah that happens."

P: "Yeah. Yeah, I'd say about four hours a day, easily."

I: "So in terms of your avatar- your engineer, how much do you feel that you actually identify with your avatar and what happens to him or her in the game? How much of you is in that?"

P: "I think my style of how she looks is what's in me, cuz I really like the fully clothed character and having a good amount of detail on there but not too much, because if it's too bright or too much then it just feels like "yeah, this isn't really me" and I'm a bit understated so yeah, that's why she looks kind of like that."

I: "Okay, so would you say that it's almost- would it be safe to say that it's sort of almost like an extension? So is your character more of a tool that allows do certain things in the game or it's the avatar more sort of a part of you? Or neither of the above, it could be completely different, everybody has a certain- a different type of emotional attachment."

P: "For me I think it's a little bit of both. It's a tool that allows me to have insane amounts of fun, but it also represents what I like, yeah, I think it's a really good mix of both."

I: "Okay, so as someone who's played the game a lot, I'm sure you know, you know, there's certain communities that really like to embody their character for role-playing and such. So does your character have any kind of personality or characteristics that you would like to have in any certain way?"

P: "Not really, actually, I don't put any effort in that aspect of the game."

I: "Why not?"

P: "Because I'm still the personality controlling that character and that's what I want to have people see, instead of a character having a personality made up by me."

I: "I see, that's really interesting."

P: "That's kind of how I play the game. It's about me and it's about the fun we can make with it."

I: "That makes a lot of sense, so in terms of your characters, how elaborate are they, you know, you mentioned that they are are type of extension in the sense that it allows you to move around the world and interact with other people, but how elaborate are the characters in themselves in terms of do you have any stories, backstories or histories attached to them in a sort of way?"

P: "None whatsoever."

I: "Okay, that's really good to know, cuz you get such a broad spectrum of how people relate, so I really try to narrow it down to your relationship so that's why I ask you all these questions that might not be relevant to you."

P: "No but it's still good because it gives useful data."

I: "Yeah exactly. So in terms of customisation then, cuz that is something that's normally quite relevant, how long would you say that you spend typically on character creation?"

P: "Straight up character creation I think usually about 30 minutes, maybe an hour. Just to get the face details right because everything else is just a little bit, yeah, design background doesn't really matter. It's mostly about the face and expressions on that. Because that's where the most customisation is, and where if you really do it right you can make something unique that, while they share a face with many many other people, they still look yours."

I: "Yeah. Yeah, I see."

P: "So that's the main part of it and then yeah armour and all that stuff. That's usually a lot later in the game. Yeah, I tend to spend a lot of time in creation just to get that thing that I want out of it. And usually after a while I'll put a makeover kit on it then just make tiny adjustments and tiny tweaks to really find something slightly newer."

I: "I see, okay. So in terms of the game world itself, so Guild Wars 2 has quite the massive open world to explore. So how much of actually exploring the world do you enjoy doing just for the sake of exploring it?"

P: "I enjoy it quite a lot for the different views and variety of stuff that's going on in the game. I wouldn't say I really enjoy the hearts or the quest content that much, but that's more to do because I've done it so many times already and it's just still boring stuff but the world itself is pretty colourful and pretty varied that it's like "I'll just go visit here" and you know, do this thing and go see this are again and that's what I enjoy most out of exploring."

I: "Okay. So how important is levelling up?"

P: "No very much. Not at all."

I: "Why is that?"

P: "Because the leveling up process is so the same, it really lacks variation, even though you can have the variation while exploring and doing the things it feels a bit like a drag and that kind of

needs policing which never happens. Yeah, that's why I don't really enjoy doing that even through tomes or just crafting stuff to level up, it just needs to be done quickly."

I: "Okay. So in terms of knowing about the game, knowing about the game rules, game mechanics, how important is that to you?"

P: "That's fairly important, to get a better understanding of what to expect, especially with fractals and raid content. It's really important to know your mechanics and know what you can do to be successful at them. Because if you're not really first into that knowledge you're just going to perform badly. And yeah, that's not what I want. That's not fun."

I: "Okay. So would you say that succeeding at the content that you actually play is important in the game?"

P: "Yeah, it is. It's very important to succeed in the things that I enjoy doing the most. And for that I have to play more to understand more."

I: "Okay, so it's kind of a give-and-take almost then in a way, that you have to invest time to get the most out of it, to get the most enjoyment out of it?"

P: "Yeah, I think the first 4,000 hours of this game have been kind of similar and kind of the same and after that I started realising like, okay, maybe I got a lot more potential than I think I do. Because I always was running the old same shitty builds and not learning more deeper mechanics because of that, and then the potential really came, which strives me to do better."

I: "Oh, so you kind of found an area or a place to kind of reach your potential then?"

P: "Yeah, that would make sense."

I: "That's really interesting."

P: "Yeah it's... I think it's because it does take a while for me to get a grasp on things and sometimes it's just, you know, keep doing the old thing, it's safe, familiar, and then you start doing something new and you realise oh shit I can do this, too."

I: "So it's a sort of ideal place to try these things out without real consequences if you would?"

P: "Mhm, yeah, definitely. Because, well, that's the downside of GW2, it doesn't really have any consequences in that area, doing exploration and just the game world, in a sense, you can just fail and try again and try again and it doesn't have any negative sides to it."

I: "Okay, so you said that's a downside, why do you say that?"

P: "Because it makes the game a little bit too easy on certain areas, which I think is why people tend to be bad at the game in the early stages, because the challenge isn't there to get them really going. Because yeah apart from raiding and fractals, it's like, well, what's so hard about this?"

I: "Okay, I see."

P: "So yeah."

I: "Yeah, I see. Good answer (laugh). So in terms of things like escapism and taking a break from real life, how much of a, I guess you can say either like an escape or sanctuary, is Guild Wars in terms of you can just park your real life for some time, you don't have to think about it, you can kind of just get into the game, is that something that you engage in?"

P: "Yeah, sometimes I do, especially on Mondays when I tend to raid with whatever I can find and it's just like, ah, no need to worry about anything I'll just do this and enjoy myself."

I: "Good. It's nice to have that, you know?"

P: "Yeah, it's really nice. It's even mid-fractals, it's no, just a short period, but it's still like, yeah, I'll try to go away and just having fun now."

I: "Is that an important part of video games for you in general, to be able to have the immersion?"

P: "No, immersion levels for me have dropped, because I have been, I don't know, really distracted with everything and people shouting at me and, you know, it's hard to really focus and get down to it. So yeah, immersion has dropped a little bit. But when I do get into it, it's just like nothing else matters and it's rather special these days."

I: "Yeah, I can see that. Okay, I am now going to stop probing you on your character. I'm going to move on to your social life in GW2, social habits, and it's mostly going to concern guilds. I know that we're in a guild together, I want you to completely ignore that if you can (laugh), and just don't worry about how any answers would affect me as a guild member, because I am fully in research mode, okay?"

P: "Yeah. Okay. No, it's- that's fine."

I: "Can you tell me a bit about your social life in GW2?"

P: "My social life in GW2 has been a little bit mixed, with my own guild where you're in it it's been really quiet and we're not engaging as much, over there. And on the other guild I'm just usually decorating things and having a little bit of fun but it's not really active, either. So in that aspect the social life- it's there but it's been diminishing, really. I do find it kind of sad, but I think it's also because the game is getting a little bit old and people are moving on and, yeah, it's hard to find motivation to keep growing it again because- I don't know, maybe it's because I've played so much."

I: "Yeah, I see. If you could keep your main guild in mind, I understand that it's normal to be part of several guilds, but if you keep one in mind that it's particularly important to you for whatever reason, how important are the members in that guild to you and why or why not?"

P: "Well, it would be my main guild which is (*name withheld*) and the members in it given our history and how much time and fun we've had together, they are really important to me."

I: "Okay, why?"

P: "I think it's the emotional attachment more than anything else. It's like, we got used to playing together for so long and you know exactly what to expect in groups and in play. That creates a level of familiarity. That's just quite nice and quite rare as well for me."

I: "I see, so how important is it you how your guild members see you?"

P: "Mmm, I'd say about average. It's not really a super concern of mine. But at the same time I do wish to be, you know, people just respect me and have fun with me and- which they do because, yeah (laugh)."

I: "They play with you (laugh)."

P: "They play with me, yeah (laugh) and they also really want me to play along with them. So, you know, that makes me feel really good. But on the other hand, I'm fully aware it's an online game

and sometimes people just drop away and guilds die and stuff happens. So, I'm trying to keep an emotional lid on it, in a way."

I: "So, like a safeguard?"

P: "Yeah. Like a safeguard so that it doesn't really hit me too hard when it all falls apart, it could happen, you never know but on the other hand, yeah, it's nice to be with them and have fun with them."

I: "I see. So it's almost like valuing what you have while you have it?"

P: "Yeah, yeah."

I: "So along that note, how important is it to you that your guild members feel like they can count on you?"

P: "Uhm, well, it's fairly important. I would say that given my recent inactivity, it's a bit less. Because, well, I'm not always there anymore and that does affect my feel about it."

I: "So when you're more involved, it's more important that others feel like you're there?"

P: "Yeah. Yeah, totally. I do still miss the days when we were all grouping together on Teq(uatl) and having stupid fun. That felt really engaging and really a good sense of community with that. And yeah as time has passed it has gotten less and so expectations are a bit less as well."

I: "Yeah, I see. So in terms of getting to know other people in the game, is that something you enjoy?"

P: "Yeah. I do actually enjoy getting to know people and just discovering what people are like and what kind of sense of humour they have and what they really like to do and, you know, just talking nonsense all day is probably one of the best things I really enjoy. And I think the discovery of new people is always a kind of a fun thing to do, especially online because you can just be or do whatever you want and you get the most unique situations out of it. Which you will never get in real life."

I: "Why not?"

P: "I think it's because the enormity of the internet and people just do crazy reactions first while typing instead of talking it, which, you know, which I do as well and typing your reaction is just instantaneous and saying it makes you think about it. So it's less- it has a different impact."

I: "So it's more going with the flow instead of censoring yourself?"

P: "Yeah. Totally that. You say stuff online you wouldn't say in real life."

I: "Okay, moving on in terms of watching people on stream. Is that something you do? Do you watch other people stream content in GW2?"

P: "Not really, actually. In general I've watched a few of (*name withheld*)'s streams, but other than that I really don't engage with streaming."

I: "Why- When you do watch, or when you don't watch, you can pick which one, why is it that you choose to or not to?"

P: "When I do it's because, well, you are in it, so that's because, you know, we have a friendly good relationship and it's fun to see, but when I don't it's usually because streamers are quite obnoxious people, I tend to find, and it's just like- I know they're streaming for the attention and

because you know, it's about them, but at the same time it's so annoying usually with so much sound and distracting things going on and it's like, this isn't fun to watch."

I: "I see, okay. How about content streaming of people opening black lion chests or playing sandstorm flush or something similar. Is that at all interesting to you?"

P: "Eh, no, not at all."

I: "Why?"

P: "Because it's once again them opening boxes of stuff that I won't get. So, why would I watch that?"

I: "Okay, I see."

P: "Like I- yeah, I'd much rather just spend some money or gift something and then open the boxes myself, that's more fun."

I: "I see. Is that more fun because you actually have a chance of getting something almost, you know, physical out of it, an actual reward?"

P: "Yeah, yeah. It's about a little bit about the thrill of getting something you wanted, and that thrill is a real thing."

I: "Okay. So on that note, I'd like to move on to spending habits in the game. So if you would just like to tell me what you spend your gold on in GW2 and why you spend it on this?"

P: "Okay. The main source of- or the main spending of gold is on legendary items and those are just because I like shiny things. They are a project thing and it makes my characters look cooler, so, that's the main spending I do."

I: "And it's to make your characters look cooler, so it's cosmetic upgrades?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay. Why are they important?"

P: "They're important because they take a long time to make and they cost a lot of gold so it gives me a reason to play."

I: "I see, okay. So do you buy these items with real money or in-game gold or both?"

P: "Both, I have on occasion spent some real money to finish them, but in general it's been in-game."

I: "Okay. Why do you think that you pick one over the other, in terms of gold or real money?"

P: "Ehm I picked real money because the desire to complete them have been greater than my patience. And that usually just leads to spending cash if I have it spare. Otherwise I won't do it."

I: "Okay, so I would also like you to tell me something about a time that you played anything like sandstorm flush or opened black lion chests or something like that. Just tell me about a time that you were engaged in that?"

P: "Okay, I've done the sandstorm flush thing a few times and I ended up really broke (laugh). It was not successful at all, but it was kind of thrilling and you know, spamming the little box in the guild chat and everyone going "yeah good luck good luck!" that's really fun about it. But yeah the moment you open it and lose you just, (sigh) you just feel awful. Uhm... and then my keys opening I've actually bought some gems recently to open 25 chests. That was all successful and I really

enjoyed that, but it's yeah, it did bring me a few days of like, ah, god dammit, why did I spend this money again on this game?"

I: "Okay. So starting- if we start with the sandstorm flush, you mentioned that if you tell people that you're going to go and do it, they tell you good luck?"

P: "Mhm."

I: "Okay, so you have that there, and then if you lose you said you feel really awful."

P: "Yeah."

I: "Can you explain what those feelings are, what thoughts are going through your mind, stuff like that?"

P: "I think the majority of the thoughts are like, this is gold that I just threw away which I could have used on my other projects. And that kind of makes me disappointed in myself, in a way, because I know the risks, but you still kind of go for it."

I: "Okay, why?"

P: "Because it's a thrill, because it's you know, you could win 2,000 gold, it's not guaranteed at all. But you still want to give it that little bit of a shot and it's, yeah, it's a rare thing, but usually it's just feeling anger afterwards, because I lost, again!"

I: "So when you lose, is that anger internal or external in terms of are you angry at yourself or are you angry at the game?"

P: "Eh, I'm usually angry at myself for not controlling- or not just stopping myself. It's not the game because it's, you know, it's a thing in the game. You can completely ignore it. It's- so, it has to be a choice by myself. And yeah, that makes me a little bit angry about it."

I: "Okay. So in terms of regularity, how often do you play sandstorm flush or open black lion chests? How often would you say you actually do it?"

P: "I think once every three months I do some chests."

I: "Why once every three months?"

P: "Because I feel like, ehm, just leads to do with what new content that is available in the new chests that makes me want to do it and that usually takes them about three months building something that's like "okay, this is tempting" but the sandstorm flush I really don't do it anymore. And that's, yeah, I don't really want to spend gold on that."

I: "So the black lion chests are tempting because they have new content in them, what about that content is interesting?"

P: "It's usually the mount skins which have a pretty good chance of dropping. Especially compared to the value of such a skin, because if you- the new one is 2,000 gems, which is also about eighteen Euros. And I got 25 chances to get it, which to me sounds like if I get it then everything else I get is a big bonus. That was my reasoning for doing it last week."

I: "So in terms of in-game gold, how much would you actually say you spend on these activities? It could be per week, if you do this every three months it would be how much you spent at that point in time."

P: "I'm not sure actually because I've always bought it with real money, the keys. And the odd key I get from area exploration that's just a reward in-game so I don't count that. But yeah, I don't spend gold on gems to buy keys."

I: "Why not?"

P: "Once again, because I want to make legendaries and yeah well if I keep spending it on the gem store then I won't have legendaries."

I: "Okay, so the gold is important because it is needed for other projects, but you don't purchase gold with gems?"

P: "No. In general, no."

I: "I see, okay. So how much do you believe that your avatar influences your decisions in-game, in terms of how important is the avatar in deciding what legendaries you want to craft for example, or whether you're going to buy black lion chests or not?"

P: "I'll say it's fairly important and it really depends on what I'm going to play next for a while. Because when I started to play my druid to raid with I was like, this will be just a druid and she'll look simple and you know, not really special or anything, but then I grew more attached to it in a way and I was like, okay, I'm just going to make this and this and this and then I'm going to give her this legendary, and that one and that one and that one... And now that's done, suddenly I want to play a different character and now I want to make a legendary for that."

I: "Okay. So in a sense a character is almost like a project?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay, I see, because you mentioned growing more attached to your druid and I'm trying to narrow down why? Why is the question, you know, why do you feel more attachment, is it because of the time you've put into that character or-?"

P: "Yeah, pretty much, it's the time and it's like, well, I've spent a lot of time on this character now and it's like, I do want her to look good then. Whilst I have other characters that really look quite good, it's like, okay this character has this amount of hours on it so there probably should be a legendary on there. I kind of go through the same process with my mesmer now. It's just like, (sigh) that's going to get something legendaries because I play that more."

I: "So... it's almost- would you consider it to be almost like a reward? Is it a reward to yourself for putting in the hours on that character or is it a reward to the character for progressing?"

P: "I think a little bit of both. It's like, it's a reward for myself because, well, they look better, so that's good, b: I've kind of learnt how to play them, effectively, which is also a reward in itself, so yeah. Because it's hard to master everything."

I: "Okay, I see. I am going to agree with you there. Okay. I have now moved on to- we have now moved on to the only question that I have for you that is quite personal. So keep in mind that you don't have to answer me but there's a reason I'm asking it, okay, because there's a follow-up question."

P: "Okay, I'm ready."

I: "I'm interested in how much real money you generate a month, whether it's in work or- so your wage or your income per month?"

P: "Okay, in Euros? That will be about 950."

I: "Okay. Follow up question, how much of that- what portion of that money, your monthly wage, would you require as a reimbursement in exchange for you deleting your main character in Guild Wars 2?"

P: "Oh god. Oh. Not enough."

I: "Okay, how much would I have to offer you in exchange for you deleting your main character in Guild Wars 2?"

P: "... Oh, that's a really hard question. Eh... I really don't know because I- if it's with the equipment and everything, ah, I don't know, probably a thousand, then I would."

I: "A thousand, okay."

P: "I think, maybe? I'm really unsure about that, that's like, that's a really scary thought because deleting my main character is like, ah!"

I: "Okay. So if I gave you a thousand Euros now and you went to delete your character, would you regret it?"

P: "Yes."

I: "Okay, so it's not enough (laugh)."

P: "No, because it's emotional attachment as well."

I: "So why- Don't worry, that's not an uncommon answer at all, I've been quoted big big numbers (laugh) so, okay, why? You mentioned the equipment and you mentioned the time, why is your main character off limits for anyone?"

P: "Because that character just represents all the time and effort I put into that, and I think because I also I know roughly about how many hours I played that character, it's about 4500 hours, it's like yeah, no, this is my main thing and your hands are just going to go stay away from it because it's mine and no one else gets access, yeah, that would be the main reason. I mean she has- I've accomplished a lot of things through that character. So yeah. Yeah, that's a big reason."

I: "So it's in a sense what that character represents do you?"

P: "Yeah, totally."

I: "I think that answers my question, so thank you for that."

P: "Yeah no problem."

I: "Okay. I only have a couple of questions left. Moving- backtracking a little bit to the black lion chests and sandstorm flush and those kind of activities, how do you feel about similar activities in other spaces? So in other games, online, online casinos, is that something that interests you at all?"

P: "Not really actually."

I: "Why?"

P: "Because I think the reason I do it in GW2 more so than anything else is because I play a lot of that game, so."

I: "So it's almost a previous investment that-"

P: "Yeah. It's mostly that, because other gambling doesn't really speak to me at all. Especially because of the dangers of it, but I feel like spending a bit of money to GW2 is like, well I'm

supporting the developers a little bit and they can get me new content and it kind of feels safe, in a way. Yeah, and other games, no."

I: "Okay. Do you have anything that you want to add, anything else you feel like I missed or I should have asked you?"

P: "Not really, actually, no."

I: "Okay, you feel like we've dug down deep in your private account? (laugh)"

P: "Yes we dug a big hole (laugh)."

I: "Okay, then I think that's everything I have for you."

P: "Nice."

I: "Yes. Thank you so much for doing that."

P: "Yeah, no problem."

Interview Transcript

04/11/2018

Alias Spaniard

Interviewer – I

Participant – P

I: "Okay, we are good to go. I believe. Okay, super so to start off. I would like to just look at your avatar and the game."

P: "So you still have it?"

I: Yeah, I still have the picture of it (the avatar). I won't need the picture for the interview that's for a later stage but I still got it. So if you could just tell me about your main Avatar in GW2 and just tell me whatever comes to mind."

P: "Okay, so she's a Necro. Basically, I had something new. Something fresh something also a little bit dark. And a female, so, I got that avatar. What else can I say? She's mostly.... I don't know something I would like to see in me also, something like that. I can elaborate a little bit more."

I: "Yeah sure, go for it."

P: "So, it's not about the hero thing in the storyline. It's more the character I made for her. It's something different from what I am. Also, I don't want to look at males' butts when I play most of the times so it's a she (laugh), yeah, that's basically it."

I: Okay, so for how long have you played GW2?"

P: "Since 2013 I think yeah. I don't recall the month, but that's the year."

I: "Have you been pretty consistent since then, do you tend to take long breaks or are you quite consistent in how often you play?"

P: "I played for a year from the start then I had a huge break break of two to three years, I believe. Then I was pretty, pretty consistent in the way I am right now."

I: "Okay. So how often do you play?"

P: "Right now when I have time maybe to the three times a week. Basically you go in to do some fractals and get out."

I: "Okay. So in terms of hours, how many hours would that be?"

P: "Per week? Less than five nowadays,"

I: "okay. Would you like to play more if you had the opportunity to?"

P: "Sure, I would like to especially if I have someone to play with it's not that I don't like the game. I like it and I used to play it alone mostly. World versus World but a few years back I lost interest in it and if I hadn't had someone to play it with I just wouldn't, I just go in do the daily fractals and log off again."

I: "So the social aspect is quite important to you. But in terms of actually playing the game, I suppose you can say that real life kind of gets in the way."

P: "Yeah, because it's not about playing it. It's more it's more like having a good time. Having someone to share the experiences, the fractals with, if you would say."

I: I see. So if we narrow in on your character again, I want to ask you how much you - you already kind of automatically went into this which is really good. But how much would you say that you identify with your character and what happens to her?"

P: "Nothing, actually, or, just the physicality of it - the pale skin. That's it. I'm getting near it, near the personality. I was... When I created it, it was very very different. I was very very shy and a very closed person. Not anymore as you can see. Yeah. I'm getting I'm going closer to her personality. She is mostly... It's not open minded. She just doesn't give a fuck and do whatever she likes. And speak whatever she wants."

I: "So you've kind of adopted some of the traits that you invented for her as a way to kind of empower yourself."

P: "Yeah, not because of her in-game situations but in RL situations. But in a way, it gets me closer to the character."

I: "Okay, if you could elaborate a little bit on that and explain that to me how you perceive that part."

P: "How did I get to where I am now?"

I: " Yeah. Yeah, even how it works for you how you've already mentioned about how you relate to her? And then you also touched on how she almost works as a as a way of enabling you to take on her traits. So she almost models a behaviour that you then take on?"

P: "Yeah, I created - it's kind of a role model, something I wish I was. I don't know if you want me to go into personal detail things or something like that, but some of the events that occurred during my... actually recent years made me change a lot and in that it was kind of nice in the long-term. And it still is. So basically I'm becoming that character. And usually it's kind of fun, I think it's a nice thing."

I: "okay. So that is a positive experience, excellent. Okay. That leads me to my second question here, which is also very interesting in terms of what you've told me so far, and that is - and I've gotten a whole range of answers to this so you don't have to worry about if an answer is right or

wrong. There's no right or wrong answer. Would you become your character if you could and why or why not?"

P: "(Laugh) No, well basically it's a she if it was a he, maybe, but not quite not really."

I: "Okay, so... why is gender important in this scenario?"

P: "Well, because I've been like this for twenty-five years and I don't want to be a girl. Thank you very much."

I: "(Laugh) It's that simple, it's just about the -, that's simply"

P: "Yeah it's that simple, yeah, exactly."

I: "Okay. I see you've already actually answered this question, but it's whether your character has a personality or traits that you would like to have and you've answered that really well in your character is quite assertive and she gets what she wants and you adopted some of those characteristics to help you along in your actual challenges in real life."

P: " Yeah."

I: " Yeah, just about sums it up. Do you want to add anything to that?"

P: "No, nothing much, not really."

I: "Okay, next question then. Still sticking to your main avatar, how often or do you make up stories or back stories, histories for your characters that somehow enrich their personalities for you in any way?"

P: "... Huh. Apart from the main story from the game. I don't usually do that. I just stick to it. I like the way – I actually like the way they model that character, making her a strong character, so I don't - I actually didn't make any background for her."

I: "Okay, and that is due to that the actual story in the game is already rich enough to provide substantial –".

P: "Yep, yeah, it is."

I: " I see. Okay makes sense."

P: "That's most of the... Ehm, how do you say, that's why I go. I play the story with her and not with any other character. Because the other characters are not like her so I just pick her to play the story and if need be I will never pick her again, for any other things like exploring the World War or going to fractals or raids or whatever. That main thing, that main story is only for her, basically."

I: "Okay, so you've kind of gotten around the way in which a story can be generic and fit every character, by actually just playing it for one character and therefore making it unique. Okay interesting. That's really good."

P: "Exactly. I could yeah do the story for other characters if it's only for unlocking something new or whatever, but it's not. Picture this, I don't skip cutscenes with her. I skip it with every other character I have. I just couldn't give a toss about their story."

I: "That's really interesting. I want to narrow in on that because there's something about... I think there's something about letting her... Giving that character more freedom to actually kind of almost explore options and events and how they would necessarily impact on the character, does that sound like it's something that could be correct to you or am I completely off?"

P: "You're kind of correct. Yes. I mean she's the main character for a reason."

I: "Yeah, it makes sense. So-"

P: "I'm not saying I don't like the others. I like to play them, a lot, especially "vampy boy". It's fun, it's a fun character to play. I mean, she's too but she's a main character."

I: "She has more meaning?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay. All right, you lead into the next question very well here so far. I mean everything just flows here (laugh)."

P: "I'm just amazing."

I: "I'm not going to-"

P: "Yes. I know you are."

I: "I'm not going to say anything about that (laugh). So, customisation, character customisation. How long would you say you spend customising your characters?"

P: "... Huh, it depends if I have the gold for it."

I: "Let's assume that I have given you a makeover kit."

P: "Okay."

I: "You have a full makeover kit. And you have a blank slate of a character and you're going to make something. How long will it take you?"

P: "Most of the times I stick to the base characteristics and work around that. And the- I mean she has the default face and most of the default things but the rest I usually work around it. Not much. Not much time spending on it. I like to work and to spend more time after with the outfits and the colour schemes and all of that."

I: "That's really interesting. So facial features less important. But -"

P: "Yeah, I mean if I want to make "vampy boy" that's kind of important, you know."

I: "Yes (laugh)."

P: "It's for a specific thing. It's to be a creepy thing, but if it's to be just a character I don't mostly care what their face, in this case her face, looks like. The hair – since I'm going with a theme, the hair and the colour of the hair is something I choose carefully. She is not it's not the necro vibe being the purple hair having the purple hair. It should be more of a green one, but it's more -. I mean she has the green clothes and all of that and that defines the necromancer part of her and the rest is more of an emo person so a darker colour for her hair will fit that personality."

I: "I see, so the characterisation is in a way built around... Almost the options you make in the early stage of character creation, right? I know that I'm going to make a necromancer and my perception of a necromancer is it's a darker more daring character. So I'm going to channel that in character creation and at a later stage where you actually get to choose these things."

P: "Mhm, I tend to choose, not their backgrounds per se, but what they are going to be. Her personality, their personalities, and then work around that. I just - how the character will be, and then I just imagine how they will look like."

I: "I see. Okay."

P: "I can give you the example of "Liffloff", it's was going to be a dark lord with a funny stupid name and that's what it is. He has dark clothes, evil kind of look but again with a stupid ridiculous name."

I: "Okay, and you made him because you liked the idea, right?"

P: "Exactly. It's not mostly the ehm, okay, I wanted, like a wizard, whatever. A... A weaver, yeah, that's it. He's a weaver. It's going to be an evil guy and a plant (Sylvari race), okay, and then I'll work around it. I make him darker, with... I mean I try to cover his face and also show it at the same time because it sparks purple. I mean, that's it. Basically, I work around the personality, and how the character is."

I: "I see, and do you enjoy this do you do it often?"

P: " As long as I have character slots, yes."

I: "Okay, I see."

P: "I mean I usually just go with "I need one of each" and then that's it."

I: "Why do you need one of each?"

P: "I want to experience the full capabilities of the game. I want to try every class, see if they are fun to play with. Also have one of each race. But that's because each race has their own story with their own achievements that you want to unlock. That's just for the unlockable part."

I: "Okay so it's about progression more."

P: "Yeah. Definitely about the progression part."

I: "I see, okay, this question I have for you is slightly ambivalent. I have reactions in different ways to this and that is because some people hate it and some people love it. How much do you enjoy exploring the world in the game just for the sake of exploring it?"

P: "Okay, since I have one hundred percent the maps with my main character, I don't usually go for a second run of it because I've seen – I've physically seen everything. Yeah, once I've seen it, I don't usually go for that thing again, even if I have to do that for a legendary weapon. I might not do it. I will if I really like the weapon but that's kind of part of the chore, part of the work I have to do to get that weapon."

I: "Yeah, the second time is not enjoyable, it's more about a means to an end. But the first time, how did you experience it the first time?"

P: "Exactly. First time it was – I mean, I wanted to complete the map. I wanted to one hundred percent that with the main character. I basically just unlocked everything I could in the map and then pushed to the next one. Not only the hearts and the points of interests and the vistas, but the full map, you have to unlock the full map per say. Not only because of the achievement but I am a completionist. I like to 100% most of the things if they don't take much work or much effort."

I: "So, even on the first run it's about progression. It's about advancing."

P: "It's about that but also exploring the map that is available to me. It's a bit of both."

I: "Okay, I see. On the same, I guess you can say on the same wavelength, how important is leveling up a character as fast as possible?"

P: "Ah gee I can't remember there, because now I have so many levelling tomes. I just level them to level 80 and that's it. I don't know, the first time I used the main character. I have- the first

character I had was a thief and I think I got to max level with it. Yeah, but it was just playing the game, it was nothing to rush about. And I think I did the same for now my main character. I think I did the same, I was just playing it, going for dungeons. WvW and Whatever experience I got I got, and she was levelling up on her own. I think I didn't rush."

I: "Okay, so it was more about the journey than the actual end goal?"

P: "Yeah, if I'm not mistaken, it was a long time ago, but I think that's mostly it, today it's just, have the 80 tomes and that's it, you're ready to raid."

I: "Okay. So, when you level up a character now, it's like a means to an end to access end game content?"

P: "Yeah, today, yeah."

I: "Yeah. I see. Okay, speaking of raids, how important is it to you to know as much about the game mechanics and rules of the game as possible, how it works?"

P: "Oh man, especially in raids. I just got to get them. I feel like screwing up on the raids for me at least, it's bad, I mean, it's so bad. I mean it's something so easy. Most of the mechanics are so easy and fucking those up make me so fucking stupid make me feel like I'm dumb. I'm dumb man (laugh). I mean most of the time it's not my fault (clears throat). I understand that but then when it's my fault, I feel like the whole party is going to pay for that because of me. So getting the mechanics, right, it's something I must learn as soon as possible."

I: "Okay, so mechanics are very important because you feel like there is – since it's group content you feel like there is a social responsibility to show up and-"

P: "It's not, it's not social, I don't give a toss, "yeah you died, fuck you" but I also want to do this, and so do you so was but come on, we have to work together to reach our goals, so, I don't like you to fuck up, I don't mind you fucking up, but especially I don't want to fuck up."

I: "Okay, so it's definitely worse when you fuck up, compared to when other people do it, and that's because of the expectations that you have on yourself and you know that you can do it?"

P: "Perhaps, I know I can do it, but... Yeah, I know I can do it, and yet I fuck up."

I: "And that's frustrating?"

P: "A lot."

I: "Okay, so let's - if we imagine a scenario, pick a raid boss, something went wrong and you died, is that – would you say that that is you dying or is that your character dying? Is it your character's fault, in a way? Is it your character that fucked up or did you fuck up? (laugh)"

P: "No. No, fuck up, pfft Jesus. My character has nothing to do with it. I'm playing the character. It's my pressing on the buttons that fuck up, not the character itself."

I: "Okay. I'm asking that just to figure out where the - Some people sometimes jump in and out of how they experience a character so when they win, but when they lose it's the character that loses so I'm just establishing where you are on that scale."

P: "We all know it's basically lag (latency)."

I: "(Laugh) Sure, okay."

P: "Okay, thank you. It's either me or the game. And it's 90% the game, let's put it that way."

I: "(Laugh) Okay. Next question is about escapism and it's about taking a break from real life. Sometimes you... especially in hobbies, you really want to sit down take a break from stuff and I'm wondering how often you play GW2 to avoid kind of dealing with real life or thinking about real life for a while?"

P: "(Sigh) For the last year it has been very difficult. You know, I have two jobs, okay, and I don't have much time and the time I have I usually just sit on my chair watch some YouTube videos or whatever. Eat some snacks and go to sleep. I have to... Since I leave at 7 a.m. and get back at 8 p.m., I just can't - I don't have the energy to go in and play. I just want to rest, watch some videos while I eat, while I'm getting ready to sleep and then go to sleep. Before that or even the future since I'm almost finishing my second job, the weekend one, I can finally escape a bit into the game and I still have the new story to play. I haven't, I didn't have the time or the energy to do it."

I: "So, it's almost like a positive thing in that you're looking forward to it."

P: "To losing the second job something that's supposed to be more important than a game. Yes. It's not about the... sure, we all need the money, we all need it to pay our rents and whatever, but I'm more into... I want to... live more and experience more in this life than just sticking with job and work all of my life to just gather money and spending it when I don't have time for it or whatever. So basically even though it's not, it's a huge cut, for me, it's a huge cut on the pay checks, but I don't give a fuck, I want time for me, I want time for myself. So, the week job already takes too much time from me, so, I don't want that on the weekends, also."

I: "Yeah, I see, that makes perfect sense. Good. Okay. We are finished with the first section about you and your avatar unless you have something that you want to add at all?"

P: "Oh my God, there's more sections?"

I: "(Laugh) Don't worry. There's only three sections."

P: "(Laugh) Okay. No, there's nothing I want to add to that.

I: "Okay, so we're moving on to your social environment and social habits. I was hoping you could tell me about your social life in GW2."

P: "I mean you can see how it is in game. It's mostly guild related socialising and since we have discord I don't have to login much as before to talk with people, so... In Guild Wars if I have someone to play with yeah sure. Let's go in have some fun talking on the discord, whatever, but apart from that I've also played alone, some of the times just doing the daily fractals and some players just add me and they later on ask me to help them with fractals and sometimes I did for the first few days and then just can't be bothered. I just say I can't now or whatever. Interesting thing. I had a guy, it was very random, I thought it was a scam, this guy just whispered me that he wanted someone to talk to, because he had a condition that when he tried to sleep, many thoughts went through his head about death and all that and he just wanted someone to talk to. And he disappeared after a while. I don't know what happened to him. But every time I logged in he was kind of there and he also whispered me back, and I mean, if it was just "hey come play with me and let's do a dungeon with some random guys" I probably will decline that. I'm not much into - even though if they look nice. I just can't... I just don't feel like playing with them. But that

guy he just wanted to talk. So for me, it was fine. It was sometimes during Tequatl, we were killing him and he was whispering to me. As I was more focused on the conversation than Tequatl itself. I was still playing but I was more into talking with him trying to help him a bit. But the rest yeah, I don't I don't usually play with strangers if, again, fractals for example, if I don't have people to play with from the guild, I probably won't do it. Just skip it and that's it."

I: "I see. So in terms of your friend the - I would assume rather serious conversation with a real person was in a way more engaging than game content offered?"

P: "It was mostly because he reached me for help. So... I saw that not as an obligation of course. Also, not pity. I don't like to feel pity for others, but I saw that he needed that attention. So, so I gave that to him. I opened up a bit as well, for him to feel more comfortable and basically, that was it."

I: "I see... So on the note of guilds would you say that- you mentioned that unless you had guild members around you weren't likely to play with strangers if you couldn't access guild members at that point in time to do content with, so on that note, would you say that the members of your guild are important to you, or if they're not, why not?"

P: "I mean the ones that are more active especially in discord and in the guild, yeah, they are, I was part of some guilds, even some of them was only Portuguese people and I mean they are so fucking dumb (laugh). No, seriously, they are just- they are awful. Most of them are awful people and I couldn't care less about them. Yes, sure, some were nice, but it was that one person or two guys from a guild. For example, (*name withheld*) was from- I knew him from a Portuguese guild and I sometimes still speak with him. It was just that one guy that stick to me, but the rest they were mostly assholes. And yeah recently, this is the only guild I mostly speak to. Or... care more about than the others, the others I'm not even in the chat, I'm in there but, yeah, whatever."

I: "So in terms of how to rank importance, it's partly about activity and how much exposure you have to these people but it's also about their actual personalities and what they can offer in terms of, well, yeah what they can bring to a conversation, for example?"

P: "Yeah, exactly."

I: "Okay. And how important is it to you how members of your guild see you?"

P: "In which way?"

I: "In any way, so in this kind of scenario you can interpret the question and they're quite open ended for that reason, so whether it's important to you how you portray yourself to these people or if you are less concerned with appearances or more just interested in being yourself and not really caring how other people see you for that."

P: "I don't care about appearances. They are who they are. They don't choose to be like that. So I don't care, I care although for how their personality is and if they seem open people I will get engaged with them. But me personally since I was excluded in a way when I was younger, I look forward to make myself noticed and you have noticed that in discord, especially. I will always have something to say even if it is stupid. I don't open up thou, I keep- It's not- it's kind of character."

I: "Would you consider it more banter? So more like playful conversation, as opposed to-"

P: "Yeah, yeah. I'm ninety-nine percent playful conversation more than any other thing. I just want to make the chat feel a little bit more alive and fun to be around with, and active than to tell how I'm feeling. Yeah, sure I can talk about how the day was or just rant about it, but personal stuff I don't usually like to expose that easily and expose the feelings I'm having in that moment. So sometimes if it's something really heavy I'm experiencing I just go away because I don't want negativity to affect others in a way. I don't want my negative feelings to pass on to into others. So I mean and this happened recently. I just disappeared. But I was still in discord. Yes. I was still reading the messages but I was appearing offline. I just didn't want to ruin some of the conversations with my own things and my negativity. I'm fine with- if I'm comfortable with the person I could go more into it, private messaging that person and telling her why did I do this? Why is I went offline all of that, but in a group- in the group chat no, I just refuse to do that."

I: "Okay, so if I'm interpreting this right and tell me if I'm not it almost feels like separating. I wouldn't say work and play but it's keeping the- a space that is strictly for play almost, in that it's a space for banter and for having fun and you want to separate that space from any kind of real serious activity that may not fit into that mold?"

P: "Exactly. I mean, if someone else engages in that like (*name withheld*) did once, sure, I will try and be more serious about it, but I'm mostly... most of the things I say it's not about hurting the others it's just being playful."

I: "So if someone else opens up that avenue first, you're more willing to engage in that type of avenue, but you wouldn't necessarily open it up yourself."

P: "Exactly. If others do that first, I will try and help, I don't talk about my own things. I don't give myself as an example for their problems, but I will try to help in any way I could."

I: "Okay, I see, so once again, it's kind of leads very well into next question and that is how important it is to you that your guild members can feel like they can count on you?"

P: "It's kind of important. I mean. especially in raids I want them to know that I won't fuck up, even though sometimes I do (conspicuous throat clearing). It's fine, you can count on me, sure I will eat that mushroom and spread and then keep the poison away, in the wrong pattern, but it's something, but sure I would like them to count on me and I try to be active with those who are active to show them that I'm willing to engage with them. I'm willing to talk to them, and I'm basically always there if they need something."

I: "Okay, if you want to compare this to your Portuguese Guild, is it equally important that they feel they can count on you?"

P: "Pfft, no, I don't speak with those guys for about a year, I don't really care, I cared a little for a while when we started raiding. It was me and (*name withheld*) who gave them the idea of raids, so we just gathered the group and went in and trained and some of the guys were nice, some of them just fucking jerks. Since we were the ones commanding it we had to deal with it, for me if I could I would just kick them. But I mean they were guild members so I wouldn't do that."

I: "So, it isn't about- once again, it's more about who puts in the- the people that put in the time you give something back to."

P: "Yeah, if they put in time in a good way, some of them are... They put the time on raids, but they get mad at the others, they start to be mean to each other and I don't fancy that very much. Okay, I'm there to have fun, yes, of course, I want to accomplish the goal, I want to finish the raid, but mostly I want to have fun, just don't be a fucking jerk. If you don't succeed, then that's fine. There's always the next day the next week the next try."

I: "I see. This is going to be an interesting one following that, how much do you enjoy getting to know other people in the game?"

P: "(Laugh) ... Hm. If they- if they are open people, and if they are in in the same guild because if they are not in the same guild I usually don't see them every day so it's- they start to vanish. And at some point they just disappear and that's it. But if they're in the in the guild, yeah, I mean... they are there mostly every day so I have to embrace them per se."

I: "I see. Okay, that makes sense. Okay, how often- this might not really apply to you since you are very busy. But how often do you watch other people stream content in GW2?"

P: "Eh, never, actually never."

I: "Have you ever done it?"

P: "Maybe once, for a few minutes then "fuck this, this is too boring."

I: "Okay, then the next question might be very straightforward as well. Do you watch other people open Black Lion chests or play sandstorm flush or equivalent in GW2?"

P: "It just makes me mad. I mean I want all of those chests."

I: "So you do watch that?"

P: "No no, I watch it because sometimes it's just appears on the feed and I found it, "Oh this seems kind of interesting" at first, and just watch that video and move on. I don't click the next one and the next one and the next one, it's just it comes up in the feed I watch it and that's it. It just catches my attention."

I: "Why do you think that is? Why does it catch your attention? Why do you watch it?"

P: "I don't know I mean, who doesn't want to watch someone open 25k trick or treat bags? I mean just for the fun of it. I just want to see what they get. I know I will never get that, but, just for fun. I mean it's something so extravagant to do. And it's not a normal feat to achieve, so I just watch that and move on."

I: "Okay speaking about moving on we're going into section three."

P: "I mean unless you count the guides to raids as a part of watching something related to- because that's just a guide that's not something I watch because I want to it's just I watch because I want to learn."

I: "And that's feeds into again, you know about your guild counting on you to do your part and you know, it all kind of connects."

P: "Intertwines, yes."

I: "Yes exactly. Okay, last couple of questions. Well, I guess a couple, last questions, and they're about your spending habits in GW2."

P: " It's mostly shiny things and outfits and appearance for the character itself or any other character. I got my legendaries because they look good. I like the look of them, it's not because

it's a legendary, it's because it looks nice. It looks fancy. People tell me "I have twelve legendaries", yeah but I don't like that one, I'm not going to spend time trying to get something I don't like so most of the times I just transform that gold into gems and by whatever is in the Gem Store."

I: "Okay. So what would you normally buy in the Gem Store?"

P: "Mostly skins for the armour, mount skins and the gliders, oh, and character expansion slots, and maybe appearance kits, but that's rare because once I have an idea for a character I buy one, I buy one kit and use it and that's it, I don't usually spend two kits on one character."

I: "Okay, so you tend to stick to the idea, right, the concept that you have in your mind. It's almost like realising a creative vision."

P: "Yeah, I can change the armour and the colours and the rest but the physicality mostly stays the same. If I don't like - for example, my thief, I deleted my first one, it had a lot of hours in it, but I didn't like the name. I don't want to spend 3k gems on changing the name and the appearances of it, so I just deleted them creating a new one, but it was just for gem saving purposes. The rest, yeah I usually just gather the gold to reach my goal of some legendary weapon or some appearance skins and that's it."

I: "Okay, so to summarise that, it's very much about visualisation- appearance. Customisation."

P: "Yeah, because I usually just have the armour or the currency from raids to buy the sets I need so I don't have to spend the gold, I already have the stats. I just change the stats and buy the cheap things I need to tweak the character and that's it. If I don't have then I just gather the gold not in a, you know, obsessed way, when I have it I have it, and when I have it, I will buy the things to use the character in the raids. It's not something I obsess with in finishing."

I: "That's interesting because you mentioned before that you felt that you were a bit of a completionist. In what way is this different to you?"

P: "I mean, it's not- the completion is about the game itself because having the armour, yes, I'm not touching a character. If I create a character specifically for raids I ain't taking it until he has fully ascended gear to play with it. So it's just stays in the back until I have all the pieces. But that's not something to complete because it's not part of the game accomplishment, the game itself has achievements that you can complete, it has maps that you can complete, but a character - finishing a character is not a completion thing, because my Dragon Hunter has full ascended gear except for the two weapons. I mean, - it's fine. I don't have to make those two weapons ascended because they just work so I'm not bothering with finishing it but if it's something like... This particular raid has ten achievements and I would like to make those ten achievements, no matter the means to come to get to them. No matter the character."

I: "Okay. I got it. So when you buy items- skins any kind of item what currency do you like to use, do you like to use real currency or do you prefer to use in-game gold or do you use both?"

P: "No, yeah, I just- I... all these years I've just spent real money on the game once, it was for a skin, but it was just that one time after that I said no it's- there's no necessity for this so I just gather the gold I need in-game and use that to change for gems. It's mostly that, at this point if I

need the gold I just ask (*name withheld*) "yeah, give me 400 gold, I don't care, I'll pay you later". And then just keep playing the game. I don't invest money on it again, like he does."

I: "Let's say that we didn't have (*name withheld*), and you didn't have someone to lend any gold from, would you abstain from acquiring the item or would you be more tempted to-?"

P: "Yeah, it will just be "sucks to be you, you don't have the gold, you can't have it, wait for the next year, or just - "

I: "Okay, so you're strictly in-game gold?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay. Do you play any sort of sandstorm flush or do you visit the ectoplasm skritt or do you open black lion chests?"

P: "I opened the black lion chests when I get the keys. I'm still trying to get gold to buy a character slot to farm the keys each week. I haven't bothered with it since, gambling... I tried it maybe once but I'm not really a gambler, even if I win. Yeah. Okay. Nice, it was a nice gamble, yay, and move on, I don't usually – I'm not like (*name withheld*) and if I want to gamble there's three tiers in gambling, so I will just pick the highest one once to check how it goes. I didn't lose any gold I think I got five gold back, fine. This is gambling."

I: "Okay. So you have different tiers and you have the - I can't remember the colours of- I think there is a green one, a yellow one and a pink one?"

P: "I guess so. Yeah."

I: "Something like that. Which one would you choose?"

P: "The pink one."

I: "The big one?"

P: "Yeah, mostly because people told me the first two tiers don't- are not worthy. I mean, yeah sure you can get something but it's copper or one gold if you want to gamble or trying to gamble just go for the highest tier and that's it. So I just wanted to try it. So at least let's try something that could be worth."

I: "Okay and it is less relevant to you whether you win or lose?"

P: "Yeah, it's, I just try that one and if I lose gold or win gold, it doesn't bother me."

I: "Okay. But the purpose of participating is for the chance of gaining gold?"

P: "No, I understand that. That's why I don't I don't usually gamble, even if I need the gold I'm not risking it because, okay, I have 400 gold, I need 500 more. I will just gather them for fractals, from raids, from whatever, I'm not gonna gamble, because I have 400 gold, I don't wanna waste them."

I: "And the purpose of that gold is to acquire skins."

P: "Yeah, most of the times. Or pay debts, but that's something else."

I: "I see. Okay. Next question is the only personal question that I'm going to ask you, and the reason I'm asking this is because I have a follow-up question that is based on your answer. And I want to just- you know, it's anonymous, it's confidential. No one else would know this information, but I would like you to tell me if you would what your monthly income is in real life."

P: "Let's say I don't have the second job anymore because it ends at the end of November. So it was going to be that income alone until I have my driving license, after that I'm getting a bit more, this month was 620 Euros. And once I have my license and my car to drive around they will give

you an extra 166 Euros. For that purpose, for the maintenance of the car and gas and all that. So you could say for now it's 620 and then later on it's that plus 166."

I: "Okay, so if I asked you how big a part or what proportion of your monthly wage would you require me to give to you as a reimbursement in exchange for deleting your main character?"

P: "I don't think I would accept any money to delete it, actually cuz I'm not yeah, I'm not into money. I'm not a material person. I like to have good shit, like the best graphics card and all that, but that's just for- it's kind of a, just an, addiction, kind of thing, but I'm not much into money. I need it, everyone does, but I don't care, actually, you could give me 1 million, I mean if- no."

I: "No? Okay."

P: "Only if that... will help not me but my family. And the ones around me. Then probably I will accept it. For my personal use, nah."

I: "There's no reimbursement that would be significant enough?"

P: "Yeah, I will- if you were to give me 1 million euros, sure, I will help my family first. You mentioned if I win the euromillions, I will invest and mostly give away things to people to those who are close to me. I would just help them with some money if they need it. I was just giving presents. I mean, I don't care much about the money. I will get- I will still buy me a nice car. That's just to be comfortable and after that, the rest I would just spend in the others. I would just buy them some dinner or whatever."

I: "Okay, so why do you think that your character is worth this to you. Why is it important?"

P: "... Hm, that's a nice one... Again, it's not about the character itself. It's about you bribing me to do something, kind of deal. You see? "I will give you this but you have to do that", I'm not into that. Even if I didn't care about the character I probably wouldn't do it, or probably would, I don't know it will depend on my real life situation at the moment."

I: "Okay, so the value, I guess you can say, the value that you put into that character depends on what your real-life situations look like?"

P: "Yeah, in a way I mean I also wouldn't... the other thief, I deleted it because I had no attachment to it. But if I wanted to change the name of my main character will probably waste those 3k gems on it and not delete it. Cuz I mean, there's also plenty of gold invested in her. Not only- because the items you can also always transfer from one another but appearances and mostly gem currency invested into the character that will justify that 3k extra to change the name."

I: "Okay I see, so in terms of decision-making, how much do you believe that your avatar influences the decisions you make in the game?"

P: "In which example? With what kind of decisions?"

I: "It could be monetary decision-making. So what you do with your gold, for example or what activities you actually undertake. How much does your avatar influence those decisions?"

P: "... Hm, I mean since I don't play her that often, I won't say she influence that much since I only play her with- when the new story comes out, if it's needed in fractals. I will just play with something else and even those wouldn't affect or influence me in any way."

I: "Okay, so in short you do what you want?"

P: "Yeah."

I: Okay, if we revisit real fast things like sandstorm flush or black lion chests, how do you feel about similar activities to that in other spaces? So in other games or online, is that something you do?"

P: "Like what like the gambling factor of Overwatch like those?"

I: "Yeah, for example."

P: "Loot crates."

I: "That could be it."

P: "In other games I'll say not specifically OverWatch, but League of Legends, years back again, also. I don't play that game for about three years, maybe, I spent around 200 to 300 Euros on that game just for the Skins alone because that's was mostly the things you would buy in that game. It was something I was very into at the moment. And not buying for myself alone, but for others, again it was something just from the appearance and this day I find it a bit ridiculous, but there was no other way in game to get those skins, like in-game currency, you had to spend money on it. So it was something-"

I: "I'm sorry how- I don't know a lot about League of Legends. So I'm just wondering how were those accessed where they from loot crates or like a gem store. You could just buy it?"

P: "There's just, there's characters that you could play, they are free characters that you can play. You can buy them, some of them with in-game currency, but apart from that they have skins that change their appearance and it's those skins that were mostly real-life currency based so now I look back and I think it's a bit stupid. But I mean it was the only way you could get them, so I would get them for my birthday or Christmas or whatever. It was like a present."

I: "Okay, but they are not acquired through chance? They're more- so for example, if I see a mount skin in the gem store, I can just buy it. But if I know that that mount skin only exists in a black lion chest I need to roll for it, which of these types of acquisition did League of Legends have?"

P: "I don't know, at the time I think there was nothing like that. And the other games I play I don't think that there's something close to that in others."

I: "So no loot boxes?"

P: " No loot boxes I don't pay for them, I just get them in-game. And that's it. It's also- it's also basically I can get them, sure, I will buy them. I mean those- yeah, you can buy those with game currency, just with money. I will just get them and open them, yeah."

I: "Okay. I see. So the system that you are seeing in GW2 is not something that you have seen in for example League of Legends?"

P: "Yeah."

I: "Okay that answers my question. Okay!"

P: "That was it? Jesus Christ. I rambled a lot."

I: "That is it, that is all my questions for you. Thank you very much. Is there something you want to add, something that you feel like I've missed that I should have asked you?"

P: "No I don't think so. I think that's it."

I: "Okay. All right."

P: "That's all folks."

I: "That's all folks."

Appendix 5

Columbia Card Task (Hot version) Interface

Introduction and Explanation

-You are now going to participate in a card game. In this game, you will turn over cards to win or lose points which are worth money.

-In each game round, you will see 32 cards on the computer screen, face down. You will decide how many of these cards to turn over. Each card is either a gain card or a loss card (there are no neutral cards). You will know how many gain cards and loss cards are in the deck of 32, and how many points you will gain or lose if you turn over a gain or loss card. What you do not know is which of the 32 cards that you see face-down are gain cards and which are loss cards.

-You indicate which cards you want to flip over by clicking on them. For each gain card turned over, points are added to your round total. You continue turning over cards until a loss card is uncovered or you decide to stop. The first time a loss card is turned over, the loss points will be subtracted from your current point total and the round is over. The accumulated total will be your number of points for that round, and you go on to the next round. Each new round starts with a score of 0 points; that means you play each round independently of the other rounds.

-You will play a total of 16 rounds, three of which will be randomly selected at the end of the session, and you will get a bonus payment proportional to those rounds.

Next

Unknown Cards:

This is what unknown cards looks like. Turn it over by clicking on it.



Previous

Next

The Gain Card:

For every gain card you turn over, your score increases by either 10 or 30 points in different rounds.



The Loss Card:



For every loss card you turn over, your score decreases by either 250 or 750 points in different rounds. Furthermore, the round immediately ends (you cannot turn over any more cards). There will be either 1 or 3 loss cards in any given round.

The number of loss cards and the value of points that can be won or lost by turning over a gain or loss card are fixed in each round. This information will always be on display so you know what kind of round you are in.

Previous

Next

Example 1: In the example below, you see 32 unknown cards. The display shows you that 1 of these cards is a loss card. It also tells you that turning over each gain card is worth 10 points to you, and that turning over the loss card will cost you 750 points. Let us suppose you decided to turn over 7 cards and then decided to stop. Please click the 'See Result' button to see what happens:

Game Round: 1

Loss Amount: 750

Gain Amount: 10

Number of Loss Cards: 1

Current Round Points: 0

How many cards do you want to take?

No Card STOP/Turn Over Next Round See Result

?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

Previous Next

Example 2: In the example below, you see 32 unknown cards. The display shows you that 3 of these cards are loss cards. It also tells you that turning over each gain card is worth 30 points to you, and that turning over the loss card will cost you 250 points. Let us suppose you decided to turn over 10 cards and then decided to stop. Please click the 'See Result' button to see what happens:

Game Round: 1

Loss Amount: 250


Gain Amount: 30

Number of Loss Cards: 3

Current Round Points: 0

How many cards do you want to take?

No Card STOP/Turn Over Next Round See Result



Previous Next

After you end the instructions you will complete two practice rounds before proceeding. Please make sure you understand the examples on the last two pages before ending the instructions.

Previous

End Instructions

Practice 1: As you click on cards, you can see your Round Total change in the box in the upper right. If you turn over a few cards and then want to stop and go to the next round, click the **Stop/Turn Over** button and then **Next Round**. If turning over cards seems too risky, you can click the **No Card** button, in which case your score for the round will automatically be zero. This is a practice round, that looks just like the game you will play. Please select the number of cards you would turn over, given the number of loss cards and the amounts of the gain and loss cards shown below.

Game Round: 1	How many cards do you want to take?	Current Round Points: 0					
Loss Amount: 250	Gain Amount: 30	Number of Loss Cards: 1					
<input type="button" value="No Card"/> <input type="button" value="STOP/Turn Over"/> <input type="button" value="Next Round"/>							
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

Appendix 6

BIS/BAS Questionnaire

Each item of this questionnaire is a statement that a person may either agree with or disagree with. For each item, indicate how much you agree or disagree with what the item says. Please respond to all the items; do not leave any blank. Choose only one response to each statement. Please be as accurate and honest as you can be. Respond to each item as if it were the only item. That is, don't worry about being "consistent" in your responses. Choose from the following four response options:

- 1 = very true for me
- 2 = somewhat true for me
- 3 = somewhat false for me
- 4 = very false for me

1. A person's family is the most important thing in life.
2. Even if something bad is about to happen to me, I rarely experience fear or nervousness.
3. I go out of my way to get things I want.
4. When I'm doing well at something I love to keep at it.
5. I'm always willing to try something new if I think it will be fun.
6. How I dress is important to me.
7. When I get something I want, I feel excited and energized.
8. Criticism or scolding hurts me quite a bit.
9. When I want something I usually go all-out to get it.
10. I will often do things for no other reason than that they might be fun.
11. It's hard for me to find the time to do things such as get a haircut.
12. If I see a chance to get something I want I move on it right away.
13. I feel pretty worried or upset when I think or know somebody is angry at me.
14. When I see an opportunity for something I like I get excited right away.
15. I often act on the spur of the moment.

16. If I think something unpleasant is going to happen I usually get pretty "worked up."
17. I often wonder why people act the way they do.
18. When good things happen to me, it affects me strongly.
19. I feel worried when I think I have done poorly at something important.
20. I crave excitement and new sensations.
21. When I go after something I use a "no holds barred" approach.
22. I have very few fears compared to my friends.
23. It would excite me to win a contest.
24. I worry about making mistakes.

Appendix 7

5-trial adjustment task

Decision making and personality questionnaire

You will be presented with a series of monetary choices, please select the choice that you would prefer in the drop down menu. Please read the questions carefully and answer to the best of your ability, there are no incorrect choices, we are interested in the option you would prefer.

Participant ID (Do not change) *

Short answer text

1. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 1 day's time? OR What's the lowest amount of money that you would accept over £100 in 1 day's time? *

1. £95
2. £90
3. £80
4. £60
5. £40
6. £20
7. £10
8. £5

2. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 1 week's time? *

1. £95
2. £90
3. £80
4. £60

2. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 1 week's time? *

1. £95
2. £90
3. £80
4. £60
5. £40
6. £20
7. £10
8. £5

3. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 1 month's time? *

1. £95
2. £90
3. £80
4. £60
5. £40
6. £20
7. £10
8. £5

4. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 6 months' time? *

1. £95
2. £90

7. £10

8. £5

4. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 6 months' time? *

1. £95

2. £90

3. £80

4. £60

5. £40

6. £20

7. £10

8. £5

5. What amount of money would you require to be given immediately for it not to be worth to wait and instead receive £100 in 12 months' time? *

1. £95

2. £90

3. £80

4. £60

5. £40

6. £20

7. £10

8. £5

After section 1 [Go to section 2 \(Demographics\)](#)

Appendix 8

GW2 Player questionnaire

2. If applicable, which of the following activities do you engage with or have engaged with in the past in the video game Guild Wars 2?

- N/A
- The Mystic Forge
- Sandstorm Flush Casino
- Flipping the Trading Post
- Opening Black Lion Chests
- Opening Seasonal Reward bags e.g. Trick or Treat bags, Wintersday Gifts etc.
- The Ectoplasm Skritt
- Other

...

3. If applicable, please state how many minutes you spend or used to spend on your selected activities in Guild Wars 2.

1. 5 minutes per week.
2. 15 minutes per week.
3. 30 minutes per week.
4. 60 minutes per week.
5. 90 minutes per week.
6. More than 90 minutes per week.
7. N/A

4. If applicable to you, the researcher would greatly appreciate if you could copy paste a link to your GW2Efficiency account below or state your personal Guild Wars 2 account value in numbers, this will help the researcher to plot your data, please be advised that the information will be made anonymous and discarded upon the completion of this research.

Short answer text

Appendix 9

Demographics

Section 2 of 4

Demographics

Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible.

Please state your gender.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Please state your age.

- 18-24
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-65
- 65+

1. How many hours of video games do you play per week? *

- 1. 1-10
- 2. 10-20
- 3. 20-30
- 4. 30+
- 5. None

5. What gambling activities do you participate in on a weekly basis? *

- I visit casinos.
- I visit online casinos or betting sites.
- I bet on sport events.
- I play the lottery.
- I don't gamble.
- Prefer not to say.

Appendix 10

Link to Experiment

Please see the link to the experiment below:

<https://psyresearch.abertay.ac.uk/george/cards/index.html>

Appendix 11

Debrief

Thank you for taking part in this study!

The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of video game gambling mechanics on risk-taking behaviour. The data that you have provided will be used to measure the relationship between time spent on simulated gambling activities and the potentially risky strategies employed in the tasks that you have participated in.

If you require further information about this study you can contact the researcher: Cecilia Bayne, email: 1305746@abertay.ac.uk or the supervisors: Dr Ken Scott-Brown, email: K.Scott-Brown@abertay.ac.uk or Dr George Lovell, email: p.g.lovell@abertay.ac.uk.

Appendix 12

The experimental manipulation

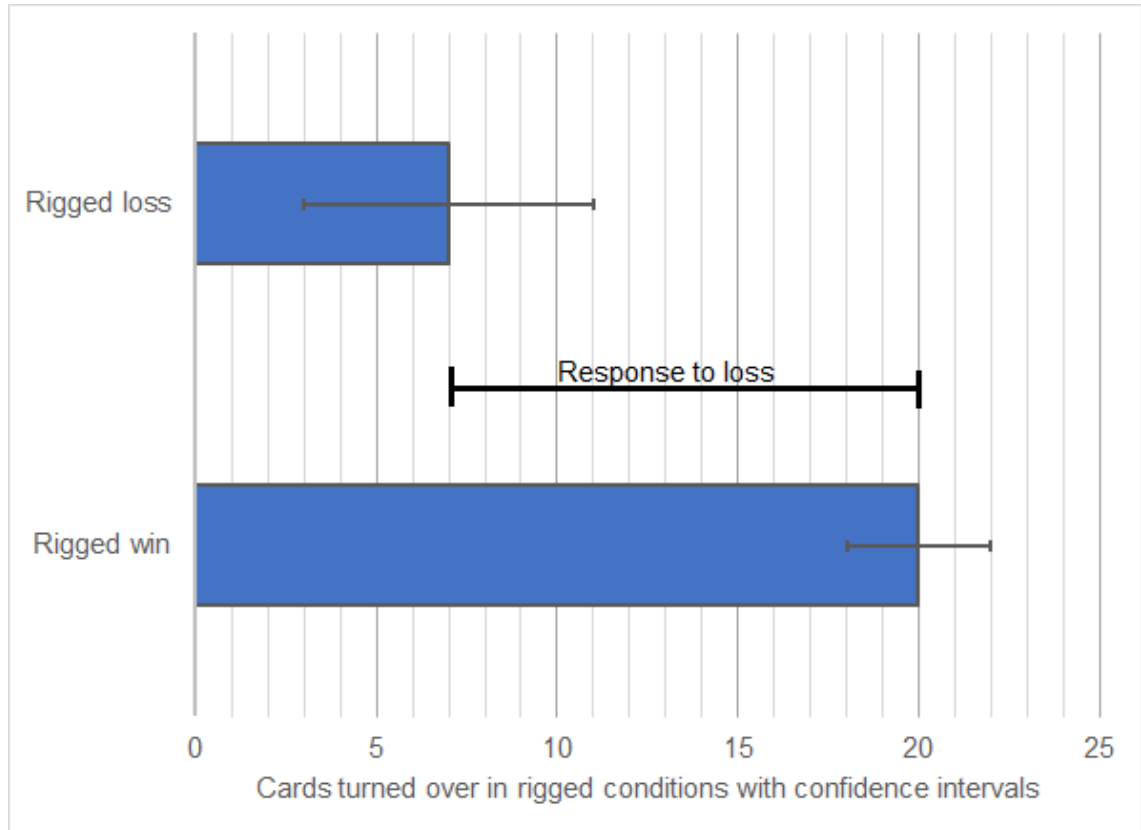




Figure 17. Showing the difference in cards turned over in rigged win and rigged loss conditions.

The chart explains how the experimental manipulation occurred in the CCT trials. The trials were distributed at random, rigged loss condition had a much greater probability of turning over a loss card between card 3-11 in the deck, whilst the rigged win condition had a much lower probability of encountering a loss card – resulting in an average of 18 cards turned over for the video game players and 22 for the control group in the rigged win condition. In comparison, the average number of cards turned over in the rigged loss condition was restricted to 3-11. The experimental manipulation was designed to cause a difference between conditions, to simulate opportunities for participants to display pathological gambling symptoms through loss chasing in subsequent trials.

Ethical Approval Study 1



Name: CECILIA BAYNE

Project Title: The role of the virtual self in facilitating spending and risk-taking behaviour in video games.


Reference: EMS632

Status: Full Approval

Approval Date: 22.10.18


The Standard Conditions below apply to all approved Research Ethics applications:

- i. The Proposer must remain in regular contact with the project supervisor.
- ii. The Supervisor must see a copy of all materials and procedures prior to commencing data collection.
- iii. If any substantive changes to the proposed project are made, a new ethical approval application must be submitted to the Committee.
- iv. Any changes to the agreed procedures must be negotiated with the project supervisor.



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Ethical Approval Study 2



Name: Cecilia Bayne

Project Title: The influence of simulated gambling in video games and personality on risky decision-making.

Reference: EMS1408

Status: Approved with specific conditions

Approval Date: 11.04.19

Specific conditions:

I am happy to approve this application with the following specific condition:

1) Please add on the debrief some source of support in case people have taken part who have problems with gambling (known/unknown) and want to seek advise/help afterwards. For example, GamCare offers free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK. It runs the National Gambling Helpline (0808 8020 133) and also offers face-to-face counselling. This is the link to their website <http://www.gamcare.org.uk>

The Standard Conditions below apply to all approved Research Ethics applications:

- i. The Proposer must remain in regular contact with the project supervisor.
- ii. The Supervisor must see a copy of all materials and procedures prior to commencing data collection.
- iii. If any substantive changes to the proposed project are made, a new ethical approval application must be submitted to the Committee.
- iv. Any changes to the agreed procedures must be negotiated with the project supervisor.

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