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New types of identities mediated by Video Games

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Outlook to Video Games in society

Videogames have become very popular among people of all ages throughout the years; it seems that there are more people who get into them day by day. The reasons for that could be many, it is said that they are a way to entertain players in their free time, it might also be said –as it happened with television- that they are used to keep children from causing trouble to their parents. (Sole, Robert)

Letting children and teenagers play videogames has led to some controversies, especially when it has to do with certain genres of videogames. Thus, it is believed that playing some videogames will spoil kids to the point of affecting their behaviors, which is an idea studied by some different researchers, such as Baillargeon (2007, July), among some others, who have gotten to prove it or to see how it works; however, it is a refutable idea because such event cannot be stated for all the people as it has been studied by people like John Ferguson (2007), Paul Gee (pg 95. 2007) and some others that will be seen further; it is important to take

into account many different contexts and social events that might influence the behavior of a person and therefore his/her identity, which at first could be defined as "… the things we say, do, gesture, posture, wear, possess, create, and so on"(Caldas-Coulthard, 2008).

Based on this previous idea it is possible to think that there might be some connections between videogames and people's identities. Many of the studies that have been carried out have had their focus on the incidence that games have in people's behaviors. Nevertheless, thinking that the relationship player-videogame is as simple as 'video games affect behaviors' is a bit flat, simple, and has been over studied. There have to be more issues beyond the mere fact of thinking that if a person plays a war game, that person is going to end up killing real people. The starting point of this research has its place in the understanding of videogames as mediators of new identities, which are not necessarily developed in a real world but in a digital one "… mediated by the new types of media" McLuhan, Marshal (Horrocks, 2004) and that come to 'life' thanks to the process of actualization which "… involves more than simply assigning reality to a possible or selecting from among a predetermined range of choices. It implies the production of new qualities, a transformation of ideas, a true becoming that feeds the virtual in turn" proposed by Levy (1998).

It is necessary to understand that even though some studies have proved videogames have a negative incidence on people's behaviors, their role is not the role of evil media, but that they can also provide people with tools to release stress, emotions, ideas and perform activities that cannot be released in a real social environment due to the rules and codes that are around any social group. It is socially impossible for a person to experiment in a normal society the sensation of killing other people, being a member of the opposite sex, behaving as a completely different person and performing tasks that are not human. In other words, video games might become the medium in which people project some emotions, desires and other human aspects that are virtual until they are actualized in the game. Therefore, games might let the players hide their true identities and allow them to become a new self that acts behind a Virtual Mask, which is a hypothesis that I propose in order to explain the event of acting in a different way that one would act in a normal human context outside the media or the digital worlds.

Having Video Games as tools to create these types of identities would provide some data regarding language studies, especially for the field of **Hipermediaciones, nuevas alfabetizaciones y procesos sociales en red** from Universidad Javeriana, for video games would start being considered as mediators of language to extend ourselves and release different desires, feelings and perform some actions through a digital tool in a digital environment that takes the role of the real one through actualization, but does not replace it. This study will also intend to

be part of a current research project that aims to create a state of the art of MMORPG (Multiplayer online role player games) in which I make part as a research assistant.

Methodological Process

In order to support the hypothesis of the virtual masks and try to answer the main question this research is done through a metatheoretical study in which some data was collected from a website called Digra, which is a specialized website that publishes the current studies regarding Video Games and Language. Digra is a recognized association that studies games and the aspects that have to do with them in different fields. The choosing of this website is not at random, it has a wide selection of articles that fulfill certain requirements from the site itself, which also follows some principles as mentioned before; Digra has also some goals regarding the field of digital games which include the promotion of digital games among with its understanding as a mean of communication, the establishment of a network promoting research that focus on digital games and their wide range of applications in different disciplines. Digra also intends to provide a meeting point for scholars and researchers who study digital games, giving them the chance to promote, publish and share their work with others.

Based on the previous, Digra becomes an essential and very useful source of information for the development of the research.

The website has been useful to get an initial number of eleven (11) research papers, which have been chosen because of their relation with the studied topic, basically, due to the fact that they include studies regarding identity, virtual identity and the possible relation or influence that they could have in each other.

The tool that was used in order to analyze these data is a chart that classifies the information, dividing the concepts of virtual and real identity and the approach that each document has toward it.

Here are some of the tools used to analyze the different data collected. After having looked through Digra for the documents and after having done some cleaning based on the criteria for this current research, I came up with a chart to analyze the chosen documents.

The first tool was a '*hypothesis analysis chart'* that I designed based on some used in my business classes. However, it is not similar to any of the ones I used there.

The elements are as follow:

Name: Here goes the name of the study or chosen paper to be analyzed.

Author: The name of the ones in charge of carrying out the research.

Year: The year in which the research was published (based on Digra's database)

Type of identity: This column presents a multiple division. The main one has to do with the difference between virtual and real identity, then, it was marked if that identity was implicit or explicit in the document explaining briefly how.

Author's ideas: Here the author or authors' ideas were quoted based on their pertinence for the current research.

Supportive ideas: In this column the ideas that could support this project were taken from 'author's ideas' and adapted to complement the next one.

Connection with thesis' ideas and masks: In this column my conclusions were drawn based on the two previous columns.

Having chosen this tool allowed me to combine the collected data with the theoretical tools and apply all that information in the study of the game experience.

The collecting these documents would give this research a theoretical answer to the main question and the hypothesis of Virtual Mask, but it would not be enough to determine those theories existence, therefore, a second methodological approach that will take advantage of the theoretical framework information and the one collected from the studied documents.

The first part consists on analyzing those documents and then coping the supportive ideas with the theoretical tools that I will define later among with my hypothesis of Virtual Masks in order to see if those concepts are present in those

collected ideas. The second one consists on applying that information to my experience playing Fable 2, which will serve as evidence to prove the existence or inexistence of the Virtual Masks.

This decision was taken based on the goals that the current document has, the first intention is to support the concepts, especially the one about *Virtual Masks,* and then, from the obtained results, a connection is intended to be found so that the core ideas could be supported through reading some game experiences. Having as a support game *Fable 2,* the intention is to see how these Virtual Masks come into life in a game that allows the player to perform lots of tasks that are not socially possible and some that are unconceivable in a real environment.

Fable 2 is an XBOX 360 game that allows the player to make choices that will affect the future of the game and its development; the decision of choosing Fable 2 is based on the fact that this game offers the possibility to modify the character, making it a character-avatar (which I will call Characterized Avatar) that is chosen from the very beginning of the game. It lets the player choose between a boy or a girl and then, during the game, modify the appearance, the expressions that are used inside the game to refer to the other characters and, of great importance for this study, it lets the player choose his/her behavior in that virtual environment, which will allow me to see if the theory of masks can be seen.

The game has some strong characteristics to be analyzed, it starts by letting the player create what his character-avatar (this concept is explained in the theoretical tools chapter) is going to be, it allows the player to shape that entity's image toward the society, to behave as the player would like it to. The different behaviors are shaped through making choices during the game such as deciding whether helping or attacking innocent people. Another way to shape that image is the way money and real estate are managed, for the player is able to be a tyrant or a righteous savior through the amount of the rent that people have to pay. Another very important aspect of the game is the expressions that the character gets as the game is being developed, people from the land can approach him/her and the player can choose between being kind or evil; for instance it is possible to use rude expressions or to make them laugh in order to gain empathy from the people of the land. No matter what the player chooses, the character will acquire some reputation that will be spread all over the land and so the player can start making decisions such as continuing on the same path and assuming whatever his/her choices bring, or trying to change some of the things he/she did before so that the character-avatar's image be changed.

Since this game allows the player to project some virtual ideas or desires, in some cases, through actualization, I would like to see if this or these new types of identities let players become a new person (a new self) that projects him/herself and shapes the character and its development throughout the game, projecting

and creating a new identity and therefore a new self with all its components. If this idea is proven to be right, the mere idea of a virtual identity would not necessarily include the reasons why the player performs one activity instead of the other, it does not explain why the player chooses a character of a different sex or with an opposite sexual orientation because it does not take into account an explicit presence of the self and its components as presented by Freud (which will be presented in the Theoretical Tools chapter). Hence, the theory of the Virtual Masks, basically tries to explain why these decisions are made and I try to prove it through some player's experiences in Fable 2 through reading and comparing with the theories and the information from the documents collected from Digra.

Doing it that way, it could be both an inductive and a deductive study. Having as first step the study of the analyzed data in a deductive way, from some general information that has been collected from the documents, I will try to see its existence or materialization in the theories that I propose. After doing so, my game experience will be used inductively to find a bridge between the theories, the collected data and the Virtual Masks in order to determine if the hypothesis that I propose exists or not.

T here have been different investigations in which identity is mediated by the different sorts of technologies that become 'extensions' of language. Some of those investigations might not be directly related to video games and such at first; however, they have been aimed at modern technologies like computers, internet, and the ones derived from there that get to the point of dealing with videogames.

PREVIOUS STUDIES REGARDING TYPES OF MEDIA DIFFERENT FROM VIDEO GAMES

Isaac Alvaréz has talked about some of the aspects of communication and its relations with the new types of media, in one of his papers he outlines the event of computer-mediated communication helping people with some issues "*computers and their nets promise communication with any part of the globe … they avoid us many annoyances and psychological difficulties that come with traditional communication. In communication through computer we are not face to face with other human beings with physical shapes, gestures and tones of voice… everything seems easier using the text of a screen. We neutralize what might intimidate us, what we may dislike or like a lot, and all those elements that shape us are deleted through the screen"(Alvarez, 2003)* For the current research Alvarez gives a closer look with his idea of computers helping people to get rid of certain parts of traditional communication. Using computers, in this case internet has a

direct relation with the concept of virtual identity, for it allows people to be somebody mediated by this medium, which narrows the path towards technology and its advantage to create new media-mediated communication –taking into account all the features that it has.

Another contribution to the topic is the one given by James Paul Gee, who holds a Ph D in linguistics and has recently studied video games and their relations with human language and language learning. He states somehow the same idea from Alvarez, this time related to video games "*I also believe that good video games are extensions of life in quite a strict sense, since they recruit and externalize some of the most fundamental features of how human beings orient themselves in and to the real world, especially when they are operating at their best*"(GEE, 2003) What Gee gives at first sight to this current project is a closer look to the already mentioned idea of "Virtual Masks" but in this specific case related to the subject: video games. He defines a projective stance, *"A double-sided stance towards the world (virtual or real)"(Ibid. Gee)* which becomes an element of the virtual identity – which was introduced in this text and will be explained further.

The two previous authors are not the only ones who deal with this matter of media and technologies. However, they give an introduction to the topic among with Marshall McLuhan, who is studied by Christopher Horrocks. He talks about McLuhan and mentions in the book 'Marshall McLuhan and Virtuality' some of

McLuhan's theories, he outlines the fact that although the theorist could not live in the era of video games some of his theories work for instance in the context of online games in which "Businesswomen from New York can become characters in Quake II or Doom VII … in order to foster a virtual slaughter" (Horrocks, pg 75).

Horrock's ideas narrow and show how video games, through virtual identities projected in characters, can help the player release some socially-unaccepted deeds.

PREVIOUS STUDIES REGARDING VIDEO GAMES

Some investigations have taken place in the direct field of video games and their role in aspects such as discourse markers, identity shapers, among others. These researches may help the current one in the aspect of narrowing the path towards the void that is intended to be studied, in which the relation between video games and people goes beyond the simple fact of seeing games as identity and behavior modifiers.

One of the studies was called *"Talking the talk: collaborative remembering and self-perceived expertise"* by Pasupathi, M.; Alderman, K.; Shaw, D in the year 2007. Its purpose was to study how discourse could be influenced by video games. In the study the researchers chose a group of friends and gave a video game to each pair, one person had to play while the other watched. The results of it showed that those who played could produce a richer narrative than those who did not,

demonstrating that having played the video game influenced the player in a different way from the non-player (Pasupathi, M.; Alderman, K.; Shaw, D. 2008)

Another study called "*Online gaming as a virtual forum*" by Matthew Payne is based on studying two groups from different backgrounds, one English and the other Asian. Both groups played an online game and showed different results in their discourse samples after playing. The study demonstrated that not only the game but also the environment in which the players lived influenced these discourse results (Payne. September 2008).

These studies have been discourse-centered; however, the role of language is implicit. Some other studies have taken into account the idea of identity more directly, which is the case of the following ones.

One study took one phrase from a video games company and used it as its name, it is "Live in your world, play in ours: The spaces of video game identity" by S.C. Murphy. In this study the relation between the player and the game is studied in terms of seeing an influence from the game character in the players' own body (in a subtle way). He stated that video games are an interactive way of television and therefore they allow the player to become an actor of this new world (Murphy. September 2008), Supporting the fact of video games as tools to create new types of identities that let the player represent himself with the character and develop an identity that is influenced by the virtual environment.

The possibility of creating an Avatar (this concept will be developed in the Theoretical Tools chapter) and an easy-to-handle character is yet to be studied, so far, one of the resources has shown the investigation called "Virtually visual: the effects of visual technologies on online identification" by Jennifer Martin (2008). The study uses an online game to analyze how the game character, or avatar, is created and what it allows the player to see and do. The research demonstrates that this creation permits a way of tolerance and understanding coming from the non-virtual player due to the necessity of experimenting with other new people. The study also shows that the virtual character is somehow limited because the environment is already given and everything can be seen and the idea of uncertainty is absent (Ibid. Martin 2008), so, the use of some games limits the player and does not allow him/her to perform and project some issues, that is why the game Fable 2 was chosen in this project, for the game does not oblige the player to play with on established character, but he/she can create and modify it at the beginning, during and after the game.

PREVIOUS APPROACHES AT PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD JAVERIANA

Having presented the latter concepts and ideas regarding the topic of this research, it is necessary to outline the closest research projects done at *La Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá Colombia*. There have been a variety of studies regarding identity and media; nevertheless, there are no research projects directly

aimed at Video Games or such. The faculty of Language and Communication – *Comunicación y Lenguaje*- is currently working on a project having to do with video games and to which this research intends to contribute in a way, as it was mentioned before.

Previous research projects from the same faculty, specifically from the major of Social Communication, have outlined aspects of virtuality and the possibilities it offers whenever mediated by computers and Internet.

One of the studies was done by Alvaro Bohórquez Cruz in his graduation project called in Spanish "Transhumanismo Comunidad Virtual; Hacia una Nueva Identidad del Ser". That project intends to demonstrate that some specific web-sites allow people to become what they cannot in the real (human) world; in this case, they are allowed to arrange changes in their bodies and physical appearance creating a new self through the sites (Bohórquez, 2005). That possibility is also found in Fable 2, the player can modify the character to the point of creating a possible projection of what he/she would like to look like.

Another research project from the same major is the one done by Daniel Villegas Guerrero called in Spanish "Del átomo al bit: una estrategia para el desarrollo de la identidad corporativa 'en línea'". The project analyses the fact event that companies face nowadays and their necessity to create a new virtual identity –in this case a corporative identity that each company has. The importance of new

media for a company to become a modern one is outlined and demonstrated to emphasize the role that these media and technologies have had and must have in the creation of an identity that is no longer purely human but digital and has to exist in a real world. (Villegas. 2004)

The insertion of media in society demands a change in the perception of people, changes caused by fast-changing technologies such as the internet and computers, and in this case video games, require individuals in society to adapt themselves so that they not be extracted from the normal functioning of society, which changes the perceptions of the world, the words that are used, the behavior that should be followed in new situations and obliging people to change their identities, their habitudes and selves so that they may fit in society. Following that line, those changes are, if not mediated, accompanied by media (the already mentioned technologies among others), therefore, the necessity to establish a way of mediation by video games is more evident, they are a type of mass-media used by lots of people (Gamespot website), but they have been studied outside Universidad Javeriana and with different focuses (mainly violence-centered), thereby, I intend to fill the void that arises when considering video games as only cause and effect in the context of violence, I would like to see if games, through avatars, characters or avatarized characters, may be also considered as the Virtual Masks I mentioned and then as possible derivations of language to express verbal and non-verbal communication through video games.

Since there are some necessary concepts that are going to be mentioned through the development of this study, it is essential to outline some theoretical tools that will be the basis of this project.

In this part, the concepts of identity, virtual, actualization, virtual identity, self, character, avatar, player, and the proposed by the author: virtual masks.

IDENTITY

The concept of identity has already been introduced in this text; however, a deeper and more appropriate definition is the one taken from a research led by Emili Boix-Fuster and Cristina Sanz in their project: Language and Identity in Catalonia. They study language as a tool to identify people, therefore the definition provided by them says that "Identities are the different ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with others" (Boix-Fuster, Sanz pg. 87, 88). Which means that it is the person who shapes his/her own identity based on the things that he/she wants to show to the social context, which allows a social identity to arise. Boix-Fuster and Sanz quote Jenkins by saying that "social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and others" (Jenkins. 1996).

The understanding of identity and the role of social identity in a context becomes a very important element for the present research, it supports the fact that an identity is not set at random and that it is the person among with his/her context or social environment who shapes it. Therefore the identity, as presented here, is set in a social and human context, where human interaction is the responsible of shaping it. For the interests of this research it is necessary to present another approach of identity: the virtual identity, which has the variation of understanding the "context" or "environment" as the virtual world given by media, or in this case by video games.

The concept of Virtual Identity will be seen as an extension of the mentioned for identity; however, before going into the concept of Virtual Identity, it is important to understand what virtual means.

VIRTUAL AND VIRTUALIZATION

In order to understand this concept, there will be some arising concepts that will explain virtual as defined by Pierre Lévy in his book "Becoming Virtual: reality in the digital age" in which he develops his ideas establishing the difference between real and virtual and the role of actualization. These concepts have been taken and used as a derivation from Mc Luhan's concepts, which served as a starting point in the study of what virtual is through the lens of that visionary; however, Levy's concepts are born in a context closer to the one that is proposed in this study.

Lévy exemplifies the difference between real and virtual saying that "the word 'virtual' is often meant to signify the absence of existence, whereas 'reality' implies a material embodiment, a tangible presence" (Lévy. Pg 23), in other words, the reality implies the existence of something, objects or events that exist in a real dimension; while the virtual is just an idea of something, a thought or a plan in different contexts. The previous idea, in the case of this project, means that the virtual can only be possible through actualization whenever a game is played, for the "reality" provided by a video game is neither material nor tangible; on the other hand, the real implies having access to touching objects, performing actions and other activities that can use material items. In more simple words, the digital environments are not real because they are not tangible in our human dimension, so they are somehow virtual and that virtuality comes to existence when it is actualized, which is the process of making the virtual real, but before going through this concept, it is important to define what virtualization is.

Lévy mentions the emerging concept of virtualization. He explains that "It consists in the transition from the actual to the virtual … virtualization is not a derealization (the transformation of a reality into a collection of possibilities) but a charge of identity …" (Lévy. Pg. 26)

This idea of virtualization explains how the real (taking into account the identity) becomes virtual (desires) and then a new nature emerges when it passes through

the process of actualization to come to life. That has a connection with the coming concepts such as virtual identity and more directly the characters and avatars, for the latter are a player-manipulated reality turned into virtual to define a new identity to show in the virtual world. However, the virtual is not enough to understand this process of avatar creation and another concept by Lévy is needed to complete that process.

ACTUALIZATION

The virtual is commonly misunderstood and given the idea of being some sort of 'mediated creation' in which the impossible things come true. Nevertheless, Lévy uses the idea of actualization to refer to that event. As he outlines in his already mentioned book "The virtual tends toward actualization, without undergoing any form of effective or formal concretization" which explains the fact that virtual does not mean creating anything through any way but "…Strictly speaking, the virtual should not be compared with the real but the actual, for virtuality and actuality are merely two different ways of being" (Lévy. Pg 23)

Having seen that the virtual is not enough for the creation of a new self, the concept of actualization is defined by Lévy as "… involves more than simply assigning reality to a possible or selecting from among a predetermined range of choices. It implies the production of new qualities, a transformation of ideas, a true becoming that feeds the virtual in turn" (Lévy. Pg 25) Based on that idea, the

concept of creating a new identity and a new self takes place in the sense that it is through actualization that a person projects him/herself and the potential, virtual, desires and other human aspects in order to perform different sorts of activities inside the digital games hidden behind that new self with all of its components.

To this point it is pertinent to define what a Virtual Identity is, it is important to take into account that it will include the already studied concepts of identity, virtual and virtuality.

VIRTUAL IDENTITY

This concept has already been introduced as "*the one mediated by the new type of interactive media, in which a computer allows the user to create a new self to satisfy different needs.*"(Horrocks, 2004). It is necessary to establish that Video Games are considered more than a new type of media. The media have a passive relation in which the spectator does not interact or alter the content, it is purely given and taken by the individuals; on the other hand, video games go further than that, they let the player become part of the show and is a relation in which both, the game and the player, are important to achieve the goals.

The concept of virtual identity proposed by McLuhan starts narrowing this project and allows us to see a basic difference between the virtual and real identities; while the real identity is mediated by the social context and the environment in which a person moves, the virtual identity is comprehended as a computer-mediated, in this

case game-game mediated; thus, it is the game that provides the context and environment for the virtual identity to arise and develop its nature through actualization.

Some other approaches that are linked with McLuhan's are mentioned by Horrocks. There are three that have this characteristic.

The Cyborg theory by Donna Haraway, which "underlines the narratives of breaking and losing of delimited identity and its political potential" and that driven into a gender issue, establishes Haraway's position in favor of these identities, for they break some boundaries and let a sexual identity be codified and understood as "natural" or "artificial" (Horrocks, pg 80). This approach to the concept of virtual identity has a connection with the idea of virtual masks in the sense that she supports the idea of "breaking" boundaries, in this case gender-related ones.

The second point of view mentioned is given by Sherrie Turkle, who does not agree with the idea of fragmenting the identity, she argues that it is a state in which "a relation between virtual and real identities, that have the potential to enrich and expand each other". (Ibid. pg 80) Her idea implies that it is a relation in which both identities belong to one self and that they work in order to improve each other; her position then is not directly related to the concept of masks due to the idea of not fragmenting the identities, at least not in an explicit way because the virtual self has still some tracks of the real one.

A third one is proposed by Catherine Hayles, whose theory argues that "a virtual identity does not mean that the mind escapes to become easily part of the virtual environment". (ibid. pg 81) That idea means that the identities are not fragmented either; however, her position adds a point that says that the virtual and the real identity are not different and isolated, they must have a connection and a relation; therefore, the virtual identity is not set randomly.

Based on some concepts that were gathered from the collected date, the virtual identity is in general what the player creates inside the game to project his self or just to play and achieve the goals proposed by the game; either of them, the virtual identity is what the avatar and character (in some cases) are, this means that even though some games provide the player with them, it is the player who uses them and therefore modifies them, not only in appearance but also in the way goals are achieved, the movements the character performs, the decisions it makes and some aspects from the game, which vary of course depending on the type of game and its nature following somehow the idea proposed by Turkle.

The concept of Virtual Identity will be understood then as a creation that the player comes up with in order to interact with the digital environment and achieve the goals proposed by it, this identity will differ from the real one in terms that this is merely Video-Game-mediated and not all the aspects of the player's real context will affect it, for it is something with which the Virtual Masks concept shall deal with.

Although it has not been mentioned much in the previous approaches, the concept of the self is vital for this research and the understanding of the Virtual Masks.

The self is understood as the perception that a person has of him/her, this means that the self is what one knows it is. To narrow this idea a bit more, the definition quoted by Eladhari Mirjam, Lindley Craig in their research Project (see appendix nu11) can work "When one starts discussing emotion one is starting to discuss having a self – a perceived and felt self. Emotions are in terms of and help define that 'self'. The purpose, we propose of this self is to integrate experiences in a meaningful way into a self. Specifically a self is a continuously maintained and global construction that speaks for the organism's reasoning and assessments on a global level."(Mirjam and Craig. 2003).

This approach to the self provides an understating of it as a plane concept, however, the concept of masks shall be supported by a different approach of the self given by Freud (Witting and Williams), for I believe that some of his theories can be applied to the understanding of virtual masks phenomenon.

To have a better understanding of Freud's terms, it is necessary to mention personality as a sub-concept in this chapter.

PERSONALITY:

Based on the book *Psychology: an introduction;* the term comes from the Latin "Persona", meaning "Mask" – referring to a theater actor. In ancient Greek the mask defined the character that the actor was to perform. (Witting and Williams. pg 421)

In specific terms, the personality is "a set of characteristics –unique for each individual- that determines a person's identity and behavioral patterns" (Ibid p. 421)

Freud's concept of personality gets inside this previous idea, but it also establishes that "at the heart of personality is a set of strategies to cope with mental conflicts" (Ibid. p. 423). He fragmented personality into three components: the id, the ego, and the superego.

Id: (Latin=it/Spanish=ello)

It contains the passion and the instincts. Based on Freud, it is related to the unconscious, which is the one that demands relief of the repressed tension through different means. For instance, if there is a person who feels like hitting his/her boss, it is the ID that store

s and restrains this desire, for it is controlled by the *ego.*

Ego: (Means I in Latin/Spanish=yo)

It is the center of the consciousness; it controls the id by respecting the social rules and agreements. In the case of the person wanting to hit the boss, the ego controls

that anger, but Freud argues that this repression has to get out of the person. It is this idea that gives more shape to the concept of virtual masks, which disobey or disregard the social rules, which are established by the *superego.*

Superego: (Spanish=superyó)

It is set from the stage of being a child, fed by the parents or the ones in charge of raising a child. It is also known as the conscience. It is the one in charge of setting and acquiring the rules that the ego controls, The superego determines how strong those rules socially said.

These fragmentations of the personality already mentioned the repression of desires in the Id. in order to release those repressed feelings Freud proposes eight defense mechanisms. "In general terms, defense mechanisms are methods used by the ego to reduce tensions arising within the competing components of personality". (Ibid. pg. 427) Starting from the understanding that restrained feelings should be released, the eight defense mechanisms are: repression, projection, reaction formation, displacement, denial, sublimation, rationalization, and regression.

The eight are different ways of releasing those feelings; however, the one that matters the most for this study is projection.

Projection:

"It is a means of lessening the pain by assuming that forbidden desires belong to someone else" (Ibid. pg 427) which, in other words, happens when one uses objects to express desires, feelings and ideas that can not be easily expressed or

said. In the context of video games, the equivalent to projection would be the character or avatar, since it allows the player to project different emotions.

Taking into account these concepts, the term self will be understood as equivalent for the development of this study. The fragmentations of the self/personality proposed by Freud are going to be vital for the matter of the Virtual Masks.

Getting closer to the core concept, it is also necessary to specify what a character, an avatar and a player are.

CHARACTER

In the present project the term character refers to the player-avatar, a term used by Michael Nitzsche and Maureen Thomas in their research "Stepping Back: Players as active participators". This term is used in order to identify the player inside the game, however, this is a established pattern in many games, this means that many games provide the player with a static character such as the famous Super Mario Bros, in which the player does not have control over the character's appearance and some aspects that are programmed by the game creators.

When the character is given by the game it tends to be constant, therefore, "The movements of the player-avatar are limited by walls, ceilings, and any other form of spatial restrictions; its manoeuvrability allows only a certain range of explorative

movements that excludes some areas and routes. In other words, the character provides a designed point of access into the game through its functionality within the restrictions of the gameworld and through the avatar-control granted to the player" (Nitzsche and Thomas. 2003). This idea, means that the fact of having this mentioned character implies that the player narrow his/her performance to the game's goals and then his/her being able to modify some aspects of the game would be completely limited.

Summarizing, a character is a given avatar that is generally impossible to modify. The text of Nitzsche and Thomas gives some tools for the concept of masks; firstly the fact of considering the games as media that should allow the player to modify the characters and the virtual world, for their research showed that players felt more attracted to the game whenever they had the chance to modify the player-avatar.

That research also narrows the path towards the understanding of *Masks,* which are thought to be "tools" or apparatuses that hide some player's projections. Although this text does not mention the idea of "hiding" something, it does give a close approach if the ideas of being able to modify a virtual character and using it as one's mask are linked.

To this extent the understanding of the idea of Avatar is very important because it differs from the character in some aspects.

AVATAR

To define this concept, I want to refer to the research carried out by Eladhari Mirjam and Lindley Craig who make a connection between the avatar and the self; they say that "An avatar in the most general sense is intended to represent the self" (Ibid. Mirjam and Craig) which starts showing a difference between the avatar and the character, outlining the first one as some sort of character that can be created or modified at the player's will. They argue that this creation is not at random and that it is connected to the player's self.

The avatar is then a variation of the character that is not created to be static but to be modified by the player, who might be projecting certain things.

With the previous ideas, my concept of virtual masks starts being mentioned in a subtle way; it implies a process in which the avatar is modified by the player, but, this modification or creation is not an activity at random, it has certain reasons why and a single or multiple purpose (not necessarily conscious).

Before getting to the concept of Virtual Masks and even though it has already been mentioned and probably understood, I will define the concept of player.

PLAYER

Since the concept of masks requires the understanding of identity (which is the normal identity or the one outside the real world and the one that a person shows), virtual identity, (that based on Horrocks' quoted theories is the one created thanks to the new types of media that offer an interaction of the person), the self (the perception that we have of ourselves and that based on Freud's theories can be fragmented into three), character (which is the established and usually non-modifiable player-avatar given by the game), avatar (which is the variation of the character) this one allows the player to choose how his/her character will be.

All the previously mentioned concepts work in a chain of complementing each other; then, to complete the chain, one of the most important elements is the player. It is the person who plays the game; in other terms, the human who is behind the creation of the avatar and the projection of feelings.

That human who uses the character or avatar to project something has a personality that based on Freud's theories and my ideas, can project in a virtual world and forget about the Superego.

The idea of virtual identity demonstrates that there is a possibility to become a new person through the interactive media and specifically video games; however, it tends to generalize the idea of virtuality and seems to narrow the creation of new selves, making it an event of creating without taking into account one very important aspect of human beings: the id.

It could be said that the virtual identity exists for the purpose of being a new metaphorical person, but it does not go deeper, this virtual identity must need some other branches to support it, in this case one that takes more into account the environmental aspects of the person who creates it, his background and possible desires, goals, and also fears –between many other feelings; hence, a necessity of hiding them appears and could be mediated, in this case by technology, this mediation is what I call *Virtual Mask.*

Javier Salazar, in his text *"Identidad virtual"* defines identity and he develops the concept by explaining *Person* and some other concepts. He defines person supporting himself with de ideas of Mauss (1971), who talks about Latin society and defines "*masks*", he establishes that the use of masks was used by them so that they could show what they were inside that society (Salazar).

A mask allows a person to hide his true self and could give security to mischief, that is why inside the concept of virtual identity the idea of a mask can specify a

use in which the player uses the games as masks to hide himself and do whatever he wants to, from killing people in the streets to raping women –going to the extreme of it. The player would not feel the social pressure of the superego that the simple fact of mentioning these things would bring; he would feel protected by that virtual mask that video games become for him/her.

It is important to outline, however, that the fact of 'wearing' this virtual mask does not imply that the person has some negative inner feelings. Unleashing the desires can also mean letting free some desires of impossible things for people such as flying, feeling power, getting to explore different places, etc.

Connecting the Ideas

Data Analysis

As it was explained in the introduction, the data that was gathered from Digra was studied through an 'Analysis Chart' which was intended at first to prove the incidence of the present identities in each study. The chart was meant to classify the different studies depending on how the identities that are mentioned in the theoretical tools chapter affected each other. Nevertheless, after having done the first analysis it was evident that if Virtual Masks should exist, the relation between identities would be 'real over virtual'; therefore, the information that was found

became useful to support the hypothesis of Virtual Masks as it will be presented in this part of the study.

The eleven documents contain some information that, to this point, support and help to make the existence of Virtual Masks evident. The first of them was the one carried out by Georg Lauteren, who uses the concept of real identity, taken this time from a different approach: "social identity" which the author defines as "one affected by the society in which the person acts based of the social aspects that are influenced by the self" (Lauteren, Georg. 2002) His main ideas focus on the fact that "…the form and structure of games – their poetics– should be complemented by the analysis of their aesthetics (as understood by modern cultural theory): how gamers use their games, what aspects they enjoy and what kinds of pleasures they experience by playing them."(Ibid 2002) In other words: that the game is complemented by the player's playing it, which creates a link between the fact of playing and not being a passive user, but one who projects and modifies what the game gives. Therefore, the author establishes the concepts of Poetics in games as rules of functioning, its methods of producing signs and the involvement of the user in this process; and the concept of Aesthetics, based on the idea of pleasure as "Pleasure is undeniably an integral part of the computer gaming experience but it is also always experienced in a certain relation to power and the hegemonic ideology" (Ibid. 2002) having then a possible relation with the unleashed restrained feelings, for they allow the self and its components to feel

some sort of pleasure when performing things that are thought to be impossible as mentioned by the author, who emphasizes the importance of the concept of pleasure and divides it into three levels: psychoanalytical, social and physical (Ibid 2002). Another idea from this author is that players have an important role in the sense that games "… are mediated sign systems – there can neither be a thing like a computer game without signifiers nor one that lacks a medium" (Ibid. 2002) Meaning that the game itself would be worthless, for it is the player who "gives life" to it and then to the characters, which are directly influenced by the player.

Another relevant study was the one carried out by Michael Nitzsch and Maureen Thomas called 'Stepping back: players as active participators'. The relevance of this study lays in the fact that they mention the fact that the players are somehow limited whenever the game provides an established character "Players can feel present in the fictional world of the game but they are not embodied in this world themselves" (Nitzsch and Thomas, 2002) making the character shape the possible virtual identity and therefore unable to project a proper one. It can be inferred from this study that, in order to wear a virtual mask, the game should allow the player to create an avatar or a hybrid between avatar and character, just like in Fable 2.

Petri Lankoski, Satu Heliö and Inger Ekman provide important information in regards to the idea of projecting one's self to the characters, they quote other reserarchers "…Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass have showed strong evidence

that people have a powerful tendency of assigning personality traits to fictional characters – and even inanimate objects invoke a sense of personality" (Petri Lankoski, Satu Heliö and Inger Ekman. 2003) providing important information for the idea of Virtual Masks and new identities. The players are not passive in their relation with the games, their role is active and they project their selves and their identities in the game through the character and its actions.

If the Virtual Masks exist, they should let the players do things they can not do because of social establishements and rules. That idea is demonstrated by Laura Ermi and Mäyrä Frans in their study 'Power and control of games: children as the actors of game cultures' in which they provide this research with a very appropriate result, they talk about the players and say that "Most games also display their fictional distance from the real lives of their players openly: they provide the players opportunities to enact and share a fantasy of something that is interesting and tempting, particularly because it is dangerous, impossible or forbidden in the real world" (Ermi and Frans. 2003) where the Virtual Masks would take place, they would appear when the players take those opportunities and the perform them hiding behind the masks. Ermi and Frans quote another researcher who claims that "Even if not backed up by large-scale psychological studies, Jones presents compelling individual stories on how games may help 'a timid adolescent tap into her own bottled-up emotionality and discover a feeling of personal power'" (Ibid. 2003) which continues shaping the idea of the existance of Virtual Masks, in which

the timid player does not feel the presure of society and so he feels protected when hidden behind the Masks. Ermi and Frans end up discovering that "Children liked the possibility of contributing to the creation of the game world. For some, the most engaging aspect of *The Sims,* for example, was building houses and for some the possibility to control the people living in that house" (Ibid. 2003) which refers to the fact of creating avatars as a motivating factor for players, in this case children, to perform different tasks inside the digital environment.

Some other authors continued supporting the idea of games as tools to unleash normal life aspects. In the study called 'Conditions of engagement in game simulation: contexts of gender, culture and age' Ralph Noble, Kathleen Ruiz, Marc Destefano and Jonathan Mintz mention that "It is clear that people play games to find sources of reinforcement and reward that are not available or imperfectly available in daily life, and to avoid sources of pain and punishment that dominate their daily lives"(Noble, Ruiz, Destefano and Mintz. 2003), something that gives games certain importance in the context of using them to let some restrained feelings appear. They also say "One can surmise that for people who don't disconnect themselves much from their onscreen avatar, they want a virtual world where they feel safe" (Ibid. 2003) which explains an engagement between the player and the game, where the player becomes free through the avatar and then he/she may perform different sorts of activities that wouldn't be safe at doing or that are not possible in the social world. These ideas are also evidence for the

Virtual Masks, which are mediating that process of letting the player unleash and project a new identity and therefore a new self with all its components.

One of the final studies that was analyzed is the one by Jennifer Martin, who quotes some other studies in order to say "…with respect to games, T.L. Taylor makes note of the importance of the visual avatar to online identity, and notes that her research subjects feel that the avatar aids in immersion"(Martín. 2005) demonstrating that the fact of having an avatar implies a more evident projection of the player's identity, for it will modify the avatar so that the player can project and show how he/she wants to be seen. Martin also mentions in her study that "Players feel that being able to create exactly the avatar they want greatly enhances their sense of identity, immersion, and involvement in the world, and allows them to play with an identity instead of simply having a character"(ibid. 2005) which is strong evidence of the presence of a new identity, the virtual one, that is mediated by the game and so it creates a new self thanks to the game.

Yasmin Kafai, Deborah Fields and Melissa Cook carry out the final study that was analyzed. The study presents ideas in regards to the avatars and identity, which are key elements for the hypothesis of Virtual Masks. The researchers establish that "Avatars are not ephemeral and spurious creations: players spend considerable time selecting and customizing them and then interacting with others online"(Kafai, Fields and Cook. 2007) for they are the way in which players will be seen and the way in which they will see themselves. The research also showed

that using a game called Whyville, the players create their avatars without following

any established patters, but they do it depending on what each person wants.

Having analyzed the different data from Digra, it is possible to say that the first part

of the methodological process is done and the next step would be to see the

author's game experience to be then coped with this information plus the concepts

of the theoretical tools.

Game Experience

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As it was mentioned before, the game I chose for this research was Fable 2 from

the XBOX 360 system. It is a new type of role game that allows the player to

choose his/her destiny and shape the future based on the actions performed.

One of the most important characteristics about the game is the plot. It always

offers the player the chance to perform good and bad actions; therefore, the

player's virtual ideas would be actualized and seen in the game following his/her

will. After presenting my experience in its general aspects, I will resort to some of

the data that I collected from Digra in order to see if Virtual Masks have the role of

letting people hide their selves behind in order to perform some activities that might

not be socially accepted.

Another important characteristic is the chance to choose the sex of the character and shape its sexual orientation as well as its physical appearance. It lets the player actualize and project some choices.

Since those are the most relevant reasons for having chosen the game, I will post my game experience and then two more people's experience in order to match them with the theoretical tools, the studied data and my hypothesis and see if the latter is proved to be right or wrong.

Author's experience:

When the game began I was to choose the sex of my character, which was new in this version of the game. The first time I chose to be a boy and then the game began. The setting was a land called Albion, some sort of medieval time and I was homeless boy who lived with his older sister. Then I had to follow her to a market in which a trader was offering us a music box that we couldn't afford because it was 3 gold coins; therefore the real choices begun. We started to explore the town and some people talked to us in order to ask favors or actions for them and the reward that each person would give was a piece of gold. The first person that I met was a police officer who asked me to collect some warrants to imprison some criminals accused of different crimes; after having done so, I was on my way to the officer and then I bumped into a criminal who offered the same piece of gold if I gave him the warrants to be destroyed. I chose to give the

warrants to the officer and collect my first piece of gold. The second person I met was a business owner who had some trouble with a bunch of ravens that had entered his warehouse and so he couldn't get any of his products to sell. What I had to do was get inside and shoot the ravens with a slingshot; however, when I was inside, there was a thieve talking to me through a window, he asked me not to help the businessman but to leave the ravens alive so that he and his group could get inside the store and steal some products. My decision was to kill the animals and collect the piece of gold from the owner of the place. Before the last favor, we met some guys who were punishing a dog, then my sister and I defended the dog but it didn't mean any gold for us. The third demand came from a man who was in love and needed to deliver a letter to the woman he loved, but he could not give it to her because her mother was there and she didn't like the guy being around her girl. What I was asked to do was to deliver the letter hiding the boy's identity. I had the choice of giving it to the woman for the piece of gold or giving it to the girl so that she could escape with the boy. After this last deed I had already collected the three pieces of gold for the music box.

After that first scenario the real story began, a lord who killed my sister threatened me and then the game founds its main goal on taking revenge.

During the whole game I started to have situations similar to the ones in which I had to face a dilemma due to the incidence that my decision would have.

One of the things I could do was to work in order to collect money or I could steal from people and kill them if I felt like doing so, but that would affect my reputation in the land. Hence I decided to work when I had the money to do so or I accepted missions such as getting rid of bandits or rescuing people from evil creatures, which meant money and a good reputation for me during the game.

Another detail in regards to that was the fact of being able to use expressions in order to say whatever I wanted to those people that I met on the road, I usually flirted on the girls I liked or did funny things when I saw boys around so that they liked me.

When I flirted to the girls, a heart appeared above their heads and then I could notice if they liked me to the point of being in love with me and I asked them to marry. Of course I didn't marry more than two girls in the same town because they would have found out about each other and left me alone. I had to go on long journeys so my wives could give birth to children that I could see later, but they were not very relevant for the story. What was relevant was the fact of buying properties to let my families live because if I didn't have a house, no girl would accept getting married with me.

After buying the house I was able to buy more and rent them, I could set the price of the rent so I set normal prices, although I was able to set high ones and get more money.

The game lasted for hours thanks to its multiple ways of finishing, but the actions I performed were always think about what would be okay in my real context; therefore, I didn't kill innocent people and I always tried to help them whenever they asked for it, especially when I was renown enough to get to go to more difficult missions. After having been though these experiences of deciding what to do I got to the final stage in which I had to face the Lord who had killed my sister and I killed him to take revenge for what he did. Later, at the end of the game, I had three choices: I could get a lot of money for the rest of my life, but all the people who had died would never come back to life; I could get my sister back and still the other people would be dead; and I could make the innocent people who died during my journey come back to life, but I would never see my sister again. I ended up choosing my sister's life and then I had the chance to continue playing some unfinished missions.

The second time:

This time I had a somehow conscious idea of wishing to be a bad person, I wanted to be feared and hated by the people of the land. So, starting with the missions as I boy I chose not to give the warrants to the police officer and I gave them to the bandit, I didn't help the businessman and I let the thieves get his belongings; finally, I didn't help the man in love and I gave the letter to the girl's mother and then this guy was arrested.

When I started my journey I avoided working, I preferred to steal or kill people because it was faster and it would allow me to be known as a fierce person. The problem was that I started to be requested by the officers from different towns to imprison me, but I always ended up killing them. I did the game's quests in order to get to my sister's assassin, but I always chose to do evil deeds, for instance in one case I let a family be killed by a group of bandits who wanted to keep that family's belongings; however, I also killed the bandits.

In terms of the expressions that I used they were never funny, I always tried to scare people or I was rude whenever I saw people looking at me. Even though it seemed difficult for me, I got married with different girls from many towns and I paid some prostitutes to have sex with them.

Regarding my real estate, I bought as many properties as possible and I set the highest prices so that I could get more money from the rent. The problem with this was that many people got poor because of me and so they fled the cities. But I collected lots of money at the end of the game.

When I got until the end of the game I killed the Lord and this time, when I had to choose my destiny, I didn't ask for my sister to be brought back to life, but I asked for the money so that I could be richer. When I continued the game every one hated me and they insulted me for all the misery that I had brought to the land, but I always killed those who said anything I didn't like. One of the odd things this time

was the fact of not being liked by anybody, I somehow felt alone in some of the cases and I found a bit senseless the fact of going around the land because I was already hated enough; nevertheless, I had the chance to notice what it would be like if I all the people hated me.

The third time:

In this opportunity I was aware of the things that my decisions could bring, so I decided to play as a girl just to see if there were some changes in the game play.

As the game began the same choices were to be made and I was behaving as a good person, so I helped innocent people to get rid of their foes and I performed things that would give me a good reputation in the land.

What I experimented by being a girl was a bit uncomfortable, I had to receive some guys flirts and comments such as 'you look gorgeous today'. I could marry any guy who fell in love with me and we could have sex. I did it in order to see how it was and I have to admit that it felt a bit uncomfortable to know that it was 'me' having sex with a man. During the whole game I tried to pay attention to my girl's appearance, I tried to make her look as I would like to look if I were a girl. At the end of the game there was a possibility to drink a potion that would make me change my sex, it cautioned me that if I drank it, I would have to remain that way for the rest of my life. I ended up drinking it and I felt more comfortable being a guy.

Do Virtual Masks exist?

After resorting to my experience, plus the concepts described in the theoretical tools chapter, and some of the analyzed information that was gathered through the data from Digra I can determine whether Virtual Masks exist or not.

From the first paper that I studied, the author defends the idea that the player modifies the game and plays it in the way he/she wants to "The author starts from the point of thinking that "…the form and structure of games – their poetics– should be complemented by the analysis of their aesthetics (as understood by modern cultural theory): how gamers use their games, what aspects they enjoy and what kinds of pleasures they experience by playing them" (Lauteren. 2002) This can be seen in the game experience: I chose to play and develop the game as I wanted to do it, when I decided to be a good person I did it and viceversa. Another very important idea from the same author that would support the Virtual Masks is that "Social pleasure always confirms one's identity … it enjoys the persistence of the self" (Ibid. 2007) Hence it is proven that the perception that one has of itself can be different when it is projected to a digital avatar or character and so it would create a virtual identity that, through actualization, makes the player behave in certain way in which that self would be digitally modified; for instance, in the game experience when I was a girl I acquired a different self and I actualized that virtual identity that I

had to have through giving that avatarized character certain physical and emotional characteristics.

Based on two authors that were mentioned before: Nitzsche and Thomas, the concept of Virtual Masks can get some more support. They argue that "Players can feel present in the fictional world of the game but they are not embodied in this world themselves" (Nitzsche and Thomas. 2003) which implies that players are aware of not being the character or avatar itself, but they still perform some activities that they would not probably dare perform in a real world. A clear example of this in the game could be seen when I played as an evil character, I insulted people with expressions and I knew that the avatarized character represented me in the game and so I was not afraid of expressing some of those feelings, I was probably letting my Id (ello) act over my Superego (superyó).

In the game experience it was easy to notice that when I played as a girl I experimented some issues that I do not have to experiment in my real life, but that even playing as a girl I assigned some characteristics such as the personal appearance, which is something that Petri Lankoski, Satu Heliö and Inger Ekman quote from other authors in their study about understanding character interpretation "Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass have showed strong evidence that people have a powerful tendency of assigning personality traits to fictional characters – and even inanimate objects invoke a sense of personality" (Lankoski,

Heliö and Ekman. 2003). The Virtual Masks would be present here in the sense that I was assigning some aspects of my personality that I would never assign to a real girl, therefore, the Virtual Mask worked as an actualizator of my virtual idea of what a girl should be like.

As it has been seen in some parts of this study I have used combination of the term avatar and character (avatarized character) because I find this event in the game Fable 2. Starting from this clarification, another relevant idea in the hypothesis of Virtual Masks is being able to create a new self, which is one of the main aspects of the existance of them. In the study carried out by Mirjan and Craig, they also say that "An avatar in the most general sense is intended to represent the self" (Mirjan and Craig. 2003). From that idea it would be possible to say that the representation of the self does not imply the existance of the real self, but the actualization of a new self that hides behind the Virtual Mask; for instance when I was playing Fable 2 and I set the prices of the rent to the top I was not really projecting my real self, the one that is controlled by my superego, but I was actualizing a virtual idea tha hid my self behind a the Virtual Mask.

Resorting to another more psychology-oriented study carried out by Laura Ermi and Mäyrä Frans who study children and their playing, I found that they discovered that "One aspect of the imaginary worlds was that children could do things there that are not possible or even acceptable in everyday life, for example beating up a

policeman or two children living in a big house without any adults" (Emi and Frans. 2003) implying even more that the phenomena there was that children felt free and protected by the Virtual Masks and so they behaved they way they did, which is something evident in my game experience when I killed innocent people, married many women from different places and stole whatever I neeed.

Finally, the study carried out by Jennifer Martin called 'virtually visual: the effects of visual technologies on online identification' demonstrates as well the possible existance of the Virtual Masks, she quotes another author who claims that "One of the most often repeated claims about virtual-reality is that it provides the technological means to construct personal realities free from the determination of body-based ('real') identities" (Martin. 2005) which would be explained as the video games becoming the technology that provides the player with the tools to construct that virtual identity and actualize it through the games. Which in the case of Fable would be the creating of a 'perfect' person as I did the first time I played the game, I tried to be kind, honest and helpful with all the people of the land.

Conclusions

The hypothesis of the Virtual Masks was proven in theory through the most relevant studies collected from Digra and it was also demonstrated in one game experience written by the author of this study.

It can be concluded that Virtual Masks are a mean of digital projection from the player who assigns some characteristics to the avatarized character and who behaves as he/she wants to behave without necessarily following or respecting the social rules of the real world (as it was seen in the game experience).

It is important to clarify that being behind a Virtual Mask means misschief and becoming a criminal, it just implies that the game offers the possibility to perform any task the player wants without being pointed out; for instance, when playing as a character whose sex is different from the player's or who experiments the feeling of power and some other aspects that do not imply violence but feelings or acts forbidden by the society or that are impossible.

NEW PROPOSALS

In the field of Language Teaching this can be used as an excellent tool to let students use not only video games, but also other types of digital techonologies in which the concept of Virtual Masks let them forget some of the problems that they might face when being in a normal classroom and it would also help teachers who are into techonology work on strategies that, through digital tools such as video games, help students improve their learning experience.

In the psychological field it would work as some evidence that video games let people release some of their emotions and experiment some reactions whenever they perform acts that are not socially accepted through the actualization of those virtual ideas.

In the sociolingustic field it gives birth to a new concept that should be developed further and applied to bigger study groups in order to prove that video games are another extension of language that should be taken into account.

LIMITATIONS

This study let me find really rich information regarding the topic and it demonstrated that it requieres a lot of study in order to solve the questions in a more accurate way. Although the results were successful, I consider that this study should be carried out using much more data and studying more game experience

and then the concept of Virtual Masks could be completely proven and minted for the study of Video Games and other areas.

FUTURE STUDIES

LANGUAGE TEACHING

The use of video games as tools to learn a foreign language should be studied more and the concept of Virtual Masks would help some students perform some tasks that would be meaningful and that would not have them perform some things that I have noticed in classrooms such as having to work with people they do not feel comfortable with or with whom they feel shy to talk to.

PSYCHOLOGY

In the field of psychology the idea of combining some Freud's theories plus the use of digital tools such as video games and my result of virtual masks could be studied in order to focus on only psychological aspects that might have to do with behaviors, the real reasons for people to choose one character or the other and the implications that this would have when creating an avatar.

BUSINESS

In the area of business this study would provide marketing studies with tools to design video games with a purpose of letting people use their Virtual Masks. If

these Virtual Masks becoming appealing enough, video game designers and the companies would have to focus on designing games in which people can perform all sorts of actions while achieving the game's goals.

Appendix

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu3

Name: The pleasure of the playable text: towards an Aesthetic theory of computer games.				
Author: Georg Lauteren			**Year:** 2002	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**

Real	**Imp.**	**Exp(x)**	**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**
The concept of real identity is taken from a different approach: "social identity" which the author defines as one affected by the society in which the person acts based of the social aspects that are influenced by the self.			I. The author starts from the point of thinking that "…the form and structure of games – their poetics– should be complemented by the analysis of their aesthetics (as understood by modern cultural theory): how gamers use their games, what aspects they enjoy and what kinds of pleasures they experience by playing them." In other words: that the game is complemented by the player and his/her playing. II. Therefore, the author establishes the concepts of Poetics in games as rules of functioning, its methods of producing signs and the involvement of the user in this process; and the	I. This study goes deep into the analysis of a direct relationship between the game, as a stated structure, that is modified by a person who holds a background with some social and psychological aspects. II. The concept of pleasure can be of great importance for the present project, due to the approach given by Lauteren because he outlines the idea of pleasure as a part of game playing. III. Another very important aspect of the game is the idea of players as signifiers, which means that the	This study is really relevant for the present project and this Masks hypothesis because it takes into account one really important aspect which is the psychoanalytical one. It provides the present project with data that includes pleasure (an aspect that had not been taken into account) and some practical examples such as the Tomb Raider experimentation.

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Real	Imp.	Exp(x)			
The concept of real identity is taken from a different approach: "social identity" which the author defines as one affected by the society in which the person acts based of the social aspects that are influenced by the self.			concept of Aesthetics, based on the idea of pleasure as "Pleasure is undeniably an integral part of the computer gaming experience but it is also always experienced in a certain relation to power and the hegemonic ideology" III. The author also outlines the importance of players by saying that games "… are mediated sign systems – there can neither be a thing like a computer game without signifiers nor one that lacks a medium". IV. The author also emphasizes the importance of the concept of *pleasure* in the research and divides it into three levels: psychoanalytical, social and physical.	game itself would be worthless, for it is the player who "gives life" to it and then to the characters, which are directly influenced by the player. IV. The fact of understanding pleasure from a psychoanalytical point of view provides this research with some ideas to shape the concept of masks.	This study is really relevant for the present project and this Masks hypothesis because it takes into account one really important aspect which is the psychoanalytical one. It provides the present project with data that includes pleasure (an aspect that had not been taken into account) and some practical examples such as the Tomb Raider experimentation.
Virtual	**Imp.**	**Exp.(x)**	From that point the author begins to refer, in a way, to the virtual identity; hence, he defines the three mentioned levels: • "The psychoanalytical approach places the origin of pleasure within the	The author addresses the idea of virtual identity in a very close way to the present project, he establishes that the virtual identity starts inside the game and it allows players to become an ideal being, either	The author mentions the subconscious pleasure, which has a really close connection with the idea of masks, for they are intended to be created from unconsciousness
The author mentions the concept of virtual identity to show that players create it in order to become something they are not in the real identity "Many users indeed construct their virtual character as a 'better, true self'…"					

Virtual	Imp.	Exp.(x)			
The author mentions the concept of virtual identity to show that players create it in order to become something they are not in the real identity "Many users indeed construct their virtual character as a 'better, true self'…"			subconscious". • "Social pleasure always confirms one's identity – it "enjoys the persistence of the self". • Physical "It is the pleasure of the body, as suggested by the sexual connotations, but also a pleasure of its dissolution, of 'losing oneself'''". Based on these previous concepts, the author studies the game Tomb Raider (famous for its main character Lara Croft) and demonstrates that players feel a way of pleasure when seeing her in the game "… offering both sexes a reflection of their 'better', or 'true self'". This study also provides information about the incidence of the identities on each other "while the gaming experience has actually helped some users to overcome problems or traumatic experiences of their real life, it has intensified inner conflicts for others"	conscious or unconsciously. By using a game as a tool to prove the theories, the study also provides this project with some ideas and more evidence on how the player projects him/herself inside the game. Finally, this study demonstrates that there can be an incidence in both ways **virtual over real** and **real over virtual,** outlining that the results are completely subjective.	when playing.

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu7

Name: Stepping Back: Players as active participators.

Author: Michael Nitzsche/ Maureen Thomas				Year: 2003	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis context and Masks**
Real	**Imp.(X)**	**Exp.()**			
Virtual	**Imp.(X)**	**Exp.()**	**I.** The authors start from stating that some traditional, and previous, video games limit the player to the character's behavior "Players can feel present in the fictional world of the game but they are not embodied in this world themselves" which implies that they can not project their real identity in the game.	I. The text gives an outlook and takes a position in favor of the hypothesis of **real identity over the virtual one,** hence, a projection of possible feelings and desires from the player in the virtual world.	The text gives some tools for the concept of masks, firstly the fact of considering the games as media that should allow the player to modify the characters and the virtual world. That narrows the path towards the understanding of *Masks,* which are thought to be "tools" or apparatuses that hide some player's projections.
			II. The initial position of the authors is that players are more motivated whenever they can modify the virtual character and world at their will "The access to the virtual world through an appealing character invites the player to sympathize with the virtual hero, initiating the	II. Stating that, based on motivation, there is an "identification process with the virtual character" the text supports the idea of video games as mediators of identities in an unconscious way.	Although this text does not mention the idea of "hiding" something, it does give a close approach with its demonstrating the incidence of **the real identity over**
The authors mention the virtual identity in the text; however, they do not follow any formal definition of it.					

Virtual	Imp.(X)	Exp.()	identification process with the virtual character".	III. Based on their tests, the authors found out that there really is an incidence of the real identity over the virtual one, and that the latter is also influenced by the virtual environment in which the player moves.	**the virtual one** in order to modify the virtual character.
			III. Using *Common Tales,* which is basically a game developed in a dramatic setting with different narrative elements, the authors expected to promote a player-character-relationship that showed "the player's interactions in *Common Tales* had character-relevant impact: they shaped the relationship between the main characters…The exploration of the characters and the influence over their relationship are the defining dramatic features of the project"	IV. The having used this game and proving their hypothesis, the authors also provide the present research with some evidence on how players become virtual participators whose actions are not only shaped by the virtual but also by the real identity.	
The authors mention the virtual identity in the text; however, they do not follow any formal definition of it.					
			IV. Based on *Common Tales* the authors proved that the players behave "not as actors of a single role but as active participators in the events in multiple roles" inside the virtual environment.		

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu8

Name: Characters in computer games: toward understanding interpretation and design.					
Author: Petri Lankoski, Satu Heliö, Inger Ekman				**Year:** 2003	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**
Real	**Imp.** **(x)**	**Exp.**	I. "Goals are one way to reduce a player's freedom in a game: If a player wants to make progress in a game she/he needs to achieve goals set by the game" II. "Characterization is strongly linked with the definition of pre-defined functions like animation of facial gestures and movement" III. "The skills and abilities of a character must reflect its physiological, sociological and psychological profile"	I. The freedom of the player is somehow limited due to the goals or objectives of the game, which make him/her do something regardless the wishes of the player. II. Some games limit the process of characterization to a game-give character, in which the player has no possible	This study gives a very important outlook to the understanding of the virtual character and the masks. The ideas presented here (real identity affection) show that not all the
In an indirect way, the authors outline some facts that would affect, in a way, the real identity.					

Real	Imp. (x)	Exp.	IV. "Even if the player is the one who holds the joystick, the game designer still controls the character" V. "Character interpretation can be involuntary, even subconscious, but still affect a player's attitude towards a game"	incidence, for the game is already offering a character with specific characteristics. III. When having to accept or to use a given character, the player can't reflect or project any of his/her personal aspects. IV. The fact of being the player does not imply having the possibility to reflect any feelings, for the character is not always changeable in terms of that. V. Since it is possible that one get a determined character, the player's attitude toward it might be of different results and may be changed at least in a way, supporting the fact that the game would have an incidence in the real identity.	games provide the possibility to project any feelings, so, the hypothesis of masks would not be applicable to all sorts of games for the inner wishes would have to be restrained and limited due to the environment of some games, and as mentioned here, due to the character of the virtual world.
			In an indirect way, the authors outline some facts that would affect, in a way, the real identity.		
Virtual	Imp. (X)	Exp.	I. The author quotes Hirsch "Action in part is what defines	I. The player has some freedom to choose where to	The fact of having freedom in games

Virtual	Imp. (X)	Exp.	a character … What this means in the context of computer games is that as the player controls the character, the actions the player takes in the game also define what the character is like" II. "Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass have showed strong evidence that people have a powerful tendency of assigning personality traits to fictional characters – and even inanimate objects invoke a sense of personality"	go, what to do, when to do it and so on; therefore, the will of the player is constant in the development of the game. II. Since the authors use some literary theory as support and reference, they outline the difference that video games characters have from literary characters. Video game characters are modifiable due to the strong sense of personality, which is the projection of every person's identity.	to project one's personality in the game is of huge relevance for the project. It is important to take into account the already mentioned fact that argues that not all video games permit this event; however, when possible, the player can project and set free some or many aspects of his/her personality on the character.

The author starts from the point of saying that "Characters in computer games will be attributed personality based on their appearance and behavior", in other words, the real identity is projected (affects) the virtual one.

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu10

Name: Computer games and violence: is there really a connection?				
Author: Tor Endestad, Leila Torgersen			**Year:** 2003	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**
Real	Imp.	Exp (x)	I. The authors show some positions that support the idea of video games	I. The authors' presented theory might work with	Outlining that the

Real	Imp.	Exp. (x)

The authors want to understand the use of violent video games and their effects on people's behaviors.

Their initial hypothesis is that video games have a relationship with violence in teenagers.

as creators of violent behavior; however, they also show the Catharsis theory which says that "exposure to predominantly violent videogames leads to a decreased tendency toward aggressive behavior.

II. Aggression catharsis theory further specifies that "engaging in activities that lead to exposure of aggressive behavior, (i.e. game activities) might even lead to reduction in tendency towards violent behavior due to a "venting off" effect of aggressive energy or desires"

III. Kirsch is quoted when he says that "It has been established, that highly aggressive boys prefer violent video games" but the authors contrast this idea with the fact that "the cause of the relationship is characteristics within the child itself and not violent games as such"

After some tests on about 2000 teenagers the authors drew some conclusions regarding the first hypothesis of video games affecting people's behavior.

IV. They present their conclusions as "only violent videogames and racer videogames had a unique positive effect on violent behavior.
V. This means that there is

some logic in terms that the player might be able to do things that are not allowed in a non-virtual environment.
II. This idea of catharsis also gives some support to the fact of freeing (venting off) the things that are restrained because of social impediments.
III. The idea of being the player's environment a possible fact for choosing a game implies that it might not only be the virtual identity over the real but the other way or in a simultaneous way.
IV. The authors determine that there are some specific games that have a violent incidence over the real identity.
V. But they outline that this result is not a general one, it depends on some social aspects and the environment of the people who

incidence of a virtual identity (although very implicit) over the real one depends on aspects different to the video games gives another approach to the ideas about relationship between the identities, it demonstrates that it is not a general "rule" or stereotype.

The concept of masks receives an indirect support with the fact that the games "vent off" certain behaviors, in this case violent ones, that are released inside the virtual world.

Real	Imp.	Exp. (x)	not a strong general effect of gaming on violent behavior. Our results also show that it is action games, and not first person shooter games, that predict violent behavior … One exception is for the youngest adolescents, where only first person shooter predicted violent behavior" VI. They finally establish that "The present study does not resolve the question of causality. However, we find a significant connection between specific games and violence controlling for gender and age groups"	play the games. VI. The authors' finding on violent video games as creators of violent behaviors gives a good support to the fact that video games do not cause those results at random, that the violent effects are not only fostered by the games but also by some other important aspects of the player.	Outlining that the incidence of a virtual identity (although very implicit) over the real one depends on aspects different to the video games gives another approach to the ideas about relationship between the identities, it demonstrates that it is not a general "rule" or stereotype. The concept of masks receives an indirect support with the fact that the games "vent off" certain behaviors, in this case violent ones, that are released inside the virtual world.
The authors want to understand the use of violent video games and their effects on people's behaviors. Their initial hypothesis is that video games have a relationship with violence in teenagers.					
Virtual	Imp. (x)	Exp.			

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu11

Name: Player character design facilitating emotional depth in MMORPGs				
Author: Eladhari Mirjam, Lindley Craig			**Year:**	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**

Real	**Imp.**	**Exp.**			
Virtual	**Imp. (x)**	**Exp.**	I. The authors mention the idea that says that "The player character itself is for the player the focal point that looks out on the world, not just by perceiving it visually from the screen, but also being the center point for all future actions and how these can be performed"	I. The first idea implies that the game character can not be unmodified by the player, in other words, the character's development inside the virtual environment depends on the player's decisions and projections.	The understanding of the character as a must-be-modified entity is of great importance. The character can not exist completely unless it is modified by the player; aspects from the player's environment appear in this modification, his/her personality, feelings, etc come out to be projected in the virtual character.
The authors start from a position in which the outline that "When you enter a Role Playing Game (RPG) you step into character and you leave your physical body behind" addressing to the idea in this project of the real over virtual.			II. Although characters are usually given in the games "After having entered into these bodies we modify and refine them in a way that gives us the satisfaction of development … We put our minds into	II. Although the characters are given by the game, the player is free to "play" with it, he/she is able to define it, especially in games where the creation of avatars is possible.	The previous ideas imply that the Masks

Virtual	Imp. (x)	Exp.			
The authors start from a position in which the outline that "When you enter a Role Playing Game (RPG) you step into character and you leave your physical body behind" addressing to the idea in this project of the real over virtual.			these bodies, which in turn are placed in a world with its own rule sets" III. The authors quote Bellman to define the self by saying that "…Specifically a self is a continuously maintained and global construction that speaks for the organism's reasoning and assessments on a global level" IV. They also refer to the avatars' aim as "An avatar in the most general sense is intended to represent the self" V. The study describes a player's mind modeling that includes traits, moods, sentiments, emotions, being values and behaviors; which are thought to be important when characterizing. VI. The research concludes one idea important for this study which says that "Here we have outlined a system that provides the player character with a prosthetic mind and makes the player character into a semi-autonomous agent"	III. The self, a very important idea for the present study, gets a definition in which its existence is defined by the player and his/her environment. IV. Therefore the Avatar becomes an expression of the self, the projection of it in the virtual world. V. The act of characterizing is seen here as a complemented by some aspects of the player that are projected and relevant for the character's actions inside the game. VI. The character is basically nothing without the player, for it is the player who projects something, be it feelings, emotions, behaviors, etc. The virtual character is modified by the player in at least one smooth way.	can also be created, for the player's projected items might be part of things that are not allowed in society of impossible in the real world.

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu12

Name: Power and control of games: children as the actors of game cultures					
Author: Laura Ermi, Mäyrä Frans				**Year:** 2003	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**
Real	Imp.	Exp.			
Virtual	Imp. (x)	Exp.	I. "Most games also display their fictional distance from the real lives of their players openly: they provide the players opportunities to enact and share a fantasy of something that is interesting and tempting, particularly because it is dangerous, impossible or forbidden in the real world"	I. Understanding the games as providers of these virtual opportunities connects to the idea of having games as mediators of language to create these virtual worlds.	This study contains very important evidence that proves the fact of video games being chosen because of certain characteristics. The fact of providing opportunities to do things inside the virtual world, which winds up demonstrating that some people might feel more comfortable if they are inside this virtual world and they can expose their feelings and some attitudes, behaviors and acts.
			II. The view where power of games is related to their capacity to imaginatively transport player to another world where the real world restrictions do not apply, is named here as **freedom-by-imagination thesis** of games' attractiveness.	II. The Freedom-by-imagination thesis is also connected to the fact of mediation; in this case it lets the player transport to places that are not possibly thought in real life.	
			III. The author quotes another researcher to say that "Even if not backed up by large-scale psychological studies, Jones presents compelling individual stories on how games may help 'a timid	III. This example of a teenager feeling power in the virtual world is vital for the matter of this project, it supports the idea of the video games being a way of letting inner emotions go "out".	The concept of masks becomes stronger, it is supported by the methodological evidence that children enjoy playing a game because of its allowance to do forbidden things in reality.
				IV. This idea is connected to some previously-studied researches, in	

The research implies a goal that hopes to understand children's playing of video games as "complex and multidimensional as any human activity" and it is not a matter of giving general concepts but a matter of studying specific cases.

Virtual	Imp. (x)	Exp.			
The research implies a goal that hopes to understand children's playing of video games as "complex and multidimensional as any human activity" and it is not a matter of giving general concepts but a matter of studying specific cases.			adolescent tap into her own bottled-up emotionality and discover a feeling of personal power'" IV. The research showed that "Children liked the possibility of contributing to the creation of the game world. For some, the most engaging aspect of *The Sims,* for example, was building houses and for some the possibility to control the people living in that house." V. The study also provides this idea "On the whole, the children considered the **imaginary world** to be central in the games. They preferred extensive worlds where they were free to move around, find new places, perhaps collect something and face new challenges" VI. "One aspect of the imaginary worlds was that children could do things there that are not possible or even acceptable in everyday life, for example beating up a policeman or two children living in a big house without any adults" VII. The study provides a result which says that "the image of a child in contemporary game culture that emerges from our research is not one of helpless victim"	which the possibility of controlling the character's behavior becomes a motivation to play the game, probably because of the projection that the player is to do. V. Connecting to the just mentioned idea, games are more appealing when they also provide players (in this case children) with tools to explore and "live" inside the virtual world. VI. This, connected to the idea of the teenager, is more evidence to prove the existence of the masks inside the game, for it allows players to do things that are not allowed in a real context. VII. This is a very important result, which demonstrates that the real identity is not necessarily modified by the video games and that it might work the other way.	This study contains very important evidence that proves the fact of video games being chosen because of certain characteristics. The fact of providing opportunities to do things inside the virtual world, which winds up demonstrating that some people might feel more comfortable if they are inside this virtual world and they can expose their feelings and some attitudes, behaviors and acts. The concept of masks becomes stronger, it is supported by the methodological evidence that children enjoy playing a game because of its allowance to do forbidden things in reality.

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu13

Name: This is not a game: play in cultural environments					
Author: Katie Salen, Eric Zimmerman				**Year: 2003**	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**
Real	**Imp.**	**Exp.**			
Virtual	**Imp.**	**Exp.**	I. The authors are based on Huizinga to mention the magic circle, which means that people join a set of stated rules and principles. The authors summarize that "To play a game means entering into a magic circle, or perhaps creating one as a game begins"	I. The magic circle implies in a game accepting the rules that are given by the game, in which case are not usually breakable, for they are set.	This study gives more evidence for the current project and its ideas regarding the creation of a virtual identity.
The study presents some ideas that seem to study a bilateral relation, in which the virtual and real identities would meet "This essay … investigates the complex ways in which games interact with their cultural environment". Since the mutual relation depends on the game that is used to study the act, the virtual identity shows up with ideas that connect with some previous works mentioned in this paper.			II. "Within the magic circle, special meanings accrue and cluster around objects and behaviors. In effect, a new reality is created, defined by the rules of the game and inhabited by its players" III. Referring playing, the authors mention the idea that "Game play takes place not in a special, isolated game space, but in and among the activities of daily life" IV. After conducting some observation, the authors mention that "Playing a game in a public space has its challenges, especially when the	II. A new type of reality is created inside this magic circle. The created reality is the one defined by the game and its environment. III. Since the player is not an alienated person, he/she has some background that has an influence on the game and inside the environment. IV. This idea supports the fact of letting video games "hide" some inner things because the performance of the player varies	This project's mentioning of Huizinga's Magic Circle theory gives more support for the understanding of the virtual worlds and their allowance to create the virtual identities that are projected through the character. In terms of the masks the mentioning of players not feeling comfortable when being seen provides more support, for it continues demonstrating that games let players hide something and project it through the virtual identity (the imaginative existence).

Virtual	Imp.	Exp.			
The study presents some ideas that seem to study a bilateral relation, in which the virtual and real identities would meet "This essay … investigates the complex ways in which games interact with their cultural environment". Since the mutual relation depends on the game that is used to study the act, the virtual identity shows up with ideas that connect with some previous works mentioned in this paper.			players are pretending to be vampires" V. And the also establish that "Players' imaginative existence as non-human vampires is heightened by the secret status they hold within the public cultural environment where the game takes place" VI. Regarding games, the authors understand them as "Games sometimes exhibit forbidden play, forms of non-game interaction not permitted in ordinary life"	whenever he/she faces a public place. V. Echoing the previous ideas, this one reflects the theory of having video games as hiding places in order to perform a given type of activity. VI. Continuing with the idea, games provide the special possibility of being or doing what's not allowed in real life.	This study gives more evidence for the current project and its ideas regarding the creation of a virtual identity. This project's mentioning of Huizinga's Magic Circle theory gives more support for the understanding of the virtual worlds and their allowance to create the virtual identities that are projected through the character. In terms of the masks the mentioning of players not feeling comfortable when being seen provides more support, for it continues demonstrating that games let players hide something and project it through the virtual identity (the imaginative existence).

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu14

Name: Conditions of engagement in game simulation: contexts of gender, culture and age.				
Author: Ralph Noble, Kathleen Ruiz, Marc Destefano, Jonathan Mintz			**Year:** 2003	
Type of identity			**Author's position and ideas**	**Supportive ideas for the present project**	**Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks**

Type of identity			Author's position and ideas	Supportive ideas for the present project	Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks
Real	**Imp.**	**Exp.**			
Virtual	**Imp.**	**Exp.**	The motivation to play games derives both from the nature of real life and the nature of the games available. Individuals are drawn to games both for the incentives and attractions in the games and to avoid or escape elements of real life that are aversive.		
Even though this is a more marketing-oriented study, it provides some important data that supports the present project.			It is clear that people play games to find sources of reinforcement and reward that are not available or imperfectly available in daily life, and to avoid sources of pain and punishment that dominate their daily lives		
			Complex cultural, social and representational issues are tied up with conceptual shifts and technological innovations which encourage and enable		

	people to disembody into the immateriality of virtual gamespace Objects in virtual reality have no inertia and are not necessarily subject to the complex rules of physical reality It is also reasonable to speculate that males who are relatively unskilled at reading non-verbal signals might find this set of circumstances more attractive than females would. One can surmise that for people who don't disconnect themselves much from their onscreen avatar, they want a virtual world where they feel safe		

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu15

Name: Virtually visual: the effects of visual technologies on online identification.	
Author: Jennifer Martin	Year: 2005

Type of identity			Author's position and ideas	Supportive ideas for the present project	Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks
Real	**Imp.**	**Exp.**			
Virtual	**Imp.**	**Exp.**	There is a general consensus among researchers that virtual worlds allow players the freedom and anonymity to create, explore, and play with multiple identities In *Life on the Screen*, Sherry Turkle examined the process of identity formation, and details how individuals are able to create, assume, and explore identities that are different from the offline self.		
this paper investigates the ways in which visual elements of online games affect the process of identifying with an online self			Similarly, Roseanne Stone has spoken of the "metaphysics of presence," or the ability to generate multiple online personas that deconstruct fixed notions of identity in textbased worlds.		
			With respect to games, T.L. Taylor makes note of the importance of the visual avatar to online identity, and notes that her research subjects feel that the avatar aids in immersion		
			preliminary research suggests that the main element that undermines online identification is the visual nature of avatars – the limits imposed on appearance, right from creation, and in-game movement		
			Anne Balsamo writes, "One of the most often repeated claims		

| | | about virtual-reality is that it provides the technological means to construct personal realities free from the determination of body-based ('real') identities"

Players feel that being able to create exactly the avatar they want greatly enhances their sense of identity, immersion, and involvement in the world, and allows them to play with an identity instead of simply having a character.

Overall, there is a tendency for players to write about their online appearance in terms of limits, boundaries, strangeness, disappointment, and, in many cases, a decreased ability to experience immersion and develop and in-game identity. | | |
|---|---|---|---|

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu16

Name: Towards emotionally adapted games based on user controller emotion knobs					
Author: Timo Saari, Niklas Ravaja, Jari Laarni, Marko Turpeinen				Year: 2005	
Type of identity			Author's position and ideas	Supportive ideas for the present project	Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks
Real	Imp.	Exp.			
Virtual	Imp.	Exp.	Most theorists endorse the		

Emotions	view that emotions comprise three components: subjective feeling, expressive behavior, and physiological arousal. Emotional regulation systems in these instances most naturally may focus on manipulating the event structures, such as characters, their roles, events that take place and other features of the narrative gaming experience.		

Hypothesis Analysis chart nu19

Name: Your second selves: resources, agency, and constraints in Avatar designs and identity play in a tween Virtual World.				
Author: Yasmin Kafai, Deborah Fields, Melissa Cook.				Year: 2007
Type of identity			Author's position and ideas	Supportive ideas for the present project	Connection with thesis' ideas and Masks
Real	Imp.	Exp.			
Virtual	Imp.	Exp.	Avatars are not ephemeral and spurious creations: players		

In this paper, we investigate the avatar design and identity play within a large-scale tween virtual world called Whyville.net with more than 1.5 million registered players ages 8-16	spend considerable time selecting and customizing them and then interacting with others online.

Inside Whyville, players created avatars using the given choices.

Overall, tweens listed six, non-mutually exclusive reasons for creating their avatars the way they did: the pure aesthetics of a look (10), to make it in part like their 'real' self (8), to affiliate with something or someone (7), because they can't have it in real life (6), to align oneself for or against a popular trend (7), and for a functional reason like disguise (6).

Some tweens did make their avatars similar to themselves either in physical appearance or in personality.

By changing her look frequently she could appear as a stranger to her friends on Whyville, sneaking into their conversations and then surprising them with her real identity.

We put forward the notion of second selves because it became apparent in our investigation that tweens venture out in multiple guises.

If we apply our notion of an identity playground to interpreting these nuanced changes, we can imagine how places like Whyville support a fluid notion of virtual identity, changing things little by little, experimenting with various looks (and even race and gender), playing with representations of one's 'real' self or a fantasy character, using | | |

	various affinities to build different friendships, even using appearance for social activism.		

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