

“Pretty Good for a Girl”:
A Feminist Content Analysis of Female Video Game Characters,
and Interviews with Female Gamers

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Abstract

Feminist media scholars have long sought to understand the representations of women in the media, in which women are consistently depicted as secondary to men, which they have used to highlight issues of gender relations.

My research involved the analysis of representations of female characters in games and explored how female gamers make sense of them, providing a more in-depth look at women in the media, whilst also addressing issues of gender such as leisure time.

The gendering of leisure is important as it provides a wider basis for my more nuanced arguments about video games and those who play them.

Throughout my research I endeavoured to study not only how women are represented in video games, but also the experiences of female gamers and how they continue to interact with the gaming community.

Drawing widely from existing feminist media research, I studied the common representations of women in video games, and what female gamers thought of them. I also researched their experiences as female gamers within the gaming community – how they had been treated as “gamers”, but also how they continued to engage and interact with the gaming community.

In order to gather this information, I utilised Content Analysis to gather and analyse game content through further Visual Analysis. This provided me with a range of insights into common patterns in the representations of women across a wide range of currently popular games, such as the role of healer. As for the experiences and engagement of gamers, I utilised interviews to gather information from individuals and tracked patterns across their experiences as a whole. Most notable are the issues of abuse and harassment, but also how women continue to engage with gaming and create their own “safe spaces” within the community both for themselves and others.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project came about largely due to my own experiences, and frustrations, as a female gamer. Whilst growing up, to my recollection, there was no one moment where I was introduced to video games – they were an integral part of my childhood, allowing me to make friends through a shared love of games such as the *Pokémon* series. Evenings at friends' houses were spent playing games, or watching their older siblings play ones for which we were far too young to play. I also spent many nights awake, playing with my Gameboy under the covers, trying (and failing) to hide these night-time activities from my parents. Video games were, and still are, my preferred form of escapism, allowing me to experience adventures that would never exist in the real world.

Though my family accepted it, to an extent, and friendships were forged around video games, it was not always easy. There were very few other girls who played video games – many of my friends were boys, and that meant I stood out. I was the “Other”, before I had even learnt the scholarly literature defining the term. There was an expectation as I grew up that I would grow out of this “tomboy” phase, would become more feminine, and leave video games behind – to be frank, it was the cause of many family arguments during my adolescence, and even into early adulthood.

Aside from my experiences, I can remember clearly the first time I realised something about video games was not fair, and it became very apparent to me from then on that I had very few options to play as a woman character in the games I loved.

For context, the series which started this thought process is also my favourite – *The Legend of Zelda*. I hold it close to my heart, but also recognise that it can be deeply flawed, just as other games can be too. It is an argument that many people have heard before, likely even if they are not familiar with video games: why can't I play as Zelda? And why do I always have to save her? Why do I play as Link, a young boy, and not the Princess the series is named after? It was frustrating, and difficult to understand as anything other than unfair when I was younger.

Gamergate

In 2014, the Gamergate controversy began and shone a harsh light on the issues of sexism within video game culture. Gamergate started with a blog post by the ex-boyfriend of game developer Zoë Quinn, accusing her of unethical practice and utilising a previous sexual relationship with a video game journalist to guarantee positive press

for her indie games (Johnston, 2014). Though the accusations were false, they gained traction and led to the harassment of Quinn via doxing (having her private information published online), rape threats, and death threats – a dangerous misogyny which was thinly veiled under the concern for the ethics of video games journalism (Johnston, 2014).

Prior to the events that became “Gamergate”, and around the time I began to study gender inequality in earnest, the experiences of feminist media critic, Anita Sarkeesian came to media attention. In 2012, Sarkeesian launched a Kickstarter (public funding) campaign to create the *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* series, a series of videos highlighting the issues female characters face within video games, e.g. being the Damsel in Distress. Though the campaign well exceeded its funding goal, it also led to Sarkeesian being subjected to harassment, including death threats, and rape threats, just as Quinn would experience in the following years. The threats continued, and worsened during the events of Gamergate, even resulting in bomb threats during Sarkeesian’s public speaking events (Alberty, 2014).

Gamergate is seen as the crystallisation of the misogyny of video game culture, where individuals “used Gamergate as a convenient cover to engage in harassment” (Massanari, 2015:334). The movement was supposedly about the ethics of video game journalism, but ultimately devolved into “concentrated harassment of game developers, feminist critics, and their male allies” (Massanari, 2015:334).

The events highlighted many of the issues faced by many female gamers and developers over the years, with the darker side of the gaming community being shown to the world through platforms such as Reddit and 4chan.

Thankfully, much of the gaming community dismissed Gamergate’s pretence of “ethics”, recognising that whilst there were a few who were genuinely concerned about ethics, it was primarily an attack on women (Hathaway, 2014). The events of Gamergate were extreme, to say the least, but if these two women were experiencing such things, and if I had also faced some resistance in life due to my interest in video games, I began to wonder how and why other women might have shared similar experiences.

I would argue that Gamergate was a turning point in how many people viewed video games. Not only were female gamers and developers the victims, but the vitriol also spread into academia, with Shira Chess and Adrienne Shaw becoming part of a supposed “conspiracy” regarding gaming and a supposed feminist “conquest” (Chess & Shaw, 2015). Academic interest in video games had been increasing steadily in the

years prior to Gamergate, all whilst women in the industry itself were becoming the targets of abuse. Gamergate effectively showed just how much more research needed to be done into the issues of gender and gaming – not just on Gamergate itself, but the state in which the gaming community has been left in.

Regarding the importance of studying video games, it is also worth noting the large-scale human and financial costs that go into making a game. Towards the end of this research project, the highly anticipated *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018) was finally released after years of delays. Along with the release was much speculation about the cost that went into making the game, with financial estimates sitting at around \$170 million for staff pay during the development period (Takahashi, 2018). Issues also came to light about the “mandatory” overtime some employees faced, working “more than 100 hours” in a week (Phillips, 2018).

Whilst the academic study of video games is still a relatively new field of scholarly enquiry, it is clear that it is fast becoming an increasingly relevant and important one. Nowhere is this more apparent than in feminist media studies where researchers are examining the gendered features of game production, texts and gamers, an endeavour to which this dissertation seeks to contribute.

Research Questions

My principle aim with this research project is to take my own experiences, and those of others and understand their significance within an academic context. I am utilising my expertise as a gamer as a specific entry point which allows me to examine larger social issues around contemporary gender relations. That is to say, I want to explore gamers’ experiences of sexism, issues around gender representation, and how these are embedded within certain theories and experiences around women’s relationships to leisure, such as the expectation that women and men will engage in different forms of leisure activities (Lemish, 2014). Gaming provided my project with a contemporary focus for the research driven by my personal passion and interest in the object of study.

Through my research, I wanted to gain an understanding of the ways in which women are represented within video games set in relation to what other female gamers thought and felt about such representations. Additionally, I wanted to see if my experiences were shared, and if so, how female gamers engage with video games, and interact with a community that was seemingly trying to exclude them.

Thus, the questions I am seeking to address through my research are as follows:

- How are women represented in video games?

- How do female gamers regard female representation in video games?
- What are the experiences of female gamers regarding gaming and within the gaming community?

Visual and Critical analysis, along with interviews were used to gather the information on the representation of women in video games, which I will explore in further depth in later chapters.

I wanted to find out what exactly other female gamers felt about the representation of women in video games, that much was fairly simple. However, it became more complex in regard to the experiences and engagement of female gamers. I wanted to find out firstly what they had experienced in life as a result of them being gamers. Did they face any issues, or resistance, throughout their life as a result of being a gamer? And what were their positive experiences?

Secondly, I wanted to find out how other women engage with video games and the gaming community. By this, I meant that I wanted to find out how women understood the representation in games, and their own experiences, and how they continued to take part in the gaming community. In the end, it came down to finding out how women made their own spaces within the gaming community.

Context

Whilst Gamergate was the initial event that ignited my passion to research this topic, it happened four years ago, and to be frank, a lot can change in four years. In terms of gaming itself, esports is a good example to highlight the growing popularity of video games. Esports is “the practice of playing video games competitively, usually over the internet or via networked computers in venues” (UKIE, 2016), and it is becoming bigger each year. Estimates suggest that esports could become a billion-dollar industry by 2019 - with around 8 million people in the UK expected to watch Esports by 2019 (UKIE, 2016). Frustratingly though, very few of the Esports stars are women. Notably, Kim Se-yeon, or “Geguri”, was the first female player within the Overwatch League, joining the Shanghai Dragons in 2018 after being falsely accused of cheating and using hacks. Following Geguri’s initial accusation, Overwatch fans in Seoul, South Korea, took part in the 2017 Women’s March event sporting flags with the logo of Overwatch character D.Va. D.Va was chosen due to the character’s back story – a female esports star accused of cheating, both accused because it was felt that “it was impossible for women to play games that well” (Frank, 2017). The National D.Va Association came into being because female gamers, and feminists, wanted to create a gaming culture which does not exclude young women.

For the experiences of women as a whole, the #MeToo movement, which began in 2017, was a successful attempt to get women (and men) talking about sexual harassment on social media to highlight just how widespread the issues were. It came about after the allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault by Harvey Weinstein – which he was later charged and arrested for. The movement was formalised into the Time’s Up initiative, which aims to actively fight sexual harassment within the workplace (primarily in the film industry), and has a number of high-profile backers, such as Emma Stone and Natalie Portman (BBC, 2018).

Recently, footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has faced rape allegations, shortly after the release of *Fifa 19* (2018), for which he was the cover star, and had been the year previously, too. Though at the time of writing there has been no confirmation of these allegations it is worth noting, even briefly, both due to the involvement of video games, and the fact that women are being empowered to speak out about their experiences, particularly with men of power.

Structure

The research project will be split into six chapters, including this introductory chapter which provides a brief insight to the work.

Chapter Two surveys the pertinent academic theories and research which informed this research project. Specifically, the chapter is split into four sections, each addressing a theme which is integral to this project, in terms of its academic basis, and its relation to pre-existing work.

For the first section, I will be focusing on *Gender*, and what it means to be a female in our society. The definition of gender used throughout the research project is based primarily upon the work of West and Zimmerman (1987) and Connell and Pearse (2015), in which gender is seen as something we act out, based on social expectations of us. In relation to this, there will be a brief look at socialisation, with theory from Stanley and Wise (2002), but also drawing on Lemish's study of children and "gendered play expectations" (2014:184). Through this, the pre-existing theory will begin to be linked to this research project in regard to how boys and girls are faced with different expectations for how they should spend their time, particularly as they grow up with regard to their leisure activities, drawing on the work of McKie, Bowlby, and Gregory (1999).

Secondly, I will be looking at various theories of Feminism, drawing upon those with relations to the media, such as Liberal Feminism. The primary focus of this section of the literature review, however, will be on Cyberfeminism, looking at the work of Plant (1998) and the more recent theories of Gajjala and Ju Oh (2012). The focus on Cyberfeminism is due to their belief that the internet can be used to change, and improve, gender relations via a number of means. This is particularly important to this research due to the increased prevalence of online gaming and communities in relation to video games.

From here, the literature review moves to focus on the media itself, looking at theories of the representation of women. This thematic section of the work relies heavily upon the work of Mulvey (1989), and Wolf (1990). Though both works are well over two decades old, they continue to be pivotal pieces of research regarding the sexualisation of women. Additionally, the work on Symbolic Annihilation by Tuchman (1978), whilst an older piece, addresses many of the issues women face in relation to media representation, or the lack thereof.

Finally, the chapter will culminate in a review of research into video games themselves. Not only will this section build upon theories of gendered play and leisure, and women in the media, but it'll focus the theories onto gaming. Cassell and Jenkins (1999), for example, introduce the concept of "pink games", and the gendered expectations of what boys and girls *should* play – theories which we have also studied through the work of Connell and Pearse (2015). One of the other main theories in relation to video

games is that of the hardcore and casual gamer (Kubik, 2012), and how definitions of the two are linked to theories of masculinity and femininity.

In Chapter 3, I outline the specific methods used within this research project: Visual Analysis, based upon content analysis, and Interviews. Visual analysis was chosen in order to research the video games themselves. The use of this particular method, being built upon a sample created from content analysis, meant that I could outline a specific criterion to research and study my sample of games with that in mind. This allowed for the use of further visual and critical analysis to research the representation of video game characters, both male and female, and to identify the patterns across a wide range of games and characters. After the basic content analysis was completed, and further analysis has taken place, Interviews were utilised to answer the remaining research questions about the gamers themselves. The idea was to have a casual yet in-depth conversation with participants, discussing their thoughts on representation and their experiences as a gamer. It was during these conversations that participants also spoke about how they engaged with video games – what games they liked, the relationships they had built around gaming, and how they navigated online gaming communities.

It also briefly mentions other methods used to ensure this research project was gathering the best possible results and ensuring that the video games outlined within the analysis were relevant to the study, and to the interests of gamers.

In the chapter, I will also look at how these methods were used by others in similar fields, such as the use of content analysis by Dill et al (2005) to study violence in video games. I will also go into more depth regarding how I utilised these methods to answer my research questions relating to the representation of women in video games, and the thoughts and experiences of female gamers.

In Chapter 4, I present a range of findings drawn from a sample built from content analysis through the use of visual and critical analysis of the character designs and backgrounds, relating it to the representation of women in video games. The methods provided a wealth of information to be analysed, providing insights into representation that I had not necessarily considered when starting the research. Based on my literature review, it is easy to see that I expected the primary finding from my visual analysis would be on the sexualisation of women. However, patterns emerged in regard to the roles of women in video games, and how they are gradually evolving over time

Chapter 5 offers the findings from the in-depth interviews with participants. The initial focus of the interviews was on their opinions of female representation in video games,

but much of the discussion was regarding their own experiences as a gamer throughout their lives, and how they continued to engage and interact with video games. For example, participants would speak of their childhood and online experiences, but also of what kinds of games they preferred and the relationships they had built.

In Chapter 6, the dissertation's Conclusion, the research findings will be summarised, and I will offer my final thoughts and reflections on the project. Much of this will be reflecting on what I would do differently, and how I overcame issues that arose during the research. It is in this chapter which I will succinctly answer the research questions that I outlined at the beginning of this paper, looking once again at representation, and the opinions and experiences of the female gamers interviewed.

I will also briefly explore how this research project could be built upon in the future, looking at areas that I may have mentioned in the paper, but not studied in depth with my methods. This is particularly the case with some of the topics mentioned within the interviews, as there were many topics discussed which I had not initially considered when starting this research project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to proceed with this research project, it is necessary to gain a greater understanding of gaming and female representation in video games. As a result, there are several themes which must be considered to understand not only contemporary gaming but providing a basis to understanding the experiences of female gamers in later chapters.

As such, the literature review will be separated into four main areas:

- Gender
- Feminism
- Media Representation
- Video Games

The following themes, and the literature within them are the focus of the literature review because of their connections with the overarching research questions of the dissertation. The aim is to not only find out how women are presented within the media, primarily video games, but what experiences female gamers have faced, and how women continue to engage with video games, despite various issues and boundaries restricting their access. Issues of gender and feminism address the expectations faced by women, whether they are gamers or not, and the methods that could be applied to alleviate the pressure of such expectations. The subjects of Media Representation and Video Games move the focus toward the video games themselves, whilst maintaining the connection to the female gamers, allowing for a more in-depth discussion of pre-existing literature through the point of view of this research.

It is important to note that whilst a large variety of literature has provided the background for this research project, the literature that follows within this chapter has been chosen because of their increased relevance to the project. Not only did the literature provide the basis of the project, but much of the theories address similar concepts as my research questions, such as the issues of sexualisation of women, and the expectations for how women should be spending their time.

Gender

Defining gender

As gender is one of the main focuses of the research, it is necessary to begin by defining it, and framing it within the context of the research.

Connell and Pearse argue that “gender concerns the way human societies deal with human bodies” (2015:11). They argue that society takes gender for granted, creating a distinction between men and women based upon what is perceived as “natural”. These societal ideals about “gender-appropriate behaviour’ are fluid, constantly changing with the times and even location, turning those that do not conform to such appropriate behaviour into deviants, who face issues such as social exclusion (2015:6). This allows for the maintenance of the status quo, keeping those with power, in power. As we will see further in the chapter, in our Western patriarchal society, men are encouraged to become breadwinner’s due to their “natural” aggression, with women “naturally” becoming carers.

Whilst the expectations for gender are based primarily upon one’s outward appearance, such as our looks and behaviours, our identity is something which develops and fluctuates over time, with individuals constructing themselves in a variety of ways within a spectrum that runs from feminine, to masculine, to something unique to the individual themselves.

It is this distinction that moves us away from a theory of biological essentialism, wherein and individuals’ gender (social) is defined solely by their sex (biological), or the assumption of their sex, towards one of social construction, in which gender is the “cultural difference of women from men” (2015:10).

Connell and Pearse also draw upon the work of West and Zimmerman (1987), whose primary argument is that gender is something that we actively do, and whilst we make our own gender through our actions in a society, we are not necessarily free to do as we please. West and Zimmerman understand “gender as a routine” (1987:126), a complex combination of actions and inactions that are deemed appropriate for the individual’s presumed sex. Once again, we as actors can be held accountable if we do not conform to society’s gender expectations, facing punishment, such as isolation or discrimination, where we deviate from the norm, thus policing individuals and maintaining hierarchies.

Though both West and Zimmerman (1987), and Connell and Pearse (2015) do reject the idea of essentialism, it should be noted that the theories posed do still rely heavily on the idea that gender is based on biological sex (though, not that sex is the same as gender). From this, we are still left with a fairly restricted perspective of two genders, defined by both their presumed sexual organs, and by the differences between masculine and feminine – men and women are expected to behave in different ways, and by acting in a way that combines masculine and feminine traits, or even outright rejection of both can leave an individual facing societal consequences.

On a related note, de Beauvoir (1949) famously argues that “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman” (2011:283) – it is society that creates men and women, particularly in the sense that women are defined by the fact that they are not men. de Beauvoir argues that women are “the Other” whilst men are “the One”, the dominant of the two. Being “the Other” is relative to the situation, and it is worth noting that it is not always a gendered concept – it can be a dichotomy as simple as night and day. If women are defined by what men are not, taking part in a masculine activity such as gaming arguably creates a greater divide between the two, as it becomes increasingly apparent that what the female gamer is doing is not what is expected of her, and it does not fit into the societal expectation. This arguably would create a greater backlash, particularly from male gamers, and further cement her position as “the Other” within that particular situation.

This research ultimately focuses on those who are defined as, or define themselves, as women, and who take part in activities that go against the social norms and expectations placed upon them because of their gender – in this case, it is gaming.

Gender roles and socialisation

Building upon the definitions of gender, we come to the theories of socialisation and gender roles, which operate concurrently during childhood to instil in us the ideals, and behaviours, regarding what it means to be a man or a woman.

Socialisation is defined by Stanley and Wise (2002) as the “process by which children are transformed into social beings” (2002:273). From birth to adulthood, children take on the norms and values of society, and fall into their gender roles, following socially approved behaviours, norms, and values. Stanley and Wise note that gender is arguably assigned at birth, based on the child’s primary sexual characteristics (their genitals). Their gender is learnt throughout their lives via action and inaction, through imitation and internalisation based on the norms and behaviours of those around them, who are seemingly the same. That is to say, young girls may imitate their mothers with games of housework and childcare, for example, with the rise of video games such as *Cooking Mama* (2006). Historically, male and female children have been socialised into different spheres, either the public (masculine) or the private (feminine) spheres; I will address this point in more detail later in the chapter, specifically in regard to leisure. For now, however, it is necessary to touch upon it briefly in relation to socialisation through the work of Lemish (2014), due to the focus of their research on childhood and the media. Throughout childhood, it is argued that boys and girls are kept in separate spheres, with boys “doing” (suggesting action and aggression) in the public sphere,

and girls “being” (suggesting passive, emotional responses) in the private sphere. Children face pressure to conform through the kinds of games they play and enjoy – these “gendered play expectations” (2014:184) are what steer boys and girls towards games with more traditionally masculine, or feminine, traits, such as fighting games versus cooking games.

Lemish’s work looks at children’s media and merchandising as a way of understanding commercialised forms of gender construction. Whilst her research examines television shows such as the *Powerpuff Girls*, the theory can be utilised to advantage with regard to video games. Lemish argues that men are the default heroes and somehow non-gendered, whilst women are gendered and thus serve the role of highlighting strict gender difference rather than inhabiting a specific role. Once again, this is something that children pick up on during the socialisation process through gendered play expectations. As Lemish further elaborates, we see young boys wanting nothing to do with “girls stuff” and vice versa (2015:184).

The results of socialisation are the gender roles we find ourselves fulfilling during our everyday lives. From the previous sources, we can see that gender is a minefield that we are navigating constantly within the confines of what is “socially acceptable.” To make it even more complex, what is socially acceptable is highly flexible, and can change depending on the time and place, constantly adapting to the part of the world and historical period in which we find ourselves. To navigate this minefield successfully, we arguably must at least attempt to conform to these set gender roles and expectations – if only to make our passage to adulthood easier.

The primary focus in the rest of this chapter will be on the roles of *women*, and how their roles play into divisions of labour and leisure. This is largely in relation to how women spend their time, and how women also conform to the roles and expectations faced as a result of their gender.

The roles of women

For many women, there is an expectation for them to be emotive, empathetic, and care for others. McKie, Bowlby, and Gregory (1999) argue that the primary gender role that women are encouraged to inhabit is that of housewife and carer. In addition to this, women are now increasingly involved in the paid workforce, with 70.2% of women between the ages of 16-64 in the UK being active members of the workforce (Office for National Statistics/ONS, May 2017). This means that women are increasingly being forced to work what is known as a triple shift, in which they are not only expected to

fulfil the housewife and emotional roles (that of the carer), but they must also fulfil their role within the workforce. It is therefore understandable, as McKie et al (1999) noted almost twenty years ago, that time is a commodity that women find difficult to fit into their daily routines, and that whilst paid employment and disposable income certainly enables leisure (including playing video games), it is made more difficult to enjoy some time off primarily due to that triple shift.

Following from these points, Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2007) argue that paid work not only enables leisure, but they maintain that it also allows for emancipation. If the workplace defines part of the processes of gendering, then increased female participation in the workplace would seemingly lead to a movement away from the standard male/female dichotomies of paid work and housework. That said, this can only truly be successful if men pick up more domestic labour to fill the gap left by women doing more paid work. Yet, despite such social change, women remain the “Other”. Mac an Ghail and Haywood note that children act as a “limiter” (2007:79) for women, with childcare meaning that women must reduce their paid work hours whilst their children are dependent on them. In this sense, women are “the Other” due to their ability to bear children, and the societal expectation that they will also be their primary carers. Even following the rise of early millennium “new feminism” (2007:228), which aimed to push boundaries and move society away from its “phallogocentric” (2007:155), or male-focused, ideals, it is still the norm that one of the main female gender roles is that of caring for others. Returning to Connell and Pearse’s (2015) argument regarding gender-appropriate behaviour, there is an assumption that women are naturally caring, thus must take on the role of carer, whilst the men are the breadwinners. This assumes that men are more aggressive and thus more determined to succeed in the workplace. Women are encouraged to nurture those around them, taking them away from paid opportunities due to the expectation that they will raise the children they gave birth to. This also assumes that women will go on to have children, therefore the “limiter” mentioned by Mac an Ghail and Haywood has the potential to come into place before children are even in the picture. Furthermore, whilst women are in fact a “substantial part of the paid workforce” (2015:3), as highlighted by the figures from the ONS above, they are usually paid far less than their male counterparts, as much as 36% in some cases (Hellier and Colby, 2017).

All of these points lead to the conclusion that women face substantial barriers to leisure. They typically spend much of their time working various ‘shifts’, thus lacking the time and potentially the economic capital, to take part in leisure activities. In 2017, women accounted for 49% of mobile gamers (UKIE, 2018), compared to 41% of all

game players (ESA, 2017). Though this may suggest that women have ample time for gaming, we must consider that a large proportion of mobile games are free to play and easy to pick up in short breaks, such as *Candy Crush*. These popular match-3 style games allow for players to play a single game in less than five minutes, usually at no financial cost to themselves, with the familiar format negating the need to learn new ways of playing games, thus saving more time. The number of women playing console and PC games being lower suggests that women do face barriers to playing more expensive and time-consuming triple-A titles (games with large budgets produced by major publishers such as Ubisoft), such as *Far Cry 5* (2018) or *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017). *Horizon Zero Dawn*, for example, has anywhere between 20 hours and 60 hours of gameplay, not necessarily considering the general map exploration that is a large part of Open World games, or various “side quests” and other story missions. The way women utilise their leisure time seems very different to how men spend their leisure time, with women perhaps using these quick games to fill a coffee break, whereas men may invest money, and time, into gaming over the course of evenings and weekends.

Best argues that this barrier to female participation is the patriarchy, which is “both a description of, and a theoretical explanation for the social position of women” (2010:41), as the patriarchy is a system of social institutions and relations which inherently benefits men. Though it can change in relation to the situation, the patriarchy is the accumulation of the ideals and norms within a society that determines the appropriate behaviours and activities for women, creating barriers which simply do not exist to many men. Women are expected to care for others at their own expense, putting family and heterosexual relations at the centre of their lives. Thus, Best argues that women are made to feel guilty for engaging in leisure activities, as they are diverting their attention away from what they supposedly should be focusing on, such as caring for others, or housework as a part of their “Triple Shift”.

In Western society, women are expected to behave in a “feminine” way – due largely to the expectation that women must do gender in a way that is suitable for the society they are based in, lest they face various consequences. In this situation, female bodies are argued to exist purely to be “decorative and passive” within their heterosexual relationships (Best, 2010:65). Conflict arises when women go against these social norms, for example, not presenting themselves in a feminine fashion (such as wearing dresses and makeup), or when playing video games. To touch briefly on video games before going into more depth later in the chapter, Yee (2014) argues that one of the barriers to participation to leisure (and gaming) that women face is the issue of parental

control, with parents arguably being more likely to restrict their daughters' access to gaming than they would their sons. This is largely due to the expectations imposed during socialisation that women will put the needs and wellbeing of others before their own leisure and desires. Gaming is seen as a masculine activity, and so young girls will be moved towards other, more 'suitable' activities such as helping with chores. As such, gaming and many of the spaces related to it, such as video game stores or cyber cafes, are "gender territory", thus the presence of one gender (in this case, female) is abnormal and is therefore classed as deviant and potentially leads to punishment – either on a social or personal level. In this case, the "punishment" could be anything from verbal abuse received whilst gaming online, or even offhand comments in video game stores about purchasing a game for their boyfriend, leaving the female gamer feeling upset or alienated. Both of these examples will be explored in more depth within the findings chapter of this research.

The primary issue with the literature reviewed so far, however, is that they seemingly rely on the idea of women as passive social beings, simply letting society's norms control their actions with no thought of their own. As we will come to see when we begin reviewing the literature on the various feminist approaches to leisure, the media, and technology, this is simply not the case. It may be true to say that there exists a backlash for not conforming, but to assume that women lack autonomy is a major flaw, particularly when combined with the overarching gender binary, in which only men and women exist and even they are reduced to simplistic traits and expectations.

Feminism

Whilst we have already touched briefly upon the topic of feminism (and the patriarchy), this is something that needs to be explored in far more depth due to the wide range of concepts within the overarching topic of 'feminism'. The following section will address various feminist schools of thought, focusing primarily on the theory of Cyberfeminism, due to the theory's focus on how the internet connects us (such as through online gaming), and it's potential to enact social change.

To begin, the work of Van Zoonen (2012) brings a number of forms of feminism to our attention. For the sake of this research project, Liberal Feminism and Radical Feminism will be briefly explored due to their very distinct views on the issue of gender in the media. Van Zoonen argues that there is an "unconditional focus" amongst feminists to view and analyse gender as "a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds, and our experience in them" (2012:25). Whilst there are differences which we will touch upon briefly, feminists, as a whole, tend to argue that gender is

what affects our daily lives, and how we experience the world – in the case of this research project, we are looking at how exactly gender affects the experiences of female gamers within that particular ‘society’.

Firstly, Liberal Feminists argue that the unequal position of women in society is linked closely to the media discourse of women as wives and mothers. As McKie et al (1999) note, women are expected to work that triple shift within their daily lives, in which they juggle paid work, housework, and emotion work (caring for others), which is arguably rooted in this issue of media representation of women. Van Zoonen (2012) argues that women rarely appear in the media, yet another issue we will address later through the work of Tuchman (1978), but when they do appear, they are reduced to the traditional family roles, or to that of a sex object – the young and beautiful woman, who is usually portrayed as far less intelligent than her male counterparts. Thus, Liberal Feminists will argue that through constant representation of women in these positions, the media perpetuates the out-dated and stereotypical sex roles we’ve come to know, and that in order to change this there must be gradual, yet definite, reform of various institutions and the media.

On the one hand, whilst Liberal Feminists argue for the gradual reform of existing institutions, Radical Feminists argue for a complete upheaval. Radical Feminists argue that “true gender equality is impossible within a patriarchal system” (Tong and Fernandes Botts, 2017:39), thus reform can only come about from a complete reordering of the society that we live in. Many Radical Feminists argue that the Patriarchal social structure we currently live under is a system full of deeply entrenched “oppressive norms, assumptions, and institutions” (2017:39). Whereas it is the belief of many Liberal Feminists that the media is the primary source of female oppression, Radical Feminists consider that there are other factors involved. As such, gradual change of the media is not enough to protect women, what is needed is absolute reform of social institutions in order to properly protect women and allow them to gain positions of power within society. The issue, however, is that not only do both theoretical arguments apparently see gender as a very simple male/female divide, they also continue to see women as passive beings. For Liberal Feminists, women simply take in and adhere to the sex roles produced by the media which suggests that they must be emotive and compliant. With Radical Feminism, the assumption is that women simply allow themselves to be oppressed by the patriarchy, which is something that simply is not true, as we have real-life examples, such as the 2017 Women’s March. The March was a worldwide protest against the recent election of US President Trump but was also organised to help protect women’s rights (Hartocollis and Alcindor, 2017).

However, it could be argued that such events are not wholly representative of the everyday lives of women both across the country and across the world. This is an issue that is shared by Radical Feminism, in that one of its greatest critiques is that it lacks a theory of intersectionality and representation required to be truly beneficial to *all* women regardless of class, race, sexuality and gender.

It is also worth briefly mentioning Socialist Feminism, due to how closely linked their theories are to aspects of this research. For Socialist Feminists, the patriarchal system is not our only enemy, it works in conjunction with class to create a “Capitalist Patriarchy” (Tong and Fernandes Botts, 2017:91). This is a combination of both class-based oppression, and gender-based oppression, in which women experience lower wages, sexual harassment, and the continuation of their Triple Shift. Similar to previous arguments within this chapter, women are faced with gendered expectations and paid work vs house work, and once again there is a split between the public (masculine) and private (feminine) sphere.

In the context of this research project, Cyberfeminism is important to consider in regard to how female gamers are treated, how they engage with gaming, and the representation of women in video games. The vast majority of contemporary video games rely on the internet, both as a method of play and of the communication of ideas, and disagreements.

Cyberfeminism has emerged from the increased presence of women online, such as playing online games, or through the use of social networking such as Facebook or Twitter. This is particularly important to this research project as many video games are now played online, gamers can connect via social networking, or streaming sites such as Twitch, with Discord being created as a platform with gamers in mind - many experiences of gaming now take place online.

With her focus on gender and the internet, Carstensen (2015) argues that there are three main viewpoints from which to view the internet: Firstly, that the internet is a male domain, created and dominated by men, which can be detrimental to women as they may continue to feel the pressure to behave in a particular way to avoid alienation. Secondly, the internet is highly beneficial to women by linking them together across the globe, creating support networks, and finally there is the argument that the internet allows for the complete breakdown of social norms and boundaries, and the destruction of gender as we know it. The internet exists beyond human bodies and physical location, supposedly freeing users from the expectations and treatment they face in real life due to their gender, allowing them to explore new identities.

Interestingly, it is a combination of the three which provide the basis of this research – the act of women experiencing harassment over the internet as a result of Gamergate was detrimental, but also acted as a catalyst for women to band together and work towards the eradication of such outdated and misogynistic ideals.

The work of first wave Cyberfeminist Sadie Plant (1998) takes a highly utopian point of view, arguing that the internet has the potential to be a revolutionary force, and can lead to the breakdown of gender boundaries and norms, a point which has been more recently argued by Carstensen (2015), who attempts to give the argument a more contemporary basis in social media. Plant suggests that access to the internet allows for increased access to resources which may have otherwise been out of reach for many due to factors such as sex or race, “none of which now need to be declared” (Plant, 1998:46). The inequalities faced by women in society are, Plant suggests, the result of being restricted to a human body, as women are being held back by sexual and gender discrimination. Plant suggests that by using the internet one becomes almost a “cyborg”, a non-biological entity lacking a distinct sex and gender. Thus, internet users, particularly women, are freed from the restrictions and norms in place that dictate our behaviours and actions in real life.

Further to this, Wajcman (2004) builds upon the work of Plant, arguing that the internet has made possible new forms of social interaction, creating a networked community in which women can band together and can gain skills and opportunities. Theoretically, cyberspace and the internet should remove “all physical, bodily cues”, leaving online interaction free of sex and gender, creating a fluid self (Wajcman, 2004:66). However, Wajcman notes that the internet is not truly free of our corporeal bodies, and it is this line of thought which moves us closer towards the more dystopian view that women do not necessarily benefit as much as hoped from the internet. For example, “flaming”, which is a form of online abuse which involves sending offensive messages over the internet, follows a highly masculine “style of communication” which attempts to actively exclude women, particularly on social media and even in online gaming communities (Wajcman, 2004:70). Furthermore, Gajjala and Ju Oh (2012) argue that whilst technology is stereotypically a male domain, the internet allows for subversion, giving women greater opportunities for equality – women are able to hide their gender online. If women are “the Other”, then by omitting their gender, it could be argued that many online users would expect them to be “the One”, or a man. At its heart, Cyberfeminism is the shared belief “that women should take control of and appropriate the use of internet technologies in an attempt to empower themselves” (Kruse, in Gajjala and Ju Oh 2012:101). Cyberfeminism has evolved alongside the Internet, as it has expanded

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in its abilities and its scope and become heavily integrated into our society. Cyberfeminism has moved from a theory of complete gender upheaval and eradication (Plant), to a more moderate theory of the emancipation of women through unity and being freed from their physical bodies. This is particularly the case as increasing amounts of people have access to the internet, and the spread of ideas about women's rights and freedoms, such as with the spread of the #MeToo movement via Twitter.

Whilst we have seen the effects of the internet's abilities to be freeing, and to gather like-minded people together to push change, such as with the 2017 Women's March and movements such as Black Lives Matter, this is not to say it will always work, nor is it always beneficial. With the rise of the internet and the increased focus on women's rights, there also arose a backlash in the form of Gamergate and "Meninism". Meninism started as a "semi-satirical" movement, protesting for "men's rights", however, it soon became a symbol for misogyny, and was utilised as a hashtag on social media to spread this hatred (Warren, 2014), similar to the rise of Gamergate. The differences that Feminism vs Meninism highlight tells us simply that the internet has yet to, or possibly never will, destroy gender as we know it, due largely to the constant differentiation of internet users (Carstensen, 2015). Thus, the work of Plant, and the argument that the internet will free us of gender, appears naïve in the context of contemporary internet usage. However, it is no less beneficial to this research project as it highlights one of the ways that Cyberfeminists hoped to achieve gender equality - by bypassing gender altogether.

For all the positive progress the internet allows, the existence of hate groups such as "Meninists" highlights a sort of paradox. The internet, and our online access, allows us to achieve so much, all supposedly under the blanket of anonymity which allows us to express our views without any identity markers to highlight us as different, or "Other". Yet this anonymity allows people to do and say terrible things, in the case of Gamergate. Many women, including Zoe Quinn and Anita Sarkeesian, have found themselves the victims of "doxing", in which personal, private information is put online into the public domain for people to send hate mail, death threats, etc. to personal addresses and phone numbers. It could be suggested that internet appears to be falling deeper into a dark hole of misuse and abuse, further from the utopian view of Plant and the eradication of gender, and subsequent freedoms. In fact, in the early days of the internet, Pollock and Sutton (in Hawthorne and Klein, 1999) argued that whilst the internet can be an excellent place to be heard, exchange ideas, and become an active producer and consumer within society, women still do not gain access to the internet as equally or easily as men. Spender (1995) argues that the internet is crucial

to the distribution of wealth and increased quality of life within society, something which is arguably even more prevalent today following the technological advances of the last two decades. However, women have been kept out of the production of information, Spender maintains that, similar to the burning of witches, contemporary women are punished for being intelligent and being denied access to the internet and other forms of education. Returning to the issue of socialisation, “the sexes are taught specific technological relationships as a part of their gender identity” (Spender, 1995:172). Regarding socialisation, young girls are taught to focus on nurturing and taking care of others, rather than focusing on improving their technological skills. For example, men get the higher paying computer-based jobs – in the UK in 2016, just 6 of the FTSE 100 CEO’s were women, in fact, “it is more likely that your name is David than you being a female” (High Pay Centre, 2017) in these top 100 companies. This is a more extreme example of women being kept out of the production of information, however, it is still worth mentioning, as it can be indicative of what is happening at lower levels. If women are earning less (and taking on more unpaid work through their Triple Shifts), then it seems obvious that they would not necessarily be able to afford computers, games consoles, or games, let alone have the time to actually play them. Their Triple Shifts severely reduce the amount of leisure time available to women (McKie et al, 1999)

It is necessary to take both the good and the bad aspects of the internet into account throughout this research project, hence why both have been focused on here, and it is the feminist spin which makes the theory integral to the project. Women are gaming, tweeting, sending snapchats now, just as men are, and many are facing a backlash for it simply by existing within what is traditionally viewed as a male-dominated space. The sources above highlight only a fraction of the pros and cons of the internet for gender relations and equality but are no less an important basis of thought as we proceed into the topics of media representation and gaming itself, particularly regarding women’s experiences of being a gamer.

Just as we see an over-representation of men on the internet, and within the production of information, we must also look at the information and media produced, and how women are presented within it. This is not just on the internet, but throughout the media that we consume in our daily lives, such as television, film, and most importantly, video games.

Media Representation of Women

Much of the literature and arguments behind the topic of the representation of women in the media has already been touched upon throughout the course of the literature

review so far. Many of the gender norms, sex roles, and expectations come from media stereotypes during the socialisation process, however, it is an idea which is central to this research project so must be revisited continuously. So far, the general theme regarding women's roles and representations has been linked primarily to their roles as housewives, with an interest in heterosexual romance (Best, 2010).

With regard to representation, much of the focus from this point will be on the sexualisation, and symbolic annihilation of women within the media, and will start to draw more on video games in order to frame it within the focus of the research and provide some understanding of the topic before focusing on the video games themselves.

Much of the representations of women we see in the media are a hang-up from society's "conservative beliefs about heterosexuality and proper romance" (Consalvo, 2003:171), in which women are expected to fall in love and marry a man, thus becoming an object of his desire. Consalvo's research focuses on *Final Fantasy IX* (2000), in which the main quest for the game is to save and marry the Princess – therefore fulfilling the expectation that women are to be swept off their feet by a man, and happily marry them regardless of their own desires. Whereas the goal of the hero is to marry the Princess, then go on adventuring again, the "great female adventure" is one of duty and fulfilment within a heterosexual relationship (Consalvo, 2003:174). To further cement this idea, Consalvo uses the example of Mario saving the Princess after she was kidnapped (Donkey Kong, 1981) to highlight the argument that women are "forcibly positioned as a heterosexual object" (2003:174) – the Princess is the object of desire at the end of the journey.

Consalvo's (2003) work acts as a middle ground between the theories of women as housewives, and women as victims of objectification and sexualisation, which leads us to the work of Mulvey (1989) on the Male Gaze, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, which is arguably one of the most influential pieces of literature in regard to female representation in the media. Though the focus is on cinema, much of the theory can be applied to video games, particularly in regard to women as objects, especially those that can be controlled by men. Take Lara Croft, for example, the main playable character of the *Tomb Raider* series of games – the games are played in the Third Person, and so Lara is always visible to the player, particularly from behind, placing her at the mercy of the "Male Gaze" in a literal sense. The "Male Gaze" is argued to be when the male audience projects their fantasy onto female characters, turning them into sexual objects, leading to "scopophilia", or the (sexual) pleasure in looking (1989:16). In this case, it is the activity of gaining pleasure from looking at another

person as an object - the man “can live out his fantasies and obsessions” by exerting some form of control over the “silent image of women” (1989:15), designed to be both looked at, and placed on display.

It could be argued, then, that by being the sexual object, women are once again highlighted as the “Other” – they are separate from men, separated by the “socially established interpretation of sexual difference” (1989:14). Women are defined by what they lack, and in this case, it is the lack of a penis which separates the two and defines her as “Other”. This furthers the idea that women exist within our media for male pleasure, as the focus is on the sexual nature of male and female beings, with women being observed for male pleasure, whereas men exist to gain pleasure and act upon their desire, based upon this phallogocentric way of thinking which places emphasis and importance on the penis.

Mulvey’s theory, whilst initially based upon film and TV and perhaps somewhat outdated, is particularly poignant in relation to video games due to this focus on the Active Male audience, and Passive Female characters. As we will see in further literature, though women and men tend to equally represent the gamer demographic, many people still believe men to be the dominant gamers, with women simply watching their partners, or being introduced to gaming by them (Yee, 2014).

Mulvey’s work on the Male Gaze also complements the pre-existing work of Berger (1972), who notes that the presence and appearance of women in society, and the media, is inherently different to that of a man. The Male Gaze is the narrative which determines how women look and appear in the media. Men “act” and have a presence of power about them, whilst women “appear” (1972:41), this is similar to the idea of “scopophilia”, in which women are viewed and watched by men for male pleasure. Berger goes a step further by arguing that women must also watch themselves being watched by the men. In this sense, not only does the Male Gaze turn her into an object, but Berger argues that the woman’s own gaze does so too, turning herself into an object. Following this train of thought, Berger notes that how a woman “appears to others... is of crucial importance” (1972:40), particularly in regard to how she will be treated by men. There is also the issue of hypocrisy which Berger mentions, in that men will create art of naked women for their own pleasure, but they are also the ones that “put a mirror in her hand and [you] called the painting Vanity” (1972:45), thus condemning the women who were depicted for the pleasure of men.

However, through the process of “mystification”, Berger (1972:14) argues that it is possible to alter the narrative, and change how we perceive what we see – we have

already established that time and place dictate our expectations of gender, but it can also dictate how we view the presentations of women in the media, for example, is a partially nude woman being sexualised for the Male Gaze? Or should we view it as empowering if she is doing so of her own volition?

Building upon the argument that women in the media exist for male pleasure is the work of Wolf (1990). In her influential book, *The Beauty Myth*, she suggests that whilst women have broken free from primarily being defined and represented in the media as a housewife, this change was almost immediately followed by ensnaring them as sexual objects. Whilst it may not be true to say that, in contemporary society, women are truly free from the role of housewife, times have changed since the advent of second wave feminism in the 1960s, with increasing numbers of women in the workforce. However, the one constant throughout this is that women are expected to embody the current trend; being the domestic goddess, the caring mother, the sexual object, whereas men are arguably the ones who possess the women with these desirable traits. Wolf takes Mulvey's argument that women are widely represented in the media as passive beings, enjoyed by men for their appearance, and adds depth to it by effectively explaining what the male gaze forces women to do. Rather than simply altering and controlling appearance, Wolf argues that the Beauty Myth prescribes behaviour, once again bringing us back to the work of Connell and Pearse (2015) and the theory of gender-appropriate behaviour. The example Wolf uses is that of eating disorders – women are expected to be slim, with small waists, and ample breasts. We need only briefly glimpse at the media to see the process of the Male Gaze altering the Beauty Myth, a prime example in this instance would be Lara Croft, who was originally designed with a large bust, small waistline, and large hips – the 'perfect' hourglass shape (Tomb Raider, 1996).

Designed by men, for men, Lara Croft is once again the perfect example of the Male Gaze projecting a beauty ideal onto the media. DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2013) argue that female characters are far more likely to wear sexy and revealing clothing than their male counterparts – in the case of Lara Croft, she was originally designed as a female version of Indiana Jones, though it is not hard to see how they increased her sex appeal through both her figure and her clothing. Croft was originally depicted in a tank top and fitted mini shorts, with variations on the theme including crop tops and spandex suits, catering to "midriff marketing" (2013:242), in which women are presented as sexual objects to sell an item - in fact, Lara Croft was used to sell the energy drink, Lucozade, in 1998, and again in 2018 with "Larazade" to coincide with a *Tomb Raider* game release (Cronin, 2018).

Bringing the arguments of both Mulvey and Wolf up to date with contemporary society is the work of Yee (2014). Focusing on video games, Yee argues that they are structured from an unquestionably male point of view, and yet this fact is completely invisible to most men. For men, the media, particularly video games, act as a kind of unconscious “digital peep show”, in which the women are “young, fertile, and always ready for sex” (2014:105). Within video games, these “women are worshipped, and idolized, as long as they are not real” (2014:108), suggesting that the presence of real women with the realm of gaming ruins the “peep show” that male gamers are taking part in. As we will see in the results of the Interviews later in this research project, women are highly aware of the exaggerated body proportions, the poses, the roles they take on, such as Damsel in Distress. Thus, they are not the passive audience they are assumed to be. Additionally, the “ideal design” for female characters is displayed, almost worshipped, perfect for the Male Gaze, and yet, as we have seen time and time again through previous literature, and we’ll see it again in the next topic, real women are shunned, alienated and excluded from gaming.

In contrast to women existing in the media, albeit as sex objects, is the highly influential theory of Symbolic Annihilation (Tuchman, 1978). So far, the focus has been entirely on what happens when women are represented in the media, yet it is also necessary to take their absence into account. Tuchman takes two main arguments: the first is that the “reflection hypothesis” argues that the mass media reflects dominant societal values, something which has been mentioned innumerable times thus far (1978:7). The second is the theory of “Symbolic Annihilation”, in which women are excluded from the media, or when they do briefly appear, they are trivialised and underrepresented. Effectively, if something is represented within the media, then it is valued and approved by society, such as the roles of the housewife and the male breadwinner. Worth noting is the fact that Tuchman speaks of a time lag, in which the media is slow to represent society. However, over forty years after she wrote about symbolic annihilation, at a time when news and information spread far faster, it is possible that this lag has reduced. Having said this, it is necessary to consider the fact that television and film media can be produced and consumed within the space of only a couple of years, whereas the process for making a video game could take much longer. For example, *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (2017) was released 5 years after its predecessor, *Mass Effect 3* (2012), which is notable for being the first game in the series to advertise its option to play the game as a female protagonist (McWhertor, 2011).

The literature examined highlights a catch-22 of sorts for women – they are frequently excluded from the media, or dismissed as trivial additions, and when they do appear they are hyper-sexualised for male pleasure.

Video Games

The final issue addressed in this chapter is that of video games themselves - what makes a video game, and also the gendered differences in video games, and gameplay, based upon issues such as socialisation, and female representation.

Salen and Zimmerman, who focus on the topic of play, define games as “a system in which players engage in artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome” (2003:83). Whilst this does not refer to video games directly, it does sum up much of what makes a video game from a technical point of view and notes that players can communicate using games over long distances, such as gaming online – though as the source was originally published in 2003, online gaming and chat has come a long way since. Salen and Zimmerman also briefly go into the issue of female representation in games, particularly regarding women as objects of desire within a man’s world. They note that various games come with a “breast jiggle” option (2003:526) to control the level of movement, or “jiggle”, of a female character’s breasts, with some games, such as *Xenoblade Chronicles X* (2015), allowing gamers to alter the size of a character’s breasts as well. However, Salen and Zimmerman (2003) approach video games from a more psychological point of view, usually with the effects of gaming in mind, such as the immersion of the gamer. They also focus on gaming as a much wider scope, from board games to digital games, so it is necessary to move into more concentrated sources that focus primarily on video games, and the gamers themselves.

Much of the literature regarding female gamers attempts to deal with the issue of stereotypical “pink games” (Cassell and Jenkins, 1999). These “pink games” are games that feature stereotypically feminine activities and goals, for example, a cooking game or a fashion game, with the focus being entirely on a female audience, such as games in the Imagine series, including *Imagine Babies* (2007), and *Imagine Fashion Stylist* (2011). In direct contrast to this, “boys’ games” feature the main characters struggling through landscapes, fighting monsters, and saving others. In extreme cases, such as *Grand Theft Auto*, male protagonists can murder prostitutes after having sex with them, highlighting the huge difference between male and female targeted games, further increasing the marginalisation of female gamers. Thus, the work of Cassell and

Jenkins (1999) brings us back, once again, to gender appropriate behaviours, a constant undercurrent throughout this research project, this time in the form of game tastes and the pleasure derived from play (Connell and Pearse, 2015).

This gendered divide in game tastes also leads us to the arguments of Casual vs Hardcore games, and to the rise of harassment within gaming culture. Chess (2013) speaks about the “gamification” of stereotypes, wherein the gender roles, such as that of the female Carer or male Provider/Protector, become video game plotlines, and character definitions. This is an extremely important argument to this research project due to the generally perceived nature of hardcore and casual games. It is widely held that hardcore games are for men, whilst casual games are for women. Chess focuses largely on Facebook games, many of which are aimed at women, and which are defined as “casual” games due to their free and interruptible nature. On the other hand, hardcore games are more difficult and are more difficult to interrupt, with many game design companies favouring the “hardcore” audience to the “casual” gamers, as such, Chess argues that it becomes very easy to be dismissive of casual games.

The work of Kubik (2012) takes the theory of hardcore vs casual into more depth regarding gender, noting that hardcore and casual gamers will identify themselves at the expense of others. This is particularly the case for hardcore gamers, who arguably view themselves as the norm, making the casual gamers the “other”, or more deviant of the two. As with previously mentioned gender theories, the norm is once again held as masculine, with the deviant, devalued other, being feminine, leading to the “devaluation of femininity through the abuse of casual gamers or casual games” (2012:137). The devaluation of casual/female gamers is what leads to the issue of harassment in online and offline gaming communities. Referring back to Tuchman’s notion of Symbolic Annihilation, as female gamers are largely erased from the gaming world, their accomplishments hidden away in favour of their male counterparts, for example, some of the most notable e-Sports teams have all-male rosters, such as Team Dignitas or Cloud9. It was only in 2018 that the Overwatch League introduced their first female player, *Geguri* (McWhertor, 2018). Not only was she quickly under scrutiny for her outward appearance, but in 2016 *Geguri* was also accused of hacking and cheating by male competitors. Whilst they were proven wrong, their careers remained unharmed by the accusations, and they were hired by other e-sports teams, such as Cloud9 (Myers, 2018).

Kubik’s main argument is that female gamers need to legitimise themselves and reaffirm their status as a “true” gamer (2013:141) to be taken seriously. Yet many female gamers are somewhat unwilling to define themselves as ‘hardcore’, arguably

due primarily to the male connotations – being a “hardcore” gamer goes against what is socially acceptable as a woman. Gaming identity is widely thought to be based heavily upon the definition of hardcore, with the ‘hardcore’ audience being the ones who decide whether a game will succeed or be a financial failure, acting as a “litmus test of quality when it comes to games” (Kubik, 2012:138).

The work of Yee (2014) has been interwoven into much of the literature review thus far, as it merges both the theories of the alienation of female gamers and the issues of representation. Yee claims that not only are women reluctant to define themselves as gamers, let alone hardcore, many of them also underestimate their own gaming skills. One of the issues raised, which is one which has also marred much of the work in this literature review, is that much of the work that exists to date has focused largely on the differences in male and female gamers. For example, the assumption women like “pink games” over more stereotypically hardcore games.

It is easy to see then that much of what it means to be a “gamer” is heavily defined by gendered expectations of not only our leisure time, but our expected behaviours too. With women expected to be selfless and caring, it does not leave much time for gaming, nor do these traits complement themselves to the so-called “hardcore” games which are both violent and time consuming. In this sense, the act of gaming is selfish – taking time for yourself to do something you enjoy, and as has been established thus far, being selfish is simply something that is unacceptable for a woman to be in our society.

Conclusion

The research reviewed in this chapter helps to build knowledge about the existing academic works and theories, even when some of these sources had various issues. It is my hope to build upon these works and marry them together where necessary to fill in the gap I have perceived in the literature. It might be very easy to say that female gamers are treated differently because men and women are brought up differently, yet we live in a world where the demographic of gamers is evenly split between men and women. Even so, women who play games continue to face with vitriol and abuse. Many of the scholars cited in this chapter have tended to argue that women are underrepresented, or defined as “casual” gamers, not always considering the issues women face when they are vocal about their love of video games. Therefore, it is my goal to find out why female gamers face such harassment (if they do at all), and whether this has any relation to separate arguments made about the representation of

women within the media and is in no way an attempt to dismiss the work of those who came before me.

The following chapter will continue to draw on the work of others. By focusing on the methods used by researchers in similar fields, I will continue to attempt to build upon the work of others, whilst also filling pertinent gaps in the research to date.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research project is focused on the representation of women in video games, and the opinions and engagement of female gamers with video games, and the gaming community. It is my aim throughout this study to see how women are presented in video games, both in terms of their roles and their physical appearances, as well as finding out what other female gamers think about the representation they see, but also how they combat issues they have faced, and continue to enjoy the games they love. As mentioned in the Literature Review, studies already exist regarding issues of representation in other forms of media, and various pre-existing studies on video games have been in relation to effects on violence and behaviours – but there has also been an increased interest in the study of video games, particularly post-Gamergate. From the project's conception, the plan was to take a two-step approach to the research of video games, and of the female gamers who enjoy them. Content analysis was employed in the beginning in order to focus on the video games themselves, and the video game characters, providing a groundwork for visual and critical analysis, which comprises a large portion of the findings of this research. It would also provide information about representation to take into the interviews with female gamers, thus it was the true basis of my research as a whole.

The Interviews would therefore compliment the analysis of the video games by building upon the results and combining them with other aspects of the research project, such as the thoughts of participants regarding representation.

These methods were chosen for their suitability to answer my research questions, particularly regarding the overarching questions of female character representation, and female gamer opinions and engagement with the gaming community. The use of interviews also allowed for the answering of my questions about female gamer experiences and their emotive responses to them, in addition to the gathering of their opinions. The methodology actually evolved during the process of researching, and a brief online survey, including questions about people's favourite games, was sent out and shared via social media in order to help gather data on popular video games, and improve the sample for in-depth visual and critical analysis, something which will be explored later in the chapter.

Whilst this project is aiming to fill in some of the theoretical gaps left by previous research regarding games and gamers, it is also building upon pre-existing works, particularly with regards to the methodology. Unsurprisingly, much of the work around

representations in the media relies heavily upon various forms of analysis, such as content or visual, which allows researchers to focus on different types, and specific aspects of the media depending upon the focus of their research and what they aim to uncover. However, what is different about this study to much of the existing research is that whilst I made the decision to utilise in-depth interviews, others in the past have employed differing methods. Methods such as observation, or larger scale surveys, have been used to find out more about the gamers, including how they play video games, and how they interact with each other.

As mentioned in previous chapters, a large proportion of the existing work on video games has not only firmly established the dominance of men as characters and gamers, but it also tends to focus on the issue of violence in video games. The works of Dietz (1998), and Dill et al. (2005), for example, both utilise content analysis to research the frequency of specific themes and types of the violence in video games. Both sources look specifically at gameplay, and how the violence presents itself within the brief period of play that was researched. What is interesting is how Dill et al. (2005) utilised PC games due to them being “easily available”, and yet today there is such a wide range of games available on PC that whilst they remain easily available, they are increasingly difficult to research. This is due in part to the increasing numbers of indie-developed games, and the relative ease of publishing them onto platforms such as Steam. Also, the ability to create *mods* (modifications) for the games, which allows gamers to change the games to suit their own wants and needs. This can include adding or removing characters, changing the original designs of the game, or adding more quests, and it generally moves the game away from what the developers had originally intended. This is something that will be discussed later in the chapter regarding the sample used for this research, yet it is worth noting here to highlight just how much video games have changed since these studies were published - an unsurprising fact given that the works of Dietz (1998) and Dill et al. (2005) were published well over a decade ago.

Also worthy of note is how research seems to have moved away from the issue of violence over time toward the issue of sexuality and representation in video games. Whilst the methods have remained highly similar, continuing with the focus on gameplay, it also seems to have moved from actions towards (female) characters, to the characters themselves. Downs and Smith (2010), for example, took 60 top selling games and focused on the primary and secondary characters of the games, based upon twenty minutes of gameplay. The aim of Downs and Smith’s content analysis was to visually “compare male and female sexuality in video game characters” (2010:721).

The quantitative results produced highlighted not only how infrequently female characters would appear compared to male, but also the increased sexuality of female characters over their male counterparts. When women appeared within the games they had studied they frequently displayed sexual characteristics, such as a smaller waist and larger breast size. The work of Downs and Smith (2010) is significant in relation to my own research project mostly because of their utilisation of similar methods, the use of visual analysis to research the representation of women in video games, albeit with a quantitative rather than qualitative focus. There were also similarities between results of the work of Downs and Smith (2010) and my own study, which will be addressed in the following chapter on my own findings from my analysis.

Another interesting study which utilised content analysis regarding female representation is the work of Martins et al. (2009). Within the study the models and measurements of the game characters were compared against the body shape and size of the average American female. This was in order to see just how far removed the image of women we see in video games is from the reality of women's bodies, highlighting how sexualised and unrealistic the bodies of the female characters studied were. The sample of games used by Martins et al. (2009) was larger than that of Downs and Smith (2010), focusing on 150 top selling video games instead of 60, but utilised a similar quantitative approach. The quantitative comparison to real female bodies arguably sets the research apart from the others that rely on visual analysis, as it goes to show just how different real life and the video game worlds can be. As we will see in the results of my interviews with participants in a later chapter, the difference between what is real and what is computer generated is also felt by those enjoying the games, not just those actively seeking these differences out.

Where the studies of Downs and Smith (2010), and Martins et al. (2009) differ from my own research project, however, is in their reliance on gameplay. All of the pre-existing research mentioned above went about analysing the content of the sample games by playing through them briefly, either by themselves or by enlisting the help of "professional" gamers (Dill et al., 2005). The gameplay was then recorded and analysed at a later date following the set coding frame, using the content as a basis for research, much like my own work. Whilst the brief nature of the gameplay exercised made analysing the content far more manageable, video games can range drastically in length. For example, *Super Mario Sunshine* (2002) can take around 16 hours to play, whereas *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011) has anywhere between 30 – 300 hours of gameplay – this is according to community based website, HowLongToBeat, where gamers log the times taken to complete a game. By focusing only on the first

thirty minutes or so, much of the further content, and characters, of the game has been effectively ignored, meaning that relying on brief gameplay alone can be a highly flawed approach to researching video games.

Following from this, the focus on gameplay is also subject to the players skills and interests – in an open world game such as *Skyrim*, the player is given a huge amount of choice and freedom, even within the opening thirty minutes, meaning that everyone who plays the game has a slightly different experience. In cases like this, though the choices can be noted and replicated, it still means that there are some choices that weren't made, which leaves potential gaps in the research, regardless of whether the gamer was a professional or not.

Furthermore, my own research also differs from many existing studies which have relied primarily upon gathering quantitative evidence. We know that in the video games researched by Downs and Smith, 41% of female characters wore “sexually revealing clothing” (2010:728), defined as clothing to enhance or exaggerate parts of the body, yet it can be difficult, and somewhat arbitrary, to place a numerical, or yes/no, value on to sexuality. It seemed necessary at this point to depart from the quantitative way of thinking and consider instead the aspects that made a female character sexual, rather than counting how many skin-tight outfits were encountered, though this method of analysing the visual content was used at a very basic level.

In contrast to the popularity of content analysis in the study of video games, it seems that interviews to research gamers have been used far less frequently. In relation to gamers and their thoughts and behaviours, studies seem to lean more towards the usage of observation of the gamers, or surveys sent out to large swathes of gaming participants – making it easier to gather larger amounts of quantitative information, but also gain an understanding of how people act when playing the games themselves. The focus, therefore, is slightly different from the one I intended to take, looking not at the activities of gameplay, but at the effects and experiences female gamers had as a result of gaming.

Where interviews are used, much like this study, they are used in conjunction with another method. For example, the work of both Schott and Horrell (2000) and Thornham (2009) utilised interviews combined with observation of gamers. Schott and Horrell opted for a more short-term approach, interviewing and observing gamers over evenings and weekends in an attempt to gather information about female gamers habits and leisure activities, whereas Thornham went for a longitudinal approach. The longitudinal nature of Thornham's research meant that a number of households were observed over a four-year period, which allowed for the gathering of very deep, rich,

and informative results in relation to gaming habits and justifications of behaviours. It also meant that the research was able to gather a far better picture of the games that were played and popular in the households, rather than whatever was being played at the time that Schott and Horrell were observing, which could arguably have altered the gamers' behaviours.

In a similar vein to this research project, Shaw (2011) employed the use of interviews in conjunction with a survey in order to gather a sample of participants. Whereas, in my own work, the use of a survey came about at a later stage of the research in order to gather a more representative sample of video games, Shaw planned on using a survey to create a sample of interviewees – thus in both Shaw's and my own study, surveys were utilised to create a sample which would be used throughout the research.

This is where the similarities largely end, as from this point Shaw's sample was further narrowed down based on participant characteristics, focusing primarily on minority gamers (i.e. those who weren't white, heterosexual males). The interviews were employed to research how gamers identified themselves, and what it meant to define yourself gamer, particularly when they did not fit the industry expectations. Shaw argues that the gaming industry views gamers as heterosexual white males, despite evidence to the contrary, which in turn leads to many of the protagonists of video games to be heterosexual white men.

Additionally, the work of Hussain and Griffiths (2009) utilised semi-structured, thematic, interviews, conducted with online gamers (i.e. those who played games such as World of Warcraft), to study the social impact of gaming, and the experiences of the gamers themselves. It is interesting to note, however, that the vast majority of participants in this study were male, so whilst the use of semi/unstructured interviews has shown itself to be a beneficial method in the research of gamers' experiences, the results of Hussain and Griffiths (2009) study in particular would be highly biased towards the experiences of male gamers, not gamers as a whole – with 52 of the participants being male gamers, compared to just 19 female gamers. It is necessary, then, for future research to focus more on the experiences of female gamers in order to fill the gap left by the male-focused results which exist to date – something which this research project has aimed to do through the use of interviews with *only* female gamers.

Furthermore, my own research aims to look at the experiences of female gamers, not at their behaviours or habits as a gamer as previous research has done, such as Thornham's longitudinal observation (2009). The trend of using observation in relation to interviews is interesting, as it allows the interviews to gain an additional depth due to the context they are in. The work of Thornham (2009), for example, based on the

development of a four-year rapport with gamers acted as the foundation for many of the findings, giving much greater depth to the experiences and habits of gamers – participants would become more comfortable with the researcher present after knowing them for a while, after all.

Once again, my research project departs from previous studies in that, rather than utilising interviews with another form of ethnographic research, the interview is included and designed to complement the findings of the visual and critical analysis. As we will see in the findings of the interviews, however, much of the focus of participants will be on the *visual* aspect of the games. The aim of using both the visual and critical analysis and interviews was to produce a greater depth of results, with the interviews building upon the analysis of the video games and providing a greater insight not only into the video game characters, but how female gamers interact with them and feel about the representations they see. In this research project, the two methods were chosen to complement each other, with the analysis providing an analytical basis for qualitative analysis, as well as the interviews, and the interviews adding human opinions, and a greater qualitative viewpoint to the results.

Visual and Critical Analysis

In terms of this project, the use of content analysis should be seen as the foundation upon which I built my research. It was employed as a tool to allow for further research into the characters which arose from the content analysis sample of games and named characters, allowing for further visual and critical analysis of their designs and their backstories.

Content analysis was chosen as a basis for my analysis of video game characters, not only because of its consistent utilisation in similar studies, but also because of the ability to focus the analysis on a specific point of interest, allowing the method to be adapted to a wide range of media, and research. In this case, I was able to focus on the video games, and the characters within them for my research, and then build upon that with further analysis.

Whilst the content analysis itself was quantitative, the further analysis of the sample was primarily qualitative, therefore it is hoped that this research will not only be provided with a source of rich data to complement the interviews, but it will allow for the identification of patterns across a wide range of data. In this instance, for example, the roles of female characters could be tracked across a large number of video game titles, allowing for critical analysis of the text, and highlighting established patterns within the content – such as the role of Princess.

Sample – Games

In order to create the sample of video games for analysis, multiple steps were taken to ensure that the final sample was representative of some of the most popular games available as of July 2017, at the time of analysis.

Initially, a sample was created of top-rated games from Metacritic, and its partner website, Gamerankings - both are cumulative review sites. The reviewing system differed between the two, so from Metacritic only the games that were scored 90-99 points were included in the initial sample, and games from Gamerankings that scored over 90% were added and integrated. This created a list of 815 games, across various platforms, and even included large digital content (*DLC*) add-ons to games, making it abundantly clear that the sample had to be reduced in size, lest it be unmanageable.

From here, the next stage was to go over the list and take out any games that were not on the dominant home console systems (Nintendo, Playstation, and Xbox), the reasoning behind this was simple: due to the fact that services such as Steam, the Apple App store, or Google Play store, were now easily accessible and filled with a huge, and ever-growing number of independent (*Indie*) games and titles, many of which are free-to-play games, to include PC and Mobile games was a near impossible task. Many people can now play video games with ease, usually without even realising it, with Candy Crush (Mobile) and various free-to-play Steam games being a perfect example of this. So, with the focus of the study resting on those who identify as “Gamers”, it seemed a necessary step to take out the games that exist in an unsure state of mind between fun app and video game. Additionally, handheld consoles were excluded from the final list because in the current gaming market Nintendo holds a monopoly over handheld gaming with their 3DS (2011) and 2DS (2013) consoles. Playstation had a brief stint of success with the Playstation Portable (PSP, 2004) and the Playstation Vita (2011), but they quickly fell out of favour, thus the audience for handheld consoles is much smaller, with very little to compare it to.

At this point, whilst the sample was much smaller, some modifications to a set of rules to include or not to include games was still required. Many in the original sample were sports games, music games, and other genres based on real-life or pre-existing media. In order to get a more accurate view of video games on their own, it was necessary to remove these. For example, whilst a game such as *Fifa 17* (2016) could provide some insight into the representation of women, based on the inclusion of female footballers,

its basis in real life meant it would be leaning more to a commentary on female representation in sports, rather than on video games.

This is where the research deviates from the original plan. Whilst the sample had been cut down to around 200 games, which seemed ample, I developed a quick and relatively informal survey which I circulated on social media to ensure the sample was including games which were both critically acclaimed and enjoyed by gamers themselves. Initially it was designed as a quick personal measure to see if the sample included a selection of games that were popular with gamers, as well as critics. However, it grew beyond expectations and so the decision was made to use the results in conjunction with the initial sample to create a more representative (and smaller) sample of video games. A brief overview of the survey will be included later in the chapter, for now, however, the survey provided the means to cross-reference the two samples. The video game series' that appeared in both lists became the final sample of the content analysis, with the relevant games within those series being the subjects of a more in-depth analysis of the characters, both visually and critically, finally creating a sample of 163 video games across 38 different series' (Appendix 1). The reasoning behind looking at the series' as a whole was to attempt to gather better information about patterns across the series' over time.

Process

Once the sample of games was complete, the research consisted of looking at each individual game, and analysing the characters within them in terms of their visual representation, and their storylines in game. This was in order to gain an understanding of the roles fulfilled, and the representation of the characters as a whole. In recent years, there has been a trend in developers creating larger and larger games, from the huge worlds of *The Witcher 3* (2015) to the massive amount of content and quests in *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (2017). This also means a sharp rise in the number of characters within a game – not just the main, playable, character, but in the supporting cast and non-player characters (NPCs) as well. Therefore, in order for the research to remain relevant to the overarching argument I'm making, and to ensure that the data corpus is analytically manageable, only the characters named within the games were included within the data set. Regardless of whether that character was *Master Chief* (Halo, 2001), or a lowly merchant named *Squirt* (Diablo 3, 2012), for the purposes of my research, a name suggested to me that the character was important to the game designers, and to the story, and thus was worthy of inclusion, regardless of character gender.

Each character was researched to find out anything worthy of note, with the following topics being of the highest importance, as per the coding manual:

- Gender (or preferred pronouns)
- Species/Race (Are they human? If not, what is their species/race, e.g. Elf, Khajit, Goron, etc)
- Role (e.g. Merchant, Healer, Princess etc)
- Status (e.g. Living, Dead, MIA, etc)
- Appearance (e.g. Shirtless, exposed bust/legs/midriff, etc)

Further notes were made, where relevant, regarding the characters marital status, including whether the player character could have a sexual relationship with the character as a part of the storyline. Information about characters was gathered from a wide range of sources, including official game websites, fan sites and forums, with no one source being a true font of knowledge for all video games. Character information, in some cases, was readily available, and official character art was coupled with the information and character biographies. Still, much of the information required a degree of digging, particularly with newer games, with fans and developers keeping the information hidden, perhaps due to the fear of spoiling the game for others.

Visual and Critical Analysis

The content analysis allowed me to create a database of characters based upon a wide range of video games, spanning a number of years and genres. In doing so, I could gather a sense of the various characters and forms of representation I would be dealing with. After providing a sample of characters during the content analysis, and following the above process, I was able to pick out some of the most common themes in design and storyline, and then visually analyse selected characters that I felt personified various designs, particularly regarding innocence and sexuality, which I will discuss in depth in Chapter 4. Also, the critical analysis meant that I could look at the trends in character roles, highlighting the aspects of female characters that were displayed across a variety of games. For example, the stereotypical healer, or looking at factors such as character death, and whether there was meaning behind it, such as the motivation of the protagonist.

It was during the process of the content analysis that I was able to choose specific characters that I felt highlighted the visual and textual trends I was seeing in the results. I chose various characters based on the initial content analysis and my own experiences as a gamer, such as *Mercy* (Overwatch, 2016), or *Princess Zelda* (The Legend of Zelda series), that I felt embodied specific roles, or shared similar designs

which I could further analyse to highlight issues of sexualisation, objectification, and others. In this sense, I followed Berger's (1972) argument that the images we see in art, or in this case, video games, have value and create arguments, and so I specifically looked at the characters which personified the arguments I wanted to make based upon the results of the initial content analysis.

Evaluation

The creation of a working and representative sample of games proved time consuming yet rewarding. Creating a sample based around games that are both highly rated by critics and highly popular amongst gamers meant that the sample was further tailored to fit the focus on gamers. If the focus were instead on best-selling games, the list would be comprised of those that have been sold, but not necessarily played and held in the hearts of gamers. Not only does this method of research provide a rich insight into the games themselves, but it allows for a far deeper analysis, and the creation of an overview of the trends that exist within the popular video games market and creates content that gamers can speak about passionately – a hugely beneficial factor when it comes to interviewing gamers.

The use of content analysis to create a sample for my overall visual and critical analysis also allowed for the evolution of the project to include a brief, and somewhat informal survey, to provide a more representative sample of games for my further analysis. Whilst the survey is by no means representative of gamers across the globe, it gathered enough traction, due in part to its simplicity, that even those who do not necessarily refer to themselves as gamers decided to answer the questions. This meant that the resulting sample for analysis was able to include games enjoyed by those who are not as heavily into gaming as those who would incorporate being a gamer into their identity, thus generating richer data in regard to the final analysis of the games themselves. Respondents were not required to go into much detail about their favourite games, or why they enjoyed them, which may have been off-putting, particularly for those who do not class themselves as gamers – they simply listed which games they enjoyed most.

It should be noted that research of the sort undertaken here can be time sensitive. That is to say, the sample of games included here, although up to date when I drew the sample in mid 2017, has the potential to become outdated very quickly. New games are launched nearly every week, and new favourites and critically acclaimed games are established and acknowledged as such just as frequently. Additionally, the sample was created around highly subjective views held by critics and gamers – it is an

obvious claim to make that one person's favourite game is different to another's. That is to say that whilst I took a great deal of time and effort to create a sample which is representative of the games that people play and enjoy, it will never truly be wholly representative of gamers, and video games. This also means that whilst the clearly outlined sample and coding structure are simple enough to follow, thus replicable and reliable in theory, this is simply not the case in practice.

Not only is the sample at the mercy of others, the research is too, with much of the information on video game characters coming from fan websites and other similar sources. This means that whilst a game designer may have given a character a name, those who play the game may believe that the character was not important enough to warrant a mention in their websites, synopsis', or character pages. This means that, inevitably, the research was open to bias, even when actively trying to avoid it by including wide range of characters and video games. This was a similar issue in the sources mentioned toward the beginning of the chapter, such as Martins et al. (2009) – gameplay styles and experiences will differ from each person, and so a truly representative experience, especially in the open-world games that are popular today, is difficult, if not impossible, to fully capture and research.

One final point worth mentioning is that, whilst the initial use of visual analysis provides large amounts of information about *how* the characters are presented within the games, it does not explain *why* they are presented as such. Whilst this may seem like a factor which would work against my overall analysis, it actually works in its favour in my research project, as it persuaded me of the importance of coupling the visual and critical analysis of the characters and the games themselves with other methods. This was in order to address research weaknesses that would inevitably result from the use of only one type of method. As such, my multi-method approach allowed me to create a more solid foundation for my research. For this project, as mentioned before, the content analysis that created the sample, and then further the visual and critical analysis of the video games was used in conjunction with a brief survey of gamers (and non-gamers), which I turn to in the next section of this chapter, to make up for its shortcomings regarding the sample.

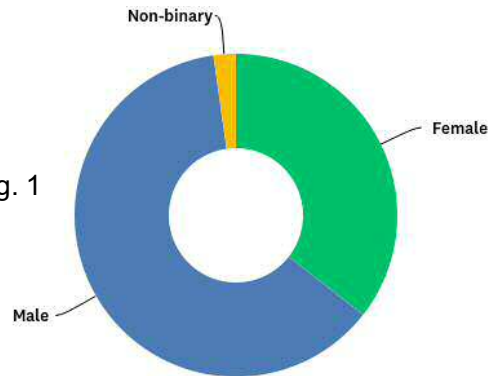
Survey

As mentioned previously, the addition of an online survey of gamers came about purely by chance, and it was incorporated into the study as a means to create a better sample for overall analysis. The aim was to compare the list of critically acclaimed games that I had compiled, to the fan favourite games mentioned by survey respondents. This was

in order to see if games that were highly regarded by critics and industry professionals were also highly regarded by gamers.

Initially, the survey was designed to gather a small amount of information regarding gaming habits and favourite games, just as a personal measure to ensure the sample was including games of interest.

Fig. 1



The survey was posted and shared via social media due to the ease of sharing it with others, e.g. by sharing a post, or 'retweeting' a link. It came as a surprise that the survey gathered over 100 results, gathered entirely by the means of a snowball sample (Atkinson and Flint, 2001) - first by sending the survey link to gamers known to myself, and encouraging the respondents to send it to others, or share on social media, thus gathering more respondents. The survey ended with 135 respondents, with around 35% of respondents identifying as female (fig. 1).

The survey was entirely optional for potential respondents, with them having the option to take part, and share the survey, or ignore it entirely. Respondents were kept anonymous and asked 6 brief questions, with either a selection of answers to choose from or being encouraged to write their own (Appendix 2). At the end, the respondents were asked to list up to three of their favourite games, though it should be noted that only one response out of three was required, so not every participant listed all three favourites.

The questions were as follows:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your preferred gaming platform?
4. How many hours a week do you spend, on average, playing video games?
(Regardless of platform)
5. Would you describe yourself as a "hardcore" or "casual gamer? Why?
6. What is your favourite video game? (Choose up to 3)

From 135 survey responses, the result was a list of 393 favourite games (202 when duplicates were removed accordingly). Whilst this list wasn't anywhere near exhaustive, or representative of gamers as a whole, it was a solid addition to the research, as it not only confirmed that the sample at this point was including video games that were relevant to the research through their popularity, but it also allowed

for the expansion of the sample. I then decided to use this data to compare this new list of favourite games against my initial sample. As mentioned previously, the sample produced by the content analysis was reduced down to 163 video games, based upon gamers choice, and critics recommendations. The reduction was the result of the cross-referencing of the pre-existing sample, and the results of the survey. Games which were not mentioned in the survey results were removed from the sample, and other games were added in order to provide an outlook on a game series as a whole, such as the *Batman: Arkham* series of games. As with the initial sample, mobile, PC, and handheld games mentioned by respondents were omitted from the final sample.

Interviews

Following from the analysis of the video games and characters themselves, I chose to use semi-structured and in-depth interviews with participants due to the nature of the topic being discussed. I wanted to find out not only what participants thought about representation of women in video games, but also speak about their own experiences as gamers and with the gaming community, thus looking at how they engaged with gaming.

In relation to female gamer experiences, it seemed appropriate to take a more relaxed, and informal, approach, particularly when speaking of issues such as online abuse, in order to put the participants at ease, and to gather more emotive information and create a rapport with the respondents, much like building a friendship and earning trust (Johnson and Rowlands, 2012). Though they were initially asked a series of questions in order to begin the interview and create a mutual understanding, much of the interview took place like a free-flowing conversation, allowing participants to voice a variety of viewpoints, and provided in-depth results for the study. Unlike structured interviews, which follow a strict set of questions, after the initial questions each interview was then tailored to the participant on the spot, creating a unique set of questions for each participant, in order to gather the required information about their opinions and experiences. This semi-structured approach to the interviews was taken in order to allow the participant to “find her voice” (Reinharz and Chase, 2001:225), giving them the opportunity and freedom to speak about their experiences when they may have otherwise been silenced. Though an unstructured approach would have given more freedom in regard to information gathered, the initial questions were necessary to find out how the participants viewed themselves (as gamers), and how they viewed video games, before going on to the more conversation-like aspects of the interviews.

When gathering information about gamers, from gamers, it is necessary to get the depth of individual experiences and thoughts, to create a conversation rather than adhere to a strict, unwavering, guideline. This allows for the opening of more topics of conversation, not only regarding potentially sensitive topics, but also allowed for the continuation of ideas and conversation, beyond simple yes/no answers, thus providing greater depth to the findings.

Ethics

Due to the inclusion of human participants in my study, it was necessary to consider the potential ethical implications of the research. The participants were at no risk of physical or mental harm, and whilst upsetting topics might have arisen in the interviews, participants were by no means forced to discuss *anything* that would cause upset. Every participant volunteered to take part in the study and generously gave up their time to speak openly about being a female gamer. Each participant was given an information sheet about the study and was asked to grant their consent to participate via a consent form (Appendix 3) which also made clear that they could withdraw at any point, without reason. Minimal information from the participants was kept for the purpose of contacting participants, keeping channels of communication open should the participant wish to withdraw, or contribute further thoughts. Anything that was necessary for contact with the participants was stored in a password-protected document. Additionally, outside of this document, all participants have been referred to with false names for the sake of anonymity.

Ethics approval was granted by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee in February 2018, after which point the research with participants began.

Sample - Participants

Participants for the interviews were gathered using a snowball sample. Initial participants came from personal connections and from social media, individuals with whom I had direct contact with. From there, information was passed on by the initial contacts to other potential participants who got involved either via direct contact or from their connections (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The sample very simply sought out women who played video games. A number of those who wanted to participate contacted me to double check they could do so as they seemed unsure whether or not they would be classed as a "gamer". This is interesting to note, as many were quick to note that they do *play* games and enjoy them but wondered if that qualified them to be called a gamer. I reassured them that they were welcome to participate in the

interviews – after all, a wide range of experiences can only be beneficial to research. The main criterion for inclusion was simply whether or not they played games, no limits on time, no need to define oneself as “hardcore” or “casual”, just an enjoyment of gaming in any form. The aim was to gather a sample of around 20 female gamers, and though I had more than 20 interested parties, the final total of interviewees was 18. Though the number is not significantly lower than planned, the reduced total was due primarily to participants ceasing to respond during the interview, or even ignoring the ethics forms, usually via email or other online services. With participants being interviewed in person at their convenience, or over video call services such as Skype or Discord, the geographical area from which participants were from increased. I had initially hoped that by increasing the geographical area, I would not only increase my sample size, but also gather data which could provide some insight into the difference between UK gamers, and those who live elsewhere. However, the majority of respondents were UK residents and so no real insight into the experiences of foreign gamers could be gathered.

Process

Participants were invited to choose their method of contact, either in person or via the internet, to suit their schedule and needs. From there the interview was essentially an open conversation about their experiences being a gamer.

A number of basic questions were asked of each participant:

- How do you define video games?
- Based upon your definition of video games, how often would you say you play games in a week, on average?
- Would you call yourself a gamer? Why?

From here the discussion focused on the participants’ experiences, both in person and in online games and communities, and would move on to their thoughts and opinions of the representation of female characters within the video games that they have played, or that they have any experience with.

Finally, participants were asked to comment on whether they believed there was a link between female gamers and female game characters – whether in their treatment as a gamer or other such issues. Whilst the discussion following the initial questioning was informal, the main topics of experience and representation were always maintained, with further relevant topics of interest being picked up and questioned during the discussion- for example, the mention of childhood experiences. Though childhood experiences were not necessarily relevant to the study at first, as increasing numbers

of participants mentioned them concerning their experiences as a whole, and how they engage with video games, it became apparent that it was a worthwhile inclusion to the study as a whole. This meant that when it came to the analysis of the results of the interviews, I could gain an understanding of changes within their lives, and comparisons of their experiences with those of others. This also kept the discussions comfortable and free-flowing without forcing the participants onto any topics unnecessarily.

For in-person interviews, the location was chosen by the participant in order to help them feel more relaxed in their chosen environment, thus “creating a comfortable atmosphere that is sensitive to the needs of the participants” (Herzog, 2005:27). The only suggestion from myself, as the interviewer, was that the area should be quiet enough for both parties to be heard, and for the interview to be picked up by the digital recorder. Leaving the decision to the participant led to many choosing locations that were familiar to both participant and researcher, such as gaming related social spaces, whereas others were most comfortable conducting the interview in their own homes. Being in the participants home also had the added benefit of them being close to their own gaming set-ups, i.e. their consoles and favourite games, not only providing an insight into the participant, but also allowing them the ability to effectively have their inspiration in front of them. It also meant that participants would frequently gesture at games and gaming memorabilia around their living space to back up their own comments. The in-person interviews had an average duration of around thirty minutes, and each participant was welcomed to get in contact afterwards should any other ideas come to them at a later date. Though very few did, a couple of participants did take the opportunity to send articles, or pictures, they had seen that they had seen online, and thought would be of interest to myself, and beneficial to the research. In person, the interview was far easier to conduct as it allowed for more freedom of conversation, however this was not always possible. Many participants were contacted via email or Skype, using both voice calls or instant messaging – whichever the participant preferred. Interestingly, none chose to take part in a video chat, which would have been more beneficial for the research, due to the inclusion of visual cues, like with in-person interviews.

Similarly, with email, the interviews were effectively dragged out over a longer period of time due to participant and researcher schedules – this means that in some cases, a specific train of thought may have been lost and an idea wasn't introduced as a result. However, by utilising the internet as a means of contact, more participants were able to take part that otherwise would have been excluded due to geographical, and logistical,

limitations. With interviews over the internet, the premise was exactly the same as in-person – the basic questions were asked originally and then topics of note were singled out and the discussion would follow in a similar fashion.

Evaluation

The use of in-depth, semi-structured, interviews allowed for an informal approach, with the aim to put the participant at ease, allowing them to control the conversation, and mention anything they believed was worthwhile. It also meant that rather than sticking to a fairly rigid design, the flowing nature of the conversation and questions meant that it was far easier to build a rapport with participants who were unfamiliar and potentially uncomfortable in the situation, i.e. speaking to someone they do not really know. Being a female gamer and speaking to a female gamer can also aid this, based on the idea that it is far easier to speak about shared experiences, which then opens the discussion to opinions and experiences that are new and different (Reinharz and Chase, 2001). This all allowed for a greater exploration of the topics and ideas that came up regarding their experiences and created a depth of knowledge that greatly complements the analysis of the video games, particularly regarding their experiences and the representation of women in video games. This particular approach to interviews also allows for emotions and reactions to seep through and into the findings of the research – for example if an event made the participant happy, or sad, even a participant's silence is worth noting, unlike the somewhat clinical approach of structured interviews and the lack of ability to deviate from the set questions.

On the other hand, whilst female gamers being interviewed by a female gamer has a positive effect on the building of a rapport and gathering rich data, it also comes with the issue of social desirability bias. Participants may answer the questions and lead the discussion in a way that they believe is socially acceptable, for example, not necessarily being totally honest about experiences, or omitting information as a result. Participants may retain information that they do not wish to share due to personal reasons, and whilst this is understandable, it can have implications on the results of the research (Adler and Adler, 2001).

Additionally, by creating a conversation during the interview, it is possible that the interview was tinged with an interviewer bias – whilst I sought to avoid this, it likely that certain questions and topics came up as a result of unintentionally leading conversation, and other such issues. Furthermore, the greatest issue with using interviews is the ethical issues that need to be considered. Whilst there is no risk of physical harm, the simple fact of using human participants comes with a variety of

factors to take into consideration, especially regarding potential emotional harm, particularly when speaking of experiences that could be upsetting. Though no participants were forced to speak about anything they were uncomfortable with and were able to pause or stop the interview at any time, the simple fact is that they may still have been reminded of upsetting events without intention, and once again may have retained information as a result of potential upset, or their desire to avoid such topics of conversation (Adler and Adler, 2001).

In general, whilst interviews do provide incredibly rich data that complements the various forms of analysing video games and characters, they are also very time consuming, which does mean that doing a large number of informal interviews is problematic at best. However, it was necessary to take this approach for the emotive aspects of the research, speaking frankly about harassment and allowing female gamers to voice their opinions about the gaming community, which may have otherwise been silenced, and speak about their experiences and personal achievements in a safe space. Participants were also given the opportunity to speak about their opinions on the representation of women in video games, which may have otherwise been met with resistance and discontent in a male-dominated gaming community.

In the following chapters the findings of these methods will be looked at in depth, highlighting the patterns and frequent themes from the results. The results of the two methods were divided into two chapters due to the sheer amount of information gathered from the analysis of the games and the characters, and the interviews. From this point on we will be directly addressing the research questions and seeking to answer them through the methods outlined above.

Chapter 4:
Video Game Analysis Findings

As outlined in the previous chapter, content analysis was the basis of this research project in order to obtain a quantitative measure of women's portrayal in some of the most popular games at the time of research (Summer 2017). This brought to light a number of recurring themes in terms of character roles and designs which could then be subjected to further visual and critical analysis to identify the key aspects which I will outline throughout this chapter.

One of the aims of my research was to find out how women were being presented within video games, not only looking at issues of sexualisation, but also into other aspects of their characters. By looking at game series', and the games within them, I also hoped to note any changes that had occurred with the representation of women through the years.

A complete list of the games studied, and their developers and release dates, can be found in the bibliography section of this research paper.

For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on three main topics, each with a number of recurring themes within:

- Roles
- Character design
- Changes over time

The decision to focus on these topics was largely out of necessity – the content analysis yielded a large amount of results for me to analyse, providing not only a wide coverage, but a depth into each game due to the focus on the named characters. As such, it would be impossible to look at every occurring theme and topic individually, but the ones chosen are arguably the most common across the researched games, which is what led to my choosing of them for further analysis.

As you can see from Table 1 below, of the 163 video games examined, over 3,000 video game characters were included in the sample. I have allowed for some movement in these numbers as some of the characters have ambiguous genders, or seemingly no gender at all. This was particularly an issue in regard to the sci-fi genre, in which robots and aliens are prevalent, and typically do not adhere to standard genders. Additionally, the sample size is somewhat smaller than the total amount of characters in each game studied, simply because I avoided studying recurring characters more than once.

Table 1 (Fig. 2)

Game Series	Men	Women
Assassin's Creed	74	28
Banjo Kazooie	4	5
Bioshock	19	9
Bloodborne	6	8
Borderlands	47	17
Call of Duty	241	16
Crash Bandicoot	17	2
Dark Souls	65	36
Dead Space	22	10
Diablo	42	20
The Elder Scrolls	116	45
Fallout	199	81
Far Cry	62	15
Fez	7	3
Final Fantasy	228	94
Gears of War	14	4
Grand Theft Auto	56	24
Half Life	12	4
Halo	30	13
The Legend of Zelda	138	72
Mass Effect	111	66
Metal Gear Solid	54	18
Overwatch	14	12
Panzer Dragoon	41	8
Persona	116	73
Portal	8	3
Red Dead	37	5
Resident Evil	55	25
Soulcalibur	23	20
Spyro	20	4
Street Fighter	31	9
Super Mario	28	7

Tom Clancy's	193	45
Tekken	45	20
The Last of Us	9	5
The Witcher	35	14
Tomb Raider	34	12
Uncharted	21	7
Totals	2,274	859

Roles

Within the sample, around 859 characters were female, and they tended to fall into a wide variety of roles, with some being more apparent than others. As part of my critical analysis of the video games, I wanted to focus on the roles that only the female characters fill, it did not seem necessary to focus on the range of roles, such as merchant, mentor, or blacksmith which are typically taken by a range of characters, though they tended to be primarily male.

The following roles are those which seemed most popular for female characters to fulfil:

- Healer
- Princess
- Queen

All of the mentioned roles tended to involve a degree of magical ability on the part of the character, but some could also be categorised without it. Though male magic-users did exist within the sample, they were few and far between, usually limited to fantasy genre games, such as *The Elder Scrolls* series.

It should also be noted that the critical analysis of the roles of female characters also opened up the opportunity to speak about how specific roles are portrayed visually, particularly in regard to the Princess and the Queen and their links to innocence and sexuality, similar to their portrayals in other forms of media, such as Disney movies.

Healer

It became apparent during the initial content analysis that one of the most predominant roles that female characters fall into across a wide variety of genres is that of a *healer* - whether through the use of magic or scientific advancements.

Of the sample size, 22 female characters were explicitly labelled as a “healer” within the game. Whilst this number may seem small in comparison to the size of the whole sample, it is worth noting that there were also female characters which had access to items and forms of magic which could heal, but it wasn’t their primary function. If we were to expand “healer” into the role of “magic user” the sample would be far too large to truly gather any useful information from it. In some cases, though these are not as prevalent in many of the games studied, some female characters are even able to “heal” the main character through the use of sexual relationships. A prime example of this is the *Grand Theft Auto* series, particularly *GTA: IV (2004)*, in which the main character, Niko, can choose between a number of potential girlfriends. Effectively, the player character is able to increase their emotional and sexual connections to the women and then use their individual “special abilities” to their own benefit – one of which is the ability to heal the player character. It was this popularity of the role in female characters that immediately drew me to studying it for the research – the ability to heal others seems almost

matronly and is reminiscent of the idea that women are expected to care for others, even at the detriment of themselves, particularly as a part of their Triple Shift (McKie et al, 1999).

Though the role of healer is usually used in conjunction with another, there are instances where the healer is a standalone role, particularly in Multiplayer games.

This includes characters such as

Mercy (Fig.3) from *Overwatch* (2016), who is a character who utilises science to heal and even revive teammates. Interestingly, the use of scientific methods of healing is usually reserved for *male* characters, with Mercy being one of the exceptions to the rule. When male characters are healers, they fulfil roles such as combat medics, scientists, and doctors. This usually occurs in games where female characters are few and far between - less so in the fantasy genre and more in action-based, first-person shooters, usually with a greater focus on a battle for survival, such as *Rainbow Six: Siege (2015)* or *Half-Life (1998)*.



Fig. 3

Throughout the research sample as a whole, it became apparent that the role of a female healer is usually coupled with the female character also being a *magic user* or having some kind of supernatural power beyond that of many of the other characters. Throughout the games studied, there was a variety of terms utilised to describe the magic users, such as mage, witch, and sorceress. For ease, we will continue to refer to the characters as *magic users*, simply due to the fact that the terms used in each game are largely contextual and have different connotations attached – for example, the term “witch” refers to both the female equivalent of a wizard, but is also used to refer to a woman with “malignant supernatural powers” (Merriam-Webster Online). Additionally, from this point on, there will effectively be two types of magic mentioned: white magic, which is “good”, selfless, and encompasses healing, and black magic, which is “evil”, selfish, and used for personal gain at the detriment of others.

Whilst male characters, particularly in fantasy settings, have powers related to them being the “chosen one” or the “hero” within the game, such as Link in *The Legend of Zelda* series, many female magic users, or powered individuals, have powers that can exceed that in certain ways, usually to the benefit of those around them. When female characters have magical abilities, or powers, they tend to fall into one of two categories, which I will call The Holy Princess, and The Powerful Queen.

Both roles occur frequently within the initial sample built from content analysis, and further critical analysis through which the roles became more apparent, with around 35 occurrences each, which is why I have chosen to focus on these over other roles which female characters may fulfill. Once again, though the number may seem low in comparison to the overall sample size, the number explicitly considers those defined as being a benevolent Princess, or an antagonising Queen. This, in total, gives us nearly 70 female characters who fall explicitly into these roles, but there are also a number of characters whose good/bad alliances were relatively ambiguous, but who were still powerful magic users, of which there were 34.

The distinction between Princess and Queen here is important – being a Queen suggests having far greater powers than a Princess, both over a Kingdom and even in terms of magic. Beyond the character roles, the distinction between the two also overflows into the character design as a whole, something which will be addressed later in the chapter.



Fig. 4

Fig. 5



Holy Princess

In many of the video games within the content analysis sample, female characters that used good, white, magic were also regarded as *holy maidens* – individuals who had links to holy beings within the setting of the game. Based upon my critical analysis, these characters are largely designed to be, and portrayed as, innocent and pure, and are motivated largely by the desire to protect others – hence their reliance on healing magic. With parallels to the lives of many women today, these fictional women also work a triple shift just as real women do, juggling (paid) work, housework, and emotion work (McKie et al, 1999), though in slightly different ways – the Princess/Maiden

not only works to survive, but also cares for others, and somehow manages to go back to effectively running a kingdom or leading a religion. There is a huge burden placed upon their shoulders, though these burdens are definitely more fantastical than women are faced with beyond the realm of gaming. As per the emotional “requirements” of their triple shift, women are expected to care for others and put their needs before her own, something which is perfectly crystallised into the form of the Princess. I would argue that the Princess is a character who is designed to be selfless, risking her own life and wellbeing for the benefit of others –in video games, for example, *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* (2011) is a prime example of this, in which Princess Zelda (Fig. 4) locks herself away in a magical crystal for hundreds of years in order to use her own powers to keep the antagonist at bay, aiding the hero in his quest.

Based on the sample, whilst it does appear to be very common for princesses to fulfil the role of a holy maiden, such as Princess Zelda (Fig. 4, *The Legend of Zelda series*), it is worth noting that not every holy maiden is a princess, like Yuna (Fig. 5) from *Final Fantasy X* (2001). Yuna is similar to a shrine priestess, wielding holy powers and embarking on a pilgrimage. However, based on my findings, they all fall into the roles of white magic users aiming to help others, whether it is the people within their kingdom, or their friends and family. These magic users fulfil a more passive role within the video games that they appear in, particularly when compared to the protagonist -



Fig. 6

they work with the protagonist, reacting to situations and the pain of others, rather than having a more active leadership role. Even in RPGs where the princess/holy maiden is technically a playable character, they tend to be relegated to the back of the party setup, in terms of game mechanics, where they can be protected by the protagonist – Aerith (Fig. 6) in *Final Fantasy VII (1997)* is a prime example of this. Within the game mechanics, Aerith is best placed at the back of the player’s party in order to protect her – this allows her to use her powers to the benefit of the other party members by healing them or providing them with defensive status boosts. When it comes to battle sequences within the game, losing the healer can mean death for the other playable characters.

Despite their magical, and sometimes godlike powers, the Holy Princess (and various Holy Maidens) still seems to end up in perilous situations which results in them being saved by the hero at some point or another. Usually the character is kidnapped by the primary antagonist of the game - Princess Peach (*Super Mario series*), for example, may not be a magical maiden, but she is the poster child for the kidnapped Princess. It is worth noting, however, that the use of kidnapping occurs even outside of the expected fantasy game genre. For example, Ashley Graham (*Resident Evil 4, 2005*) is the daughter of the US President and is kidnapped multiple times throughout the course of the horror game. Across many of the studied games, female characters are kidnapped typically as some form of leverage upon the protagonist, with the hero enacting revenge for what has been taken from them, and saving the Princess becomes either the ultimate goal for the hero, or a major part of the larger story.

The cycle of being kidnapped and being saved seems to “forcibly” render the Princess as an object to own, either in the hands of the antagonist or the protagonist (Consalvo, 2003:174). The Princess, as a result, becomes the primary objective of many games, particularly titles aimed at children, such as the *Super Mario series*, and *The Legend of Zelda series*. Similar to the portrayal of women and Princesses in Disney films, these kidnapped women in video games become the object of desire, usually romantic or sexual, for villains and heroes alike. “Regardless of how strong they might appear” these Princesses need to be “rescued by men” in order to continue their lives – usually engaging in a relationship with the hero of the story after being saved (Giroux, 2002:115). In video games, particularly in regard to those I have studied, these women may hold the power of Gods and Goddesses in their hands, but that does not stop them from being a prize to be coveted and stolen away by others – the male characters will always be stronger than them, overpowering them and effectively rendering the female character as an object to own.

In some cases, these powers that the character holds are what the antagonist truly desires, viewing the Princess as a vessel, or more specifically, an object. Aerith, for example, is not only a beneficial healer for the party in *Final Fantasy VII* (1997) but is also being hunted within the plot of the game by an antagonistic corporation which seeks to harness and exploit her powers for their own gain. Similarly, in *The Witcher 3* (2015), the primary objective of the game is to save your adoptive daughter, Ciri, from those who are hunting her and wish to exploit her substantial powers.

Whether it is a fantasy game, or an action game, the female characters act almost as a carrot on a stick for the main character, and the player – she is the prize at the end of the game.

Powerful Queen

In contrast to the youthful innocence and purity of the Princess, it became apparent to me during my analysis that the Queen is her opposite, both in the visual and critical sense – typically she is an older character which embodies power, and at times, sensuality.

When the older, powerful, female characters appear in video games they are usually posed as one of, if not the primary, antagonist of the game. The overarching trend seems to be that they are black magic users with a thirst for power and beauty. It is interesting that their focus on beauty is villainised and pushed into vanity by turning it into an obsession, particularly when real women are expected to focus upon their own appearance and make themselves appealing to others. This hypocrisy is highlighted in Berger's (1972) work – women are viewed and sexualised by men for their own pleasure, but when a woman begins to take pleasure in her own appearance, it is sinful and vain.

In many forms of popular media, such as the Disney film *The Little Mermaid* (1989), older women are seen as “predatory”, their thirst for beauty not just vanity but a desire for sexual power, posing the “mature female body as ominously menacing”, rather than innocent and desirable like that of the younger Princess (Trites, 1991).

Interestingly, the threat of a powerful female magic user also exists in the sample in genres where one would not necessarily expect to see magic. For example, Himiko, from the action game *Tomb Raider* (2013), was the antagonist, and utilised black magic to effectively render herself immortal by taking over the body of a young priestess. In this situation, the Powerful Queen is stealing and exploiting the innocence of these Holy Maidens for her own gain, attempting to maintain the youth and innocence of the young women whilst continuing to rule over others – effectively trying

to get the best of both worlds, in her view. Having a villain who focuses on her own youth and beauty is relatively standard, it appears in many forms of media such as games and film, however it is the obsession with it which is largely posed as the problem. As per the work of Wolf (1990), women are expected to embody the current trends and desires almost naturally – the moment it is forced, such as through the use of black magic in *Tomb Raider* (2013) to obtain it, they are no longer desirable. After all, “nice girls” simply should not “have that much power” (Trites, 1991). Using the example of Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*, Trites (1991) argues that powerful women are posed as almost Satanic, exploiting the lives of others for their own gain, inciting sin and choosing to “rule in the Hell she has created” instead of being subservient to the men who are allowed to rule instead. At this point, they are no longer doing things for the benefit of others, but they are being posed as selfish individuals who only care about their own wellbeing.

In addition to being feared, many Queens in the sample were also posed as tragic characters – their obsession and power has turned them into something sub-human, something for us to pity, and romanticise. I propose that, similar to real life queens, such as Anne Boleyn, whose quest for power ended in her own death,



the tales of queens in video games have been spun and turned into something beautifully tragic. An example from my research is Mytha, the Baneful Queen (Fig. 7), from *Dark Souls II* (2014) was once a beautiful queen whose betrothed loved another, despite her beauty, thus she was transformed in her madness into a monster, the tragedy spawning from a failed heterosexual relationship. It is a fairly standard story, one heard throughout the ages in fairy tales and mythology, the scorned women who become powerful, feared, but also extremely tragic in their metamorphosis. One example of this is the Evil Queen from *Snow White* (1937) who dies after using her powers to transform into an old hag in order to kill Snow White. The irony of the nature of her death is not lost when you consider her goal was to remain the “fairest” young maiden in the land.

I would argue that the tragedy of the Princess character-type lies in the sacrifice she makes for others – she can be a saint-like martyr, dying for her beliefs and the protection of others. On the other hand, however, the Queen is hellish, using her



Fig. 8

jealousy and rage to destroy others. Much like saving the Princess is an objective in many games, destroying the villain is a part of that – these Queens are destined to die at the hand of the hero, regardless of whether they are in video games or Disney films. Regardless of the video game in question, whether tragic or feared, women with power are ones to be defeated. Whilst the “good” Princesses are kidnapped and used by others, the “evil” Queens who cannot be controlled are rendered powerless, or dead.

Other Roles

It is worth mentioning, even briefly, that in terms of other roles that came up during the analysis, women tend to only fill them when the genre specifically calls for it. The role of a soldier, for example, is interesting as men can be soldiers across a variety of games, from sci-fi to fantasy. However, throughout the critical analysis of the games, it became apparent that female soldiers only typically appear in highly specific games, such as the *Tom Clancy's* series, which has a militaristic theme. The games are loosely related to the work of author Tom Clancy, whose books were primarily about the topics of war and the tactics used by military forces. In the *Tom Clancy's* series specifically, 193 of the characters examined were male, and 45 were female – but the vast majority of these female characters were soldiers, which is to be expected within the genre and storylines of the games.

Within this genre, and similar genres of games, female soldiers are included almost as an afterthought. To me, and through the lens of my research, they seem to be the token females in the games, added to create the illusion of gender diversity - not quite equal, but seemingly enough to avoid criticisms of sexual discrimination within the games. This tokenism is extremely apparent in the *Call of Duty* series – through the initial sample from the content analysis, we can see that in the first ten games in the series, female characters did not make an appearance until the third game. They were then excluded from at least two other games after their initial inclusions. Even when they did appear it tended to be a single female character, surrounded by a cast of men. In a similar vein, whilst male characters across a variety of genres can be seen and classed as fighters or warriors, female fighters only tend to make an appearance specifically in one-on-one fighting games, such as the *Street Fighter* or *Soulcalibur* series of games. Women in these games are fighters by necessity, it fits the storyline

and genre of the game, and it has the added benefit of allowing gamers to play as a female character. One could argue that the most notable example of a female fighter character is Chun-Li, of the *Street Fighter* series (Fig. 8), who is also mentioned later in the chapter due to the issue of the sexualisation of women.

Character Death

I did not examine quantitative patterns in character death in depth largely because many games across my sample utilised character death somewhat haphazardly, regardless of gender.

In many cases, character death was optional, with the player being able to choose whether a character lives or dies through their own actions – sometimes the player can kill NPCs simply because they have the ability to, most obviously in games such as *Grand Theft Auto*. In various RPG games, the death of a character at the hands of the player can have an effect on the outcome of the game as a whole, and entire storylines can be altered around a single act. Games such as *The Witcher 3* (2015), for example, have a variety of endings based on the choices the player made throughout the game, largely in relation to the saving or killing of others. The deaths of 155, or 18%, female characters were counted as a part of the critical analysis – due to the freedom of choice given in video games, this number may not necessarily be representative of just how many characters have died, and how, but it gives us a general idea of the trends in place.

In games such as the *Assassin's Creed* series, where the player character is an Assassin, character death is expected both at your own hands and during the progression of the storyline - your entire purpose in the game is to kill others, usually with the intent to save the world to justify your actions. Likewise, in the *Call of Duty* series, which is about various forms of warfare and played from the point of view of a soldier, the death of fellow soldiers is an expected aspect of the militaristic and war-based theme. For example, the vast majority of the 241 male characters in the *Call of Duty* series died during the game, either as a result of story progression, or your own actions. Additionally, regardless of genre, if a game has an antagonist, that antagonist is usually condemned to death. Much of this time this is an endgame which exists beyond the choices you make along the process of the game - the final act of a hero is presumably to save the world from the embodiment of evil, after all.

There are times, however, when character death occurs, and it is arguably indicative of a larger issue at play in regard to female representation – Symbolic Annihilation (Tuchman, 1978), or the lack of women in the media. The term “Women in

Refrigerators” was coined by Gail Simone (1999) in response to the death of a female comic book character. In the initial example, the Green Lantern’s girlfriend was murdered, and her body placed in a fridge in order to further the hero’s character arc by forcing his hand – the character is typically motivated to find the one who has “fridged” (killed or wounded) their partner and exact revenge, usually experiencing character growth and development in the process. Other forms of “fridging” include female characters losing their powers, being raped, kidnapped, or otherwise punished in a variety of ways that are almost dehumanising, usually at the hands of a male antagonist, all in order to justify their actions of the male protagonist along the process of the storyline.

When it comes to storytelling, there seems to be a reliance on the “fridging” of women video games - the character Kratos from the *God of War* series, for example, constantly seems to be motivated by not only anger, but also the death of his first wife and his daughter in the earliest games. Though the newest instalment of the game series was not included in the content analysis due to its release in early 2018, after I had gathered my sample video games, it is a worthy mention, as the plotline of the game is still driven by the death of Kratos’ second wife. Though she is posed as a powerful and important character, wielding magical abilities and the power of premonition, both analysis of the game and personal playthrough highlights the fact that she is never properly shown on screen (aside from her shrouded corpse), and her death is the catalyst for the game’s story. I would argue, however, that there has been a decline in the use of “Women in Refrigerators”, particularly in the more extreme sense of female character death and rape. However, as mentioned previously, the kidnapping of female characters is still a popular storyline amongst game developers. I believe that one reason for this decline, which I will touch upon more in the Interview chapter, is because the women who grew up playing those games, and who were unhappy with the representation of women, or lack thereof, are now the ones making the games. Not only that, but the decision to buy a game or not is the easiest way to show a developer that you are unhappy with the choices they have made with the game – based on the interviews alone, we can see that women tend not to enjoy games where they have very little options to play as a female character and are bombarded with sexualised images.

Whilst these specific patterns are not necessarily indicative of video games as a whole, the roles mentioned above are important to the research as they truly ascend genre – Goddesses and women with a touch of magic about them can be found in many

genres, including games you would not necessarily expect, such as the demigoddess Dolos, in *Call of Duty: Black Ops III* (2015), highlighting just how prevalent this trend is.

Character Design

The issue of the sexualisation is one of the core issues faced by women, both in video games and in other forms of media. Not only is it one of the first things participants spoke about in the interviews, the findings of which are in the following chapter, but it is arguably one of the more researched aspects of women in the media. Notable works from Mulvey (1989) and Wolf (1990) continue to retain their relevance to contemporary discussions about representation of women, despite being over two decades old.

Following on from my previous discussion regarding the specific roles of the Princess and the Queen, data from the visual analysis suggests that many female characters are largely defined in terms of two visual themes: Purity and Sensuality. Although the main focus of this section will be on the sensuality, and sexualisation, of female characters, it is worth mentioning the opposing theme of purity.

An emphasis on purity in female characters is not something that is included in the design of male characters. Unlike the Holy Maiden and similar characters, there is no expectation of purity via virginal status with men, and male characters by extension. As per our supposed gender appropriate behaviour (Connell and Pearse, 2015), women are expected to bear children and care for them as they grow, essentially placing a woman's value in her womb, whilst men face no such pressures and expectations. An examination of any of the Maidens or Princesses included in this project reveals that you are likely to find them wearing long, flowing dresses, usually in more

“feminine” colour schemes, such as light pinks and whites. To highlight this aspect of the visual analysis, we can see in Fig.9 from *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (2017), on the right, that Princess Zelda is in white with a serene look on her face. In contrast, the hero Link is in a variety of colours and



clothes suitable for action, appearing more determined. Their appearances encapsulate the pure young woman, using her powers for the benefit of others, serving the protagonist (and her nation) - a girl untainted by sexual desires or a lust for power.

I would maintain that this reflects traditional expectations of young girls in society, as I outlined in the literature review chapter in relation to gender socialisation. Young girls are expected to be neat, tidy, polite, no roughhousing allowed like their male counterparts – the image of a perfect child who will grow up into a perfect wife.

The sexualisation of women in games certainly is not a new issue. It has been a feature of video games for a long time, even since the days of 8-bit graphics and sprites, when all gamers had was their imagination and the official art in the game manuals. With contemporary games, there is, admittedly, little left to the imagination of gamers – one example that comes to mind is “Breast physics”, more colloquially referred to as “jiggle physics”. This is an attempt by game makers to emulate the way breasts move, often to ridiculous effect. This is particularly apparent in fighting games, as the characters move around a lot, usually in exaggerated forms, all whilst the female character risks getting a black eye from her own chest – it does not help that the characters tend to wear revealing clothing, a factor which I will turn to consider shortly. Players may find themselves eye-level with a set of breasts that move noticeably, even during a character’s idle animation. As we will see later in this chapter, based on my research it would appear that many of the worst games for such sexualisation are those within the fantasy genre, notably *Final Fantasy* and similar – and not just for human women, but for the females of other species and races as well.

Of the 859 female characters examined, 189 of them were highlighted through my analysis as being sexualised in some way – that is nearly a quarter of all named female characters in the games examined. By “sexualised” I meant that the characters had been designed with an emphasis on larger (sometimes exposed) breasts and hips, usually combined with a noticeably smaller waist, or longer exposed legs - essentially the secondary sexual characteristics which had been designed in such a way as to draw our attention to them. It is also worth noting that a number of female characters in



Fig. 10

the critical analysis also fell into “sexual roles” – 83 characters fell into roles such as a sexual partner or prostitute.

In relation to the topic of breasts, they are part of a far larger issue with regard to the sexualisation of the female body. Female game characters are largely designed with a particular notion of the perfect female body– the large bust, small waist, and wide hips, all somehow pieced together on a tall and slender woman. As per the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989), these are all

designed and combined in a way to be pleasing to the (masculine) eye. Though the “pure” female characters also tend to be designed in this way, it truly gets pushed to the limits in relation to the female antagonists, or *femme fatale* style characters. It became apparent through the visual analysis that the Powerful Queens are designed in dark colours, not just because darker colours have evil connotations, but also because they contrast their pale skin. Based on visual analysis, I would argue that this also serves to highlight their over-exaggerated proportions, combined with the skin-tight outfits which are a direct contrast to the Princess’s flowing dresses. In some cases, the female characters are even left partially naked, and this is something we will address later in the chapter in regard to the various body horrors and modifications some female characters are subjected to. Designing a female character to appear conventionally attractive is not necessarily problematic. Instead, I would suggest that issues around the depiction of women as stereotypically attractive become so when you compare them to male characters within the same games.

Fig. 11



Fighting and Fantasy genre games provide important examples regarding the sexualisation of female characters, as they usually stand out in comparison to their male counterparts – partially when the female characters are overwhelmingly underdressed, in the sense that they have a substantial amount of skin showing, and are designed with a near impossible chest to waist ratio. Male characters, as a whole, are rarely sexualised, and only infrequently wear exposing outfits. For instance, *Final Fantasy* characters Tidus (Fig.10, *Final Fantasy X*, 2001) and Vaan (*Final Fantasy XII*,



Fig. 12

2006), whilst having exposed chests and muscles are not sexualised – both characters are still relatively well covered, with the areas towards their groins in particular, still being covered by clothing. For men, the areas surrounding their primary sexual characteristics tend to remain well covered, yet for female characters the areas close to both their primary and secondary sexual characteristics (groin and bust) are exposed and emphasised. Additionally, the lack of secondary sexual characteristics, such as facial hair, serves as a reminder

for the players that these particular characters are *young* men, which I would argue is perhaps another reason for their lack of sexualisation.

Compare the image of Tidus (Fig.10) to the character Lulu (Fig.11, *Final Fantasy X*, 2001) - despite the layering of clothing, the emphasis on her breasts and her exposed thigh creates an alluring image by drawing your eye to the exposed areas. The dark colours of her dress are a direct contrast to the pale white of her skin, and even her face is partially covered by her dark hair, leaving her chest and a portion of her thigh (above what seems to be lace stockings) exposed, and immediately drawing the eye. Interestingly, although her design attributes of dark colours and sexuality would imply that Lulu would fulfil the role of the Powerful, and evil, Queen, this is not actually the case. Lulu is one of the few examples within the visual analysis of a powerful female character who aids the protagonists, rather than one who is feared or who must be defeated by the hero.

The pattern continues across fighting games, including those that have become console-based games after starting out in an arcade setting. It could be argued that in the era of arcade games character designs were largely to attract customers to the venue – if the target audience at the time was teenage boys, it is plausible to suggest that designers believed they would be more likely to choose a game with a scantily clad woman on the unit, rather than a gorilla at the top of a ladder. However, this is simply a personal hypothesis, and certainly does not justify the continuing sexualisation of characters in contemporary video games.



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

In titles such as *Street Fighter* and *Soulcalibur*, male characters can frequently be seen wearing more battle-ready outfits or armour.

Ryu's karate *gi* (Fig.12), for example, is based on real-life fighting gear, and is explicitly designed for fighting in comfort. Compare this to Chun Li's *qipao* (Fig. 8), and Cammy's swimsuit-style leotard (Fig.13), and I would

argue that you get the sense that the female characters simply are not prepared to fight.

Furthermore, *Soulcalibur* is a fighting series which has a greater reliance on weapons being used over fists. As such, one could expect the characters to be dressed accordingly, such as with armour – though one look at the character Sophitia (Fig. 14) highlights that this real-world logic of protecting yourself during a fight was missing from the female character designs.

Sophitia is designed with the pure, white flowing dress of a Holy Maiden, with the blessing of a God, coupled with large (and barely covered) breasts, and exposed thighs – much like her daughter, creating an almost untouchable allure to the character. The comparison of male and female designs becomes clearer when you look at the designs Sophitia's children: Pyrrha and Patroklos.

Though Pyrrha's (Fig. 15) default design is arguably far less sexualised than that of her mother, her thighs are still exposed due to her thigh-high stockings, and her bust is emphasised by a tight-fitting dress underneath. As for her brother, Patroklos (Fig. 16), his character design seems more befitting of that of a warrior, with no exposed skin, scaled armour over fabric clothing – a more stereotypically military attire.

In my view, this is a clear example of what Mulvey (1989) referred to as the 'male gaze.' Although the male and female characters in these games are serving the same purpose – to fight, they are designed inherently differently based upon the characters gender. By following the assumption of video game makers that the primary consumers of their content are heterosexual men, then one could reason that the characters within the games, women in particular, are designed with male visual pleasure in mind. By generating a sense of sexual pleasure from looking at these female characters, or "scopophilia" (Mulvey, 1989:16), video game creators are hoping to sell their game on the basis of this pleasure – essentially, I would argue that this is a clear case of producers assuming that sex sells their products.



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

In addition to this, one feature of contemporary game design of female characters is the inclusion of gender identifiers – wherein characters have something overtly “female” worked into their design – whether that be something as small as lipstick and eyelashes, or giving the character sexual characteristics, such as a bust. This tends to occur where the characters themselves are not human, or humanoid, in any form, largely in more cartoon-styled games aimed at younger

audiences – in *Banjo-Kazooie* (1998), for example, the titular character Kazooie (Fig.17) is a female bird, something which is immediately apparent through her eyelashes and lipstick-like markings on her beak.

Even in more contemporary games, anthropomorphic characters are gendered via similar means. A standard minor antagonist within the *Super Mario series* is the Goomba, a small mushroom-like creature which is easily dispatched by Mario.

In *Super Mario Odyssey* (2017) there exists a female Goomba, also known as Goombette. Not only is she a pale pink, compared to the standard red Goomba, but she also has eyelashes and a distinctive blush on her cheeks, almost as if she were wearing makeup.

Additionally, in the original Japanese translation, Goombette (Fig.18) is simply referred to as “girl

Goomba”, instantly making the player aware that she is the “Other” (de Beauvoir, 1949), distinguishing her from the “standard”, male, Goomba. It is also worth noting that she exists largely as a romantic side-quest, in which Mario transforms into a male Goomba and easily gains her affection for a collectible item, once again placing female characters as objects which can be used for the heroes gain, all whilst disregarding female emotions as trivial.

This fact holds true even beyond living creatures – many robots and AI characters within sci-fi games are gendered. Similar to how real women are treated as “the Other”, technological characters are largely assumed to be “male”,



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

unless they are specifically assigned as female. Those that are assigned as female, are noticeably female. For example, Cortana, from *Halo*, is an AI who appears to the main character, and the player, as a naked female with a shapely body. Similarly, in games such as *Fallout*, “female” robots are given gender identifiers such as breast plates, and names such as P.A.M. (Fig.19), or KL-E-O.

Even when the design of the game is simplistic and many of the characters are designed to look the same, or similar, the female characters are designed to stand out and are differentiated from their male counterparts. In recent years there seems to have been a resurgence in the “old-school” 8-bit and 16-bit style games, this could be due to nostalgia, as the gamers who grew up playing the “old-school” games are now making games themselves. It could even be due to the relative ease of creating them compared to other games with higher graphics, allowing for indie developers to create games with far smaller budgets. These indie games have permeated the gaming market, and so it is no wonder that they have become popular, with games such as *Stardew Valley* (2016) becoming easily available via services such as Steam. One particular example from the content analysis, taken from the survey, which utilised the simplistic, and pixelated style of games was *FEZ* (2012). The characters are simply designed as plain white sprites, with little distinguishing features, aside from a hat or some glasses.



Fig. 21

However, in comparison to Gomez (Fig. 20), the main character, the female characters, conveniently named Blonde and Brunette (Fig. 21), have long hair, blue eyes, lipstick, and a bow in their hair – making it obvious that they are female. Following on from the topic of gender identifiers is the rising trend of the Monster Girl. It is a theme that’s highly popular in Japanese manga and anime, with the rise of series’ such as *Monster Musume* (2012), but it has also become more prevalent in video games, particularly in recent years. Whilst it lacks a formal definition, the Monster Girl is a theme in which a female character has monstrous body parts, such as wings or horns, and physical traits, like scales, but is still largely humanoid – it is obvious that they are partially a human female. Although there were only around 10 “true” Monster Girls in the sample, there was also a large number of female characters who weren’t human, therefore were classed as a “monster girl” for the purpose of this research – these pseudo monster girls are mentioned later in this section in relation to other humanoid characters. I would contend that the monster girls studied for this project were largely sexualised, with the human aspects of them falling prey to the Male Gaze



(Mulvey, 1989) and adhering to current conventional western standards of what is widely deemed as attractive – in this case, it is the larger bust, petite (human) frame. This is in order to appeal to the market – which is once again assumed by producers to be mostly heterosexual men.

In fantasy games, this tends to take the shape of a female character with a human torso (breasts

included), and the lower half of a beast, such as a snake or a spider. The greatest example of this is the Dark Souls series, in which a number of female antagonists take the form of a magic-wielding monster with a female upper half. Chaos Witch Quelaag (Fig. 24), for example, is a demon with the torso of a beautiful woman, her breasts conveniently covered by her long hair, and the lower body of a large spider-like beast. In games that rely more on sci-fi themes, the Monster Girl is more likely to appear as a humanoid alien, particularly in comparison to their male counterparts within the games.

Whilst much of the male aliens tended to look as far from a human as possible, such as Garrus (Fig. 22) from the *Mass Effect series*, the female aliens tend to retain some humanoid features. This is usually in the form of sexual characteristics such as breasts,



but they also follow the beauty standards for human females– large breasts, small waist, and a slender figure. In the *Mass Effect series* once again, many of the female aliens look distinctly human, the Asari (Fig. 23) race, for example, have female characteristics, yet are distinguished from humans by their blue skin and lack of hair. Of the two distinctions, those that appear more beast-like tend to act as antagonists within the games, whilst those that are closer in appearance to humans are seemingly more likely to act with the protagonist, aiding them and forming a part of their team

along the way. In some cases, the humanoid Monster Girls are also romance options for the player character, providing emotional, and sexual, aspects to the story. If we continue to use the example of the *Mass Effect*



series, relationships with characters such as Liara (Fig. 23) can result in the character engaging in sexual relations and altering the outcome of the story through character relationships. *Mass Effect* is a good example of this in play, not only due to its nature as an RPG, giving players choices and altering outcomes, but also because of its wide cast of characters that expand beyond the human race.

Changes over time

The final section of this chapter regarding the content analysis is effectively a summary of what has been mentioned so far, and how the representation of women has changed over time within the games studied for the content analysis.

The initial content analysis of this research focused on game series' in order to get a glimpse into the evolution of the games, and whether they have improved over the years as each new game in the series is released.

One trend noted within this study is the increased inclusion of women in games, mainly as background characters, or NPCs. In the *Elder Scrolls* series, for example, the number of female characters rose from nine in *Morrowind* (2002), to 26 in *Skyrim* (2011).

Throughout many of the games studied in the content analysis, the increase in female characters was steady, usually including one or two extra characters with each addition to the series. Some series did fall backwards and include fewer women in more recent games than they had in previous, *Metal Gear Solid V* (2015) is one such example, where only one new female character was introduced to the game. The character, *Quiet* (Fig. 25), is worth noting because not only is she wearing what is essentially her underwear, but she also does not speak throughout the majority of the game. The reason for this is explained in the game – she breathes through her skin, and speaking would unleash a deadly parasite from her vocal chords. However, that still does not change the fact that one of the only female characters in the game has been highly sexualised whilst her male counterparts are able to wear full body armour.

Whilst many of the women introduced to games do tend to fall into the categories mentioned earlier in the chapter, or even as love interests for the male characters, their inclusion should be seen as a positive movement within video game representation.

Arguably, this is the first step (of many) towards games which are far better at



Fig. 25

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representing women as a whole, rather than as just objects of love and lust. Notable examples of this change are game series' such as *Call of Duty* and *Assassin's Creed*, with the first female character *at all* being introduced in *Call of Duty 3* (2006). Admittedly, female characters have been few and far between in the *Call of Duty* series, with only 16 female characters in the series in total. Many of the female characters which have made an appearance in recent years were included as a part of the online multiplayer mode and not the main story, Chloe Lynch in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2* is one example of this (2012). This is worth noting because gaming companies such as Sony and Microsoft now charge fees to players in order to access online gaming – this effectively places the few female characters that exist behind a paywall, even after buying the game. To exclude female characters from the central story would suggest that contemporary games still largely exhibit a high level of symbolic annihilation (Tuchman, 1978) where female characters are concerned - women are ruled out as soldiers, fighters, and leaders.

An historical examination of *Assassin's Creed* would appear to suggest that the game has offered better and more varied feminine representation: female characters take on roles such as assassins, scientists, and double agents. However, the main series did not actually get any playable female assassins until the release of *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (2015), and even then, Evie Frye was not the sole playable character – it was a role shared by her and her twin brother, Jacob.

Thankfully, however, Lara Croft is no longer the only playable female character in existence. With a wide range of female characters now becoming available to play in games such as *Overwatch* (2016), providing female characters such as Tracer (Fig. 26) and D.Va. Whilst the majority of the playable characters are from these multiplayer games, 69 of the female characters included in the content analysis were playable in some form or another. However, it should be noted that games which allow the player to create a “party” and control multiple characters may have distorted the results somewhat, such as Aerith, who was mentioned earlier in the chapter (*Final Fantasy VII*, 1997).

Not only has there been an increase in women as playable characters, but also as one of the primary protagonists within the game. For instance, one character which was frequently mentioned in my interviews, which we will go into greater detail about in the



OVERWATCH

next chapter, and was also in the content analysis, was Ellie from *The Last of Us* (2013). Her character was integral to the plot of the game, without the usual issues that plague female characters such as sexualisation or being a magical princess at risk of being kidnapped.

Whilst there are not anywhere near as many leading female characters as there are male, I would still like to believe that even just having female main characters paired with a male character, such as in *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* is a positive change, one that moves us toward having better representation in terms of actually having female characters, but also one which provides us with more realistic and well-rounded female characters.

In addition to this, RPG-style games such as *Mass Effect 1* (2007), *Diablo 3* (2012), and *Fallout 4* (2015) give the player the option to choose their characters gender. This freedom of choice allows women to play games in their chosen gender and not simply be limited to playing the game through as a male character.

In regard to their storylines, this open-world style of games allows players to not only explore the world of the game in a non-linear fashion, but they also allow for more freedom in how gamers enjoy the game. Many open-world games allow the players to choose the race, sexuality, and even the species of their player character, in addition to their gender choices. Sexuality is an interesting factor within many open-world video games as it is not a set choice, but there are times when the player is able to romance another character regardless of factors such as gender and species. There are times when this is limited, though it is usually due to the designed sexual preference of the NPC (Non-Player Character), not simply the main character being stuck as a heterosexual white, human, male.

This is not to say such options for more varied representation represent a huge advance. Whilst the rise of open-world video games encourages player choice in many aspects, some games still follow the standard theme of a male protagonist, with multiple female love interests. *The Witcher 3* (2015), for example, follows the story of Geralt and allows the player to have sexual relations with a rather large variety of women – at one point there is even a sex scene *on* a unicorn.

Continuing with the sexual themes, there are also instances where female characters, both named and unnamed, are characterised as sex slaves, particularly in the *Fallout* series of games. These sex slaves were included in the 83 female characters who held a sexual role within the game. Whilst one could argue that is a part of the futuristic dystopia of a post-apocalyptic America in an 18-rated video game, is it truly necessary for the progression of the storyline, or the success of the game? I would maintain that it

is unnecessary, as it reinforces the view that women exist in video games as objects to be used and abused, and that they only exist when necessary, either for healing abilities, or for players to act out their own power fantasies. After all, many open-world games allow players to be “good”, or “bad”, with their choices having an effect on the ending of the game as a whole.

To conclude, I maintain that the overall patterns within the results of both the visual and critical analysis were both promising in terms of greater variety, scope, and depth of feminine representation but also somewhat disheartening to myself – change may be occurring, but it seems that women in video games still fulfil a largely passive role, providing support to the main player character. This could be through their skills as a healer, their magical abilities, or even as a romantic interest for the player, providing more depth to the story in an emotional sense. Frustratingly, the female characters which are active, rather than passive, tend to be posed as the villains of the game, with their “excess of sexuality and agency” being portrayed as evil (Bell, 1995), ultimately dooming them to be defeated by the hero in the end.

Many video games, from both recent years and decades past, still seem to believe that women can't be heroes, at least not without the help of a man.

This does not mean that the change we are should be disregarded, the change may be gradual, with one or two female characters added to a new game, but this is already better than when games had no female characters in at all.

There are some games which have been released which have a female main character but weren't included in the sample for content analysis for a variety of reason. One such game is *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017), which is a brilliant example of a video game where the female character, Alloy, is the *main* protagonist, and a playable character with a rich story (and little, to no, sexualisation). It was also nominated for the BAFTA Best Game Award 2018, alongside other female-lead game *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (2017).

As we will see in the next chapter, many of the arguments posed here were also brought up by interview participants. The positive change we are seeing, albeit slowly, in reaction to the more out-dated and over-sexualised imagery of female video game characters is something which many participants were keen to speak about, usually without prompting.

The work and results of the visual and critical analysis formed the basis of my knowledge going into the interviews, and a number of games which were excluded from my own research sample we mentioned by participants, only adding to the scope of this study.

Chapter 5:
Interview Findings

In addition to the various forms of analysis discussed in the previous chapter, interviews were utilised within this research project in order to answer my final research questions. These were in relation to how female gamers felt about representation, their experiences as gamers, and how they engaged with gaming in the face of various issues.

A sample of participants was created from those who volunteered to take part in the interviews. After receiving ethical approval, the initial message asking for interested parties was spread via word of mouth and social media. From there the sample was created as the message was passed along, and channels of communication were opened between researcher and participants.

The interviews started as soon as possible, meeting individuals in person and speaking online when individual timetables allowed. For all interviews, the needs of the participants came first in order to create a “comfortable” environment that suited them, whether that be working around their work shifts or going to their homes to speak to them in person (Herzog, 2005:27). Unfortunately, due to a number of participants not responding and finishing their interviews, the findings will be drawn from 18 interviews, rather than the originally planned sample of 20.

The full transcripts of all interviews can be found in the Appendix (Appendix 5), but various quotes from participants were drawn out and chosen due to how well I believe they highlighted the various recurring matters which were being discussed throughout the interviews.

Defining Video Games

At the start of the interviews, the participants were all asked to define video games, and whether they called themselves a gamer, in order to get a feel of their understanding of the topic at hand. These initial questions were very brief, and as such yielded shorter answers, as their purpose was simply to get both researcher and participant on shared ground to begin the more in-depth section of the interviews. Without fail, every participant defined video games as a form of digital entertainment that they could interact with. This was usually in the form of making decisions, such as characters to defeat or save, that would alter the course of the game - similar to Salen and Zimmerman’s definition of video games as “artificial combat” with “a quantifiable outcome” (2003:83). Some put emphasis on their existence on specific consoles, or

PC, and interestingly, some even went as far as actively excluding mobile games from their definitions. Many of the participants mentioned that video games provided an escape from reality for them, with one participant defining video games as “a *safe place*” (Jenn) for them to go to for relaxation when real life becomes stressful. For participants, this safe place exists within a private sphere that the gamers can access, away from the aggression of the “public sphere” (Lemish, 2014), keeping them shielded from the issues faced by women in the real world, such as harassment and violence. Within this new world, the participants felt more at ease, able to relax and distance themselves from the hardships of the day.

Based on the definitions given, participants were then asked how many hours they spent playing video games in a week, with answers ranging from an hour or two hours in the evening (around 14 hours a week), to 12 hours in one day with other shorter bursts of gaming throughout the week (around 24 hours a week, and upwards). The variation itself is not surprising; work, studies, and children were mentioned as factors which could reduce the amount of time they spent playing video games, with each gamer having a variety of factors to work around before they were able to simply sit down and start gaming. What is surprising, however, is that despite spending so much of their time playing games, very few were comfortable calling themselves gamers. Most of the participants did refer to themselves as gamers but included a number of caveats. A common concern was that they believed themselves to not be “hardcore” enough to really be a gamer.

Whilst there is no true, agreed, definition of what it means to be either a hardcore or a casual gamer, the general consensus is that it is defined by the amount of time you spend playing video games, and the genre of games preferred. Simply put, hardcore gamers prefer First Person Shooter (*FPS*) games, or lengthy games such as Role-Playing Games (*RPGs*), and casual gamers enjoy quick and easy games, such as mobile games like *Candy Crush*. It has been the point of many arguments for decades that the time available to us, and the way we spend it, is gendered. McKie, Bowlby and Gregory (1999) noted, nearly two decades ago, that free time is something that women rarely get, as they juggle work at home, caring for others, and paid work. This Triple Shift has meant that, even with the increased economic power to buy video games due to their paid work, women struggle to find the time to play video games. When they do find the time, such as when participants would spend a whole day gaming, they tended to feel guilty about it, feeling that they should have been doing something else, or “acting in a way conducive to accepted notions of adulthood” (Thornham, 2009:156).

Therefore, if we base our definitions on what it means to be a hardcore or a casual gamer on time spent, it is no wonder that female gamers are reluctant to call themselves “hardcore” when they feel guilty for playing games. In this sense, being a “hardcore” gamer is an inherently male concept, only adding to the feeling that gaming is for boys and men, with some of the more “casual” games being held in lower regard. For example, one participant in particular was initially unsure about whether she could call herself a gamer as she was unsure if the games she played “counted”:

Ren: “*Sims... Does it count?... What about Pokémon Go, does that count?*”

After the initial assurance that the games she played did “count”, the participant not only realised she spent a lot of time gaming, but also defined herself as a gamer, at least on a “*low key level*” (Ren) – similar to classing herself as a “casual” gamer. This once again highlights the reluctance of female gamers to define themselves by “hardcore” or “casual” terminology, potentially due to the gendered connotations behind the terms. Rather than the focus being on time spent, however, it has fallen onto the types of games played by participants. Similar to the “pink games” (Cassell and Jenkins, 1999:37), such as fashion games, or caring for animals, which have been designed with a female audience in mind, games such as *Pokémon* are usually associated with children and younger gamers. If we were to ignore the more masculine aspect of having these “Pocket Monsters” fighting each other, the primary aspects of the game collecting, and caring for, these cute and small animals, like the recognisable mascot Pikachu (Fig. 27). Walkerdine notes that participants saw Pikachu as “the cute and cuddly one”, with an “absence of... masculinity” that drew the attention of the young girls playing video games in the study (2007:52).

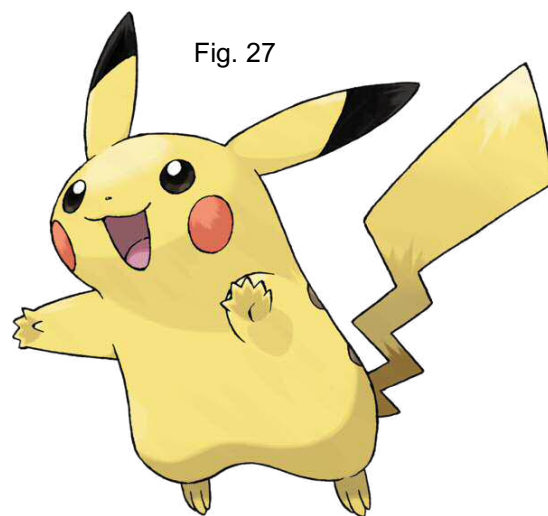


Fig. 27

Additionally, with its initial release in the late 1990s, *Pokémon* coincided with the childhoods of many of the participants. This gives us the impression that games like *Pokémon* are games which you should grow out of over time, and that as you grow there is an expectation to move onto more “hardcore” 18-rated titles, like *Doom* (1993) which was rebooted in 2016 – conveniently when many of the children born in the 1990s were legally old enough to buy the title.

Continuing with the notions of “hardcore” versus “casual” gamers, according to the work of Kubik (2012), hardcore and casual gamers tend to define themselves against one another, with hardcore being the standard for gaming habits, and casual being the

“Other” – much like women are seen as the “Other” to the male standard in our everyday lives. As we have seen so far there is an expectation held amongst some participants that in order to *be* a gamer, they must play certain games and act in certain ways. Because of this distinction, there are women who struggle to call themselves a gamer because how they play games is different from these pre-conceived notions.

Kubik argues that female gamers need to legitimise themselves, and that they need to reaffirm their status as a gamer within the community – however, as we explore later in the chapter, this is not as easy as one would expect, with women being constantly questioned and abused for existing within the gaming community.

In the end, those that did not call themselves a “gamer” largely did so because whilst they enjoy video games, they did not see it as something which defined them as a person, highlighted by the following quote:

Maya: *“I think the term ‘gamer’ inherently has some sort of identity built around games, which I do not have. I do, however, enjoy playing games.”*

Regardless of how they defined themselves, all participants involved found gaming to be a simultaneously enjoyable and problematic experience. Participants tended to enjoy gaming alone, or with likeminded friends, but found social experiences in relation to gaming to be daunting, as we will see in the next section. Many feared the backlash of calling themselves a “gamer”, and simply omitted such information when speaking to people, with some tentatively admitting to being a gamer in their interviews.

From this point on the chapter will focus largely on participant experiences of being a gamer, their thoughts on representation, but mostly how they continue to engage with video games and the community in a way which makes them feel most comfortable.

Experiences

Following their personal definitions of video games, participants were given the opportunity to speak freely about their personal experiences with, or as a result of playing, video games.

Whilst many of the women interviewed spoke about video games as a safe space for them to relax and escape, it also became apparent that many had faced issues of abuse and harassment relating to video games. It is also worth bearing in mind that interviewees may have experienced a number of cruel and abusive events in the past, relating to gaming, which they did not speak about in their interviews.

Though the act of gaming itself may be a form of escapism for women, and they seek solitude and safety in the games they choose, they may still face backlash about their

activities in real life situations, or in online gaming spaces. In fact, the vast majority of the negative experiences that participants mentioned occurred in online games, such as *Grand Theft Auto: Online*, *Halo*, and *Destiny*. Some participants noted that they “do not feel safe as a woman” (Iris) in online gaming, and other spaces related to gaming – simply being a woman puts them at risk of harassment, because by engaging in an activity which is seen as inherently male these female gamers are seen as abnormal by not adhering to the expectations of what it means to be a woman in our society. Thornham (2008) notes that not only is the action of gaming is “a boy thing”, being gendered as male, as such it is something which women are expected to avoid and take part in activities more befitting of their gender. However, there are also related assumptions about how we, as women, should act and behave in regard to gaming as well. Many of the participants have experiences of verbal abuse, particularly of a sexual nature, in online gaming, with other gamers (usually assumed to be male), sending them messages, or harassing them over in-game voice chat. This frequently occurs when the female gamers is seen as better at the game than the male gamer – in Thornham’s ethnographic study (2008), the women were almost expected to make themselves appear less skilled than the men, allowing themselves to be taught by them.

One participant, Sara, mentioned being asked for “nudes”, naked photos, from a young age, whilst also being harassed for personal information:

Sara: *“When I was 10 years old playing Halo: Reach... Some older man in the chat sent me a private message threatening to rape me and find out where I live.”*

Participants also mentioned receiving messages from male gamers because they were “cute” (based on their profile pictures) and wanted to talk to a “girl gamer” (Eva). Whilst seemingly harmless, it still made the participant uncomfortable at the time, and wasn’t a standalone event either, with the participant noting that this was a “regular occurrence”. In our society, Best argues that women are expected to be “decorative and passive” (2010:65), and so in this situation it would be expected that the women in question would simply accept the supposed compliments from the men who contact them. Even participants who haven’t necessarily experienced such behaviour themselves spoke about how this happened to others and did not want it happening to themselves. They were afraid and anxious about both receiving the messages, and either ignoring or responding to them, lest the sender become verbally abusive.

The online harassment can evolve into a form of violence toward the female gamers, with players being told by others to “kill yourself” (Victoria). Within the virtual

world, female players noted harassment in the form of their characters being targeted and killed by others repeatedly – in the case of *Grand Theft Auto V: Online*, one participant, Lillie, even spoke about an event in which a male player put a bounty on her character and would continuously track her down, destroy her cars, and kill her character. She also spoke about having “quite a few guys” messaging her, telling her that “they do not like girls online”.

If we look at real-life statistics, between 2013 and 2016 in England and Wales 70% of the victims of domestic abuse related homicides were women (ONS, 2017). Women are overwhelmingly more at risk of real-life abuse than men, and it could be said that the actions of men online reflect this. There is a massive difference between murder and gaming, but women continue to be the victims, so it comes as no surprise that women fear the abuse and the escalation online, just in case it becomes a real threat - such as it was for Anita Sarkeesian and Zoë Quinn during the height of Gamergate. Furthermore, whilst gaming, women become active members of the gaming community, a far cry from the expectations of being passive objects whose appearances can be consumed and enjoyed by men – a “digital peep show” in which women are accepted, as long as they are not real (Yee, 2014:105). Real women, and the fact that they simply are not passive beings in real life, can ruin the illusion of the digital world, perhaps being one of the causes of anger at female gamers – they do not meet the expectations of what women *should* act like in video games, particularly in online games where characters are the avatars of other players.

In real-life situations, participants noted that they were frequently met with a degree of confusion regarding their enjoyment of gaming – far less vitriolic than the violence experienced in online spaces. We will go into more detail on many of these experiences later in the chapter when we look at childhood experiences, however, it is worth mentioning now due largely to the contrast between real life and online experiences. Online experiences seem to be marred by sexual themes and violence, yet it seems that in real life, the approach to female gamers is different. This is not to say that participants had many positive experiences in real life, particularly with male gamers, but simply that it is different – with no gamertags and avatars to hide behind, the negative treatment of female gamers is far more subtle. A number of participants mentioned that when they did speak about being a gamer, they faced issues of not being taken seriously as such, both in terms of their skills and knowledge about the games they play. It is experiences like these which can also make women reluctant to call themselves a gamer, with some noting that people would try to “catch [them] out” (Eve) by trying to find gaps in their knowledge, particularly within a work environment,

with a couple of participants who work with video games noting that they would also be bypassed in favour of their male colleagues. This could also take the form of being quizzed by male gamers to prove that the female gamers know something about the games that they play, highlighted by one of Freya's anxieties, and one of the reasons why she actively chose not to disclose her status as a "gamer" to those she was unfamiliar with:

Freya: "*I feel like [I'm] being quizzed... I feel like with a guy, if you get something wrong that's fine, but if it was, you know, [a] female, I feel like suddenly it'd be picked up upon straight away...*"

I would argue that this testing of knowledge is an attempt to deny women access to the world of gaming as a whole, or perhaps the more stereotypically masculine aspects of it. By failing the tests on their knowledge, women can be shut out, labelled as a "fake gamer", only serving to highlight their position as "the Other" in the gaming community. Not only did participants mention having to prove their knowledge of games, they also felt as though they had to prove themselves within the games too. Many felt that there was an expectation for women to be bad at video games, simply based on the fact that they are a woman, and when they do play games, they should be playing "girly games" (Lillie). In the gaming community, when women are allowed, it seems to be under certain regulations - There's almost an expectation that women should be playing so-called "pink games" (Cassell and Jenkins, 1999), or games that are stereotypically marketed at young girls, with the inclusion of themes such as Princesses or childcare. A typical example of such games is the *Inspire* (2007 – 2013) games series, including titles such as *Imagine: Babyz* (2007), or *Imagine: Fashion Life* (2012). These "pink games" are the polar opposite of more stereotypical "boys' games" involving fighting, actions, and saving people (usually a woman), games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, for example. There is a suggestion that our taste in games is defined by our gender, due largely to our socialisation as children – once again, with young girls supposedly focusing on the caring of others and boys going on their own adventures (or to work), learning these patterns through imitation of their parents (Stanley and Wise, 2002). Once again, there is a sense that female gamers are not taken seriously, as gamers in their own right. There seems to be a belief that women shouldn't play games such as *Fifa*, or *Destiny*, but instead should be learning stereotypically feminine skills from "girly games". When buying "masculine" video games, they are faced with the assumption that they are buying a game for their "boyfriend" (Jenn), and not for themselves. Many participants noted that they would seek solace in story-based games, largely to avoid the abuse they faced online. The lack of online functionality gives them the ability

to not only escape from their troubles in the real world, but also stay away from the toxicity they experience when gaming online. Story-based games tended to take on a more emotive tone, focusing on the relationships built with other characters, and following a storyline which is almost like a film. Many participants mentioned that they enjoyed being guided through an in-depth story, particularly ones where they could form emotional attachments to the characters in the game. This may not be surprising when we consider that many theorists have argued that women are expected to be more caring and emotive, with men being steered away from such displays of emotion (Stanley and Wise, 2002). From this perspective, men are expected to enjoy the games that feature less emotional ties, and more action – many of which are online. The previously mentioned instances of online violence, abuse, and general confusion have fuelled a sense of fear which dominates many of the online interactions of female gamers and changes the way they engage with the gaming community. What may start off as something as simple as a message calling the individual “cute” can turn into a series of negative events. As such, participants mentioned keeping their identities hidden, or omitting information about their hobbies when speaking to others. Whilst it could be argued that some male gamers do conceal their identities online in order to hide when harassing others, female gamers do this to appear gender-neutral, or almost male, and avoid any negative experiences with gaming. “Many men assume... that everyone on their team, or in that particular match is a male” (Martina), and so by not outwardly displaying themselves as female online, women are arguably able to hide and keep themselves safe due to this assumption.

The easiest way that participants noted they kept their gender hidden was with their gamertags – though some noted that as their gamertags were their names, it was obvious that they were women. Participants also noted that they, or their friends, would actively avoid speaking through microphones in any online games, or gaming chatrooms, in an effort to once again conceal their gender and avoid harassment. Many Cyberfeminists, such as Plant (1997) and Wajcman (2004) have argued that the internet allows us to transcend our “physical, bodily cues” (Wajcman, 2004:66), thus freeing us from the inequalities we face. However, from the interviews conducted for this research, it seems that many women hide behind this ambiguity online for safety, noting that other gamers may simply assume they were men, without any cues to suggest otherwise. This certainly is not as freeing, or utopian, as theorists such as Plant (1997) had hoped for, as instead of being freed of gender, women find themselves acting as men to fit in and feel safe. This is reflected in the work of Fox and Tang (2017), who argue that women have a number of responses to online sexual

harassment, with avoidance and “gender masking” being two of them, highlighting that my own participants are not the only women who take such actions to feel safer.

These are just some examples of ways women are attempting to make these spaces safe for themselves again, and are somewhat less drastic than distancing themselves, or stopping playing a game altogether - yet this is also a step some women have taken for their own wellbeing. It does not necessarily address the issue, nor does it punish those who engage in the harassment, but it is a development worth noting as it is beneficial for the women themselves. Not every female gamer necessarily feels she has the power to completely solve the current issues in the gaming community, so they work together to make it more enjoyable for themselves and others in whatever way they can.

Participants took part in the study because of their love of games, regardless of their levels of skill, and by carefully choosing the games they play they are able to continue to enjoy video games without the extra risk. It may seem contradictory; not playing games to continue to enjoy games, but it mainly means that women enjoy different games to men, not that they have stopped gaming all together - their engagement with the games they play has simply evolved to suit their needs and desire for a safer space in which to enjoy themselves. Beyond video games, participants did also mention that women were creating their own safe, gaming related spaces. These included women-only e-sports teams, such as *PMS Asterisk**, or Facebook groups where they can freely discuss video games, and other similar endeavours. This benefits the women who choose to continue to play certain games, regardless of the risks, allowing women to play together, further spreading their created safe spaces into the games themselves.

This is not to say that all interactions with video games are bad. Participants frequently mentioned making friends through their mutual love of gaming, and even building relationships around them. Many even found that the fear of gaming online was greatly diminished when gaming with friends in the same group as them, regardless of the gender composition of their group. Some were eased into new friendship groups of gamers by siblings or partners, allowing them to enjoy online gaming without repercussions. However, it is rather telling that women are more likely to be welcomed into a group of online gamers when introduced by a male gamer – Yee (2014) suggests that certain spaces in our society are specific “gender territory”, based on the differences in male and female socialisation. In this case, gaming is a male “gender territory”, and so women are not welcome unless they are welcomed by a man. Yee further argues that 27% of female online gamers were introduced by their male

partners, which legitimises their presence in that specific online territory. Hence the assumption that women are buying games, or taking part in games, as a result of their heterosexual partners.

Many of the experiences of female gamers, it would seem, have been marred by fear, and their way of engaging with video games and the gaming community has changed to adapt. Although the changes are small, and not total upheavals of the community, they are minor changes that allow female gamers to continue to enjoy games, regardless of what others think and say – similar to Liberal Feminists advocating gradual change to enact large change, I would argue that these small actions are a part of something larger.

Childhood Experiences

Within the pilot interviews, it became apparent that participants were interested in speaking about experiences from their childhood, as well as their current experiences with gaming. The topic was integrated into further interviews, though many times the participants naturally brought the topic up during the course of the conversation. Prior to starting the interviews, speaking about childhood experiences wasn't something which I had explicitly planned on, though I came to recognise very quickly that it was necessary to speak about, particularly because of the "gendered play expectations" we are faced with whilst growing up (Lemish, 2014:184).

The participants interviewed primarily experienced their childhood in the 1990's and early 2000's, those that were slightly older did not tend to have as many childhood experiences, but experienced video games more as young adults and parents. Games "loaded up from cassette tapes" (Aoife) are a world apart from the video games many had access to during the early millennium. At this time, online gaming was still developing, and was very different to how we know it today, including peripherals for consoles and wired connections – it wasn't until their teenage years, or later, that any of the participants really experienced online gaming. The reason for mentioning this change in technology is because it will inevitably have an effect on the results of the interviews, with participants not experiencing the issue of online abuse until they were much older, however, this is not to say that participants did not experience any issues prior to the launch of online services – as we will see later within this section, they took on a different form. Furthermore, the experiences of people who were growing up in the early millennium will be completely different to the childhood experiences of children growing up now – it is impossible to say whether the issues faced by adult

gamers now mirror those of children in this day and age, or if children now face the same issues as previous generations.

For most participants, gaming holds a special place in their lives, usually cultivated at childhood. Their relationships with siblings, friends, and even their parents as a result of gaming gave participants fond memories. Whilst Yee (2014) discusses the theory that women are accepted into gaming spaces because of their male *partners*, women can also be introduced by members of their families, or friends – there are a wide range of people in our lives who we can interact with, and who can affect our likes and dislikes, though in this case the focus is on the men who have introduced women to gaming. For the most part, participants with male siblings seemed more likely to have access to gaming from a young age, gaining access by watching others:

Lillie: *“It was a lot of watching my dad and my brother play games like Tomb Raider, [watching] my brother play GTA.”*

Though participants noted that they did not necessarily play the games themselves at first, they did watch siblings or parents playing, which led to their interest in the games. Unsurprisingly, the activity of gaming was more likely to be encouraged by families that included other gamers, usually fathers, who would take them to midnight launches when they were older or use gaming as a way of bonding. Following the argument of Stanley and Wise (2002), young girls are expected to imitate their mothers, learning their behaviours from them, seemingly giving them fewer shared experiences with their fathers – with young girls taking an interest in the more masculine activity of gaming, it allows fathers and daughters to have a shared interest and shared space.

Participants also frequently mentioned that they did not get their own games console until they were older, usually early teens, and that until that point they relied on playing their siblings' (or parents') consoles – or receiving their old ones when their family members upgraded to a new one.

Though overwhelmingly positive, participants did note some more negative experiences they had regarding gaming in their childhood. Within the home environment this usually took the form of parents expecting young girls to be doing something other than gaming, such as helping around the house, or doing school work. As mentioned in the literature review, Connell and Pearse argue that “gender-appropriate behaviour: (2015:6) is a fluid concept, changing over time and location. This “appropriate” behaviour for women comes in the form of the expectation to care for others, or do housework, which becomes a Triple Shift when they are old enough to take part in paid work (Best, 2010) - yet no such expectations are placed on young

boys and men. For participants growing up, there was an expectation that girls would not play video games, as they weren't appropriate for them. When they did play games, it was expected that they would enjoy the "pink games" mentioned by Cassell and Jenkins (1999), anything beyond this was not deemed to be appropriate behaviour for young girls, as we see in the quote below.

Lyn: *"She said, because she was annoyed, 'why can't you just be like a normal girl?'"*

Even when participants had male siblings, some still noted that their parents would have different expectations, resulting in different treatments – sometimes, such as the example above, it was obvious to the participant that they were expected to be doing something that was supposedly more befitting of their gender.

The deviation in experiences tends to begin at adolescence, with some participants suggesting that their parents accepted it as a part of themselves, though some still faced opposition due to the belief that *"it's for teenage boys, not adult women"* (Sofie). Outside of the family, participants noted that they did face issues from other children their age, sometimes they were seen as *"a bit weird"* (Eva) for wanting to play video games. For some, this went as far as being *"picked on"* for liking things that *"girls shouldn't like"* (Jenn), creating a sense of fear which, sadly, seems to have continued into contemporary gaming, particularly with playing online, and even speaking about their hobbies in public, or on social media.

Jenn: *"I've had people that are my age, or older, judge me because I'm a girl that plays games."*

Some participants also mentioned other women from their age group being critical of their hobbies. Misconceptions such as sitting in their room all day, doing nothing but gaming (Flora), or that they were a "recluse" (Eva). However, aside from the general confusion regarding their interest in gaming, the responses from other women were far tamer than responses from men. The assumption that women are empathetic and thus should spend their time caring for others, rather than taking part in leisure activities has permeated our society. Gaming in particular is seen as a masculine hobby, and so this means that female gamers are seen as engaging in behaviours which are not "gender-appropriate" (Connell and Pearse, 2015).

Thoughts on Representation

For the second part of the interviews, participants were asked about their thoughts on the representation of women in the video games they played or had experience with.

This was to see if the issues with representation found within the content analysis were reflected in the opinions of other female gamers.

Though I focused largely on the *roles* of female characters in my content analysis, the primary focus of most participants was the issue of the sexualisation of female characters. Additionally, many noted the apparent lack of female characters, or the symbolic annihilation (Tuchman, 1978) of women, in video games as a whole.

Sexualisation

Participants spoke about the sexualisation in video games with genuine frustration, with some noting that they found it very difficult to enjoy a game, or even focus on a game, when they were faced with the sexual imagery.

Much of this frustration was due to their view that the women in the video games they played created unrealistic ideals, and impossibly high expectations for their own bodies and appearance in real life.

Iris: *“For a very long time, men were the sole gatekeepers of those forms of entertainment... meaning that they dictated how the women who they allowed to be there appeared.”*

Women are seemingly presented in video games how men *believe* women should appear, not how women truly are, or how they want to appear.

Participants spoke about how they felt like, on the whole, the women who appeared in video games simply did not represent “real women” - this is meant in the sense that the women they see within the games they spoke of weren’t true reflections of the variety of body types seen across women in the real world.

DeFrancisco and Palczewski note in their study on women in the media that “female characters are more likely than males to wear sexy clothing...[and] be depicted partially nude” (2013:242), and that they are presented as an object of desire, subjected to the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989). Similarly, participants believed that female video game characters tend to exhibit a highly exaggerated form of femininity, with “massive breasts, and [a] lack of clothing on their body” (Martina). This stood for both human women, and fantasy women - one participant noted being unsure about “what” the characters were, but that they looked obviously feminine, with humanoid female characteristics, such as breasts and curves (Ren).

Some argued that the over exaggeration of the female body followed on from the expectations and representation of women in television shows or magazines, giving media consumers something to look to and yearn for.

Flora: *“It’s just another thing for us to look to as women and be like ‘Why do not I look like that?’”*

There is no shortage of theorists who argue that women are expected to look good and pleasing to men. The theory of the Beauty Myth by Wolf (1990) is one of the most influential theories about the sexualisation of women, both in life and the media. Wolf argues that women are restricted by the expectations of female beauty, and how women feel about themselves. In this sense, women are being controlled by the ideals and stereotypes that not only outline how a woman should behave, but also how she should present herself in order to be pleasing to the opposite sex.

In some cases, participants felt that female characters were reduced to sex objects, both in-game, and amongst gamers. With games such as Tomb Raider, it was noted that there’s the possibility that “guys play [Tomb Raider] because she’s hot” (Ren) – suggesting that some male gamers would play a game in order to “enjoy the view”, so to speak. This is a very obvious example of Mulvey’s (1989) theory of the Male Gaze at work, with men quite literally gazing upon a female body for their own enjoyment, even if the body itself is not truly real. Yee (2014) referred to this as a “digital peep show”, objectifying women for the sexual enjoyment of men, whilst simultaneously rejecting the existence of real women. These theories suggest that the female body is best enjoyed when it is passive, with gamers being able to control the female bodies in video games for their own enjoyment. Gazing upon a passive (and digital) female body creates a truly unobtainable ideal which women are still expected to embody in order to please men.

Within the video games themselves, there are also female characters who are quite literally sex objects, with prostitutes and strippers being quite prevalent in games such as the Grand Theft Auto series. One participant mentioned The Witcher series of games, as the main (male) character is able to have romantic and sexual relations with a number of women – not only choosing between two women to have a more meaningful relationship with, but also being able to sleep with other women to aid a variety of side quests and missions (Victoria). Much like the Princesses mentioned in the previous chapter can be the prize at the end of the game, female characters also exist as stepping stones to get the male characters to them. They are usable objects which benefit the player, such as through healing abilities, or existing within the game as a sexual conquest.

With the growing popularity of open world games, and the focus on player choice within the games, it is no surprise that character creation is also an issue with participants mentioned in relation to representation. Participants who brought it up mentioned the

limitations they faced with it – a female choice wasn't always readily available, and when they were, their body types were extremely limited. Options tended to include being “blonde, with big boobs and 12 feet tall” (Flora), slender, and yet curvy. It is not uncommon to want to create a version of yourself within the games, and some participants still felt that they were being forced to become an ideal woman within game, far from their own image.

In addition to the issues surrounding body types, a number of participants also mentioned issues with character costumes. Whether a default costume, a variation, or a completely personal choice, participants mentioned that many costumes would often simply be “skin tight suits” (Sara), highlighting the characters' body, particularly the bust and waist. Female costumes would also be highly revealing, leaving large parts of the characters body exposed, with some options being “little fur pants, [and] thigh high boots” (Freya). Referring once again to the work of DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2013), something which was also picked up upon in the content analysis was that the juxtaposition of male and female character costumes, and how the female character was more likely to be sexualised than the male. For participants, became more apparent in arcade-style fighting games – simply compare *Street Fighter's* Ryu to Chun-Li. As we saw in the previous chapter on the content analysis findings, Ryu's costume choices revolve around a karate *gi*, whereas Chun-Li's costumes involve a modified *qipao*, which is form fitting to highlight her bust, whilst also revealing her legs. It is difficult to see this as anything other than the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989) at work, particularly when Chun-Li's primary attacks are the use of high kicks, with the fabric of the *qipao* conveniently falling to cover her groin whilst displaying the length of her leg. It could be argued that, unlike Mulvey's argument that the female characters are passive, the playable female characters of fighting games are active characters. However, this does not alter the fact that the Active Male audience are in control of her movements, still subjecting them to the sexual gaze of the audience. Aside from the frustration, the general consensus was that the sexualisation of female characters is an obvious attempt by games designers to sell more units, “trying to draw in the male gamers” (Freya). When “sex appeal is what sells games” (Martina), it arguably creates another form of media for women to compare themselves to, and for men to expect from women – something which we will address later in the chapter.

Symbolic Annihilation

As we saw in the results of the content analysis in the previous chapter, of the 3,133 characters analysed only 859 were female. This means that roughly 27% of all named

characters researched were women. This is an issue which many participants also mentioned within their interviews.

Symbolic Annihilation (Tuchman, 1978) is the theory that women are excluded from the media, or trivialised and underrepresented when they are included. In terms of this research project, the focus will be on the aspect of exclusion and underrepresentation, and how we see far fewer women in video games than we do men. As mentioned in the previous chapter, on content analysis, there have been changes, and the number of women in video games is increasing. However, the lack of women in video games is still an issue that many interview participants brought up in their discussions on representation. Not only were participants frustrated by the sexualisation of women, but they also spoke about the general lack of women in video games as a whole. The absence, and underrepresentation of a variety of women seemed to have been felt quite profoundly by many of the participants – not only did they not see themselves in their own characters, they rarely saw women at all.

Maya: *“It’s a little ridiculous that it’s 2018, and we’re still in this position.”*

When speaking about the “position” that female gamers find themselves in, the participant is referring to the lack of options when it comes to playing as female characters, or simply not having female characters in games. As noted previously, the vast majority of participants grew up in the 1990’s, where Lara Croft was one of the very few female characters available to play as. Participants noted that they still found themselves struggling to find games where they could play as a female character, especially one which wasn’t highly sexualised.

The most frequently mentioned were sports games, such as *Fifa*, or action games, such as *Call of Duty*. For example, “in the campaign for CoD, the protagonist is male, and the woman only show in side roles, and hardly ever.” (Tamsin).

Not only were the “main characters mostly men” (Lyn), but participants felt that women rarely made appearances at all - not only in the games, but the advertising and marketing for them too. For example, female football players weren’t introduced in *Fifa* games until *Fifa 16* (2015), and even then, the marketing for the game was largely focused on the male players. The global cover for the game featured Lionel Messi, with female players Alex Morgan and Christine Sinclair featuring behind Messi in select American and Canadian game covers (EA Sports, 2015). As per Tuchman’s theory of the “reflection hypothesis” (1978:7), it is the values and achievements that society holds in higher regard which gets the media focus. In this sense, by having female players effectively hiding behind the men, we could reason that the achievements of these female sports stars are viewed as less important than those of their male co-

stars – despite the fact that both male and female stars have played successfully on the international stage.

Changing Roles

When women did appear in games, sexualised or not, many were relegated to side-kicks, or providing the character with a side mission. When speaking about their childhoods, many participants noted that they had very few options for female characters in the games they played, both as playable characters, or NPCs. With a “whole two options” to play as (Maya), and lack of “female characters to admire, and aspire to” (Aoife), it’s unsurprising that the same female characters were brought up by multiple participants in the interviews. Lara Croft and Princess Peach were mentioned frequently and are also opposites in terms of their character roles - with Croft being an active, playable character, and Princess Peach being the passive damsel in need of saving. A large proportion of the participants grew up with Lara Croft as their main example of a female hero, but needless to say they wanted more than that. The “pathetic” (Ren) and passive damsels in distress saturated video games for much of their history, but participants acknowledged that this could be changing, albeit slowly. Particularly within the last decade, participants noted that there’s been a somewhat steady rise in the number of smart, well-rounded and characterised heroines available in video games. Whilst they may not all be playable characters, “you are starting to see some epic female characters that prove you can still be a badass and wear all your clothes” (Agatha). Characters such as Ellie from *The Last of Us* (2013), or Elizabeth from *Bioshock Infinite* (2013) were frequently mentioned examples of women in video games who weren’t sexualised and were perfectly capable of looking after themselves. These changes could suggest a movement away from the traditional roles and ideals women are held to, particularly those of the housewife and the carer (McKie et al, 1999), with women becoming more active members of society through activities such as paid work. In more recent years, there has also been a rise in playable female characters, with characters such as Alloy (*Horizon Zero Dawn*, 2017), and Senua (*Hellblade: Senua’s Sacrifice*, 2017) joining the ranks with a rebooted Lara Croft, and other heroic women. This is giving female gamers greater choice in regard to the games they play, meaning that if some do decide to stop playing various games for their own wellbeing, there is an increasing number of games for them to choose from instead.

On the whole, participants tended to gravitate more towards story-based games, particularly over online games, or multiplayer games. When participants spoke of video

games as an escape from reality, they were usually referring to escaping to the alternate realities that existed within games such as *Dishonored*, or *BioShock*. When speaking about these games, participants mostly mentioned the more in-depth characters and storylines they found there, coupled with gradually improving representation. Over a decade ago, Consalvo (2003) suggested that the representation of women in the media is due to societal beliefs about heterosexual romance, with the expectation that the man will save the Princess, and they will live happily ever after. Whilst the storyline of saving the Princess remains in many games today, we are seeing more female characters where romance is not central to their storylines – Ellie from *The Last of Us* (2013) for example had a more familial relationship with Joel (the player character) and was posed as a young woman capable of surviving in a post-apocalyptic world. It should be noted that the lack of online play was also an important factor for some participants as it allowed them to avoid much of the vitriol and harassment female gamers receive, as mentioned earlier within the chapter. Whilst participants did mention the gradual positive changes in regard to female representation, with more female characters included in games, some were also hesitant about whether or not this could be seen as true progress. There was also concern about the ramifications of these changes within what is still regarded as a stereotypically male activity.

Iris: *“The thing I was thinking was... Diversity actually makes bigotry worse rather than better, because people perceive “their” thing is being taken away from them.”*

The process to achieve better representation of women in video games has the potential to be highly divisive amongst the gaming community, with resistance occurring where some may feel there is no need to change existing representation. There may be a concern that in changing representation, the very nature of video games, and what makes them enjoyable to gamers, will be changed as well. As one participant mentioned, changing something that a group see as “theirs” can incite backlash, sometimes in the form of abuse and harassment, which may only make matters worse for female gamers in this scenario.

A number of participants felt some concern that the recent increase in female characters and better representation is mostly profit motivated – therefore, if the better representation of women is not as profitable as leaving video games as they are and catering to those that wish to maintain the status quo, we simply won’t see the better representation that we want. Although women are increasingly joining the workforce, and generating disposable income, many are still faced with the expectation that they

should be doing housework and caring for others. This means that leisure continues to be a commodity for many women that they simply do not have time for (McKie et al, 1999), making it difficult for them to spend their money on the video games they want, particularly those with better representation of women. However, this is not to say that women have no power over the games they play. Going back to the argument of hardcore vs casual gaming, many of the “casual” games which are regarded as more feminine are free to play through platforms such as Facebook (Chess, 2013), and it would be easy to assume that they simply do not generate the profits that the “hardcore” console games do. However, these “free to play games”, such as *Pokémon Go*, which one participant noted in her interview as a game she plays very regularly are a huge source of profit for companies. *Pokémon Go* continues to make around \$2 million a day since its 2016 launch, with well over \$1.8 billion in player expenditure (Nelson, 2018). This comes from a variety of in-game purchases by players in an attempt to utilise certain features or to make their experiences easier through access to high level items.

For comparison, *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013) became one of the best-selling games of all time, earning its publishers around \$6 billion by early 2018 in the five years since release – a feat not necessarily unobtainable by *Pokémon Go* should the profits continue. This goes to show that, even when spending their leisure time differently, women still, in theory, hold financial power over game developers by using their money almost as a vote of confidence in what a developer is doing. If the game were to suddenly become unappealing to the players for whatever reason, then one would argue that this revenue stream would decrease. This is similar to home console games – if the players do not like what they see, they simply will not pay for it, which in turn will hopefully continue the trend of better female representation in games and improve the experiences of female gamers through their self-made communities through the forcing of developer’s hands via revenue streams.

Engaging with video games

For the final part of the interview, participants were asked if they believed that the representation of women in video games has had any effect on their experiences as gamers, and engagement with video games as a whole.

A number of participants hadn’t necessarily considered that their experiences, and the way they engage with video games, may be connected to issues such as representation. One participant went as far as to reason that because “everyone knows” that video games are not real, that it “does not really sway the treatment of

females” (Nina). This singular argument stood out as it was an outlier within the interviews as a whole – whilst there were participants that hadn’t considered such issues before, after some thought many believed that there was a cause somewhere, whether in video games themselves, or with video games acting as a conduit for larger societal issues, particularly the sexism faced by women in everyday life.

Sara: *“The treatment of women, and the performance of women in video games, are all tied back to these controlling ideas created and solidified by our patriarchal culture, that teaches these ideas.”*

Similar to the ideas of the Beauty Myth (Wolf, 1990), and the socialisation of young women into housewives and mothers (Stanley and Wise, 2002), video games are a form of media which perpetuates the norms and expectations placed upon women in our society. Though the focus on the research was on video games, this is not to say that it is the only media that we engage with and can face issues with – video games simply provided a singular point of focus for both myself and the participants. For my research, I wanted to see how women engaged with a form of media that was deemed “masculine” and that, based on the results of the content analysis, primarily represented women as sex objects, or prizes to be won.

There were participants who believed that resolving the issues regarding the representation of women could positively impact how we, as women, interacted with video games. Participants spoke about the “genuine surprise” (Tamsin) they faced from others when they found out about their gaming habits but mentioned that if there were more women in video games, there would be less surprise over the existence of female gamers. This does not stand just for video games, but also within the larger gaming community – streaming on services such as Twitch and YouTube were mentioned by participants, both as something they did themselves, or frequently watched others doing. The topic of streaming also takes us back to the issue of the sexualisation of women. Participants mentioned that women in video games were designed to reflect how the men who made them believed women should look in real life, an issue which carries over into streaming. Female gamers are expected to look their best on camera, even if they are not the main focus of the video, because they believe they will be “judged not only on how [they] play”, but also on how they “present [themselves]” (Emilia), creating perhaps another barrier that women face in the gaming community. As mentioned earlier within the chapter, some participants felt as though there was no real “safe space” for female gamers, but that women were nevertheless using gaming as a way of striving to create a sense of their identity. It seemed that for some participants, streaming was allowing women to work their way into the male-dominated

space of gaming and create their own pockets within it. It is a gradual change, but one that if continued, can perhaps lead to a change in the greater culture of gaming by normalising the presence of women within the community.

Participants believed that with the increasing presence of female gamers on YouTube would lead to “more respect for those [female] gamers” (Lillie), and that women would no longer be seen as the Other within the community.

Emilia: *“Why can’t there be an environment for female gamers, where they can feel at home, as male gamers seem to feel in, like, the complete community, and... life, generally. So, I want to create something like that, somehow”*

In this sense, the gradual creation of spaces for women is similar to the gradual change in the media which Liberal Feminists call for. Changing the media may change the games themselves, but we must also strive to achieve change in the communities that surround gaming. When women are seen as “the Other”, their participation in video games is unexpected, and sometimes unwelcome, and so some of the participants felt as though it fell to them to create, and fill, the spaces they wanted to see.

Arguably, it is the participants’ awareness of such issues regarding a lack of shared female gaming spaces which allows them to push for change within video games and the community. As a whole, participants believed that they were far more likely to notice issues with female representation, and the differences in how men and women engaged with video games *because* they were women. They would notice when female characters were missing from video games, or if a female streamer was treated differently to a male streamer – many were even able to compare their own experiences to male siblings and friends.

Participants overwhelmingly shared similar views on video games and being a female gamer. Additionally, they were largely determined to enjoy video games, despite the issues they faced, and in many ways, were actively trying to make the community a safer space for other women. This was at both a personal level, of trying to unlearn behaviours which put other female gamers down, and at a social level of taking part in groups and making it so that women were becoming more visible in the community. To conclude, many of the observations about women in gaming made by participants reflected those made within the content analysis. The interviews, however, provided greater insight into women’s opinions on the representation, and how they engaged with video games. Much of their experiences were shared, and their engagement in gaming communities involved navigating a minefield of abuse, and the bombardment of images of sexualised women. This was all whilst attempting to create a space that

was safer for them and other women to engage in and creating positive experiences along the way. Many participants saw the gradual change that was taking place in video games, and their communities, and wanted it to continue by supporting it, and supporting others like them. It is my argument that these gradual changes, such as those suggested by Liberal Feminists, are just as important as the overall dismantling of an institution suggested by more Radical Feminists. By taking small actions to create their own spaces within the community, I would argue that these female gamers are building a foundation for future change in terms of their experiences and the representation of women in video games, one which will benefit future female gamers – much like the National D.Va Association, which aims to empower female gamers, mentioned in this project's introduction.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to look not only at the representation of women in video games, but also at how female gamers engaged with games and gaming culture. I chose to look at the representation of women in video games as a basis for the work largely because I wanted to see if my personally held beliefs about it had any academic backing. In this sense, I wanted to see if female characters continued to be presented differently to male characters, and what roles they fulfilled. The inclusion of other female gamers was because I wanted to know if others felt a similar way, and if they had had similar experiences to myself, as a result of being a gamer, throughout their lives. To me, the human aspect was important because not everyone who plays games looks at them through the lenses of academia, with theories such as the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989) giving context to what they saw in the media – it was the aim of my research to provide such feelings with an academic basis.

The issues and challenges female gamers face were one of the most important aspects of this research, not only because they are shared by others, but because they were also seemingly linked to the games themselves. Participants noted, for example, that if games had more female characters, then female gamers would not necessarily face ostracization from the gaming community.

Regardless of the abuse and issues they faced, however, every participant chose to continue playing games despite the backlash– they were determined not to have something they enjoy taken away from them because of their gender. Many chose to play different games to avoid these issues, particularly those relating to online gaming, but some participants took it upon themselves to engage in, and create, safe spaces where other women could enjoy games without the risks of abuse and harassment. Through streaming, playing with friends, or joining social media groups, the participants spoke of the ways that they continued to enjoy the gaming community and engage with it whilst challenging the male dominance – even if it was unintentionally. I would argue that these participants, without even realising, are taking on a liberal feminist approach in regard to creating a multitude of small changes at one level to enact greater change overall in terms of video games and how female gamers (and character) are treated. It is very easy to become disillusioned when speaking about representation in video games, especially as a woman. The lack of women in video games can become disheartening and seeing hyper-sexualised women in games as we do in other forms of media can only add to these feelings. As for the experiences female gamers have

had (and how they have reacted to them), many experiences which may be upsetting, or distressing are shared by individuals. As a result, it became my aim as the project continued to see how things were changing for the better, for example, the increased inclusion of women in video games as a whole, or the use of female characters as playable characters. I also wanted to find the enjoyable aspects of gaming, the shared experiences we were happy to have, and how female gamers carved their own spaces in the gaming community, thus normalising their presence.

As for my research questions, they generally remained the same throughout my research. Initially I had planned to simply look at the connections between representation whether it had an effect on the experiences of female gamers. During the interviews, participants frequently spoke about the games they played, and the activities they took part in. It was at this stage it became apparent that simply looking at representation and experiences together was not enough. Not only was it difficult to quantify the effects and truly research such a phenomenon, but a lot of it would have simply come down to opinion. The introduction of the focus on engagement came at a late stage, even after some of the interviews were conducted, and yet a large amount of the information provided by participants directly addressed their engagement with gaming and the community, and it seemed a waste to ignore such a wealth of information.

Each part of my research works together in order to answer my overarching research questions:

- How are women represented in video games?
- How do female gamers regard female representation in video games?
- What are the experiences of female gamers regarding gaming and within the gaming community?

Key Findings

The results of this study were a doubled-edged sword of sorts. On the one hand, it brought to light issues of women being cast into very similar roles across a wide variety of games and raising questions about female autonomy. However, it also showed that there was change occurring in the way women were being presented, a feeling which was also shared by interviewees.

The results of the visual and critical analysis aspect of this research project highlighted two major recurring roles for female characters: the good Princess, and the evil Queen. The Queens were primarily women who exercised a degree of autonomy and were frequently typecast as villains to be defeated, usually as a result of their autonomy. On

the other hand, the Princesses were passive female characters who embodied the expectations of women through the “great female adventure” of heterosexual love, and the caring of others before their own wellbeing (Consalvo, 2003).

However, there were signs that this is changing, albeit slowly, not only with the introduction of more female characters in games as a whole, but also with increasing choice in playable female characters.

Series’ were looked at as a whole, and positive change could be seen throughout many of them over the years. The inclusion of more named female characters over the years is a small change, but a welcome one as it is hoped that this increase is indicative of a long-term movement toward greater female representation. Symbolic Annihilation (Tuchman, 1978) is debatably still an issue in video games, with there still being considerably fewer female video game characters than male, particularly regarding the playable characters. These playable characters are, more often than not, the game’s main character and the focal point of the plotline. The inclusion of more women as playable characters highlights a move toward a more active female character – one which is not villainised. Due to the nature of the sample for content analysis, and the timeframe for this research project, many of the more recent games which include female leading characters were not included in this research. This means that although they are missing from this particular research project, it is something which can be studied in greater detail in the future. From 2017 up to the completion of this research, there have been a variety of games released with *playable* female characters. This includes new video game IPs (Intellectual Properties) such as *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017), and the continuation of pre-existing series with new female leads, like *Uncharted: The Lost Legacy* (2017).

The improvements are slow, but sure, and there has seemingly been a greater increase in these playable female characters in the last decade, or so, and I would argue that change *is* occurring, and will continue. It may not be the introduction of legislative changes that liberal feminists’ campaign for, but the introduction of more playable female characters has also introduced more diversity in character roles, and though the Holy Princess and the Evil Queen are still prevalent roles, female characters are also increasingly becoming the Heroes of the game. Once again, it is the small changes which push the bigger changes, even in video games.

Furthermore, there have also been slight improvements concerning female character design. Although the issue of sexualisation is still salient in terms of female representation, it does seem that game developers are aware of the issues and working to improve on them. As an example, in 2016 shortly before the full release of

Overwatch, Blizzard responded to fan complaints by removing the controversial Tracer “butt pose”, in which the character’s back (and rear end) was to the screen, looking over her shoulder (Grayson, 2016). The argument was that Blizzard had built a character whose identity did not revolve around her sensuality, so the inclusion of such a pose felt unnecessary – something with which Blizzard agreed with. Unsurprisingly, however, there a degree of community backlash against what some felt was “pandering” (Grayson, 2016), reminding us of the comments interview participants made about people who were afraid of “their” things being taken away and changed. Sex may have sold more games in the past, but it appears that developers are realising that this is not necessarily what people want anymore. In order to increase their games’ audiences, they need to start creating games which do not ostracise certain groups of gamers, such as women – it was this realisation that allowed Blizzard to make the necessary changes, despite the community backlash.

It is difficult to say whether the changes we are seeing are a result of a real desire for more complex female characters, or if they are profit motivated. There are many stages that go into making a video game, so perhaps it is a combination of the two, with the content creators bringing these female characters into the game, and the distributors aiming to generate profits. Regardless of how you look at it, however, the primary aim of a game is to make money, and so customer satisfaction is a major concern for everyone within the game developing process. With the ever-rising popularity of social media, it is easier to see now how the desires of gamers can make or break a game. Although not in relation to gender, EA’s “loot box controversy” is a prime example of this in action. In 2017, a comment from an EA developer on Reddit regarding *Star Wars: Battlefront 2*’s (2017) loot box system lead to the comment becoming the most downvoted comment ever, with 680,000 downvotes as of mid-November 2017 (Newhouse, 2017). In turn, *Star Wars: Battlefront 2* missed the proposed sales targets, with EA placing the blame on this “loot box controversy” (Sarkar, 2018), and removed the micro-transactions from the game completely within the first year of release. As for the Interviews, speaking to female gamers provided insights into shared experiences, not only with myself, but with other participants. Participants on the whole had experienced negativity as a result of being a female gamer, usually being seen as a bit “weird” by their non-gaming peers for taking part in stereotypically masculine activities. A lot of this also came in the form of non-gamers expecting the gamers themselves to be recluses, not doing anything worthwhile with their time away from work or school. There were also times when participants would experience more extreme verbal abuse – usually when online. Much of this was in relation to other,

male, gamers believing that they did not belong in what they felt was their community. Some even made it very clear that the reason they were targeting the participants within the game was because they were women. Furthermore, the sexual nature of many of the threats left no doubt in participants' minds that these messages were relating to them being female – with rape threats, and harassing individuals for nude images of themselves. These threats all seemed to cumulate in the idea that these women should be submissive to the men who were sending them the abuse, making them sex objects to be used against their will, or turning them into passive bodies to be subjected to the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1989). From my own perspective, it seems like much of these actions were a form of power play and dominance, with the male gamers looking to recover the parts of their games and communities that they felt that they had lost, or that had been taken away from them by those who demand change to gaming and the culture around it. Once again, whilst women hide behind online personas for their own safety, there are men who hide behind their personas to give themselves a degree of freedom when it comes to abusing others. There were some participants who did admit to hiding behind their gamertags and online personas to protect themselves from the abuse they had either received in the past, or seen others receive. For some, the fear of the repercussions made it difficult to stand up to the issues they faced, but this did not necessarily stop them from engaging in gaming communities and helping in other ways, which we will address again shortly. These experiences of abuse and harassment did not tend to outweigh the positive experiences, such as building relationships through gaming, as none of them had given up gaming as a result of them. Participants continued to engage with video games, regardless of the horrible experiences, but they would alter it in a way that suited them and avoided conflict – such as playing story-based games and avoiding online gaming. The participants in my research project also utilised “gender masking”, using their gamertags to disguise their gender (Fox and Tang, 2017). Whilst this may not directly challenge the issues of harassment, it allows them to continue to enjoy their chosen hobby without fear – it is similar to placing a bandage over a wound, but it should be seen as a small step which in the long run can prevent festering and the worsening of a situation.

Some participants also spoke about forging their own paths within the gaming community. Taking part in online streaming and joining local gaming communities allowed them to both create, and support, safe spaces for other women. These are attempts to ensure that other women do not experience the fear that they did,

supporting fellow gamers – much like Zoë Quinn creating the Crash Override network post-Gamergate to support victims of online abuse.

It feels almost like defeat to admit that female gamers continue to find their own safe spaces and conform to the expectations of the gaming community, without initiating a complete overturning of the system - however it should not be seen as such, these are the small changes which liberal feminists would advocate, and many would argue that they greater effects and long term benefits. These small, every day, acts of rebellion, by playing the games they are told to avoid, and doing what they love are arguably empowering – doing what they want because they want to, regardless of the boundaries they face as a result of their gender.

The main takeaway from my research project is that change is occurring, albeit slowly. It is easy to see this in relation to the analysis of the video games, where there are more women appearing in video games, and they are fulfilling roles which are not limited to anachronistic stereotypes. The change, however, is slower and subtler in regard to the way women interact and engage with video games. Some participants noted a feeling of fear; fear of abuse, fear of backlash, fear of experiencing any of the horrible things other women have been subjected to. And so, though their actions are limited by it, they are not non-existent. As it stands, women are finding and creating their own safe spaces within gaming culture, and instituting gradual change from within, mostly by normalising their presence in the community. I believe that if this were to continue, the fear would not be as much of an issue, and that more and more women will speak up – just looking at the #MeToo movement (2017) we can see that people will speak out about injustices when supported by others. Furthermore, women are realising that their voices can and should be heard, we are seeing this in events such as the 2017 international Women’s March. Both movements were seen as some of the biggest mobilisations of feminism in recent years, regardless of whether you were radical, liberal, etc - this in turn will arguably create a ripple effect and encourage women to make even the smallest changes to empower themselves, as we are seeing with women in gaming communities.

We are currently living in times of change, where women are empowering each other and working together. It is my hope that these small actions taken by women when engaging with video games can go on to help others in the future too. At the end of it all, whether they are aware of it or not, many of the participants were simply asking for equality, and this is a feeling which is shared – at least by myself, and is one of the primary catalysts behind this research project. Part of this desire for equality also stems from the desire for a safe space, somewhere free of repercussions where

women can simply enjoy themselves without fear – it's contradictory that the place e escape to is also one which brings us frustration, but the participants of this project show that they want change and that they will bring it about in the smallest, or grandest, gestures that they can manage.

Reflections

This research project was *difficult*, but a worthwhile endeavour.

The primary issue this research project faced was the inclusion of human participants. By utilising a snowball sampling technique, it wasn't necessarily difficult to find women who were interested in the topic and willing to take part – the problems arose when trying to get potential participants to fill out ethics forms, and then take part in the interviews when many weren't conducted in person. Various reminder emails and messages were sent out to remind potential participants to fill out the forms or notify me if they were no longer interested in participating. Many of these messages were left unanswered – however a decent number of participants remained, so losing a couple was not necessarily detrimental to the research.

Organising meetings and interviews in person were frustrating at times, but these in-person interviews were arguably the easiest of all to orchestrate – once again the biggest issue faced was getting participants taking part via email or other messaging services to respond to the questions sent out. However, this issue was largely resolved when I messaged participants again to organise a Skype interview, or something similar, allowing them to sit down at a time which was convenient for the both of us and focus entirely on the interview at hand. However, the Interviews were successful in that they provided an insight into the experiences of others, allowing me to draw many conclusions from a wealth of data.

In comparison, the Content Analysis proved easier, if not time consuming. The last-minute decision to use a brief survey, distributed via social media, to gather information on people's favourite games allowed for the Content Analysis sample to be more representative of gamers interests. It allowed for the inclusion of range of games which survey participants had listed as their "favourites" as well as cross referencing these to the critically acclaimed games of the initial sample. This meant that the sample was considering games which were held in high regard by gamers and critics alike. Many of the games from the survey results were already included within the original sample, based on critically rated games, and other games were added or removed based on their popularity across both sample sources.

If I were to do this research again, I would be far more inclined to use human participants within a close geographical area so that travelling to them would reduce the issues of contacting them. The increased geographical area and use of technology to contact participants was an attempt to both increase sample size, and make contact easier for both parties involved, however, it did create a lot of problems.

Additionally, I would create a sample for the Content Analysis based purely upon the favourite games of others – having a survey sent around social media that took fewer than five minutes to complete provided a great deal of responses, and sample data.

Suggestions

If given the option to, there is much from my own research that I would like to expand upon. One such focus would be the generational differences in the experiences of female gamers – participants spoke about their childhoods, but with many growing up in the 90's and early millennium, it does not necessarily reflect what young girls who play games experience now, two decades later. The games played by girls in the 1990s are a far cry from those played now, and not just in terms of their graphics, but also regarding the amount of games available and the increasing number of female characters. At the point of writing this, an online game called *Fortnite*, a Battle Royale style game in which players defeat each other to be the last man standing is hugely popular amongst younger gamers. The game itself has made international news because of parental concerns about children's gaming "addictions" (Gough, 2018), but also because of the increased issue of "stranger danger" as the young gamers are able to chat with other players through voice and text services (BBC News, 2018). Whilst many participants in this research project received messages of an abusive nature when they were older, the availability of online games to younger audiences now means that they could be subjected to such issues much earlier.

There are many other questions like this which I left unanswered but would be interested to see the results of them.

Finally, in future research projects, I would like to increase the number of participants I spoke to – even if it was difficult at the time. The reason being is that I would hope to create a more representative sample of female gamers by gathering more information about their experiences. It is hard to say whether the sample of 18 gamers in this research is representative of female gamers as a whole, but in my opinion, it does provide a good insight into the topic and sets the tone for further research.

With the focus of this research project being on the female gamer, speaking to more women would have been preferable. However, it would also be interesting to compare

the experiences of male and female gamers, either through interviews, or mixed-gender focus groups to gather information. This would allow us to see if there really a gendered difference is between how we engage with gaming, and the community, and how we spend our leisure time.

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Assassin's Creed (Ubisoft)

- Assassin's Creed (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Assassin's Creed II (2009, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood (2010, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Assassin's Creed: Revelations (2011, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Assassin's Creed III (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, WiiU*)
- Assassin's Creed: Black Flag (2013, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, WiiU, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Assassin's Creed: Unity (2014, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Assassin's Creed: Syndicate (2015, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Banjo-Kazooie (Rare)

- Banjo-Kazooie (1998, *Nintendo 64*)
- Banjo-Tooie (2000, *Nintendo 64*)

Bioshock (Industrial Games, 2K Games)

- Bioshock (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Bioshock 2 (2010, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Bioshock: Infinite (2013, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)

Bloodborne (FromSoftware, 2015, Playstation 4)

Borderlands (Gearbox Software, 2K Games)

- Borderlands (2009, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Borderlands 2 (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel! (2014, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)

Call of Duty (Infinity Ward, Treyarch, Sledgehammer Games)

- Call of Duty (2003, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360 ports*)
- Call of Duty 2 (2005, *Xbox 360 port*)
- Call of Duty 3 (2006, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Call of Duty: World at War (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2009, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Call of Duty: Black Ops (2010, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Wii*)
- Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 (2011, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Wii*)
- Call of Duty: Black Ops II (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Call of Duty: Ghosts (2013 *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One, WiiU*)

- Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (2014, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Call of Duty: Black Ops III (2015, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare (2016, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Crash Bandicoot (Naughty Dog, 1996, Playstation)

Dark Souls (FromSoftware)

- Dark Souls I (2011, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Dark Souls II (2014, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Dark Souls III (2016, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Dead Space (EA Redwood Shores, 2008, Playstation 3, Xbox 360)

Diablo 3 (Blizzard Entertainment, 2012, Playstation 3, Xbox 360 port)

The Elder Scrolls (Bethesda)

- Morrowind (2002, *Xbox*)
- Oblivion (2006, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Skyrim (2011, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)

Fallout (Interplay Entertainment, Bethesda)

- Fallout 3 (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Fallout: New Vegas (2010, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Fallout 4 (2015, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Far Cry (Crytek, Ubisoft)

- Far Cry (2004, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Far Cry 2 (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Far Cry 3 (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Far Cry 4 (2014, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

FEZ (Polytron Corporation, 2012, Xbox 360)

Final Fantasy (Square Enix)

- Final Fantasy (1987, *Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Final Fantasy II (1988, *Nintendo Entertainment System/Famicom*)
- Final Fantasy IV (1991, *Super Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Final Fantasy V (1992, *Super Nintendo Entertainment System/Super Famicom*)
- Final Fantasy VI (1994, *Super Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Final Fantasy VII (1997, *Playstation*)
- Final Fantasy VIII (1999, *Playstation*)
- Final Fantasy IX (2000, *Playstation*)
- Final Fantasy X (2001, *Playstation 2*)

- Final Fantasy XII (2006, *Playstation 2*)
- Final Fantasy XIII (2009, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Final Fantasy XV (2016, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Gears of War (Epic Games, 2006, Xbox 360)

Grand Theft Auto (Rockstar)

- Grand Theft Auto (1997, *Playstation*)
- Grand Theft Auto III (2001, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (2002, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (2004, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Grand Theft Auto IV (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Grand Theft Auto V (2013, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Half-Life (Valve, 1998, Playstation 2)

Halo (Bungie, 343 Industries)

- Halo: Combat Evolved (2001, *Xbox*)
- Halo 2 (2004, *Xbox*)
- Halo 3 (2007, *Xbox 360*)
- Halo 4 (2012, *Xbox 360*)
- Halo 5: Guardians (2015, *Xbox One*)

The Legend of Zelda (Nintendo)

- The Legend of Zelda (1986, *Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Zelda II: The Adventure of Link (1987, *Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- A Link to the Past (1991, *Super Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Ocarina of Time (1998, *Nintendo 64*)
- Majora's Mask (2000, *Nintendo 64*)
- The Wind Waker (2002, *Gamecube*)
- Twilight Princess (2006, *Gamecube, Wii*)
- Skyward Sword (2011, *Wii*)
- Breath of the Wild (2017, *WiiU, Switch*)

Mass Effect (BioWare)

- Mass Effect (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Mass Effect 2 (2010, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Mass Effect 3 (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Mass Effect: Andromeda (2017, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Metal Gear Solid (Konami)

- Metal Gear Solid (1998, *Playstation*)

- Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty (2001, *Playstation 2*)
- Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (2004, *Playstation 2*)
- Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots (2008, *Playstation 3*)
- Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (2014, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain (2015, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Overwatch (Blizzard Entertainment, 2016, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Panzer Dragoon (Sega)

- Panzer Dragoon (1995, *Sega Saturn*)
- Panzer Dragoon Saga (1998, *Sega Saturn*)
- Panzer Dragoon Orta (2002, *Xbox*)

Persona (Atlus)

- Revelations: Persona (1996, *Playstation*)
- Persona 2: Eternal Punishment (2000, *Playstation*)
- Persona 3 (2006, *Playstation 2*)
- Persona 4 (2008, *Playstation 2*)
- Persona 5 (2016, *Playstation 3, Playstation 4*)

Portal (Valve)

- Portal (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Portal 2 (2011, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)

Red Dead (Rockstar)

- Red Dead Revolver (2004, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Red Dead Redemption (2010, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)

Resident Evil (Capcom)

- Resident Evil (1996, *Playstation*)
- Resident Evil 2 (1998, *Playstation*)
- Resident Evil 3: Nemesis (1999, *Playstation*)
- Resident Evil – Code: Veronica (2001, *Dreamcast, Playstation 2*)
- Resident Evil Zero (2002, *Gamecube*)
- Resident Evil 4 (2005, *Gamecube, Playstation 2*)
- Resident Evil 5 (2009, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Resident Evil 6 (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Resident Evil: Revelations (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Resident Evil: Revelations 2 (2015, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Resident Evil 7: Biohazard (2017, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Soulcalibur (Project Soul)

- Soulcalibur II (2002, *Playstation 2, Xbox, Gamecube*)
- Soulcalibur III (2005, *Playstation 2*)
- Soulcalibur IV (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Soulcalibur V (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)

Spyro (Insomniac Games)

- Spyro the Dragon (1998, *Playstation*)
- Ripto's Rage! (1999, *Playstation*)
- Year of the Dragon (2000, *Playstation*)

Street Fighter (Capcom)

- Street Fighter III (1997, *Dreamcast*)
- Street Fighter IV (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Street Fighter V (2016, *Playstation 4*)

Super Mario (Nintendo)

- Super Mario Bros. (1985, *Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Super Mario Bros. 2 (1988, *Nintendo Entertainment System*)
- Super Mario 64 (1996, *Nintendo 64*)
- Super Mario Sunshine (2002, *Gamecube*)
- Super Mario Galaxy (2007, *Wii*)
- New Super Mario Bros. Wii (2009, *Wii*)
- Super Mario Galaxy 2 (2010, *Wii*)
- New Super Mario Bros. U (2012, *WiiU*)
- Super Mario 3D World (2013, *WiiU*)

Tom Clancy's (Ubisoft)

- Rainbow Six: Lockdown (2005, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Rainbow Six: Critical Hour (2006, *Xbox*)
- Rainbow Six: Vegas (2006, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 (2008, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Rainbow Six: Siege (2015, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Ghost Recon 2 (2004, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter (2006, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2 (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Ghost Recon: Future Soldier (2012, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Ghost Recon: Wildlands (2017, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)
- Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow (2004, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory (2005, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)

- Splinter Cell: Double Agent (2006, *Playstation 2, Xbox*)
- Splinter Cell: Blacklist (2013, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- The Division (2016, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

Tekken (Bandai Namco)

- Tekken (1994, *Playstation*)
- Tekken 2 (1995, *Playstation*)
- Tekken 3 (1997, *Playstation*)
- Tekken 4 (2001, *Playstation 2*)
- Tekken 5 (2004, *Playstation 2*)
- Tekken 6 (2007, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Tekken 7 (2015, *Playstation 4, Xbox One*)

The Last of Us (Naughty Dog, 2013, Playstation 3)

The Witcher 3 (CD Projekt Red, 2015, Playstation 4, Xbox One)

Tomb Raider (Core Design, Crystal Dynamics, Ubisoft, Eidos)

- Tomb Raider (1996, *Sega Saturn, Playstation*)
- Tomb Raider (2013, *Playstation 3, Xbox 360*)
- Rise of the Tomb Raider (2015, *Playstation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One*)

Uncharted (Naughty Dog)

- Uncharted: Drake's Fortune (2007, *Playstation 3*)
- Uncharted 2: Among Thieves (2009, *Playstation 3*)
- Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception (2011, *Playstation 3*)
- Uncharted 4: A Thief's End (2016, *Playstation 4*)

Video Games (Mentioned):

Candy Crush Saga (King, 2012, Mobile)

Cooking Mama (Office Create, 2006 – 2014, Nintendo DS)

Donkey Kong (Nintendo, 1981, Arcade)

Far Cry 5 (Ubisoft, 2018, Playstation 4, Xbox One)

God of War (SIE Santa Monica Studio, 2018, Playstation 4)

Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice (Ninja Theory, 2017, Playstation 4, Xbox One)

Horizon Zero Dawn (Guerilla Games, 2017, Playstation 4)

Imagine (Ubisoft)

- *Imagine: Babyz (2007, Nintendo DS)*

- *Imagine: Fashion Life (2012, Nintendo 3DS)*

Pokémon (Game Freak, 1996-, Nintendo Game Boy)

Red Dead Redemption 2 (Rockstar, 2018, Playstation 4, Xbox One)

Xenoblade Chronicles X (Monolith Soft, 2015, WiiU)

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Content Analysis Games

Assassin's Creed

- Assassin's Creed (2007)
- Assassin's Creed II (2009)
- Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood (2010)
- Assassin's Creed: Revelations (2011)
- Assassin's Creed III (2012)
- Assassin's Creed: Black Flag (2013)
- Assassin's Creed: Unity (2014)
- Assassin's Creed: Syndicate (2015)

Banjo-Kazooie

- Banjo-Kazooie (1998)
- Banjo-Tooie (2000)

Bioshock

- Bioshock (2007)
- Bioshock 2 (2010)
- Bioshock: Infinite (2013)

Bloodborne (2015)

Borderlands

- Borderlands (2009)
- Borderlands 2 (2012)
- Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel! (2014)

Call of Duty

- Call of Duty (2003)
- Call of Duty 2 (2005)
- Call of Duty 3 (2006)
- Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (2007)

- Call of Duty: World at War (2008)
- Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2009)
- Call of Duty: Black Ops (2010)
- Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 (2011)
- Call of Duty: Black Ops II (2012)
- Call of Duty: Ghosts (2013)
- Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (2014)
- Call of Duty: Black Ops III (2015)
- Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare (2016)

Crash Bandicoot (1996)

Dark Souls

- Dark Souls I (2011)
- Dark Souls II (2014)
- Dark Souls III (2016)

Dead Space (2008)

Diablo 3 (2012)

The Elder Scrolls

- Morrowind (2002)
- Oblivion (2006)
- Skyrim (2011)

Fallout

- Fallout 3 (2008)
- Fallout: New Vegas (2010)
- Fallout 4 (2015)

Far Cry

- Far Cry (2004)
- Far Cry 2 (2008)
- Far Cry 3 (2012)
- Far Cry 4 (2014)

FEZ (2012)

Final Fantasy

- Final Fantasy (1987)
- Final Fantasy II (1988)
- Final Fantasy IV (1991)
- Final Fantasy V (1992)
- Final Fantasy VI (1994)
- Final Fantasy VII (1997)
- Final Fantasy VIII (1999)
- Final Fantasy IX (2000)
- Final Fantasy X (2001)
- Final Fantasy XII (2006)
- Final Fantasy XIII (2009)
- Final Fantasy XV (2016)

Gears of War (2006)

Grand Theft Auto

- Grand Theft Auto (1997)
- Grand Theft Auto III (2001)
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (2002)
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (2004)
- Grand Theft Auto IV (2008)
- Grand Theft Auto V (2013)

Half-Life (1998)

*Halo*Halo: Combat Evolved (2001)

- Halo 2 (2004)
- Halo 3 (2007)
- Halo 4 (2012)
- Halo 5: Guardians (2015)

The Legend of Zelda

- The Legend of Zelda (1986)
- Zelda II: The Adventure of Link (1987)
- A Link to the Past (1991)
- Ocarina of Time (1998)

- Majora's Mask (2000)
- The Wind Waker (2002)
- Twilight Princess (2006)
- Skyward Sword (2011)
- Breath of the Wild (2017)

Mass Effect

- Mass Effect (2007)
- Mass Effect 2 (2010)
- Mass Effect 3 (2012)
- Mass Effect: Andromeda (2017)

Metal Gear Solid

- Metal Gear Solid (1998)
- Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty (2001)
- Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (2004)
- Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots (2008)
- Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (2014)
- Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain (2015)

Overwatch (2016)

Panzer Dragoon

- Panzer Dragoon (1995)
- Panzer Dragoon Saga (1998)
- Panzer Dragoon Orta (2002)

Persona

- Revelations: Persona (1996)
- Persona 2: Eternal Punishment (2000)
- Persona 3 (2006)
- Persona 4 (2008)
- Persona 5 (2016)

Portal

- Portal (2007)
- Portal 2 (2011)

Red Dead

- Red Dead Revolver (2004)
- Red Dead Redemption (2010)

Resident Evil

- Resident Evil (1996)
- Resident Evil 2 (1998)
- Resident Evil 3: Nemesis (1999)
- Resident Evil – Code: Veronica (2001)
- Resident Evil Zero (2002)
- Resident Evil 4 (2005)
- Resident Evil 5 (2009)
- Resident Evil 6 (2012)
- Resident Evil: Revelations (2012)
- Resident Evil: Revelations 2 (2015)
- Resident Evil 7: Biohazard (2017)

Soulcalibur

- Soulcalibur II (2002)
- Soulcalibur III (2005)
- Soulcalibur IV (2008)
- Soulcalibur V (2012)

Spyro

- Spyro the Dragon (1998)
- Ripto's Rage! (1999)
- Year of the Dragon (2000)

Street Fighter

- Street Fighter III (1997)
- Street Fighter IV (2008)
- Street Fighter V (2016)

Super Mario

- Super Mario Bros. (1985)
- Super Mario Bros. 2 (1988)
- Super Mario 64 (1996)
- Super Mario Sunshine (2002)
- Super Mario Galaxy (2007)
- New Super Mario Bros. Wii (2009)
- Super Mario Galaxy 2 (2010)
- New Super Mario Bros. U (2012)
- Super Mario 3D World (2013)

Tom Clancy's

- Rainbow Six: Lockdown (2005)
- Rainbow Six: Critical Hour (2006)
- Rainbow Six: Vegas (2006)
- Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 (2008)
- Rainbow Six: Siege (2015)
- Ghost Recon 2 (2004)
- Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter (2006)
- Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2 (2007)
- Ghost Recon: Future Soldier (2012)
- Ghost Recon: Wildlands (2017)
- Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow (2004)
- Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory (2005)
- Splinter Cell: Double Agent (2006)
- Splinter Cell: Blacklist (2013)
- The Division (2016)

Tekken

- Tekken (1994)
- Tekken 2 (1995)
- Tekken 3 (1997)
- Tekken 4 (2001)
- Tekken 5 (2004)
- Tekken 6 (2007)
- Tekken 7 (2015)

The Last of Us (2013)

The Witcher 3 (2015)

Tomb Raider

- Tomb Raider (1996)
- Tomb Raider (2013)

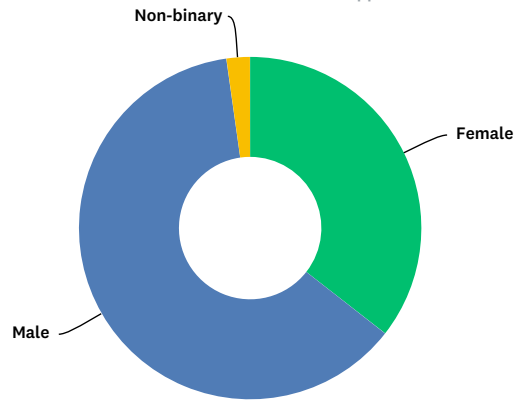
- Rise of the Tomb Raider (2015)

Uncharted

- Uncharted: Drake's Fortune (2007)
- Uncharted 2: Among Thieves (2009)
- Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception (2011)
- Uncharted 4: A Thief's End (2016)

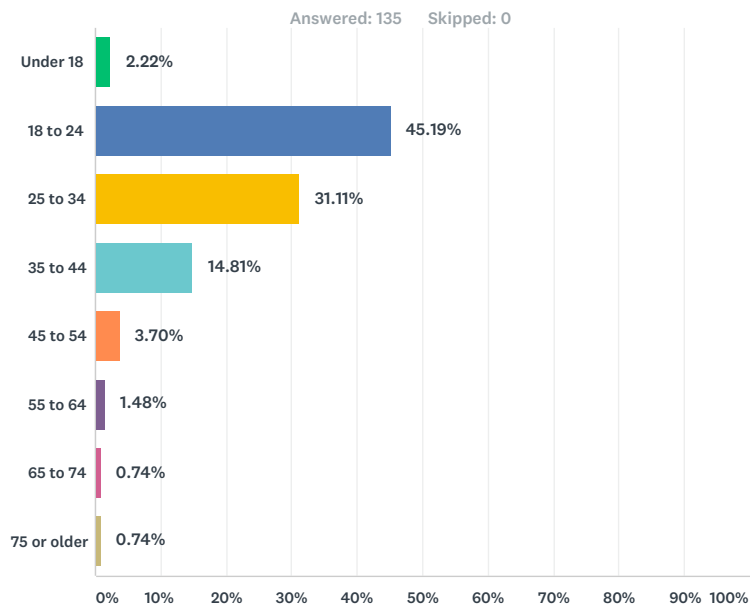
Q1 What is your gender?

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0



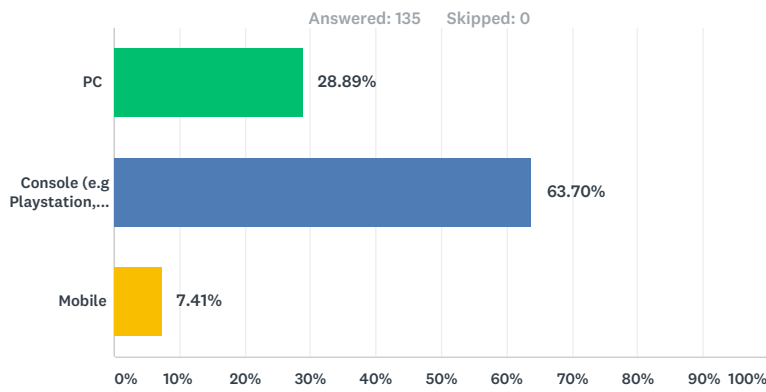
Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	35.56%	48
Male	62.22%	84
Non-binary	2.22%	3
Total		135

Q2 What is your age?



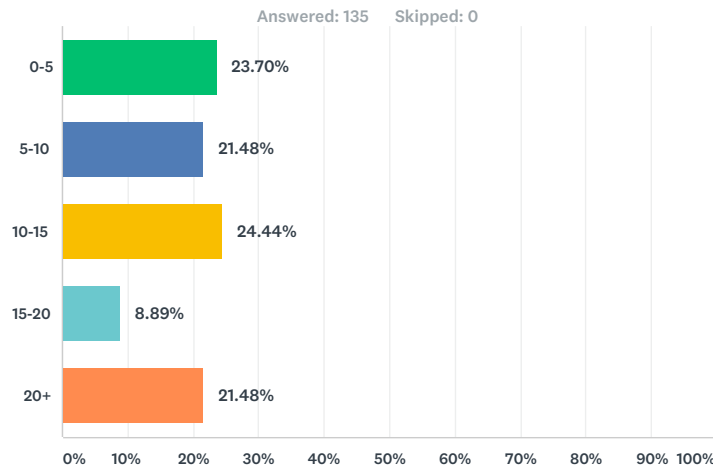
Answer Choices	Responses
Under 18	2.22% 3
18 to 24	45.19% 61
25 to 34	31.11% 42
35 to 44	14.81% 20
45 to 54	3.70% 5
55 to 64	1.48% 2
65 to 74	0.74% 1
75 or older	0.74% 1
Total	135

Q3 What is your preferred gaming platform?



Answer Choices	Responses
PC	28.89% 39
Console (e.g Playstation, Xbox, Nintendo)	63.70% 86
Mobile	7.41% 10
Total	135

Q4 How many hours a week, on average, do you spend playing video games? (Regardless of platform)



Answer Choices	Responses
0-5	23.70% 32
5-10	21.48% 29
10-15	24.44% 33
15-20	8.89% 12
20+	21.48% 29
Total	135

Q5 Would you describe yourself as a 'hardcore' or 'casual' gamer? Why?

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	Casual, deomtimes I get an urge but don't usually have time	7/16/2017 11:07 PM
2	I would describe myself as more of a casual gamer these days as I don't get to spend as much time playing games as I used to. I squeeze in gaming when I can	7/15/2017 11:07 AM
3	Casual - don't play as much as I used to, work and gigs always getting in the way ??	7/15/2017 8:26 AM
4	Hardcore casual.	7/14/2017 10:32 PM
5	Casual. Only play when have spare time	7/14/2017 10:30 PM
6	Hardcore: I do not play shovelware.	7/14/2017 9:29 PM
7	Casual now due to lack of time	7/14/2017 12:53 PM
8	Hardcore, due to time spent per week usually on hardest settings	7/14/2017 11:31 AM
9	Casual. Do not get enough time.	7/14/2017 8:56 AM
10	Hardcore due to how long I've been gaming, my collection and general love of of gaming!	7/14/2017 6:57 AM
11	Casual, don't take things too seriously and play for fun not competition.	7/13/2017 11:54 PM
12	Casual, if I get into a game I'll play it through. Otherwise, I just pick it up to pass time.	7/13/2017 11:31 PM
13	Casual, I play when my boyfriend isn't on the Xbox!	7/13/2017 10:28 PM
14	Casual gamer	7/13/2017 10:26 PM
15	Depends. Most people nowadays say "casual" gamers are people who only play games on their mobiles, whereas "hardcore" gamers are OTT FPS players. If that is the case, I'm somewhere in the middle. Question 6: This is tough, If i had to choose it would be...	7/13/2017 7:26 PM
16	Casual - don't have time	7/13/2017 6:42 PM
17	Casual but dedicated	7/13/2017 6:25 PM
18	Definitely gone from hardcore to casual in the last year because I've been studying and have not had the time to play.	7/13/2017 6:04 PM
19	Hardcore gamer, if I am not playing games myself I am watching gaming streams and I also keep updated with any new releases	7/13/2017 5:53 PM
20	Casual as I can't dedicate the time :(7/13/2017 5:48 PM
21	Casual, as I really only play on my phone when I am bored.	7/13/2017 5:42 PM
22	used to be hardcore, since having kids it's been less so.	7/13/2017 5:38 PM
23	Casual as I only use it to fill in time and it is irregular playing	7/13/2017 5:30 PM
24	Hardcore, but only because of the amount of time I spend playing, rather than my skill. :D	7/13/2017 5:27 PM
25	Casual	7/13/2017 4:34 PM
26	Casual gamer, only really play games for the story line	7/13/2017 4:17 PM
27	Hardcore as I play all games on top difficultly setting.	7/13/2017 3:31 PM
28	Yes, for the meme	7/13/2017 3:12 PM
29	Hardcore, persistent play on console games with intent in progression withing gaming communities, as well as a thorough interest in the industry around gaming	7/13/2017 2:42 PM
30	Rarely play	7/13/2017 2:01 PM
31	Hardcore, a mythic raider in World of Warcraft so a lot of time is needed for preparation for a raid and actually the execution of a raid.	7/13/2017 1:44 PM
32	I wouldnt describe myself as either of those.	7/13/2017 1:13 PM
33	Hard-core follow all gaming news and updates and take online gaming seriously	7/13/2017 1:04 PM
34	Casual - dip in and out of games when the mood strikes me	7/13/2017 12:56 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

35	Casual gamer as I don't play frequently and I can take a break from it.	7/13/2017 12:53 PM
36	I don't really play video games, but when I go I would say it's a casual gamers as I play a game on and off	7/13/2017 12:30 PM
37	Casual, on & off phases	7/13/2017 12:06 PM
38	somewhere in between. gaming since the 80s, playing many different genres but sometimes I might play games daily, sometimes I might not play anything for a week or 2	7/13/2017 12:05 PM
39	No	7/13/2017 11:52 AM
40	Probably casual as I don't play that often, but when I do play I might be on there for hours	7/13/2017 11:48 AM
41	Was once hard-core, now more casual	7/13/2017 11:35 AM
42	Casual gamer, only game with friends and only 'big titles'	7/13/2017 11:21 AM
43	Hardcore, preferably I'd say somewhere in the middle as I don't take the games as 'seriously' as a hardcore gamer but still spend the majority of my free time gaming	7/13/2017 11:18 AM
44	Hardcore as play several and few in depth.	7/13/2017 11:13 AM
45	Hardcore , as I spend so much time gaming and built a custom gaming PC	7/13/2017 10:41 AM
46	more hard-core - I usually play competitively in multiplayer and on the hardest settings on single player	7/13/2017 10:39 AM
47	Casual because I game for fun and never take it too seriously	7/13/2017 10:33 AM
48	Casual. The attitude I take to playing games is very non-competitive. I enjoy playing but have no desire to be the "best in the world" type of player that exists in gaming.	7/13/2017 10:30 AM
49	Casual at the moment because I am at Uni and literally never am home (always in labs)	7/13/2017 10:14 AM
50	Casual, I like my games but I get bored after being on my console too long.	7/13/2017 9:57 AM
51	Casual, no time to be hardcore at anything.	7/13/2017 9:54 AM
52	Casual - the time I spend playing per week varies, and I never buy new releases.	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
53	Casual - i play daily but not intensely	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
54	Knee jerk reaction would be to say hardcore, in reality these labels are meaningless - you wouldn't describe yourself as a hardcore or casual tv viewer, you're just consuming entertainment.	7/13/2017 9:39 AM
55	I would not. They're redundant labels used by gatekeepers.	7/13/2017 9:33 AM
56	Hardcore - I play a lot if games, have done for many years, across many devices, and consider myself competitive on multiplayer games	7/13/2017 9:26 AM
57	Casual gamer	7/13/2017 9:25 AM
58	Hardcore	7/13/2017 9:23 AM
59	Hardcore because I stream some of my content and due to the amount of hours per week	7/13/2017 9:15 AM
60	Casual but used to be hardcore	7/13/2017 9:05 AM
61	Hardcore, the sheer hours put in coupled with always playing the hardest difficulty.	7/13/2017 8:35 AM
62	Casual, very light occasional use nowadays	7/13/2017 8:32 AM
63	Casual.	7/13/2017 8:21 AM
64	I guess hardcore because of the amount of time I dedicate to it, but I don't play online and not much of a platinum freak.	7/13/2017 7:56 AM
65	Casual, as I don't spend all my free time playing. I will dedicate at least one day off from work to play, as long as I don't have anything else to do that day. I prefer to play knowing I don't have to stop to clean or something.	7/13/2017 7:44 AM
66	Casual Still spend a lot of time gaming, but don't have the hours to commit to being a hardcore player any more	7/13/2017 7:25 AM
67	Casual. Not in any clans/groups/guilds	7/13/2017 6:58 AM
68	Casual; I have no interest in online competitive gaming.	7/13/2017 6:50 AM
69	I dont spend much time playing anymore	7/13/2017 6:42 AM
70	A bit of both. If I could I would sit and play all day every day but I can't so only play when I can.	7/13/2017 6:36 AM

71	Casual because i dont have the time anymore	7/13/2017 6:35 AM
72	I would say hardcore, because playing online with friends in competitive modes gets real serious.	7/13/2017 6:32 AM
73	Casual- I play for fun really, and I'm not fussed about 100%-ing either	7/13/2017 6:29 AM
74	Casual but I would like to be hardcore if I could find the right teams	7/13/2017 5:07 AM
75	I'd say hardcore just cause of my habits	7/13/2017 3:31 AM
76	Casual, no time	7/13/2017 3:07 AM
77	Casual gamer, I dont know a lot about games or technology to consider myself hardcore	7/13/2017 2:32 AM
78	I would more use the word 'serious' than hardcore because that makes me sound addicted or something though I have used the word hardcore definitely to describe myself before. Definitely not a casual gamer. Gaming is my main hobby and what I devote the majority of my free time to, I've been gaming since I was a small child which my Dad first sparked. I have a broad taste in games and experience of games and like playing lots of different kinds of things. I know some people who game a lot in terms of hours but only play one game or franchise, like FIFA say, and they don't actually know much about gaming or games more broadly beyond playing something a lot and they call themselves casual gamers. I think being a serious or hardcore gamer isn't just about spending a lot of time doing it its about engaging with it more and knowing a lot about games, game making, creators, the industry etc. With high skill based competitive gaming I guess you'd call yourself hardcore even just playing one thing if you have expertise and may be a professional in esports even. Otherwise hardcore vs casual for me is like the difference between people who just like watching films and those who really love film or are 'film buffs' who actually know about directors and editing and cinematography etc and are more broadly versed and so on. To me games are a serious artform and while lots can just be for fun, or to chill, the best are works of art in the same way films or literature can be as narrative devices. Gaming is my biggest passion.	7/13/2017 2:16 AM
79	I use to be hardcore and still have moments when I play all day but now I am a casual gamer	7/13/2017 1:51 AM
80	Hardcore if choosing between the two options. Strive to be the best. Made the switch to face to face games from digital in recent years for the social aspect.	7/13/2017 1:41 AM
81	I would describe myself as a hardcore gamer because I spend a good portion of my time playing games. It's also one of the hobbies that bring me the most fun.	7/13/2017 1:18 AM
82	Hardcore	7/13/2017 1:07 AM
83	casual. i previously owned a console or two but found it addictive. i also downsized due to travel. now i don't have the spare time to game.	7/13/2017 12:58 AM
84	Both	7/13/2017 12:55 AM
85	Casual	7/13/2017 12:43 AM
86	hardcore, because I will still find the time to game whenever I can	7/13/2017 12:30 AM
87	Somewhere in the middle	7/13/2017 12:29 AM
88	Harddddcooooreee. haha. Obsessed is probably a more accurate word. I've been playing games since I was 4 and i've just never stopped. I appreciate all aspects from gameplay to game design. When I'm not gaming I'm usually watching gaming YT channels (Eurogamer, Many a True Nerd, Game Grumps, Playstation Access etc). I also watch my Husband play all the scary games because I'm rubbish at them haha. Have a nice day :D	7/13/2017 12:19 AM
89	Hardcore, more to the time I dedicate than skill level	7/13/2017 12:08 AM
90	Casual, because I don't usually know the inside outs of the game, and I'm usually not that great at them, but I love playing games regardless :)	7/12/2017 11:51 PM
91	No time for any other than casual	7/12/2017 11:46 PM
92	Of those two choices I would describe myself as hardcore because I have been playing games since I was 3, and play most games that come out each year and spend a great deal of my time doing so, as well as having a love for the industry in general	7/12/2017 11:39 PM
93	casual, i don't have enough time spare to play to be 'hardcore'	7/12/2017 11:33 PM
94	i guess hardcore because i play more than the average person	7/12/2017 11:29 PM
95	Casual, I play a lot but not seriously	7/12/2017 11:28 PM
96	Casual. I only really play games when my husband plays games and it's just to be together. I have no real investment in a lot of the games except pokemom online and I play the card game competitively so use the online version to test etc.	7/12/2017 11:27 PM

97	I'm pretty moderate gamer to be honest. I spend half time I have spare gaming so I'm not hardcore and I played a wide varied mixed games.	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
98	Casual, play a lot but not a serious competitive gamer.	7/12/2017 11:25 PM
99	in the middle , dont take games too seriously but play certain games a competitive leve	7/12/2017 11:17 PM
100	Casual time restricted	7/12/2017 11:15 PM
101	Hardcore. I play an online RPS Game for up to 8 hours a day.	7/12/2017 11:09 PM
102	Hardcore I play a number of different titles over a number of different consoles; and know a lot about games	7/12/2017 11:05 PM
103	If I had to I would say casual because I never play games enough to get good at them and usually prefer games that do not require skill (Pokemon, Harvest Moon)	7/12/2017 11:01 PM
104	I'm a casual gamer. I play my games in my spare time due to working on something most of the time.	7/12/2017 10:59 PM
105	Casual, gaming is a thing I do in my spare time rather than having to find spare time that isn't gaming.	7/12/2017 10:56 PM
106	I don't really like either phrase, they both infer certain stereotypes that I feel I don't fit.	7/12/2017 10:48 PM
107	Casual gamer because of lack of spare time.	7/12/2017 10:44 PM
108	Casual, unless it's GTA V or Final Fantasy 15 in which case I can spend hours and hours without taking a break playing. Especially online.	7/12/2017 10:40 PM
109	Casual because online competitive game modes are too pressurising and there's too many angry youths	7/12/2017 10:36 PM
110	Casual due to time constraints	7/12/2017 10:34 PM
111	Casual, depending on University or work	7/12/2017 10:29 PM
112	go between the two depending on how involved/immersed I am with the particular game	7/12/2017 10:26 PM
113	Casual, not enough time to play these days!	7/12/2017 10:17 PM
114	I'd say somewhere in between although I do spend a lot of time playing games!	7/12/2017 10:13 PM
115	Hardcore. Large variety of games, not casual shit.	7/12/2017 10:10 PM
116	Casj	7/12/2017 10:09 PM
117	Casual. It's not something to be way too competitive for me. Play for fun	7/12/2017 10:08 PM
118	Casual. I work too much :(7/12/2017 10:04 PM
119	Barely ever play games, they don't really capture my attention and I'm too busy with uni work and reading	7/12/2017 10:02 PM
120	Casual but play the games people associate with hardcore gamers e.g. doom, counterstike.	7/12/2017 9:54 PM
121	None	7/12/2017 9:50 PM
122	Casual. I have a full time job so I don't have time to be a hardcore gamer! If I had the time, I would be hardcore.	7/12/2017 9:49 PM
123	hardcore. I enjoy playing competitive video games often associated with e-sports, such as Smash Bros., Counter Strike and Overwatch.	7/12/2017 9:48 PM
124	Casual - I play about once a fortnight and never for too long at a time! It's also not always first on the list of things I want to do when I've got some spare time.	7/12/2017 9:46 PM
125	I would say somewhere in between. I go through phases where I am hardcore but then periods where I'm a lot more casual with my gaming.	7/12/2017 9:44 PM
126	Hardcore when time allows from work. With working life more casual for hours but played competitively.	7/12/2017 9:42 PM
127	Casual	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
128	Hardcore, because I guess I just match the general criteria what would be seen as a "hardcore gamer" in the media and the community, with having all the consoles, huge backlogs, massive dedication to many games etc.	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
129	Casual. Only interested in a few franchises, but if I get into something then I tend to play it a lot.	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
130	Casual gamer due to time constraints.	7/12/2017 9:40 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

131	No. I don't play much these days	7/12/2017 9:39 PM
132	Medium, my life doesn't revolve around it but it's a big part of it.	7/12/2017 9:38 PM
133	Casual, I rarely play competitively, such as in overwatch or mobas I would play quick match	7/12/2017 9:36 PM
134	Casual. I don't play regularly.	7/12/2017 9:33 PM
135	More in between as I feel I play more than the average person but not particularly 'hardcore'	7/12/2017 9:32 PM

Q6 What is your favourite video game? (Choose up to 3)

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
First Choice	100.00%	135
Second Choice	97.78%	132
Third Choice	93.33%	126

#	First Choice	Date
1	Sims	7/16/2017 11:07 PM
2	Halo 3	7/15/2017 11:07 AM
3	Crash Bandicoot Series	7/15/2017 8:26 AM
4	Portal 2	7/14/2017 10:32 PM
5	Forza	7/14/2017 10:30 PM
6	Spyro: Year of the Dragon	7/14/2017 9:29 PM
7	Silent Hill	7/14/2017 12:53 PM
8	Streets of Rage 2	7/14/2017 11:31 AM
9	Metal Gear Solid	7/14/2017 8:56 AM
10	Super mario world (SNES)	7/14/2017 6:57 AM
11	Skyrim	7/13/2017 11:54 PM
12	The Witcher 3	7/13/2017 11:31 PM
13	Assassins creed	7/13/2017 10:28 PM
14	Gears of war	7/13/2017 10:26 PM
15	Dark Chronicle / Dark Cloud 2	7/13/2017 7:26 PM
16	Uncharted	7/13/2017 6:42 PM
17	Witcher 3 Wild Hunt	7/13/2017 6:25 PM
18	Mass Effect 2/3	7/13/2017 6:04 PM
19	Portal 2	7/13/2017 5:53 PM
20	World of warcraft	7/13/2017 5:48 PM
21	Gin Rummy	7/13/2017 5:42 PM
22	Final Fantasy 7	7/13/2017 5:38 PM
23	Candy crush	7/13/2017 5:30 PM
24	Final Fantasy series	7/13/2017 5:27 PM
25	GTA	7/13/2017 4:34 PM
26	Mass effect	7/13/2017 4:17 PM
27	GTA V	7/13/2017 3:31 PM
28	Fallout 4	7/13/2017 3:12 PM
29	The Last of Us	7/13/2017 2:42 PM
30	Sensible Soccer	7/13/2017 2:01 PM
31	Final Fantasy 1 through to 13-2	7/13/2017 1:44 PM
32	Kerbal Space Program	7/13/2017 1:13 PM
33	Final fantasy x	7/13/2017 1:04 PM
34	Shenmue II	7/13/2017 12:56 PM
35	Call of Duty Black Ops 3	7/13/2017 12:53 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

36	Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games 2008	7/13/2017 12:30 PM
37	Metal gear solid franchise	7/13/2017 12:06 PM
38	Overwatch	7/13/2017 12:05 PM
39	Carmageddon	7/13/2017 11:52 AM
40	Skyrim	7/13/2017 11:48 AM
41	Rainbow Six Siege	7/13/2017 11:35 AM
42	Battlefield	7/13/2017 11:21 AM
43	Battlefield 1	7/13/2017 11:18 AM
44	Skyrim	7/13/2017 11:13 AM
45	Witcher 3	7/13/2017 10:41 AM
46	The Talos Principle	7/13/2017 10:39 AM
47	The last of us	7/13/2017 10:33 AM
48	World of Warcraft	7/13/2017 10:30 AM
49	Kingdom hearts	7/13/2017 10:14 AM
50	Tomb Raider (franchise as a whole. Even the reboot.)	7/13/2017 9:57 AM
51	Super Mario Sunshine	7/13/2017 9:54 AM
52	Harvest Moon: Back to Nature	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
53	Pirates; Tides of Fortune	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
54	Morrowind	7/13/2017 9:39 AM
55	Dark Souls 2	7/13/2017 9:33 AM
56	Dynamite Headdy	7/13/2017 9:26 AM
57	Fallout 4	7/13/2017 9:25 AM
58	Kingdom Hearts 2	7/13/2017 9:23 AM
59	PTCGO	7/13/2017 9:15 AM
60	The Last of Us	7/13/2017 9:05 AM
61	Pokemon (any)	7/13/2017 8:35 AM
62	Borderlands 2	7/13/2017 8:32 AM
63	League of Legends	7/13/2017 8:21 AM
64	Final Fantasy VII	7/13/2017 7:56 AM
65	Kingdom Hearts series	7/13/2017 7:44 AM
66	Overwatch	7/13/2017 7:25 AM
67	Dragonage origins	7/13/2017 6:58 AM
68	Fallout 4	7/13/2017 6:50 AM
69	Halo 3	7/13/2017 6:42 AM
70	FIFA	7/13/2017 6:36 AM
71	Half life	7/13/2017 6:35 AM
72	Overwatch	7/13/2017 6:32 AM
73	The Legend of Zelda Twilight Princess	7/13/2017 6:29 AM
74	Overwatch	7/13/2017 5:07 AM
75	Dark souls	7/13/2017 3:31 AM
76	Pokemon	7/13/2017 3:07 AM
77	Oneshot	7/13/2017 2:32 AM
78	Grim Fandango (my sentimental number 1 if I really have to pick this is what I say)	7/13/2017 2:16 AM
79	Heavy rain	7/13/2017 1:51 AM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

80	The Last of Us	7/13/2017 1:41 AM
81	Counter-Strike Global Offensive	7/13/2017 1:18 AM
82	Rainbow Six Siege	7/13/2017 1:07 AM
83	tomb raider	7/13/2017 12:58 AM
84	Overwatch	7/13/2017 12:55 AM
85	Beyond Good and Evil	7/13/2017 12:43 AM
86	The Sims	7/13/2017 12:30 AM
87	Horizon Zero Dawn	7/13/2017 12:29 AM
88	Fallout 3 (I thought I'd stick to regent generations as I've got so many!!)	7/13/2017 12:19 AM
89	Pokemon Mystery Dungeon 2	7/13/2017 12:08 AM
90	Final Fantasy 9	7/12/2017 11:51 PM
91	Lego Star Wars all episodes	7/12/2017 11:46 PM
92	Bioshock	7/12/2017 11:39 PM
93	Farcry	7/12/2017 11:33 PM
94	Mother 3	7/12/2017 11:29 PM
95	World of Warcraft	7/12/2017 11:28 PM
96	Pokemon	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
97	Rocket league	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
98	Tom Clancy's: The Division	7/12/2017 11:25 PM
99	destiny	7/12/2017 11:17 PM
100	Pokemon	7/12/2017 11:15 PM
101	Gangster Nation	7/12/2017 11:09 PM
102	Pokemon Gold	7/12/2017 11:05 PM
103	Kingdom Hearts 2	7/12/2017 11:01 PM
104	Pokemon	7/12/2017 10:59 PM
105	Final fantasy x	7/12/2017 10:56 PM
106	Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus R	7/12/2017 10:48 PM
107	Legend of Zelda ovarian of time	7/12/2017 10:44 PM
108	GTA V	7/12/2017 10:40 PM
109	Kid Icarus Uprising	7/12/2017 10:36 PM
110	Monster Hunter	7/12/2017 10:34 PM
111	World of Warcraft	7/12/2017 10:29 PM
112	Red Dead Redemption	7/12/2017 10:26 PM
113	The Last of Us	7/12/2017 10:17 PM
114	Fallout	7/12/2017 10:13 PM
115	Banjo Kazooie	7/12/2017 10:10 PM
116	spyro	7/12/2017 10:09 PM
117	Battlefield series	7/12/2017 10:08 PM
118	Gta	7/12/2017 10:04 PM
119	Mario Kart on Nintendo 64	7/12/2017 10:02 PM
120	Counter strike go	7/12/2017 9:54 PM
121	None	7/12/2017 9:50 PM
122	Fallout 3	7/12/2017 9:49 PM
123	Counter Strike: Global Offensive	7/12/2017 9:48 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

124	Sims	7/12/2017 9:46 PM
125	Dead Space	7/12/2017 9:44 PM
126	Gears of War (1-4)	7/12/2017 9:42 PM
127	Candy crush	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
128	Rocket League	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
129	GTA V	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
130	Batman Arkham city	7/12/2017 9:40 PM
131	Football Manager	7/12/2017 9:39 PM
132	Overwatch	7/12/2017 9:38 PM
133	Overwatch	7/12/2017 9:36 PM
134	Formula 1	7/12/2017 9:33 PM
135	Grand Theft Auto V	7/12/2017 9:32 PM
#	Second Choice	Date
1	Tekken	7/16/2017 11:07 PM
2	Luigi's Mansion	7/15/2017 11:07 AM
3	PGA Golf	7/15/2017 8:26 AM
4	Silent Hill 2	7/14/2017 10:32 PM
5	Forza horizon	7/14/2017 10:30 PM
6	Dark Souls	7/14/2017 9:29 PM
7	Projecto Zero / Fatal Frame	7/14/2017 12:53 PM
8	GoldenEye 007	7/14/2017 11:31 AM
9	Bioshock	7/14/2017 8:56 AM
10	Halo 3	7/14/2017 6:57 AM
11	GTA5	7/13/2017 11:54 PM
12	Street Fighter V	7/13/2017 11:31 PM
13	Far cry	7/13/2017 10:28 PM
14	Bioshock	7/13/2017 10:26 PM
15	Final Fantasy 10	7/13/2017 7:26 PM
16	Call of duty	7/13/2017 6:42 PM
17	Fallout 4	7/13/2017 6:25 PM
18	Dark Souls Series	7/13/2017 6:04 PM
19	Destiny	7/13/2017 5:53 PM
20	Fifa	7/13/2017 5:48 PM
21	Toy Blast	7/13/2017 5:42 PM
22	Civilization (any)	7/13/2017 5:38 PM
23	Silent Hill series	7/13/2017 5:27 PM
24	FIFA	7/13/2017 4:34 PM
25	Witcher 3	7/13/2017 4:17 PM
26	Command and conquer	7/13/2017 3:31 PM
27	Bioshock Collection	7/13/2017 3:12 PM
28	Fifa	7/13/2017 2:42 PM
29	Kick off 2	7/13/2017 2:01 PM
30	Zelda Franchise	7/13/2017 1:44 PM
31	Overwatch	7/13/2017 1:13 PM

32	Mass effect 3	7/13/2017 1:04 PM
33	Soul Calibur	7/13/2017 12:56 PM
34	Minecraft	7/13/2017 12:53 PM
35	Mario Kart wii	7/13/2017 12:30 PM
36	The last of us	7/13/2017 12:06 PM
37	Team Fortress 2	7/13/2017 12:05 PM
38	Deus Ex	7/13/2017 11:52 AM
39	The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	7/13/2017 11:48 AM
40	The Withxher 3	7/13/2017 11:35 AM
41	Call of duty	7/13/2017 11:21 AM
42	Minecraft	7/13/2017 11:18 AM
43	Championship Manager 01/02	7/13/2017 11:13 AM
44	Skyrim	7/13/2017 10:41 AM
45	Skyrim	7/13/2017 10:39 AM
46	Horizon zero dawn	7/13/2017 10:33 AM
47	Fallout	7/13/2017 10:30 AM
48	World ends with you	7/13/2017 10:14 AM
49	Mirrors Edge	7/13/2017 9:57 AM
50	Zelda: Breath Of The Wild	7/13/2017 9:54 AM
51	Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
52	Stormfall: Age of War	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
53	Starcraft	7/13/2017 9:39 AM
54	Tekken Tag Tournament	7/13/2017 9:33 AM
55	Final Fantasy 8	7/13/2017 9:26 AM
56	War Thunder	7/13/2017 9:25 AM
57	Overwatch	7/13/2017 9:23 AM
58	Hearthstone	7/13/2017 9:15 AM
59	Witcher 3	7/13/2017 9:05 AM
60	The last of us	7/13/2017 8:35 AM
61	Call is duty 4	7/13/2017 8:32 AM
62	Battlefield	7/13/2017 8:21 AM
63	Kingdom Hearts 2	7/13/2017 7:56 AM
64	Everybody's Gone to the Rapture	7/13/2017 7:44 AM
65	Runescape	7/13/2017 7:25 AM
66	Mass effect 2	7/13/2017 6:58 AM
67	Diablo 3 (PS4 port)	7/13/2017 6:50 AM
68	Witcher 3	7/13/2017 6:42 AM
69	Assassin's Creed	7/13/2017 6:36 AM
70	Gta v	7/13/2017 6:35 AM
71	Stardew Valley	7/13/2017 6:32 AM
72	The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	7/13/2017 6:29 AM
73	Pokémon	7/13/2017 5:07 AM
74	Bloodborne	7/13/2017 3:31 AM
75	Mario kart	7/13/2017 3:07 AM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

76	Left for dead 2	7/13/2017 2:32 AM
77	Bioshock (1+Infinite), Half life (all), The Last of Us, Oblivion, Skyrim, Red Dead Redemption, Fallout 3, Riven (plus all the Myst Games really bar five ha) Far Cry 3, LA Noire, Wolfenstein: The New Order, The Curse of Monkey Island, Outcast, Blade Runner, Diskworld (sorry 3 was super hard so wrote top games I find hard to exclude from my top list and obviously just got sentimental about what I loved as a kid towards the end. You can just take the first 3 written including Grim Fandango as my top 3 if you need to only have people write 3)	7/13/2017 2:16 AM
78	Batman arkham city	7/13/2017 1:51 AM
79	Stalker	7/13/2017 1:41 AM
80	Warframe	7/13/2017 1:18 AM
81	Skyrim	7/13/2017 1:07 AM
82	any generic puzzle colour match	7/13/2017 12:58 AM
83	Assassins Creed	7/13/2017 12:55 AM
84	BioShock Infinite	7/13/2017 12:43 AM
85	Stardew Valley	7/13/2017 12:30 AM
86	Splatoon	7/13/2017 12:29 AM
87	Bioshock Infinite	7/13/2017 12:19 AM
88	League of Legends	7/13/2017 12:08 AM
89	Skyrim	7/12/2017 11:51 PM
90	Lego pirates of the Caribbean	7/12/2017 11:46 PM
91	Pokemon Ruby	7/12/2017 11:39 PM
92	GTA	7/12/2017 11:33 PM
93	The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time	7/12/2017 11:29 PM
94	Call of Duty	7/12/2017 11:28 PM
95	League of legends	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
96	WWE 2K17	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
97	Tom Clancy's: Rainbow Six Siege	7/12/2017 11:25 PM
98	pokemon	7/12/2017 11:17 PM
99	Zelda	7/12/2017 11:15 PM
100	Torn	7/12/2017 11:09 PM
101	Legend of Zelda: The Windwaker	7/12/2017 11:05 PM
102	Pokemon (any)	7/12/2017 11:01 PM
103	Sword Art Online	7/12/2017 10:59 PM
104	Crash bandicoot	7/12/2017 10:56 PM
105	Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night	7/12/2017 10:48 PM
106	Destiny	7/12/2017 10:44 PM
107	Final Fantasy XV	7/12/2017 10:40 PM
108	The Simpsons Hit and Run	7/12/2017 10:36 PM
109	Final fantasy 7	7/12/2017 10:34 PM
110	Overwatch	7/12/2017 10:29 PM
111	Fallout 4	7/12/2017 10:26 PM
112	Final fantasy 7	7/12/2017 10:17 PM
113	Bioshock	7/12/2017 10:13 PM
114	Batman Arkham City	7/12/2017 10:10 PM
115	Hearthstone	7/12/2017 10:09 PM
116	Destiny	7/12/2017 10:08 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

117	Sims	7/12/2017 10:04 PM
118	The Sims 2 on PC	7/12/2017 10:02 PM
119	Elite dangerous	7/12/2017 9:54 PM
120	SSX 3	7/12/2017 9:49 PM
121	Final Fantasy 7	7/12/2017 9:48 PM
122	Mass Effect series	7/12/2017 9:46 PM
123	FIFA	7/12/2017 9:44 PM
124	Battlefield (All iterations)	7/12/2017 9:42 PM
125	Colour	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
126	DayZ	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
127	Mario Kart	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
128	Zelda Ocarina of Time	7/12/2017 9:40 PM
129	Life is Strange	7/12/2017 9:38 PM
130	Binding of Issac	7/12/2017 9:36 PM
131	Grand Theft Auto 5	7/12/2017 9:33 PM
132	The Legend of Zelda; Breath of the Wild	7/12/2017 9:32 PM
#	Third Choice	Date
1	Crash Bandicut	7/16/2017 11:07 PM
2	Bioshock Infinite	7/15/2017 11:07 AM
3	Pokemon	7/15/2017 8:26 AM
4	Destiny	7/14/2017 10:32 PM
5	The Last of Us	7/14/2017 9:29 PM
6	Resident Evil	7/14/2017 12:53 PM
7	Pokemon Crystal	7/14/2017 11:31 AM
8	Streets of Rage	7/14/2017 8:56 AM
9	Football manager series	7/14/2017 6:57 AM
10	Fallout	7/13/2017 11:54 PM
11	Pokémon	7/13/2017 11:31 PM
12	Fifa	7/13/2017 10:28 PM
13	Battlefield	7/13/2017 10:26 PM
14	Minecraft	7/13/2017 7:26 PM
15	Final fantasy	7/13/2017 6:42 PM
16	Monkey Island	7/13/2017 6:25 PM
17	Persona series	7/13/2017 6:04 PM
18	Farcry 3	7/13/2017 5:53 PM
19	Skyrim	7/13/2017 5:48 PM
20	Genies and Gems	7/13/2017 5:42 PM
21	Stellaris	7/13/2017 5:38 PM
22	World of Warcraft	7/13/2017 5:27 PM
23	SMASH	7/13/2017 4:34 PM
24	Gears of war	7/13/2017 4:17 PM
25	Gears of war	7/13/2017 3:31 PM
26	Stardew Valley	7/13/2017 3:12 PM
27	Mario 64	7/13/2017 2:42 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

28	World of Warcraft	7/13/2017 1:44 PM
29	Elite Dangerous	7/13/2017 1:13 PM
30	Forza motorsports 5	7/13/2017 1:04 PM
31	Skies of Arcadia	7/13/2017 12:56 PM
32	Pokemon Go	7/13/2017 12:53 PM
33	Pokemon heart gold	7/13/2017 12:30 PM
34	Call of duty BO. 2	7/13/2017 12:06 PM
35	Unreal Tournament (99)	7/13/2017 12:05 PM
36	Tempest	7/13/2017 11:52 AM
37	Super Mario Kart	7/13/2017 11:48 AM
38	Skyrim	7/13/2017 11:35 AM
39	Fifa	7/13/2017 11:21 AM
40	CoD: Zombies	7/13/2017 11:18 AM
41	Secret of Monkey Island 2: LeChucks Revenge	7/13/2017 11:13 AM
42	Assassins creed	7/13/2017 10:41 AM
43	Civilization V	7/13/2017 10:39 AM
44	The elder scrolls V: Skyrim	7/13/2017 10:33 AM
45	Mass Effect	7/13/2017 10:30 AM
46	Final fantasy franchise	7/13/2017 10:14 AM
47	GTA	7/13/2017 9:57 AM
48	Mario Kart 8	7/13/2017 9:54 AM
49	Earthbound	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
50	Liberators;	7/13/2017 9:43 AM
51	Knights of the Old Republic	7/13/2017 9:39 AM
52	Final Fantasy XII	7/13/2017 9:33 AM
53	Panzer Dragoon Saga	7/13/2017 9:26 AM
54	Borderlands	7/13/2017 9:25 AM
55	Fallout 3	7/13/2017 9:23 AM
56	Runescape	7/13/2017 9:15 AM
57	Final Fantasy 7	7/13/2017 9:05 AM
58	Final fantasy 4	7/13/2017 8:35 AM
59	Fifa	7/13/2017 8:32 AM
60	iOS apps	7/13/2017 8:21 AM
61	Star Ocean 3	7/13/2017 7:56 AM
62	Night in the Woods	7/13/2017 7:44 AM
63	Battlefield	7/13/2017 7:25 AM
64	Gears of war	7/13/2017 6:58 AM
65	Dragon Age Series	7/13/2017 6:50 AM
66	Call of duty black ops 2	7/13/2017 6:42 AM
67	Uncharted	7/13/2017 6:36 AM
68	Crash bandicoot	7/13/2017 6:35 AM
69	Player Unknowns Battlegrounds	7/13/2017 6:32 AM
70	The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild	7/13/2017 6:29 AM
71	Theme Hospital	7/13/2017 5:07 AM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

72	League of legends	7/13/2017 3:31 AM
73	Stardew valley	7/13/2017 2:32 AM
74	Telltale Walking dead	7/13/2017 1:51 AM
75	Dust	7/13/2017 1:41 AM
76	Elder Scrolls V Skyrim	7/13/2017 1:18 AM
77	Arkham Knight	7/13/2017 1:07 AM
78	tekken-type fight-em-up	7/13/2017 12:58 AM
79	The Last of Us	7/13/2017 12:55 AM
80	Resident Evil 7	7/13/2017 12:43 AM
81	Any Legend of Zelda series	7/13/2017 12:30 AM
82	Breath of the Wild	7/13/2017 12:29 AM
83	Witcher 3	7/13/2017 12:19 AM
84	Counterstrike: Global Offensive	7/13/2017 12:08 AM
85	Destiny	7/12/2017 11:51 PM
86	Lego avengers	7/12/2017 11:46 PM
87	Mario and Luigi Superstar Saga	7/12/2017 11:39 PM
88	Fallout	7/12/2017 11:33 PM
89	Metal Gear Solid 3	7/12/2017 11:29 PM
90	Portal	7/12/2017 11:28 PM
91	Viva pinata	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
92	Dragonball Xenoverse 2	7/12/2017 11:27 PM
93	Battlefield 1	7/12/2017 11:25 PM
94	skyrim	7/12/2017 11:17 PM
95	Halo	7/12/2017 11:15 PM
96	Kingdom Hearts 2	7/12/2017 11:05 PM
97	Harvest Moon	7/12/2017 11:01 PM
98	Kingdom Hearts	7/12/2017 10:59 PM
99	Destiny	7/12/2017 10:56 PM
100	Ultra Street Fighter IV	7/12/2017 10:48 PM
101	Fez	7/12/2017 10:44 PM
102	Sims	7/12/2017 10:40 PM
103	Overwatch	7/12/2017 10:36 PM
104	Pokemon	7/12/2017 10:34 PM
105	League of Legends	7/12/2017 10:29 PM
106	Rocket League	7/12/2017 10:26 PM
107	Skyrim	7/12/2017 10:17 PM
108	Silent Hill	7/12/2017 10:13 PM
109	The Legend of Zelda The Wind Waker	7/12/2017 10:10 PM
110	Sims	7/12/2017 10:09 PM
111	Lego * eg Star Wars, Marvel etc	7/12/2017 10:08 PM
112	Civ 5	7/12/2017 10:04 PM
113	Kirby's Dream Land on Gameboy	7/12/2017 10:02 PM
114	Assassins creed	7/12/2017 9:54 PM
115	Crash Bandicoot 3	7/12/2017 9:49 PM

Gaming Habits

SurveyMonkey

116	Resident Evil 2	7/12/2017 9:48 PM
117	Assassins Creed series	7/12/2017 9:46 PM
118	Portal 2	7/12/2017 9:44 PM
119	The Witcher (1-3)	7/12/2017 9:42 PM
120	Flappy bird	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
121	GTA IV	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
122	Lego Harry Potter	7/12/2017 9:41 PM
123	Batman arkham Asylum	7/12/2017 9:40 PM
124	Portal 2	7/12/2017 9:38 PM
125	Heroes of the storm	7/12/2017 9:36 PM
126	Pokémon Red	7/12/2017 9:32 PM

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project:

The representation of women in video games, and its potential links to the treatment of
female gamers

[Working Title]

Researcher Information:

Elizabeth Munday, MPhil Journalism Studies

Email: MundayE@cardiff.ac.uk

I understand that my participation in this project will involve discussing my experiences as a female gamer, and my thoughts on video games, this can take around 30 minutes, but may be longer due to the informal nature of the interview.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.

I understand that the information I provide will be shared with the research team or research supervisor and may be used in subsequent academic publications.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually, any names used will be pseudonyms.

I understand that, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, this information may be retained indefinitely.

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by *Elizabeth Munday*, School of Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies, Cardiff University with the supervision of *Dr Cynthia Carter*.

Please feel free to contact the researcher with any questions, or concerns, you may have regarding the research, and the use of data.

Signed (researcher/student):

Signed (Participant):

Date:

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Yes **No**

Taking Part

I have read and understood the project information sheet above.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded (audio or video).¹

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.

I understand that I will not be identified at any point within the research project, with no personal details being revealed outside of the project

I understand that I may be anonymously quoted in the research project.

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.

Name of Researcher Signature Date

Name of Participant Signature Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

Further Info:

Due to time constraints and distance, interviews may be required to take place remotely.

Please note which method you would prefer to be contacted via i.e. in person, via Skype, Discord, or email, etc (in cases of remote contact, please provide a contact email or username).

Also, please make note of your general availability:

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

If there are any further notes about your how to contact your or your availability, please make a note in the following space:

Once all the information required from the participant is completed, please send the completed documents to: MundayE@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 4 – Full Character List

Assassin's Creed	Desmond Miles	Main character, playable, dead
	Altair Ibn-La'Ahad	Assassin, MC, playable
	Dr Warren Vidic	Scientist, antagonist
	Lucy Stillman	Double agent, dead
	Shaun Hastings	Scientist
	Rebecca Crane	Scientist
	Al Mualim	Assassin, mentor, dead
	Malik Al-Sayf	Assassin
	Jabal	Assassin
	Robert de Sablé	Antagonist, knight, dead
	Tamir	Merchant, dead
	Garnier de Naplouse	Antagonist, dead
	Tala	Slaver, dead
	William of Montferrat	Knight, dead
	Abbas Sofian	Assassin
	Jubair al Hakim	Antagonist, dead
	Abu'l Nuqoud	Merchant, dead
	Majd Addin	Regent, dead
	Sibrand	Antagonist, dead
	Maria Thorpe	Altair's wife, disguised as man to fight, killed avenging son
AC II	Ezio Auditore da Firenze	Assassin, MC, playable
	Claudia Auditore da Firenze	Ezio's sister, temporarily leads Creed, runs a brothel and a city
	Cristina Vespucci	Ezio's first love interest, dead
	Mario Auditore	Assassin, leader
	Leonardo da Vinci	Real person

Rodrigo Borgia	Real person
Giovanni Auditore da Firenze	Assassin, dead
Maria Auditore da Firenze	Assassin
Paola	Courtesan, sexual (breasts)
Federico Auditore da Firenze	Assassin, dead
Antonio de Magianis	Assassin
Rosa	Assassin, courtesan, sexual (Breasts)
Uberto Alberti	Antagonist, dead
Carlo Grimaldi	Antagonist, dead
Lorenzo de' Medici	Politician
Bartolomeo d'Alviano	Assassin
Jacopo de' Pazzi	Antagonist
Emilio Barbarigo	Merchant, antagonist
Clay Kaczmarek	Assassin, dead
Silvio Barbarigo	Antagonist
Marco Barbarigo	Antagonist
Gilberto	Assassin
Vieri de' Pazzi	Noble, antagonist
Francesco de' Pazzi	Noble, antagonist
Checco Orsi	Antagonist
Minerva	Benevolent deity-type, sexual (breasts)
Teodora Contanto	Courtesan, assassin, sexual (breasts)
Annetta	Servant
Caterina Sforza	Noble, sexual (sexual intercourse)
Niccolò Machiavelli	Real person
Antonio Maffei	Monk
Juno	Malevolent, antagonist, deity-type
Jupiter	Deity-type, uninvolved
Aita	Juno's husband died

AC: Brotherhood	Octavian de Valois	Antagonist, dead
	Ercole Massimo	Noble, dead
	Lucrezia Borgia	Antagonist, sexual (breasts)
	Juan Borgia the Elder	General
	Cesare Borgia	Antagonist, dead
AC: Revelations	Sofia Sartor	Ezio's wife, sexual (breasts)
	Yusuf Tazim	
AC III	Achilles Davenport	Assassin, mentor, dead
	Kanen'to:kon	
	Kaniehtí:io	Connor's mother, her death motivates him
	Olá:ner	Mystic woman
	Ratonhnhaké:ton / Connor	Assassin, MC, playable, motivated by death of mother
	Haytham Kenway	Antagonist
AC: Black Flag	Edward Kenway	Assassin, MC, playable
	Adéwalé	Assassin
	Mary Read	Pirate
	Charles Vane	Pirate
	Blackbeard	Pirate
	Caroline Scott-Kenway	Kenway's wife, sexual (breasts)
	Anne Bonny	Pirate, sexual (breasts, thighs)
	Stede Bonnet	Pirate
	Melanie Lemay	Antagonist
	Olivier Garneau	Antagonist
	Jack Rackham	Pirate
	Bartholomew Roberts	Pirate

	John Standish	Assassin?
	Ah Tabai	Assassin
	Laurens Prins	Pirate, dead
	Julien du Casse	Antagonist, dead
	Benjamin Hornigold	Pirate, dead
	Woodes Rogers	Antagonist
	Laureano de Torres y Ayala	Antagonist

AC: Unity	Elise de la Serre	Killed, death motivates character
	Arno Dorian	Assassin, MC, playable, philanderer
	François de la Serre	Dead
	Le Roi des Thunes	
	Aloys la Touche	Revolutionary
	Marie Lévesque	Merchant

AC: Syndicate	Lydia Frye	Assassin, playable
	Henry Green	Assassin, love interest
	Crawford Starrick	Antagonist, dead
	Lucy Thorne	Antagonist, dead
	Maxwell Roth	Antagonist, dead
	Pearl Attaway	Antagonist, dead
	Rupert Ferris	Antagonist, dead
	Philip Twopenny	Antagonist, dead
	Galina Voronia	Master Assassin
	Jacob Frye	Assassin, playable
	Evie Frye	Assassin, Playable

Banjo	Banjo *	Bear (in shorts)
Kazooie	Kazooie *	Female bird (with lipstick!)
	Gruntilda *	Witch, kidnaps Banjo's sister

	Tooty *	Kidnapped
Banjo Toobie	Mumbo-Jumbo	
	Bottles	Killed (revived)
	Mingella	Witch
	Blobbelda	Witch
	King Jingaling	Killed (revived)
Bioshock	Andrew Ryan *	Antagonist, dead
	Atlas	Guide
	Brigid Tenenbaum *	Scientist, carer of saved girls
	Frank Fontaine *	Antagonist
	Jack	MC, playable character
	J.S. Steinman	Antagonist
	Peach Wilkins	Antagonist
	Sander Cohen	Antagonist
	Big Daddies *	Genetically mutated
	Little Sisters *	Genetically mutated
Bioshock 2	Augustus Sinclair	Guide, mutated, dead
	Eleanor Lamb	Previous Little Sister
	Sofia Lamb	Eleanor's mother, scientist, antagonist
	Subject Delta	Big Daddy, MC, playable character
	Gilbert Alexander	Antagonist, scientist, can die
	Grace Holloway	Singer, antagonist, can die
	Simon Wales	Antagonist, mutated, dead
	Stanley Poole	Double agent, can die
Bioshock: Infinite	Booker DeWitt	MC, playable character, sent to retrieve Elizabeth
	Elizabeth	Imprisoned, power over reality (Bookers daughter)
	Robert Lutece	Antagonist
	Rosalind Lutece	Antagonist

	Zachary Hale Comstock	Antagonist, can die
	Daisy Fitzroy	Enslaved, rebel leader, dead
	Jeremiah Fink	Businessman, dead
	Lady Comstock	Dead
	Cornelius Slate	Soldier, can die
	Songbird	Robot, protector/(prison)guard
Bloodborne	The Doll	Motherly figure, guide
	The Hunter	Protagonist, playable
	Gehrman	Hunter, antagonist
	Gilbert	Can be killed
	Iosefka	Healer, dead
	Eileen	Can be killed
	Father Gascoigne	Antagonist, dead
	Viola	Gascoigne's wife, dead
	Arianna	Gives birth to a beast, prostitute, can die, sexual (breasts)
	Sister Adella	Kidnapped, can be killed
	Master Willem	Academic
	Patches	Spider with a human male head
	Lady Maria	Dead
	Annalise	Undead Queen, covered face
Borderlands	Mordecai *	MC, "Hunter"
	Lilith *	MC, "Siren", sexual (breasts)
	Roland *	MC, "Soldier"
	Brick *	MC, "Beserker"
	Dr. Zed Blanco *	
	Moxxi *	Sexual (breasts), mother
	Marcus	Merchant
	Patricia Tannis	Insane, sexual (chest only exposed area)

	Scooter	Mechanic, dead
	TK Baha	
	Crazy Earl	
	Angel	Guide, abused by father, psychic, dead
	Nine-Toes	
	Sledge	Dead?
	Mad Mel	
	Krom	Dead
	Kobb Brothers	
	Baron Flynt	
	Mr. Shank	
	Steve *	
	Commandant Steel	Siren, dead, sexual (breasts)
	General Knox	Soldier, dead?
	Admiral Mikey	Young child, dead
	Jeffery Blake	
	Claptrap	Robot, referred to as 'he'
Borderlands 2	Axton	MC, "Commando"
	Gaige	MC, "Mechromancer"
	Krieg	MC, "Psycho"
	Maya	MC, "Siren", sexual (skin tight suit, "boob window")
	Salvador	MC, "Gunzerker"
	Zer0	MC, Assassin
	Ellie	Moxxi's daughter
	Sir Hammerlock	Hunter
	Michael Mamaril	Merchant
	Tector & Jimbo Hodunk	Antagonists
	Mick	Mission provider
	The Bagman	Antagonist, mini-boss
	Karima	Leader of small town
	Jack	Handsome Jack, main antagonist
	Boom & Bewm	Antagonists, dead?

	Captain Flynt	Antagonist, dead
	Face McShooty	Dead?
	Flesh-Stick	Antagonist, dead
	Tiny Tina	Test subject, gang leader
Borderlands: The Pre- Sequel	Janey Springs	Wants revenge for dead girlfriend
	Nurse Nina	
	Harold Tassiter	Dead
	Huxter T. Meredith	Mayor/Sheriff, dead?
	Pickle	
	Skipper	Kidnapped and held as girlfriend, dead?
	Gladstone	Dead
	Papa Crust	Mission provider
	Colonel Zarpidon	Soldier, mother, dead
	The Watcher	Genderless, female voice
	Deadlift	Dead
	Red Belly	Two people, dead
	Bosun	Antagonist, kidnapped Skipper
	Athena	MC, "The Gladiator"
	Wilhelm	MC, "The Enforcer"
	Nisha	MC, "Law-Bringer"
	"Jack"	Doppelganger
	Aurelia	MC, "The Baroness"
Call of Duty¹	Evans	Playable, soldier
	Borodin	
	Harding	
	Heath	Dead
	Johnson	Dead
	Kozlov	Dead
	Elder	Dead
	Brooks	

¹ All Call of Duty characters are soldiers unless otherwise specified

	Ross	Dead
	Yakov Fetodovich	Dead
	Martin	Playable
	Alexei Voronin	Playable
	V.S. Zubov	
	Price	Dead
	Foley	
	Moody	
	Gerald Ingram	
CoD 2		
	Letlev	
	MacGregor	
	Leonov	
	Vasilli Koslov	Playable
	Henderson	
	Jack	
	Blake	
	Braeburn	Dead
	John Davis	Playable
	Coffey	
	Doornink	
	Randall	
	Peas	Dead
	Rosetti	Dead
	Miller	Dead
	Donnie McCloskey	Dead
	Myers	
	Normal	
	Bill Taylor	Playable
	Spears	Dead
	Pavel Semenov	Dead
	Dimitri Volsky	
	David Welsh	Playable
CoD 3		
	Mandlebaum	
	Pierre LaRoche	
	Duncan Keith	
	Kolwalski	Dead

Salvatore Guzzo

Leroy Huxley

"Papa Jack" Jackowicks

Bueller Dead

Jonathan Callard Dead

Bohater Playable

Leslie Baron Dead

Cole Playable

Isabelle DuFontaine Dead

Mike Dixon Dead

"Lucky" Rudinski Dead

Jean-Guy Roblechauld

Frank McCullin Dead

McCord

Marcel

Nichols Playable

Marek Ulan

Santino Zoff Dead

**CoD 4:
Modern
Warfare** Mac Dead

Lootz

Keating Dead

Griggs Dead

Gaz Dead

Paul Jackson Playable, dead

Arem

Khaled Al-Asad Dead

Yasir Al-Fulani Playable, dead

Barton

Gaines Dead

Roycewicz Dead

"Deadly" Pelayo Dead

Ivan Petrovich Dead

Massey Dead

Sasha Dead

Scully

	Sergey	Dead
	Smith	
	Viktor	Dead
	Volker	Dead
	Vasquez	Dead
	West	Dead
	Yura	Dead
	Victor Zakhaev	Dead
	Imran Zakhaev	Dead
CoD: World at War	Luyties	Dead
	Locke	Playable
	Koopman	Dead
	Gordon	
	Henderson	Dead
	Booth	
	Arseni	Dead
	Heinrich Amsel	Dead
	Denny	
	Daletski	Dead
	Chernov	Dead
	Cook	
	Fluffy	
	Roebuck	Dead
	Rojas	Dead
	Peter	
	Polonsky	Dead
	K. Pyle	Dead
	M. McCord	
	Markhov	
	C. Miller	Playable
	O'Neil	
	Tom Sullivan	Dead
	Dimitri Petrenko	Playable, dead
	Sophia	Secretary, dead, now a machine
	Viktor Reznov	Playable, dead

CoD: MW2	Macey	
	Lev	Dead
	Kearing	
	Kiril	Dead
	Hamed	
	Anatoly	
	Archer	Dead
	Joseph Allen	Dead
	Dunn	
	"Driver"	Dead
	Foley	
	"Royce"	Dead
	Alejandro Rojas	Dead
	"Rook"	Dead
	Simon "Ghost" Riley	Dead
	Petrov	
	"Peasant"	Dead
	James Ramirez	Playable
	"Meat"	Dead
	McCord	
	Marshall	
	"Ozone"	Dead
	Toad	Dead
	Sumners	
	"Scarecrow"	Dead
	Gary "Roach" Sanderson	Dead
	Sandler	Dead
Shepherd	Dead	
Boris Vorshevsky		
Wade	Dead	
Viktor	Dead	
"Worm"		
Vladmir Makarov *	Dead	
CoD: Black Ops	Maestas	Dead
	Robert McNamara	Playable, dead

Kaylor		
Sergei Kozin		Dead
Yuri Kravcheski		
Bruce Harris		Dead
Groph		
Gersch		
Gary		
Carlos		
Terrance Brooks		
Joseph Bowman		Dead
Brock		
Aziz		Dead
Crosby		Dead
Daniel Clarke		Dead
Drew		Dead
Nikita Dragovich		Dead
Nevski		
Mosely		
Neitsch		
Swift		Dead
Friedrich Steiner		Dead
Schusters		
Shabs		
Adrienne Smith		Doctor/healer
VC Bookie		Dead
Tvelin		Dead
Vikharev		Dead
Grigori Weaver		
Yared		
CoD: MW3		
Grinch		Dead
Marcus Burns		Playable
Truck		Dead
Sandman		Dead
Derek "Frost" Westbrook		Playable
Yuri		Playable, dead
Cod: BOPs 2	Chloe Lynch	Playable

Mile Harper	
George Berkley	
DeFalco	Dead
Stanley Ferguson	
Farid	Dead
Josefina Menendez	Dead
Raul Menendez	Dead
David Mason	Playable
Manuel Noriega	
Lev Kravchenko *	Dead
Jason Hudson *	Playable, dead
Alex Mason *	Playable
Frank Woods *	
CoD: Ghosts	
Logan Walker	Playable
David "Hesh" Walker	
Riley	Playable (dog)
Elias T. "Scarecrow" Walker	Dead
Thomas A. Merrick	
Keegan P. Russ	
Alex V. "Ajax" Johnson	Dead
Kick	
Neptune	
Gabriel T. Rorke	
Riddian "Grim" Poe	
Chris "Torch" Green	
CoD:	
Jack Mitchell	Playable
Advanced Warfare	
William Robert Irons	Dead
Gideon	
Ilona	
Cormack	Dead
Hades	Dead
Joker	
Pierre Danois	

CoD: BOPs 3	Player	Choose gender, dead
	Abasi Hakim	Dead
	Corvus	Dead
	Danny "Blackjack" Li	
	Deimos	Demigod, dead
	Dolos	Demigoddess
	Jacob Hendricks	Dead
	Jae Xiong	Dead
	John Taylor	Dead
	Leary	
	Maurica Baak	
	Peter Maretti	Dead
	Rachel Kane	Dead
	Said	
	Sarah Hall	Dead
	Sebastian Diaz	Dead
	Sebastian Krueger	Dead
	Xavier Hirtzel	Dead?
	Yousef Salim	Dead
	Zeyad Khalil	Dead
CoD: Infinite Warfare	Lt. Nick Reyes	Dead, player
	Lt. Nora Salter	
	Eth.3n	Robot, male design
	Dan "Wolf" Lyall	Dead
	Fredrick Raines	Dead
	Usef Omar	Dead
	Sean Brooks	Dead?
	Todd Kashima	Dead?
	Cpt. Maureen Ferran	Dead
	Victor Diallo	Dead
	Maynard Griffin	Dead
	Audrey MacCallum	Engineer, mother, dead
	Ebele Yedite	Dead
	Laura Gibson	Dead
	Nunez	Dead

	Salen Kotch	Dead
	Caleb Thies	Dead
	Bradley Fillion	Dead
	Akeel Min Riah	Dead
Crash Bandicoot	Crash Bandicoot *	
	Tawna	Crash's love interest, damsel, Humanoid, sexual (curves, breasts)
	Coco Bandicoot *	Playable - Crash's younger sister, sometimes damsel, humanoid
	Aku Aku *	Spirit in mask, male
	Uka Uka *	Spirit in mask, male
	Doctor Neo Cortex *	
	Doctor Nitrus Brio *	
	Doctor Nefarious Tropy	
	Ripper Roo *	
	Koala Kong *	
	Pinstipe Potoroo *	
	Komodo Brothers *	
	Tiny Tiger *	
	Dingodile *	
	Papu Papu *	
	Polar *	
	Pura *	Originally believed to be female, changed to male
	Baby T	
	Penta Penguin *	
Dark Souls	Undead Hero	Player
	Kingseeker Frampt	Serpent
	Darkstalker Kaathe	Serpent
	Gwyn, Lord of Sunlight	
	Gravelord Nito	Grim reaper?
	Witch of Izalith	Only female bearer of a "lord soul"

Furtive Pygmy	Ambiguous gender
Seath the Scaleless	Dragon
Four Kings	
Petrus of Thoroland	Murders Princess Reah
Princess Reah	Murdered
Vince & Nico	Bodyguards, dead
Paladin Leeroy	Undead
Solaire of Astora	Dead
Alvina of the Darkroot Wood	Talking cat
Shiva of the East	Merchant
The Fair Lady	"Quelaag's sister", dead, sexual - naked upper body
Eingyi	
Gwynevere, Princess of Sunlight	Sexual - Cleavage, deity
Dark Sun Gwyndolin	Male, raised as a daughter, dead
Lady of the Darkling	Servant
Oswald of Carim	Bishop
Anastacia of Astora	Tortured, martyr, dead
Oscar, Knight of Astora	Dead
Witch Beatrice	Dead
Siegmeyer of Catarina	Knight, onion knight, killed by daughter
Sieglinde of Catarina	Siegmeyer's daughter, searching for him
Ingward	
Crossbreed Priscilla	Half-dragon, humanoid
Iron Knight Tarkus	Dead
Lautrec of Carim	Dead
Patches *	
Sir Arstor	
Velka	Goddess of Sin, witch, unseen
Allfather Lloyd	Deity
Havel the Rock	
Kirk, Knight of Thorns	

	Maneater Mildred	Wears a sack on her head, sexual? (Wearing very little)
	Chaos Witch Quelaag	Sexual - Naked upper body
	Undead Prince Ricard	
	Ornstein and Smough	Dual bosses
	Xanthous King Jeremiah	
Dark Souls 2	Bearer of the Curse	Player
	The Emerald Herald	Fire keeper
	King Vendrick	Dead
	Strowen, Morrel & Griant	Fire keeper
	Milibeth	Carer of fire keepers
	Crestfallen Saulden	Undead
	Maughlin the Armourer	
	Blacksmith Lenigrast	
	Sweet Shalquoir	Female cat
	Benhart of Jugo	
	Carhillion of the Fold	
	Rosabeth of Melfia	Ditzy, sorcerer
	Merchant Hag Melentia	Merchant
	Licia of Lindeldt	Priestess
	Stone Trader Chloanne	Daughter of the Blacksmith, sexual (breasts)
	Laddersmith Gilligan	Carpenter
	Mild-Mannered Pate	Hunter
	Blue Sentinel Targray	Apostle
	Lucatiel of Mirrah	Knight! Seeking a cure for a curse her and her brother are under
	Staid of Olaphis	Sorcerer
	Steady Hand mcduff	Blacksmith
	Manscorpion Tark	Half man, half scorpion - fights his wife

	Head of Vengarl	A literal talking head. Male.
	Darkdiver Grandahl	Sorcerer
	Lonesome Gavlan	Chief of a secluded underground race
	Felkin the Outcase	Mage
	Creighton the Wanderer	Murderer, "knight"
	Titchy Gren	Sadistic murderer
	Magerold of Lanafir	Merchant
	Weaponsmith Ornifex	Crow demon, blacksmith
	Cromwell the Pardoner	
	Duke Tseldora	
	Chancellor Wellager	Ghost
	Milfanito	"songstress", soothing the souls of the dead - defined as pure and innocent, sexual - bust
	Grave Warden Agdayne	Immortal grave keeper
	Royal Sorcerer Navlaan	Sorcerer
	Mytha, the Baneful Queen	Beautiful queen, gone made in the pursuit of eternal beauty, boss fight, snake with female torso, sexual
	Scorpioness Najka	Wife of Manscorpion, human torso, boss fight, sexual
Dark Souls III	Ashen One	Player (can choose gender)
	Fire Keeper	Mage, power to end the world, no eyes
	Ludleth of Courland	
	Yuria of Londor	Merchant
	Anri of Astora	(gender differs based on your gender choice) Yuria makes them your spouse

	Blacksmith Andre	
	Hawkwood the Deserter	
	Ringfinger Leonhard	
	Sirris of the Sunless	Knight, dead?
	Realms	
	Greirat the Thief	
	Emma, High Priestess of Lothric Castle	Priestess
	Holy Knight Hodrick	
	Siegward of Catarina	Dead
	Eygon of Carim	Knight
	Irina of Carim	Blind maiden, locked away
	Horace the Hushed	Mute soldier
	Orbeck of Vinheim	Sorcerer
	Rosaria, Mother of Rebirth	Mute, sorceress, sexual (bust)
	Archdeacon mcdonnell	
	Company Captain Yorshka	Last remaining deity
	Karla	Witch
	Heavenly Daughter Gertrude	Unseen in game, effectively started another religion
Dead Space	Isaac Clarke	Player, looking for girlfriend
	Zach Hammond	Dead
	Kendra Daniels	Spy, dead, sexual (bust)
	Corporal Chen	Dead
	Corporal Johnston	Dead
	Captain Benjamin Mathius	Dead
	Dr. Terrence Kyne	
	Dr. Challus Mercer	Dead
	Nicole Brennan	Medical officer, players girlfriend - already dead
	Jacob Temple	Attempting to find girlfriend
	Karen Howell	Doctor, dead

	Lexine Murdoch-Weller	Test subject, ended up pregnant
	Warren Eckhardt	Dead
	Nolan Stross	Scientist, dead, also killed wife and daughter
	Dr. Isabel Cho	Having affair with Stross, dead
	Ellie Langford	Secondary love interest after Nicole dies
	Hans Tiedemann	Dead
	Daina Le Guin	Dead, sexual (“boob window”)
	Dr. Foster Edgars	Experiments on humans, kills himself
	Major General Spencer Mahad	Kills his team, then himself
	Tim Caufman	Dead
	Sam Ackerman	Dead
	Admiral Marjorie Graves	Dead
	Tucker Edwards	Dead
	Earl Serrano	Dead
	John Carver	Family killed, guilt-ridden,
	Robert Norton	Dead
	Mark Rosen	Dead
	Locke	First name not revealed, dead
	Jennifer Santos	Engineer, dead
	Austin Buckell	Dead
	Jacob Danik	Dead
Diablo 3	Adenah the Curio Vender	Tradeswoman, sexual (bust)
	Adria	Witch, humanoid demon, dead
	Alaric	Warrior, dead
	Argus the Collector	Merchant
	Asheara	Mercenary, sexual - basically wearing a bikini

Auriel	Archangel of Hope, sexual (breast armour)
Bron the Barkeep	Bartender
Brother Malachi the Healer	Healer
Captain Davyd	
Captain Rumford	
Covetous Shen	Jeweler
Deckard Cain	Scholar, dead
Eirena the Enchantress	Sexual? Fairly exposed design
Headrig Eamon	
Hakan II	Mortal host for a god
Halbu	Dead
Halmin the Alchemist	
Hansen Haile	
Holus	Mayor, dead
Humbart Wessel	A talking skull
Imperius	Archangel of Valor
Ironsmith Maldonado	Blacksmith
Itherael	Archangel of Fate, no determined gender but referred to as male
Javad the Merchant	Merchant
Kadala	Gambling service
Karyna	Rescued by player
King Kanai	Dead
Kormac	Templar
Kyla	Hansen Haile's daughter
Kyr the Weaponsmith	Merchant
Larra	Child, parents murdered, now a merchant
Leah	Half human, half demon, dead
Lieutenant Lavail	
Liria	Goddess, dead
Lloigor the Crazyed	Dead
Lugo the Miner	Merchant
Lyndon the Scoundrel	Thief

Marius	Dead
Mehtan the Necromancer	
Mira Eamon	Wife of Headrig, dead
Myriam Jahzia	Mage, bust
Noblewoman Kala	Became a nomad
Queen Asylla	Killed by her husband, ghost walks around holding her head. Sexual (little to no clothing)
Radek the Fence	Merchant
Rodger the Alchemist	Merchant
Sasha	Peasant farmer
Sergeant Dalen	
Silmak the Fence	Merchant
Squirt the Peddler	Merchant
Tashun the Miner	
Thadar	
The Cow King	Male, actually a cow, dead
The Warden	Dead
Tyrael	Former Archangel, now human
Urshi	Ancient spirit, merchant
Vendel the Armorsmith	Merchant
Vidian	Demon, Lord of Envy, dead
Virgil	Dead
Rina	Referred to in-game as "the Wandering Tinker", merchant
Warriv	Dead
Willa Rathe	Ghost, will only be at peace when family is mercifully killed
Zaven the Alchemist	Merchant
Zoltun Kulle	Mage, dead

Elder Scrolls: Morrowind	The Nerevarine	Player, choice over gender, race, etc
	Lord Indoril Nerevar	Death and potential reincarnation fuel the game (player may be reincarnation)
	Vivec	Mortal God, referred to as male
	Almalexia	Mortal Goddess, "healing mother", high priestess, queen-wife, dead, sexual - scantily clad, antagonist
	Sotha Sil	Mortal God, dead
	Dagoth Ur	Mortal God, went mad, dead, antagonist
	Azura	Appears as an avatar, technically dead? Potentially pulling the strings. Prophetic powers
	King Hlaalu Helseth	King
	Divayth Fyr	Sorcerer
	Caius Cosades	Spymaster
	Crassius Curio	Crass playwright, will see the player naked regardless of character choices
	M'aiq the Liar *	Khajiit (cat folk)
	Sjoring Hard-Heart	Dead
	Percius Mercius	
	Eydis Fire-Eye	Fighter
	Hrundi	
	Trebonis Artorius	Can be killed
	Ranis Athrys	Mage
	Ajira	Mage, Khajiit (cat folk)
	Edwinna Elbert	Mage

	Skink-in-Tree's-Shade	Argonian (lizard folk)
	Jim Stacey	Thief
	Sugar-Lips Habasi	Khajiit (cat folk), thief
	Aengoth the Jeweler	Thief
	Big Helende	Thief, High Elf
Elder	The Prisoner *	Player, customisable
Scrolls:		
Oblivion		
	Emperor Uriel Septim VII	Dead
	Martin Septim	Becomes Emperor after father's death
	Grandmaster Jauffre	
	Baurus	
	Mankar Camoran	Antagonist, dead
	Eldamil	Dead
	Mehrunes Dagon	Worshipped as a god of destruction
	Kathutet	
	Captain Audens Avidius	Dead?
	Captain Hieronymus Lex	
	Umbacano	
	Count Janus Hassildor	
	Glathir	
	Dovesi Dran	Dead
	Matilde Petit	Damsel, but unlikeable, dead?
	Nels the Naughty	
	Neville	
	Primo Antonius	
	Countess Narina Carvain	
	Count Regulus Terentius	
	Countess Alessia Caro	Wife of Marius Caro
	Count Marius Caro	
	Countess Millona	
	Umbranox	
	Count Andel Indarys	
	Farwil Indarys	

	Count Ormellius Goldwine	Dead
	Modryn Oreyn	
	Maglir	
	Vilena Donton	Guildmaster, Mother, sexual (breasts, breast armour)
	Viranus Donton	
	Hannibal Traven	
	Jeanne Frasoric	
	Raminus Polus	
	Mannimarco	
	Irlav Jarole	
	Caranya	Mage, spy, dead
	The Gray Fox	
	Lucien Lachance	
	Mathieu Bellamont	
Elder Scrolls: Skyrim	Dovahkiin	Player, customisable
	Alduin	Dragon-God of destruction, male
	Paarturnax	Male, dragon, dead?
	Odahviing	Male dragon
	Mirmulnir	Male dragon, dead
	Sahloknir	Male dragon
	Sahrotaar	Male dragon, enslaved, dead
	The Dragon Priests	Undead followers of the dragons
	Gormlaith Golden-Hilt	Ancient hero, died in battle, sexual (breast armour)
	Hakon One-Eye	Ancient hero
	Felldir the Old	Ancient hero
	Arngeir	Mentor
	Esbern	Sorcerer
	Delphine	Warrior

Balgruuf the Greater	Ruler
Elisif the Fair	Ruler, wife of the (dead) king
Ingrid Ravencrone	Ruler, mother, gift of premonition
Sidgeir	Ruler
Igmund	Ruler
Brina Merrillis	Replacement ruler
Maven Black-Briar	Replacement ruler, mother
Kraldar	Replacement ruler
Brunwulf Free-Winter	Replacement ruler
Laila Law-Giver	Puppet ruler, mother
Skald the Elder	Ruler
Korir	Ruler
Vignar Gray-Mane	Replacement ruler
Dengeir of Stuhn	Replacement ruler
Thongvor Silver-Blood	Replacement ruler
Sorli the Builder	Replacement ruler
Ulfric Stormcloak	Ruler, leader of rebellion, dead?
Galmar Stone-Fist	
Ralof	
General Tullius	
Legate Rikke	Second in command of Imperial faction
Hadvar	
Commander Maro	
Emperor Titus Mede II	
Legate Fasnedil	
High King Torygg	Dead
Elenwen	
Ondolemar	Justicar
Rulindil	Sorcerer
Estormo	Dead?
J'datharr	Khajiit (cat folk)
Gissur	
Valmir	Dead
Kodlak Whiteman	Dead

Aela the Huntress	Werewolf, sexual - revealing outfit
Farkas	
Vilkas	
Skjor	
Njada Stonearm	Sexual – revealing outfit
Ria	
Athis	Blacksmith
Torvar	
Brill	
Tilma the Haggard	
Eorlund Gray-Mane	Blacksmith
Savos Aren	Archmage, dead
Mirabelle Ervine	Mage, dead
Tolfdir	Mage
J'Zargo	Khajiit (cat folk)
Brelyna Maryon	Mage
Onmund	Mage
Arniel Gane	Mage
Enthir	Merchant
Faralda	Mage
Nirya	Mage
Phinis Gestor	
Colette Marence	
Urag gro-Shub	
Drevis Neloren	
Sergius Turrianus	
Quaranir	
Ancano	
Brynjolf	
Mercer Frey	Dead?
Karliah	
Gallus Desidenius	Dead
Delvin Mallory	
Vex	Thief
Sapphire Mallory	Bandits killed her family
Vipir the Fleet	
Cynric Endell	

Thrynn		
Dirge		
Vald		
Etienne Rarnis		
The Night Mother		Murdered her children to become a god
Astrid		Leader of faction, dead?
Arnbjorn		Werewolf
Nazir		
Babette		Vampire
Veezara		Lizard folk, dead
Gabriella		Dead
Festus Krex		Sorcerer, dead
Cicero		
Fallout 3	The Lone Wanderer	Player, customisable
	Dogmeat	Male dog
	Fawkes	Super mutant, companion
Star Paladin Cross		Companion
	Butch Deloria	Companion
	RL-3	Robot, referred to as male
	Jericho	Companion
Clover		Companion, sexual/ sex slave
	Charon	Ghoul (zombie-like), companion
	James	Players father, dead
Catherine		Players mother, dead
	Overseer Alphonse	Ruler
	Almodovar	
Amata Almodovar		Ruler's daughter
	Allen Mack	
	Stevie Mack	
	Wally Mack	
	Jonas Palmer	Dead
	Andy	Robot, referred to as male
Doctor Madison Li		Scientist
	Chief Harkness	Synth (robot)

Bannon	
Flak and Shrapnel	Two merchants
Seagrave Holmes	Merchant
Cindy and Pauli Cantelli	Married couple, merchants
Angela and Gary Staley	Father/daughter merchants
Sister	Mute
Horace Pinkerton	
Mei Wong	Escaped slave
Abraham Washington	
Garza	
Allistair Tenpenny	
Mr. Burke	
Chief Gustavo	
Herbert "Daring" Dashwood	
Susan Lancaster	Sexual, Prostitute
Roy Phillips	Ghoul (zombie-like)
Bessie Lynn	Roy's girlfriend
Michael Masters	
Carol and Greta	Ghoul merchants
Mr. Crowley	Ghoul
Ahzrukhal	Bartender
Cerberus	Robot, referred to as male
Sydney	Potential ally, dead?
Griffon	Merchant
Machete and Dominic Ellsadro	Mercenaries
Tanya Christoff	"The AntAgonizer"
Scott Wollinski	"The Mechanist"
Sierra Petrovita	Insane
Roland Laren	Protects Sierra because he is attracted to her
Red	Medic
Shorty	
Bittercup	Potential relationship, sexual (breasts)
Kimba	Warrior

Sticky		
Dusty		Warrior
President John Henry		
Eden		
Colonel Augustus Autumn		
Eulogy Jones		Sells child slaves and sex slaves
Three Dog		Radio DJ
Uncle Leo		Super mutant
Agatha		Old lady
Smiling Jack		
Dr. Stanislaus Braun		Tortures and kills inhabitants of vaults
Daniel Littlehorn		Merchant?
Mel		Failed pickpocket
Elder Owyn Lyons		Dead
Sentinel Sarah Lyons		Daughter of Owyn, dead
Irving Gallows		
Reginald Rothchild		
Bigsley		
Lucas Simms		Dead
Stockholm		Sniper
Colin Moriarty		Merchant
Gob		Ghoul
Nova		Prostitute, sexual (breasts)
Moira Brown		Merchant
Jenny Stahl		Merchant
Confessor Cromwell		
Doc Church		
Fallout New Vegas		
The Courier		Player, customisable
Arcade Israel Gannon		Companion
Craig Boone		Companion (wife was killed, hunting those responsible)
Raul Alfonso Tejada		Companion (ghoul)
Rose of Sharon Cassidy		Companion

Lilian Marie Bowen	Companion, schizophrenic, super mutant
Veronica Renata Santangelo	Companion
ED-E	Companion, robot - referred to as male
Rex	Companion, cyber-dog
President Aaron Kimball	Regional president, can die
Ambassador Dennis Crocker	
Thomas Hildern	Scientist
Angela Williams	Scientist
Keely	Ghoul
Fantastic	
General Lee Oliver	
Colonel James Hsu	
Colonel Cassandra Moore	
Major Dhatri	
Lieutenant Carrie Boyd	Soldier
Cpt. Ronald Curtis	
Sgt. Daniel Contreras	
Corporal Willaim Farber	
Pvt. Christina Morales	Soldier, husband recently died, requests you find his corpse
Major Knight	
First Sergeant Astor	
Private Kyle Edwards	
Chief Hanlon	
Ranger Jackson	
Ranger Andy	
Ranger Ghost	Sniper
Lieutenant Gorobets	
Sergeant Bitter-Root	
Corporal Sterling	

Corporal BetsyEmotional trauma from
being raped

10 of Spades

Manny Vargas

Corporal Mags

Private Razz

Private O'Hanrahan

Private Poindexter

Ceasar

Lucius

Vulpes Inculca

Antony

Otho

Will repeatedly insult
female Courier**Siri**Slave woman, kept to
make medicine**Melody**

Slave girl

Legate Lanius

Aurelius of Phoenix

Decanus Severus

Canyon Runner

Cursor Lucullus

Silus

Picus

Robert Edwin House

Ruler, dead?

Victor

Robot, referred to as male

Yes Man

Robot, referred to as male

Mr. New Vegas

Radio host

Benny

Swank

Mortimer

Nero

Big Sal

Cachino

Clanden

Doc Mitchel

Mayor Trudy**Sunny Smiles**

Hunter

Chet	Merchant
James and Francine	Merchant twins
Garret	
Beatrix Russell	Ghoul, potential prostitute
Rotface	
Mick and Ralph	Merchants
Old Ben	Can be recruited as a prostitute?
Jeannie May Crawford	Mayor, sold another woman into slavery
No-Bark Noonan	
Ada Straus	Medicinal
Old Lady Gibson	Scavenger
Johnson and Ruby Nash	Merchants
Deputy Beagle	
Primm Slim	Robot, referred to as male
Red Lucy	Can sleep with character, also a warrior
Mean Sonofabitch	Super mutant
Dermot and Saint James	Slave dealers, rapists
Crandon	
Jules	
Clay	Fortune Teller
Pearl	Leader, old lady
Jason Bright	Ghoul
Chris Haversam	
Harland	Mercenary
Nolan mcnamara	Leader
Edgar Hardin	
Motor-Runner	Leader
Cook-Cook	Rapist
Violet	Insane
Driver Nelphi	
Papa Khan	
Tabitha	Super mutant
Davison	Super mutant
Alice Mclafferty	Old lady
Festus	Robot, referred to as male

Fallout 4	The Sole Survivor	Player character, customisable, on a journey to save their child
	Nate/Nora	Players original spouse - dies early on in the game
	Shaun	Players son, kidnapped, becomes antagonist (possibly), dies
	Shaun 2	Robot replica of your son
	Codsworth	Robot, referred to as male
	Dogmeat	
	Piper Wright	Companion, journalist
	Nick Valentine	Robot, detective, companion
	Preston Garvey	Companion
	Paladin Danse	Companion
	Deacon	Companion
	X6-88	Companion, robot boydguard
	Cait	Companion, drug addict
	Curie	Companion, robot referred to as female!
	John Hancock	Drug addict
	Robert Joseph maccready	Mercenary
	Strong	Super mutant
	Arthur Maxson	Leader
	Lance-Captain Kells	
	Knight-Captain Cade	Medic
	Knight L. Rhys	
	Proctor Ingram	Engineer, disabled
	Proctor Quinlan	
	Proctor Teagan	
	Senior Scribe Neriah	Medicinal
	Scribe Haylen	Medicinal
	Desdemona	Leader
	Tinker Tom	Mechanic
	Dr. Carrington	

Glory	Robot, can die
Drummer Boy	
P.A.M	Analytics robot, referred to as female, sexual? has a chest plate
High Rise	
Sturges	Mechanic
Mama Murphy	Drug addicted old lady
Jun and Marcy Long	Merchants, mourning the loss of their son
KL-E-0	Robot, referred to as female, sexual? has a chest plate
Fahrenheit	
Kent Connolly	Ghoul
Magnolia	Singer, sexual, can sleep with character
Whitechapel Charlie	Robot, referred to as male
Bobbi No-Nose	
Doctor Amari	Scientist
Marowski	Mobster
Trashcan Carla	Merchant
Lucas Miller	Merchant
Cricket	Merchant
Doc Weathers	Medicinal
Old Man Stockton	Merchant
Conrad Kellog	Dead
Brian Virgil	Super mutant
Liam Binet	Dead?
Madison Li	Scientist
Clayton Holdren	Scientist
Lawrence Higgs	Scientist
Allie Filmore	Scientist
Justin Ayo	Scientist
Alana Secord	
A-2018, XPN-20A, z4k-97B	Robots
Austin Engill	

Erin Combes

Katy	Teacher
Gwen McNamara	Leader
Robert and Tina De Luca	Merchants
Miranda Song	Medicinal
Dr. Olivette	Dead
Ronnie Shaw	Veteran
Sarge	Robot, referred to as male
Jack Cabot	Scientist
Lorenzo Cabot	Insane
Rex Goodman	
Kat and Gus	A young girl and her (male) robot guardian
Manta Man	"superhero"
Pickman	Serial killer
Professor Goodfeels	Robot, referred to as male
Eddie Winter	Ghoul, mobster
Arlen Glass	Ghoul
Sinjin	Ghoul, gang leader
Captain Zao	Ghoul
Barney Rook	Militia leader
Tommy Lonegan	
Parker Quinn	
Nat Wright	Newspaper seller, Piper's sister
Mayor mcdonough	Replaced by a robot
Travis Miles	Radio host
Vadim and Yefim Bobrov	Merchants
Ellie Perkins	Secretary
Doctor Duff	Scientist
Paul Pembroke	Can die, suspects wife of cheating
Henry Cooke	
Colette Cooke	Henry's daughter
Myrna	Merchant
Arturo Rodriguez	Merchant
Moe Cronin	Merchant
Sheffield	

	Takashi	Chef robot, male
Far Cry	Jack Carver	Player, former soldier
	Valerie Constatine	Journalist, sexual (exposing clothing)
	Richard Crowe	Mercenary, dead
	Harland Doyle	CIA agent, dead
	Dr. Krieger	Scientist, dead
Far Cry 2	Marty Alencar	Optional Player character
	Anto Kankaras	Dead
	Arturo Quiepo	Dead
	Frank Bilders	Optional Player character
	Michele Dachss	Imprisoned, companion
	Nasreen Davar	Companion, dead
	Hakim Echebbi	Optional Player character
	Paul Ferenc	Optional Player character
	Flora Guillen	Companion
	Andre Hyppolite	
	Josip Idromeno	Optional Player character
	Joaquin Carbonell	Dead
	King Nnyere	Dead
	Leon Gakumba	Dead
	Father Maliya	Presumed dead
	Addi Mbantuwe	Dead?
	Nick Greaves	Dead
	Doctor Obua	
	Oliver Tambossa	Soldier
	Reuben Oluwagambi	Journalist
	Prince Oeduard	Requests the death of his father
	Prosper Kouassi	Dead?
	Seth Uniya	Dead?
Quarbani Singh	Optional Player character	
The Jackal	Antagonist, dead	
Hector Voorhees	Dead	
Walton Purefoy	Dead	
Warren Clyde	Optional Player character	

	Xianyong Bai	Optional Player character
	Yabek	Merchant, dead?
Far Cry 3		
	Jason Brody	Player character
	Grant Brody	Dead
	Riley Brody	Kidnapped
	Vaas Montenegro	Dead
	Liza Snow	Player character's girlfriend, kidnaped
	Daisy Lee	Deceased brothers' girlfriend
	Citra Talugmai	Tribe leader, sexual (exposed)
	Alec Earnhardt	Medic, drug addict
	Hoyt Volker	Slave trafficker, dead
	Buck Hughes	Mercenary
	Dennis Rogers	Guide
	Willis Huntley	
	Keith Ramsay	
	Oliver Carswell	
	Sam Becker	
Far Cry 4		
	Ajay Ghale	Player character
	Amita	Dead?
	Balin	Dead?
	Bhadra	Believed to be a goddess reincarnate, dead?
	Chinjan	Merchant, dead?
	Darpan	Dead
	Deepak	Dead
	Dharani	Kidnapped, dead?
	Eric	Body double, dead
	Gang Min	Dead
	Gary	Assistant
	Ishwari Ghale	Players mother, dead
	Jangbu	Kidnapped
	Kalinag	Potentially dead
	Kanan	

	Longinus	
	Master Sandesh	Dead
	Mohan Ghale	Players father, dead
	Mumu Chiffon	Tailor
	Noore Najjar	Doctor, making heroin, dead
	Pagan Min	Dead?
	Paul "De Pleur" Harmon	Dead?
	Rabi Ray Rana	
	Raju	
	Sabal	Dead?
	Sharma Salsa	Involved in pornography
	Lakshmana Min	Dead
FEZ	Blonde	Teacher, identified by blonde hair and red bow and lips
	Brunette	Identified by brown hair, red bow and pink lips
	Dot	Guide, no gender
	Geezer	
	Gomez	Player character
	Izaac	
	Mayor mcmayor	
	Oldy	
	Xavier	
	Zoe	Identified by red bow
Final Fantasy I	"Warriors of Light"	Player characters - no names, no gender!
	Garland	Personification of Chaos
	Bikke	Pirate captain
	Astos	Evil King
	Chaos	Defeated
	Princess Sarah	Kidnapped, gifts hero with magic item
	King of Cornelia	Offers reward to save daughter

	Matoya	Witch
	Bahamut	Dragon King
	Lich	
	Marilith	Sexual? Female torso, lower body of a snake
	Kraken	Squid-like
	Tiamat	Multi-headed dragon
	Arylon	Dancer, only named in US versions of the game
	Chronodia	Super boss, multiple forms
	Darryl	Former mermaid, only name in US versions of the game
	Prince of Elfheim	
	Jayne	Queen
	Koppe	
	Lukahh	Sage
	Nerrick	
	Sadda	Sage
	Smyth	Blacksmith
	Underhill	Merchant
	Dr. Unne	
	Watts	
Final	Firion	Playable
Fantasy II		
	Maria	Sexual (revealing clothing) Playable
	Guy	Playable
	Leon	Playable
	Minwu	Dead
	Josef	Dead
	Gordon	
	Leila	Pirate, sexual - wears a bikini
	Ricard Highwind	Dead
	Scott	Dead
	The Emperor	Dead?

	Borghen	Dead
	Princess Hilda	Princess/ Leader of rebellion, gets captured
	Nelly	Josef's daughter, orphan
	Paul	
Final Fantasy IV	Cecil	Player character
	Kain	
	Rosa	Love interest for Cecil AND Kain, kidnapped, healer, marries PC – sexual (revealing clothing)
	Rydia	Presumed dead (training elsewhere), sexual, exposing outfit
	Tellah	Sage, dead
	Edward	Prince
	Yang	Fighting monk
	Palom	Mage
	Porom	Mage, Palom's sister
	Cid	Engineer
	Edge	Prince
	Fusoya	Sage
	Golbez	Sorcerer, dead?
	Scarmiglione	Zombie warrior monster
	Cagnazzo	Monster
	Barbariccia	Monster but looks exactly like a well-toned human female, sexual (exposed)
	Rubicante	Monster
	Dr. Lugae	Scientist
	Baigan	Knight
	Calcabrina	6 dolls, 3 of which are female
	Zemus	Sorcerer, controlled others, dead

	Luca	Dwarf Princess, engineer
	Elder of Mysidia	Leader
	Giott	Leader of Dwarves
	Sheila	Yang's wife... No name in original game
Final Fantasy V		
	Bartz Klauser	Party member
	Lenna Charlotte Tycoon	Princess, party member, magic user
	Galuf	King, party member, dead
	Faris Scherwiz	Ambiguously female, pirate, party member
	Krile Mayer Baldesion	Galuf's granddaughter
	Cid Previa	Inventor and scholar
	Mid Previa	Inventor and scholar
	Alexander Highwind Tycoon	King
	Xezat Matias Surgate	King, warrior
	Kelger Vlondett	Werewolf
	Ghido	Ancient sage, turtle
	Exdeath	Villain, dead?
	Gilgamesh	Warrior
Final Fantasy VI		
	Terra Branford	Party member, enslaved at the beginning, magic user
	Locke Cole	Thief, motivated by death of partner
	Edgar Roni Figaro	King, engineer, womanizer
	Sabin Rene Figaro	
	Celes Chere	Magic user, imprisoned
	Shadow	Ninja for hire
	Cyan Garamonde	Samurai, rebel
	Gau	Wild child
	Setzer Gabbani	Plots to kidnap the woman he loves
	Strago Magus	Mage

	Relm Arrowny	Magic user, imprisoned
	Mog	Moogles
	Umaro	Yeti
	Gogo	
	Banon	Medicinal
	General Leo Cristophe	Soldier
	Cid Del Norte Marquez	Scientist
	Arvis	
	Duncan Harcourt	
	Darill	Captain, went missing, confirmed dead
	Siegfried	Swordsman
	Maduin and Madeline	Terra's parents
	Kefka Palazzo	Villain, mage
	Emperor Gestahl	Dead
	The Warring Triad	Three ancient gods, one of which is female (Goddess is scantily clad)
	Ultros	Octopus monster
	Humbara	Monster, dead
	Deathgaze	Monster, dead
	Vargas Harcourt	Dead??
	Ramuh	Human-looking, magical being, dead?
	The Elder	Leader, dead
	Valigarmanda	Magical being
	Ifrit and Shiva	Magical beings, Shiva uses ice magic and is scantily clad
Final Fantasy VII	Cloud Strife	Party member, soldier/mercenary
	Barret Wallace	Leader of eco-terrorist group
	Tifa Lockhart	Cloud's childhood friend, exposing clothing
	Aerith Gainsborough	Mage, ancient race, dead (Zack's girlfriend)

Red XIII	Experimental creature
Cait Sith	Puppet
Cid Highwind	Pilot, brawler
Yuffie Kisaragi	Ninja girl, exposing clothing
Zack Fair	Dead
Rufus Shinra	Businessman villain
Hojo	Scientist
President Shinra	Dead
Heidegger	Leader of military force
Scarlet	Weapons specialist, sexual (bust)
Palmer	
Reeve Tuesti	Controlling Cait Sith
Tseng	Mercenary
Reno	Mercenary
Rude	Mercenary
Elena	Mercenary
Hollander	Scientist
Gast Faramis	Scientist
Lucrecia Crescent	Scientist, Hojo's lover, sacrificed child for science then regretted it
Sephiroth	Soldier, wanted to become a god, dies and is reborn continuously
Gensis Rhapsodos	Soldier
Angeal Hewley	Soldier
Lazard Deusericus	Dead
Kunsel	Soldier, possibly dead
Jenova	God-like, destructive force, exposed body (intact chest, but otherwise a body horror in a jar)
Don Corneo	Mafia don, kidnaps Tifa
Marlene Wallace	Young girl

	Biggs, Jessie , and Wedge	Dead
	Bugenhagen	Guide
	Dyne	Marlene's father, dead
	Iflana	Aerith's mother, dead
Final Fantasy VIII		
Final Fantasy VIII	Squall Leonhart	MC, party member, soldier
	Rinoa Heartilly	Needs rescuing quite a bit until she learns magic, romantically linked to Squall
	Zell Dincht	Soldier
	Selphie Tilmit	Soldier, healing magic
	Quistis Trepe	Teacher, romantically interested in Squall
	Irvine Kinneas	Sniper, romantically interested in Selphie
	Laguna Loire	Soldier
	Kiros Seagill	Soldier
	Ward Zabac	Soldier, mute
	Cid Kramer	Teacher
	Ellone	Kidnapped, psychic powers
	General Fury Caraway	Army general, Rinoa's father
	Julia Heartilly	Lounge singer, sexual, revealing red dress, Rinoa's mother, dead
	Raine Loire	Implied to have died giving birth to Squall
	Xu	Soldier
	Nida	Soldier, pilot
	Dr. Kadowaki	Unknown first name, medic
	Ma Dincht	Zell's adoptive mother
	Martine	
	Zone & Watts	Soldiers
	Dr. Odine	Scientist

	Mayor Dobe and Flo	Mayor and his wife
	The Queen of Cards	Unknown quest giver
	Seifer Almasy	Soldier
	Sorceress Edea	Vain sorceress, sexual, wearing an evening dress
	Vinzer Deiling	Self-proclaimed president, dead
	Biggs and Wedge	Soldiers
	Raijin and Fujin	Fujin speaks in monotone
	Norg	Ruler
	Sorceress Adel	Ruler, sealed into a tomb
	Sorceress Ultimecia	Evil sorceress, possesses others, sexual, revealing clothing
Final	Zidane Tribal	Hero
Fantasy IX		
	Vivi Ornitier	Black mage, party member, dead
	Adelbert Steiner	Soldier, party member
	Garnet "Dagger" Til Alexandros XVII	Love interest, princess, sexual? Form fitting outfit, mage
	Freya Crescent	Knight, searching for her lost love, anthropomorphic rat
	Quina Quen	Ambiguous gender
	Eiko Carol	Mage, form fitting clothing (also nude coloured), healer
	Amarant Coral	Bounty hunter
	Brahne Raza Alexandros XVI	Queen, Garnet's mother, overtaken by a desire for power, dead
	Kuja	Sorcerer, manipulates others
	Garland	Warlock, protector, dead
	Zorn and Thorn	Jesters

	The Black Waltzes	Three black mages
	Lani	Warrior, revealing clothing
	Necron	God of death
	Beatrix	General of all-female army
	Regent Cid Fabool IX	Monarch of rival nation, hires bandits to kidnap Garnet
	Dr. Tot	Researcher
	Puck	
	Sir Fratley	Freya's lover
	Mikoto	Artificial life, angel of death
	Alleyway Jack	Thief
	Lady Hilda	Cid's wife, kidnapped
Final Fantasy X	Tidus	MC, hero, dead but also not
	Yuna	Mage, kidnapped (but saves herself), Tidus = lover
	Wakka	Sporty character
	Lulu	Sorceress, revealing clothes, belt dress, ends up with Wakka
	Kimahri Ronso	Yuna's protector, anthro cat
	Auron	Guardian, dead
	Rikku	Attempts to kidnap Yuna, revealing clothing
	Jecht	Controlled by Sin, dead
	Seymour Guado	Sorcerer, dead, totally insane
	Sin	Space whale? Male
	Yunalesca	Practically naked, sorceress, dead
	Yu Yevon	Mindless spirit, filled with rage

	High Summoner Braska	Yuna's father, died doing something heroic
	Dona	"rival" to Yuna, arrogant
	Barthello	Dona's guardian
	Isaaru	Summoner, "rival"
	Maroda and Pacce	Isaaru's brothers and guardians
	Belgemine	Technically dead, mentor and guide
	Grand Maester Yo Mika	Spiritual leader, actually a bad guy, also dead
	Maester Kelk Ronso	Redeems himself, then gets killed
	Maester Wen Kinoc	Bad guy, dead
	Maester Jyscal Guado	Dead, killed by son
	Cid	Leader
	Rin	Merchant
	Biran and Yenke Ronso	Warriors, dead
	Tromell Guado	Sidekick to bad guy
	Maechen	Scholar
	O'aka	Merchant
	Luzzu	Warrior, can die
	Gatta	Warrior, can die
	Captain Lucil	Soldier, commander
	Elma	Knight, warrior
	Clasko	Soldier
	Shelinda	Nun
	Wantz	Originally stalks Yuna
Final Fantasy XII	Vaan	MC, party member, orphan
	Penelo	Party member, love interest of Vaan, childhood friend, gets kidnapped, orphan
	Balthier	Party member, pirate, dark past as an enemy but defects

Fran	"bunny-woman", archer, revealing clothing
Captain Basch fon Ronsenburg	Former captain, tried as a traitor, actually framed
Princess Ashelia "Ashe" B'Nargin Dalmasca	Crown princess, married then both husband and father died in war, faked death, leads resistance movement, revealing clothing
Vossler York Azelas	Militia Captain, betrays mcs
Marquis Halim Ondore IV	Secret good-guy
Al-Cid Margrace	Part of ruling family
Reddas	Leader of pirate city, redemption death
Prince Rasler Heios Nabradia	Late husband of Ashe
Reks	Vaan's older brother, dead
Gerun	No physical gender but assumes female pronouns, controlling mcs
Vayne Carudas Solidor	Son of Emperor, antagonist, protecting younger brother, dead
Larsa Ferrinas Solidor	Vayne's younger brother, desires peace
Doctor Cidolfus Demen Bunansa	Researcher, bad guy, dead
Emperor Gramis Gana Solidor	Ruler, killed by son
Venat	Genderless, female pronouns though, dead
Judge Gabranth	Redeems self, gets killed
Judge Bergan	Brute

	Judge Drace	Protecting the youngest prince, only female Judge, dead
	Judge Ghis	Dead
	Judge Zargabaath	Not that bad, survives!
	Montblanc	Merchant, magical creature (moogle)
Final Fantasy XIII	Lightning Farron	MC, party member, journey to protect younger sister, orphan
	Snow Villiers	Party member, engaged to Serah
	Oerba Dia Vanille	Party member, revealing clothing, dead?
	Sazh Katzroy	Party member, pilot
	Hope Estheim	Orphaned
	Oerba Yun Fang	Party member, revealing clothing, dead? Sacrifices self with Vanille
	Serah Farron	Lightnings sister, presumed dead (actually not due to magic abilities)
	Dajh Katzroy	Presumed dead (not due to magical abilities)
	Nora Estheim	Hope's mother, dead
	Primarch Galenth Dysley	Antagonist, dead
	Jihl Nabaat	Antagonist, revealing clothing, dead
	Yaag Rosch	Redeems self then dies
	Cid Raines	Soldier, dead?
	Amodar	Soldier
	Rygdea	Soldier
	Anima	God-like being, genderless
	Titan	God-like being, genderless

	Orphan	God-like being, genderless but referred to as male, dead
	Mwynn	Mother-God, dead
	Etro	Goddess of Death
	Lindzei	Deity, creator of the world, ambiguous gender
	Pulse	Deity, male?
Final Fantasy XV	Noctis Lucis Caelum	MC, party member, prince
	Ignis Scientia	Party member, advisor, blinded, presumed dead
	Gladiolus Amicitia	Party member, bodyguard, presumed dead
	Prompto Argentum	Party member, friend, presumed dead
	Cor Leonis	Commander
	Iris Amicitia	Gladiolus's sister, healer, enamoured with Noctis
	Aranea Highwind	Commander, redemption arc, revealing clothing
	Regis Lucis Cealum CXIII	King, father, dead
	Titus Drautos	Commander
	Talcott Hester	
	Weskham Armaugh	Merchant
	Lunafreya Nox Fleuret	Princess, religious powers, Noctis' fiancé, dead
	Gentiana	Messenger of the gods, actual god, Luna's protector, cleavage (basically naked in god-form, Shiva)
	Cid Sophiar	Mechanic
	Cindy Aurum	Mechanic, revealing outfit
	Camelia Claustra	Politician
	Biggs and Wedge	Soldiers
	David Auburnbrie	Hunter

Dino Ghiranze	Journalist
Sania Yeagre	Researcher
Vyv	Journalist
Wiz Forlane	Merchant
Ardryn Izunia	Antagonist, insane, immortal (but dead now)
Emperor Iedolas Aldercapt	Emperor, antagonist, dead
Ravus Nox Fleuret	Prince, brother of Luna, dies twice
Verstael Besithia	Researcher, dead but transfers being into a machine
Titan	God-like, gives power to mcs
Ramuh	God-like, gives power to mcs
Shiva	Gentiana, god-like (goddess of death), almost naked
Leviathan	Sea serpent, female
Bahamut	God-like, protector
Ifrit	God-like, destroyer
Gears of War	
Marcus Fenix	MC, hero
Dominic Santiago	Soldier, dead
Augustus Cole	Soldier
Damon Baird	Soldier
Anya Stroud	Soldier, MC love interest
Adam Fenix	Soldier, faked death, then actually died
Colonel Victor Hoffman	Soldier
Chairman Richard Prescott	Politician, soldier
Carmine	Family name, multiple characters who tend to die
Lieutenant Minh Young Kim	Soldier, dead
Tai Kaliso	Soldier, tortured, killed himself

	Dizzy Wallin	Soldier, joined military after wife died
	Jace Stratton	Soldier, orphan
	Samantha Byrne	Soldier
	Bernie Matak	Soldier
	Garron Paduk	Soldier
	Sofia Hendrick	Soldier, kidnapped
	Colonel Ezra Loomis	Soldier, dead
GTA I		
	Travis	PC
	Troy	PC
	Bubba	PC
	Kivloc	PC
GTA III		
	Claude *	MC, anti-hero
	Catalina *	Claude's partner, sexual (bust) dead
	8-ball	Criminal
	Luigi Goterelli	Criminal, owns a sex club
	Misty	Sexual, Prostitute
	Salvatore Leone *	Criminal
	Maria Latore *	Trophy wife, presumed to be dead, sexual (bust)
	Asuka Kasen	Dead
GTA IV		
	Niko Bellic	MC, criminal
	Roman Bellic	Businessman, friendship benefits = free travel
	Mallorie Bardas-Bellic	Secretary, Roman's partner, having an affair
	Bruce Kibbutz	Mercenary
	Kate mcreary	Potential girlfriend, can be killed
	Michelle	Potential girlfriend, undercover agent, real name: Karen

	Carmen Ortiz	Potential girlfriend, benefits: healing
	Kiki Jenkins	Potential girlfriend, benefits: legal aid
	Alex Chilton	Potential girlfriend, benefits: loving discount
GTA V	Michael De Santa	MC, bank robber
	Trevor Phillips	MC, insane
	Franklin Clinton	MC, gang member
	Amanda De Santa	Wife, previous prostitute, having an affair
	Tracey De Santa	"dumb blonde", erotic dancer
	Jimmy De Santa	Drug addicted gamer
	Denise Clinton	Sex-obsessed, brought Franklin up
	The Vanilla Unicorn	Strip club, named and unnamed female characters (Juliet, Infernus, Nikki, Sapphire, Chastity, Cheetah, Fufu, and Peach), can all be attacked and killed
GTA: Vice City	Auntie Poulet	Gang leader
	Avery Carrington	Businessman
	Big Mitch Baker	Biker gang leader
	Cam Jones	Gang member, can be killed
	Candy Suxxx	Former prostitute, turned porn star
	Juan Garcia Cortez	
	Alex Shrub	Politician, affair with Candy
	Hilary King	Driver

	Ken Rosenberg *	Lawyer, gets MC out of prison
	Kent Paul *	Band manager
	Lance Vance	Drug dealer, wants revenge for brothers death
	Love Fist	Band
	Mercedes Cortez	Juan's daughter, ends up in the porn industry
	Pastor Richards	Money-obsessed preacher
	Phil Cassidy	Merchant
	Ricardo Diaz	Drug dealer
	Sonny Forelli	Mafia family leader
	Steve Scott	Missions = porno
	Tommy Vercetti	MC, just left prison
	Umberto Robina	Gang leader
GTA: San Andreas	Carl Johnson	MC, motivated by death of mother
	Sean Johnson	Gang leader
	Melvin Harris	Gang member, drug dealer
	Lance Wilson	Gang member
	Officer Tenpenny	Corrupt cop
	Officer Pulaski	Corrupt cop
	Officer Hernandez	Corrupt cop
	Wu Zi Mu	Gang leader
	Ran Fa Li	Gang leader
	Su Xi Mu	Gang member
	Barry Thorne	Gang member
	Kendl Johnson	Dating a gang leader, took on household responsibilities after mothers death
	Cesar Vialpando	Gang leader
	Jethro & Dwaine	Merchants
	Mike Toreno	Gang leader
	Mark Wayne	Drug dealer
	Jeffery Martin	Wannabe rapper

	Maccer	Recording artist
	T-Bone Mendez	Brute
	Jizzy B	Operates a strip club
	Maddog	Recording artist, spurred by death of mother
	Zero	Merchant
	The Truth	Hippie
	Old Reece	Barber, informant
	Brian Johnson	MC's younger brother, dead
	Beverly Johnson	MC's mother, dead
	Denise Robinson	Potential relationship
	Michelle Cannes	Potential relationship
	Helena Wankstein	Potential relationship
	Barbara Schternvart	Potential relationship
	Katie Zahn	Potential relationship
	Millie Perkins	Potential relationship
Half-Life	Dr. Gordon Freeman	MC, scientist
	Barney Calhoun	Security guard
	Corporal Adrian Shephard	Soldier
	Gina Cross	Researcher
	Colette Green	Engineer
	Alyx Vance	MC, rebel
	Dr. Eli Vance	Scientist, rescued by daughter, dead
	Dr. Isaac Kleiner	Scientist
	Dr. Judith Mossman	Scientist, double agent
	Dr. Arne Magnusson	Businessman
	Father Grigori	Peacher, dead?
	Colonel Odessa Cabbage	Rebel soldier
	Griggs and Sheckley	Healers
	The G-Man	Not totally human, evil
	Dr. Wallace Breen	Researcher, betrayed MC, dead?

Halo:	Master Chief *	MC, soldier
Combat Evolved		
	Cortana *	AI, female form??
	Captain Keyes	Dead
	343 Guilty Spark	AI, referred to as male
	Avery Jr Johnson *	Soldier, dead
	Carol Rawley	Pilot, dead
	Chips Dubbo *	Dead?
	Marcus Stacker *	Dead?
	Wallace Jenkins	Soldier, dead
Halo 2	Sergeant Banks	Soldier
	Gravemind	Antagonist, dead?
	Miranda Keyes	Soldier, dead
	The Prophet of Mercy	Dead, alien
	The Prophet of Regret	Dead? Alien
	The Prophet of Truth *	Dead, alien
	Rtas 'Vadum *	Alien
	Sesa 'Refumee	Leader of heretical group, dead
	Taratus	Leader of clan, alien,
	Terrence Hood *	Leader of humanity
	Thel 'Vadam *	Alien, soldier
Halo 3	Lt. Hocus	Pilot, face covered by helmet
	Flipyap	Alien, dead
	N'tho Sraom	Alien
	Usze 'Taham	Soldier, alien
Halo 4	Captain Andrew Del Rio	Soldier
	The Didact	Leader, alien, antagonist, insane
	Gek 'Lhar	Soldier, alien
	Jul 'Mdama *	Soldier, dead, wanted to avenge wife's death

	The Librarian	Alien, scientist, Didact's wife
	Roland *	AI, referred to as male
	Dr. Sandra Tillson	Scientist, dead
	Sarah Palmer *	Soldier, leader,
	Thomas Lasky	Soldier, leader
Halo 5: Guardians	031 Exuberant Witness	AI/Robot, referred to as female
	Dimkee Hotay	Alien
	Holly Tanaka	Soldier, family killed
	Jameson Locke	Soldier, assassin
	Kelly-087	Soldier
	Linda-058	Soldier, dead?
	Shipmistress Mahkee 'Chava	Pilot, alien, no physical appearance
	Olympia Vale	Soldier, linguist
	Governor Sloan	AI, referred to as male
	The Warden Eternal	Robot, referred to as male
The Legend of Zelda I	Link *	Hero
	Princess Zelda *	Princess, magic powers, kidnapped (a lot)
	Ganon *	Antagonist, usually kidnaps Zelda, has a beast-like form and a human form
Zelda II	The King of Hyrule	Wise ruler, dead
	The Prince of Hyrule	Not explicitly in the game, dead
	Error	Informative
LoZ: A Link to the Past	Sahasrahla	Sage, informative
	Agahnim	Evil sorcerer, actually Ganon

LoZ: Ocarina of Time	Navi	Companion - Fairy guide, disappeared at the end
	Sheik	Actually Zelda in disguise, warrior (Zelda gets kidnapped as soon as the guise is dropped)
	Rauru	Sage
	Saria	Sage, childhood friend, presumed dead
	Darunia	Non-humanoid, sage, presumed dead
	Ruto	Humanoid-fish, sage, princess, presumed dead (romantically inclined toward Link)
	Impa *	Sage, Zelda's carer, warrior, presumed dead
	Nabooru	Sage, warrior, thief, presumed dead, revealing clothing
	Great Deku Tree	Guardian tree, dead
	Kaepora Gaebora *	Guardian owl
	Malon	Farmer
	Talon and Ingo	Merchants
	Sharp and Flat *	Dead, magical powers
	Ganondorf *	Ganon, human form, dead?
Dark Link *	Shadow of hero	
Twinrova	Twin witches, Ganon's "parents", dead	
LoZ: Majora's Mask	Tatl	Companion, fairy guide
	Tael	Fairy
	Happy Mask Salesman	Merchant, instigator of doom

	Skull Kid	Possessed by evil mask, possibly dead?
	Majora's Mask	Mask inhabited by deity, unknown gender, true villain, dead??
	Darmani	Dead, non-humanoid
	Mikau	Dead, humanoid-fish
	Anju and Kafei	Were to get married, Kafei went missing, dead?
	Honey and Darling	Merchant couple
	Link the Goron	Non-humanoid
	Mayor Dotour and	Kafei's parents
	Madame Aroma	
	Gorman and the Gorman Brothers	Merchants
	Kamaro	Dead, dancer
	Romani and Cremia	Sisters, merchants, dead?
	Koume and Kotake	Witch sisters
	Zubora and Gabora	Merchants
	Lulu	Humanoid-fish, singer, mother-to-be
	Pamela and her Father	Cursed
	Captain Keeta	Dead soldier, granter of power
	King Ikana	Dead soldier, cursed
	Sakon	Thief
	Tingle *	Merchant
	The Fierce Deity	Trapped in a mask, diety?
LoZ: The Wind Waker	King of Red Lions	Companion, dead King of Hyrule
	Tetra *	Princess Zelda, pirate leader, kidnapped after reveal
	Gonzo	Pirate
	Nudge	Pirate
	Senza	Pirate
	Zuko	Pirate

Mako	Pirate
Niko	Pirate
Medli	Sage
Makar	Sage
Laruto	Dead, sage
Fado	Dead, sage
Aryll	Link's sister, kidnapped (which starts the quest in WW)
Grandma	Maternal carer of Link and Aryll, healer (of sorts)
Quill	Humanoid-bird
Komali	Humanoid-bird, prince
Mila	Riches to rags, kidnapped
Maggie	Rags to riches, kidnapped
Orca	Swordsman
Sturgeon	Researcher
Sue-Belle	
Mesa	
Abe	
Rose	Abe's wife
Joel and Zill	
Valoo	Dragon guardian
Great Deku Tree	Forest guardian (second tree)
Jabun	Sea guardian
LoZ: Twilight Princess	Midna Companion, imp-form (later turns into humanoid Princess)
Zant	Antagonist, dead
King Bulbin	Minor antagonist
Rusl	Mentor, swordsman
Ashei	Knight, resistance soldier
Auru	Scholar
Shad	Scholar
Telma	Bar-owner, maternal figure, busty

	Ilia	Link's childhood friend, gets abducted, temporary amnesia (suggested to be love interest)
	Colin	Kidnapped
	Malo	Kidnapped, merchant
	Renado	Shaman
	Barnes	Merchant
	Agitha	"Bug Princess", lolita
	Jovani	Turned to gold due to greed
	Dr. Borville	Doctor, racists
	Hena	Merchant
	Coro	Merchant
	Iza	Merchant, midriff and cleavage window!
	Yeto and Yeta	Yetis, married (wife becomes possessed and evil for a time)
	Ralis	Zora (fish-folk), prince
	Rutela	Queen of Zora, mother to Ralis, executed
	Impaz	Last of her kind, old lady
	Hero's Shade	Previous Link, dead, ghostly soldier
	Ooccoo	Human-chicken hybrid? Mother
	The Great Fairy	Magical being, bare chest
LoZ: Skyward Sword	Fi *	Spirit living within a sword, manifested into female form, companion, technically dead?
	(Zelda)	Note: not actually a princess in this game, but is a Goddess reincarnate. Super powerful, but gets kidnapped (twice...)

	Crystal prisons, also a love interest
Goose	Link's rival
Impa	Zelda's initial rescuer and protector
Old Woman	Actually Impa (time travel is involved in this game), dead
Girahim	Antagonist, flamboyant, sword spirit, manifested in male form
The Imprisoned	Beast form of antagonist, Demise
Hylia *	Goddess, recincarnated as Princess Zelda
Gaepora	Scholar, Zelda's father
Owlan and Horwell	Scholars
Cawlin and Strich	Sidekicks - Goose
Pipit	Knight
Karane	Knight, involved in love triangle
Fledge	Student
Gondo	Merchant
Rupin	Merchant
Luv	Merchant, wife, mother
Bertie	Merchant, husband, father
Sparrot	Merchant
Piper	Merchant, chef
Peatrice	Merchant, love interest
Peater	Merchant
Beedle	Merchant
Batreaux	Demon
Pumm and Kina	Father and daughter merchants
Gorko	Goron (rock-folk), archeologist/scholar
Bucha	Kiwki (plant-folk) elder
Ledd and Cobal	Mogma's (mole-folk)

	Faron	Dragon-diety, water-focused
	Eldin	Dragon-diety, fire-focused
	Lanayru	Dragon-diety, electricity-focused, dead??
	Levias	Whale-diety
LoZ: Breath of the Wild	Princess Zelda	Technically not kidnapped in this game, but is using her powers to keep Ganon at bay. Also love interest for Link
	Daruk	Goron (rock-folk), Champion, warrior, dead
	Mipha	Zora (fish-folk), Champion, healer, dead, also romantically interested in Link
	Revali	Rito (bird-folk), Champion, dead
	Urbosa	Gerudo (desert-folk), Champion, warrior, dead, revealing clothing
	Calamity Ganon	Formless entity of evil, Demon King Ganon
	Master Kohga	Minor antagonist, dead
	Old Man	Guide, the King of Hyrule in disguise, dead
	Beedle	Merchant
	Kilton	Merchant
	Pikango	Guide
	Traysi	Journalist
	Mina and Mils	Treasure hunter siblings
	Magda	Florist
	Loone	Insane
	Bozai	Bit sexist, really
	Impa	Sheikah (ninja-folk) leader

Purah	Sheikah, magically de-aged
Symin	Scholar
Paya	Shrine maiden of sorts, romantically interested in Link
Cado	Bodyguard
Dorian	Bodyguard, father
Cottla and Koko	Young daughters, deceased mother
Jerrin	Scientist, Robbie's wife, Granté's mother
Robbie	Scientist, scholar
Hestu	Korok (forest-folk), magic
Chio	Korok (forest-folk), creates trials for Link
Teba	Rito (bird-folk), warrior
Saki	Rito (bird-folk), Teba's wife, mother
Tulin	Rito (bird-folk), Teba's son
Harth	Rito (bird-folk), warrior
Kass	Rito (bird-folk), musician, guides
Kaneli	Rito (bird-folk) elder
Sidon	Zora (fish-folk), Prince, Mipha's brother, warrior
King Dorephan	Zora (fish-folk), Mipha's father
Muzu	Zora (fish-folk), royal advisor
Kodah , Kayden, and Finley	Zora (fish-folk) merchant family, Kodah was romantically interested in Link in the past
Riju	Gerudo (desert-folk) Chief
Buliara	Gerudo (desert-folk), warrior

	Barta	Gerudo (desert-folk), warrior
	Isha	Gerudo (desert-folk), merchant
	Shabonne and Tali	Merchants
	Yunobo	Goron (rock-folk), Champion's descendant, cowardly
	Bludo	Goron (rock-folk) Chief
	Cotera, Kaysa, Mija, and Tera	Great Fairies, revealing clothing
	Horse God Malanya	Magical being, can resurrect dead horses
	Naydra, Dinraal, Farosh	Dragon-deities, Naydra (female) is corrupted by evil and requires saving
	Satori, Lord of the Mountain	Horse-like creature
	Bolson	Merchant
	Hudson	Merchant
	Greyson and Pelison	Goron (rock-folk) merchants
	Rhondson	Gerudo (desert-folk) merchant
	Fyson	Rito (bird-folk) merchant
	Kapson	Zora (fish-folk) merchant
	Granté	Robbie's son, merchant
Mass Effect 1	Commander Shepard *	Can be either gender, but not really advertised as such until later games
	Richard L. Jenkins	Soldier, dead
	Kaiden Alenko *	Party member, romance option for FemShep
	Ashley Williams *	Party member, can die, romance option for MaleShep

Garrus Vakarian *	Party member, alien, non-humanoid, can die
Liara T'Soni *	Party member, alien, humanoid, bi-love interest
Tali'Zorag nar Rayya *	Party member, alien, unseen face, skin-tight clothing making it apparent that she is humanoid-female
Urdrnot Wrex *	Party member, alien, non-humanoid, can die
Saren Arterius	Antagonist, alien, non-humanoid, dead
Benezia	Antagonist, matriarch, Liara's mother, alien, humanoid, dead, sexual (breasts)
Sovereign	Antagonist , a spaceship with an insane AI, uses others as vessels, dead
The Thorian	Antagonist, sentient alien plant, can control others, dead
Shiala	Alien, humanoid, sacrificed (but can be saved)
Ethan Jeong	Killing others for reseach and profit, dead
Rana Thanoptis *	Scientist, can be killed or spared (will later kill herself anyway)
Droyas	Alien, non-humanoid, can die
Fist *	Crime boss, can die
Ventralis	Security chief, trying to kill you
Alestia Iallis	Scientist, trying to kill you, dead, alien, humanoid

Darius	Warlord, sexist, dead
Elanos Haliat	Pirate, exiled, dead
Dr. Saleon	Scientist, organ thief
Jeff Moreau *	Pilot, can die but mostly survives
Karin Chakwas *	Medic/healer
Charles Pressly *	Crew member, dead
Gregory Adams *	Crew member, engineer
Nihlus Kryik	Alien, non-humanoid, soldier, dead
Din Korlack *	Alien, non-humanoid,
Kirrahe	Soldier, alien, non-humanoid, can die
David Edward Anderson *	Soldier, dead
Donnel Udina *	Diplomat, dead
Toombs *	Ex-Soldier, can die
Kahoku	Soldier, dead
Martin Burns *	Politician, can die
Conrad Verner *	Soldier, can die
Chloe Michel *	Medic/healer
Talitha	Slave, suicidal
Harkin	Disgraced soldier, chauvinist
Khalisah bint Sinan al-Jilani *	Journalist
Emily Wong *	Journalist, dies sacrificing herself
Nassana Dantius *	Alien, humanoid, politician, dead
Sha'ira *	Alien, humanoid, consort
Helena Blake *	Crime boss, can die
Charles Saracino *	Chauvinistic politician
Gianna Parasini *	Bigot
Administrator Bel Anoleis	Can die, alien, non-humanoid
Lorik Qui'in	Alien, non-humanoid
Maeko Matsuo	Soldier
Kaira Stirling	Security officer, dead

	Han Olar	Scientist, alien, non-humanoid
	Fai Dan	Mind controlled, kills self
	Rachni Queen *	Alien, non-humanoid, can die
	Vigil *	AI, genderless
Mass Effect 2	Grunt *	Companion, soldier, can die
	Jack *	Human test experiment, romance option, revealing clothing, can die
	Jacob Taylor *	Soldier, romance option
	Miranda Lawson *	Genetically engineered human, romance option, can die, sexualised
	Mordin Solus *	Alien, non-humanoid, doctor, dead
	Wilson	Soldier, dead
	Samara *	Warrior monk, cleavage, can die, alien, humanoid
	Thane Krios *	Assassin, romance option, alien, non-humanoid, dead
	Legion *	Robotic, AI, dead
	Morinth	Alien, humanoid, serial killer (succubus), dead, can kill you with sex
	Harbinger *	Antagonist, mind control, can die, non-humanoid
	Collector General	Vessel controlled by Harbinger, dead
	Derelict Reaper	Living starship, dead
	Human Reaper	Dead/Destroyed
	EDI *	AI, takes on a humanoid form
	Kelly Chambers *	Romance option, can die (in various ways)

Kenneth Donnelly and Gabby Daniels *	Engineers, can get together, both can die
Rupert Gardner	Can die, joined armed forces following death of family
Jack Harper *	Dead, antagonist
Armando-Owen Bailey *	Soldier
Anaya	Soldier, alien, humanoid
Niftu Cal	Basically high the whole time, alien, non-humanoid
Aethyta *	Matriarch, alien, humanoid
Pitne For	Merchant, alien, non-humanoid
Lantar Sidonis	Vigilante, dead
Joram Talid	Politician, bigot
Kolyat Krios *	Alien, non-humanoid, assassin
Gavin Archer *	Can die
Shala'Raan vas Tonbay *	Face covered, skin tight suit, can die, alien, seemingly humanoid
Zaal'Koris vas Qqib-Qwib *	Soldier, alien, seemingly humanoid, face covered
Han'Gerrel vas Neema *	Soldier, can die, alien, seemingly humanoid, face covered
Daro'Xen vas Moreh *	Researcher, face covered, seemingly humanoid
Rael'Zorah	Soldier, Tali's father, dead, seemingly humanoid, face covered
Kal'Reegar *	Soldier, can die, alien, seemingly humanoid, face covered
Wreav *	Can die, alien, non-humanoid
Mealon Heplorn	Scientist, can die, alien, non-humanoid

	Charr *	Alien, non-humanoid, dead
	Niket	Dead
	Prazza	Alien, seemingly humanoid, dead
	Ronald Taylor	Dead
Mass Effect 3	James Vega	Soldier, brief romantic option
	Kai Leng	Assassin, dead
	Dr. Eva Coré	Scientist, robot (body taken over by EDI)
	Henry Lawson	Scientist, Miranda's father, dead
	Steve Cortez	Pilot, motivated by husbands death, romance option , can die
	Samantha Taylor	Scientist, romance option
	Diana Allers	Journalist, romance option, family is killed, can die, skin tight clothing
	Adrien Victus	Soldier, alien, non- humanoid
	Linron	Alien, non-humanoid
	Padok Wiks	Scientist, alien, non- humanoid, can die
	Major Coats	Soldier
	Tarquin Victus	Son of Adrien, dead, alien, non-humanoid
	Jondum Bau	Soldier, can die
	Kahlee Sanders	Soldier
	Lee Riley	Soldier, can die, face covered
	Garret Bryson	Researcher, dead
	Ann Bryson	Garret's daughter, can die
	Alex Garneau	Technically dead
	Mel	Soldier, raunchy

	Eve	Alien, non-humanoid, sole survivor of experiment, can die
	Kalros	Alien, non-humanoid, kaiju
Mass Effect: Andromeda	Pathfinder Ryder	Playable character, play as either Scott or Sara
	Liam Kosta	Party member, romance option
	Cora Harper	Party member, romance option, skin tight suit
	Vetra Nyx	Party member, romance option, alien, non-humanoid
	Peebee	Party member, romance option, alien, humanoid, midriff
	Nakmor Drak	Party member, alien, non-humanoid
	Jaal Ama Darav	Party member, alien, non-humanoid, romance option
	SAM	AI
	Kallo Jath	Alien, non-humanoid, pilot
	Lexi T'Perro	Doctor, alien, humanoid
	Gil Brodie	Engineer, love interest
	Suvi Anwar	Scientist, love interest
	Alec Ryder	Father of Ryder twins, scientist and soldier, dead
	Ellen Ryder	Scientist, mother of Ryder twins, dead
	Jien Garson	Leader of initiative into new galaxy, dead
	Jarun Tann	Politician, took command after Jien died
	Foster Addison	Bureaucrat
	William Spender	Bureaucrat, bigot

Nakmor Kesh	Engineer, alien, non-humanoid, becomes a mother
Keri T'vessa	Journalist, alien, humanoid, romance option
Sidera Nyx	Vetra's sister, gets kidnapped
Avina	AI, given female form
Knight	Her son is being used as a test subject, can die
Nozomi Dunn	Captain, can die
Harry Carlyle	Doctor
Macen Barro	Soldier, dead, alien, non-humanoid
Avitus Rix	Alien, non-humanoid, spirals when he discovers his partner, Macen, is dead
Elonis Atandra	Captain, alien, humanoid
Ishara	Dead, alien, humanoid
Sarissa Theris	Succeeded Ishara, alien, humanoid
Vederia Damali	Alien, humanoid
Lumont Hayjer	Captain, alien, non-humanoid
Zevin Reaka	Alien, non-humanoid, soldier, can die
Saelen Varn	Soldier, alien, non-humanoid
August Bradley	Soldier
Grace Lito	Engineer
Danny Messer	Civilian
Priya Blake	Mayor, ex-soldier
Christmas Jones	Mayor, ex-soldier
The Archon	Commander, alien, non-humanoid, antagonist, dead

The Primus	Archon's second in command, alien, non-humanoid
The Cardinal	Soldier, alien, non-humanoid, can die
Archon's Sword	Soldier, alien, non-humanoid, dead
The Valiant	Alien, non-humanoid, dead
The Invictor	Alien, non-humanoid, soldier, dead
Moshae Sjefa	Alien, non-humanoid
Paaran Shie	Alien, non-humanoid, politician
Evfra de Tershaav	Resistance leader, alien, non-humanoid
Akksul	Bigot, alien, non-humanoid, can die
Farah Noskos	Warrior, alien, non-humanoid
Annea	Merchant, alien, non-humanoid, can die
Avela Kjar	Archivist, alien, non-humanoid, romance option
Calot Gurting	Trafficker, alien, non-humanoid
Sloane Kelly	Soldier, exiled, antagonist, can die
Kaetus	Alien, non-humanoid, spurred by Sloane's potential death
Reyes Vidal	Smuggler, romance option
Bain Massani	Exile
Umi Henon	Bartender, alien, humanoid
Kalinda T'Reve	Alien, humanoid, bureaucrat, can die

	Krannit	Alien, non-humanoid, mercenary can die
	Aroane	Pirate, can die
	Meriweather	Exile, kidnaps Sid, dead
	Nakmor Morda	Alien, non-humanoid
	Nakmor Vorn	Kesh's lover, alien, non-humanoid
Metal Gear Solid	Solid Snake *	Playable character, soldier
	Big Boss *	Antagonist, Snake's father, aka Naked Snake
	Gray Fox *	Child soldier, dead, cyber ninja
	Roy Campbell *	Soldier, Meryl's father
	Master Miller *	Soldier, mentor, dead?
	Liquid Snake *	Soldier, Big Boss's second clone-son, dead
	Revolver Ocelot *	Soldier, dead
	Psycho Mantis *	Soldier, psychic, dead
	Sniper Wolf	Soldier, sniper, disciple of Big Boss, cleavage, dead
	Vulcan Raven	Soldier, dead
	Decoy Octopus	Impersonator, dead
	Hal/ Otacon *	Support unit, hacker
	Naomi Hunter *	Scientist, cleavage, dead
	Mei Ling *	Soldier
	Natasha Romanenko *	Soldier, weapons expert, cleavage
	Meryl Silverburgh *	Soldier, briefly Snake's romantic interest, fanservice
	Johnny Sasaki *	Soldier Meryl's husband
	Kenneth Baker	Company president, dead
	Jim Houseman	Secretary of Defense, dead

MGS 2: Sons of Liberty	Raiden *	Main character of SoL, child soldier, cyber ninja, has a wife and child he protects
	Rosemary *	Raiden's partner, (has a fake marriage to Campbell to protect herself and their son)
	Emma Emmerich *	Hal's sister, kidnapped, dead
	Peter Stillman	Soldier, mentor, dead
	Solidus Snake	Raiden's adopted father, former POTUS, dead
	Sergei Gurlukovich	Mercenary, dead
	Olga Gurlukovich	Sergei's daughter, soldier, sacrifices herself to save Raiden and her baby
	Helena Dolph Jackson	Soldier, loved ones die (a lot), dead
	Vamp *	Soldier, apparently immortal, dead
	Fatman	Soldier, dead
	Richard Ames	Secret agent, dead
	President James Johnson	POTUS, puppet ruler, dead
	The Colonel	Guide, AI
Scott Dolph	Helena's father, dead	
Liquid Ocelot *	Revolver Ocelot, possessed, dead	
MGS 3: Snake Eater	Major Zero *	Soldier, leader, dead
	Signit	Tech specialist, dead (the character we see is a decoy)
	Para-Medic *	Medic, experiments on humans, dead

EVA *	Sleeper agent, aka "Big Mama" (caring for child soldiers, also technically Snake's mother)
The Boss	Soldier, Big Boss' mentor, mother, dead
The Pain	Soldier
The Fear	Soldier, surgically enhanced
The End	Soldier, technically dead (then really dead)
The Fury	Soldier, dead
The Sorrow	Soldier, dead prior to game (killed by The Boss - his lover)
Yevgeny Borisovitch Volgin *	Soldier, dead (technically dies twice?)
Ivan Raidenovitch Raikov	Soldier, exiled
Nikolai Stepanovich Sokolov	Scientist, dead
Aleksander Leonovitch Granin	Scientist, dead
Johnny	Prison guard
MGS 4: Sunny Emmerich	Young girl, rescued by Raiden, raised by Otacon and Snake, Olga's daughter
Guns of the Patriots	
Drebin 893	Soldier, former child soldier, one of multiple Drebin's
Laughing Octopus	Beauty and Beast unit, insane, skin tight suit
Raging Raven	Beauty and beast unit, insane, skin tight suit
Crying Wolf	Beauty and Beast unit, insane, skin tight suit

Screaming Mantis

Beauty and Beast unit
(leader), insane, skin tight
suit

Haven Troopers

Private military unit, all
female, can be groped and
fondled by MC (which
you'll be attacked for, but
still)

**MGS V:
GZ/PP**

Skull Face

Body horror, antagonist,
dead

Morpho/Peqoud

Pilot

Glaz and Palitz

Soldiers, sniper and
spotter

Bitter Centipede

Prisoner 12282

Quiet

Mute sniper, exposed
(with reason, but...),
doesn't talk (again, with
reason), strips in one
scene, dead

Code Talker

Scientist, regrets work

Dr. Evangelos
Constantinou

Medic, dead

Eli

Child soldier, young Liquid
Snake

Tretji Rebenok

Child soldier, face covered

The "Man on Fire"

Volgin's corpse, powered
by hate, also definitely
dead now

Shabani

Child soldier, goes
missing, dead

D-Dog

Wolfdog, soldier

D-Horse

Horse, soldier, transport

Venom Snake

Player character, former
medic, soldier, body
double

Ishmael

Actually Big Boss (the real
one)

Overwatch	Doomfist	Leader of terrorist organisation
	Genji	Cyber ninja
	McCree	Cowboy
	Pharah	Soldier
	Reaper	Soldier, terrorist
	Solider: 76	Soldier
	Sombra	Hacker, skin tight clothing
	Tracer	Soldier, skin tight clothing (also infamous booty pose prior to release)
	Bastion	Robot, referred to as male
	Hanzo	Partially exposed
	Junkrat	Partially exposed
	Mei	Scientist
	Torbjörn	Mechanic
	Widowmaker	Sniper, exposed cleavage, skin tight suit
	D.Va	Soldier, skin tight clothing
	Orisa	Robot, referred to as female
	Reinhardt	Soldier
	Roadhog	Partially exposed
	Winston	A talking gorilla, scientist
	Zarya	Soldier, masculine
	Ana	Sniper, soldier, older woman, mother, healer
	Lúcio	Musician, healer
	Mercy	Healer (angelic design), skin tight clothing
	Moira	Healer, androgynous design
	Symmetra	Healing/protecting, legs
	Zenyatta	Healer, robot, referred to as male

Panzer Dragoon	Blue Dragon *	Dragon
	Keil/Kyle Fluge	Playable character, dragon rider
	Black Dragon	Dragon, antagonist
Panzer Dragoon Saga	Edge	Playable character, mercenary, possibly dead
	Abner	Gatekeeper
	Aldo	Merchant
	An'jou	Hunter
	Arwen	Soldier, antagonist, dead
	Azel	Ancient drone, designed and referred to as female, love interest for Edge, created a drone made of their genetic material
	Baich	Merchant
	Bezer	Orphan, dead
	Boaz	Merchant
	Damon	High priest
	Edna	Merchant
	Enkak	An'jou's son
	Fei	Baichah's daughter, romantically interested in Edge
	Gash	Leader of mercenaries, Edge's friend
	Jael	Bartender
	Jared	Merchant
	Jephthah	Mercenary
	Juba	Bartender
	Craymen	Antagonist, dead
	Kou	Baichah's wife, mother
	Ladha	Guardian, mercenary
	Paet	Pilot
	Perez	Mercenary

	Quitor	Father
	Radgam	Hunter, dead
	Raul	Hunter
	Reuben	Mercenary
	Rhagg	Mercenary
	Rhoda	Daughter of Quitor
	Rhua	Mercenary, dead
	Sestren	Genderless, man-made being, dead
	Shella	Mercenary, healer
	Siffle	Gatekeeper
	Simeon	Mercenary
	The Seventh Emperor	Antagonist, dead
	Viaman	High priest
	Zadoc	Mercenary, researcher
	Zastava	Soldier, assassin, dead
Panzer Dragoon Orta	Damad	Mercenary
	Emid	Mercenary
	Evren	Captain, soldier, presumed dead
	Iva Demilcol	Minor protagonist, presumed dead
	Abadd	Drone, referred to as male, dead
	Letral Naus Demilcol	Iva's father, researcher, dead
	Mobo	Humanoid, warrior
	Noof	Mercenary
	Orta	Protagonist, drone, designed as and referred to as female - half drone (Edge/Azel are her parents)
	Stratei Uramis	Student, military training, dead

	Ponta	Leader of nomad group
Persona 1	The Protagonist	Player character, various names, "The Emperor"
	Maki Sonomura *	Sickly, kidnapped, split personality, "The Priestess", healer, can die, romantically interested in Protagonist
	Masao Inaba	Mischievous, romantically interested in Maki, "The Chariot"
	Kei Nanjo *	Rich boy, "The Hierophant"
	Reiji Kido *	Delinquent, "The Devil"
	Hidehiko Uesugi *	Kick started events, captured, "Justice"
	Eriko Kirishima *	Rich girl, "Judgement"
	Yuka Ayase	"The Magician"
	Yukino Mayuzumi *	Ex-delinquent, motherly, "The Empress"
	Trish *	Healing fairy
	Yamaoka	Kai's butler, dead
	Mai	Maki's alter ego
	Setsuko	Maki's mother, unnamed in the game, gets possessed at one point
	Dr. Nicholai	Scientist
	Saeko Takami *	Teacher, possessed at one point
	Vice Principle Hanya *	Sadistic teacher
	Chisato Kasai	Student who went missing, trapped in other world as "Harem Queen"
	Yosuke Nato	Chisto's boyfriend, trapped in other world
	Tamaki Uchida *	Student, former demon summoner

	Tadashi Satomi *	Student, ends up with Tamaki
	Kenta Yokouchi *	Student, gets possessed
	Tsutomu Kurouri	Student, occult
	Takahisa Kandori *	Antagonist, kidnaps Maki, "The Tower", dead
	Takeda	Kandori's subordinate, just disappears
	Aki	Maki's alter ego, antagonistic
	Pandora	Embodiment of Maki's nihilism (so, one of her alter ego's), is also naked at some point
	Kumi Hirose	Killed herself, was resurrected to act as a guardian (due to stress)
	Michiko Matsudaira	Killed herself (for power against her bullies), was resurrected to act as a guardian
	Yuriko Yamamoto	Killed herself (to stay beautiful), was resurrected as a guardian
	Tomomi Fujimori	Possessed, driven by hatred
	Nyx *	Eldritch abomination, goddess of night and death, antagonist
Persona 2	Tatsuya Suou	Player character/ party member, "The Sun", dies, resurrected
	Maya Amano	Player character/party member, "The Moon", sacrificed, resurrected

Lisa Silverman	Party member, romantic interest in Tatsuya, "The Lovers"
Eikichi Mishina	"Death"
Jun Kurosu	"The Wheel of Fortune", alter ego is a serial killer
Katsuya Suou	"Justice", Tatsuya's brother, policeman,
Ulala Serizawa	"The Star"
Baofu	"The Hanged Man", getting revenge for his assistant/lover, Miki's, death
Daisuke Todoroki	Private detective
Fujii Shunsuke	Photographer, dead
Youichi Makimura	Ulala's ex
Philemon *	Observer, party ally
Igor *	Mentor
Joker	Antagonist, alter ego of Jun
King Leo	Antagonist, "The Sun", dead
Lady Scorpio	Antagonist, "The Tower", can die
Prince Taurus	Antagonist, "The Lovers", dead
Queen Aquarius	Antagonist, Jun's mother
Ixquic	"The Moon", antagonist
Tatsuzou Sudou	King Leo's father, politician
Kiyotada Sumaru	Reanimated warlord, can die (again)
Chizuru Ishigami	Antagonist, dead
General Sugawara	Soldier
Captain Togashi	Policeman, dead
Administrator Shimazu	Policeman
The Fuhrer	Literally Hitler

	Maya Okamura	Teacher, plans to start the apocalypse over love
	Yasuo Inoe	Student, "The Hanged Man"
	Hiroki Sugimoto	Student, "Death", possessed
	Nyarlatotep *	Manifestation of chaos
	Akinari Kashihara	Jun's father, dead (in one timeline)
	Belladonna	Singer, sexual (breasts)
	Steven Silverman	Lisa's father, Japanophile
	Miyabi Hanakouji	Lisa's classmate, emotional distress = comfort eating
	Matsuoka	Kai's current butler
	Mizuno	Editor-in-Chief, Maya's boss
	Shiori Miyashiro	Police officer, possessed
	Zula	Talking cat
	Chandraputra	Persona user
Persona 3	Protagonist	"The Fool", orphan, dead (can romance characters)
	Yukari Takeba	"The Lovers", healer
	Junpei Iori	"The Magician", dead (revived)
	Akihiko Sanada	"The Emperor", orphan, sister Miki died
	Mitsuru Kirijo	"The Empress", healer
	Fuuka Yamagishi	"The Priestess", kidnapped, sickly
	Aigis	"The Chariot", robot, designed to look female
	Koromaru	Dog, "Strength", shrine protector
	Ken Amada	Orphan, "Justice", wants revenge for mother's death

Shinjiro Aragaki	"The Hierophant", accidentally killed Ken's mother, dead
Metis	"The Hierophant", Aigis' "sister" - the embodiment of rejected emotions
Elizabeth and Theodore	Assistants, quest-givers
Takeharu Kirijo	Mitsuru Kirijo's father, dead
Shuji Ikutsuki	School chairman, dead
Eiichiro Takeba	Scientist, Yukari's father
Kenji Tomochika	Support
Hidetoshi Odagari	Support
Kazushi Miyamoto	Support
Chihiro Fushimi *	Support
Keisuke Hiraga	Support
Yuko Nishiwaki	Support, love interest
Nozomi Suemitsu	Support
Pharos	Death, support, antagonist
Bunkichi and Mitsuko Kitamura	Support
Maya	Support, teacher, in an online relationship with the MC
Maiko Oohashi	Support
Tanaka *	Businessman, support
Mutatsu	Support, monk
Mamoru Hayase	Support, student
Akinari Kamiki	Support, dead
Natsuki Moriyama	Bully, student
Edogawa	Teacher
Kurosawa	Police officer
Takaya Sakaki	Antagonist, "Wheel of Fortune", dead
Jin Shirato	Antagonist, "The Hermit", dead
Chidori Yoshino	Antagonist, "The Hanged Man", healer, loves

Junpei, gets kidnapped,
dead

Persona 4	Protagonist	Main character, "The Fool", can romance characters
	Yosuke Hanamura	Party member, "The Magician"
	Chie Satonaka	Party member, "The Chariot"
	Yukiko Amagi	Party member, "The Priestess", heiress
	Kanji Tatsumi	Party member, "The Emperor", delinquent
	Rise Kujikawa	Party member, "The Lovers", idol, romance option
	Teddie	Party member, "The Star", talking bear mascot
	Naoto Shirogane	Party member, "Wheel of Fortune", androgynous, orphan
	Ryotaro Dojima	Support, police officer, motivated by wife's death
	Nanako Dojima	Support, Dojima's daughter, Protagonist's cousin, kidnapped (can die)
	Margaret	Support, assistant
	Kou and Daisuke	Support
	Ai Ebihara	Support, unreciprocated crush
	Yumi Ozawa	Support
	Ayane Matsunaga	Support
	The Fox	Fox, shrine guardian
	Naoki Konishi	Support, motivated by death of older sister

	Eri Minami	Support, stepmother, motivated to be a better mother
	Sayako Uehara	Support, nurse, motivated by breakdown of relationship
	Hisano Kuroda	Support, widow
	Shu Nakajima	Support, student
	Mayumi Yamano	Reporter, murdered
	Saki Konishi	Student, murdered
	Mr. Morooka	Teacher, dead
	Hanako Ohtani	Student, unreciprocated crush (providing useful items for MC), vain
	Noriko Kashiwagi	Teacher, vain, breasts
	Mitsuo Kubo	Antagonist, murderer, student
	Taro Namatame	Antagonist, affair with Mayumi, kidnaps party members
Persona 5	Protagonist/Akira Kurusu	Main character, "Joker", romancing characters
	Ryuji Sakamoto	"Skull", delinquent, pseudo-death
	Morgana	Talking cat, healer
	Ann Tamaki	"Panther", skin tight suit
	Yusuke Kitagawa	"Fox"
	Makoto Nijima	"Queen"
	Futaba Sakura	"Oracle", "Navi", tech prodigy, love interest
	Haru Okumura	"Noir", love interest
	Goro Akechi	"Crow"
	Sojiro Sakura	"Hierophant", Futaba's father
	Chihaya Mifune	"Fortune", fortune teller

Caroline and Justine	Velvet Room attendants, young twins - two halves of one whole being
Munehisa Iwai	"Hanged Man", merchant, mafia-type
Tae Takemi	"Death", medic, romance option
Sadayo Kawakami	"Temperance", teacher, part-time maid, can cook and clean for the protagonist
Ichiko Ohya	"Devil", reporter
Shinya Oda	"Tower", bully
Hifumi Togo	"Star", Queen-like
Yuuki Mishima	"Moon", passive
Toranosuke Yoshida	"Sun", disgraced politician
Sae Niijima	"Judgement", Makoto's sister, ruled by envy
Natsuhiko Nakanohara	Ex-government worker, stalked and harassed ex-girlfriend
Toshio and Hiromi Takase	Adopted parents of deceased student, blackmailing Sadayo for money
Youji Isshiki	Futaba's uncle, abuser
Mitsuyo Togo	Hifumi's mother, using her daughter to her own ends
Shoichi Oyamada	Tae's former superior, spread rumours about her to destroy her reputation
Yuichi Fukurai	Recruited Chihaya, scamming others for money
Kouta and Asami Magario	Abusive parents
Akimitsu Tsuda	Mafia-type
Hanae Oda	Shinya's mother, abusive mother, forcing her son to

	become a bully via bullying him
Shinpei Honjo	Ichiko's boss, stonewalling her
Yohei Kiritani	Dual personality, homeless man by day, assassin by night
Suguru Kamoshida	Teacher, lust over female students twists him
Ichiryuusai Madarame	Yusuke's guardian, claims apprentice's work as his own, fueled by pride
Junya Kaneshiro	Mafia boss, extorting students
Kunikazu Okumura	Businessman, Haru's father, fueled by greed, dead
Masayoshi Shido	Politician, Akechi's father,
Yaldabaoth	God of Control
Shiho Suzui	Student, attempted suicide when Kamoshida (teacher) tried to molest her
Wakaba Isshiki	Futaba's mother, apparently commit suicide, was actually murdered by Akechi
Sugimura	Haru's arranged fiancé, abusive toward her
Mika	Model, horrible person hidden by lovely face
Lala Escargot	Bar-owner, keeps an eye on the characters and Ichiko
Takakura	Parental substitute for Haru
Eiko Takao	Poor student, jealous of Makoto

	Tsukasa	Eiko's boyfriend, sells girls into the sex trade
	Kaoru	Student, Iwai's adopted son
	Principle Kobayakawa	Teacher, dead
	Ooe	Politician, orchestrates a massive accident simply to kill two people
	Ms. Chouno	Teacher, revealing clothing
	Mr. Hiruta	Teacher
	Mr. Inui	Teacher
	Ms. Usami	Teacher
	Mr. Ushimaru	Teacher
Portal	Chell *	Silent protagonist, surviving science experiements, ambiguous back story
	GLaDOS *	AI, portrayed as female, attempting to kill Chell, is destroyed (and restored from a backup)
	Doug Rattmann *	Mysterious person who left clues for Chell all over the testing center
Portal 2	Wheatley	AI, acts as a guide, goes psychotic after beung plugged into GLaDOS, also revives GLaDOS
	Cave Johnson	Founder of Aperture, went insane, long dead
	Atlas and P-Body	Two robots, Atlas is assumed to be masculine, P-Body is feminine
	Space Sphere	AI sphere, really into space

	Rick the Adventure Sphere	AI sphere, perverted
	Fact Sphere	AI sphere, insane
	Caroline	Cave Johnson's assistant, uploaded into GLaDOS against her will
Red Dead Revolver	Red Harlow	Protagonist, in-series legend, cowboy
	Jack Swift	Cowboy, dead
	Annie Stoakes	Runs a ranch, faces a lot of sexism
	Shadow Wolf	Cowboy, dead
	Buffalo Soldier	Cowboy
	Governor Griffon	Antagonist
	General Diego	Antagonist, soldier
	Colonel Daren	Soldier, killer, has a cannon for an arm
	Mr Kelley	Bounty
Red Dead Redemption	John Marston	Protagonist, former outlaw, family is held hostage, dies protecting family
	Bonnie MacFarlane	Rancher, married, MC saves her from being raped
	Drew MacFarlane	Bonnie's father
	Marshal Leigh Johnson	Sheriff
	Nigel West Dickens	Travelling merchant
	Irish	Arms dealer, dead
	Seth Briars	Treasure hunter
	Eli and Jonah	Deputies, comic relief
	Bill Williamson	Antagonist, gang member, dead
	Agustin Allende	Governor, rapist, kidnaps women for his own harem, dead

Vincente de Santa	Allende's deputy, rapist, dead
Landon Ricketts	Retired gunslinger, protects others
Luisa Fortuna	Schoolteacher, rebel, dies for love (Abraham)
Abraham Reyes	Rebel leader, selfish, greedy, liar, tyrant
Captain Espinoza	Allende's deputy, military commander, dead
Javier Escuella	Gang member
Agent Edgar Ross	Federal agent, holding Marston's family hostage, kills John, dead
Agent Archer Fordham	Ross' apprentice
Professor Harold MacDougal	Drug-addicted scientist
Nastas	Native American, dead
Dutch van der Linde	John's mentor, dead (suicide)
Abigail Marston	John's wife, former prostitute, dead
Jack Marston	John and Abigail's son, becomes an outlaw to get revenge for father's death
Uncle	Reformed thief, alcoholic, dies protecting the Marston family
Randall Forrester	Series killer, can die
Billy West	Old man, keeps wife's corpse in her rocking chair
Sam Odessa	Wandering through the desert
Jimmy Saint	Journalist
D.S. MacKenna	Filmmaker
Silas Spatchcock	Actor
Herbert Moon	Racist, merchant, dead
Mother Superior	Nun

Resident Evil	Chris Redfield *	Protagonist, soldier
	Jill Valentine *	Protagonist, soldier, Chris' work partner, has been mind-controlled, skin tight suit
	Barry Burton *	Merchant, family being held hostage
	Rebecca Chambers *	Soldier, medic, has an attack involving her buttocks, some costumes can be very revealing
	Brad Vickers *	Soldier, helicopter pilot, dead
	Richard Aiken	Soldier, dead
	Enrico Marini *	Captain, soldier
	Albert Wesker *	Antagonist, back from the dead (a lot), bioterrorist, actually dead now... maybe?
	Lisa Trevor	Injected with a virus, test subject, orphaned, insane, sewed her parents faces to her own, dead
Resident Evil 2	Leon Scott Kennedy *	Rookie police officer turned US federal agent, brainwashed at one point, got a few love interests going on
	Claire Redfield *	Chris's younger sister, non-military, sexual, revealing clothing midriff, gets kidnapped a couple of times
	Ada Wong *	Secret agent, revealing clothing (signature red

		dress), back from the dead, gets captured a few times, saved by Leon
	Sherry Birkin *	Soldier, daughter of scientists, gets captured a lot, gets rescued
	William Birkin	Scientist, injected himself with a virus, became a monster, Sherry's father, dead
	Annette Birkin	Sherry's mother, scientist, redeems herself then dies
	Brian Irons	Police chief, corrupt, dead
	Ben Bertolucci	Reports, dead
	Marvin Branagh	Police officer, dead
	Robert Kendo	Merchant, dead
	HUNK *	"Mr. Death", mercenary, sole survivor
	Mr. X	Minor antagonist, genetically altered, not really human
Resident	Carlos Oliveira	Mercenary, Jill's partner
Evil 3:		character
Nemesis	The Pursuer	Minor antagonist, genetically altered, dead
	Nicholai Ginovaef	Mercenary, kills own team mates, potentially dead
	Mikhail Victor	Dead, soldier
Resident	Steve Burnside	Son of double agent, kills own dad, dead, romantic feelings for Claire
Evil Code:		
Veronica	Alfred Ashford	Alexia's twin brother, sister complex, dresses as Alexia

	Alexia Ashford	Alfred's twin sister, antagonist, assumed dead, cryogenically frozen, mutated
	Rodrigo Juan Raval	Secret agent, captures and imprisons Claire, dead
	Alexander Ashford	Alexia and Alfred's father (technically, as they're both clones of an ancestor), mutated by children, dead
	Edward Ashford	Ancestor, founder of Umbrella, surprisingly good
Resident	Billy Coen	Former marine, wrongly convicted of murder, presumed dead
Evil 0		
	Dr. James Marcus	Founder of Umbrella, murdered
	Reborn Dr. Marcus/Queen Leech	Mutated creation, humanoid, antagonist, creature posing as human to get revenge
Resident	Luis Sera	Myserious aid, dead
Evil 4		
	Ashley Graham	President's daughter, rescued by Leon after being kidnapped (gets kidnapped a LOT), offers Leon sex
	Ingrid Hunnigan *	Mission control
	Osmund Saddler	Antagonist, planned to kidnap Ashley, mutated, dead
	Ramon Salazar	Antagonist, grown man in a child's body, dead

	Jack Krauser	Antagonist, kidnapped Ashley, mutated, dead
	Bitores Mendez	Gang member, village chief, hunted Leon and Ashley, dead
	Mike	Helicopter pilot, dead
Resident Evil 5	Sheva Alomar	Chris' partner in 5, revealing clothing, overly sexy alternate costumes
	Josh Stone	Sheva's mentor, soldier
	Ozwell E. Spencer	Founder of Umbrella, antagonist, dead
	Excella Gionne	CEO, antagonist (wants to be Queen on the new world), in love with Wesker, revealing clothing, dead
	Ricardo Irving	Black Market dealer, dead
Resident Evil 6	Jake Muller	Protagonist, mercenary, Wesker's son
	Helena Harper	Leon's companion in 6, forced to kill own sister, revenge mission
	Piers Nivans	Soldier, mutated (to effectively save himself), then chooses to die
	Carla Radames	Founder of Neo-Umbrella, transformed into a clone of Ada Wong, remembers who she really is, goes a bit insane, antagonist, revealing clothing, dead
	Deborah Harper	Helena's sister, mutated, dead
	Derek Clifford Simmons	US National Security Advisor, assassinated the

President, wanted to "own" Carla (as Ada), dead

President Adam Benford Dead

Resident Parker Luciani Jill's partner, soldier, presumed dead (but is revealed to be alive later in game)
Evil:
Revelations

Jessica Sherawat Chris's partner, revealing outfit (seriously, why is one leg exposed in her cat suit?), impractical heels, double agent

Raymond Vester Parker's friend, agent, dead

Clive R. O'Brian Part of a commission to end bio-terrorism

Quint Cetcham Soldier, tech expert

Keith Lumley Soldier, Quint's partner

Rachael Foley Agent, revealing clothing, dead

Morgan Lansdale Antagonist, arranged bio-terrorist attack

Jack Norman Head of bioterrorist group presumed dead (actually alive)

Resident **Moira Burton** Revealing clothing, can die
Evil:
Revelations
2

Natalia Korda Child with unknown abilities, goes bad

Alex Wesker Overseer, sole survivor of Wesker children project, imprints her mind into Natalia's, goes insane,

		mutates, technically dead??
	Neil Fisher	Working with Alex, sacrifices employees (including potentially Claire and Moira), mutates, dead
	Gina Foley	Neil's employee, dead
Resident Evil 7: biohazard	Ethan Winters	Protagonist, searching for missing wife, Mia (she's presumed dead)
	Mia Winters	Ethan's wife, brainwashed, attacks husband, can die
	Peter Walken	Paranormal investigator, dead
	Andre Stickland	Paranormal investigator, dead
	Jack Baker	Patriarch of Baker family, actually a good guy, being controlled by brain fungus, dead
	Marguerite Baker	Jack's wife, being controlled, dead
	Lucas Baker	Family son, kills and tortures, dead (killed by Chris)
	Eveline	Disguised as catatonic grandmother (actually aged rapidly), antagonist, enslaved the Bakers after they took her in, dead
	Zoe Baker	Jack's daughter, crystallised, can die
	Chris Redfield *	The Chris Redfield
	David Anderson	Police officer, dead
	Alan Douglas	Responsbile, with Mia, for transporting Eveline, dead

Soul Calibur II	Astaroth *	Golem, dead, resurrected, dead, replaced by copy, revealing clothing
	Cervantes De Leon *	Pirate, half naked, dead, resurrected, zombie pirate
	Isabella Valentine *	Cleavage, revealing clothing, Cervantes' daughter (a story involving mind control and rape), stopped aging, antagonist?
	Kilik *	Monk, half naked
	Maxi *	Seeking revenge for murdered adoptive brother, dead-not-dead, half naked
	Heishiro Mitsurugi *	Samurai, half naked
	Nightmare *	Series antagonist, possessing Siegfried Schtauffen
	Seong Mi-Na *	Underboob, revealing clothing (but is dressed more conservatively in recent games e.g. hanbok),
	Sophitia Alexandra *	Chosen by the Greek Gods, cleavage, revealing clothing, married and becomes a mother in later games (later motivated by child's kidnapping), dead-not-dead
	Taki *	Ninja, skin tightsuit (nipples, always), bust
	Voldo *	Revealing costume (BDSM style)

Chai Xianghua *		Younger sister of Kilik's adoptive sister, fairly revealing clothing, Kilik's love interest, has his child
Yoshimitsu *		Ninja, seeking revenge, (there's multiple generations of Yoshimitsu's)
Raphael Sorel *		Nobleman, dead, (body became a vessel for Nightmare), vampire, skin tight costume
Talim *		Priestess, revealing costume, currently missing
Hong Yun-Seong *		Half naked
Cassandra Alexandra *		Sophitia's younger sister, cleavage, revealing costume, missing for 17 years
Necrid		Mutated human
Charade *		Unnamed man, dead, reanimated corpse
Soul Calibur III	Nathaniel William "Rock" Adams *	Half naked, motivated by kidnapping of adoptive son, barbarian-esque
	Zasalamel *	Exiled from tribe, immortal
	Tira *	Revealing costume, cleavage, former assassin, split personality
	Setsuka *	Geisha-style (Oiran), revealing costume, cleavage, motivated by revenge for the death of the man she loved
	Amy Sorel *	Raphael's adoptive daughter, child-like yet revealing costume

	Olcadan	Owl-human, half naked (male chest)
	Abyss	Mutated Zasalamel
	Valeria, Hualin, Lynette	"Shop Girls" (all wearing maid aprons), busts (with added jiggle physics)
Soul Calibur IV	Hilde *	Knight, mother
	Algol *	Almost naked, antagonist
	Lord Geo Dampierre	Con artist
	Ashlotte Maedel *	Robot (female design)
	Kamikirimushi *	Oni (demon), bust
	Shura *	Assassin, revealing clothing, bust
	Scheherazade *	Storyteller, elf
	Angol Fear *	Servant, bust, revealing clothing (skin tight armour?)
Soul Calibur V	Patroklos Alexander	Sophitia's son, motivated by mother's apparent death
	Pyrrha Alexandra	Sophitia's daughter, kidnapped, enslaved, hired as a maid, framed for murder, somewhat revealing clothing
	Natsu	Taki's disciple, possessed by a demon, skin tight suit, bust
	Z.W.E.I	Half naked
	Yan Leixia	Xianghua's daughter, revealing costume
	Viola	Servant to Z.W.E.I, bust, revealing costume, mage
	Xiba	Xianghua's illegitimate son with Kilik

	Elysium	Embodiment of a sword, technically genderless but looks like Sophitia (and is almost very naked)
Spyro the Dragon	Spyro *	Dragon, main character
	Sparx *	Dragonfly, guide
	Gnasty Gnorc	Antagonist
	Toasty	Boss, antagonist
	Dr. Shemp	Boss, antagonist
	Blowhard	Boss, antagonist
	Metalhead	boss, antagonist
	Jacques	Boss, antagonist
Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage!	Professor *	Ally
	Hunter the Cheetah *	Ally
	Elora the Faun	Ally
	Zoe the Fairy *	Ally, saved
	Moneybags *	
	Crush	Antagonist
	Gulp	Antagonist
	Ripto	Antagonist
Spyro: Year of the Dragon	Sheila	Playable
	Sgt. James Byrd	Playable
	Agent 9	Playable, space monkey
	Bianca	Mage, ally (rabbit boobs?)
	Buzz	Antagonist
	Spike	Antagonist, boss
	Scorch	Antagonist, boss
	Sorceress	Antagonist, boss

Street Fighter III	Alex *	Main character (game), shirtless, also gets kidnapped
	Dudley *	English gentleman
	Elena *	African warrior princess, exposed (bikini)
	Ibuki *	Female ninja, exposed (midriff, thighs)
	Ken *	Wearing a gi
	Necro	Science experiment
	Oro	Hermit, mentor, shirtless
	Ryu *	Main character (series), wearing a gi
	Sean	Wearing a gi
	Yun and Yang	Twin brothers
	Gill *	Basically naked, half red half blue, antagonist
Street Fighter IV	Chun-Li *	Interpol agent, exposed legs (fighting in a dress)
	Honda *	Sumo wrestler, shirtless
	Blanka *	Wild-man, half naked (also green?)
	Zangief *	Wrestler, shirtless
	Guile *	Soldier
	Dhalsim *	Indian mystic, shirtless
	Balrog *	Boxer, antagonist, shirtless
	Vega *	Spanish ninja, motivated by death of mother, antagonist (serial killer)
	Sagat *	Shirtless, revenge fueled
	M. Bison *	Antagonist, military style, abducted teenage girls and brainwashed them
	Akuma *	Antagonist, shirtless
	Abel	Motivated by death of mentor

	Crimson Viper	Spy, catsuit, cleavage, mother
	Rufus	Overweight, comic relief
	El Fuerte	Wrestler, shirtless
	Seth	Antagonist, basically naked
	Gouken	Martial arts master, mentor
	Cammy *	Teenager, fights in a swimsuit(?), legs,
	Juri *	Martial artist, skin-tight suit, cleavage
	Hakan	Wrestler, shirtless
Street Fighter V	Birdie *	Bouncer, shirtless, overweight
	F.A.N.G	Assassin, scientist, antagonist
	Karin *	Wealthy heiress, legs
	Laura	Martial artist, midriff, cleavage (has an attack that uses her buttocks)
	Nash	Dead, re-animated corpse (maybe not dead)
	Necalli	Warrior, shirtless
	R.Mika *	Pro-wrestler, cleavage, buttocks (has an attack that uses her buttocks)
	Rashid	Motivated by kidnapping of friend (who is actually dead)
Super Mario Bros.	Mario *	Main character, playable
	Luigi *	Secondary character, playable

	Princess Toadstool *	Princess Peach, gets kidnapped (a lot), Mario's love interest
	Bowser *	Antagonist, kidnaps Peach
Super Mario Bros. 2	Toad *	
	Yoshi *	Protects Baby Mario and Luigi
Super Mario 64	Tuxie	Baby penguin, goes missing
	Dorrie	Sea dragon
	Headless Snowman	Snowman
	Big Penguin	Penguin
	Mother Penguin	Tuxie's mum
	MIPS	Rabbit
Super Mario Sunshine	Bowser Jr. *	Bowser's son, antagonist
	Toadsworth *	Princess Peach's steward
	Il Piantissimo	Human disguised as another race
Super Mario Galaxy	Rosalina *	Guardian, searching for her mother
	Polari	Star-folk (Luma), guide
	Baby Luma *	Star-folk (Luma), becomes a Beacon to transport Rosalina
	Captain Toad *	Treasure hunter
	Spooky Speedster	
	Honey Queen *	Queen Bee, rules over the Honeybees
	Coach	Penguin
	Penguru *	Elder Penguin

Super Mario Bros. Wii (No new characters introduced)

Super Mario Galaxy 2 Lubba Star-folk

Lumalee Star-folk, merchant

Super Mario Bros. WiiU Kamek * Mage, antagonist

Lemmy Koopa * Antagonist

Morton Koopa * Antagonist

Larry Koopa * Antagonist

Wendy O. Koopa * Antagonist, only female on the Koopaling siblings

Iggy Koopa * Antagonist

Roy Koopa * Antagonist

Ludwig von Koopa * Antagonist

Super Mario 3D World **Sprixie Princess** Sprites, kidnapped

TC Rainbow Six: Lockdown **Ayana Yacoby *** Soldier

Annika Lofquist * Soldier

Eddie Price * Soldier

Roger McAllen * Soldier

Dieter Weber * Soldier

Louis Loiselle * Soldier

Pak Suo-Won * Soldier

Renee Raymond * Soldier

TC Rainbow Six: Critical Hour John Clark * Ding's father-in-law, soldier

TC Rainbow	Logan Keller *	Soldier
Six: Vegas		
	Gabriel Nowak	Soldier, dead
	Kan Akahashi	Soldier, dead
	Jung Park *	Soldier
	Michael Walter *	Soldier
	Joanna Torres *	Soldier, intelligence
	Irena Morales	Terrorist leader, dead
	Shawn Rivers *	Soldier, dead
	Brian Armstrong*	Soldier
TC Rainbow	Bishop	Main character in Vegas 2,
Six: Vegas 2		soldier (appearance and gender can be altered)
	Sharon Judd	Soldier, status unknown
	Dennis Cohen	Security chief
	Monroe	Negotiator, dead
	Scott Neville	Agent, dead
TC Rainbow	Sledge	Soldier
Six: Siege		
	Thatcher	Soldier
	Smoke	Soldier
	Mute	Soldier
	Ash	Soldier, FBI
	Thermite	Soldier, FBI
	Castle	Soldier, FBI
	Pulse	Soldier, FBI
	Twitch	Soldier
	Doc	Solder, medic
	Rook	Soldier
	Glaz	Soldier
	Fuze	Soldier
	Kapkan	Soldier
	Tachanka	Soldier
	Bltiz	Soldier
	IQ	Soldier
	Jager	Soldier

	Bandit	Soldier
	Buck	Soldier
	Frost	Soldier
	Blackbeard	Soldier
	Valkyrie	Soldier, former Olympian
	Capitão	Soldier
	Caveira	Soldier, interrogator
	Hibana	Soldier
	Echo	Soldier
	Jackal	soldier
	Mira	Soldier
	Ying	Soldier
	Lesion	Soldier
	Zofia	Soldier
	Ela	Soldier
	Dokkaebi	Soldier, hacker
	Vigil	Soldier
TC Ghost	Will Jacobs	Soldier
Recon 2		
	Leah Cohen	Soldier
	Klaus Henkel	Soldier
	Harold Gordon	Soldier
	Scott Ibrahim	Soldier
	Dieter Munz	Soldier
	Nigel Tunny	Soldier
	Jack Stone	Soldier
	Henry Ramirez	Soldier
	Guram Osadze	Soldier
	Astra Galinsky	Soldier
	Susan Grey	Soldier
	Jodit Haile	Soldier
	Dimitri Arbatov	Antagonist, dead
	Tesfaye Wolde	Antagonist, captured
	Ashenafi Abate	Antagonist, captured
	Ariel Priego	Antagonist, captured

TC Ghost Kozak Soldier
Recon:
Future
Soldier

Pepper	Soldier
30K	Soldier
Scott Mitchell *	Intelligence
Twistings	Driver
Volodin	

TC Ghost Joshua Keating * Soldier
Recon:
Advanced
Warfighter

Major General Martin *	Soldier
Richard Allen	Soldier, dead
Marcus Brown *	Soldier
K. C. Kirkland	Soldier
Joe Ramirez *	Soldier, dead
Paul Smith *	Soldier
Matt Beasley *	Soldier, dead
Derrick Parker *	Soldier
Bo Jenkins *	Soldier
Annibale Cruz	Soldier
Alicia Diaz *	Soldier
John Hume *	Soldier
Bud	Soldier, dead
Louie	Soldier
James Monroe	Retired soldier
Ontiveros	Antagonist, dead
Carlos Ontiverson	Soldier, antagonist dead

TC Ghost Colonel Jimenez Soldier
Recon:
Advanced
Warfare 2

Barnes	Intelligence
Alex Nolan	Soldier, medic

	Josh Rosen	Soldier, pilot
	Teagues	Soldier, pilot
	Provenanzo	Soldier, dead
	Ramon Vega	Soldier
TC Ghost Recon: Wildlands	Nomad	Soldier, leader, playable character
	Holt	Soldier
	Midas	Soldier
	Weaver	Soldier
	Karen Bowman	CIA, intelligence, imprisoned
	Ricardo Sandoval	DEA, dead
	Pac Katari	Rebel, betrayal of MC, dead
	Amaru	Mentor, dead
	El Sueño	Cartel boss
	Nidia Flores	Cartel, tight leather outfit, mother
	Rolando Villa	Underboss, fathered Nidia's daughter, dead
	El Cerebro	Intelligence
	Boyer Reed	Drug trafficker, dead
	Octavio Allende	Money launder
	Ricardo Godinez del Toro	Smuggler, dead
	Antonio Garcia-Taylor	Drug addict, kidnaps and tortures women
	Gustavo Serrano	Former priest
	Ramon Feliz	Former journalist, dead
	Marco Garcia	Radio DJ
	Maria del Rocio Mendez	Underboss, dresses as a nun
	Javier Coronal Vallardo	Playboy
	Marcelo Rios	Singer
	Rudolfo Yana	Drug cook
	Katrine Svensden	Underboss, drug cook
	Gonzalo Yana	Drug cook, dead

	Ruperta Faro	Drug cook
	Marcus Jensen	Drug cook
	Pedro Gil	Drug cook
	Fransisco Munguia	Cartel security
	Ignacia Perez Cervantes	Cartel underboss, can die
	"Polito and Yuri "	Dead
	Carl Bookhart	Dead
	Raul Murillo	Disposed of bodies
TC Splinter	Azrul Arifin	CIA agent
Cell:		
Pandora		
Tomorrow		
	Saul Berkovitz	CIA agent
	David Bowers *	President
	Dermot Brunton	Intelligence
	Frances Coen *	Soldier
	François Coldeboeuf	Security guard, can die
	Clifton Finch	CIA agent
	Sam Fisher *	Main character, playable
	Bartholomew Fisk	Army general, dead
	Anna Grímsdóttir *	Soldier, intelligence
	Ingrid Karlthson	CIA agent
	Irving Lambert *	Army Colonel, soldier, dead
	Morris Odell *	Newsreader
	Suhadi Sadono	Antagonist, imprisoned
	Bellagio Sampler	CIA agent
	Douglas Shetland *	Soldier, CEO, dead
	Norman Soth	Rogue CIA agent, dead
	Dahlia Tal	Undercover Agent, dead
TC Splinter	Captain Diego	Antagonist, presumed
Cell: Chaos		dead
Theory		
	Long Dan	Politician
	Emilio	Guard
	Kaneda	Soldier, dead

	Hugo Lacerda	Guerrilla leader, dead
	Frank Mason	Secretary of Defence
	Milan Nedich	Antagonist, dead
	Bruce Morgenholt	Hyper-intelligent, dead
	Toshiro Otomo	Soldier
	Paco	Guard
	Arthur Partridge	Captain, dead
	William Redding	Guide
	Thomas Standish	Bank thief
	Tetsou	Soldier, dead
	Abraham Zherkezhi	Hyper-intelligent, dead
TC Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Alejandro Takfir	War criminal
	Aswat	Scientist, can die
	Stanley Dayton	Hacker, dead
	Emile Dufraisne	Antagonist, dead
	Sarah Fisher *	Sam's daughter, kidnapped a few times, fakes death
	Hisham Hamza	CIA agent
	John Hodge	Soldier, dead
	Massoud Ibn Yussif	Terrorist leader, imprisoned
	Carson Moss	Terrorist, dead
	Enrica Villablanca	Terrorist, medic, dead
	Jamie Washington	Criminal, dead
	Cole Yeager	Soldier, dead
TC Splinter Cell: Blacklist	Ali Rohani	Soldier, general
	Isaac Briggs	Soldier
	Patricia Caldwell	President
	Clark McGowan	Soldier, dead
	Charlie Cole	Hacker
	Victor Coste	Soldier

	Dawoud	Militia soldier, dead
	Gareth	Police officer
	Jadid Haidos	MI6 agent, dead
	Kestrel	Soldier
	Andriy Kobin	Criminal leader, imprisoned
	Lester Gollancz	Secretary of Defence, dead
	Majid Sadiq	Terrorist, imprisoned
	Miguel Garcia	Soldier, dead
	Oliver Fenton	Intelligence
	Reza Nouri	Arms dealer
TC The Division	The Agent	Playable character, either gender
	Faye	Mission control
	Louis Chang	Agent/soldier, dead
	Aaron	Soldier, betrayal
	Simon	Mentor, soldier
	Jasmine	Soldier, kidnapped
	Benitez	Police Officer/Soldier
	Kandel	Scientist, kidnapped
	Rhodes	Mercenary/Soldier
	Ripper	Antagonist, dead
	Hutch	Antagonist, dead
	Finch	Antagonist, dead
	Barrett	Criminal boss, dead
	Slingshot	Antagonist, dead
	Keller	Antagonist, dead
	Glass	Antagonist, dead
	Swizz	Antagonist, dead
	Slider	Antagonist, dead
	Ferro	Antagonist, motivated by death of wife, dead
	Benchley	Antagonist, dead
Martinez	Antagonist, dead	
Kosinski	Antagonist, dead	
Rogan	Antagonist, dead	

	Bliss	Antagonist, dead
	Scarecrow	Antagonist, former agent (betrayal), dead
	Hornet	Antagonist, former agent (betrayal), dead
	Raptor	Antagonist, former agent (betrayal), dead
	Domino	Antagonist, former agent (betrayal), dead
	Perez	Antagonist, dead
	Heather Lau	Kidnapped/missing
	Michael Dufrane	Kidnapped/missing
	Judy Walters	Kidnapped/missing, dead
	Alexis Kwan	Kidnapped/missing
	Bernard Gamble	Kidnapped/missing
	Gordon Amherst	Scientist/doctor, dead
	Vitaly Tchemenko	Scientist/doctor, kidnapped
	April Kelleher	Civilian, kidnapped
	Rick Valassi	Reporter
	Eva Acosta	Explorer, author, potentially dead
Tekken	Anna *	Nina's sister, assassin, cleavage (low cut dress, legs)
	Armor King *	Technically different characters, dead, wearing armour
	Devil Kazuya *	Cursed demon, basically naked
	Ganryu *	Sumo wrestler, shirtless
	Heihachi *	Main character, wearing a gi, dead, antagonist
	Jack *	Series of robots, wearing armour
	Kazuya *	Main character/antagonist, Heihachi's son (kills him)

	King *	Multiple characters, shirtless, animal masks
	Kuma *	A bear, bodyguard to Heihachi
	Kunimitsu *	Ninja, unknown fate, legs
	Lee *	Gentleman, wears a suit
	Marshall Law *	Shirtless
	Michelle *	Shorts (legs), midriff, adoptive mother
	Nina *	Anna's sister, skin tight outfits, legs, cleavage, mother
	Paul *	Wears a gi
	P. Jack *	Robot, dead
	Wang *	Recluse, wears a gi, unknown fate
	Yoshimitsu *	Ninja, cybernetic
Tekken 2	Alex *	A dinosaur
	Angel *	Holy being
	Baek*	Wearing a gi, accidentally killed his father
	Bruce*	Boxer, shirtless, mercenary
	Jun *	Mother (assumed), mini skirt and thigh-high socks
	Lei *	Comedic relief
	Roger *	A kangaroo
Tekken 3	Ancient Ogre *	Antagonist, deity, shirtless, dead
	Bryan Fury *	Psychopath, shirtless
	Dr. Bosconovitch *	Scientist, elderly man
	Eddy Gordo *	Martial artist
	Forest Law *	Marshall's son, cheongsam
	Gon	Dinosaur

	Hwoarang *	Baek's student, shirtless, martial arts attire
	Jin *	Main character, Kazuya's and Jun's , fights shirtless
	Julia *	Michelle's adopted daughter, midriff, legs (mini skirt)
	Mokujin *	Wooden training dummy come to life (referred to as male)
	Panda *	A panda, bodyguard
	Xiaoyu *	Young girl, qipao, legs
Tekken 4	Christie *	Midriff, bust
	Combot *	Robot, referred to as male
	Marduk *	Shirtless, imprisoned
	Miharu *	School uniform (short skirt), bikini
	Steve Fox *	Boxer, Nina's son
	Violet *	Lee Chaolan's alter-ego
Tekken 5	Asuka *	Midriff/legs, somehow connected to Jin
	Devil Jin *	Jin's demon form, shirtless
	Dragunov *	Soldier
	Feng *	Shirtless
	Jinpachi *	Heihachi's father, dead
	Lili *	Student, legs
	Raven *	Agent, unknown fate
	Roger Jr. *	A kangaroo
Tekken 6	Alisa *	Android, designed to look like Bosconovitch's dead daughter
	Azazel *	Antagonist, dead
	Lars *	Main character (later games), Heihachi's son, wears armour

	Miguel *	Motivated by death of sister
	Zafina *	Midriff, cleavage, psychic
Tekken 7	Claudio	Sorcerer, wears a suit
	Devil Kazumi	Kazumi's demon form, technically dead
	Gigas	Experimented on, turned into bio-weapon
	Josie Rizal	Legs, midriff, cleavage (mini skirt)
	Katarina	Adopted by Gigas, midriff, cleavage
	Kazumi	Kazuya's mother, technically dead
	Lucky Chloe	Idol, cat clothing (cleavage, thigh high socks)
	Master Raven	Ninja, cleavage, hips
	Shaheen	Soldier
The Last of Us	Joel	Main character, playable, father-figure, dead daughter
	Ellie	Main character, born into destroyed world, holds the cure to fungal disease
	Marlene	Leader, attempts to sacrifice Ellie for a cure, dead
	Ethan	Civilian soldier
	Tommy	Joel's brother, regrets not saving his niece
	Maria	Tommy's wife, leader of survivor community
	David	Scavenger, cannibal, antagonist, dead
	James	Cannibal, dead

	Tess	Teams up with Joel, dead (infected)
	Bill	Merchant
	Henry	Survivor, dead, forced to kill brother
	Sam	Survivor, killed by brother following infection
	Robert	Merchant, betrays the MCs, dead
	Sarah	Joel's daughter, dead
The Witcher 3	Anna Strenger	Bloody Baron's wife, beaten, cursed, enslaved
	Birna Bran	King's widow
	Bran	King, dead
	Brewess	Crone - demonic sister
	Caleb Menge	Soldier/commander, religious fanatic, dead
	Chapelle	Chancellor, (technically dead)
	Ciri	Playable character, main character, "Child of Destiny", Princess
	Crach an Craite	Jarl (chief)
	Dandelion	Poet, narrator, philanderer
	Dijsktra	Criminal, dead?
	Djenge Frett	Bounty hunter
	Donar an Hindar	Jarl (chief)
	Dudu Biberveldt	Doppler (magic being, mimic)
	Elihal	Elf, cross-dresser
	Emhyr var Emreis	Emperor, Ciri's bio father
	Eskel	Witcher (hunter)
	Eredin	King of the Wild Hunt (supernatural hunters), hunting Ciri, dead
	Ermion	Druid

Felicia Cori	Sorceress, dead, sexual (bust)
Francis Bedlam	King of Beggars
Geralt of Rivia	Main character, playable character, Witcher
Graden	Witch hunter
Halbjorn	Claimant to throne, warrior
Hendrik	Spy, dead
Hjalmar an Craite	Claimant to throne, warrior
Imlerith	Wild Hunt general, dead
Johnny	Godling (woodland creature), childlike design
Keira Metz	Cleavage, sorceress, nymphomaniac (can have sex with MC), can die
Radovid V	Mad king, dead
Lambert	Witcher
Louisa la Valette	King's mistress, cleavage, kidnapped/tortured
Marvran Voorhis	Soldier
Oyrygg an Hindar	Donar's grandson, claimant to throne, warrior
Priscilla	Poet, romantic links to Dandelion, brutally attacked
Philippa Eilhart	Sorceress, cleavage, tortured
Skjall	Helped Ciri, dead
Tamara Strenger	Bloody Baron's daughter, witch-hunter
Tavar Eggebracht	Soldier
The Bloody Baron	Drunkard, wide-beater
Triss Merigold	Sorceress, cleavage, healer, can have sex with MC
Uma	Cursed
Vernon Roche	Soldier
Vesemir	Witcher, dead

	Vimme Vivaldi	Dwarf, banker
	Weavess	Crone - demonic sister
	Whispess	Crone - demonic sister
	Whoreson Junieur	Crime boss, can die
	Yennefer	Sorceress, Geralts primary Love Interest, can have sex with MC (on a unicorn)
	Zoltan Chivay	Dwarf, soldier
Tomb Raider (Original Series)	Lara Croft	Female-Indiana Jones, midriff (cleavage)
	Winston Smith	Butler
	Jean-Yves	Archeologist, kidnapped
	Werner Von Croy	Antagonist
	Sergeant Azizas	Dead
	Father Bram	Priest
	Kurtis Trent	Unknown fate, psychic
	Alister Fletcher and Zip	Mission control, Alister = dead
	Anaya Imanu	Lara's friend, revealing clothing
	Carter Bell	Lara's rival
	Jacqueline Natla	Antagonist
	Larson Conway	Antagonist, dead
	Pierre DuPont	Antagonist, dead
	Jerome Johnson	Gang leader, antagonist, dead
	Kin Kade	Henchman, antagonist, dead
	Marco Bartoli	Antagonist, mafia boss
	Tony	Researcher
	Puna	Leader of Cannibal tribe
	Sophia Leigh	Vanity-obsessed, antagonist
	Dr. Mark Willard	Antagonist, mutated
	Set	Egyptian God, antagonist, sealed

	Verdilet	Demon/ghost
	Pieter van Eckhardt	Alchemist, dead
	Marten Gunderson	Cabal-member
	Kristina Boaz	Cabal-member, dead, mutated
	Joachim Karel	Cabal-member, antagonist
	Amanda Evert	Lara's friend, dead, antagonist
	James William Rutland Jr.	Amanda's love interest, dead
	Shogo Takamoto	Yakuza boss
	Xolotl	Aztec God, sealed
Tomb Raider (2013)	Lara Croft *	Archaeologist, motivated by disappearance of parents, clothes get more destroyed
	Sam Nishimura	Companion, gets kidnapped, possessed
	Roth	ex-military, dead
	Grim	Gets kidnapped, dies
	Reyes	Mechanic
	Jonah	Chef
	Alex	Tech support, hacker, dead
	James Whitman	Archaeologist, kidnaps Sam, dead
	Mathias	Antagonist, madman, dead
	Vladimir	Antagonist, dead
	Himiko	Sun Queen, Sam's ancestor, immortal (by possessing others)
	Richard Croft	Lara's father, dead
Rise of the Tomb Raider	Jacob	Dead
	Sofia	Female warrior

	Ana	Lover of Lara's father, wants to be immortal, antagonist, dead
	Konstantin	Antagonist, Ana's brother
Uncharted	Nathan Drake *	Amateur archaeologist, treasure hunter, mother commit suicide, father abandoned him
	Elena Fisher *	Marries Drake, has a child, journalist
	Sully *	Drake's mentor
	Chloe Frazer *	Professional thief, treasure hunter
	Gabriel Roman	Crimelord, antagonist
	Atoq Navarro	Mercenary, antagonist, dead
	Eddy Raja	Pirate, antagonist, dead
	Sir Francis Drake	The real life explorer
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	Harry Flynn	Thief, dead
	Zoran Lazarevic	War criminal, antagonist, dead
	Tenzin	Explorer
	Karl Schafer	Treasure hunter, dead
	Jeff Wynis	Cameraman
	Marco Polo	The real life explorer
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	Katherine Marlowe	Antagonist, dead
	Talbot	Marlowe's second in command, dead, antagonist
	Charlie Cutter	Thug
	Rameses	Pirate, dead

	Salim	Tribe leader
	T.E. Lawrence	Real life Lawrence of Arabia
Uncharted 4: A Thief's End	Sam Drake	Drake's brother, motivated to finish mothers final work
	Rafe Adler	Treasure hunter, antagonist, dead
	Hector Alcázar	Drug lord, imprisoned with Sam, dead
	Nadine Ross	Mercenary
	Evelyn	Friend of Drake's mother, dead
	Cassie Drake	Drake and Elena's daughter
	Henry Avery	Real life character, pirate
	Thomas Tew	Real life character, pirate

Appendix 5 – Transcripts

Transcript 1 – Pilot

Int:

So, basically, the research is about the representation of women in video games and whether that effects the treatment of female gamers.

I've already done a very large amount of content analysis where I've looked at probably over a hundred games over the last decade or so, and looked at all the characters within them – so that's some background

Eva:

Cool.

Int:

So basically, the first question would be to ask how you personally define video games?

Eva:

Uh... [Laugh] I guess, something... a game is something you interact with, uh, by making decisions on how your character develops within a game? Uh, so, for me, I play a lot of console games, things like Bioshock and Fallout which is a story driven video game set in a particular scenario, but I also play a lot of mobile platform games which I would also consider to be video games as well.

Int:

Okay.

Eva:

Especially how much they've developed over the last couple of years.

Int:

Based on that, obviously you mention consoles and mobile games, how often would you say you gamed in a week?

Eva:

Every day. [Laughs]

Couple of hours every day.

Int:

With your mobile is that like on the go, while you're at work?

Eva:

Uh, on my lunch break, on my way home from work, probably the first thing I do when I get home from work.

Int:

So, throughout the day, obviously you're playing a lot, what do you play?

Eva:

Uh... main game I'm sort of playing at the moment would be the Animal Crossing mobile game. I used to play a lot of Pokémon Go as well, but that sort of fizzled out - the same with Pokémon Shuffle. But then when I get home I've got my actual consoles with me – I play a lot of Stardew Valley, a lot of FPS², a lot of story-based games, a lot of the, uh, Tell-Tale games lately, usually whatever's out and about. I tend to go back to a lot of games that I previously played and replay them, cos I love them so much.

Int:

Okay – so it sounds like you play a lot, would you call yourself a gamer?

Eva:

Yes – it's on my Instagram feed, in my descriptions and things like that. Yeah, I'd definitely consider myself a gamer.

Int:

Why? Is that because of the amount of time you put in, or...?

Eva:

The amount of time I put into video games, but also how long I've been playing video games as well.

² FPS – First Person Shooter

So, video games were a massive part of my upbringing, so it's not something I've developed a recent liking to, it's something that I've grown up with and been surrounded with in many different shapes and forms, so yeah, it's part of my personality and part of what makes me, me.

Int:

So then, the main part of this is about your experiences as a gamer - you'd define yourself as a gamer, you say it's on your social media feeds, so it's not like you hide it. What is your experience of being a gamer?

Eva:

Uh – somewhat positive, there seems to be a lot of bias towards female gamers, both negative and positive. Uh, so a lot of – on my first day of my new job, uh, obviously on my CV it mentions that I play video games, cos I mentioned my favourite games in my “About Me” part of my CV and the first thing the CEO Mentioned was “Oh, so you play video games?”, and then asked me what type if games I played, and then what set the tone for further conversations I have with other staff members that I may not necessarily speak to on a daily basis, but they'll now come over and ask me for recommendations.

I used to work in a video games shop, I used to get people question whether I actually played games, question my knowledge, go and speak to male staff even though I told them the correct information and was also the manager! They'd often go and ask standard sales assistants just because they were male, or ask their opinions on what I said basically to try and catch me out.

Uh... I tend to avoid a lot of online games, just because I don't want people trying to talk to me whilst I play game. So, last night I had some guy who added me, or followed me on Playstation, tried to message me trying to interact with me, pointed out the fact that I was a “girl gamer”, and that my profile picture looked cute, so he thought it was okay to try and talk...

That is a regular occurrence... yeah.

Int:

So then, in regard to when you were growing up... Obviously what you've said so far is very much about your life at the moment. What was it like being a gamer, as you were a child growing up?

Eva:

Uh... It was always very difficult, not a lot of people where I grew up played video games, and that was both male and female. They thought I was a bit weird for enjoying games as much as I did – a bit more of a recluse... than what I am now [Laughs].

It was always seen as a weird thing that I was playing video games as much as I did – to go home and play my Sega Mega Drive, or Master System when I went home, or when the DS came out, I'd play that lots. I always took my GBC³ to school, and play games on that, but I was always the weird one for sort of playing that, and a lot of people didn't tend to understand why I enjoyed playing video games.

Int:

So then, over the years... What has been your, sort of, perception of video games. So... if there have been any changes, trends, particularly in regard to the women in video games?

Eva:

I feel like the variety of games that are available now is a lot more varied compared to when I was younger – It used to tend to be a lot of shooters without a story, so like Doom was really popular when I was growing up, basically just shoot some monsters etcetera, etcetera, or a lot of horror games were really popular but now there's a big variety and I guess just different types of games appeal to different types of gamers...

I guess, previously when I was younger the kind of women in video games were shown to be quite effeminate... so for example, Lara Croft was very overly sexualised... I feel like that's changed slightly and women are kind of give a more... leading role, so whereas it used to be that you'd have to go and rescue the princess, or try and help out a female, or females were... picturised as being quite weak characters, that's kind of flipped a little bit... Not as much as male driven protagonists but, for example, The Last of Us, Ellie's quite a stubborn young woman, although you are trying to help her out, she's quite... Very much able to hold her own despite being a 14-year-old girl. And you have Alloy from Horizon Zero Dawn, who's a very, very, strong female character. Again, Tomb Raider has had a massive comeuppance again, a lot of female villains as well, so that seems to be a lot more popular as well, is to have just a variety of different characters in different situations.

Int:

³ GBC – Game Boy Color

With the games you just mentioned, I couldn't help but notice that two of them were Playstation exclusives – do you think that there's a different between the kinds of games you get on consoles, or between like home consoles and mobile?

Eva:

Yeah, I definitely guess so – I think mobile video games tend to cater more to women, they tend to be games that you don't have to put your full attention span into. I guess that's the whole idea of women not having as much time to play video games as much, or just how they prioritise their time compared to male gamers... As for console exclusivity, I think that's just where Microsoft are lacking on their first party titles – their focus has been FPS, racing games, although everyone can play them, it tends to cater more towards the male market, whether that's intended or not it's always been the case that men are more likely to pick up racing games than a woman is. Again, with the FPS, they're very much gore based rather than story based, so although there is a slight story, they're more about the effects – blood splatter and that kind of thing. Even with Halo 5 the story was shocking, it had really bad reviews but that's because they focused mainly on the multiplayer than the story...

That's my personal opinion.

Int:

What draws you to certain games? What is it that makes a game playable, and enjoyable for you?

Eva:

I like a variety of games. Probably horror is my favourite, so if there's a good story-based horror game, I love playing that, so that's usually my go-to.

So, for example, I love Resident Evil 7, when they came out last year. I loved The Evil Within when that came out this year – I always go back to a lot of my classic horror games, so like Silent Hill, things like that.

I love my story based games, which you can probably tell! Fallout is probably my favourite series ever, with over 900 hours clocked on Fallout 3.

Bioshock, again, one of my favourite series', but it's all story based, shooting games, cos... I love shooting something as much as the next person, y'know the anger of the day?

I do also play a lot of games like Stardew Valley, where you've got to arrange things and do things in a certain order, kind of... It makes me feel like I have control over my life a little bit... That's probably why I love Animal Crossing so much, cos you get to

help people and do tasks, and you have to prioritise how your day goes... I also like playing games like the Tell-Tale series, cos it also takes away from having to worry about choosing things, it gives you that option to just let the story drive the game, rather than you drive... the game? If that makes sense?

Int:

Yeah...

Eva:

You can take a backseat and just enjoy, it's more like a movie experience rather than...

Int:

You're lead through it, rather than leading it through?

Eva:

Yeah!

Int:

One other thing worth mentioning, or pointing out, is... I did a survey around the middle of last year, trying to get an idea of whether the games I was using for my content analysis were actually on track with what gamers liked, and it was interesting to note, especially based on what you just said, that a lot of women likes the kind of post-apocalyptic games... I'm just wondering what the draw is?

Eva:

Role playing games, so RPGs and things are enjoyable for me because it takes you out of your mundane everyday life, and it's something new to experience – it's not something you'll probably experience in this lifetime, so I guess it's the whole idea of escaping reality and being able to sink your teeth into something which is a lot different to how your real life is.

It gives you the opportunity as well to kind of play your life maybe how you want to live it, rather than how you do live it.

I play as a badass in my Fallout games, y'know, overpowered RPGs⁴ and missile launchers, just for the sake of it.

⁴ RPG in this instance refers to Rocket Powered Grenade launchers.

Int:

What was interesting with like Fallout 4 was the storyline was you finding your kid – but you weren't limited to just playing as "The Mum".

Eva:

No

Int:

So it wasn't your very stereotypical gendered thing.

Eva:

I did play as a woman on my play through, but that's just because I tried to recreate myself in the game... But you do have the... As you mentioned, you do have the option to play as either Male or Female in the game, which is quite cool.

Int:

The last thing, we've spoken about you as a gamer and the games you've played – do you believe that there's a link between video games and how that translates to some of the more negative experiences you've had? Or even the positive experiences?

Eva:

Yeah, definitely. Uh... whilst I worked for a video game retailer, and things I used to have some people come up to me and be like "Oh, you look like XYZ from this game", which could either be a massive compliment, or it could be quite... not insulting, but quite derogatory.

So when I was working where I did, it was during GTA V's launch on the 360, and I stood at the front of the shop and it was one of my first shifts, and I had a guy come up to me and I was standing next to the Lindsay Lohan-like character and he told me that I looked like her, which made me feel very uncomfortable.

Int:

That's very inappropriate behaviour...

Eva:

Yeah, and in the four years I worked for the video game retailer that wasn't the first instance. If we had, like, dress up days and things, women were kind of encouraged to dress quite sexually as well. So, when Batman was launched, I dressed up as Harley Quinn and there wasn't really an option to not be a sexualised Harley Quinn. All the

premade outfits based on a video game were very sexual, emphasised certain body areas, which are related to being effeminate... Basically boobs.

Int:

[Laughs]

Eva:

Yeah, but also some positive experiences as well. So, I have a lot of friends who I've met because I play video games as well, and a lot of people are like "Oh, it's really cool that you play video games", you know? Will go into a lengthy conversation about it with me.

Again, whilst working and actually surrounding myself with people with different viewpoints, it was quite often that... uh... it was just uncomfortable, with the comments that were made by customers and relating back to how sexualised characters can be in video games.

Int:

There's also the issue of women not being in video games...

Eva:

Oh yeah, definitely. Although there is more variety than when I grew up, there's still a lack of females in video games.

Int:

Do you feel like that particularly could have an effect on... what people expect from the gamer demographic?

Eva:

Yeah – It used to be quite a shock that I played video games, especially when they used to speak to me about how much I played video games... As we've established, I play a lot of games, so a lot of parents used to be like "Oh... you're a girl, and you play video games?" because it's definitely been seen as a male dominated area, and I guess the whole fact that women are... sexualised, it kind of almost acts as a deterrent for women playing video games as well. It is that little but weird that enjoy playing these games, for example, *Catherine*, obviously... It's all about sex, essentially. I was having a conversation with close guy friends who were like "Oh... Ew, you like those kinds of games?"

Int:

"Those" games.

Eva:

"Those" games.

Int:

A lot of it as well, you've mentioned things that men have said to you – what about your experiences with other women?

Eva:

... It can be quite... Jealous?

So... I've had some great experiences where I've had women like "Oh! You're a video game player as well!" and I've had conversations that way... Other women try and put me down for my choice of games as well, "Oh, you're not a 'real' gamers, you don't play online shooting games', even though...

Int:

...It's the same anywhere.

Eva:

*Yeah – I guess it works both ways where I've probably had impressions of people in the past, "Oh, you know, they play *Call of Duty*, they're not really a gamer, they're just doing it...for the credit."*

But it's usually quite passive, or shock, if they're not gamers themselves, that women tend to like video games and enjoy them... Yeah

I hope that's kinda what you were looking for?

Int:

Yeah

Eva:

Nothing else you want to say?

Int:

...One of the things you mentioned would just be, you mentioned women being effeminate originally and now they have a variety of roles... Do you think that there are

any roles that stand out? Like certain trends in the kind of positions women fill in video games?

So... At the risk of being somewhat leading – In the content analysis, it became apparent that women tended to fill the roles of healers, they were romance objects – not necessarily always sex objects, but they were the object of someone's affections.

Eva:

Yeah, I definitely see that. I guess it goes back to *Fallout* – you have the option to romance male/female/robot characters, no matter which sex you choose – there's moments throughout the game where you have to go to a casino, and there's a singer there... You start chatting with her and if your charisma is high enough you can convince them to sleep with you, essentially...

Yeah, there's loads of encounters like that in... you know, in games.

There's a lot, as well, of... Although they might be strong female characters, they have to report to male characters, like for example, Piper in *Fallout 4* has to report to... the Mayor of the town quite often, with anything that she finds, and he then makes the decisions, not her, even though she's the one that does all the hard work.

Int:

...I romanced Piper because I liked her...

Eva:

[Laughs]

Even down to *Mario Odyssey* – there's a bit with the Goombas where you trick the female Goomba...

Int:

With her little hat.

Eva:

With her little hat, and very red lipstick.

Int:

Gender identifiers...

Eva:

Yeah.

Int:

From what I've seen, it's not alone in that respect.

Games like Mass Effect – it's a game that's set in space, so you could literally have anything, aliens can be whatever you want them to be, and the male aliens were very much non-humanoid, but the female aliens fit a very human ideal.

Eva:

Yeah.

Int:

So, they were still human looking, human passing, so I think we still have those gendered markers...

Eva:

Definitely – I'm just trying to think of games I've played recently... *Evil Within*, it's a story based game – are you gonna play it?

Int:

No

Eva:

Okay so, spoilers – you kind of go back to STEM, which is where you've been chasing after your daughter who you thought was dead, but isn't dead, but that's a whole other kettle of fish.

You basically find out that your wife is still in the game and she's still acting... in the game? In STEM, trying to protect your daughter – a very motherly role, sacrifices herself in the end to try and protect her daughter. Although she's a very strong character, she's still fulfilling a typical gender stereotypical role of being a mother who has to give everything away to protect her daughter, instead of... Sebastian, the male protagonist, giving up everything to protect the daughter, so the mum can go free... with the daughter.

Int:

So... He's still the hero? And she's effectively been fridged?

Eva:

Yeah! That seems to be a common theme...

Int:

The whole thing of 'Women in Refrigerators' is still very prevalent... It sucks.

Eva:

Resident Evil 7... You have to choose between two women, a woman you love who's a bit psycho now, and then a woman you just met, who might also be a bit of a psycho... It's very much... You're literally made to choose between two women.

Int:

And that was only out last year? 2017?

Eva:

Yeah... That's not even a thing you can skip, you genuinely have to choose what one you save, cos you know, they're not capable of leaving themselves.

I guess it always goes back to the rhetoric of Mario and Princess Peach – she can never save herself, she's always the defenceless princess.

Int:

It's one thing I liked about Breath of the Wild – have you finished it?

Eva:

NO.

Int:

[Laughs] Okay, I won't say anything about Breath of the Wild then, but... I liked it [laughs], please finish it.

Eva:

Stardew... The aim of the game is to build your farm – you have the option whether you want to have kids or not, but generally that's the thing that happens when there's nothing left to do – you get married, yeah you can marry the same sex... but you still end up having children – it's quite... pedantic language? Very gender specific language used, so one of the lines your partner will tell you when you're pregnant is "Oh, Sweetie, didn't you know that you're pregnant?", and for a game which prides itself on being open about life and life experiences, it's very much "Oh... So that's what I have to do... Okay..."

Int:

Yeah... You're also running a farm in the meantime, but it's very much a case of some of the language you're like "...eh....yeah?"

You'd like to think it's unintentional... but no one really knows for sure.

Transcript 2

Int:

The basic nature of the research is... I was looking at the representation of women in video games –

Flora:

Yep.

Int:

And whether that has any connections to the treatment of female gamers.

Flora:

Yeah.

Int:

Just a couple of questions and then it's most like a free discussion – so first thing, how would you personally define video games?

Flora:

Uh... I suppose... It's like... games? Just, in general, it's like anything that's not a board game – anything that's digital, that you play on a console, PC, or just anything really – anything that's not a board game.

Int:

So, a bit more digital than like, physical, in front of you.

Flora:

Yeah, yeah, mostly.

Obviously, there are some exceptions, but, you know, most I'd say video games... yeah.

Int:

Following on from that, based on your definition of video games, how many games do you play in a week, roughly?

Flora:

Separate games?

Int:

Yeah, so... More like how often do you play?

Flora:

Uh, I'd probably say anywhere between 3-7 days a week, depending on how much free time I've got really.

Int:

So, that could include like mobile games, anything like that?

Flora:

Yeah.

Int:

From that, what do you play the most?

Flora:

Uh... At the moment, it's my Nintendo Switch.

Int:

Okay, and then do you just have phases, what you want to play more?

Flora:

Yeah, so uh, recently it's been *Rayman*, uh, but I've gotten back into *Zelda* now I'm playing Master Mode, so I'm back into that heavily at the moment, but I also play my Playstation in between.

Int:

So, the main thing really is, would you call yourself a gamer?

Flora:

Yeah, but I wouldn't say I was hardcore.

Int:

No? Why is that?

Flora:

Cos, I don't... I'm not competitive, I play games for fun, not necessarily to like... I don't know, I just don't really do anything competitive with my gaming, it's like for me, I don't really play online or anything like that.

I'll play games for the story rather than... you know, to beat people.

Int:

Yeah... Yeah, that's fair enough.

So then, following on from that, you call yourself a gamer, but you don't call yourself 'hardcore' – what is your experiences of being both female and a gamer?

Flora:

Uh, I've had a few times where like, all my female friends seem to think that I'm a massive nerd, even though I'm really not, you know, I'm just the same as most girls, but I just do... but all my female friends seem to have this misconception that all I do is sit in my room and just game for like hours on end, it's not like that at all.

Some days, yeah, I do, but it's not very often.

Uh... From the male perspective, it's like they kinda don't really take you seriously, like for example my first day working in [video game store] someone came up to me and was like "Oh! A girl gamer? That's cool!" and it was like... it's just very condescending.

Int:

Yeah... So that wasn't a great experience.

Flora:

I found it funny, but you know, I could've taken it the wrong way and got quite upset about it.

Int:

I guess in hindsight you realise it's not necessarily a cool thing to say.

Have you had any positive experiences?

Flora:

Uh... It's hard to really think about it, it's always just been part of life, it's not really something we really thought about, it's just something that I've done.

I suppose one of the most positive things I've had is actually getting into gaming when I was younger because my mum got me into it. My mum's like a really heavy gamer – you wouldn't expect that from her, but she's very similar to me, so it's kinda like... It's nice that I've got that connection with my mum that most people wouldn't have, so that's quite cool, but other than that really, I can't pinpoint anything.

Int:

So as a child, it was very much cultivated as a part of you?

Flora:

Well, it's quite funny actually, because it wasn't so much cultivated, it was more that my mum didn't want me playing her games, they were hers, but I played them anyway, and like she'd know when I went on the Sega, cos she'd be like "I'm playing that game – arg!", like she'd be playing some and I can't remember which game it was, but it was one of the ones that didn't save it, and she'd go to the toilet and come back and I'd have killed her and she'd be absolutely furious!

She'd just be like "I got to start again now!" and then she'd go on *Sonic and Tails* so that I could play with her in the end.

For a long time, it was very much like... for example, when I got into *Pokémon* on the GBC⁵ uh... it was... I stole my mums DS⁶ and hid it in my room so I could play, and she was really mad at me. She was like "Oh, you've got a TV in your room and this and that, you're a spoiled little girl!", and I was like... I just wanted to play *Pokémon*, so it was quite funny.

As I grew up she kind of accepted I liked games too, so she bought me things, she bought me all my consoles, and all that, but when I was younger it was very much like "Get off it, it's mine."

Int:

It's nice, cos usually a lot of it is, from what I've researched and from what other people have said, it's "No, you can't do it because you're a girl", so it's quite refreshing to hear "No, you can't do it because it's mine".

Flora:

To be fair, my dad was never into video games or anything like that as well, my brothers... they're all like heavily into their video games, like they all play online, they'll play whatever's out, they've got a lot of experiences, but they're very much stuck to

⁵ GBC – GameBoy Color

⁶ DS – Nintendo DS

their Xbox's and PlayStation's. Where I've got a lot of experience more on the Nintendo side of things, and handheld consoles, so it's like my brothers are very much what I personally feel is a typical gamer, what you'd expect when someone says they're a gamer.

Uh whereas, me and my mum are very similar in the way, like we both play pretty much everything, we might not have a lot of experience in everything, but we've given everything a go, so that's pretty cool/

Int:

What's interesting to note as well, going back a little bit, you couldn't really... outside of the experiences you've had with your mum, you couldn't really think of any positive experiences... and yet, though it all, you still define yourself as a gamer.

Flora:

Yeah... there were like a few points where... like, for example, going back like 5/6 years, I only really played my DS, and uh... I didn't feel like I was a gamer because all I had was a DS, and everyone else I knew had like Xbox, PlayStation, a DS, and a PSP or whatever's going at the time. I didn't feel like I was a gamer at all. It wasn't until kind of the last couple of years, when I met my partner, and he was like... "Well yeah, you are a gamer, you play games", he said to me, you know, "Do you play games?" and I said "Yeah... I'm not a gamer or anything though", and he was like "Yeah, you are". I suppose that's kind of a positive, he kind of showed me that you don't have to be hardcore or anything to be defined as that person, and it's not like a closed bracket thing, it's very open bracket, you can be at any level.

He was like "The old granny who plays *Candy Crush* in the bus? She's a gamer. That guy who sits at home and doesn't leave his house for two years because he's on *LoL*⁷ constantly, he's a gamer too!", he was like there's no definition.

I suppose that was pretty cool, and I haven't really questioned it since then, but I didn't for a long time feel like one – I've always been into games, but I never felt like... I would never have classed myself as a gamer until a couple of years ago.

Int:

So you had that realisation?

⁷ LoL – League of Legends

Flora:

Yeah.

Int:

So, going onto a different topic, you said that you basically played whatever you could get your hands on, you tried any game – throughout those games, what... are your thoughts and opinions on the representation of women in those games?

Flora:

From the games... A lot of the games that I've heavily played, the women haven't been... very dominant. Occasionally, like, for example, in *Pokémon* you're able to choose to be a female character, but I don't really think that that changed the game at all, it wasn't like very defining, it's more like you can be whatever you want to be and you'll still be able to take on, you know, whatever, so that didn't really matter in the games, which is nice. You don't feel like you're being objectified or anything like that, uh... As a whole though, I feel like in a lot of games, women are sexualised, the same as like TV and films, not necessarily the games that we ever enjoyed – off the top of my head, I can't think of any games that I've liked where woman have been sexualised, but I've never really thought about it before....

No... Not from anything that I've enjoyed, but yeah. I've definitely seen a lot of like, skimpy outfits and like women generally being weaker – like I'm playing *Dragon Ball (FighterZ)*, and the female character is absolutely awful, you know, I just... She might be good once you get to play her but she's like very basic, and it's a bit like why can't she be badass like all the others?

Int:

A lot of fighting games have –

Flora:

A weaker female, at least one.

Int:

At least one, and then the other women tend to be quite sexualised, especially in comparison to their male counterparts, so... I guess... It's not really surprising... Are there any trends you think you've noticed over the years?

Flora:

Uh... boobs.

Lots of boobs.

Like even in some of the more subtle games there's always a little bit of cleavage – they're still very sculpted women, it's like... Women don't look like that, you know? They don't, and I understand that the men don't look like that necessarily either, but normally... I don't know, I just feel like the women... It's just another thing for us to look to as women and be like "Why don't I look like that?"

Whereas, with men, it's almost... you know, I'm not a man so I don't really understand how they feel, but it's almost like that could be like that more easily, but for women it's like, if you took a few ribs, sucked in your stomach, and got everything, you know, got fake boobs, hair extensions, everything – you're never gonna be like that... You know, with men it's like standard guys are good looking with a few muscles, maybe...

Int:

Yeah.

It is interesting as well what you're saying about how men can look whatever, cos... A trend that came up in my content analysis in fantasy games, space games, like Mass Effect, male aliens can look like anything, female aliens on the other hand –

Flora:

Big boobs and skinny?

Int:

Yeah, they'll always look like human women, so there's very much a distinction.

Flora:

Yeah... You can never really have... I can't actually think of any game where the female's been anything other than... the standard female shape for a video game. You know, we don't look like that in reality, women come in all shapes, sizes, heights, everything. Hair colour, eye colour, we're not all blonde with big boobs and 12ft tall, you know, that's not realistic.

Int:

To finish up, taking the two topics that we've spoken about – do you feel like... what you've mentioned... Well, the negative representation of women, but you also mentioned having negative experiences as a gamer yourself – do you think, at any level, that there is some kind of correlation between the two?

Flora:

Uh... The thing that I find most strange about it all is it seems to be a very strong divide in the way male gamers, as it were, think about me as a woman who plays games.

Uh... Cos there are some guys, for example, I was playing with a guy today, playing *Dragon Ball FighterZ*, and he didn't like... he was just like "Right, I'll show you how to do this, this, and this" – teaching me and helping me, whereas there were a couple of other guys who were playing who were like "Oh! I beat you really easily", and I was quite open, you know, like I don't have much experiences on this game, and instead of being obsessed with beating me like the other two guys were, this one guy was like, "No, no, I'll take the time to show you cos I don't see why you should be worse than everyone else", so I don't know if that was a gender thing, but the other guys I played with were very much like "I'm gonna win" and that's fine, you know, there just seems to be two very different sides to it. There seems to be almost the feminists, and the non-feminists. Some guys can be very ignorant, almost like "Oh, she's a girl, she doesn't really know what she's doing", or they can be like "You don't know what she's like, she could be much better than you!"

Some people are very on edge with me, and others are like "I could totally beat you", so it's hard to say... I don't know if that's been affected by the actual way video games are made or anything like that...

Off the top of my head, I know there's many. But I can't think of any like badass girls in video games at all. I suppose there's not really anything to go off there, but... It could do, but... I'm not sure really, I'm undecided.

Int:

I guess it's hard to say – even in my research I feel like I'm grasping at straws with it, cos... You've got things like fake gamer girl culture and –

Flora:

Yeah, that's something that really amuses me – it's like a joke in my house.

Int:

Yeah, so like the idea that women are playing games –

Flora:

Not even playing them most of the time!

Int:

Yeah – just as a form of almost... self-sexualisation.

Flora:

Yeah, they're trying to make out like that's what girls are like when they play games – I'm usually sat 'round in my PJs with my hair a mess, eating chicken or something.

Int:

[Laughs]

Just do what you want to do!

Flora:

Yeah!

Int:

So, I think that's pretty much everything. Obviously, a lot is your own opinion on the matter, all I can say is from my research a lot of what you've said is pretty much bang on. It's difficult cos everyone has their own perception about what women in video games are like, and sadly a lot live up to it.

Flora:

A lot of the time, as well, when... I've said before, I never considered myself as a gamer, it was because I didn't want to be labelled a 'gamer girl', you know, like the typical thing you see on the internet – I didn't want to be that, that's why I never tried to conform to that, so I think that's why for a long time I was saying I wasn't a gamer – I just play video games. Yeah, I play a lot, but I'm no more of a gamer than anyone else.

Int:

There's that distinction.

Flora:

Yeah, I don't want to be in that category, I want to enjoy my games, and not be defined by it.

Int:

It's almost like self-preservation, saving yourself from –

Flora:

The ridicule.

Int:

So, yeah, what you're expecting just from being a gamer, and if I'm honest there's a lot behind that... But yeah, that's everything!

If there's anything else you want to add, you can do so now, or you can just contact me in the future!

Transcript 3

Int:

The research is about the representation of women in video games and the treatment of female gamers – what I'll do is just ask a couple of questions just to work out where you stand, and your level of gaming and we'll go from there.

Ren:

Okay

Int:

So, firstly, how do you define video games?

Ren:

Uh... Games that you play [Laughs]... Digitally? Like using a console or a computer, or a handheld... thing?

Int:

Like a phone?

Ren:

Yeah, or like a DS or something... Like a digital game, like not a board game, or a speaking... game, like a digital game.

Int:

Okay, definitely digital!

So then based on that, if you're defining video games as a digital thing to play, how often would you say you played them in a week?

Ren:

Uh... Maybe once a day, once every other day...?

Int:

What are you playing?

Ren:

Sim [Laughs]

Int:

That counts!

Ren:

Does it count? [Laughs]

Int:

It does count!

Ren:

What about Pokémon Go, does that count?

Int:

It definitely counts

Ren:

Oh, then I play games all the time! [Laughs]

Like, I probably play those more than I breathe [Laughs].

So... and then if not those, then I play like something on the DS, like maybe, once a week. [Partner] just bought me Detective Pikachu!

Int:

[Gasps]

Ren:

I'm gonna start that, and... I'm not actually playing anything on the PS4 at the moment, but when I am playing a game, then I usually play that at least every other day, but right now I'm not. I'm playing Sims too much!

Int:

So it varies then?

Ren:

Yeah!

Int:

That's fine – so, based on that then, obviously you've just come to the realisation that Pokémon Go counts as a video game –

Ren:

Yeah! [Laughs]

Int:

Would you call yourself a gamer?

Ren:

Uh... Yes, but on a low key level... Well... Quite hardcore about Pokémon!

Int:

There's no right or wrong way to describe yourself, some people use casual and hardcore to do it, but others prefer not to – it's whatever you feel fits you best.

Ren:

Ok... Yeah, definitely more casual, I think, cos I don't... have that much, like, broad video game experience. I haven't played that many, but then I do... When I like something I sort of get obsessed with it, and then play it nonstop.

Int:

Mhm

Ren:

So... yeah! And I came into it, like, later in life. I didn't do it at all when I was a child, didn't start playing video games until... I got to uni, so that's why I've taken a bit longer to... get there?

Int:

Yeah – that's fine!

So, from this point on, we've established where you stand, how it will literally just be your opinions and experiences.

Ren:

Okay

Int:

So... We'll talk about experiences first – it doesn't need to be anything massively in-depth, it doesn't need to be an overarching thing, it could just be something that stands

out to you that you've experienced as a result of being a gamer! Whatever level, whether it's just playing a game, or whatever.

Ren:

Okay... Anything at all?

Int:

Anything that you think is relevant!

Ren:

Uh... I don't know?

Int:

[Laughs]

So like, for example, I personally am a gamer, and as a result of that I'm not doing this as a degree, again! And I'm working with them. So... Some people had it when they were growing up, you mentioned that it's something you just came into, so... y'know.

Ren:

Well, playing video games has really helped me develop my relationship, like we – cos we got together literally after Pokémon Go came out, so we bonded over that, and then he's introduced me to more – like he bought me my Nintendo DS, and he bought the PS4, so I upgraded from my PS3 and we'd talk about things, and he bought me Sims, and he's done a lot to like get me into it, and it's given us something else to talk about in our relationship, and that's been probably the best thing that's come out of me playing video games... And I've also gotten my mum into playing Pokémon Go [laughs], so that gives us something else to do and talk about, and it annoys my dad, but uh... It has, like, opened up a whole new world of things to me that I definitely would have experienced if I hadn't started gaming, and like with Pokémon it's like a community – and on Reddit, and things you can talk about all kinds of things, and I love that side of it as well!

Int:

So – it's a very positive experience for you?

Ren:

Yes! Yes.

Int:

So there's that sense of community for you, especially with things like Pokémon Go, and obviously in the beginning that was a massive thing. So if we make it a little bit easier, and we look at like Pokémon Go specifically, outside of your relationship, have you had any sort of experiences, or events, or anything that comes to mind when you think about the game?

Ren:

Well... Uh, I've met people out doing raids, not like I've kept up communication with them outside of it, but when I see them we chat – things like how are things going on, and it's really cool – I like that! [Laughs]

Int:

Any experience you want to talk about is worthwhile, don't panic if you think it's not good enough!

It's interesting because everything you've experienced in very much in-person, do you have any experience of online games?

Ren:

Uh... Not really, cos... well, I did once, before I was with [partner], and I was playing GTA Online, on my PS3, and uh, I bought a headset, though it didn't really work, and I didn't really know what to do with it, and then, uh... I was trying to do things, and people were talking to me, but I couldn't talk back cos I couldn't get the headset working properly, and then they were shouting at me, and I was like "Oh no! I don't like this!"

Int:

So... A little bit of panic?

Ren:

Yeah, a little bit of panic, and yeah, I didn't do that much, but then I have played GTA Online, or whatever, and I tend not to talk to people cos... Yeah. I'm not very good at it, for one, I enjoy playing it, but I'm not very good, and they get mad at me...

Int:

You just don't want people having a go at you?

Ren:

Yeah, pretty much, especially cos I am bad, but it's fun.

Int:

That's good – well, I say it's good, what's interesting is that you don't feel comfortable doing it cos you don't think you're good enough, whereas a lot of women will not play online cos they're... Women...

Ren:

Yeah – I played as a woman character, styled after me cos that was fun [Laughs]. I don't know... if... then they might not know that I was a woman, just from that, cos some men make women characters, and some things I've read online, men make characters cos they look looking at them and I'm like "...okay".

Int:

Admittedly, it's something that a participant brought up in my [BSc] dissertation...

Ren:

Yeah [Laughs]

Fine, I mean, I don't judge, but... but that's an attitude towards women in video games, isn't it? They're always really skinny, and they're always like hot, and... yeah like, I try to make my character shorter because she was really tall, and I'm like "that's not me", but there's no way to make her shorter... I was a bit annoyed about that.

Int:

So, you like the sort of... Character creation?

Ren:

Yeah! Uh... Cos I like it to be as accurate as it can be, it's okay that it's got more of a standardised beauty or whatever, but at least make it a bit realistic... But that's something I love about the Sims as well – I'm such a girl, aren't I? [Laughs]

Int:

That's fine, you can talk about the Sims as much as you want.

Ren:

Yeah, I like making it as personal as I can, cos then I feel like I can relate to it more, and stuff...

Int:

That's fine, I won't judge- I used to love the Sims when I actually had a computer that could run it!

Ren:

The Sims is killing my computer, [Partner] says it's getting too old.

Int:

The issue of character customisation brings up into pretty much the biggest part of it – going into the representation of women.

You said that you don't have a massive array of games that you play, but based on the ones you do play, what do you think about the way women are represented in the games?

Ren:

Uh... Well... Something that annoyed me about Pokémon Moon was the portrayal of Lillie, cos she was made to be a very sort of... very girlie, a bit pathetic cos she couldn't control her Pokémon, and she never seemed to know what was going on, and I got really annoyed at her cos... like, that's a character, that's the main female character in the game that wasn't me, cos I was a girl, and obviously I was a boss, but that's Pokémon, but... the other guy, your rival who was your friend, he was good and portrayed well, but Lillie, she was the one that needed saving, like come on! It's 2017!

Int:

So, then, what about other games? With Pokémon from... an academic point of view, the games didn't actually introduce playing as a female character until gen... 2? It wasn't available from the beginning.

Ren:

Yeah, I played [Pokémon] Red, and it's just a boy.

Int:

So what are your thoughts on things like that?

Ren:

Well, when Pokémon first came out, it was like 20 years ago, or something, so things weren't as progressive... Games were stereotyped to be a very... man thing? Boy

thing? But not something that girls are into, so maybe they didn't [inaudible] think about making girl character options, or they just didn't think anyone would want to play as them, but then it's good that they did introduce them further on, cos girls do want to play video games!

I'm quite a girly video game player, but there are other girls who can... battle... They need representation!

Uh... Yeah [Laughs]

Int:

That's fine [laughs], that's alright – So then what about outside of the games you play, do you have any thought or opinions on what the rest of the market is like?

Ren:

Well, from... When I was a teenager, before I played games myself, I watched friends play things like FIFA and CoD⁸, and it just seemed very male oriented, like... FIFA's like the... male football sport thing, so it's the male players, and CoD is like army... but I don't know if there are any women in CoD cos obviously women can be in the army, but I've never seen one [in CoD], and uh... when [Partner] plays, he plays a lot of online games, so a lot of things I know through hum, and it's always him shouting at his mates down the headset, and like shooting things, and parachuting into somewhere, I don't know what he does.

Uh... He's never said anything about any women being involved, not just friends that he talks to, but in any game that I've seen – it's just always men.

Int:

So, at this point it's worth mentioning that I've done a very large amount of content analysis, over 100 games, and CoD is on there, and you're right – there just aren't that many women, maybe one or two women across the first couple of games, so, you know, what you're saying is still the case.

You're looking at the very realistic, war based genre – what about things like Pokémon, like it's almost fantasy, is there anything you notice in that genre?

Ren:

... I don't really know – well, something like Final Fantasy has lots of women in it, but they're sort of like... Well, they're fantasy women – I think they're women... They look feminine, I don't know what they are, [Partner] plays it, and they seem to have a good

⁸ Call of Duty

range, but I don't know what it was like earlier cos [Partner] was playing Final Fantasy 7... I don't know if there are women in it?

Int:

It's one of the older ones, the most recent one is Final Fantasy XV.

Ren:

Wow!

Int:

So a lot of what you've mentioned then is in relation to women actually appearing in games – when they do appear, like with Lillie, her role in the game was, admittedly, pretty crap, but toward the end she got better.

Ren:

Yeah, yeah!

Int:

What about the way women are presented, so their actual appearance?

Ren:

Uh... Often very sexualised and there was that thing recently about... was it Lara Croft? She's in a film or something, and there was this whole thing like "Oh! She can't play it; her boobs aren't big enough!"

Yeah... I was like "Wow, okay!"

And cos those very, very, early editions of Lara Croft, her boobs are very... Just pointy things, and from that obviously they've developed and graphics got better, but that's what guys focus on – her boobs... and... It's amazing, like she's got her own video game series, like that's *Lara Croft, Tomb Raider*, but guys play it cos she's hot... So I don't know, but that's what they seem to care about...

Yeah... With GTA⁹ the women are... they're sorta like beaten up looking, cos they're badasses, but they are very skinny and like... tall.

Int:

[Laughs]

You really don't like the fact that they're tall!

⁹ Grand Theft Auto

Ren:

No!

They're too tall, and wearing heels! You get girls running around in heels trying to batter people – I know you can change their clothes, but it was sort of like standard that she's running around in heels!

... It's not practical...

Int:

so, then, at the end of all this, obviously it's been quite difficult for you to... One, voice your opinions, but also you... You're giving the impression that you feel, because you don't play as much, it's much harder for you to comment... but I will say, in the last bit, you can say whatever you want – it can be whatever you wanna say.

Ren:

About video games in general? Or women in video games?

Int:

Video games in general.

Ren:

Uh... Like as a sum up?

Int:

Whatever you wanna say, there's no expectation, it's just final thoughts on the matter.

Ren:

Okay... Well, when I was younger, like before I played, uh, I was partly of the... Not opinion, cos it's not what I thought, but I had the impression that video games were very much more for guys, and I didn't know about all the possibilities out there, uh, that did gear to the female market, or to both.

It was... Without playing, just from being on the periphery, all that I really know about was the very... sort of war... War things that are geared towards men, and obviously girls could play them, but I didn't know any girls who did, uh... So, it wasn't until I got older that I discovered... That there's all kinds of things out there that do cater to women, and aren't just completely like "this is for men", and everything but, I don't know if that's cos it wasn't that widely discussed or promoted in any way, maybe a bit

of both, but uh... Since getting into playing the games I do, it's really given me something else to do with my life, and talk about, and I love it!

The games I do play, I really love!

There's always room for improvement in terms of representation of women in all kinds of media, not just video games, but uh... I think it's okay, and I think it's better than it was, but... I don't know... Though some of my friends – Once I have started played, and then some of my friends who were girls were like “oh, what you playing that for?”, especially when I was at uni, and I was playing GTA all the time, and they were like “oh, well that's a bit weird, innit? Why'd you like that?”, I don't know – I just do, it's fun! And so... But they're just completely non-gamers, like at all, nothing, and some people still, like, ridicule me for playing Pokémon Go cos obviously it was a huge thing that summer, and people are like “oh... you still play *that*?”, like, yeah? It's really good. There's so many new things, but there's still that judgement out there from certain people just from playing video games in general, like, but I don't think boys get it, but girls do.

No one ridicules [Partner] for wanting to play video games all the time, but it's something I've had to explain to some people why it's fun, or just... Whatever

Int:

The thing with that is it's made me think of a couple more questions – you mentioned when you were younger, the fact that you didn't necessarily think that video games were for girls, but on the flip side you mentioned earlier that your mum now plays Pokémon Go. Do you think, possibly, it's something that your parents had a hand in, or like you said, it's just a product of the times, there wasn't really much geared towards girls.

Ren:

Maybe both?

I remember when Pokémon, when the Pokémon TCG¹⁰ (before it got banned in my primary school), I didn't understand it, cos I didn't watch that many cartoons. I much preferred the, like, the realistic drama for kids' TV, and uh... I never asked for a video games console, or whatever, my parents never thought to get it, get one for me - though, I did pretend, I had a big giant calculator that stopped working, and I pretended it was a Game Boy... But that was me being a bit silly, but my parents... They're big on games, but they're big chess players, so we played lots of games as a family, but like

¹⁰ Trading Card Game

board games, and card games, and a bit of sport – though I was rubbish, so we did lots of gaming in that way, but not video games, and so they just had like no idea about any of it.

I've had to teach my mum, but my mum loves it, so... She likes, especially, like the getting out and walking side of Pokémon Go, and something to do with me as well, but... And she's loving learning about Pokémon and everything, cos she didn't know how big it could be, and how much there is to it, but it was something she wouldn't have ever considered like 10 years ago, or whatever, when I was a kid...

Did I answer that question?

Int:

[Laughs] Yeah.

Transcript 4

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Hey, it's a tiny bit early but I can get this interview started if you're ready - we'll be doing it via messaging if that's okay?

Emilia:

Hey! Yes sure :)

Int:

Awesome! Let's get right to it then, I'll just start with a couple of questions and then we'll get to the main thing, hopefully it won't take too long :)

Emilia:

Don't worry about me :) I have all evening

Int:

It shouldn't take that long :')

And before I get started, just know you can answer however you like and mention whatever you think is relevant, it'll be a pretty free flowing thing

Emilia:

got it!

Int:

So firstly, how would you define video games?

Emilia:

Oh wow that's getting right into it.

I think I would define it as all games played digitally.

Emilia: Or

Int:

Yeah, it's a bit of a tough question to start with!

Emilia:

because that is just defining in regard to "boardgames" i suppose i would say, digital interactive Entertainment media

Emilia:

with a huge stress on the interactive ^^

Int:

Is that people interacting with the games or with each other?

Emilia:

firstly with the game, and then they might also interact with each other, mediated somehow by the game

Int:

A very nice definition! So based on that, how often do you play games in a week and what do you play?

Emilia:

Well, daily, because I Play Animal Crossing on my phone and Pokemon Go sometimes

Emilia:

with "what do you Play" do you mean a literal list of the games i regularly Play?

Int:

It doesn't need to be comprehensive, you can just mention the platforms you play on or your "go to" games :)

Int:

They're pretty broad questions cos it gives you the chance to mention what's most important to you

Emilia:

okay sure!

I just recently got a Switch and Play stardew valley almost every day

also Pokemon, which I Play with my boyfriend on the 3ds

I used to Play a lot of singstar in like huge Groups of People but not since I live alone and then... i love the mass effect games and witcher 3, which i always come back to

i Play don't starve together quite regularly
oh and guildwars 2 as well as hearthstone from time to time

Emilia:
and i usually really enjoy just trying out small and indie games from time to time

Int:
So a massive variety there!

Emilia:
yeaaaah i have never really found one 'genre' or sth that i like most
(i do know that i mostly do not enjoy Sport games though, like Fifa? My Brothers could
never get me to Play those)

Emilia:
OH AND

Emilia:
this is important :D
back when i owned a PS2 I loved the kingdom hearts games and jak and daxter, those
Kind of games

Emilia:
and i'm currently trying to figure a way out to Play those again (really happy that Crash
is gonna come to the Switch)

Int:
And they're the kind of games you played growing up?

Emilia:
yep! those three most of all

Emilia:
and pokemon starting with silver, i played every gen

Int:
I've got my fingers crossed for Spyro :D

Emilia:

oh yes is the remastered Edition official yet?

Emilia:

spyro i knew as a child but i think i mostly watched my Brothers Play that

Int:

Not yet but it'll be sooooo good if it is official

Emilia:

yeeees

Int:

Maybe this seems like a silly follow up question now, but here we go - would you call yourself a gamer?

Emilia:

Ha, not silly at all

Emilia:

I often feel like I tend to Play games more on the "casual" side and ask myself if i'm still a gamer then

But I think I am and I should not have to lock myself into my room playing counterstrike all day to Count as a gamer ^^

Int:

So you don't really rely on the use of "hardcore" vs "casual" to define yourself

Emilia:

nah i think thats really stupid

i mean, i could understand when People who mostly Play and enjoy mobile games would not necessarily Label themselves gamer and thats fine

but i feel like if you feel the Need to define yourself as "hardcore" gamer meaning like a "real" gamer, then you have a Problem and not really understood the whole 'games are for fun' thing

Int:

Gotta say I agree with that!

Emilia:

I'm glad! would have been really awkward if you considered yourself a hardcore gamer

Emilia:

but i think thats more of a male thing

Int:

It's hard to say, I game a LOT, and I study them, and work with them, but it seems redundant, I just like games!

Emilia:

that seems like a really good view of it

Int:

This leads us nicely to the main part of this actually, and it's talking about your experiences as a gamer

Int:

Again, it's a super broad topic, but you can talk about anything that you want - positive or negative, in person or online

Emilia:

Okay sure!

So, I usually made quite good experiences when playing games.

It brings me closer to friends and my Brothers, I bond with People a lot over Videogames

I actually was never quite able to make friends over social media based on Videogames or playing, it was usually with People I knew from real life (which is Kind of weird for me, because I used to make 'online friends' quite regularly, just never related to games I guess)

Then again, I usually stay away from anything with an online multiplayer, the only Thing I played with that is well guildwars2 and I usually Play that with friends and don't notice the Chat at all (i actually wish there was a way to completely Close it)

Emilia:

oh and I played league of legends a few times, but the pressure of having People in my Team relying on me really got to me and i didnt like it at all (especially when there were

People in the game saying like "lets hurry up and end this" when i was playing like the most Basic beginner vs AI modes where I was just supposed to practice and not ... go through one game after another... that really pissed me off and made me stop playing basically)

Int:

Sounds like there's less of a positive experience with the online multiplayer then?

Emilia:

(I also tried Streaming literally once and made a really good experience with that, People were really nice which i did not necessarily expect but i never did it again anyways)

Emilia:

oh yeah online multiplayer, as soon as there is a Chat involved, is shit, in my opinion

Emilia:

like, i have not found ONE game where i met nice People that way
guildwars Kind of does it well because Players can only cooperate and also do that automatically without having to form Groups and talk to each other, so thats fine but you still get the occasional 'looking for a girlfriend' shit in the Chat and that is just a big turn-off for me

Int:

Yeah, I get where you're coming from

Int:

On the flip side though, it sounds like you have really nice experiences of playing with people locally (so like siblings in the same room)

Int:

Especially growing up

Emilia:

oh yeah! actually, when we were Kids i feel like we did mostly our own Things but later, like teenage days, it brought me closer to my Brothers when i could lend them some pokemon Edition because they wanted to Play again but didnt Keep theirs

and i could imagine playing spyro with them and us having a really great time with that, or the early jak and daxter, that would be amazing

Emilia:

but playing pokemon with my boyfriend now (each their own Edition, well one of my Editions but anyways, just next to each other) is really amazing as well as playing together with friends i know, i Keep in contact with a good friend who is off doing her PhD in another City by playing dont starve together and talking in voice chat

Emilia:

guildwars2 is another Thing i mostly Play with a friend who lives quite far away and who i only met once

Int:

Honestly it's great that gaming seems like such a bonding experience to you

Emilia:

yeah! i enjoy games most when i share the experience with others i think I'm reaaaaaally looking Forward to the stardew valley multiplayer

Int:

Yessssssss, it's gonna be so good

Emilia:

Yes! And its the game I Play most at the Moment :)

(Oh I also totally forgot Harvest Moon as like my usual go-to on like every console I own)

Emilia:

even when I Play solo-Player stuff I love talking to others about it, I tried to explain all the possible marriage candidates and stuff to a friend

Int:

Harvest Moon/Story of Seasons has taken over my life, there's something so addictive about farming sims

Emilia:

which is also why i think Streaming would be nice for me but i just dont do it

Emilia:

oh yes definitely!

Emilia:

i just wish they would take the best out of their good games and go with that instead of trying new stuff every time that i get upset or frustrated with...

Int:

I just wish they'd localise the stuff faster :”(

Emilia:

true thats also a Problem : D

Int:

Gonna jump back slightly to your brothers, growing up etc, but what was it like growing up as a gamer? You sound like you enjoyed gaming/watching with them, but when you were younger what was your experience outside of that?

Emilia:

oh by the way, the reason i Keep bringing up Streaming is, that i do watch streams and lets Plays and stuff like that a lot

Emilia:

just so it makes more sense

Emilia:

hmmm when i was younger

Int:

That's fine! Bring it up and talk about it as much as you want

Emilia: ^^

Emilia:

i think growing up it was just normal?

Int:

So, when I was younger, it was seen as weird that I liked gaming so much as there was no one else really who did it (and I'm a girl so that's another thing)

Emilia:

the first console in our home was a PS1 my dad bought for himself to Play tomb raider (and i would Play the tutorial over and over again)

Emilia:

oh really? i think i even brought my Gameboy with pokemon silver to School and we traded pokemon and talked about it and stuff

Int:

That's awesome!

Emilia:

i have a very vivid Memory of being at School and talking to People if you could take the cardridge (?) out of the Gameboy after you had saved

Int:

It's lovely that you've had such a positive experience with it all

Emilia:

because we thought it might just be ... saved on the... combination of cardridge and Gameboy? i guess? children are like that

Emilia:

oh and then I was the best one at using that cheat in pokemon where you have to turn the System off just as you save between switching boxes or something

Emilia:

so my Brothers AND their friends (living on our street) would come to me for help with that

Emilia:

and let me tell you, being the only Girl with two younger Brothers i was ecstatic to have something where they were looking up to me ^^

Int:

Somehow that's really nostalgic though I never got to experience it!

Emilia: :)

Emilia:

thats really the part of my childhood i look back on with the fondest memories

Emilia:

growing older it got kinda worse, i almost didnt Play after elementary School because no one else seemed to, my Brothers only played fifa and stuff like that by themselves, i only played pokemon continuously and my Brothers Kind of gave me shit for that as well (until they were old enough to feel nostalgic about it again)

Emilia:

and right now i'm just lucky to be surrounded by a lot of People who are VERY similar to me

Int:

A lot of the people I've spoken to do have really fond memories of it all, and it's seriously refreshing, from my end I'm always fearing the worst when it comes to these interviews!

Emilia:

Oh thats great to hear!

Emilia:

I imagine that when People make a game that they would want People to make exactly those experiences and memories with it

Emilia:

or, thats what i would want

Int:

Gaming really can bring joy to people, it's awesome

Int:

Something more people should recognise

Emilia:

Definitely!

Emilia:

I hate it when People even think of bringing it up in the american gun debate

Emilia:

i just want to scream "you have no idea what you're talking about" >.<

Int:

Exactly! There's a lot more things out there than can affect us

Int:

So we'll get on to the last topic before we get too heavy and a little depressed about it all!

Emilia:

Sure!

Int:

Gaming brings us joy afterall

Emilia:

Yes :)

Int:

Really the last thing is about the representation of women in video games

Int:

This doesn't need to be a whole social commentary (that's what my thesis is for!) but it can just be things like what you noticed about women and girls in the games you've played

Emilia:

Okay, so the first Thing I want to say is that even with my really good male friends, it has come up way too often that they want to argue with me that women are not even represented THAT badly

Emilia:

and are getting into the whole "well but being sexy is her Thing" argument

Emilia:

and then i have to Count for them, how MANY "sexy is her Thing" characters there are in a game and that made its a "sexy is the Producers Thing"

Emilia:

made=maybe

Int:

Yeaaaah, it's a...problem

Emilia:

and These are in part friends i would actually consider feminists

Int:

When I did my Bachelors dissertation I spoke to men and women and honestly that debate came up a lot (and turned into an argument once or twice)

Emilia:

they just dont seem to notice

Emilia:

and, mind you, i'm bisexual, so i really enjoy looking at attractive female characters as well

Int:

It's a really thin line to follow!

Emilia:

i mean you just notice if a character is attractive or JUST made for the male gaze

Emilia:

male gaze is such a prominent Thing in female character designs

Int:

I also appreciate a nicely designed (and attractive) female character, but you wonder if there's more to them

Emilia:
right!

Emilia:
the debate over the new tomb raider movie that her breasts are too small?

Int:
Oh yeah, I saw that all over twitter

Emilia:
like, seriously? you played the game for her triangle boobs??

Emilia:
its a good game dude

Int:
Firstly, she should be wearing a sports bra

Int:
No sane woman wants that kind of back ache

Emilia:
thats also true her design in the early games is horrible obviously

Emilia:
hot pants to do climbing and exploring? i do not think so

Int:
What's interesting is that she was designed as the female Indiana Jones, but they really went for the female part

Emilia:
yeah definitely...

Emilia:

okay, other than that- i noticed that it got better

Emilia:

i mean, you finally can Play a female character in pokemon

lots of games have more character creation with different Body types etc

Emilia:

(even though the female clothes are still mostly more revealing even in games i enjoy a lot and i really dont understand why)

Int:

Are there any female characters that stand out a "good" representation to you?

Emilia:

its very very slow progress

Emilia:

the new lara croft is like a great example

Emilia:

Story written by a women, design more catering to Players who dont have to be attracted to the player

Emilia:

i also love how in mass effect2 (the one i played the most of that Franchise) you can choose and then completely create your own character

it doesnt give you Body type choices, but you can make a really "conventionally unattractive" face if you want to

Int:

Speaking of Mass Effect, one thing I noticed and found really interesting was the difference between male and female aliens

Int:

Like male aliens LOOKED alien, but female aliens looked human, it was odd

Emilia:

Hmmm i cant say i have noticed that too much to it at that point

Int:

Admittedly, this was part of my research :')

Emilia:

ah yeah : D

Int:

If you enjoy the game and these things don't phase you, then that in itself is interesting too!

Int:

Some things can pull you out, but other things go unnoticed when you're enjoying yourself

Emilia:

hmm well i notice the same Thing in tv Shows and other fiction usually, just didnt seem to in mass effect

Emilia:

with like orcs and stuff like that in a lot of fiction i see exactly that

Emilia:

women = blue skinned human, man = orc

Int:

Are there any roles you notice women fulfilling?

Emilia:

hmm i think a few years back i would have said healer but i start to notice a Change in games like league of legends and guildwars i do not seem to notice that

Emilia:

but! and i dont Play overwatch myself, but i saw a graphic lately that was like "Supports complaining about People screaming for healing" and it was literally one guy with like 7 female characters

Emilia:

didn't know it was like that but apparently most of the new female characters they introduced since the game came out are supports

Emilia:

which is kinda disappointing

Emilia:

but i DO notice female PLAYERS tending to choose support

Int:

They actually are - whilst their talents are different like there's a sniper or a soldier type, then largely tend to heal which is odd

Emilia:

i notice in myself as well that if i Play with others i would rather stay back and heal or do some other supporting stuff because i fear i might not be good enough to be on the front line, have more responsibility, etc

Emilia:

which is Kind of contradicting because good healing also requires a lot of skill...

Emilia:

i have questioned that in myself a lot, but don't really find... a solution

Int:

Being both female and a gamer tends to have contradictions

Int:

It's weird

Emilia:

very true

Int:

and it sucks

Emilia:

oh coming back to the Streaming thing

Emilia:

everytime i do think "hey if i Play this game now, i could also stream it"

Emilia:

i feel like, aw well i would have to put other clothes on and maybe make up

Emilia:

because i know i'm going to be judged not only on how i Play but how i present myself
(and i fear that my gameplay is really not going to make up for anything : P)

Int:

That's one of the reasons I don't stream (that and I don't want to hack my 3DS)

Emilia:

understandable ^^"

Emilia:

i really really want to have like an all-female Group for games like the stardew valley
multiplayer and just stream game sessions

Emilia:

there are SO many Groups and lets Plays like that with all male Teams (achievement
hunter and funhouse both have ONE Girl each, if that means anything to you)

Int:

It's very much a world where they have the "token" girl

Emilia:

and its just... unreasonable...

Emilia:

why cant there be an Environment for female gamers

Emilia:

where they can feel at home as male Gamers seem to feel in like the complete
community and .. life, generally

Emilia:

so, i really want to create something like that, somehow

Int:

It's sad, but I agree - we need a safe space for women

Emilia:

but thats a different Topic i guess :D

Emilia:

one Thing i did want to talk about because i have been thinking about constantly the last few days

Emilia:

i just recently discovered that stardew valley was developed by one guy completely alone

Emilia:

and it explains SO MUCH why every male 'bachelor' in that game is COMPLETELY uninteresting and plain stereotypical

Emilia:

(except for maybe the one that he literally modelled after himself)

Emilia:

like... he just has no idea what women are looking for in men... it makes sense... why didnt he just ask his girlfriend for help... dude...

Emilia:

that was just SUCH a big reminder for me that... if women aren't making the games, they are not really made for women

Int:

Honestly, both times I've played I married Sebastian, but after a while it just falls flat, it seems like they tried to push the characters to the extremes

Emilia:

Sebastian is the one i would argue he modelled after himself

Int:

Then you go back and play a game like Story of Seasons: Trio of Towns and even that has far better characterisation

Int:

and thats a 3ds game!

Emilia:

its like... Alex likes Sports... sam likes Music... and besides that... i mean he Kinda gave them a tragic backstory then but not much character dfevelopment at all

Int:

Agreed

Emilia:

with the women at least you get a Little depth

Emilia:

even though they seem to be less differentiable eventually, which i also Attribute to him just designing them to his own wishes or expectations of women you would like to marry

Emilia:

designing so many characters by yourself is just really not a good idea i feel ^^

Int:

Yeah, as much as I loved the idea of being able to play as a female and marry a female character, I never chose to because one never really stood out

Emilia:

yeah... i'm currently choosing who to marry for the first time and its like... i cant really choose

Int:

My brain just went "Marry the emo"

Emilia:

i might actually go for penny because i feel SO bad for her with her living Situation >.<

Emilia:

does she get a happy ending if i dont marry her??

Int:

Not really, that's the biggest thing with Stardew Valley, outside of Marriage, the characters don't really change much

Int:

Hopefully that's not a spoiler or anything

Emilia:

but yeah right now i'm mostly debating which character i would hurt the least by marrying

Emilia:

nah its fine

Emilia:

harvest moon does a better Job with that, but then again, stardew is really a big indie game and he worked on it for 4 years

Emilia:

i'm just happy for him that he is finished with that, i couldnt ask for more :D

Int:

Yeah, and Harvest Moon has a looooong history and large following

Int:

You can definitely see where he was inspired by the Harvest Moon series

Emilia:

definitely! even though i feel like they rarely really listen to their following and do what the community likes most >.<

Emilia:

oh yes he said himself he loved harvest moon and wanted Kind of like his own
"updated" Version of it where he thought harvest moon lacked

Emilia:

but in doing that he kinda lost the HM charme

Int:

Some are pretty good - XSeed listened to the community (at least the US one) when they decided to localise the Story of Seasons DLC, but then everyone else is feeling a bit high and dry

Emilia:

ah yes thats true...

Emilia:

i havent played trio of towns because i accidentally bought the previous one :')

Emilia:

heard good Things about that one though

Int:

I recommend it, I've sunk a LOOOOOT of time into it

Emilia:

good to know! i'll check out the characters again, thats mostly my reason for playing

Int:

The characterisation of the NPCs actually made it hard to choose who to marry

Emilia:

thats a really good Quality trait!

Emilia:

(geez sorry my english is getting really bad for some reason)

Int:

Whilst you can only marry the opposite gender you can actually dress and design your character regardless of gender so its not so bad

Int:

Don't worry about it!

Emilia:

Thats cool so i can Play a dude and just act as if i was a Girl? : D

Int:

Yeah!

Emilia:

nice nice

Int:

One you unlock things like a wardrobe and hair design you can design yourself however you want

Int:

It's a nice work around

Emilia:

thats really cool :)

Int:

As much as I could talk about that game for hours, it's probably time to start wrapping up!

Int:

Is there anything else you want to mention?

Emilia:

hmm nothing Comes to mind

Int:

Well, you have my twitter and you can keep me on Skype so if there's ever anything else you want to mention, just drop me a message!

Emilia:

Definitely!

Int:

Thank you SO much for this, you've been really helpful!

Emilia:

Of Course! I enjoy every opportunity I get to talk about Videogames

Transcript 5

[Participant was somewhat anxious about what they were going to say through the interview]

Int:

Don't stress, don't overthink it.

Basically, my research is about the representation of women in video games, and the treatment of female gamers – whether there is potentially a correlation between the two.

Freya:

Hmm...

Int:

So, we'll start!

Freya:

... That is interesting...

Int:

It's a couple of questions to begin with, and then it's more... just a discussion.

Freya:

Okay

Int:

So firstly, how would you define video games?

Freya:

... *[Freya looked somewhat alarmed]*

Int:

It's not a test, it's your opinion.

Freya:

Okay! Uh... I define video games... for me personally, or as a whole?

Int:

For you personally.

Freya:

Personally... It's a stress reliever, something I enjoy doing, uh... Pretty much could spend all day playing games, ever since I was small, so it's something I grew up with, something I enjoy – Uh... I don't know, I suppose it's nice having that different world to get lost in really...

Int:

I'm making notes as well, don't stress

Freya:

Okay, that's fine!

Int:

[Laughs]

So, based on that, how often would you say you play video games in a week?

Freya:

...

Int:

No judgement.

Freya:

Pretty much every day.

It could be from like an hour in the evening, or if I have my day off, 12 hours... It's really bad...

Int:

And in the course of the week, what games do you play?

Freya:

Uh... I more often, now, play a lot more multiplayer, whereas before I wouldn't touch 'em cos of the whole... People can be jerks online...

Int:

Yeah...

Freya:

So, it'd be a lot of, like, single player gamers, and I'm quite lucky that my brother's a gamer, so one day I happened to be in a party with his friends, and they were really nice.

It's... now I'm friends with them, so... otherwise, I don't think I would. I could never ever, like... jump into like, someone messages me or invites me, never accept them cos I'm like [*pulls face*].

Int:

So, strangers?

Freya:

Nooo, you just don't know, do you?

I don't know...

Int:

So then, based on all of that, would you call yourself a gamer?

Freya:

Yes! Yes... Yes.

Int:

Obviously, there's a lot of discussion about 'hardcore' vs 'casual', all of that, and it's not necessarily that clear cut, you say you're a gamer – what kind of... how would you then define yourself?

Freya:

Uhm... I mean, I'd say I was more of a 'casual' gamer... I think... Like, I'm not... I know some people who know the ins and outs of games, and I'll never be able to do that... They'll know... for instance, for example, *Destiny*, like there's people I play with that know all the weapons, the know what they do, they know all the – and I'm just like, how?!

I don't know, I think that's probably... my mentality. I just like to play games, I'm not gonna know everything, and you know, *Destiny's* my favourite game, you'd think I'd know like EVERYTHING, but I don't, like... You know.

So, I'd say I was more of a... I mean, I guess I play more than...

Int:

You don't have to limit yourself to the casual or hardcore, you can define yourself in a whole new way if you want?

Freya:

Oh! A whole new...? Uh... is there an in-between?

Cos I'd say... I wouldn't say I was a hardcore gamer, but I wouldn't say I was your basic... like... I don't know.

Cos some people play *Candy Crush*, and that's a gamer really, isn't it?

Uh... I don't know, I'd just say, like, I'm a gamer.

Int:

You play video games.

Freya:

Yeah!

I'm really sorry of this is not helping you...

Int:

No, no, it's fine, you don't have to –

Freya:

Oh god!

[Laughs]

Int:

Here's the thing, it's your opinions, you don't have to define yourself!

Freya:

Okay

Int:

It's not me pushing you towards a certain answer.

Freya:

I'll probably think of answers tonight like "damn".

Int:

That's fine, you're more than welcome to message me if you thought of something – it

says on the consent form you've got until the point of publication to change, retract, anything like that.

Freya:

Okay!

Int:

So... you already mentioned that you started with your multiplayerers because of your brother – what kind of experiences have you had through your life, being a female gamer? And calling yourself a gamer?

Freya:

Uh... To be honest, it's not something I really shout about a lot, because of stuff I see online... Uh... I mean, there's so many times I could... You know, when you go on Facebook and someone will mention... Like I'll never say, "Oh yeah, I play this or that" because then... Oh my goodness, I feel like... you will get quizzed, just about... You know, "Oh, well, what's this?" and it's something I keep quiet cos... Yeah, it's... I don't know, it's just... I can never find the words!

I mean, if it comes up in conversation between friends then I'm like "yeah, yeah, I play video games", but I wouldn't... Especially online... Uh, you know, even like my gamertag, you couldn't tell if I was male or female, cos otherwise I'd feel like... On Xbox... On Playstation it's my name. Uh, but luckily, I haven't had any like... Cos I always feel like if I play badly in a gamer, I'm like "Ahh, someone's gonna message me, and be like [*grumbling*]", but I haven't had that, luckily, but I try and stay away from it, uh, but I see so much... So much from people online, and even then, I'll wanna put my two cents in, but I'm like "No, just stay out of it, cos it'll rile you up", you know? As with everything really...

It's a frustrating world [*laughs*]

Sorry, what was the question, cos I feel like I trailed off...

Int:

It's fine, it's fine – I'm not sticking to like set questions so you can talk about what you want.

Freya:

I feel like being quizzed – It happens a lot, and I really... I don't like that because even if you get something wrong, that's it... You know? I feel like with a guy, if you get something wrong that's fine, but if it was, you know, female, I feel like suddenly it'd be picked up upon straight away, you know?

I don't know...

Int:

What about the positive experiences? A lot of what you've mentioned so far is very much... It seems like there's an undertone of anxiety... Which is understandable, but also there... Obviously you are a gamer, you play games, so you must derive some enjoyment out of it.

Freya:

Yeah, uh... I mean, I'm not saying that everyone is bad – I'm quite lucky that I've found a group of people, uh, you know, and they... I think when I first started playing with them there were jokes of "Ohhhh" and you know – it'd be more of "She's not good at this" and then they'd stick with me and be like "I've got her, I've got her" and I'm just like "I'm doing fine, I can handle myself", uh... and then that sort of then away quickly... I became friends with everyone and then there's another one of my friends who... his group is friends with another group of people, and again they are the nicest people, a mixture of guys and girls, I've ever met like... Yeah, that I've ever met online – super nice, but like I said, I would never... I'm not comfortable enough to be like "I wanna join" to people, even part of groups I'm part of – I'm in a *Destiny* group, mostly males on there, I would never... And I've seen girls comment saying, "I need some help" and, oh my goodness, the comments after it – I'm just like "why am I here?", you know what I mean?

Int:

Mmhmm

Freya:

Uh... They're all – they'll make jokes. If someone says "Oh, I'll help", then they'll get... So, the guys jump on this guy's comment like "Oh yeah, you're after stuff", and you know?

I don't know... You just never know what's a joke... and it's not a joke, basically, girls

playing games – it's not a joke. It's a thing that happens and it's very normal, and it's a real thing. I don't know why there's such a... Why it has to be made into a joke.... You know what I mean?

Int:

Yeah

Freya:

Almost as if it's cool to do it, instead of thinking about it, you know?

Int:

So you mentioned your brother, you played the games whilst growing up, being a girl who grew up playing games – although you didn't necessarily go out saying you were a gamer – do you have any experiences from when you were growing up?

Freya:

Uh... [Laughs] Do you mean with, like, people?

I mean, the only thing that's stuck with me since I was younger was... I was never bought any, like, game stuff, it was always my brother's and then passed down and then it was through that that I got my interest, so I was never... again, it's always... the whole male or female thing, like, "Oh he has to have all this stuff and she has to have all this stuff", whereas I would always be in his room playing his consoles anyway – so in that sense that's the only thing growing up where I experienced something that stuck with me cos I think... Yeah, I was never – I bought my first console when I was in uni and that was the greatest thing ever cos, like, it was mine!

Int:

Yeah

Freya:

Like, it's mine – I never had anything gaming... Actually, apart from Pokémon stuff, but that wasn't gaming, it's just more... Merchandise, Pikachu everything, uh, but yeah, and obviously there was no online stuff when I was a kid, so I was away from all that, uh... and even in high school, I remember there was one person I spoke to about gaming, and we would swap games, but... That was never... never really told anyone about it, it was just a thing... I feel like growing up, and growing up into it, there's

definitely a lot of... things I never thought about, uh... like how people get treated in the gaming industry.

I don't know... I don't know...

Int:

[Laugh]

You can say anything.

Freya:

Yeah... Yeah...

Int:

So then... throughout – over the games you played, the ones that you're most comfortable with, the ones you're most comfortable talking about – what do you notice, or feel about the representation of women.

Freya:

[Sighs]

Int:

[Laughs]

Freya:

Oh my... Oh my... Funnily enough, Final Fantasy is a game I hold very dear in my heart for the storylines, but it's something I have noticed – cos that was a game I played when I was young – uh, they don't seem to be a... I mean, the way some of the characters are dressed is uh... it's insane, and I notice it more when people cosplay these characters cos I'm like... I can't remember what character it is, but I'm just like "Oh my god", there is a lot, I mean women can wear whatever they want, but then I'm just like "Crap, there's like nothing to this outfit", and then I see the character and I'm like, obviously you know, characters, the way they move and stuff sometimes they do it – you know, everything in place but they you're thinking a person's gonna try and take this on as a cosplay and it's... yeah, if you go to a convention you know it's... I mean there are some male characters that are... you know, bare chest, but a lot of female characters, it seems like they're trying to draw in the male gamers in a way, and even the way they're talking about and you're just like... It's something that's more important than the character itself, it's just like you're selling it wrong, like...

Oh, it just gets me, it gets me so mad.

I mean, even in, recently, *Monster Hunter*¹¹, although you gotta give them props, some of their armour choices you know, big huge bully armour, but then there's two that's literally like a bone bra... with their torso out like... "This is practical! Not!", you know? It's just... and then you've got, I don't know, the guys have got male characters, I haven't seen any of them in little fur pants, thigh high boots – I mean, I don't know, and then I suppose that... girls growing up then, they... they're gonna think "ah, this is what I need to look like as well", and it's like magazines and everything, you've got that in games as well, it's supposed to be your... getting away from stuff, but then it's there as well, and I don't know... And then the whole thing – oh, the whole thing then of what guys expect you to be then as a "girl gamer", you know, they....

[Sighs]

That really infuriates me.

There is no way to be or to look, you know? And then you've got people - again, I shouldn't read the comment sections on Facebook – you've got people fighting about "Oh yeah, I wear –"they're fighting over what they're wearing, like, it shouldn't even be... Just... Don't try and... I don't know...

I feel I wanna keep talking but yeah.

Int:

It's okay, it's allowed

Freya:

[Small scream]

I'm messing up my sentences, like...

Int:

Say whatever you want

Freya:

Then it's like, women fighting over that they're... "Oh yeah, I wear my pyjamas with my

¹¹ *Monster Hunter Worlds* (2017)

hair up, I don't care, and I eat pizza when I'm doing it", like that's becoming a thing now as well, like you have to... "Oh, I'm not this, I'm *this* because this is what guys seem to like" as well, you're finding that group of people, and I'm just like...

Int:

It's almost women shaming women...

Freya:

Yeah! And you shouldn't have to justify what you wear, your actions, this is where I'm saying I should just stay away from the comment sections – like, I'm happy to say I've never once bitten to it, like I'm just reading it and I'm just like "oh, oh no" – not that I'm saying you should be quiet about it, and you shouldn't be shouting about it, it's whatever, do whatever you like, but it's kinda like sitting back, watching this destruction, and like... I mean, I don't think there'll ever be a nice balance, there's always gonna be something, but uh... Whether it's getting better... I don't think so... but... it's... yeah, it's more of being aware and acknowledging that this is what people are like.

Int:

Yeah...

Okay, you've really quite nicely brought everything together anyway, uh, you've mentioned things like the representation of women and now they're sexualised –

Freya:

Oh yeah!

Int:

- and that people expect real women to be like that as well, so do you think – in your opinion – that there is...

Do you believe that there is a correlation between what we've seen in video games – or don't see, so if a woman isn't in a video game, compared to how women as gamers are treated?

Freya:

Wait, what was that?

Int:

So, if you take the way women are presented in video games, and how they're not presented – like they are present, not present, how they look, etc. -

Freya:

Oh! Okay!

Int:

- and then you have a look at how women are treated, so what you brought up so far was fear, anxiety, you don't want to experience any of that – do you think there's a correlation between the two, so the treatment and the representation?

Freya:

Yeah... I think... Like... Especially with the way some characters look as well, I mean that's gonna be what males essentially feel like women should be anyway.

Yeah definitely.

Uh... I mean, a guy's not gonna notice if there's no females in a game, are they? And then even if they are they're gonna expect... They're probably gonna wanna expect them to look a certain way, and if they don't then that's something they bring up as well, they're like "Oh", or like I've always noticed guys will be like – I mean, I know women do the same thing as well, kind of, you know, like "Who's the sexiest female in gaming?", and they'll talk about the ugly ones, and it's just like it's not about that – you're taking it away completely from whatever game it is, what it's about, and you're gonna talk about looks – everything's just down to looks, usually, at the end of the day. In a really bad way, cos it's not about that!

But yeah, I feel like, especially with the games that kids play as well, that... some of the characters... I don't know.

[Laughs]

It's like I could go on a rant but I feel like I'm gonna trail off.

Int:

You can if you want to.

Freya:

... But, yeah... It's just... For me, growing up, it was all about the story, and I never really noticed too much, uh, but, definitely growing up it's something you think about,

especially if people are commenting on it, and you're like "Oh yeah... uh... there is this, and there is this!"

Int:

The rise of social media certainly hasn't helped.

Freya:

Ah no – if anything... In a way it's half and half, like you're aware of these things now, but then you're seeing it as well, and it's more of... It's gonna be out there, you put something o and then that's it, you're never getting it back, it's out there, everyone's gonna see it, uh... so in terms of awareness, it's good, but then, in terms of... it's a place for people to do things, and say things that are gonna be seen by everyone, it's kinda like the right and the wrong things, there's no...

[Laughs]

Int:

You're stressing, stop stressing, you can say whatever you want – anything you say is relevant!

Freya:

I'm sure there's stuff that I've... Just like pushed to the side.

Int:

You're more than welcome to drop me a message if you've thought of anything else, and I'll incorporate it into it. Most people are like "I'll probably think of something later!"

Freya:

Yeah, I definitely will...

Int:

I can always add it in, is there anything else you want to say?

Freya:

Uh... What's your title?

Int:

I'll give you a bit of background, I couldn't say too much at the beginning because I

don't want to lead people, but in regard to the research, I've done content analysis – I've looked at maybe 150 games, possibly...

Freya:

Jesus...

Int:

And then I looked at all the characters within them, my document is about 10,000 words long – it's a lot but there are trends that stick out, mainly the sexualisation.

Transcript 6

Int:

That's all good!

If you're happy to do it via email, I'll get started! There are just a couple of quick questions to get an understanding of things like how you view games and then we'll get into the meatier stuff - so firstly, how do you define video games?

VICTORIA:

Neat :)

I guess I'd define video games as anything I'm playing on a screen, whether that be handheld, tv or computer monitor.

Just let me know the rest and I'll get answering :)

Int:

Based on how you define video games, how often would you say you game in a week? And during that time, what is it that you're most likely to play?

Victoria:

Heya,

I would say I probably play around 2-3 times a week.

I usually play Zelda/Witcher 3/assassins creed.

Most recently playing sea of thieves on a regular basis :)

Int:

Hey,

That's great! Honestly don't worry about whether your answers are okay or not, just say whatever you want!

So, based on this, would you call yourself a gamer?

Victoria:

Hey,

No worries (I was a bit unsure before if you needed genres or game titles 🤔)

Victoria:

I guess for a few reasons:

1. I play for fun only really
2. I don't feel like I 'need' to play, I can go without quite easily
3. I'm not overly concerned with getting all the achievements in a game
4. I don't always beat games to completion and will drop them if I get stuck or stop enjoying it for some reason

Int:

All very valid reasons, you gotta define yourself however you want.

The main part starts now really, and it's talking about your experiences - it can be whatever you want, positive/negative/in person/online, but is there anything you've experienced in life as a result of you being a gamer (however you define yourself)?

Victoria:

Hey, sorry for the delay, I've been giving this question a bit of thought before answering.

I feel like being somebody that plays games on a semi-regular basis doesn't particularly have any strong positive or negative effects on my life, and combined with that, there aren't any major standout experiences that have sprung to mind.

On a positive note, I feel like playing multiplayer online games boosts a sense of community. I play with a small selection of friends, who I might not get to see that often, but I do speak to them a few times a week while we play.

Combined with this, I began speaking to my current partner (pre-relationship) again after a couple of years break because we started playing an online game together.

Negatively, while playing online griefing is quite frequently an issue. This will usually put you in a bad mood or sometimes want to withdraw from the game. This can rub off on the people you're playing with too, which gives a slightly negative vibe to playing sometimes.

I will add that I play in a group of 2 women and 4 men (we don't usually all play at the same time, it depends on who's available/which game) and I never feel as though I'm treated differently because of my gender. It's pretty equal ground.

Let me know if you'd like me to expand on anything I've said here.

Int:

Obviously, you don't have to go into more detail if you don't want to, but in regard to the grieving what kind of issues do you face?

If you don't want to talk about it, that's fine!

The topic of community is one that has come up quite frequently across my research, and not just in relation to online multiplayer games, which is honestly a very heart-warming theme - has that sense of community always been there? In particular, we've been speaking mostly in the present, but what was gaming like in the past for you? Especially if you did so as a child!

[Interview moved to voice call]

Int:

Did you get the last email about... sort off... what issues you've faced regarding 'griefing' and gaming in your past?

Victoria:

I did – I'm sorry I didn't get back.

Int:

That's fine

Victoria:

Yeah so, in terms of kind of where I've mentioned grieving, uhm, it's not been that much of an issue, generally speaking across the games that I play, but I's say mainly in, it comes up in Overwatch, and it's come up quite a lot in Sea of Thieves as well, which are the two online games that I play mainly.

Int:

Yeah

Victoria:

In Overwatch, it tends to just be "oh, get off that character so that I can play them", sometimes people can become a little bit aggressive towards you, on PC at least, on console they kind of limit that which is nice, uh but yeah it tends to just mainly be people telling you to like, kill yourself if you're not doing well enough, and it's just that kind of thing that I was getting at.

With SoT it's less verbal stuff and more, say, the situation is where someone will come aboard your boat in the game, and they'll kill your crew and take your treasure, but

then sometimes people stay on your boat so that when you respawn they'll just kill you off straight away. They kinda get into a pattern.

Int:

Yeah

Victoria:

it's just stupid, uh, so yeah those are kind of the main examples I can think of in regard to that, just really... At least, it tends... I tend to play more kind of console games on my own, that aren't kind of multiplayer, so obviously, I don't get it there, uh.... I'm just having a little skim over what else I've got in the email

Int:

That's fine

Victoria:

Uh... you spoke a little bit about community in there as well, uhm, so yeah there's a bunch of people that I kind of will meet up with a couple times a week... Sometimes like in real life, we'll just play board games together which is quite nice, we kind of take it in turns to host. But then online we play together as well... What else have we got there... "Not just in relation to online multiplayer games"... So yeah, it's like we have that friendship in real life, and then it just kind of transfers over into games. Uh, less myself, but somebody that I know has kind of got a community that they met online, uh, so most of the people I play with I do know in real life, but I know that other people do make friendships.

Int:

Aw, that's alright then!

Quite nice.

Victoria:

So what else have we got here...

Int:

Basically, just... a lot of it is focusing so far on the present, and what's happening now, but... I kinda want you to get into it a bit more, what it was like gaming while you were growing up.

Victoria:

Mhm, the first game I kind of remember playing was on the Playstation 1, uh, which was Spyro, which I really enjoyed as a kid, and going into kind of junior school, they were still bringing out games in that series, so I played it up until... The series that launched just before the Skylanders is where I played it to... And it was one of the main games I played growing up, I would say.

There are kids that I knew in, like, infant school that were really interested in Mario, but I had no idea what it was apart from this concept game that we'd play at lunch time...

Uh, so I'd say in terms of franchises, that would be the main one, and I remember we used to have... My mum used to be a childminder when I was a kid, so we used to have kids in our house quite a lot, and I remember like... We didn't really have that many multiplayer games, but we would spend time, as I started getting older, kind of playing together on consoles and stuff. I remember when my brother got Mario Kart, we used to play that together quite a lot as well. But yeah, I guess growing up it was mainly games that I'd play on my own, until my brother kind of got to an age where he became interested in games as well. Then it sort of started to be more of a multiplayer thing, uh... but yeah, it's kind of always been a present thing, I guess.

Going into secondary school, you kind of have a little bit of an idea, cos we used to play Zelda together!

Int:

Yeah [Laughs]

Victoria:

Years 7 and 8, and yeah, even... it was mainly secondary school where I started to discover a lot of Nintendo kind of games, uh, and yeah, otherwise Nintendo wasn't really part of my childhood, where for a lot of kids I feel like it was.

Int:

You were more the Playstation...?

Victoria:

Mhm, growing up at least. I feel like now... I'd say now it's more balanced, I'd say... Yeah, I was gonna say maybe I do prefer some of the Nintendo stuff, but I think there's a lot of stuff that launches on the Playstation that I like as well.

Int:

Oh yeah, I mean the Playstation is really good for your story games.

Victoria:

Yeah, like, I love The Witcher, that would be my favourite game to play.

Int:

Still haven't actually delved into that one yet.

Victoria:

I can recommend!

Int:

It's waiting, it's been on my list, I watched my partner play through it and I was like, y'know, "I'm gonna give this a go", but like... Y'know studying games, working with games, I don't really get the chance to play games

Victoria:

[Laughs]

But yeah, it's just... With that one as well, like I've tried to push my partner into playing it as well, and he has bought them! All three of them – and he's given the third one a little bit of a go, but he doesn't play it that much, and I'm like "It's really good!"

Int:

It does look really good – I'll give it that! It looks amazing...

So, in that vein, the last part of it really, cos we did most of it over email anyway... It's just talking about – based on the games that you play, or games that you have experience with, what do you notice about the representation of women within them...?

Victoria:

Well, just going off The Witcher, that we were just discussing, The Witcher's very much... All of the women in it are your very stereotypical feminine figure, really small waist, really large boobs, uh... All the women in that game are white, as well, I will mention, all of like the main [characters]... You hardly see any black women in that game, even the non-playable characters! I'm just trying to think of a time where I have seen... I don't think there are, I think all of the characters in that game are white, from what I can remember... And yeah, I'd say in The Witcher, they are treated as, kind of like, sexual objects as well, a large portion of the game does kind of revolve around trying to sleep with women that are in the game. You have the choice whether you want to do that, whether you want to be loyal to one of them, whether you want all of

them, that kind of gist... So, despite its merits as a game... The portrayal of women in that particular one could be improved.

Int:

Yeah

Victoria:

Also, sorry I've got my tea, I'm just gonna sip –

Int:

That's alright

Victoria:

Uh, I'm just trying to think of other games that I can kind of... think of off the top of my head.

I guess Zelda as well, that... Even though her name kind of is the whole title of the series, the whole time she's portrayed as pretty helpless. Though saying that, in certain instances, Link definitely won't be defeating Ganon without her.

Int:

That's true!

Victoria:

Uh... Yeah, she's there... But the whole kind of gist of the game does revolve around that classic, kind of, man rescuing the princess kind of thing, same with Mario.

Yeah, kind of thinking of this as well a lot of the women... And men... The character's that I've played in games myself – there isn't a lot of diversity in race, from what I can think of off the top of my head... Uh, I'm actually trying to think of a character that isn't white, that's kind of like a major character.

Int:

The only game I think I can think of was... Uh... Dishonored: Death of the Outsider, it came out... this year, or the end of last year I think? Uh... It's not even a full game but the main character there is a woman of colour, but even that's like the only think I can think of.

Victoria:

Yeah, it's like, even the little things like that... I know this isn't so much women, but,

until recently, in Animal Crossing you couldn't select what your skin colour was gonna be. It's like, you're white, and you get a slight tan when you go on the beach, uh... But kinda going back to women, I guess, uh... I'd say – I'll go into Horizon [Zero Dawn], have you played it at all?

Int:

Dabbled, but don't worry about spoilers

Victoria:

No worries – it wasn't so much spoilers, it's just, uh, just if you were familiar. But the main character in that is a woman and I think that in terms of portrayal, she probably is one of the more... positive portrayals? But again, she is very... in terms of body, small waist, larger boobs...

But she's kinda out there, looking after herself

Int:

She's the protagonist of a pretty big video game, so I think she's doing alright.

Victoria:

[Laughs]

Yeah, she's not doing a bad job, but uh... Yeah... I think that... That's mainly more mature games. Games that I played as a kid, like Spyro isn't a good example cos everyone's pretty much not human in that game, uh... What else have I played as a kid...?

I mean, I guess it's just Mario, but in Mario I guess most of the female characters are your typical Princess, again. I guess like, only like the Bowser children, I think there's like a female one maybe that's like, again, not human, she's scaly, but she's not really... I don't think I would count that cos it's not really a human portrayal, like a more positive body image.

Int:

She's a little dinosaur, so –

Victoria:

Yeah.

I'd say in terms of intelligence as well, I feel like... Cos like Peach and Daisy aren't really, like... I've always found Daisy in particular to be really annoying, cos I feel like they do come off as whiny, uh... And, yeah, I don't feel like intelligence is really portrayed very well there.

I've just noticed my brothers Overwatch poster, and that's prompted me to say I feel like Overwatch is a lot better in terms of portraying female characters, as kind of... like... I guess the characters have more depth to them, like they have more personality, and I feel like on the topic of intelligence that kind of comes off a lot more on characters in Overwatch, and there's more variation in the way that the characters look as well, although a lot of them meet that kind of, typical, like slim body look that I mentioned as well.

Int:

Widowmaker...

Victoria:

Yeah- Widowmaker... Widowmaker's like the typical one. They have got Zarya as well, though, so there's variants in there too – and Mei as well.

Int:

Yeah, they are better than most, I would say

Victoria:

But uh... It's kind of picking out one in, kind of a market where most are not like that, and it's like, "should we praise them for this?", probably not! Most of them should just be doing that anyway.

Int:

Yeah... It's tough, cos you want them to do it because you want that representation anyway, but a lot of them will start doing it because it makes money.

Victoria:

Yeah, precisely

Int:

And that just sucks... you want to be uh... you want them to be benevolent rather than financially minded.

Victoria:

Yeah, it's like, though... When it comes to like, marketing and stuff, just even in the company that I work in, we get so many requests to make our product uh... like, we do men's product, women's product, and unisex product at the moment, and we get so

many requests saying, “oh could you make your women’s product unisex, so that you’re more inclusive of trans people” and... a lot of, like, we haven’t done it yet because we know that the largest sizes won’t sell in the quantities that we would need them to, so like a lot of it in video games as well will just come down to marketing, which is sad

Int:

yeah, I mean... Do you think there’s been a change over time? Not just possibly from a marketing perspective, just in regard to the video games we have?

Victoria:

Uh, maybe a little, but I think it’s something that’s kinda been a lot more recent and I don’t feel like it’s that widespread yet, uh... So, I’d say, taking the example of Overwatch, and taking Sea of Thieves as well, cos at the beginning of that you’re given kind of randomized characters, so you’ll have people who are fairly overweight, some that are clearly underweight, and pretty average, and you have got a span of difference races as well, uh, and you can just pick from the random ones it suggests.

Those two games have come out fairly recently, so any kind of representation that I mentioned has only been in the past couple of years or so... Prior to that I don’t think I could pull up many examples... I mean even now I can’t...

Int:

That’s fair enough, even that in itself is rather telling... Just, y’know an experience or not

Victoria:

Yeah, I’m not sure what else to add really...

Int:

That’s fine – it just brings us... I know I said the last bit was the last bit but it’s not, the final question basically is whether or not you think there is a relationship between the representation of women in video games, or the lack of, and how women as gamers are treated.

Victoria:

Okay... Uh... So, I think I’ll start with just my personal experience, uh, I think typically when I’m playing, if I’m on a voice channel, people that aren’t playing as part of my party will kind of... They don’t always necessarily say anything, but I don’t know if it’s

more from my end of if it's actually something I'm experiencing, but like I feel like I won't always be treated a seriously, maybe as some of the other members of my party... But, saying that as well, I feel like there are people who probably have experienced much worse than what I would experience as well... Uh, but again that's just me kind of making assumptions about things...

I think... like, this doesn't relate so much to video games, but there's... So, there's a table top board game that my partners interested in, and he's kind of getting me interested in it as well, and uh... In the community online, you tend to find... There was a little thread going recently where a woman had posted about her work, and some of the guys were coming back like "oh, you're only getting likes cos you're a woman and people can clearly see that you're a woman in your profile picture". And it's just like, I don't think that is why, cos this person does have skill in that area.

I feel like women that will stream online, a lot of the time, will kind of get a lot of people saying "Oh, you've only got all of these subscribers because you're a woman and cos you have boobs", or whatever, and it's just like... It could be because she's actually alright at playing the game!

[Laughs]

Like, I personally quite like to, watch women on YouTube, let's say, because I do feel like there is kind of more of a minority, but even saying that, I feel like people sometimes assume that their skill level will be lower... Uh... and like, I hate to admit it as well, but I feel like sometimes, because of the way that things are portrayed online, even I will go into things sometimes like "oh, she's not good" and then I'm like "Ah, no! She is actually pretty good", and that kind of... it's like training that you kind of get from just... just from expecting people to...

I don't know how to word it properly...

Int:

I get where you're coming from, it's... kind of like internalised misogyny...

Victoria:

yeah, I guess, that's... yeah, that would be it.

It's like you sometimes, you'll have a thought, and you're like "no, that thought is incorrect cos I have this experience and I know that it's not correct", it's like your brain automatically kind of throws that at you, like... That's probably not the case, y'know...

Int:

I mean, it makes sense – where I work we actually have our own esports teams, and

they are 90% men... Probably even 95% men, uh, but that's not because the women who come in and try aren't good enough, or anything like that, it's literally just... the hostility within the teams is so much sometimes, like even working there I wanna kick them out the shop...

Victoria:

It's like as well... with the Overwatch League, I don't think there are any female players in the OL that I can think of... I haven't looked into it that much, but from what I know, it's all men.

Int:

There's one... There's one woman

Victoria:

I mean... That says something

Int:

She made headlines about it cos she is the only female member, like she was facing loads of criticism cos people thought she was cheating, they were like "oh, there's no way she can be this good at Overwatch"...

Victoria:

But... but she is? She really is! It's like in the little group that I play with, uh, the other girl that is in it, aside from myself, is quite clearly the best in our group, and it's like the guys will know that and they all respect that, but I know that... We've had conversations before where one of them will go like "Well, [Name] is clearly the best" and it's just like, they say it like it's a surprising thing...

Uh... And it's just like, I feel like when women are, kinda good at video games in particular, or any kind of... hobby that's a majority male, people are surprised when she's good at it, I guess...

I feel like... I feel like I've gone off the topic a little bit!

Int:

No! It's fine, like the whole point of this is to just talk about anything you think is relevant to the subject, I'll end up listening to it all again and pulling bits out, it's the whole point of it.

Victoria:

Writing it all down... I remember doing this in Sixth Form as well... We did little interviews and we had to write it all out exactly as it was said, so... I won't put too much in that's not relevant.

Int:

It's fine, like, I've already transcribed six interviews, so another won't hurt.

Victoria:

But... Not sure what to add really... Do you mind repeating the initial question just, so I can go back a little bit?

Int:

So, do you think there's a relationship between the representation of women in video games and how female gamers are treated?

Victoria:

Uh... So, I guess with what I said about stereotypically, the women in video games are... Kind of... the classic like small waist etc, uh... I feel like that kind of expectation... I dunno, I guess because women don't always come across as particularly educated in games as well, I think that does transfer a little bit onto guys just thinking that women that are interested in this... like... Won't know as much of them... Like "Oh, so you like The Witcher? So, like answer this question about it and answer this question about it" and I feel like that happens a lot, not just in video games, but...

So I think maybe the portrayal like.... Women aren't always necessarily shown as being particularly educated or where they're sort of shown as being just objects, that can kind of cross over a little bit into the way that these guys that play games sort of... do think they're superior.

Again, like, not all guys are gonna be like that, but I've definitely met people that are...

Yeah...

Yeah, it's like there's one person in my head that's sticking out, and I'm like "I'm not a fan".

Int:

Fair enough

Victoria:

Yeah, but uh, yeah, I feel like I'm gonna start struggling for things to add now, so

Int:

That's fine then, I mean, if there's nothing else you want to add that's totally fine, you're more than welcome to message me, email me, whatever, if you think of something. This thing isn't gonna be finished until like November, so, you've got time.

Victoria:

If anything does pop up, I'll ping it over.

Int:

Please do! Even if you're sitting there like "I don't know if it's relevant", just send it, cos if I can use it, I'll use it, I've got 40,000 words to fill.

Victoria:

40,000 words? That's a lot! That's... just a few

Int:

But yeah, thank you for doing this today, it's one less interview to worry about.

Victoria:

No worries – I should've just said we'd do it on Discord straight away, cos, guess who's not the best at replying to her emails on time?

Int:

Yeah well, I kinda figured if I could do it by email there'd be less transcribing, and I could get it done fairly quickly, and then... Nah, so

Victoria:

Hopefully this will be okay

Int:

This is all good, thank you!

Transcript 7

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Awesome, so firstly, how do you define video games?

Sofie:

thats really difficult to answer

today it would mean something with a playable character that you control through a series of events

Int:

Is that what it means to you, or in general?

Sofie:

in general i suppose

Int:

What are they to you?

Sofie:

you mean how to i feel about them or what i think they actually are?

Int:

Whatever you want

Sofie:

i dont know really

Int:

Okay, so we'll stick with your general definition then!

Sofie:

i'm a logical person so to me its a a digital game on any electronic platform

Int:

Boom, sorted

Sofie:

Cool

Int:

Based on that, how often do you play games in a week? And what do you usually play?

Sofie:

i play games every day. usually on the ps4 but I also play a lot of mobile games on my ipad whilst watching tv

i tend to play rpg's for the most part

occasionally i have played mmo's but I don't enjoy them as much as single player games

Int:

Would you call yourself a gamer?

Sofie:

Yes

Int:

Why?

Sofie:

because of how often and how many hours i tend to play games for. It would be a couple of hours each day usually, which adds up to a lot of time.

Int:

Okay so now we'll get into the meaty bit

What experiences have you had, positive or negative, in person or online, that came about as a result of you being a gamer?

Sofie:

okay well the positives are that i met a lot of friends and a partner through gaming. It was how we connected with a mutual love of games

Negatives wise, when i played League of Legends, there is a lot of negative comments on there, such as being called a 'noob' or berrated if you play badly

the other negative would be the arguments with my parents, who think i am too old and a girl, so should not play games
but in terms of myself, gaming is massively positive in that its a form of escapism for me, and playing games makes me happy

Int:

You said you play more single player games - is that because of issues with online games like LoL or your own preference?

Sofie:

its probably a mix of the two. I prefer single players anyway because I like having a storyline with characters I get attached to, as well as having better graphics. Whilst I used to play both types of games, I no longer play many online games because of the abuse you tend to get. Its very immature, and I found myself getting angry at online strangers so I decided to stop playing them

Online games also tend to be dominated by young teenage boys, which i think leads to the poor community

Int:

That's fair enough - a wise decision

Going back to your parents though, thinking you shouldn't game because you're a girl - has this been an issue all your life? With the age thing simply coming into play later?

Sofie:

When I was really young, so before secondary school it didn't bother them because I would only play a game occasionally. However it's always been an issue with them that I am a girl. They don't understand why I enjoy it. As a teenager they tolerated it as long as I was getting good school results. But as I got into sixth form and beyond, its where the age thing came into play. They think its for teenage boys, not adult women they have also never had a problem with my brothers playing games

Int:

So they weren't exactly subtle about it being a girl thing?
or a gender thing

Sofie:

no not subtle at all, my parents have always treated me differently to my brothers in many aspects of life, gaming hasn't been any different. Although I think recently i got

through to them about how for me its a form of escapism, just like they watch tv or read books. My brother also defended me on this one, telling them its no different from me watching tv every day, but the younger generations tend to play games instead

Int:

What did they expect you to be doing instead though? If video games weren't suitable what did they think was?

Sofie:

they expect me to be putting a lot more hours into work, until i graduated it was to study more. They expect me to put as many hours as i do into gaming, as something productive like working out

basically they think i'm lazy and should be doing a lot more productive tasks. My dad works 50 hours a week, goes to the gym most days and spends the rest of his time cleaning/tidying the house. he implies that he expects me to do the same

Int:

Do they expect the same of your brothers?

Sofie:

at the moment one of my brothers lives away from home so they don't really see or control what he does. my youngest brother is 17, he's expected to get school work done but does spend most of his time on the ps4. i think its an age related thing rather than gender though

Int:

That's fair enough, can't recommend gaming over school work... Heh

Sofie:

yeah i totally never did that...

Int:

Same...

Moving on!

Based on the games you play, what are your thoughts and opinions about the representation of women in video games?

Sofie:

single player rpg's tend to do the best job at making the genders equally represented. in the case of Horizon zero dawn, the main character is female. she's presented in appropriate gear for the game, and is an all round great character for female gamers. Also in other games like fallout 4 and far cry 5, its gives you the option at the start about whether you want to play as male or female in a game, which doesn't affect the overall gameplay except for cut scene differences or minor dialogues

i think game developers are becoming more aware of the problem games like lara croft created, with women in games only having scantily clad armour and were made to look more attractive for male gamers

in older single player games, this isn't really the case. For example in the older assassins creed games you could hire concubines to help hide you, which evolved into blending into small groups instead as the games evolved

Int-:

So they's changing with the times?

Sofie:

yeah i think so for sure, in the single player rpg world that is. I think big developers with the blockbuster games like far cry are realising its important to evolve with the changing landscapes, with more female gamers

this may not be the case with mmo's or other genres though, i'm not sure

Int:

That's fine, it's based on your opinions and experiences afterall

the final part is taking everything we've spoken about and combining it

In your opinion, is there a relationship between how women are represented in video games and how female gamers are treated?

Sofie:

i think it depends on the types of game. For online games, where women are represented as trying to look attractive, e.g. barely any clothes etc, it has had an impact on female gamers. For example female streamers on websites like twitch, capitalise on this to stream wearing revealing tops to get views. It also has lent to women getting more abuse on online gamers, as they are seen as weaker gamers in general

its probably also where my parents got their view of me being a female gamer. When they were younger, the main game they had on ps1 was tomb raider. this was a time where gaming was pitched at men, having these attractive female leads

however, with modern day rpg's, i think there's been a more positive impact. a lot of my female friends now own consoles and really enjoy playing them. i think in some way we all stick to non-online games with strangers to stop any mistreatment or abuse but these new games maybe opening up a narrative for women to start talking about games more amongst friends

Int:

A mix of positive and negative impacts then?

Sofie:

Yeah

Int:

Is there anything else you want to add?

Sofie:

i think i covered everything

unless you have anymore questions?

Int:

Nope! I'm good!

Transcript 8

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Tamsin:

Fire away

Int:

Awesome! So firstly, how do you define video games?

Tamsin:

Erm games you can play using a computer or a tv I think, that requires a console and technology

Int:

And based on that, how often do you play games in a week ?

Tamsin:

I hardly play weekly anymore as I'm just really busy. I would say i play a couple of times in a few months actually.

Int:

Aw that sucks 😞

Tamsin:

Yes definitely. A lot of the time during university if I had free time I would play on my playstation almost everyday.

I guess maybe then I was more of an active gamer than now but yes I think I would still class myself as a gamer because I would fall into the same routine if I started playing now.

Int:

Have you had any experiences with other people?

Tamsin:

Do you mean playing games with other people?

Int:

Yeah

Tamsin:

Yes online I've played multiplayer games with other people also using the game. And also with family members in person when they come over or just with my brother.

Int:

So gaming is a social activity for you as well?

Tamsin:

Yh definitely

It becomes a lot more fun when you are playing with other people as well. It just allows you to do more.

Int:

Awesome!

Any other experiences you want to mention?

Tamsin:

Just that I've pretty much played video games thought my childhood till now I think. I had a PlayStation since I was little and we got newer versions as they came out and just changed the games we used to play. Probably depending on age range and whats popular at the time.

Throughout my*

Int:

So then, in the games you play, what are your thoughts about the representation of women in them?

Tamsin:

The games I usually play are call of duty, fifa or car racing games. I feel they are definitely under represented. In the campaign for cod the protagonist is male and the woman only show in side roles and hardly ever. During fifa the players are male but I'm not sure if there is a way of playing the female teams as I haven't tried before. The car racing games hardly show the players/drivers anyway so not really much to say in those I think.

Haven't tried before*

Int:

With fifa they did introduce female players a couple of years ago but it's not something they mention very often 🙄

Not sure if it has much effect on women playing the games or if most are deterred from it.

I generally just played the games I wanted to play regardless

And I feel a lot of women may think the same but also feel and notice the under representation

Int:

So in a similar vein, do you think the representation of women in video games impacts female gamers?

Tamsin:

I can't speak for all, it didn't really impact me as I played whatever i wanted even if there was no representation simply because I enjoyed the games.

But I understand if there would be irritation around the general representation of women in these games.

Int:

That's fair

Do you think the representation effects the treatment of female gamers at all?

Tamsin:

I haven't experienced any negative treatment if I mention I play games, just once my younger (11year old) cousin showed genuine surprise when he found out I play quite violent games and that I'm actually good. But other than that not really personally. I think a few people may think similar and just feel surprise more than anything else. I feel like it's quite common for there to be many female gamers.

I think if there was more representation of women as capable of the game within the games there would be less surprise

E.g. a female assassins creed maybe

Int:

Yeah that makes sense

Is there anything else you wanna comment on about the topic of women and gaming?

Tamsin:

Just that I think the representation of women in games differ by the type of games. Like I mentioned earlier it's more of a lack of representation in violent games. Whereas

games like sims or Mario kart it's pretty normal for everyone to play those games rather than having a targeted male or female audience.

Int:

That makes sense, it'll obviously differ from genre to genre

Tamsin:

Yh definitely.

Int:

Awesome, so if there's nothing else you want to mention then we're pretty much done!
Feel free to message me if you have any thoughts on the matter, otherwise we're all good 😊

Transcript 9

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Sorry it's taken me so long to get around to it, but I'm finally get started with the "interview" process!

As it's happening over email, the process will obviously take a bit longer than the half an hour or so stated in the consent form, but it does mean you have more flexibility and can reply when it best suits you.

To begin with, there'll be a couple of questions and from then it'll be a largely free discussion (or as free as it can be via email).

To get started, how do you define video games?

And based upon your definition, how often would you say you play video games in a week (and what do you play)?

Martina:

To get started, how do you define video games?

I define video games as a way to escape from reality. A way to relax, socialise, role play, to become another person/ character.

And based upon your definition, how often would you say you play video games in a week (and what do you play)?

When I do find the time to play I would say probably around 2-3 hours mainly during the evenings. During the weekends I would play with my kids.

I like to play a range of games. From RPG's, J-RPG's, Adventure, Simulated, FPS and Casual. Currently the games I am playing are BF1, The Sims 4, Kingdom Come Deliverance, Farming Simulator 17 and Euro Truck Simulator.

Int:

Nice! So based on this, would you call yourself a gamer? And what's your reasoning behind it?

Martina:

Omg! I'm so sorry I forgot to reply back!

based on this, would you call yourself a gamer? And what's your reasoning behind it?

Yes I would call myself a gamer. I don't think there is no set definition as to what a gamer is. I am a person who loves games. I get excited when a new game gets announced. I also get excited when a new game gets released. I enjoy playing games. I enjoy meeting and socialising with people I meet in multilayer games. I also enjoy chatting about games with other people.

Int:

Don't worry about it!

It sounds like gaming really does bring you a lot of joy! The main part of this is talking about your experiences as a gamer so we're coming nicely onto that now - Have there been any stand out experiences in your life that came about as a result of being a gamer?

Or is there anything you just want to talk about regarding being a gamer?

Martina:

I wouldn't say there is anything that stands out in terms of experiences of being a gamer. I have played games from a very young age. But one thing I have realised especially now being an adult. Many men assume alot of the time that everyone on their team or in that particular match is a male. They never seem to think that females do play games also, but if they were to play games, they wouldn't think female would be playing a FPS game for example. It would be really nice if there was a bit of equality in games that women wouldn't get teased or harassed for playing a particular game. I have had messages sent from strangers in the past saying about how i should play games like My Horse and Me 2! When I have had messages like this it did get me a little down, but I believe that females are as as good as men at games, and that we

shouldn't suffer any form of harassment from men either. I believe that games is meant to be fun and for all to enjoy.

Int:

It's cool! That's why I sent out reminders

You mentioned you've been gaming from a young age - what was it like being a gamer as you were growing up?

Martina:

I enjoyed being a gamer growing up. I have many fond memories of playing games. I used to sneak to play games on my mum's Amstrad CPC 464. Looking back, the games would take ages to load!

My first console I owned was the Nintendo NES. The console was at my dad's house and I would spend pretty much all weekend playing on it. My favourite game to play was TMNT and Duck Hunt. I would play the games for hours on end. Always trying to better myself and try and get further in the game than previously. I remember getting annoyed at that age when someone would turn off the console. Because it meant many hours playing was lost!

After the NES I had the SEGA Mega Drive. But I have to admit the best times I had was when I bought my GameCube. I used one month of my wages to pay for it! I remember owning the GameCube was the first time I had completed a Legend of Zelda game. I thought back then and still do that the GameCube was the best console for that generation of consoles. I was the only one out of my friends who owned the GameCube. All my other friends had the PS2.

Growing up and playing games throughout my childhood I never faced any criticism that video games were meant to be just for boys.

Int:

Thanks for being so detailed!

I'm glad you mentioned that you didn't face the criticism that gaming was for boys, especially as you mentioned getting some criticism in recent years - though it definitely sounds like that wouldn't have held you back anyway.

We'll move onto the next (and final) part now, which is talking about your thoughts and opinions about the representation of women in the video games you play (or as a whole, which you want to talk about) - this can be absolutely anything you want to mention!

Martina:

Hmm.. Not sure where to start really on this. I believe that in order for game companies to sell games that have either a main female character in it or multiples of females in it, they pretty much always seem to sexualise women. Many of the games that are catered for the Japanese market, the women usually tend to have massive breasts and lack of clothing on their body, like short skirts for example. Games like Dead or Alive, much of the emphasis usually is around the breasts and the physics in them. But the Japanese market is not the only ones who sexualise women, I believe the Western market still sexualise women but in a different way.

But enough about sexualisation of women, another thing about women in games is how, depending on the game women need to get rescued 'by their hero'. For example, every Mario game, Princess Zelda ALWAYS needs to get rescued. Its like women always need to be rescued and that we need to wait for a guy to come the rescue. I do not know of a game where the table is reversed and the female rescues the guy. I could be wrong.

Don't get me wrong, I think its awesome that there are more female characters in games, or where there is an option to choose if you want to play either male or female in a main storyline.

Int:

There was one Princess Peach game for DS where you could rescue Mario, but that's probably about it - and it didn't exactly subvert anything either seeing as her "powers" were her emotions....

You mention that women need saving in games, but what other roles have you noticed them filling? If at all!

And what kind of positive representation is out there that you like to see?

Just a quick reminder about this - we're almost done, and I'd love to be able to include this interview in my work!

If it's stumped you, that's fine, we can move into the next (and I promise the final) question :)

Martina:

sorry I've been so busy! I swear I have a brain like a fish!

I would like to say even though a lot of games have women who need to be saved. It is nice to see games where females are the main character of the game and don't actually need saving. Like Lara Croft for example or Aloy from Horizon Zero Dawn.

I think for me it would be nice to see main female characters who were less attractive. For example ones who did not have the perfect body shape. Or a main character who is a Tom boy and doesn't like to wear revealing clothing. I know this is a dream and would never happen because having a character with a huge sex appeal is what sells games.

(I think I poorly explained myself here. I really struggled to say what I wanted to say. But I hope this makes sense.)

Int:

That makes perfect sense! Don't stress about it :)

The last part is whether you think there's a relationship between the representation of women in video games and the treatment of female gamers?

Once again, this is 100% your opinion!

Martina:

This is a tough one. I would say yes. This is because if women were not sexualised in majority of games then perhaps male gamers would treat women with more respect. But on the other hand I also believe that the treatment towards women gamers is because of society and that many people still view games as a male hobby or way to have fun.

Int:

Awesome, it's definitely a tough question to answer, that's why I'm writing 40,000 words on it

That pretty much sums it all up, but if there's anything else you want to add, now's your chance!

Transcript 10

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Sorry it's taken me so long to get around to it, but I'm finally get started with the "interview" process!

As it's happening over email, the process will obviously take a bit longer than the half an hour or so stated in the consent form, but it does mean you have more flexibility and can reply when it best suits you.

To begin with, there'll be a couple of questions and from then it'll be a largely free discussion (or as free as it can be via email).

To get started, how do you define video games?

And based upon your definition, how often would you say you play video games in a week (and what do you play)?

Sara:

I think video games are a fun way to socialise with people and to kinda distance yourself from reality when you need to. Id say I play roughly 20 hours a week

I play mainly Elder Scrolls, or any first person shooter games like Overwatch. Stuff that is very multiplayer.

Int:

Hey,

Based on what you've told me, would you call yourself a gamer? And what other reasons are there behind your decision?

Sara:

I'd definitely call myself a gamer because I enjoy it, I enjoy every type of game and it's one of my favourite hobbies. It's what brought me and my friends and boyfriend together as well.

Int:

Awesome - this leads us nicely to the main part of this which is talking about your experiences as a gamer. That is to say, have there been any stand out experiences in your life as a result of being a gamer, or is there any experiences you've had that you just want to talk about?

You have total free reign with this, so you can bring up anything you want - positive or negative experiences, in person or online, whatever you want!

Sara:

Positive sides:

Meeting people through games, having some of the best and funniest moments through gaming. I met my boyfriend through Xbox when I was 11, it's how we bonded and even today it's what we do to spend time together. I'd stay up with my family playing games till 4am. Got to the point where my older brother's would want to watch me play games that I was good at because it was fun for us. Was a solid bonding experience between us all. My family (especially my brother's) were extremely supportive in letting me play what I want to, and to take no slack from others.

Negative sides: the earliest abuse I remember from online was when I was 10 years old playing Halo Reach with my dad, we'd be on our team and some older man in the chat sent me a private message threatening to rape me and find out where I lived. He had no idea how young I was, still it was a bit shocking for a 10 year old. But he knew I was a girl, the gamertag and appearance in game gave it away. Other times through Xbox I'd have constant verbal abuse such as rape threats, boys asking for nudes, trying to trick me into sending pictures or my information, and I was barely 12 years old at the time. I'd always have messages from other players calling me "b*tch" or worse. Even today, while I'm playing games like Overwatch, which is known for the players toxicity, I'm told that I shouldn't be playing this game because of my gender. I get called "c*nt" and am constantly teased for being a girl gamer. I was playing Rainbow Six Siege the other day and the moment I spoke in game I was hearing "oh it's girl gamer, ay baby what's your name"

And then immediately teasing me and saying how I'm a whore and assuming that I'm into really kinky sex.

By now, 10 years of gaming online and offline with all kinds of people. This sort of abusive isn't new, but that doesn't mean it's not right. The abuse still happens but I've gotten thicker skin. Just block them n keep playing, but I know for a fact girls don't talk when gaming because they know the attention and abuse will target them. The gaming community is getting slightly more diverse. But the idea of gaming as a male hobby is still a dominant ideology in society.

Int:

That's some honestly shocking experiences, thank you for bringing them up though - your mentality is the most interesting part, you still call yourself a gamer and still game how you want, so it's obviously not stopping you!

Just quickly regarding your upbringing, it sounds like gaming was a good family experience for you growing up, but what was it like being a young girl and a gamer outside of family?

Sara:

Definitely still call myself a gamer, I know these people that threaten girls feel protected behind their obscured identities. We only know their usernames on games, so I'm sure they feel quite disguised online.

However, outside of the family. If I were playing games with friends or if I were to say "ye I'm a girl and I play Halo and call of duty" people wouldn't take me seriously. Always asked "oh you play games? Prove it". I had to prove myself at something that's supposed to be fun and exciting.

It always felt like I was expected to be bad at games. Or that I only play really simple ones. As someone who enjoys watching professional tournaments in E-sports. I know maybe 2 all girl teams. One isn't even a global team. This just proves that we aren't taken seriously as a gender that enjoys video games directed towards men and boys.

Int:

I honestly didn't realise all girl e-sports teams existed, that's distressing to me! What teams are they (I want to look them up!)?

Moving on now to the last section - in the games you play, what do you notice about the representation of women?

This can be absolutely anything at all that you wanna mention!

Sara:

There's Team Asterisk, and another csgo team sponsored by hyper X but I can't remember the name

In January overwatch just barely got it's first female league player

<https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/newsbeat-42974081>

Although she wasn't involved in the competitive games going on now???

Female representation in games is hard because there's female Spartans in Halo which is cool. Do they have any leading roles, nah. Many female characters are

sexualised like in GTA. Even in Overwatch the skin tight costumes show everything. And there's more than one female character that wear a skin suit. So I think even though in games we're getting female roles, they're still designed for the male gaze.

Int:

Do you think there's been any changes in representation over the last few years? At least in the games you play or know about?

Sara:

Definitely, I think it's gotten slightly better. But I do take it with a grain of salt. Like in Fortnite you get randomly assigned a gendered player. You could be randomly a female. Which I find interesting because most games let you either choose one or the other or you were strictly male. The characters in Fortnite don't seem overly sexual at all either. So, there is progress there.

Obviously GTA does have gender stereotypes: the nagging wife of the main character, the promiscuous young teenage daughter. Angry sassy black female characters.

Completely fulfils the female trope. So there is criticising there.

I'd say that games are starting to know their audiences slightly better. Knowing that girls do play some games, and perhaps if there was a broad variety of characters it could be more attractive to the audiences. With recent games such as Overwatch, although some women do have the skin tight suits, that show details of their genitalia, not all of them do. They don't rely on their bodies to win a game either. So as a feminist I'm quite supportive of the different personalities they gave the female characters, Strong, cute, funny, sexy, etc. Obviously it's how the rest of society treats these characters and perceives them. In Horizon Zero Dawn they have a modest female protagonist. In Senua's Hellblade, they have a female protagonist that even suffers from mental illnesses. So I would say that the industry is slightly expanding its views when it comes to smaller companies making games. For the bigger titles like Call of Duty, Battlefield 1 they got some work to do because those are catered towards men specifically.

Int:

Following on really from what you've mentioned, about changing representation but also parts that have remained stagnant - do you think, taking a look at everything you've spoken about, that there's a link between how women are presented in video games and how female gamers are treated?

Sara:

I'm not sure if they're directly linked. But I believe there's a deeper issue that influences both points. The root of the issue goes way back further than video games. I've been reading a lot of Foucault, and Judith Butler who explain power organisations like media and our culture which is patriarchal, create ideologies that control women's bodies through how they're "performed". Through how we talk and describe the subject with language. Women are "domestic" "weak" "sexual" "erotic". Men are "strong" "independent". These discourses and ideologies are what video games are basing their gender stereotypes on, it's how they've been taught to talk about gender. A masculine buff male protagonist who's the epitome of male and testosterone. And his lesser, weaker woman. It's western society to be honest. And I'm glad some games are breaking those affixed ideologies, that control how we talk about women. It's this discourse and language that has society assuming that video games are for boys. Women are assumed to the role of domestic house keepers, who are feminine. They shouldn't have links to warfare games that celebrate death and violence. They should be playing Nintendogs and animal crossing. Simpler games. Which is completely false. The treatment of women and the performance of women in video games are all tied back to these controlling ideals created and solidified by our patriarchal culture that teaches these ideas. Thankfully, they're slowly breaking these boundaries.

Int:

Honestly, I love how you got Judith Butler in here.

Also, I genuinely have no idea how to proceed cos you've worded it very eloquently! What I will ask though is if you think it is an issue that is solely faced by Western society?

Sara:

I don't want to assume that video games and the culture with gaming is dominantly western, pop culture is very westernised though. But with my experience in different countries, mainly third world. They didn't really care for video games, but there was still strong sexism. I think modern cities that promote gaming culture is basing these ideals off of old views of what gender should play what their gender role entails.

Int:

A fair point - games are a part of our media after all, and that reflects the views, or perceived views, of society!

Transcript 11

Int:

It's just gonna be a couple of quick questions, and then it's mostly up to you – don't worry about anything you're saying, if it's not "fine", cos it's all fine!

So firstly, how would you define video games?

Lillie:

Uh, I guess somewhere to just escape to, like... Relaxing time, something to do in spare time.

Int:

Okay!

So then based on that, how often do you play video games?

Lillie:

Probably like 3 times a week or something, whenever I actually get time to between uni and work.

Int:

Yeah – so is that like 3 days, or...?

Lillie:

Uh... Yeah, 3 afternoons, like night-time type things.

Int:

How long do they last for?

Lillie:

Uh, at the moment, an hour or so, but when I get a new console, probably longer.

Int:

Exciting times!

So then, based on that, would you call yourself a gamer?

Lillie:

Yeah – definitely [Laughs]

Int:

[Laughs]

Lillie:

I used to play games all the time, it's just I don't have time to do it anymore.

Int:

That's fair enough – nice and easy!

So that's the first couple of questions done. So basically, from here it's literally – we're just gonna talk about your experience. So, when I say talking about your experience, I literally mean you can talk about anything that's happened to you, or anything in your life that stands out as a result of you being a gamer.

Lillie:

Uh... It's mainly online games that I've found have it becomes a problem, like GTA¹² Online. I have my name in my gamertag, then quite a few guys will message me like they don't like girls online, will destroy cars, will put bounties on me in GTA, just because I'm a girl online.

Int:

Wow...

Lillie:

Other than that, like, a lot of people that I play games with are guys, so they don't really have an opinion on me being a girl and playing games, cos sometimes I'm better

¹² Grand Theft Auto

at them than them, but other than that the only times that I find sexism from being a gamer is at work, when we get, you know, customers that won't listen to female staff, and will only listen to male staff – that's the only time that I really experience anything like sexism-wise in games.

Int:

So then... what about positive experiences?

Lillie:

Uh... I don't really get many [Laughs].

I'm more of, like, a story based gamer, like The Last of Us, and Bioshock, and stuff like that. I try and stay away from online games just because of previous experiences. I haven't had the typical "I'm out of ammo", and then everyone gives me ammo because I'm a girl – nothing like that.

I've never had like good experiences, except maybe guys following me in games, and that's about it.... That's not even that positive! [Laughs]

Int:

That just sound creepy...

So then, obviously, you don't have to go into it if you don't want to, but if we look at the negative experiences you've had, aside from the general sexism, is there any –

[Interruption]

Is there any one incident that stands out?

Lillie:

Uh, just mainly the GTA one, cos I got a message after blowing up my car, killed me a couple of times, put a bounty on me, used their own money just to send a message to say they don't like girls online, and then continue to say quite horrible stuff to me... That's the one that stands out and it made me stop wanting to play online.

Int:

Yeah... So then, what about in person? So, like, you call yourself a gamer, have you been a gamer your whole life?

Lillie:

Uh, I guess I have. I've always grown up with consoles in the house from the first PS1 to now the PS4, it's only the last maybe 10 years or so that I've fully gotten into gaming, so yeah, I guess...

Int:

So what was it like growing up?

Lillie:

It was a lot of watching my dad and my brother play like games like Tomb Raider, watch my brother play GTA. I didn't really go on much, but it always intrigued me to see other people play them, which has actually continued now, watching like YouTubers play games, so for me it was always like a bonding experience in the house that my dad and my brother - me and my sister would sit in a room and watch my dad, or my brother play Tomb Raider, that's what it was like really.

Int:

What about playing yourself, was it encouraged, or...?

Lillie:

Yeah... Uh...I got my very first, my own console, proper one, not just like a DS, when I was in year 11 or year 10. My dad was more than happy for me to get one, yeah, he would actually come to midnight launches with me, he was more than happy to go – if he knew it made me happy then he pushed me to continue playing.

Int:

That's nice and supportive!

So then... In regard to the games you play, you mention you play a lot of story-based games, what do you notice about the representation of women within them?

Lillie:

Well... I think it's just the games that I choose, but I normally play games that actually have strong female characters. So, I played The Last of Us, that has Ellie and Tara, both very strong female characters, and they're main characters!

Uh, Bioshock Infinite, that has Elizabeth... and the Lutece twins, so a lot of the strong based games that I've got all have like their main characters as... They're strong female roles, like Tomb Raider, Dishonored, things like that...

I'm not sure whether I do it on purpose.

Int:

You're just kinda drawn to them?

Lillie:

Yeah, I think when I was younger, there was only really Lara Croft, that was a strong female character. I saw her the most in games, but it's only recently that you've actually been able to get more of them, and having them as a lead character, and not just like some sidekick, or some [inaudible] character that dies at some point, not just... doesn't really do much...

Int:

Yeah

Lillie:

But actually has an impact in the game and the story!

Int:

Okay, so then what about games as a whole? Obviously, you work with them, so you know what's out there, uh... What sort of stands out?

Lillie:

I think... it's... there's still a lot of like... I know whenever I get parents come up to me that have daughters who want to get into gaming, I always get asked the question of

“you’re a female, what girly games do you play?”, and it’s... that [stigma] that there’s separate games for girls, and separate games for guys, when you can play the same games! But I think it’s because of games like FIFA, and CoD, and The Division, and things like that, that are still heavily male based. Like, if you look at a cover for CoD, there’s a male on the front. FIFA is a male game, Division has males on the front, and it’s kinda like they’re mainly online games, so it’s still that [stigma] of online is for male’s cos you’re showing them on the cover.

So, I think if they changed it around a little bit and put a female – a strong female on the cover, you’d probably get more girls playing online.

Int:

Yeah.

Lillie:

And not feel ashamed or being online or scared to be online.

Int:

So, obviously you’ve mentioned there’s been almost a change, and a movement toward having the strong female characters... What is it that you think makes the character strong, and makes you want to play [as] her?

Lillie:

I think it’s... Like the females like Elizabeth from Bioshock, and Ellie from The Last of Us, they’re not sexualised, they’re still female... They... They’re not put into tiny bits of armour or anything like that. They’re smart, they’ll fight back, they’re not weak, they’re not scared to have their own opinion.

Elizabeth, although she – you can’t play as her, she’s still a very strong part of the story, she is the pushing force of the story, she’s powerful, she’ll do whatever she needs to get through it.

And the same for Ellie, same for Emily from the Divi- no, Dishonored 2 even. Uh, that they’re just powerful, they’re not sexualised in any way, so it’s kind of nice cos there’s still things like GTA where the females on the cover are in bikinis and stuff. It’s just like... That’s not what we want anymore, we want strong female role models.

Int:

Actual human type women to play as would be nice...

Lillie:

Yeah!

Int:

So then –

[Interruption]

So, you mentioned it already, the idea that you've got the men on the covers of games, and so people don't really think they're for women to play, do you think on the whole that there's a relationship between the representation, or the lack of representation of women in games, and the treatment of them as gamers? Or even as people?

Lillie:

I think so... Cos... Although I don't hear it much from my male friends, I have heard from other girls that do play games online that they've had certain people say stuff cos they'll be playing games like GTA, where there's female prostitutes, there's no male prostitutes. There's girls in barely anything on the cover, in the game they're just sexual objects really, so I think that kind of effects how people would see girls that play online.

I think... uh... A couple of years about when GTA came onto like new consoles, or when it got onto PC, people were hacking it so female online gamers, their character just stripped off, had no clothes on – it's not that big of a deal, but it's still like that's what's happening.

It wouldn't happen to a male character, it only happens to the female ones. They do that, and like it'll continue until there's more strong female representation, so they're porting GTA 6, like around that, fully dressed female as the main character – I don't think it'll change...

Int:

That'd be nice, I might actually play it then.

Lillie:

[Laughs]

Int:

With that... do you think, you've mentioned that representation has changed, has the treatment of female gamers changed with it in recent years?

Lillie:

I think so, because now we're getting a lot more female gamers on YouTube, uh... getting more respect for those gamers. I still see it, like as I said, in day to day work, there's just some males that are set in their ways, and they don't think girls know anything about games, but you get a lot more men that actually push for girls to be in games, that get involved in things, and not make a huge deal either.

That's the other thing, you can't make a huge deal about girls being gamers, cos it just has the reverse effect, that teenage boys will troll the whole thing, trying to push it, so I think it needs to happen by itself, but any little help would be great.

Int:

Much appreciated.

Lillie:

Yeah

Int:

Anything to make it a little bit easier.

I guess the last thing is if there's anything you want to mention about gaming, video games, anything you've noticed or want to get off your chest, cos this is a good opportunity to do it.

Lillie:

Yeah, there isn't anything else I want to say, just put more girls in online gaming, like on the covers and things, cos I think that's the bigger issue, like, when I try to sell a

game to a parent that's got a daughter, and I suggest CoD, or the Division, or FIFA, or anything like that, they automatically think it's a male game because of the cover. But if I suggest The Last of Us, or Horizon Zero Dawn, anything that has a female on the cover, they automatically think it's a girl game, which doesn't affect the male side of it, but it definitely affects what certain girls will play.

Int:

It's interesting that the story based games seem to cater more for the female audience than the male audience...

Lillie:

I think it's because story based games tend to have a lot more emotion in them, and because of that there's still that [stigma] of "boys aren't allowed to show their emotion" – I think it goes both ways, in that because males aren't really allowed by society to show their emotions, crying, things like that, that story based games tend to be geared more towards females because they'll be upset when a character dies. They'll be upset when something happens to a character they really like, or be happy when something great happens to them – they get attached more. That's why there's more strong females in that, cos I think the game industry still thinks that guys just want to go on a game and shoot things – which at times, I want to go on a game and shoot things! That's why I bought Far Cry [5]! So, I think it works both ways, sometimes, sexism in games...

Int:

Yeah! It's not just focused on women, it's a very problematic industry.

Transcript 12

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Hey, if you're still up for doing the interview for my thesis we can just do it over f messenger to suit when you're free?

Agatha:

No worries send it over I'll do it today!

(You know what I mean haha)

Int:

Just answer whenever, it's just questions - firstly, how do you define video games?

Agatha:

Hahahahaha okay to me Video games is the ability to play/live/dream in another world which is something that I probably wouldn't have even imagined. It's getting lost on a story line, or grinding that online multiplayer is something that I play and enjoy

Int:

Based on your definition, how much time do you spend playing games in a week?

Agatha:

Usually 4 a day so prob average 28-30

Int:

And based on that would you call yourself a gamer?

Agatha:

I would, anyone who can sit and enjoy and invest time in any sort of game on any sort of a device can call themselves a gamer,

Int:

Awesome! That's the easy part done 😄

This next part is about your experiences as a gamer, either online or in person, positive or negative, anything you remember in life that's affected you as a result of video games!

Agatha:

Oh god haha

Okay

Negative- I will always remember one time I went to a lan event and participated in a COD tournament ? Must have been modern warfare 2? But the backlash I got cause first I was a girl, and secondly I wasn't good is something I'll always remember, being really out of my comfort zone and thinking why bother play games when you get this sort of stuff at ya!

Positive stuff, the amount of people I have met! Either through online gaming, or just talking to people about games and their story line etc has really opened my friendship circle! Three of my closest mates I met through gaming 😊

Int:

Regardless of the negative, you still play games and call yourself a gamer - Does the positive outweigh the negative for you?

Agatha:

Absolutely I enjoy playing games and I'm not going to stop cause of a few 'keyboard' warriors so to speak

Int:

And has gaming always been a part of your life?

Agatha:

Every since I was little when I got my first console off my dad (swag mega drive!)

Int:

Swag mega drive :) That's staying in! So your parents encouraged it then?

Agatha:

My dad loved it and we used it to bond together, we would play streets of rage and golden in on the 64 together!

Int:

That's sweet! Are there any other experiences you want to mention before we go to the next bit?

Agatha:

Sorry I forgot

I'm sorry!!!

Int:

It's okay 😂😂

Agatha:

You can go next bit haha

Int:

For this bit, what are your thoughts on the representation of women in video games?

You can focus on the ones you play if you want to 😊

Agatha:

See I think that's a tough one! In fighting games, Japanese RPG's etc woman/girls are barely clothed and I think come across a bit ditsy! (Dead or alive was one game I remember thinking what are they playing at?! However you are starting to see some epic female game characters that prove you can still be a badass and wear all your clothes eg new tomb raider, Ellie last of us, Kait gears of war! But yet unfortunately there are more games that sexualised woman but we are getting there! (Slowly

Int:

So then what are women like in your favourite games?

Agatha:

I guess just badass and can come across as being able to do anything a man can do

Int:

Got any examples?

Agatha:

Defo Kait from gears, she goes into the army and takes control in any situation, the fact the next gears is gonna be about her is very exciting

Int:

It was good to see that at E3 this year! Like you said, we're starting to see more awesome female characters!

Though the representation is changing, you mentioned there are still issues of sexualisation in video games - the final part is whether you think there's any relationship between how female gamers are treated and female characters are presented?

Agatha:

Yeah I believe some comments that can be made towards female gamers stem from how female characters are perceived! I believe also the way some female characters are treated in games make people believe it's okay to act like that in real life, eg GTA

Int:

So like women as sex objects?

Agatha:

Yeah, treat em like shit and get away with it. Or being able to make comments without any consequences

Transcript 13

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Lyn:

Sorry I've only just seen this! Typically, I'm working every single day you named 🗣️ if it's easier for you I don't mind doing it over messenger xx

Int:

That's okay! We'll do it over messenger 😊

It'll be a couple of questions and a discussion - so the first question is how do you define video games?

Int:

Hi [Lyn], just a quick reminder about this! If you don't want to take part anymore that's totally fine, but I hope you do because your input will be super helpful!

Lyn:

How long do you need answers to be?

Int:

As long as you want

Lyn:

So I personally define video games firstly as my favourite hobby, it's what I do whenever I get spare time. I'd define them as a way for me to escape reality and to sort've get away if I've had a particularly hard or bad day.

Int:

Perfect!

Based on that, how often in a week do you play video games?

Lyn:

I would say at least 5 days a week, maybe around 10-15 hours a week

Int:

And would you call yourself a gamer?

Lyn:

I would define myself as a gamer yeah

Int:

Nice and easy 😊

From here on it'll just be your opinions, so feel free to say whatever you want

If you want to take time to think about an answer, that's cool, I'll just drop a message tomorrow to check you're all good :')

But firstly, you call yourself a gamer, it takes up a lot of time in your life as well - do you have any experiences in life that stand out as a result of that? This can be online, in person, positive or negative! Whatever you want

Lyn:

I would say it's caused a lot of experiences in my life. Due to my interest in games I decided to do a degree and masters in computer games development, I would love to eventually build a career based on video games due to this interest. I've also found myself working in stores that sell games just because I have such an interest and love to talk about them. I spent a fair amount of time playing games while growing up my and my mum wasn't very happy about it and one thing that will always stick with me was once when I was playing on my Xbox and I wouldn't just turn it off as I was in the middle of an online game, she said because she was annoyed 'why can't you just be like a normal girl?' Which forever stuck with me and put me off playing games for a while as I thought people would think of me as 'boyish' etc.

Hope this is the right sort of stuff you're looking for, if I've taken the question wrong just say 😊😊

Int:

If you think it's worth mentioning, then it's what I'm looking for!

What's interesting is how you're building yourself around it, even after your mum seemingly tried to stop you

Did that happen a lot as you were growing up?

Lyn:

Not really no, I grew up really close with my brother who is very much into his video games and still is, so normally I was playing games with him so I didn't really hear any comments about it from my parents.

Int:

So you did it together?

Lyn:

We did until I got my own Xbox 360 for Christmas

Int:

That's cute - even if your mum did lose her temper once!

Are there any other experiences you want to mention?

Lyn:

I remember the first ever time I played a video game, it was sonic the hedgehog on the mega drive. I was 5 and it was Christmas 2000, my dad has a camcorder of me playing it trying to sing along to green hill zone, that will stick with me forever.

Int:

That's adorable and also I'm pretty sure that was one of my first games too!

So then, based on the video games you play, what have you noticed about the representation of women within them?

Int:

Hiya, just a quick reminder about the interview question! We're almost done! So then, based on the video games you play, what have you noticed about the representation of women within them?

Lyn:

Based on the video games I play I notice there is a mix in the representation of women. It's obvious that the main characters in games are mostly men and a lot less female main characters but they do seem to be getting more female main characters as time goes on. Most of the time a lot of the main goals of the games are to save the damsels in distress but this is becoming less and less now. I'm also noticing that on games when you get to create your own character you used to only be able to make male characters and again in more recent times you are starting to be able to create your own female character which is good and I think a step in the right direction.

Int:

And then the final question - do you think there's a link between how women are presented in video games and how female gamers are treated?

Lyn:

I do definitely think there is a link between female game characters and how female gamers are treated.

Int:

Do you want to expand on that at all?

Lyn:

I think because you see a lot less female characters in games when some people see female gamers they assume that it's not their place to be there. Hopefully as time goes on and females are appearing more and more in games this will become less and less likely

Transcript 14

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

It shouldn't take too long, depends mainly on your answers :)

Int:

Firstly - how do you define video games?

Iris:

Coolio

Iris:

any game i can play on a console eg PS4, Wii, Xbox etc whether handheld or not

Iris:

e.g mobile and iPad games don't count

Iris:

computers do

Int:

Interesting, why not mobile or iPad?

Iris:

i'm not sure really

Iris:

i think it's because i define it as something with a story, whereas all the games i play on my mobile are just to pass the time while i'm travelling or before bed

Int:

(Sorry my Skype crashed)

Int:

That's fair enough! Based on your definition, how often do you play video games?

Iris:

a couple of times a week, more when school is out

Int:

And what do you play?

Iris:

which games specifically?

Int:

If you want, or just general genres

Iris:

platform games

Iris:

action-adventure games

Iris:

party games

Iris:

in fact let me just list then

Int:

Go for it

Iris:

various games in the AC, mario, sonic, zelda and fifa series

Iris:

plus [Brother] is teaching me to play fortnite

Int:

Oh wow

Iris:

also randomly

Int:

Fortnite is ridiculous

Iris:

starfox adventures

Iris:

lmao i know right? it made the news the other day

Int:

It's crazy

Int:

So then based on all that, would you call yourself a gamer?

Iris:

no, but only because it's not my main hobby

Int:

That's understandable really

Int:

Though you don't necessarily call yourself a gamer, we'll be talking about your experiences with video games and the representation within them from here on out

Int:

It's mainly free discussion!

Int:

But have there been any stand out experiences in your life as a result of video games? Or anything you'd like to mention about your experiences with them, either in person or online or whatever?

Iris:

what kind of experiences do you mean

Int:

Anything - for example with me, I'm working with and studying video games!

Iris:

hmmm

Iris:

i can't say that there have

Int:

What about with your family and playing games?

Iris:

how do you mean? have we had any experiences together?

Int:

Yeah!

Iris:

i mean it's something we all do together on a pretty regular occasion

Iris:

oh i took [brother] to comic con and he went and listened to some talks about it

Iris:

and played some old vintage games

Int:

See - there's your experiences!

Int:

You can honestly mention anything in your life that had something to do with video games

Iris:

oh i once bought three assassin's creed games in a week because i was so obsessed

Iris:

and i listen to the soundtracks now

Int:

Do you like story based games the best then? No playing online or anything?

Iris:

yes

Iris:

because then it's like an interactive movie

Iris:

and you feel like you're making progress

Int:

So you said you play games with your family fairly regularly, is that something you started or they kind of encouraged ?

Iris:

we just sort of started doing it

Iris:

i started when i was small. [sister] wasn't old enough to play yet but she she started when she was, and my mum just always got games that all of us could play

Iris:

i guess because [sister] saw me play and then [brother] saw me and [sister] play, they sort of picked it up

Int:

That's cute!

Int:

I'll stop tormenting you with this part now, here's the juicy bit - what are you thoughts about the representation of women in the video games you play?

Iris:

well

Iris:

i mostly played younger-skewing games until a few years ago

Iris:

but take mario as an example - princess peach is like the epitome of a damsel in distress

Int:

For sure

Iris:

and then on the adult end, it took them YEARS to have a female assassin in AC

Iris:

games like GTA are pretty sexist, i hear

Iris:

and the way women are rendered is terrible

Int:

The thing with Creed was that Evie wasn't even the main character, she was like... co-main character

Iris:

exactly

Iris:

and for the first few games, the lady played by Kristen Bell was just the chloe sullivan-type voice over the intercom

Int:

You'll have to explain to me what you mean by "chloe sullivan-type" :')

Iris:

blonde nerdy chick who's good with computers and exists to help the hero

Iris:

*glasses optional

Int:

Ahhhh, okay

Int:

What about in video games as a whole, are there any trends you're noticing?

Iris:

i know there's a lot of diversity pushing

Iris:

but as with everything i don't know how much is genuine and how much is people realising that it's profitable

Int:

It's a sad thing to realise...

Int:

For this part, feel free to just go off on one if you want to, or just mention anything you think is relevant to you

Iris:

fortnite has a couple of women skins but i think you have to win most of them

Iris:

gamergate scared me off

Iris:

oh one thing i've been thinking

Int:

Go on

Iris:

the thing i was thinking was

Iris:

diversity actually makes bigotry worse rather than better, because people perceive "their" things being taken away from them

Iris:

OH

Iris:

i have a kind of experience?

Int:

Go for it

Iris:

well remember pewdiepie? or however in god's name you spell that?

Int:

Yeah

Iris:

and that time he said the n-word

Int:

Yeah 🤔

but it made me realise that i don't play online games because i don't feel safe as a woman in those spaces

Int:

Honestly that's completely understandable

Int:

Like aside from personal preference in video games there's a lot more to consider when choosing what you want to play

Iris:

exactly and i was about to say

Iris:

i don't buy games where there are no women or opportunities to get women, which limits my choices lmao

Int:

I kinda wanna go back a bit to what you said about diversity

Iris:

sure

Int:

You mention there aren't many games with women in really, but you also feel like the introduction of more diversity only breeds bigotry

Iris:

not only

Iris:

but i've definitely seen it

Int:

From that perspective it sounds like a vicious circle, y'know?

Int:

I can definitely see where you're coming from though

Int:

So... I guess what I'm trying to get at is what do you feel is the best way to proceed?

Iris:

i think it is a vicious cycle, but most definitely a necessary one

Iris:

i think all struggles wrt to diversity and inclusion are like that, you know?

Int:

Yeah, I get where you're coming from

Iris:

like, look at the star wars fiasco when those dudebros made that cut of the last jedi (?) with no women and no poc in it

Iris:

but that franchise is also insanely popular

Int:

Wait what?! Is that fans remaking it?

Iris:

oh yeah google it

Iris:

a few dudebroey fans didn't like how much rey, finn, and all the other women and poc were in the movie so they made a cut without them in it

Int:

I'm disappointed but honestly not surpriaed

Iris:

yeahhhhh same tbh

Iris:

they were SO triggered

Int:

It's the epitome of the point you're making

Iris:

and then with BP

Iris:

in china they didn't like it because there were too many Black people

Iris:

but it made a shit load of money, which means that studios will have more faith in it because they see there's an audience

Int:

In essence, having diversity will be met by resistance, but it's a necessary fight

Int:

And money talks

Iris:

exactly

Int:

It's a cynical view to have but it definitely makes sense

Iris:

studios like to make money, creatives like to make people happy

Iris:

diversity does both

Iris:

and lbr, even if i don't always agree with kevin feige, i'm sure he and all the other movie executives all over the world are happy that they're making people happy, at least on some level

Int:

This is actually bringing us really nicely into the last topic

Int: And it's basically whether you think there's a relationship between the representation of women in video games and how female gamers are treated

Iris:

sorry, skype keeps freezing

Int:

That's okay!

Iris:

I feel like half of this conversation is missing and now i can't remember what i said

Int:

Yeah it looks like it

Iris:

oh wait nvm

Iris:

ok yes to answer your question

Iris:

because all media - games, books, tv, film - is escapism

Int:

Looks like I'm missing some but go on

Iris:

and for a very long time, men were the sole gatekeepers of those forms of entertainment

Int:

Yeah

Iris:

meaning that they dictated how the women who they allowed to be there appeared

Iris:

so they had them appear as fantasies more often than not - which on some level is understandable, because when you read a story or play a game or whatever you want to appear as the hero, you know?

Int:

Yeah I get it

Iris:

except the problem was that they never represented women the way WOMEN wanted to be represented

Int:

So it was male made for male audiences?

Iris:

so then you have these women who come on playing these video games demanding to be treated properly and it's like they're encroaching on THEIR space

Iris:

yeah, exactly

Iris:

and it's not like they act like this to women in real life (although they probably do) it's just that here, in video game land, they're the ones who are in charge and they resent being told that they have to be another way

Iris:

it's like that black mirror episode

Int:

From the latest season in the spaceship?

Iris:

yup

Int:

That's actually a perfect analogy

Iris:
that episode is PURE GOLD

Int:
There was a lot to unpack from it but the message really does stand out

Int:
But it goes back to what you were saying about diversity making bigotry worse
Women standing up for themselves in this space just makes men most hostile toward
them in a way

Iris:
yeah so it's a massive uphill battle

Iris:
but a worthwhile one, of course

Int:
Yeah

Int:
Is there anything else you wanna add?

Iris:
i don't think so

Iris:
i mean i can't think of anything

Int:
Awesome! Then we've done it!

Transcript 15

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Hello!

Sorry it's taken me so long to get around to it, but I'm finally get started with the "interview" process!

As it's happening over email, the process will obviously take a bit longer than the half an hour or so stated in the consent form, but it does mean you have more flexibility and can reply when it best suits you.

To begin with, there'll be a couple of questions and from then it'll be a largely free discussion (or as free as it can be via email).

To get started, how do you define video games?

And based upon your definition, how often would you say you play video games in a week (and what do you play)?

Aoife:

How do I define video games?

I think they are games that are played on single purpose consoles - DX, Xbox, Wii etc, or have to be purchased and loaded up (as in PC games). I don't consider games that have been downloaded as app onto smart phones, or even dumb phones (Snake) as video games. I am not sure why, i guess they are nowadays, when they usen't to be. The lines are getting merged now.

If I considered phone and console games I probably play on them every day. But if its consoles alone, I probably only play on that ON AVERAGE once a week. In actuality, I tend to binge-play, not playing for a long time, sometimes years, and then, when the right game come along, everyday for a few hours, given the chance! Games i like in particular are the Lego games (Harry Potter, Indiana Jones, Star Wars etc). I like to play them until I have completed them. I also LOVE Zelda. I originally played it around 2006 on the Wii. Now I am playing Breath of the Wild, which I love. I love all the little side missions, and the fact I can wander around and discover small challenges or hidden shrines. I love the detail - pretty much all the people you meet have something to say, that is different from the last person, and they have names. And not all the locations behave the same, so in some stables you can get a new mission, some you have mini challenges, or just find new weapons and sleep, or find a recipe and cook some meals. I also love that when you die you dont have to go right back to the

beginning. I used to play games like Chucky Egg, donkey Kong, Citadel, Pong (!!), The Hobbit (on a BBC computer!), and Robin of Sherwood (both loaded up from cassette tapes). I hated that you had to go back to the beginning each time you died. I like games that follow a narrative and have an end.

Int:

Awesome! So you mentioned you play console games maybe once a week, but then there's that difference when you take into account mobile games (and like you said, the lines between console games and mobile games are blurring now) - would you call yourself a gamer at all?

And what's your thinking behind your answer?

For example, some people call themselves "hardcore" or "casual" or define themselves however they please!

(Also, Breath of the Wild is AMAZING, so easy to lose hours into it, I'm always scared to check my time spent on it)

Aoife:

Would I call myself a gamer at all? That's a good question. When do you stop being a game player and become a gamer? I am probably not a gamer in the sense that I hang out in Game or Hot Topic (not sure if that's a store you have over there). But I enjoy playing games and keeping vaguely in touch with new consoles and games. I did go to a fancy dress party dressed as Link, but that's about it for cosplay!! As an adult and a parent I don't have so much available time, but I spend a lot of the time I do have free playing games, but only if they are particular games. I wouldn't play just anything. And sometimes I have to make a conscious effort to stop and walk away otherwise my time would be eaten up! I think I am a casual gamer. I did get into Pokemon obsessively for a while but got weaned off it when I moved to an area with bad signal! And that's a mobile phone game and not a console game, but definitely a game.

I haven't bought the extension for BoTW yet, I'm holding off until I have gotten as much as I can out of the first installment!

Int:

We don't have Hot Topic over here but I do know about it!

The main part of this is gonna be talking about your experiences as a gamer, and whilst you don't necessarily define yourself as a "gamer" in some senses, it's apparent that it's still one of your interests.

Have you had any stand out experiences as a result of gaming? These can be positive, negative, anything you think is worth mentioning!

And the expansion is great, well worth the money! I haven't actually worked through it all yet though...

Aoife:

sorry for not getting back to you before. The only experience as a result of gaming I can think of is when the Wii was released. My 2nd eldest son was a baby and I had to keep ringing the stores to see if they had any deliveries of console. One day I got lucky and I raced into town with the baby strapped to me in a sling. The shop keeper seemed very surprised, but he said, 'first come first served, and you are first', so off I went with my new Wii.

Int:

Don't worry about it, that's why I send out another email!

Honestly, for the "experience" part, you can talk about anything you want - do you tend to pop into stores and get the games you want? Have you had any other experiences when shopping for games?

And what about reactions from people around you, such as family and friends?

[Interview moved over to Skype for ease]

Aoife:

Hello I am here when you are ready. Just sat down with a cuppa.

Int:

Hello! I'm just looking through our emails to see where we got up to

Int:

It looks like we got up to experiences and you talking about buying the Wii :)

Aoife:

yes,

Int:

So then from here, based on the games you've played or come into contact with, what are your thoughts about the representation of women in video games?

Aoife:

Hmm they are quite sexualised

Aoife:

And Princess Peach, just Pink and girly

Aoife:

Even Princess Zelda is sexy,

Aoife:

there are no characters that are admirable

Aoife:

really, female ones

Int:

It's a shame that even Nintendo are guilty of it, because they pride themselves on being the kid-friendly game company

Aoife:

lots of tight clothes

Aoife:

some of the women in Zelda, the characters in villages and stuff are just normal people

Aoife:

but the main characters wear tight clothes and have flowing hair.

Aoife:

Other games I like to play are Lego ones and again , the girls are sexualised

Aoife:

It does annoy me when I play these games

Int:

It can really take you out of the game :(

Aoife:

yes I think so

Aoife:

because you realise that they are writing the games for males and not females, really

Aoife: there are no female characters to admire and aspire to,

Aoife:

It kinda sucks

Int:

They're definitely hard to find

Int:

I remember shortly after the new Zelda was announced everyone thought you could play as a female (cos of Link's lovely ponytail) and a lot of people were upset that you couldn't (still)

Aoife:

Link is a bit of a hermaphrodite though. I bet a lot of people think he is Zelda

Int:

Yeah, there's always a mix of genuine misconceptions and jokes going around

Aoife:

but I think that is a plus, so I think its ok to make that mistake.

Int:

It's good that he's this relatable hero

Aoife:

Also there is no suggestion of Link and Zelda having a romance (if there is I have missed it), I think romance is generally in things for the benefit of ladies....

Int:

They did it in Breath of the Wild a bit more obviously than they have before, but you have to search for the evidence rather than them just giving it to you, which was nice

Aoife:

yes. Zelda aside. the whole Mario thing bugs me that Peach is the only girl. That is Very obvious :-(

Int:

Yeah :(

Aoife:

My recent experience of computer games really is restricted to Mario, Lego and Zelda. I think they are so well made when I play something else it just isn't as good, so I give up. I remember playing 007 (Nintendo 64) and Tomb Raider (playstation) things were not as flexible. Talking of women in games - Lara Croft!!!!

Int:

I'm glad we have Lara Croft, even if she can be sexualised a lot

Aoife:

Yes that was one of the first major games that got people playing and buying Playstations - I think it was playstation, so long ago I cant remember straight....!

Int:

Yeah, Tomb Raider was mainly Playstation for a while!

Aoife:

I had to borrow a console to play it

Int:

So then the last part is taking what we've spoken about so far - the experiences and the representation, and kind of mashing them together

Int:

Basically, do you think there's a relationship between how women are represented in video games, and how female gamers/game players are treated?

Aoife:

I think yes there is a relationship but in as much as women are represented in any walk of life - referring to equal pay and equal opportunities. For years we have pretended that women have equal rights but in video games, we can see a better representation of how women are respected. I don't play games that have sexy ladies in them, there is one my children played where they are dueling in a ring and the men are muscly and the women are sexy. I can't remember what it is called, but they are not allowed to play that. So that is a direct impact of how women are portrayed, I wont play them and my children aren't allowed to either. But when children are a bit older and have more control of their choices then I would imagine they are games they play without a second thought, because they are there.

Int:

So you'd say there's less of a direct relationship, and more that video games are part of a larger issue?

Aoife:

yes, I think its just because of the need to sell a product I think they have had to dispense with the pretense and just use women to sell the games - like Lara Croft, men fancy her and girls want to be like her. But as more and more girls are gamers, and they want someone to identify with, but there isn't anyone. Maybe there should be a Scooby doo video game and we can all be Daphne :-) Also, its a generational thing, the access to games when I was in my twenties was very limited, now everyone can play games, and there are more games to play. As a result there are more girls that want to play, like so many things, men dominate that industry.

Int:

I think we've pretty much covered what I need for my research, but if there's anything else you want to add then go for it

Aoife:

I don't think so, thanks for letting me be involved! Im going to have a nap now :-)

Transcript 16

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

We can get started with the "interview" process now!

As it's happening over email, the process will obviously take longer than the half an hour mentioned in the consent form, but it does mean that you have more flexibility and can reply when it suits you best.

To begin with, there'll be a couple of questions and from there it'll be a largely free discussion (or as free as it can be via email).

Firstly, how do you define video games?

And based on your definition, how often would you say you play games in a week (and what games)?

Maya:

Hello

It's nice to hear from you.

I define video games as console or PC games played electronically on a monitor or television.

Based on that I would say I play games around an hour a week, averaging over a month. Some weeks I play nothing, others I do 5 or 6 hours.

Int:

Hi,

Thanks for getting back to me!

Based on your definition of video games, would you call yourself a gamer? And what's your reasoning behind this.

Maya:

Based on my definition I wouldn't call myself a gamer. I think the term 'gamer' inherently has some sort of identity built around games, which I don't have. I do, however, enjoy playing games., I just don't feel that it's a vital part of my identity.

Int:

That's fair enough! Whilst you don't necessarily define yourself as a gamer, you do derive enjoyment from it - Have there been any stand out experiences in life that have come about as a result of video games, or is there just anything you want to talk about

regarding the playing of video games and your life?

This could be absolutely anything you want to mention, you have total free reign at this point!

Maya:

Sorry for the late reply!

Essentially, I just love the pick up and play nature of games. They're a perfect activity to do with friends, and I've even got my family into it! I've been playing things like Crash Team Racing and such since I was a kid, but recently Jackbox games has been super cool for involving my whole family - you don't need a lot of knowledge and it's a really cool alternative to a board game or something. Personally, I like to play single player games when playing the more traditional, less casual games (like Tomb Raider and Zelda) as multiplayer online seem to always have a pre-built set of players who expect skills and there's a pressure there that I really dislike.

I occasionally jump into Battlefield, but always feel like I have to prove I deserve to be there by playing well, rather than just playing without worry.

I hope that helps!

Int:

Hey,

Don't worry - I'm just as bad! If you want to speed things up we can always use something like Skype IM instead?

What was it like enjoying games growing up? You say you've gotten your family into it which sounds like they weren't always into gaming!

Have you had any other experiences with online gaming?

Maya:

Well I have an older brother and we got a playstation as a combined present when they first came out. Because we used to fight over who got to play, my mum encouraged us to play multiplayer games, and we used to force her to play with us sometimes. As I got older, I still played multiplayer with my brother (borderlands and portal are two highlights), but started playing more on my own as well. I also found things like mobile versions of Tetris and such that I managed to get my mum hooked on. And then yeah, like I say, Jackbox has pretty much taken over from board games for my family when we're all together!

Int:

Awesome!

So in the games you've played, what have you noticed, or what are your thoughts on the representation of women in them?

Maya:

Well I always wanted to play as the girl, so I usually had just the one option. I was always Coco in Crash, I remember that, and I loved that game because there was a girl. Then if I didn't have a choice of a girl character I'd choose the one that I thought was most like a girl (o can't think of a particular video game character, but I thought Piglet was a girl for years haha!).

And then I was drawn to Tomb Raider because of Lara and I'm Borderlands I always play as a girl, which is why I like Borderlands 2 so much: I have a whole 2 options rather than the one in the original game. I have never really played a tank in any game because of that so I tend to play stealth characters (badly)

Int:

"A whole 2 options" is sadly hilarious - do you think there's been much change over the years in regards to having the option to play as a woman?

Maya:

I think we're getting there. I know Overwatch has a tonne of options even though I don't play it, and the new uncharted game has female leads. More and more games are having female leads, and mario kart and things are catching up, so I think it is improving. It's a little ridiculous that it's 2018 and we're still in this position though.

Int:

Onto the final part - you've spoken about both your experiences with video games, and the games themselves, do you think there's any relationship between how women are presented in video games and how they're treated in real life/online as gamers?

Maya:

Well that's a hard one to answer, because I don't really play online. But I can see that there would be a relationship there sure. If there aren't any or many women in your game then you're going to see them as "other" to the gam, and therefore not welcome, so that makes sense to me.

Int:

That's a very succinct way to put it!

It can be a very difficult question to answer, but if there is anything else you'd like to add, or even just throw out there to mull on then go for it!

Maya:

I think I've covered pretty much most of what I wanted to say. I hope it was enough for you to go on!

Int:

That's absolutely fine! Thanks for helping out and if there's anything else you'd like to add in the future, feel free to email me!

Transcript 17

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Hiya,

It'll just be a couple of questions to start, then a more general discussion but firstly - how do you define video games?

Jenn:

Hey [Int],

How do you define video games?

Initially, when I was younger, I saw them as an activity that I enjoyed when I came back home from school. The games I played back then were only the most popular games of its time and nothing more. Now that I'm older and have more freedom in the games I choose to buy and play, I define video games as something I go to when I've had a long day at work, or I've had a stressful time and I want to get out of that mood - an escape if you like. I define it as a safe place, a fun outlet, somewhere where I'm also not having to interact with others except within the games I play, so it relaxes me.

Int:

Hey,

So based on your definition of games, how often would you say you played games in a week? And what kind of games do you play, and escape to?

Jenn:

Hey :)

I play 3 - 5 times a week. I work a lot so when I get home after a long day I do just want to unwind. The most games I play include RPG or open world games. A game like Animal Crossing I will play daily (gotta keep on top of my plants!) Although some exceptions do apply. Examples of games I play include Fallout, BioShock, Elder Scrolls, Destiny, Overwatch... it also depends on when games come out. If a game I have pre-ordered comes out then I'll play that game for a few weeks and then play a game I've probably completed multiple times (like Fallout, my fave) as a "filler" game if that makes sense?

Int:

Hi,

Animal Crossing is one of those games that rules my life if I let it...

And it totally makes sense that you've got games you go back to!

Based on this, would you call yourself a gamer?

Jenn:

I would let it take over my life as well but I have so many responsibilities (adult life is fun) and the new Pocket Camp game already takes up a lot of my time!

I would consider myself a gamer yes. I play so many different games and get involved in the lore and fan communities etc. I buy the most recent games available that interest me and I have a lot of good friends from gaming. Although I also find that there isn't a certain level of fan you have to be to consider yourself a gamer. In that you don't have to buy every single game ever to be a gamer. For example I only play console games and no PC games, so I don't hit that kind of market.

Int:

Awesome! Pocket Camp is dragging me back in at the moment... It's not good.

So from here on out it's mostly your opinions and experiences, so feel to mention anything you want or think is relevant.

Firstly, have you had any experiences as a result of being a gamer, either in person/online, positive/negative, that really stand out to you?

Jenn:

Hahaha I keep crafting all the outfits because they're so cute!

Experiences that stand out to me... I had to think about this for a little bit but I do have two experiences that will be relevant!

My first one is when I attended MCM Comic Con in London a few years ago. There are a lot of gaming events that happen there and you can even take part in meetups. This was in 2011 so forums were still the best way to organise these things, but I met up with a group of people that were cosplaying in different characters from games. It wasn't a requirement (as I didn't dress up) but you did feel more inclusive if you did dress up. Regardless we had a picnic outside and then participated in the team gaming events inside the con, which were from Mario Kart to Halo. I don't think any of us made it anywhere near the finals but it was more of a bonding experience and I ended up being really close to some of those people I met up with.

Another experience was last year when I met one of my closest friends today who's also a girl. She's probably the only friend I've met in real life that's female and a gamer which does make me feel better about myself. We talk about games all the time, share games and swap games if we don't have a game and want to play it among other things. I think that's an experience mainly because of the fact I've struggled to find someone the same sex as myself and loves the same things as I do. But of course that's just my own experience of it, I know there are millions of girl gamers out there that I'd love to know.

Int:

I'm trying to get my campsite looking perfect - it's difficult D:

And it sounds like your stand out experiences are really quite positive! I actually used to live in London, so it was always fun seeing people dressed up going to MCM :)

You say that having that gamer friend in real life made you feel better about yourself - if you don't mind me asking, why is that?

Like... I guess what I'm wondering is if being a gamer has negative connotations or setbacks to you?

Sorry if that's worded weirdly, and obviously if you don't want to say, then that's totally fine!

Jenn:

I think mainly because I got picked on when I was younger because I liked things "girls shouldn't like". I was afraid to tell people that I liked video games before. It's a very male-centric arena, but thankful that that's changing. These days I'm more open with what I like and who I am.

I hope that answers your question? Let me know if you need me to elaborate on any of that!

Int:

It does! I worded it so badly...

Was that attitude mainly from people your age, or your family?

Jenn:

It was mainly from people my age. At school, mainly, but I've also had people that are

my age or older judge me because I'm a girl that plays games. I still get that sometimes now! Like, for example, I went to a staff party in the Principality stadium on Saturday (I work at Confused.com so we have these big parties every year) and there's a video games corner and they had classics but also games like the new Doom and Overwatch and I was playing on almost all of them and people behind me would comment, saying things like "wow she plays pretty good for a girl" (in my head I'm silently raging). My family were the ones that actually encouraged me to like what I want to like! I was very lucky in that my parents were happy with whatever interests I had with video games (within the right age ranges of course).

Int:

"Pretty good for a girl" is like the bane of my life - it's good that your family encouraged it though!

We might come back to your experiences if I can think of something else to ask...

Moving on then, what are your thoughts on the representation of women in video games? This can be in games you play or games as a whole!

Jenn:

Well it's fair to say game studios have made a lot of progress in representing women. I used to play Tomb Raider a lot when I was younger and you could clearly see the difference between Lara and her male equivalents. These days it isn't so bad, but you can still see it in even the most popular of video games. I loved when Bayonetta came out and she is awesome, although slightly sexualised, but the gameplay was great. Games where you can choose between a man and a woman are also a favourite of mine and I'll always pick the woman in that situation. There are loads of games I have now where I can choose a female character, like Overwatch - filled with a plethora of diverse characters - including a wide array of different women to choose from. In some other games such as DOOM, the main antagonist being female, is a nice surprise for a hugely male-dominated game. Assassin's Creed initially was very male-dominated, but now more female characters are being added into the games, which was similarly seen in Dishonoured at the start as well.

Games like Grand Theft Auto aren't my cup of tea before. Sometimes there were missions where you had to kill multiple women at once, or even go into a bar and grope certain women to progress through a quest. Games that still have those kind of "missions or quests" (when I wouldn't refer to them as either as that hardly progresses any quest, let alone the other reasons why that's wrong) to me feel like they haven't spent enough time writing a real story to support the game. A classic from Rockstar

games (creators of GTA) was LA Noire, a game set in 1940s America where women were treated less desirably than now had great writing and storytelling without demonising women, merely showing the struggles they had for the time, although you could only play male characters in that game.

When Mass Effect came out as well we seen women from different races from across different planets even! And romantic relationships also affected your plot line in those games. Then games like The Last Of Us and Life Is Strange I feel truly changed the gaming world at least a little bit. Younger females were shown as strong and "badass" even, and the exploration of female relationships more so in Life Is Strange which I believe is important for women. Following that, Telltale's series of games such as The Walking Dead games and Tales From The Borderlands (such a great game!) added to that.

My favourite female characters, aside from Lara Croft, are: Anya Stroud from Gears Of War, Liara T'soni from Mass Effect, Piper from Fallout 4 and Jill Valentine from Resident Evil

That was a lot of words and games at once so let me know if you want me to clarify anything from what I've said above!

Int:

Honestly, that's a great response! Some great examples of the good and bad too - admittedly I've never played GTA, the way they treat women in the games has really put me off touching it, even with people saying GTA V is amazing.

So then, do you think there's a link between how women are represented in games and how female gamers are treated/how they engage with the games?

Jenn:

With regards to general sexism/misogyny there is a link yes. Although in different instances if that makes sense... there are, as mentioned already, games that will over sexualise women and remove any interesting plot from them. Whereas others are more inclusive of women.

In real life there are still general sexist views about women playing video games. I've never managed to avoid it, but being a part of different communities has allowed our voices to be heard a bit more. I just joined one called Confetti Ghosts which is for girl

gamers, graphic novel fans, etc. and it's awesome! It's a bit like anything male dominated that communities and groups help make others aware that we do exist and we can also hopefully influence game developers to eradicate this linkage we keep seeing.

Int:

Confetti Ghosts sounds awesome, I might have to look into that one... Is there anything else you want to add?

Jenn:

If you want, I can invite you to the group on Facebook? There's also an Insta page for them (@confettighosts). It's in early stages yet but still interesting and I've made a few friends out of it already :) also good for research! Although not the only group out there I'm sure.

We've covered a lot of ground to be fair, but based on my personal experiences, and I know not everyone will unfortunately receive the support I got when I was younger, but I had a lot of freedom in what hobbies I enjoyed (to an extent a child can anyway) and haven't any had negative feedback from them about my video gaming hobby as already discussed. I believe that my parents gave me that support and start in life to do what I wanted. When I got to school years I was bullied for liking "boys" things but these days it's not as prominent. I get it sometimes if I'm in a shop buying a game ("is this game for your boyfriend?" a common question asked and then they're shocked when I say it's for me, which is probably why I preorder most games?) but nothing that doesn't completely deter me. I'm always gonna be a gamer and I embrace that wherever I go - on my desk at work it's full of gaming Funko Pops and other memorabilia. People know me in the office as the "go-to" for all things gaming, and I'm never questioned about it because I'm a girl.

Others may not be so lucky and that's why communities and safe spaces help them. I'd love to be able to host a cool girl gaming club where we just literally sit in a room and play different games (maybe I can arrange that in the future...). The biggest thing out of this is probably my main wish, which is for all women to feel respected and loved for their passions, regardless of whether it is gaming or not.

Int:

That'd be awesome, if you could?

And it's good that you want to use your more positive and supportive experiences to give others the same, everyone deserves to be able to have their own interests and not be harassed for them in any way!

That's pretty much the end of the interview, but honestly if there's anything else you want to add you've got up until November/December to add or change anything, even take it away, so just feel free to message me (and I promise I'll be better at replying when I've got less chapters to type)

Jenn:

let me know if you got my invite!

That all sounds good to me :) thank you for your time and I wish you all the best with your work here!

Transcript 18

Interview conducted via IM – Errors, emojis, and language are included from original text

Int:

Hello!

As it's happening over email, the process will obviously take a bit longer than the half an hour or so stated in the consent form, but it does mean you have more flexibility and can reply when it best suits you.

To begin with, there'll be a couple of questions and from then it'll be a largely free discussion (or as free as it can be via email).

To get started, how do you define video games?

And based upon your definition, how often would you say you play video games in a week (and what do you play)?

Nina:

I would define video games as any electronic based game, so any game on console, mobile or PC.

I would say I play around 15 hours of video games in an hour, and i play most types of games, but predominantly RPG's and Shooters recently.

Int:

Cool! So based on your definition of games, and your gameplay habits, would you call yourself a gamer?

Nina:

based on my definition and my habits, yes i would call myself a gamer

Int:

Cool, so onto the main part now!

What experiences have you had, either in person or online, as a gamer that really stand out to you? These can be absolutely any experience you want to talk about!

Nina:

Hi,

Sorry for the lack of reply, I've been extremely busy with both work and university.

I'm actually unsure as to what you mean by an experience as a gamer, would it be possible for you to elaborate?

Int:

Hi,

That's okay! Your experience as a gamer can be anything, whether in person or online, positive or negative, anything you want to talk about is relevant!

This could be growing up, experiences with friends - absolutely anything.

For example, cos I'm a gamer I now study and work with video games!

[Interview moved over to IM for ease of contact, and speed]

Int:

The last question we got up to was about your experience as a gamer - it's a pretty big question but feel free to mention whatever you want! So, what experiences have you had, in relation to video games that stand out to you

Int:

These can be in person or online as well

Nina:

probably the most stand out one was trying out for the overwatch team for GAME here

Int:

What was that like for you?

Nina:

it was exciting but also kind of nerve wracking to be honest

Int:

If you don't mind me asking - what was nerve wracking about it?

Nina:

pretty much just the fact that everyone there was so much better at the game than I was, I thought that they would be better, but not as much as they were

Int:

You still went though, which I find pretty admirable!

Nina:

i'm not the kind of person who will back away from something

Int:

I respect that

Int:

Is overwatch your main game to play?

Nina:

at the time, it probably was, but not so much anymore

Int:

Sorry if I've already asked this before in the email section, but what kind of games are you into?

Nina:

all sorts really, at the moment mostly strategy games or RPGs

Int:

So it changes with your mood?

Nina:

pretty much yeah

Int:

That's cool, and totally understandable

Int:

Have you been gaming for a while?

Nina:

pretty much all my life, I don't actually remember a time where games weren't a massive part of my life

Int:

So then what was it like being a gamer growing up?

Nina:

it was always fun, my siblings and I were always kind of competitive with certain games, so that was always good

Int:

That's nice - it was encouraged then?

Nina:

pretty much, my parents got us each a Gameboy to keep us all from arguing on long car journeys, and my dad used to join in playing games with us on the playstation

Int:

And what about with other people your age, outside of your family?

Nina:

I used to play quite a few video games with them when they got into gaming, but I probably started gaming really early in comparison to them

Int:

Awesome! We'll get onto the last part now, which is about the representation of women in video games

Int:

In the games that you play, what are your thoughts and opinions on women in video games>

Nina:

I've honestly never really thought that much into it, I guess that they've always been portrayed as something more of a lust object in comparison to male characters, i.e Lara Croft

Int:

It's okay if it's not something you've really noticed before, any of your observations are worthwhile

Nina:

i think that the portrayal of female characters has definitely been updated from far earlier games, female side characters have much more detail around them than they used to in games

Int:

So you'd say it's improving?

Nina:

definitely

Int:

Awesome! Is there anything you've noticed about the games you're playing at the moment and the women in them?

Nina:

female characters are given more of a primary role in games nowadays in comparison to games from the ps1 era

Nina:

they were mostly just secondary or tertiary characters from what i can remember

Nina:

but aside from that, theres nothing i can think of really

Int:

That's okay! Like I said, anything you mention is worth mentioning

Nina:

Those are the only things I've ever noticed about female characters

Int:

Then that's honestly fine :)

Int:

The last part is a little more abstract I suppose

Int:

But do you think there's a connection between how women are presented in games (so you've noticed them being sexualised) and how female gamers are treated?

Nina:

I don't think so, I think gaming might be one of few forms of media that actually doesn't really sway the treatment of females honestly

Int:

Why do you think there's that distinction then between video games and other media?

Nina:

I think with gaming, everyone knows that its completely not real, whereas with things like TV, a large idea is to submerge people into the fact that it could be a reality and immerse them into the show

Nina:

if that makes any sense at all

Int:

It does, and it's not actually something I had considered before

Nina:

i don't think many people consider it, i think I've just put more thought into this than i probably should've

Int:

Not at all, you've made a really interesting point!

Nina:

I'm glad I could help then :)

Nina:

any other questions?

Int:

That should about round this up, but honestly if there's anything else you think of or want to mention, you've still got my email so feel free to send me anything!

Nina:

if I think of anything, I'll be sure to email you :)

Int:

Thank you for helping out! Have a nice evening :)

Nina:

and you :)