"I did not really get anything out of it": A nexus analysis of non-gamer perspectives regarding video games

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Abstract

The growing status of video games as a form of entertainment is evident in multiple sectors in today's culture. However, their influence and points of access to gaming are rarely investigated from the perspective of non-gamers and what they think about video games. Their perspectives are important to take into account as an addition to the video game discourse for what factors video games may be considered unappealing and to deter non-gamers from wanting to play them altogether. This thesis will approach this issue by interviewing a group of non-gamers individually and analyzing their ideas with nexus analytical tools to find out what constraints they face from engaging with video games. As a secondary source, the interviewed non-gamers' perspectives are contrasted with Yle news network articles about video games for broader understanding of the nexus of practice non-gamers situate video games in. The online articles add further illustrative examples of video games as an influential phenomenon for how they appear in a growing number of contexts and are, contrary to early perceptions of them as juvenile and wasteful activity, considered to be exciting and newsworthy. The interviewees consider video games to not be necessary to engage with because of their prior experiences with games having been too demanding of their skills, requiring too much time to get properly engaged with them and not having easily recognizable benefits form the act of playing them. While the interviewees do not see video games as personally beneficial for them, they acknowledge their potential to be a source of many good things and experiences if their implementation and moderation are taken sufficiently into account. The findings suggest that non-gamers mostly view gaming as unimportant for themselves, but they equally recognize their value in other contexts and are aware of their effects.

Tiivistelmä

Videopelit ovat kasvaneet viihteen muotona monella sektorilla näkyvillä olevaan asemaan nykykulttuurissa. Tästä huolimatta pelien vaikutuksia ja keinoja päästä pelaamisesta mukaan harvoin tutkitaan niitä pelaamattomien näkökulmasta, ja mitä he ajattelevat videopeleistä. Heidän näkökulmiansa on tärkeä ottaa huomioon täydentävänä osana diskurssia videopeleistä, mitä asioita he kokevat videopeleissä epämieluisiksi, ja mikäli ne estävät heitä haluamasta pelata ylipäänsä. Tämä tutkielma lähestyy tätä aihetta haastattelemalla yksittäisten haastattelujen kautta pelaamattomia ja analysoimalla heidän ideoitaan neksusanalyysin periaatteiden mukaisesti. Tällä tavalla selviäisi, mitkä rajoitteet estävät heitä kiinnostumasta videopeleistä. Lisäksi haastateltavien pelaamattomien näkökulmia verrataan laajemmin Yleisradion verkkoartikkeleihin videopeleistä, jotta pelaamiseen liittyvät diskurssit tulisivat laajemmin ymmärretyksi, ja millä tapaa pelaamattomat suhtautuvat peleihin. Verkkoartikkelit täydentävät havainnollistavien esimerkkien kautta videopelien roolia vaikutusvaltaisena ilmiönä, kun ne ovat esillä yhä useammassa aiheyhteydessä. Varhaisiin ajatuksiin verrattuna, kun videopelit nähtiin lähinnä lapsellisena ajanhukkana, videopelit koetaan jännittävinä ja uutisoimisen arvoisina. Haastateltavat eivät koe videopelejä vaivannään arvoisiksi, koska heidän aiemmat pelikokemuksensa ovat olleet liian vaativia, pelaamisen opettelu ja niistä kiinnostuminen vievät liikaa aikaa, ja he eivät tunnista pelaamisesta saatavia hyötyjä helposti. Vaikka haastateltavat eivät koe videopelien olevan hyödyllisiä heille itselleen, he tunnistavat pelaamisen sisältävän monia etuja, ja antavan hyviä kokemuksia, kunhan niiden käytön valvonta otetaan huomioon riittävän vahvasti. Tutkimustulosten mukaan pelaamattomat enimmäkseen kokevat videopelit mitättömiksi heille itselleen, mutta he tunnistavat niiden arvon muissa aiheyhteyksissä ja ovat tietoisia niiden monista vaikutuksista.

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1. Introduction

Video games mean different things to people based on how much they know about them. Those who are deeply engaged and experienced with them may find it easier to see their influence and potential benefits than those who know very little of them. Often well-experienced gamers are the focus of research for understanding video games, since this allows researchers to more reliably understand video games from those who already know a lot about them. However, only focusing on people that are deeply familiar with a specific activity may create one-sided truths without taking into account those who are not as interested and what obstacles they may face.

To understand a specific media, and its nature, it is necessary to gain perspective from people who are less knowledgeable or engaged with it. Video games are, compared to other similar media such as books or movies, a relatively new form of entertainment with different genres of games to express their developers' own ideas and methods to engage their players to experience something unique. Often the common discourse about video games in related studies has focused on their effects on gamers – both positive and negative – and their behavioral differences in contrast with non-gamers. Gaming as a hobby can influence the player's ways of thinking and perception skills among other things, and understanding only the perspective of gamers may distort the validity of the findings. Rather, their influence and effects should be also inspected via non-participants who may simply have a surface level idea of them. This would make it easier to understand the problems that may surface when attempting to play and become interested in it as a new activity.

Attitudes on gaming have been influenced by the news media and what details have been highlighted of gaming. Since gaming has been a growing market, the non-participants' explanations, hereafter titled as "non-gamers", contribute to specific perspectives of video games that may be based on limited experiences of them. While Sjöström et al. (2013, p. 19) have showcased the positive recognition of social sciences in the debate of violent video games, the amount of coverage is considered low by the general audience. Moreover, Sjöström et al. note how there is a positive relation to news as informative and negative when they downplay the risks of gaming (p. 20). While the use of gaming-related media is connected to developing new skills such as vocabulary from a foreign language (Eligio & Kaschak, 2020) and improving cognitive skills via game training (Boot et al., 2011), people experience video games differently based on their exposure to specific information from social media or second-hand information.

The consideration of video games as media has changed considerably from their early generalizations as simple, time-wasting entertainment for young children with no deeper purpose. While it is true that too much gaming can cause problematic behavior (Charmaraman et al., 2020), it can equally display several benefits to one's mental health, wellbeing, and social functioning (Allaire et al., 2013). Video games are more visible than ever before due to several things like online gaming which is considered "a part of the modern lifestyle regardless of time and location" (Laurence et al., 2023). General perspectives on video gaming have steadily changed to be more inclusive and understanding of them, but there is still much to do to make gaming more mainstream without necessarily forcing non-participants to engage with said activity to achieve a satisfactory understanding of them.

This issue is important to discuss due to the common reliance of video game industry on designing games only for gamers that are already into video games. Investigating non-gamers' opinions will help in taking their perspective more seriously as well as help in perceiving their potentially misinformed perspectives of video games. As of today, video games are recognized as an extremely popular leisurely activity which produces in the United States twice as much revenue than the music industry and the movie industry combined (Kröger et al., 2021, p. 1). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, video games have become the largest entertainment industry since 2011, exceeding music and video sales (Hollingdale, 2014). Further corroborated by Sener et al. (2021), video games are "one of the fastest-growing industries globally" (p. 2). In accordance with video games and their widespread position today, it is intriguing how the concept of a "non-gamer" exists as a concept in studies, but no similar definition exists for those who, for example, do not watch movies or listen to music. Further understanding of video games via non-gamers will help in defining the ways one may be prevented or exposed to gaming. Additionally, this may lead to making video games more accessible, not just in terms of game design, but on the surface level based on what purpose they provide.

It is also paramount to specify how these "non-gamers" (also referred to as non-participants or nonplayers) formulate their perspectives of games in addition to the scenarios they encounter video games in. More discussion is required to better understand the ideas non-gamers' attribute to video games and why they prefer being a non-gamer. This study is important in bringing more attention to non-gamers as a vital target demographic that could be better introduced to gaming as a whole, but also since "There is scarce research on non-participants even though non-participants comprise at least half the population" (Marc, 2017, p. 2). Comparisons between gamers and non-gamers' ideas about gaming contribute to a better understanding of the types of experiences and constraints they

may face when playing or trying to get interested in video games. This approach would be beneficial in understanding non-gamers' perspectives based on their experiences with video games and what factors influence them to be a non-gamer. Furthermore, the findings will highlight both the core problems and benefits of gaming based on non-gamers' experiences with them, and how they have later internalized it.

The thesis will first discuss prior research about video games and main findings in them. Afterwards, the primary analytical framework is introduced, and in what way it helps in inspecting the phenomenon. This is followed by an introduction to collected data and its analysis. The analysis will be divided based on the most evident findings from the interviews. Lastly, a discussion will further elaborate on the validity of the findings and how non-gamer perspectives are valuable in the context of contributing to more comprehensive understanding of them.

The purpose of this thesis is not to negate non-gamers' perspectives and consider them as lesser, narrow-minded experiences of video games. People more than likely have reasonable background and experiences to consider video games in a specific light. Rather, the goal is to contribute to a better understanding of video games by discussing how these perspectives emerge and how they are valuable in assessing the current status of video games in terms of their approachability. These perspectives will further explain potential points of contention and issues that video games could be developed further when the non-gamer interviews are connected to a broader nexus of practice of gaming as a phenomenon.

2. Theoretical and analytical framework

In section 2, I will introduce some of the core research on video games related to non-gamers and their experiences with games. For the sake of understanding video games and previous non-gamer perspectives sufficiently, I will discuss relevant studies on non-gamer perspectives of games, benefits and detriments from playing, and how engagement to games is important but constrained component to getting interested in them. The primary focus is specifically on non-gamers and how they perceive video games based on their own experiences and attitudes.

2.1. Defining a gamer and a non-gamer

In order to better define the contextual background of how non-gamers are situated with gamers, it needs to be clarified how the determinants "gamer" and "non-gamer" are used and what meanings their use entails. In prior research, these terms have been loosely used to differentiate research participants better and whether they have specific amount of video gaming experience. Some approaches to distinguish gamers and non-gamers have asked the participants whether they have played any games at all in the past twelve months (Sjöström et al., 2013; Laurence et al., 2023). On the other hand, Eligio and Kaschak (2020) state that having played video games at all, regardless of the time since the last session, is enough to be considered a gamer. They also conclude the importance of the types of games that one plays, since different experiences are to be expected between games from different genres. Most of the time, there is little, if any, explanation about who is considered a "gamer" in video game related research. Based on this, the use of this term is inconclusive and seems to depend on how recently one has played video games. For the sake of this study, the 12-month gap, implemented by Sjöström et al. and Laurence et al., serves as the frame of reference in determining the "non-gamer" due to the likelihood of other things emerging in place of gaming.

Gamer in itself is a vague and a surface-level description of one's amount of gaming knowledge and experience. Both games and gamers range from casual to hardcore, but this is usually defined individually without clear rules between these categories. The inconclusive use of the term has negative impressions related to its use, since it can alienate what the term means to a non-gamer (Fron et al., 2013). The stereotypical gamer has been plagued by an image problem for decades in social sciences (Sjöström et al., 2013) for being mostly viewed as an isolating activity for young boys (Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022). From an external perspective, a common simplification of video

games has been to perceive it simply for the potential threats that it may cause such as more aggressive behaviour and reduced psychological stability (Allahverdipour et al., 2010). The understanding of the typical gamer and who can be considered as one varies between studies and is constrained by the negative repercussions that are highlighted of being one.

The level of gaming knowledge is influenced by various factors from the user's age, the game's purpose, frequency of playing and how much time people spend on games. Casual games, for instance, are more inclusive by nature compared to more demanding hardcore games, and their wide appeal makes them easy to play in shorts sessions as well as appealing to core gamers (Wesley & Barczak, 2013, p. 176–177). However, there is discrepancy between gamers of different levels such as when core gamers resort to preventative actions, such as gatekeeping, towards less skilled players whose lack of skill is considered "a threat to how much fun can be had in the gameplay" (Käsmä, 2020, p. 70). The reason for this steep categorization is tied to industrial hierarchies and how they prefer catering gamers rather than taking non-gamers into account. Fron et al. (2007, p. 309) argue that the digital gaming industry has been dominated by complex power relations that ignore the minority players in favor of a status quo despite how the assumed "minority" of non-gamers actually constitutes the majority of potential users, thus hindering the reach and commercial success of video games. Creating games simply for specific purpose and for specific people would meet the needs of active gamers, but more inclusive tactics can broaden the appeal to non-gamers as well.

2.2. Effects of video games

Much of the discourse about video games has primarily focused on people who consider themselves "gamers" and what kinds of effects video games have on them and their cognitive skills, different age groups, types of social nature they are stereotypically attributed to be and what differences gamers and non-gamers have. Boot et al's (2011) investigation on whether games have effects on non-gamers' cognitive and perception skills – while contested by inconsistent test results in a game training study – suggests that "game benefits might reflect shifts in strategy rather than changes in more basic cognitive or perceptual capabilities" (p. 3). This training study thus points out that video games' effect is a type of placebo that is influenced by the type of game the participants play ranging from an action game to a puzzle game, for instance.

While Boot et al.'s investigation indicated clear benefits to playing video games from observing non-gamers, non-gamers are not as comprehensively researched demographic as gamers are.

Despite this, some research has found perspectives on non-gamers that prevent them from enjoying or engaging with the media altogether. Allaire et al. (2013) suggest that gaming with older adults can function as a psychologically positive activity. Their investigation revealed that older adult gamers had better levels of well-being, social functioning and less depression compared to non-gaming older adults.

Despite the visibly widespread status of video games, much of the past research has focused especially on their negative effects from playing them such as video game addiction (Monley et al., 2022) and associations of their player to be more likely to have lower income level (Marc, 2017, p. 1). According to Marc (p. 1, 2), the negative non-participant attitudes are associated with more conservative political orientation, higher age, and technophobia. The negative effects also have a strong association to their effects on children and adolescents in relation to time spent playing and social behavior. Allahverdipour et al. (2010) note that about 47% of children in the Islamic Republic of Iran have played one or more intensively violent game. These children were also reported to suffer poorer mental health compared to those who played very little or not at all. Another study by Charmaraman et al. (2020) observes early adolescents and how playing violent, high-risk games negatively impacts gamers' health, social interactivity, and other self-care issues. The reliance on video games can be a method to cope poor personal conditions and social status, but their overconsumption may lead to other problems.

Video games have been claimed to cause problematic behavior for a long time, though plenty of positive effects have been equally proven of their use. While there are plenty of studies suggesting that there is a connection of playing violent video games and more aggressive behavior (Allaire et al., 2013; Sjöström et al., 2013; Fron et al., 2007; Hollingdale et al., 2014, Monley et al., 2023), there are also studies suggesting that their relation to causing harmful effects is inconclusive (Allahverdipour et al., 2010; Drummond, 2020). Moreover, Drummond suggests that there is a publication bias on short-term effects of aggressive games on aggression because of methodological issues in the field which contribute to misleading results. Kühn et al. (2018, p. 23) further elaborate that many of the studies focused on understanding the effects of video games obtain their data from short sessions between four minutes to two hours, ignoring or disincentivizing the role of causal conclusions from them. While seeing violence anywhere can influence one's ways of thinking, especially children's, more longitudinal studies should be conducted for more balanced findings instead of blaming video games as a source of negative behavioral patterns based on skewed research conditions.

In light of the negative impact of video games on younger demographic, parents' role should be especially highlighted in how they are responsible in moderating video game use. As mentioned by Allahverdipour et al. (2010), parents should be informed sufficiently of the benefits and effects of video gaming in order to properly moderate its use. Charmaraman et al. (2020) note that many gaming problems typically stem from unmoderated gaming including poor sleeping habits, depression and social repercussions. They further claim that there is need for more research on parent-child relationships in connection to their gaming habits in order to better understand the behavioral and social implications that gaming has. Different parenting tactics are more effective depending on the circumstances, which is why more research would stress parents' role in moderating the use of video games with their children.

Moderation of gaming is especially important to be aware of since overexposure to them can turn into overreliance when unrestrained players are left with them for too long. While excessive gaming is problematic itself, Monley et al (2023) point out that negative gaming habits are rarely caused by games themselves but instead external causes that players later find fulfilment from video games. The study calls to question problematic gaming as a disorder similar to gambling disorder, and that these problems could be prevented by meeting gamers' psychological needs (Monley et al., 2023). When gamers with poor psychological conditions rely on video games to find places of "autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (Monley et al., 2023), it categorizes and assumes that many other gamers are statistically similar and further strengthens the image problem of video games. This also contributes to the non-gamers viewing gaming as unnecessary and associated with unhealthy behavior.

The contrived status of video games can be explained by the tone of discourse about gaming's effects. Adult non-gamers may especially discount video games for the observed problematic gaming it contributes to (Monley et al., 2023). On the other hand, the discussion of the negative effects is considered to revolve around stereotypes that non-gamers especially maintain, as noted by Buyukozturk and Shay (2022) on social interactions in different types of tabletop games and video games. Their findings, however, indicate gaming to benefit the participants' relationships via shared experiences of playing with others and learning about games from older generations. Moreover, leisure gaming is argued to blend "the dynamics of digital and physical social realms" (Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022). When new technologies are better exposed and normalized as forms of entertainment, they can have significant effects on growing populations and their collective life experiences (Brown, 2017). Negative initial hesitancy from first impressions with games can turn

into enjoyment, and more clarified understanding via better exposure can help in debunking negative attitudes of games.

In addition to improved cognitive skills, video games are a well-recognized source of learning English as a L2 language. Sundqvist (2019, p. 105) notes that teenage gamers that have played commercial-off-the-shelf games demonstrate better proficiency in L2 English by employing more diverse vocabulary learned from games in comparison to non-gamer teenagers. The type of game and the amount of time played also influenced the effectiveness of L2 learning (Sundqvist, 2019, p. 97). Eligio and Kashcak (2020) also affirm that exposure to video gaming activities in a foreign language is related to broader vocabulary in specific areas of knowledge. The type of game played is important in learning L2 English via exposure to them, since video games with little dialogue would not be as effective in learning foreign words in comparison to dialogue-heavy games such as role-playing games (RPGs). However, a game may limit the vocabulary specifically to highly contextual use of English related to the game's context. For instance, playing a first-person shooter (FPS) may expose the player primarily to military-related vocabulary, thus limiting the range of words they learn. For gamers that play a variety of games, they are at an advantage over non-gamers in their language proficiency for being exposed to foreign words and, at times, forced to learn the word's meaning when they associate a foreign word with the action in the game.

Other positive effects from video games have benefits to one's mental health and well-being. As mentioned by Allaire et al., (2013), video gaming can be beneficial to one's psychological and physical therapy. For example, games such as *Brain Age* provide a variety of mental puzzles for players to solve which can improve their mental and cognitive capacities. Additionally, the video gaming system *Nintendo Wii* was especially popular amongst older populations and non-gaming groups due to more casual-friendly games and better approachability (Brown et al., 2017; Allaire et al., 2013; Wesley & Barczak, 2010, p. 149). Games like *Wii Sports* allowed for intuitive use of the Wii remote's motion controls for sport activities whereas *Wii Fit* utilized a balancing board to offer a variety of exercise games and measure the player's health. More recent games such as *Ring Fit Adventure* on the *Nintendo Switch* functions as an efficient method of exercising with the use of its mandatory accessories that implement exercise movements as a gameplay feature. Games like these offer a practical use for playing them while simultaneously being a fun and engaging activity.

The introduction of the *Nintendo Wii* in 2006 was important especially making gaming more approachable to non-gamers in contrast to other consoles and their comparatively complex games. At the time, video games were becoming difficult to make sense out of, only being understood by

experienced gamers who had played similar games before (Wesley & Barczak, p. 23). While prior gaming experience can help in learning new games due to their habitual resemblance to other games for their structure, learning new video games from scratch is exponentially more difficult as described by Wesley & Barczak:

> Just as a person who learns multiple languages develops an aptitude for learning languages, experienced gamers are able to learn new games quickly. Imagine the difficulty experienced by adults who have never been exposed to a foreign language when they suddenly find themselves in a foreign country without a translator to guide them (p. 160).

Despite the many important findings on gaming's effects, the research is still limited in whether there are differences with adult gamers and non-gamers' emotional health and well-being. While adult gamers seem to have improved their socio-emotional status, it is not proven whether non-gamers adults would differ significantly on these aspects (Allaire et al., 2013). Similar stances about video games, such as violent video games being harmful, may be perpetuated by news media based on individual interpretations from isolated instances (Sjöström et al., 2013, p. 7). By its nature, social sciences are prone to produce fragile evidence due to limited conditions, personal experiences and attitudes (Sjöström et al., 2013, p. 6). Individual studies about the effects of video games, therefore, should be a part of a large collection of perspectives that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of video games and their effects. Even though video games are constantly developing, and new kinds of games may change the ways we think of them, an understanding about their effects at a specific time can function as a point of reference for new perspectives in the future.

2.3. Non-gamers' perspectives

Prior research has provided some insights to non-gamers and what attitudes they have on games that may prevent them from engaging with them due to individual, structural or relational reasons. Women especially may feel constrained in their attempts of getting interested in games due to the social issues in gaming environments and games being considered primarily for the male audience. Bergstrom (2017) suggests that women often stop gaming due to how they have been stereotypically treated with less respect and harassment in a gaming environment in contrast to men. Moreover, certain games may portray women in a sexualized and objectified manner to appeal more to the male audience and to improve the sales figures with the use of appealing characters intended

for the male gaze (Käsmä, 2020, p. 20). These game industry practices further perpetuate the image of video games being primarily intended towards white, male-dominated target audience (Fron et al., 2007, p. 311). Furthermore, prior studies that have analyze males, gamers or male gamers to understand games (see Buykozturk & Shay, 2022; Boot et al., 2011) contribute to a potentially misconstrued understanding of the different levels of gaming knowledge that ignore other viewpoints. As such, the constrained position of being a gamer does not incentivize women to take part in it, more likely diverting them to remain as a non-gamer.

Women's access to games is also construed by the social expectations that have been imposed on them. In addition to the critical male-dominated gaming culture, it is argued that women are impeded of getting into games because of "the larger social construction of gender-based expectations about what is or is not an appropriately feminine leisure activity" (Bergstrom, 2017). Furthermore, the lack of interest is described to be "a shallow reading that obscures other potential barriers preventing women's access to games" (Bergstrom, 2017). Rather, women are said to be more influenced by "externally imposed social expectations and gender-based stereotypes that lead to women to feel less entitled to leisure than men" (Bergstrom, 2017).

The idea of women being less attuned to video games is also influenced by what kinds of games are intended to be primarily for female audiences. The marketing and the number of casual games designed for women have been so strongly female-focused that they risk being appropriately appealing or engaging for women to invest enough into (Bergstrom, 2017). Furthermore, these games risk women getting further into gaming when some people in the games industry "do not consider casual games to be 'real' games and thus discount the growing influence of women in the games industry" (Fron et al., 2007). It is natural that people are more attuned to different things based on their gender, personal preferences, and experiences, but women could be considered more seriously as a group of gamers alongside the stereotypical male gamer being the norm.

Despite the popularity of many casual games especially among adult women players outnumbering male gamers (Wesley & Barczak, 2010, p. 171), the stereotypical division between the male gamer and the female non-gamer has persisted for a long time. This status quo that has been perpetuated by corporate elite figures for improved commercial success (Fron et al., 2007) demonstrates the stagnant nature to evolve the design of games to a wider audience that excludes specific minorities. Earlier studies have considered female gamers to not be of consequence to what has been considered primarily a male-dominant activity (Fron et al., 2007; Boot et al., 2011). Käsmä (2020) indicates that when women have gotten into gaming, their experiences may be challenged by

established gender norms, the game being too challenging and the social ability to play and communicate with other players in an online environment. Based on these barriers of entry and the portrayal of women in games, it is no surprise how women are not categorized often as gamers and why they may be reluctant to call themselves a gamer (Fron et al., 2007).

Aside from the divisive treatment of gender roles in the video game industry, some recent applications of video games in the mainstream may be paving the way for a breakthrough out of these gender norms. Wesley and Barczak (2010) describe that "video games should not be viewed as the exclusive domain of antisocial teenage boys, but rather as part of the commercial mainstream" (p. 2). They further note examples of video game applications by how "game software is used to train soldiers for battle, to train pilots in flight controls and navigation, and to provide rehabilitation services to hospital patients" (Wesley & Barczak, p. 2). With more applications of games crossing boundaries, more non-gamers are exposed to games as another method to deal with specific situations and learn new things with their use. Furthermore, when it is more evident that video games are meant for everyone regardless of gender, age or experience, they can become a more normative activity instead of a point of reluctancy that derives from a lack of understanding them.

Another matter to consider from a non-gamer perspective are the potential constraints of getting to play them in the first place. Video game consoles and gaming computers usually are expensive in addition to separately purchasing video games, accessories, Internet access and potential service fees for live service games and subscription services. Financial requirements create structural barriers that are not necessarily related to being interested in a specific game (Bergstrom, 2017). Some of these things may be more normative in one country, but things like Internet access or television could be considered a luxury elsewhere, thus conceiving gaming as a luxury activity to engage with.

Non-gamers may also be constrained by not understanding a video game's gameplay systems and the objective in it. Brown (2017) notes that older adult non-gamers perceive digital games difficult to engage with due to self-identified themes such as limited understanding of games and games being considered too challenging. More importantly, the study points out how there is a "dearth of research that specifically examines older non-gamers as a distinct audience." Brown also suspects that there will be a growing interest and general understanding of video games in there future due to increase in "greater proportion of older gamers in the coming years". Video games publicly more exposed than ever before, but gaming experience is highly subjective based on personal histories

that they are met in. A bad experience with games can spread those negative feelings further, which may be taken for granted without personally looking into them, thus spreading misinformation further.

The increased visibility of video games may lead to a wider understanding of them in the general public. Video games are often discussed in news media by non-gamers or people who have had little exposure to games in general. Since the *Nintendo DS* and the *Nintendo Wii*, there has been a noticeable growth in the reach and appeal of video games with more video games intended for everyone instead of exclusively for gamers (Brown, 2017). With more casual games released thereafter to broaden video games and their ease-of-access to players, they have steadily become better understood as a form of entertainment that surpasses the definition of the stereotypical "gamer." More case studies are required of video games to gain a more general and unbiased understandings of them.

2.3.1. Engagement to games

Video games need to be engaging for them to hold the player's attention if they intend to attract new players to play them, especially with getting non-gamers interested of games in general. It is an important challenge for game developers to design a game that can maintain the player's interest for long periods of time. This can be achieved, for example, by designing the game's content to be appropriately challenging and to match the player's level (Laurence et al., 2023). Player engagement is also maintained by potential social component of online multiplayer games and talking with other players which may develop to real-life relationships (Laurence et al., 2023; Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022). The design of a video game is optimally engaging and something the player considers worthwhile after they have purchased the game or spent more on additional downloadable content for it.

At its essence, engagement with video games translates to the player's willingness to play the game and its ability to keep them playing it. Laurence et al. (2023) claim that "Video game engagement partially mediates the relationship between the gamer experience and the intention to continue playing games" (p. 4). While the type of game can make the player desire to purchase the newest games in a series, different approaches are necessary to draw non-gamer's attention to play games. This has been particularly challenging due to many negative attitudes that non-gamers imagine games as despite never participating in it (Marc, 2017, p. 4). Often non-gamers imagine video

games as a wasteful and meaningless activity because of how, despite current broad and varied landscape of different types of video games, their primary target demographic has been gamers themselves, unaware of the fact that non-gamers constitute a considerable population that they could design video games towards, thus having "narrowed the playing field" (Fron et al., 2007, p. 309). More games should be open about their level of approachability instead of having games exclusively for the most dedicated playerbase.

The hegemonic idea that video games are designed exclusively for specific target demographic has severely hindered the potential variety and the wider image of video games as an engaging activity that non-gamers could feel interested in. Such stereotypical ideas that video games should only be for "young white men" that are also mostly considered "isolated individuals" (Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022) have been disproven as inaccurate depictions, but the negative stigma still persists. It has been an ongoing idea that being called a "gamer" is sometimes avoided because it includes potentially negative connotations and allows for discriminatory practices to non-gamers, especially on women trying to get into video games (Cote, 2016, p. 9; Fron et al., 2007). Not taking a wider variety of potential gamers with different skill levels and playing preferences into account has noticeably reduced the potential design and approachability of video games due to the assumption that only gamers play games (Fron et al., 2007; Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022). The widespread popularity, the range of applications and the current status of video games as an engaging activity demonstrate that considering video games to only cause negative repercussions and only available to specific target demographic is an archaic viewpoint of gaming as a whole.

When speaking of engagement to games, it does not solely refer to the game being something a player puts a lot of time into. Sometimes games are designed to engage players by devious tactics that ask for player's attention for as much as they can with potentially predatory tactics. Kniestedt et al. (2022) note that engagement on applied video games' systems requires attention which is considered a limited source. The level of engagement can vary depending on how well players are involved with the game's activity as well as whether the engagement serves the intended purpose based on its functions (Kniestedt et al., 2022). For non-gamers, this model for applied games demonstrates how video games can be designed to interest the player in the process of being engaged with it. When video games become interesting based on their elements, it is easier for non-gamers to start playing them due to an impulsive interest to it rather than pressure to play them.

Similar to other media products like books or movies, video games are primarily designed to offer more hedonic value than utilitarian, or pleasure over practical benefit (Laurence et al., 2023). With

video games, it is considered an optimal experience when a gamer loses the sense of time and a game provides, for example, an appropriate level of challenge (Laurence et al., 2023). Based on this, losing the sense of time could be considered the highest form of engagement, but it can equally deter a player from engaging with them in the first place. If one feels that they need to spend too much time on games or if a game is too long to complete, they may give up on it altogether for taking too much time for other things. The level of investment to video games should be in the player's control instead of the game enticing the player to spend unhealthy amount of time with it. Creating different types of games that players and non-gamers can play without requiring an initial or continuous time commitment to properly get into them should be a more plausible option to get further engaged with games in general.

2.3.2. The relevance of marketing and appealing design

Further continuing from the idea of player engagement being connected to enjoyment of them, non-gamers may be prevented from accessing games due to financial constraints. Video games require a specific system to play a specific game that they may not necessarily have feelings about since it is something they have no experience with. Without anyone to recommend them an appropriate game to try, it can be an arduous process to get into video games if a purchased game is unappealing or not appropriate to one's gaming skills. To help give information to those unaware of gaming's intricacies, well-designed marketing, appealing design and positive second-hand information of them can make it easier to get interested of video games.

A non-gamer may be overwhelmed by the large number of games to choose from, vague information of what they are like and potential bias of them not being appropriately interesting or too challenging. One appealing option for non-gamers are the game adaptations that adapt familiar media properties and events into a game. This has been the case with the Lego game adaptations of popular franchises such as Harry Potter or Star Wars which Wooten (2013, p. 1) describes as an effective method for parents to re-experience nostalgic characters and stories with their children from a new perspective. The Lego games are particularly appropriate for non-gamers to approach since the cutscenes are often created without dialogue, thus allowing for players to build new narratives of it for themselves (Wooten, p. 64). While it is influenced by personal attunement to controlling virtual characters and how well one can approach new technologies and systems, own

hobbies or jobs can similarly incentivize one to play games that involve similar mechanics or information because of the player's pre-established interest on them.

Non-gamers are an ideal group to design games that demonstrate the benefits of playing them instead of being considered something to simply spend time with. Such is the case with Coroller and Flinois' study (2023) which showcases the social and ecological benefits of *Animal Crossing* - series to connect with other people and inspire players to appreciate nature and get in touch with it more. Another widespread example of games as means of socialization is with the mobile game *Pokémon Go* which Coroller and Flinois indicated to be particularly effective of video games connecting people of different backgrounds (p. 12). These popular casual games are easy to approach without any prior gaming experience, and they also contradict the violent video games debate (Sjöström et al., 2013) being a dated assumption that violent video games would be the only popular genre of games.

Easily understandable controls can also help alleviate some barriers of entry for non-gamers due to the lack of experience with using a game controller and other similar systems. Difficulty in understanding technology may prevent people from getting into, or wanting to altogether, understand controls essential to progressing in a game. The *Nintendo Wii*, a commercially successful system especially among casual gamers in 2006, included an intuitively designed controller resembling a television remote, which allowed for more non-gamers get into video games because the controller was something people could relate to due to familiarity with similar devices (Wesley & Barczak, p. 149). Video games on other consoles at the time were increasingly difficult to learn, further distancing non-gamers from picking up video games due to their complex systems (Wesley & Barczak, p. 23). In contrast, many recent games include plenty of accessibility options from colorblind mode to one-handed modes to appeal to broader range of players from casual gamers to hardcore gamers. In allowing certain players to access gaming at all, these features may be considered "a fundamental necessity" (Dumont & Bonenfant, 2023, p. 239). While certain games should not cater to all kinds of players at the risk of changing its core design, players should be allowed to experience many kinds of games in their preferred way. This would also lead to more open visibility and access to games and their perception of it in the general public.

As more non-gamers are exposed and obtain a certain understanding of video games, it may become increasingly difficult to find non-gamers and compare them with gamers (Podlogar & Podlesek, 2022). It is possible that this distinguishment may become obsolete due to the widespread status of gaming as a commonplace activity and the decreasing need to differentiate between the two groups.

However, it is essential to take non-gamer perspective into account for more comprehensive understanding of video games and how video games can be further improved to appeal better outside of the gaming communities and to not view games simply as a "medium that is juvenile" (Wesley & Barczak, 2010, p. 2).

2.4. Nexus analysis

As the primary research methodology in this study, nexus analysis was selected for its capabilities to investigate the reach of video games in the different areas of discourse it is visible. At its basics, Suzie Wong Scollon and Ron Scollon (2004) first described this methodology as "the study of the ways in which ideas or objects are linked together" (viii). While this description by itself seems ambiguous, it highlights the importance of investigating different phenomena from multiple angles for more comprehensive understanding of it and if discourses influence one another meaningfully. Scollon and Scollon's nexus analysis functions as the primary resource for this study because of its focus on understanding the perspectives of non-gamers and in which instances they encounter video games. Nexus analysis provides an appropriate approach to understand the social discourse, the personal backgrounds and the logical framework for helping understand non-gamers and their personal perspectives in contrast to the prior research about the more accurate state of video games.

Nexus analysis has broad applications in understanding the varied instances of discourse about certain things. The past research has utilized nexus analytical methods in topics like educational linguistics due to its "principled yet flexible nature" (Martin-Jones & Martin, 2016, p. 89). As far as how nexus analysis helps in understanding video games from the lenses of non-gamers, the issue can be inspected similarly through online discussions, local spaces as well as how individuals conceptualize it in sociocultural circumstances they are situated into (Martin-Jones & Martin, p. 96). Käsmä (2020) utilizes nexus analysis to approach social actions in a video game environment and what affordances and constraints people of different gender and social ability face there. The nexus of practice becomes objectified as a "community of practice" and is adapted to observing instances where "humans act together, without an actual sense of community being necessarily essential" (Käsmä, 2020, p. 23). Similarly, the ideological understanding of non-gamers in this study is influenced by the types of experiences and social settings in which non-gamers may have encountered video games in and whether other people have influenced these perspectives in a specific way.

In researching video games and their areas of impact, it is important to note that new types of video games and technologies are developed continuously and, therefore, new ideas and gameplay styles can become dominant in discussing games' nature. Scollon and Scollon (2004) describe that "all discourses are based on technologies, though some of them are considerably simpler and much older and more naturalized in our practice than others" (p. 3). Because new types of technologies are constantly developed, including the types of video games, it is considered "a liability" to get introduced to one type of technology and how to use it, only for newer models to perform differently and necessary to learn them in turn (Käsmä, 2020, p. 3). Similar to the Internet and movies and how they were new and foreign concepts once, people steadily accept new ideas and technologies when they become a norm despite the difficulties to accept them early on.

In the case of foreign technologies, nexus analysis can be applied to focus on understanding specific perspectives and how they come from a history of experience with them in specific scenarios and later internalizations of these experiences. This will reduce the influence of personal bias in determining the validity of the claims that non-gamers may feel in a specific situation of games. As such, the use of nexus analysis leads to broad understanding of social elements and their appearances due to its focus on "engaging, navigating, and changing the nexus of practice" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 9). Social actors are highly dependent on several variables, which is also why nexus analysis is necessary to be conducted from a variety of perspectives and at different times to better understand the ongoing development of the studied phenomenon.

Recent applications of Scollon and Scollon's nexus analysis demonstrate its flexible nature to be used to research a wide variety of topics that are involved with any kind of nexus of practice. For instance, Larsen and Raudaskoski (2020, p. 817) explain its suitability for analyzing online social practices based on the daily actions in them. While some mediated actions online involve language use more than elsewhere, nexus analysis can help in analysing social media when certain instances "contain both textual and visual elements of action and social interaction" (Larsen & Raudaskoski, 2020, p. 817, 819). Such instances include news articles, videos or chat rooms that utilize different types of multimedia. Social actions online can be understood as deeply rooted in mediated actions due to the variety of multimedia tools used in them. While Scollon and Scollon (2004) define that their study is conducted at the early stages of the Internet's emergence to wide popularity, the types of discussions in it demonstrate how it contributes to further understanding of social interactions in new media settings (p. 139). Currently, it is especially important to evaluate the Internet as a source of information, what is being presented in it, and how it can perpetuate specific concepts and their portrayals of real ideas as misrepresentations.

To better visualize the connection of nexus analysis to human actions and their social practices, nexus analysis involves three core elements: *discourses in place*, *interaction order*, and *historical body* (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 19, 20). They allow researchers to understand the specific instances people experience and discuss about things, such as educational linguistics (Martin-Jones & Martin, 2016) and the ways these instances transpire. The *discourses in place* approaches language use in place and how they cause specific actions (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 97), the *interaction order* observes how actors behave alone or in relation to one another (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 99), and the *historical body* analyses the participant's personal experiences and their link to the action that is being researched (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 94). It is essential to consider the relevance of these approaches on a case-by-case basis since, depending on the type of study, "not all three types of discourse emerge as equally relevant analytically" (Martin-Jones & Martin, 2016, p. 101). Nexus analysis allows for flexible data analysis with its elements as seen by Martin-Jones and Martin (2016) in their study:

> "While every nexus of practice will manifest itself in unique ways, the three foci indicate the types of discourses to be mindful of and point the researcher in the direction of the sorts of cycles or flows of discourse that are useful to document." (pp. 100-101)

2.5. Critical Discourse Studies

Since this study analyses language use based on specific contexts, a method that focuses on analyzing language use is necessary. As an important part of nexus analysis, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) offers appropriate methods to "demystify the role language plays in the (re)production of unjustified domination and inequality and questions the social conditions in which these discourses are embedded" (Forchtner, 2012, p. 1). To obtain a comprehensive grasp of the nature of games and how they are understood, the ways how it is being discussed about should be understood. In support of this, Critical Discourse Studies – also known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – provides appropriate theoretical tools to gain information of the types of discussions that further determine the current status of video games and the level of understanding that goes into them. More specifically, CDS helps in understanding the perspective of non-gamers and what they think about video games from their own experiences based on the type of language they use when describing or discussing games.

Wodak and Forchtner (2017) discuss recent strides in Critical Discourse Analysis and how it has applications on empirical research regarding political issues. Approaches in CDS are concerned with language use and with a goal to "understand the complex workings of language within a society" (Wodak & Forchnter, 2017, p. 135). More importantly, CDS draws on various theoretical approaches and employs them to deal with a variety of political issues (Wodak & Forchtner, 2017, p. 135). Furthermore, discourses are viewed not simply as "free-floating or singular elements in this (re)production but as embedded in social contexts, referring to each other (interdiscursivity) as well as to material conditions which enable/constrain discourses" (Forchtner, 2012, p. 1). The role of language and its situational repercussions should be understood in conjunction with other discourses in play, thus contributing to a more comprehensive nexus of practice.

As defined by Wodak and Forchtner (2017, p. 136), discourse is a diverse concept which is involved with "challenging, criticizing and justifying validity claims." Discourse can be simplified to depict the social use of language to "accomplish some action in the social world" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 2). CDS focuses on understanding language use in specific instances and attempts to demystify the ways power relations and specific ideologies are perpetuated (Forchtner, 2012, p. 1). Depending on what is being investigated, a specific perspective may be used for the most optimal number of disciplinary methods and whether there is need for a specific amount of cooperation between boundaries or whether an analysis from a single perspective is sufficient in creating a comprehensive understanding of the whole phenomenon.

Further tying into CDS and its purpose to make sense of language use, Forchtner and Wodak (2017) present that Foucauldian ideology, the idea of understanding human knowledge being based in history, is closely relevant to discourse's tone by how discourse practices are interdependent as well as tying them together due to their "discursive nature of power, the political nature of discourse and the discursive nature of social change" (p. 139). Discourse in practice becomes apparent via relationships, especially how current trends focus on "technologization of discourse" and its methods "to understand, reshape and reproduce discursive practices that benefit certain hegemonic projects and ideological effects" (Forchtner & Wodak, 2017, p. 139). In this study, non-gamers' ideas about video games can contribute to certain discursive practices being more prominent and widespread than others. Forchtner and Wodak consider meaning-making in the context of understanding discourses to be subject for change in how new styles and representations are characterized similar to a doctor–patient communication (p. 139). As the discourse of games and their use develops along their real-life applications and of their effects, it is paramount to be aware of the nuances in the language used in those contexts and what purpose it serves.

Language use is intrinsically connected to also possess a certain degree of power based on what is said about something. Forchtner and Wodak (2017) present "technologisation of discourse" as a form of "constitutive power in modern society" (p. 139), referring to the function of discourses in reshaping, reproducing, and understanding discursive practices and how they benefit specific ideologies. Conceptualized discourses portray information about something in a specific light and bolster specific viewpoints further in attempts to cause change. Since discourses express knowledge and power relations based on what is said (Wodak & Forchtner, p. 140), portraying certain ideas in a specific way can have important repercussions on how something is perceived. This order of thinking could be interpreted as a method to benefit political ideologies, but it can similarly benefit specific ideas of how people see more commonplace things like video games.

3. Description of materials

3.1. Interviews

This section will introduce the collected data to understand the perspective of non-gamers on gaming. To provide current insight on video games based on non-gamers' perspectives, I will conduct this study by interviewing non-gamers and analysing their ideas about video games based on their own words. A permission was asked from the university academic services to send an email to a university student list to find willing non-gamer participants. A total of 5 non-gamer interviewees were chosen to be interviewed, and the interview meeting times were decided between each participant. The "non-gamer" was determined whether they had played very little or not at all during the past 12 months similar to previous studies that have categorized between a gamer and a non-gamer (see Sjöström et al., 2013, Laurence et al., 2023). After contacting the interviewees, they were asked for their agreement to participate to the research. They were then interviewed in separate, up to 1-hour long sessions which were recorded and preserved for the duration of this study. Questions mentioned in Appendix 1 were used to conduct the interviews and to delineate the focus of the study. The example citations from the interviews were translated from Finnish.

Any methods of personal identification were anonymized in this study, such as the interviewees' names via pseudonyms. However, certain things like age and gender are described for their relevance in understanding the interviewees' perspectives further. While the interviewees were not asked of their specific age, rough age ranges were hypothesized based on certain elements that emerged in the interviews. Interviewees Vince and Tara were in their early 20s based on their recalled recent exposure to video games in their teens whereas Kim, Ian and Mia were between their late 30s and early 40s based on their mentions of having adolescent children and of trying out games a few decades ago. The interviewees' gender was assumed based on how they appeared in the interview meetings, but their personal preferences on this was not interrogated further whether they preferred themselves in another gender role. While this is not the primary focus of the study, gender plays an important role in determining specific behavioural patterns between non-gamers.

The exact age of the interviewees is not necessary information either for this study, but the distinction to younger and older non-gamers provides different kinds of historical bodies of exposure to video games and how they are relevant to understanding their recalled experiences. For example, older non-gamers may have more moments of exposure to video games based on their example of a game further in their youth compared to younger players' experience with more recent games that attract more casual adult gamers (Wesley & Barczak, 2010). The variety within the

study group provides appropriate perspectives to approach video games from with enough recognizable patterns to connect them between each other on non-gaming habits.

The interviewees' different levels of prior exposure to video games is important to consider for its relevance on understanding them via the implemented nexus analytical methods. Ian and Vince mentioned being into gaming several years in the past whereas Kim, Tara and Mia had minimal exposure to video games outside of a few occasions. All of the interviewees did have little to none or no gaming experiences in the past 12 months, which is what categorizes them as non-gamers for the purposes of this study. Gaming experiences are recalled based on non-gamers' words, and their understanding will be of utmost importance.

3.2. Online discourse in popular news media

While the non-gamer interviewees constitute the primary data due to the focus on their own perspectives, this is not sufficient in terms of nexus analysis and should be contrasted to other perspectives about video games for more comprehensive and unbiased results. The majority of video game discussions take place in online forums and in social media because of its function as a platform for widespread discussions regardless of location. However, non-gamers are rare to find in video game forums since there is little reason for them to discuss about video games without any personal engagement with the activity itself. Additionally, online forums, such as Reddit, should be doubted for the validity of the information presented in it. Many of its anonymous users cannot be ascertained whether they are non-gamers when they discuss non-gaming attitudes based on text alone.

For this reason, in addition to my individual data from non-gamer students' interviews, it is important to contrast local data on a larger scale to condone with nexus analysis' idea to understand different areas of discourse together. The nexus of practice of non-gamers emerges based on their previous experiences with games, what attitudes they have on games, where the non-gaming habits originate, and what reasons they have for not playing. The discourse in news media outlets is not in itself a source of legitimate information alone, but instead, "one source among many other that journalists make use of for specific communication purposes" (Sjöström et al., 2013, p. 10). As a method to further deepen the understanding of current non-gamer attitudes and of gaming's status currently, I will investigate video game articles published online within a year from a selected news media site as a secondary source that provides wider perspective to the interviews and allows for

more comprehensive understanding of the nexus of practice video games are situated in. While journalistic articles can be debated for their validity, the information in them and in the interviews directs the analysis to the "micro-analysis of unfolding moments of social interaction" as well as "much broader socio-political-cultural analysis of the relationships among social groups and power interests in the society" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 8).

Several online articles from a specific source were investigated to better emphasize and understand the perspectives, the variety and the tone of video game discourse. The online news website of Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yleisradio, also known as Yle) was chosen because of its widespread popularity and reach as a prolific broadcasting company in Finland about a wide variety of topics. As such, the analysis of its video game related articles also tells how topics about gaming are written to a wide audience instead of exclusively for gamers. Their renowned status in Finland was also an essential factor in finding a place of discourse where video games are found to be discussed on a sufficiently professional and representative scale.

In the Yle news website, the keyword *videopelit* 'video games' was used to find relevant articles of the different contexts that video games appeared in. A total of 160 articles were found between August 6th 2022 and August 6th 2023 with this keyword, in which the relevance of video games to each article varied greatly whether it was the primary focus or used as an example to another issue in the article. The articles were chosen within a year to understand the tone that video games are discussed, whether certain topics are more common, and whether there are more articles in a specific topic, therefore contributing to the visibility and representation of specific ideas about video games for non-gamers. This method provides better understanding to the interviewees' perspectives and how a non-gamer might be exposed to specific types of ideas about video games amidst other types of articles.

The Yle articles are categorized below based on the contexts that video games were discussed or appeared to some extent:
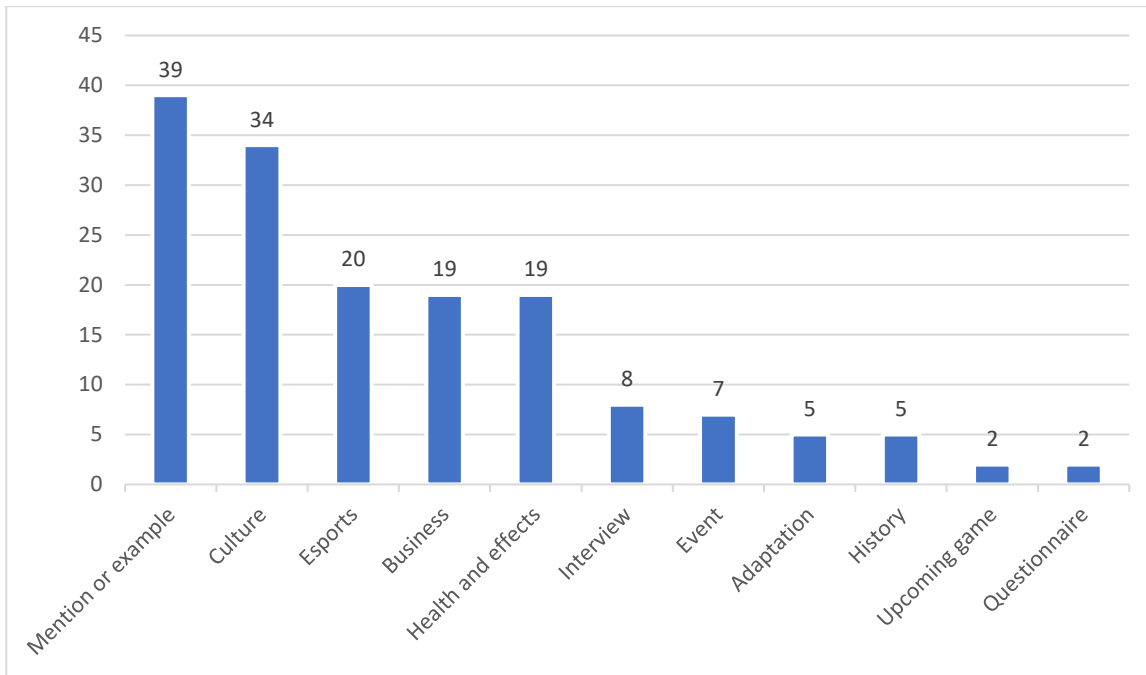
Figure 1. *The types of video game related articles found in the Yle news network between 6.8.2022 – 6.8.2023 with the Finnish search word 'videopelit'*

Figure 1 provides an overview of the variety of topics that were provided from the Yle website when searching for video game related topics. Most of them are categorized under "Mention or example", meaning that video games are presented as a supportive detail to prove a point of the main topic. Their use also fluctuates depending on whether they are used as a positive or negative example. The articles categorized under "culture" depict video games in a culturally significant role or in an unusual context such as being a part of a museum exhibition or in a surprising setting in people's daily lives. The other categories provide a more transparent idea of the topics video games are newsworthy for such as being adapted to a new environment or informing about business deals between video game publishers.

The Yle articles broaden the scope beyond the non-gamers' perspectives as examples that they might encounter in news media that contribute to their perspectives about video games. Even if non-gamers do not necessarily read articles about video games, simply seeing the article's title or hearing about them from a secondary source can instill them with certain viewpoints for a long time, often disregarding the details of the news itself. The range of topics influences how the phenomenon itself is seen either for its contributions or controversies and should be taken seriously as a site of power for imposing certain ideologies.

4. Data analysis

In this section, I will discuss the research data described in section 3 and analyze their common themes, perspectives, and potential constraints that are related to gaming habits and attitudes. The non-gamer interviews function as the primary points of understanding video games based on their own words, whereas the Yle articles add to the discourse of the ways certain depictions that bolster specific viewpoints about video games based on the types of instances they emerge in and are discussed as. By using the nexus analytical methods, the analysis of non-gamers will contribute to the larger discourse about understanding the influence and the state of video games as a phenomenon.

4.1. Video games are difficult to understand

Each of the non-gamer interviewees implicated that they have very little experience about video games despite having tried to play certain games once or few times either during their childhood, adolescence or with their children on a few occasions. While they have seen others play video games, such as friends or children, the rare occasions of trying to play a game have often led to bewilderment and confusion. The act of playing a game is a rare activity to the interviewees, and this leads to knowing little about the kinds of things that video games can appear and influence as.

Some interviewees explained that the lack of overall experience with video games made it difficult to recall the exact feelings that playing a game caused. While Mia commented that she had played some 2d games in her youth such as *Super Mario Bros.,* she particularly found her past experience with a 3d game and grasping its controls difficult:

Example 1.

> Mia: Mä en pysy perässä ja ohjata tota ukkelia yhtään mihinkään. Mun aivot ei ollenkaan pysy perässä, kun mun aivot on tottunut semmoiseen, et se kulkee tonne suoraan. Siitä jää semmoinen, ettei nää pelit oo mulle."
>
> Mia: "I cannot follow and control the (game's) character anywhere at all. My brain just cannot keep up with it, since I am used to the character moving straight. It left me feeling that these games just are not for me."

Mia's recalled experience with a 3d game is interesting in that she is used to a very specific types of game that she had played previously. Her comment of the character moving straight refers to her prior experience with a 2d game where the player character's movement is typically restricted to moving left, right, up and down as opposed to 3d games' wider range of movement. Her previous experience with a 2d game had become the default experience to compare other gaming experiences to, as implied by her troubles with a 3d game and its controls.

Mia also mentioned that her lack of experience in controlling characters in a video game was similar to her experience in handling a driving simulator in a driving school. According to her, it was difficult to follow the simulator's screen and dodge incoming obstacles which made her experience *nauseating*. These problems suggest that Mia lacks the required cognitive and perceptual abilities that many games with action elements often include (Podlogar & Podlesek, 2022). When asked of the types of games Mia would like to play if an appropriate opportunity emerged, she preferred the 2d games she had grown accustomed by explaining that *they are games that I can understand*. This also referred to the act of getting to play in the first place as she indicated her frustration in spending too much time on learning the controls of a game.

Game's genre can also be a potential deterrent to non-gamers if they clash with the player's personal preferences. As mentioned in example 1, Interviewee M indicated that fast-paced games posed too much of a challenge to even follow the game's events. An instance of someone else prompting her to play *Resident Evil*, a mature horror game where one navigates a labyrinthian environment filled with monsters and puzzles, was considered similarly not suitable in addition to the game's scary content. A player with little experience faces several challenges not only with controls or understanding the game's events but also if the game's visuals are not something that they are already accustomed to.

Similarly, Kim also claimed that she had trouble in understanding the controls of games due to having very little experience in playing games in general. She commented that she had tried a platformer game once as a teen but did not find it engaging at the time and now prioritizes it very low, only seeing it as something her children sometimes play:

Example 2.

> Kim: "Myös se, etten kaipaa elämääni sellaisia kiksejä. Se on mulle liian jännittävää, että se vaikuttaa mulle sellaisena fyysisenä jännityksenä tavallaan. Ikään kuin kattoo jotain urheilukilpailua, jota ei voi kattoo koska se menee liian jännittäväksi, negatiiviseksi tunteeksi. Tuntuu siltä, ettei se oo mulle.
>
> Kim: "I also do not need those kinds of kicks in my life. It is too exciting for me, and it causes physical excitement to me akin to watching a sports competition. I cannot watch it because of the overly exciting and negative feeling it causes. It feels like that it is not for me.

Kim describes a perspective where simply watching video games is a challenge in understanding what is going on in it and what types of strong emotions it has caused in her past experiences. This would suggest that she has engaged with few, potentially fast-paced video games that require fast reflexes, patience and attention span to succeed in the game. The games she mentioned having played previously were *adventure and jumping games*, most likely referring to the games in the platformer and action-adventure genres. The emphasis on the game being too exciting could be because of the game being too complex or constrained conditions to get properly acquainted with the game and its systems. Kim's interaction order of getting into video games can be seen as constrained due to the games being too difficult to understand. It is possible that Kim lacks a certain degree of mental capacity and focus to manage in the played games as indicated by the comparison of the experience to watching sports and as something that does not inherently cause positive feelings.

For some interviewees, understanding games was more difficult in their youth because of their lack of sufficient exposure to video games. According to Ian, one had to possess a specific amount of knowledge in their youth to get into video games and understand how to get games working in the first place. This indicated low level of exposure may be influenced by video games being relatively new phenomenon in the past and the non-gamers lacking the option to learn about games easily via methods like intergenerational transfer (Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022). The non-gamers indicated that they did not have anyone close in their youth that could introduce them to video games. This was explained to influence their current attitudes of not needing video games because they had been accustomed to not playing them in the first place. As such, the non-gamers considered unnecessary to get interested in video games since they have not needed them before and do not see the purpose of getting interested in them now either.

Some Yle articles demonstrate potential ways how non-gaming adults can find out about video games and become interested in them. For instance, an article (Sarajärvi, 2023) about a game that

takes place in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter -franchise titled *Hogwarts Legacy* introduces the background of the interviewed non-gamer, followed by how they ended up playing it and what the game in question is about in terms of content and its development history. Similar to Lego games and their new methods to engage adult players in a new setting (Wooten, 2013), familiar characters and themes from other media can interest non-gamers to play video games related to the source material. It is also the reason why successful adaptations have become popular to a point where video games are described to be "the new book for film makers" (Puukka, 2023). Puukka's article further explains that successful movies based on video game properties are a new trend that especially attract young viewers due to the familiar characters in them that they recognize, further connecting them with Wooten's study.

Sarajärvi's article (2023) also discusses the attitudes non-gamers may generally experience about video games in their own words. In the article, the non-gamer recalls that "Those who do not play usually have a negative perspective (of video games). Playing video games can certainly be detrimental if one plays them too much, but it has also been researched to be beneficial." Sarajärvi mentions some benefits of gaming being related to improvements in practical skills such as problem-solving, perception and work memory. Lastly, the article mentions that the interviewed non-gamer considers video games to lower her stress levels, especially so when she gets to "delve further in the game's world, see the developed landscapes of the game and find new pathways in it." The non-gamer considers progression in the game enjoyable, especially so when the game is related closely to the interviewee's prior long-term enjoyment of the source material it is connected to. While this article may be biased due to the non-gamer's potential willingness to be interviewed, it does provide evidence of video games' level of awareness effects to non-gamers better than before (see Fron et al., 2007).

All of the interviewees mentioned that they do not usually follow video game related articles from any news sites. This was explained by not having enough time to find out information about games and it not being considered necessary to read them since they already are not interested in playing games. When asked about the kinds of topics the interviewees would be interested in reading about, Kim, Ian and Mia expressed interest on learning about the effects of video games. Kim considered beneficial to know about video games to be better aware of them since some of them can be *too scary for small, school-aged children*. Ian was also concerned of how video games and movies would influence children based on the type of content, emphasizing the age restrictions to not always be accurate and that *It is dependent on the type of child for what kinds of impressions they acquire from them*. Mia presented that she would like to learn about the good and bad effects of

playing video games equally, mentioning that *there should be no blind judgement if there is no reason to*. These ideas present non-gamers as open and level-headed about video games and prioritizing information connected to their personal lives.

Kim, Ian and Mia's interest in video game's effects is also explained by each of them being parents and being concerned about the influences they may impart to their children. They also commented that online information should be able to provide information clearly to parents about video games. This was explained by how their children have played video games to some extent, and that the non-gamers would like to see the effects being discussed in social media. Kim commented that she was not sure about the best method to obtain relevant information, mentioning better public discussion as a possible option. She also mentioned how there are some games that make rounds in social media due to being *too scary for young school-aged children.* Being informed about the detrimental effects and examples of video games is not something that non-gamers seek information about on their own. Rather, they learn about particularly alarming topics inconsistently from close relatives or when amidst other information. Especially in social media, they may be at a risk of exposure to biased and questionable information about the negative examples, further perpetuating the perception of games as unbeneficial when biased information is internalized as the truth.

In discussing video game related news articles and their role, Mia generalized that there should be a good sense of judgement in evaluating online information:

Example 3.

> Mia: "On tärkeää, että ne oppii ymmärtämään sen käytön ja sen, mitä sieltä kannattaa uskoa ja mitä ei, ja kuinka paljon sen kannattaa vaikuttaa omaan elämään. Sama on niissä peleissä ja ihan muissakin asioissa mitä elämässä on. Kun kuitenkin koittaa suhtautua niihin järjellä, niin en ainakaan siinä tapauksessa näe siinä mitään vikaa, oli se peli minkälainen vaan.
>
>
> Mia: "It is important that they learn to understand its use and what one should believe and what one should not out of it and how much it should influence one's own life. Same thing with those games and anything else in life. After all, when they are faced with common sense, I do not see anything wrong with them regardless of the type of game in question.

Mia compared online information to video games for how both should be understood by common sense and without prejudice. As long as video games, online information, and *anything else in life* are moderated and understood properly, Mia thinks that they are fair game. Her emphasis on *common sense* indicates that both gamers and non-gamers are preferred to be open about video games before coming into their own conclusions based on the isolated and limited instances they

are encountered in. Contributing on the problematic focus of social sciences on biased information and the lack of "hard sciences" in news media (Sjöström et al., 2013, p. 6), Mia's concern is valid in setting both video games and online information at an appropriate level of use where they do not lead to any problems.

4.2. Video games require too much time

The time it takes to finish a game depends on each game and what genre it belongs to, and some players may find more enjoyment either from long or short game for individual reasons. For non-gamers, a more pressing matter is having time for video games in the first place let alone finishing them. The interviewees indicated them to take too much time out of their busy schedule, preventing them from engaging appropriately with video games. A regular gamer can transfer their prior gaming experience from their previous gaming experiences into other games with similar controls or systems, making learning new games easier based on prior experiences. A non-gamer, on the other hand, needs much more time to understand the controls, the objective and the general mindset for playing a single game. If these things are not learned at an appropriate pace, the player may be overwhelmed and quit in frustration, as indicated by Kim in example 4:

Example 4.

> Kim: Joskus oon kokeillut jotain peliä, niin siinä hätääntyy. Ei hallitse sitä ohjainlaitetta, ja sitä pitäis tehä niin paljon että tulis tutuksi. En halunnut nähdä vaivaa.
>
>
> Kim: Sometimes I have tried some kind of game, and it caused me to get panicked. I cannot handle that controller, and it should be done so much that one would be familiar with it. I did not want to put in the effort.

Kim presented the seemingly many required things to progress in a game to be a major constraint for the enjoyment of it. Without any frame of reference or experience to help her get further in the game, she recalls the game being too confusing and uncomfortable in terms of handling the controller and understanding the game, further concluding to not want to *put in the effort* to progress in the game. Kim did not mention the game or its genre specifically, but the overwhelming experience may be indicative of the game's demanding nature or being introduced to play it by someone else in a particularly challenging instance. This supports the idea that video games require

specific amount of perceptive and cognitive skills (Boot et al., 2011) which Kim seemed to lack in this scenario. It is also possible that the game was still in the tutorial phase, failing to engage the player at the learning phase of its systems. Regardless, troubles in grasping the game gave her an idea that video games require too much effort and time to understand.

Understanding the variety of experiences available in different kinds of video games would help non-gamers to get into them instead of interpreting the genre based on a few bad examples. However, finding this out would require time on its own which non-gamers already lack due to other higher priority matters. This is a difficult, figurative barrier for non-gamers to cross if they do not have the patience or open attitude to learn video games. Simply finding an appropriate and interesting video game and getting to play it becomes a challenge in addition to the challenges of playing in itself which non-gamers may not feel inclined to invest a lot of time into. These challenges were brought up by Tara who, instead of the controls or the objective of the game being difficult, indicated troubles in being interested or sufficiently engaged about games:

Example 5.

Tara: Valikoima on niin laaja, nii sit ei tiedä, mitkä pelit itteä kiinnostaa ja mihin riittää mielenkiinto enemmän kuin sen yhden pelikerran ajan. Siksi ei ole oikein tullut kokeiltua mitään. On helpompi jatkaa harrastuksia ja ajanvietettä, mitä on aiemmin tehnyt sen sijaan, että tavallaan tietoisesti ottaisi jotain uutta.

Tara: The selection is so broad that it is difficult to know which games I might be interested in and which I have enough interest in to play more than one session. That is why I have not really tried anything. It is easier to continue hobbies and pastimes that I have already done instead of intentionally picking up something new.

Tara feels that getting into video games is difficult because of the overwhelming selection of games to choose from. While there are a variety of games easily available to engage with, Tara doubts whether they are interesting enough for *more than one session*. In this sense, there is a sense of constraint of becoming sufficiently engaged with them not because of the lack of required cognitive or perception skills, but due to doubtful attitudes on whether the game will be interesting enough and worth their time. Tara does not think of herself as against video games, but her lack of motivation and the required time investment to find an appropriate example were presented as major hindrances to playing games.

Further explaining Tara's non-gamer perspective, she presented herself as not being a patient person in general. Her reluctance to adapt video games as a reoccurring activity extend to her disregard of watching other people playing games or *15- or 20-minute gaming videos on Youtube about video games* which she considered to be too long and boring. When asked of the ways they would be interested in getting into games, she claimed her interest on *Youtube Shorts* and *Tiktok* -videos which are, by their nature, brief videos about a variety of things, and a preferred way for her to learn new things via short content. Her affinity to short videos and impatient personality may indicate that these behavioral patterns are caused by the lack of time or being intimidated by the unclear time requirement for playing games. Combined with the common non-gamer attitude of regarding video games as a waste of time (Brown, 2017; Marc, 2017, p. 1), getting into gaming is not incentivized by any motives or contexts that are worth the effort.

The perspective of not having enough time to spend on video games among non-gamers may come from a historical body of gaming experiences and becoming aware of what they can offer to oneself. In some cases, gaming as a hobby may turn into a lifelong passion, but it is equally likely that the time spent on them becomes reduced when a gamer feels that they have seen all there is to offer. Ian mentioned having plenty of experience with video games in his youth, and he justifies his current lack of time on video games due to his busy schedule on other hobbies and important affairs not giving *an opportunity to get excited of them*. Furthermore, Möller's article (2022) especially highlights the negative influences with its interviewee that are present as a gamer but not as a non-gamer such as unhealthy diet, worse social relations, and video game addiction. Despite acknowledging video games for their benefits, the non-gamer in the article describes them as *mindless waste of time* and that his current occupied lifestyle does not have room for video games. In these instances, video games do not have a place for non-gamers because of realizing their limited benefits and devaluing them so low that the time for them is occupied by more valuable matters.

The age of the interviewees is a potential reason for why they lack the required time to play video games. This is explained by the increased number of responsibilities as an adult in comparison to children having less of them and having more time on other activities. The non-gamer parents indicated concern on games and their potential to cause negative effects from unmoderated and lengthy use:

Example 6.

> Kim: Jos ajankäyttöä ei itse pysty rajoittamaan, se kaventaa elämänpiiriä muuten, koska muulle elämälle, kavereille ja harrastuksille ei jää aikaa. Kynnys lähteä mihinkään muuhun kasvaa.
>
>
> Kim: If people cannot manage their time by themselves, it limits the things they can do because no time is left for friends, hobbies, and other things in life. The threshold to go and do other things also increases.

In example 6, not being able to limit the time spent on games may lead to social problems. Spending too much time with games due to high engagement is viewed detrimental to one's social life if equal amount of attention is not directed to both of them. Unbalanced division of one's time would also lead to lower quality family relationships and conflicts (Charmaraman et al., 2020). Kim also presented there being a *threshold* to get into other things from video games, meaning that playing games may feel more comfortable than doing other things if one plays too much. Many things in games can motivate players to stay engaged with them such as the sense of belonging in an online community (Käsmä, 2020, p. 23) or the sense of enjoyment from solving challenges and coming back to the game multiple times (Laurence et al., 2023). Kim's perspective aligns well with these studies of there being a real danger to do other things if video games incentivize and attract the player to play them for too long.

The negative attitudes about the time spent with video games are not always connected to non-gamers' own historical bodies of experiences, but also how they see their influence on other people who are also in a similar family setting. Kim recalled that her husband's friends seem to play games regularly whereas most women she knows do not engage with video games at all. More generally speaking, Kim suspected that *gaming is a negative thing in families that play them because it influences how they allocate their time*. Other responses mentioned that excessive gaming can reduce social activity, the quality of family relationships, and mental health but did not specify whether she has seen these effects in her own family. Supporting Charmaraman et al.'s findings about behavioral risks of gaming (2020), the non-gamer parents view gaming's possible risks and appropriate use an important topic that they have discussed to varying degrees previously within the family.

Depending on the game and whether they are played for occasional enjoyment or more seriously on a competitive scale, video games may require a lot of time to play and get invested in them. While

certain games that can be played all the way to the end in a few sessions, it is not easily evident to non-gamers which games are shorter than others. Combined with non-gamers not necessarily comprehending the differences of video games genres and what they might require from the player, playing a video game becomes an intimidating endeavor without prior experience to similar games or any recommendation from a reliable source such as from a relative or a friend. Many things, like finding an appropriate game, playing it and being familiar with their mechanics, prevent non-gamers from engaging with games properly due to requiring time investment to each of these areas.

4.3. Ambiguous benefit for playing video games

The third main point further compounds the earlier observations about the difficulties to understand video games and the seemingly large commitment of time required to comprehend them: how is playing video games considered beneficial? When video games take so much time without any visible benefit in return, it is easy to assume that non-gamers would be opposed to the idea of being indulged with them for a long time. Being engaged with games to the point of ignoring other responsibilities is a real danger for causing problematic behavior (Charmaraman et al., 2020; Monley et al., 2023), but the discussion about video games' effects, especially the visible emphasis on the negative, may obscure the beneficial effects of gaming to be understood by non-gamers.

As described in example 4, Kim's reason for not wanting to *put in the effort* to games was related to difficulties in understanding the game and the game controller. While this behavior can be explained simply by the lack of time to learn the game due to other adult responsibilities, giving up on it altogether either refers to the lack of necessary skills or not seeing the purpose to playing it further. Kim's lack of motivation to play suggests the perceived lack of benefit from playing in exchange for their time. Playing more would progress them further in the game, but it would not give them anything of value in return, presenting video games as pointless. Even though video games generally improve cognitive and perception skills among other things (Boot et al., 2011; Allaire et al., 2013), the lack of immediately perceivable benefits leads non-gamers to consider them meaningless.

Some interviewees were transparent about not benefitting from playing video games to any extent. Vince expressed how he had been into video games in the primary school *more than anything else*. He then had quit gaming when *motorcycles, girls and other more formative hobbies came up and when gaming did not interest any longer*. In this context, the current non-gamer has experienced

gaming for what it can offer to them and is now considered frivolous after a sufficient historical body of experiences with it. Ian corroborated these ideas by having been a gamer several years ago and coming into terms with it as something unnecessary. He had tried gaming during college studies with a few examples such as the first-person shooter *Medal of Honor* among other used games. After a few sessions of trying them out, he concluded that gaming was incompatible with his current interests:

Example 7.

> Ian: Jossain määrin kiinnosti ja oli tavallaan kivaa, mutta se oli jotenkin tylsää aikuisiällä. Mä en saanut siitä hirveenä irti mitään. Se oli ihan erilainen intohimo joskus nuorempana pelata. Nyt se vaan tuntuu pitkästyttävältä pelaaminen ja se, miten siitä hyötyy.
>
>
> Ian: It was interesting and kind of fun to some extent, but it was somewhat boring as an adult. I did not really get anything out of it. There was entirely different kind of passion to gaming when I was younger. Now it just feels dull whether I benefit from it at all.

A particularly interesting mention from Ian in example 7 of there being a *different kind of passion* when he was younger suggests a few things about the connection of age and interest with video gaming. Video games in childhood are more exciting and interesting when players have a lot of expendable time and no properly developed interaction order with them. Children frequently adapt brand new experiences that they most likely do not have other frame of experience to compare video games to. Regardless of the game's quality, simply being able to control the characters and learning to progress in the game is a unique experience the first time playing a specific kind of a game. In contrast, adulthood introduces a more critical perspective on where to spend time and what actions and activities are more beneficial in the sense of self-development and benefit.

The example 7 indicates the idea of adults emphasizing their time investment on the things that they feel to benefit out of. Compared to Ian's recollection of how playing games felt to him in his youth, his recent experience had little to offer in return, even being remarked as *dull* despite being considered *fun to some extent*. Like Vince's thoughts on quitting gaming in the past, any interest on video games had become less relevant and something that he had outgrown out of in favor of other new interests and responsibilities in adulthood. When deciding where to put more time into, video gaming becomes a disposable activity in this context.

Gaming is also considered unappealing because of the possible fear of purchasing a video game and not enjoying it, as indicated by Tara in example 6 for her lack of interest to play a game after the first session. In a hypothetical scenario of purchasing a new game, playing a new game only once could be considered wasteful and would cross the restrictive structural barrier (Bergstrom, 2017) of using personal finance on them with no perceivable benefit. This would not entice the player to pick up other games again because of the poor experiences last time they had tried a game. However, it is also possible that the interviewees simply favor fewer hobbies and not to spread themselves too thin in their busy adult lives.

Another questionable type of game to spend additional finance on that was discussed was related to mobile games. These games are typically free to download on smart devices but may also require frequent payments, microtransactions, to help the player progress in the game or to not show ads when playing. Mia commented on the ads particularly disturbing and interrupting the use of different phone apps in addition to her recalled sparse mobile game experiences. Ian also indicated his frustration with microtransactions even in games one had already purchased. These microtransactions were recalled to cause arguments particularly with his children who seemed to be willing to purchase them. With the interviewees, mobile games and microtransaction practices presented as negative examples that stained their view gaming practices in general.

Later experiences with games, especially with the same genre or with sequels with some new additions to familiar gameplay mechanics, may be less interesting because their general structure can be referred to based on previous gaming experiences of similar titles. In comparison to the foreign intrigue of video games in childhood, adults who are familiar with certain games are more critical of their content and may attempt to seek practical benefits over the entertainment value, even though games primarily offer hedonic over utilitarian value (Laurence et al., 2023). The non-gaming attitudes in this regard derive from a familiarity with a specific genre of games and an assumption of having seen everything there is to offer, regardless of the full variety of games or new systems introduced in new games.

Deeming gaming's benefits and nature based on selective experiences is not a definite source for reliable information, but it functions as a compromise for the personal resources and investment it would cost otherwise to experience a more comprehensive variety of games. Ian mentioned that he was not sure how other people have enough time to spend on gaming in comparison to his busy schedule in saying that *if adults play games, it is practically time wasted*. This line of thinking may come from his historical body of gaming experiences which constitute to an overall idea of what

video games are, what they provide and whether they are worth the investment. Even if there are newer games that provide things like new gameplay options, impressive graphics, and immersive storytelling, gaming itself may require too many resources to be worth it in terms of time, money, and personal interest on a game. When these things are constrained, gaming is valued more strictly, especially so amongst other responsibilities and their presence during adulthood.

The interviewees that mentioned having children are an important group to consider because of the social dimension that gaming enables in a family setting. A common pathway into gaming is through a parent sharing their passion of games to their children, friends, or relatives (Buyukozturk, 2022). Interviewees Kim and Mia mentioned only observing their children playing games and learning about games via their children, indicating that their gaming habits and knowledge have emerged from a secondary source mostly. On the other hand, Ian offered his perspective to how he considers video games in a family setting:

Example 8.

> Ian: Mä en usko, että sinänsä se peli vetää minua puoleensa, vaan enemmän se, että saa yhessä tehä ja pelata siinä sivussa. Vähän samalla tavalla kuin tyttö tulee Lego-paketin kanssa: yhessä voidaan rakentaa, mutta en mä niillä menis yksin (rakentamaan) tai en mä yksin jaksais rakentaa niillä sen rakentamisen ilosta.
>
>
> Ian: I do not think that the game attracts me, but rather, the idea of playing it with someone else. It is similar when she brings a Lego package: we can build together, but I would not go (build) with them alone or have patience to build with them just for the sake of building.

Despite not being personally into video games any longer, Ian considered gaming an opportunity to engage with his child by supporting them in the game. Being engaged with the game and solving its challenges function as methods of entertainment as well as socialization between the players. Ian considered to be more drawn into seeing his child happy in this hypothetical scenario, and his distant gaming experience gives him the necessary knowledge of games to be of assistance. Other non-gamer parents also mentioned that their children often come talk about games to them, which they consider a main method of learning about games. Instead of solely providing personal benefit, example 8 demonstrates how video games can be socially beneficial in providing topics to discuss about the game's world and experiences with specific sections that may be played as shared experience. Further complementing Buyukozturk and Shay (2022), video games may involve non-

gamers in shared experiences of them that may exist even outside of the gaming session as topics of discussion.

Other methods of applying video games in cultural contexts became especially apparent in the Yle articles described in figure 1. Many of these articles included video games in a culturally significant situation, and their uniqueness became the reason for them being newsworthy. For example, Korhonen (2023) introduces an example of a video game being developed as part of an event and integrating children's drawings into its design. Similar to more examples of video games in a variety of contexts, including movies (Puukka, 2023), steady and successful implementations of video games outside of their own boundaries can have positive repercussions. By extension, their presence in a variety of contexts will help in developing a nuanced understanding of the discourses in place that video games emerge from.

4.4. Optimistic perspectives and interests about video games

Despite the many problems that the non-gamers mentioned video games to be unsuitable for them personally, they also acknowledged their benefits in the right circumstances and when moderated properly. Further expanding beyond the scope of non-gamers' personal lives, the interviewees explained their ideas about the societal role video games are in and how video gaming could be improved to be more inclusive based on their design. Despite being self-assessed non-gamers and therefore having minimal to no engagement with it, exploring the roles non-gamers place video games in can reveal potential methods to ease other non-gamers get into gaming and contribute to better public perception of video games.

As pointed out in section 4.1., the interviewees often felt that video games do not provide them with anything meaningful, therefore, why they consider it a low priority and only worth inspecting to be on the lookout for its dangers. Despite the discussed negative perspectives, the interviewees acknowledged video games to provide several social and psychological benefits as opposed to Brown (2017) and how her older adult non-gamer interviewees consider benefits to be related mostly on brain development. The non-gamers here commented video games to engage players socially in online environments, help them develop their cognition skills, and get them exposed into new things through their use:

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Example 9.

Tara: Riippuu, minkä tyyppisiä pelaa ja minkä verran. Videopelit voivat tuoda paljon hyvää, sosiaalista näkokulmaa ja sellaista henkistä hyvinvointia, että pääsee tekemään jotain erilaista ja kehittää vähän itseäänkin. Sitten jos pelaa vaikka tosi paljon, niin se voi vaikuttaa ettei ole sosiaalista kanssakäymistä, etenkin jos pelaa paljon yksinpelejä.

Tara: It depends on the type of game and how much they are played. Video games can bring with them a lot of good, social perspective and a kind of mental well-being from getting to do something different and to develop oneself simultaneously. If one plays a lot, though, it may influence them to not have any social activity, especially so if they play single player games.

In this extract, Tara described video games to be beneficial for multiple reasons. The type of game played is described to have a specific effect, and that there are differences between games from different genres. One such discussed game introduced here were the single player games, and how Tara views them to adversely impact the social activity of the player as opposed to online games. While Tara indicated her disinterest on watching others play games, this perspective would ignore the potential of single player games' option to engage multiple participants taking turns in playing them as a method of social interaction (Buyukozturk & Shay, 2022). For a non-gamer, it may be difficult to be immersed in watching someone else play and then suddenly take control of the game's character with limited enthusiasm and prior experience, leading them to scenarios described in examples 1 and 2.

Non-gamers were particularly intrigued about the realism of video games and how the technology has developed compared to video game consoles in their youth. Mia mentioned being impressed about the realism in video games today compared to her experiences of playing on the original Nintendo Entertainment System, saying that *it is telling of good technique and professionalism*. She also commented of her concern on realism in video games, referring to violent and gory games and how they may be exposed to children or otherwise sensitive people. Ian also presented interest on the visual realism as well as on the realistic controls of a racing game that they would be *more pleasing if they could be controlled with a steering wheel and pedals*. The appreciation to realism derives in part from familiar controls from another activity, similar to the Nintendo Wii's intuitive controls being more appealing for non-gamer audiences (Wesley & Barczak, p. 149). It also allows for more immersive and engaging experiences instead of using imagination to fill in the gaps of what is happening in a pixelated game with minimal animations.

In addition to realism, the non-gamers cited video games as impressive because of their potential to provide experiences or exposure to things from the real world. Driving simulators were a reoccurring example which Ian felt, in addition to first-person shooters, excited for how one could do things in them that one would not be able to easily replicate in real life. Ian felt that the sense of freedom and early exposure to specific subject matter in them were intriguing. Kim corroborated these ideas by claiming that prior familiarity with, for example, guns via games can be a boon during mandatory army service when knowledge about guns becomes more relevant in there. On the other hand, Ian's experience with a fishing game was considered pointless and only slightly amusing, since he could go and fish with real equipment instead of using a controller to do the same actions with inferior, less authentic feeling. While most games are not primarily intended for education purposes, exposure to real-life things through video games has been studied to be a method to learn and become interested in new things (Coroller & Flinois, 2023, p. 12). The non-gamers view video games in this context as a beneficial, albeit minor, method of learning and experiencing new things and something to moderate appropriately.

Much like younger gamers, adult gamers can similarly learn new things from games such as foreign languages and topics about a foreign culture, but the idea of considering video games as a beneficial resource may subside for other responsibilities. Despite this perspective, some interviewees suggested that a game connected to their job may be considered interesting and something to try out. Kim considered that if she was familiar with the subject matter of a game via her job, she felt that this would allow her to succeed in it as well. If the game also corresponds to the activity the non-gamer is familiar with via their job, it would be easier for them to understand the objective and the mechanics of the game from similar prior experiences. Using the controller may still present as an obstacle in conjunction with understanding games' actions, but getting into video games from an initial interest to similar things is considered to help them overcome games' challenges.

To help alleviate the issue of challenge and time constraints on learning a game as described in examples 1 and 2, the non-gamer interviewees suggested that games should be more accessible so that they could try them out for free. This would enable them to play without steep initial investment in purchasing a gaming system and a game which they may not end up liking. Video games that include trial versions, demos, of the full game are a common method of letting players play a short section of the full game and enticing them to purchase it. The suggested issue here is the lack of knowledge of there being a system like this available, as presented in example 5 of there being an overwhelming variety of games to choose from and the unawareness to game demos. As

such, better visibility of free games or demos would help non-gamers in trying games instead of paying for them as the only perceived option to get to play any games.

The specific games that non-gamers mentioned being potentially interested in were of the games from the same genre they had played previously. For example, those who had played platformers in their youth mentioned wanting to play similar games from the same genre if given the chance. This mindset could be explained by wanting to experience the difference in a newer game from the same genre and what changes there are. It is also possible that this preference to familiar games may come from the lack of knowledge about other games from other genres, rather sticking to games they have already little experience from before. Much like in example 5, familiar games are easier to stick to rather than learning new games.

5. Discussion

The idea to understand video games via non-participants' attitudes to it is unusual, but the interviewed non-gamers highlighted important limitations and points of intrigue that video games are recognized for. While it is evident that non-gamers' limited knowledge and minimal exposure to video games grounds their perspectives mostly to surface-level observations, they presented plausible methods to make video games more inclusive and to achieve a broader understanding through often-ignored groups (Marc, 2017, p. 2). Perspectives such as example 9 demonstrate the level-headed and broad thinking of both benefits and problems of gaming that non-gamers take into account. In contrast to dismissive perspectives of adult gamers considering video games as "waste of time" (Brown, 2017), the non-gamer interviewees here considered video games to be taken seriously, even regarding them as common knowledge. The indicated embedded presence of video games also stresses the role of non-gamers as valuable, especially when it has been theorized that in the future "everyone, at least at some point in their lives, will play video games" (Podlogar & Podlesek, 2022, p. 4).

From a nexus-analytical standpoint, the non-gamers' attitudes were greatly influenced by their historical body of experiences with video games. If the non-gamer had not been into video games before, they were likely to not feel the need for them currently. Examples 1, 2 and 4 highlight the problem of not being in control of the game and the experience being too overwhelming due to the amount of gameplay systems to get used to. On the other hand, previous gamers had become non-gamers based on their assessment of video games as providing limited benefit and whether they could spend their time on better things as mentioned in example 7. It was also noticeable how non-gamer men had been into gaming before whereas non-gamer women had little to no exposure to it, hinting at the withstanding idea of games being intended primarily for the male audience (Bergstrom, 2018). This also highlights the relation of women's access to games being still constrained by the lack of skills required to play, but no attitudes on games as tied to exclusively for men were noticed in the interviewees' opinions of them. Due to the relatively small number of interviewees, the significance of the gender cannot be ascertained, and the found division of men being gamers before and women were not could be purely coincidental in interviewing a specific minority from a larger group.

In terms of interaction order, the non-gamers had different points of entry to games aside from some having more exposure than others in their youth. One unique finding from the interviews, as discussed by Coroller and Flinois (2023), was that video games and real-life ideas mutually benefit

each other: video games can introduce players to new concepts and personal interests can get them interested in video games about similar things. Intuitive controls and controllers, realistic visuals and exposure to real life concepts were elements that non-gamers praised them for, even though realism also was a cause for concern in the case of young children being exposed to violent games. Personal interests were of note in being a point of entry to games since it would allow for success in the game due to a sense of familiarity with the game's ideas.

A common method to learn about video games for non-gamer parents was via their children who were more involved gamers. Video games and their content were considered a central social element, like in example 8, to discuss of their appropriate use and what happens in them. These instances note the meaning-making role of language and how certain domains "are shaped by naturalised practices and relations without being directly forced to do so" (Wodak & Forchtner, 2017, p. 138). Games were not considered beneficial as solo activities but rather as something to spend time on with others.

Combining the perspectives of non-gamers with the Yle articles allowed for observable instances of discourses in place in terms of distinguishing areas of social action where video games are involved with. Similar to the interviews, the chosen Yle articles are also highly volatile data that are influenced by the chosen sample and representing individual perspectives. Of the 160 analyzed articles and from what perspective they represented video games from, 79 (~49%) were positive, 27(~17%) negative, and 49 (~31%) appeared as neutral, informative articles without distinguishable stance from the writer as positive or negative. Additionally, 5 (~3%) articles presented both positive and negative effects of video games for how they are recognized as beneficial but causing some troubling effects, such as in Palvaila and Boustani's (2023) article of a 24-year-old Starcraft esports player having a profitable career despite his parents' concerns on spending so much time on video games. The investigated articles represent video games mostly as a positive phenomenon with a lot of potential. However, it is dependent on the method games are applied in whether gaming is a force of good or if their use leads to negative repercussions. It should be emphasized that the chosen articles were selected purely within the investigated year of publications, and different topics and conclusions could emerge from a different collection and publishing period. The articles here, however, are indicative of the growing status of video games and in showcasing meaningful areas of influence for video games that non-gamers may be exposed to.

At its core, nexus analysis is focused on "engaging, navigating and changing the nexus of practice" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 9). Instead of attempting to cause change on individual non-gamers

and getting them interested in gaming, the change here is directed more on the societal perspective of understanding video games from non-gamers' lenses. Most interviewees cited the lack of time due to a number of other responsibilities to be a key contributor in not allowing them to be as excited or interested in video games as they maybe would like to. The idea of the optimal gaming experience being present when the player loses the sense of time (Laurence et al., 2023) is at odds with the non-gamer perspectives and how they are more critical of the things they spend their time on.

The discourse about video games and their benefits is a clear development from the early conceptions of video games as "the exclusive domain of antisocial teenage boys" (Wesley & Barczak, p. 2). Even if non-gamers feel that video games do not provide anything meaningful for them, they still acknowledge the benefits that they provide for the others. Contrary to the limited understanding that the interviewed non-gamers felt themselves having, as discussed in section 4.1., their comments also showcased moderate understanding of video games as a social element. Even if the non-gamers demonstrated apathy towards video games because of their previous experiences with them and their busy schedule, video games were still appreciated for their societal benefits.

As is necessary in conducting a study within social sciences, it is important to consider the potential bias in implementing interviews as the main data. The 5 interviewees represent a small sample of the larger variety of non-gamers and should be considered as such as an additive case study. It is also possible that the interviewed non-gamers represent a particularly vocal minority of their unique attitudes on video games, though the connection of their responses support previous studies from multiple perspectives.

6. Conclusion

The role of a non-gamer is interesting in how it could be considered meaningless in comparison to gamers and their comparatively more comprehensive level of exposure and knowledge of games. As has been discussed, non-gamers provide vital perspective to understanding the approachability and constraints of games, and they may be better aware of the potential benefits and deterrents that playing video games would entail from an external perspective. The non-gamer can provide a more critical perspective of the available benefits and whether they are worth the required investment for time and other resources. In the case of gaming becoming more widespread activity and non-gamers with little to no experience with games becoming less prominent, the non-gamer perspective may become even more valuable in providing critical and unbiased opinions about games instead of gamers' perspective with specific interests that may be difficult to express to non-gamers.

This study is significant in distinguishing how video games appear to non-gamers and how they view gaming based on their historical body of experiences. Not deciding to play may be a conscious decision based on the prior exposure on them, the necessity to spend time on more urgent things and a sense of acknowledging their limitations and incompatibility with personal skills and preferences. In dismissing gaming as unnecessary, the non-gamer adults also do not become stressed about it as another addition to their busy schedules and may still remain optimistic about the potential of gaming in appropriate circumstances. Staying with familiar activities is a safe preference, but it may deter one from taking part in other less familiar activities that could have the potential to surprise and provide something unique.

Interviewees' perspectives were understood based on their own words and how they recalled their previous experiences of trying video games which in some cases were several years ago. Despite this limited perspective and a relatively low number of interviewees, the chosen participants provided commendable amount of diversity and many evocative ideas that can be beneficial in developing video games further. In the context of gaming companies, this study provides them with insight of non-gamers and ideas of how to develop video games and their marketing. This, in turn, would help make games more desirable for larger audiences, including non-gamers and getting them to try out games easier.

The lack of longitudinal studies about gaming and its influence is a suitable area to expand in future studies with the help of this study's findings. An extension of this study could investigate both non-gamers and regular gamers gaming experiences in a long-term setting to gain equal comprehension

from both sides of how gaming is represented. When more non-gamers become better exposed and aware of its areas of influence, it may lead to video games being considered in a more nuanced and improved light.

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Appendix: Interview questions in Finnish

1: Mitä tiedät videopeleistä yleisesti ilmiönä?

2: Mitkä asiat tai kokemukset pitävät sinua poissa videopeleistä tai sen ottamisesta osaksi omaa arkea?

3: Millaisia vaikutuksia videopeleillä on mielestäsi ihmisten käyttäytymiseen?

4: Ovatko videopelit mistä syistä enemmän positiivinen tai negatiivinen ilmiö?

5: Onko videopeleillä mielestäsi keinoja toimia ihmisiä yhdistävänä tekijänä?

6: Missä tilanteissa kohtaat videopeliaiheisia mainoksia, oheistuotteita tai muita videopeleistä peräisin olevia asioita?

7: Mistä asioista videopeleistä olisi hyvä puhua sosiaalisessa mediassa?

8: Jos videopelit olisivat osa vapaa-aikaasi, minkä tyyppiset videopelit houkuttelisivat sinua eniten?

9: Onko lähipiirissäsi paljon videopelien harrastajia, ja miten he suhtautuvat siihen?

10: Millä tavoin kehittäisit videopelejä houkuttavammaksi?