

GENDER AND VIDEO GAMES: HOW IS FEMALE GENDER GENERALLY  
REPRESENTED IN VARIOUS GENRES OF VIDEO GAMES?

BY

Xeniya Kondrat

1580452

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Image 1 A caricature on female representation in video games

## **ABSTRACT**

Gender representation in video games is a current and sensitive topic in entertainment media. Gender studies in video games look at the difference between the portrayal of female and male characters and how these representations affect the target audience. Most video games tend to over-represent stereotypes and in general use extensive violence and cruelty (Maietti, 2008). Some video games use wrong, disrespectful and sometimes even violent representations of females.

This research paper focuses on the current representation of female gender in video games and how they are represented, stereotyped and used as characters in games. The analysis will include case studies of two particular video games from different time periods. Results show that there is a difference between portraying women in the past and present.

This research paper is based on previous academic research and case studies. Also, several interviews were conducted amongst game professionals, future game designers (students) and game players.

At the end of the research paper advice is offered to the game industry on how to change female gender representation in the video games and with which communication or media tools.

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 Introduction and background

Video game history started in 1940 when Edward Condon designed a computer that could play a game called “Nim” with one player (Video Game History Timeline). The first home video game, “Space Odyssey”, was created in 1972. In 1993, a release of “Mortal Kombat” forced the US government to start rating the games based on their violence level (Video Game History Timeline). The first game with a female protagonist appeared in 1996: “Tomb Raider”. It became one of the most popular games in video game history. Afterwards, Will Wrights created a game called “The Sims” in 2000 which became the most popular game amongst female players.

As we can see, video games have a rich and long history. Video games are viewed by many as an essential communication medium for children, teenagers and even grownups nowadays. Edery & Mollick (2009) claim that video games train for a logical way of thinking, teach cooperation with other people – players, create and improve their imagination. Video games became a channel of communication and socializing between people.

Video games of different genres have become a subject of research based on aesthetics, moral and sociocultural representations and technical aspects (Jahn-Sudmann & Stockmann, 2008). Video games allow children and teenagers to discover new worlds, where they can do anything they want to, even things that are impossible in real life. Video games can also teach something new, which is not necessarily good for a person’s perception and mind, such as violence, sexuality and aggression.

In 1998, Dietz analyzed 33 Sega games and found that almost 80% of the games contained violence, of which 20% was directed towards women characters (Dietz, 1998). From the same research, Dietz also determined that most of the female characters in these 33 video games were portrayed as “damsels in distress” (Dietz, 1998). These female characters had unimportant roles, as non-active characters, they could not participate in the video games, and they did not have any other role besides just being locked or lulled. Other than that they were stereotyped by being dressed in tight and provocative clothing, which showed their large breasts and long legs. The author states in her research that “this representation is harmful to children of both sexes since they will internalize these expectations and accept the idea that women are to be viewed as weak, as victims, and as sex objects” (Dietz, 1998).

One of the biggest criticisms of video games is stereotyping. Stereotyping implies that a set of fixed and most of the time non-truly based information or image is being used for the representation of something or someone (Oxford University Press, 2014). As mentioned before, some video games constantly stereotype female gender. Most common ways of stereotyping in video games are “damsels in distress” and sexual objectification. The representation of females in video games is usually sexualized (Jahn-Sudmann & Stockmann, 2008) and according to Laura Mulvey (1975), “presents them as objects of the male gaze: most women appear to be hardly older than 30, in most cases wear skintight, figure-accenting clothing and are slim.” In these kinds of games, women are dressed in provocative clothing and are created to serve males as an aid or even as a sexual object. As an example, *Grand Theft Auto III Vice City* allows the player’s character to have sex with a prostitute, afterwards kill her, and from this act get a health bonus.

As a result of this wrong and negative representation of women, some girls and women might suffer from eating disorders and develop bulimia or anorexia (Thomson, 2004). Furthermore, they may establish the wrong idea of how women should look like.

Researchers are trying to show that mass media is affecting our perception of the real world and its standards by providing us with unreal, made-up beauty and moral rules. Since video games are a part of mass media, nowadays they are partly responsible for the unrealistic, ideal body perceptions as well. Girls and boys who play video games that use this ideal shaped body image for females are more likely to create their concept on how female should look like based on this representation.

Lately, it has been mentioned that there is a slow change in video games and their target audience. There appears to be an increasing trend in the number of women playing video games and the age of players of both genders. According to the Entertainment Software Association<sup>i</sup> report in 2013, 55% of game players are male and 45% are females (Entertainment Software Association, 2013). This means that there is a switch at the market and target audience’s interests. Adults, especially male ones, who grew up with video games tend to continue playing them and now women are starting to gain interest in them as well. Therefore, it proves that video games have become one of the most important and influential media nowadays. Moreover, it is necessary to research and analyze video games themselves as well as their effect on the target audience and the world.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Video games are one of the largest media outlets today. They appear to have a strong influence on the players and their perception of the world. According to various research, it seems like some of video games provide wrong and negative ideas about how the female gender should look, feel and be treated. Dmitri C. Williams notes that “at the same time as games were drawing the ire of conservative society, they were also used as a means of reinforcing social norms and power relations (Nielsen, Smith, & Tosca, 2008). This was particularly evident for gender and age” (Williams, 2003) where female gender and players are still ignored and presented in “a negative image of the male antisocial teenager” (Nielsen, Smith, & Tosca, 2008). It is important for game production companies to represent female gender in a respectful way, so that the target audience can learn about and perceive the female gender in a realistic, non-stereotyped way. This includes both genders, female and male, since it affects both of them. Therefore, the following policy and research questions were established to aid in the research of this topic:

### Policy Question

*How can stereotyping of female gender in video games be changed?*

### Research Question

How is female gender generally represented in various genres of video games?

The additional policy and research questions will guide the research and help to explore information, which can assist in giving professional advice at the end.

### Sub Questions

How are females represented in video games?

How is female gender stereotyped in video games?

Why is female gender stereotyped in video games?

What are the consequences of the present representation of female gender in video games?

How can stereotypes of female gender be changed in video games?

## 1.3 Operationalization

To be able to conduct this research at an appropriate level, it is necessary to set several boundaries by means of defining particular words, which are constantly used in this research paper.

### 1.3.1 Video games

According to the Oxford Dictionaries, a video game is “a game played by electronically manipulating images produced by a computer program on a television screen or other display screen” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). In this research paper, a video game will stand for all types of electronic video game genres, including action, adventure, single player shooting, real-time strategy, fighting, role playing, massively multiplayer online games and simulation and different video game platforms such as PC, console and online. Mobile video games are going to be excluded from the research paper due to lack of previously conducted research and data about gender and video games on mobile platforms. Also, it is hard to analyze gender representation such as clothing and body of the characters on the small mobile screen.

### 1.3.2 Gender

This research paper uses “gender” in a traditional concept. It expresses “the state of being female or male” (Oxford University Press, 2014). If the word “gender” is used without mentioning female or male then it refers to both genders.

### 1.3.3 Stereotyping

As mentioned previously in “Introduction and Background”, stereotyping is a group of fixed opinions or belief about something or someone. This research paper reconsiders “stereotyping” as a negative representation, opinion or believe of something or someone.

### 1.3.4 Representation

Oxford Dictionaries describes representation as “the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way” (Oxford University Press, 2014). Due to questioning of the representation of female gender in video games, there is no clear image or view of its negative or positive representation. This is going to be discussed at the end of this research paper.

### 1.3.5 Target audience of video games

The target audience of video games is not based on fixed criteria; age, level of education, gender and nationality. This research paper is going to have data on these criteria of the respondents, based on which the research will be analyzed.

## 1.4 Justification

This research will hopefully give a clearer image on how female gender is represented in video games and why it is represented in such a way. At the same time, this research might help to determine if females are stereotyped in video games and if yes, how it affects the target audience of these video games – particularly the male gender. One of the main goals of this research is to determine if representations and stereotyping of females in video games are carrying negative or positive images and how they affect males and females in real life.

Based on previous research in this field, theories which have been collected and used for the questionnaires and the data that came out of it, advice will be given on how to improve the representation of female gender in video games, if needed.

## 1.5 Restrictions of research

The research paper focuses on female gender representation in video games. Not a lot of research has been done on this particular topic. Therefore, there is a lack of data and theories on which this graduation assignment could be based. However, there are quite a lot of research papers and journal articles about female gender representation in movies, TV series, journals and newspapers. Thus, this research paper contains theories which were mostly used in previous research for television and print media.

## 1.6 Chapter division

The research paper is divided into the following five:

Chapter 1 – Introduction and background as well as justification of the problem and restrictions of research.

Chapter 2 – Literature review and theoretical framework which will give a clearer view on the past and current situations and suggest theories used for this research.

Chapter 3 – Methodology will explain and show how the research will be conducted.

Chapter 4 – Findings and conclusions will show the results of the Chapter 2 and 3 combined.

Chapter 5 – Overall conclusion of the whole research paper.

Chapter 6 – Recommendations will be given based on the results of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

The questionnaires and detailed interviews can be found in the appendix at the end of the research paper.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 1, the background and history of video games was discussed, as well as previous research in the field of gender representation in mass media, its affects and consequences on society, and its perception of reality and world. The background information on earlier findings gave the idea and outline for these theories and how they can be used in this research.

In this chapter the theoretical concept and perspectives that are related to the gender representation, self-esteem and identity are discussed. Theoretical framework is a structure that explains and supports the chosen theory(ies) of the research paper. This theoretical framework will review Feminist, Uses and Gratification, and Cultivation theories. A review and critical analysis of these theories will be conducted, based on previous research papers and articles. Furthermore, two case studies of two video games are going to be presented and analyzed.

Based on the analysis of these theories, the Methodology, questionnaires and interviews, will be formulated. At the end, the results will show how this theoretical framework supports the conclusions of the research.

#### **2.2 Uses and gratification theory**

The uses and gratification approach was developed by Blumler and Katz in 70's to explain how consumers use media to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals, and to do so by simply asking them" (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Uses and gratification theory defines why people choose certain media and what they do with it. This theory analyzes how peoples' needs influence their choice in media. It proves that the user plays an active role in media by choosing what he or she wants to see, watch or hear. Blumler and Katz, the founders of this theory, believed that the users are goal-oriented in their needs and make decisions by themselves.

As an example, if a person wants to feel relaxed and watch a comedy he/she can go to the cinema or just stay at home and watch something on the TV. Whether he/she chooses to go to the cinema or stay at home depends on the person's feelings and desires. The same works for video games. Some game players prefer to play shooters or action and others

massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPGs). This theory might be useful for this research paper and helpful in figuring out why people like to play video games and what affects their choice.

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) mentioned that the uses and gratification approach may actually be based on the reasoning of Lundberg and Hulten (1968), which includes the following five elements:

1. “The audience is conceived as active – an important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal directed and patterns of media use are shaped by more or less definite expectations of what certain kinds of content have to offer the audience member.”
2. “In the mass communication process much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member. This places a strong limitation on theorizing about any form of straight-line effect of media content on attitudes and behavior.”
3. “The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction.”
4. “Methodologically speaking, many of the goals mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves- i.e., people are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to recognize them when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation.”
5. “Value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms.”

It is also important to understand media functions while analyzing the uses and gratification approach. Lasswell was the first one who purposed the four-functional interpretation of the media in 1948. However, the later investigation by McQuail, Brown and Blumler (1972) improved his interpretation and became:

1. “Diversion (including escape from the constraints of routine and the burdens of problems, and emotional release)”
2. “Personal relationships (including substitute companionship as well as social utility)”
3. “Personal identity (including personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement)”
4. “Surveillance”

Media can serve several functions at the same time. For example, television series provide functions of personal identification with the characters as well as diversion since people watch television for relaxation (Blumler, Brown, & McQuail, 1970). Also, another study, which was done based on the analyzing children's essays on the topic "Why I like to Watch Television", found out that the main reasons are: to pass time; to forget, as a means of diversion; to learn new things; to learn about myself; for arousal; for relaxation; for companionship; as a habit (Greenberg, 1972). Based on that, we can assume that video games can serve functions of diversion (relaxation, escaping the real world and problems), personal relationships (online multi player games with its own communities and forums) as well as personal reference (through avatars of the characters), reality exploration (exploring and traveling in different worlds, exploring and learning about yourself) and value reinforcement (leveling up and gaining more experience).

According to Greenberg (Gratifications of Television Viewing and their Correlates for British Children) television was the main media for the youth in 1974. It was most universal, trustworthy, used and adored media for them. Already then researchers understood the importance of analyzing and researching what attracted adolescents so much from television. It was important to find out what they seek and think they receive from it because it would lead to understanding "potential effects and social behaviors resulting from television and may be predictive of those behaviors" (Greenberg B. , 1974). Nowadays, television is still the first major mass media, but internet and video games are becoming favorite media for the users as well. As an example, more than 50% of the participants of the Deloitte's survey have a gaming console in their house (Deloitte, 2013). Most of them (80%) are 14 to 17 years old. Definitely, it becomes clear that video games should be studied as well, like television has been studied for several decades now.

McQuail's (1987) typology can be used for analysis of what kind of reason or need a person feels for a certain media use. This typology consists of four sections: information, personal identity, integration and social interaction and entertainment:

- "Information sections consists of reasons such as finding out about relevant events and conditions in immediate surroundings, society and the world; seeking advice on practical matters or opinion and decision choices; satisfying curiosity and general interest; learning; self-education; gaining a sense of security through knowledge"
- "The Personal Identity section focuses on needs which help in finding reinforcement for personal values; finding models of behavior; identifying with

valued others (in the media); gaining insight into one's self; Integration and Social Interaction; gaining insight into circumstances of others; social empathy; identifying with others and gaining a sense of belonging; finding a basis for conversation and social interaction; having a substitute for real-life companionship; helping to carry out social roles; enabling one to connect with family, friends and society etc.”

- “The Entertainment section is based on needs of escaping, or being diverted, from problems; relaxing; getting intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment; filling time; emotional release and sexual arousal.”

Not all of the reasons mentioned above can be used for analysis of the usage of video games, but the sections, Personal Identity, Integration and Social Interaction and Entertainment are appropriate. These sections might give a clearer view into why people play video games and what kind of needs they fulfill by playing them. Based on the answers of the respondents, it might be possible to understand what they want to see in video games, why they want to see it and how to implement it. It is likely that relaxation and avoidance are going to be the most popular gratifications. Video games are created as entertainment. Therefore people are most likely to play them when they need to relax and avoid doing another task or at least prolong the time before doing the task. Also, as it was mentioned before, video games allow players to enjoy and imagine unreal worlds and situations. Therefore, it is very probable to receive a high percentage on the fantasy gratification as well.

### **2.3 Cultivation theory**

Firstly, the theory was a part of the “Cultural indicators” project of Gerbner. The cultivation theory (analysis) was the third step of the project and was defined as the “study of the relationships between institutional processes, message systems and, and the public assumptions, images, and policies that they cultivate” (Gerbner, 1970, p. 71).

The Cultivation theory suggests that media affects and builds people’s views of (social) reality. Television, magazines and games affect a person’s perception of the real world and its social and moral standards by providing them with mainstream ideas of how a person and the world should look like and behave. Likewise, media images assemble in the minds of the children and teenagers and “eventually result in expectations of the real world that correspond to media representations” (Harrison & Hefner, 2008). Most

research which was based on the cultivation theory analyzed television, news and magazines. One of these studies analyzed and established that “makeover” TV programs negatively affect self-esteem of viewers and positively present “perfectionism” and “body dissatisfaction” (Kubic & Chory, 2007). Another study found out that heavy viewers, especially young men, of the reality dating shows were most likely to have a stereotypical thinking about relationships and women such as “men are sex-driven”, “dating is a game” and “women are sex objects only” (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007). It resembles that the perceptions of heavy TV viewers are affected more rather than casual viewers (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Therefore, it is logical to assume the same effect for heavy video game players.

When it comes to games “the idea of involvement as an important factor in cultivation underlines the active nature of media use in which individuals are engaged in actively constructing a story rather than being passively exposed to it” (Chong, Teng, Siew, & Skoric, 2012), which can be important in using this theory to analyze video games. The Cultivation theory can be used as an explanation to why thin figure, large breast and beauty ideals are considered as desirable and normal features today (Martins, Williams, Harrison, & Ratan, 2009). Mainstream media affects the mind of heavy media users (television, magazines, video games etc.) and its effects can be found in the perception of the female body among males as well as females. Based on research conducted in 2003, Harrison (Television Viewers' Ideal Body Proportions: the Case of the Curvaceously Thin Woman) found out that heavy television female viewers were affected by the provided female image so much that they felt forced to meet it and by doing so they were ready to reduce their larger breasts or in case of the smaller breast to have augmentation surgery.

The cultivation theory was used in another study related to video games and body ideals. The results suggested that the male gamers who read game magazines (preadolescent boys) tend to have a stronger desire to gain muscularity rather than readers of fitness or sport magazines (Harrison & Bond, 2007). This means that muscularity, power and super abilities of the game characters affect a boy’s perception and makes them believe that if they achieve the same level of the muscularity then they will have the same amount of power and popularity. The same goes for female players who wish to be as thin as the female characters of the games with their large breasts, small waist and small hips. They wish to achieve the same tight and thin body, which is not physically possible in most cases and cannot be reached in a healthy way. At the same time, since there are still more

male game players, the female body representation in the video games affects boys' minds as well. They see it as normal and attractive. Also even though, girls play fewer games than boys, male players might affect females through peer pressure, such as bullying girls in the school who do not have a thin body. As proof to that, Harrison (2000) did a research study amongst school boys in the United States. The research showed that thinness was socially accepted and valued when fatness was denounced and a fat female will be negatively stereotyped as being lazy, greedy and without any friends (Harrison, 2000).

Another research study investigated how the quality of a game – its realism – affects the game players and their sense of presence, aggression and involvement (Ivory & Kalyanaraman, 2007). It showed that the gamers react more to realistic games rather than low quality (old) games, by having higher skin conductance level as well as aggressive feelings (Barlett & Rodeheffer, 2009).

Based on previous research, it seems logical to use the cultivation theory for this research paper. Hopefully, it will help to find out whether video games affect the perception of game players or not. Depending on the results of the questionnaires, which will be handed out to game designers and game players, it will be possible to analyze if there is a connection between seen “unreal” image of the females in the video games and real perception of them in the present time.

### **2.3 Feminist theory**

The key assumption of the feminist theory is that females and males are equal and have the same rights. The feminist movement started in the United States in 1848, because of the lack of rights for women. Women were previously not allowed to vote, did not have property rights, university education was not accessible for women and their husbands had the right to make decisions for them and even punish them. However, change takes time and thus, these issues could not all be solved immediately. As an example, women gained the right to vote in the United States only in 1920. Then, the 60's became the era when the feminist movements started to grow and actually started to help women gain their rights and stop sex discrimination at their work places. From then on, women have kept fighting for their rights and against discrimination. Nowadays, females have considerably more rights and freedom than they did 50 years ago.

Nonetheless, it has been suggested that some aspects of society still keep discriminating against female gender, by showing them in a negative, disrespectful, and sexual way.

One of these areas is video games. While video games have mostly been a male form of entertainment for the past few decades, recently the number of female video game players has started to rise. Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) assumed that 43% of the US gamers were females in 2001 (Interactive Digital Software Association, 2001). The video game industry market was mainly dominated by the games for boys, such as shooters and action games. However, the industry realized that girls (most girls) do not like these kinds of the games, so they have decided to create games for females as well, with Barbie Dolls and ponies or Sims. Most of these games were based on the stereotyping that girls like to play with dolls, dress them and buy things (of course, some girls enjoy doing these things, but it is not the only thing they can and want to do). The industry was not (and it seems like is still not) interested in creating video games for both genders. As it was said at “ABC Nightline” news program by Sherry Turkle (1997) “If you market to girls and boys according to just the old stereotypes and don’t try to create a computer culture that’s really more inclusive for everyone, you’re going to just reinforce the old stereotypes....We have an opportunity here to use this technology, which is so powerful, to make of ourselves something different and better.”

It is important for the game industry to carefully develop games for girls so that they show the diversity of women’s lifestyles, interests and identities (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000). Sadly, it is easier for the industry to produce games for girls based on stereotypical views because they will sell better. On the other hand, the increasing popularity of sports among women, such as football, shows that there is a market for sport-oriented games for girls. Furthermore, the common belief that girls cannot stand violence is wrong as well (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000). The growing amount of action movies and games with female protagonist, such as “*Xena: Warrior Princess*” TV series and “*Tomb Raider: Lara Croft*” video game and movie, shows that females are attracted to this kind of representation of them and are willing to watch/play and follow such media (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000).

Fortunately, some game companies do understand the importance of integration of female gender into video games. Sega, one of leading and main game industry company (Sega), agreed that there is a need for the creation of video games that are attractive to both genders. They tried to introduce a lot of new female heroines into their fighting games, which were originally targeted only to the male gender, and gave them powers which will be engaging for female and male players (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000). Another solution can be better marketing of the existing male based games to females, such as a fantasy role-playing games which are already popular among girls (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000). “Tomb

Raider: Lara Croft”, which was already briefly discussed in this paper, is a good example of the game industry’s attempt to create a game for both genders. As it was mentioned, Lara Croft is the female protagonist of the game called “Tomb Raider” created in 1996 by Core Design Company. She is independent, strong, smart, wealthy, and has an amazing body and countless skills. It is a perfect fantasy for both girls, who want to be like her, and boys, who want to be with someone like her. A big mistake of the company was that they market the game extensively to the male audience and less so to the female. When the game was advertised to the public it was represented by half-naked female models at trade shows.

According to the Oxford Dictionary gender means “the state of being male or female (typically) used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones” (Oxford University Press, 2014). However, the word “gender” can mean different things through various perspectives and points of views.

**Table 1 Conceptions of gender**

	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Constructivism</b>	<b>Critical Analysis</b>	<b>Postmodernism</b>
	<i>Biology (nature) facts</i>	<i>Sociology (culture) paradigms</i>		<i>Semiotics (virtual reality) discourses</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Biology is destiny: “the two genders”; sex is gender	Gender as socially constructed: sex vs. gender	Gender as ideology: “Battle of the sexes”: social relations and practices as gendered; reproduction/resistance	The “differently gendered”: Post-feminism/s; being any gender as “drag”

(Castell & Bryson, 2000)

As we can see from Table 1, gender can be viewed through various paradigms which give different meanings for it. After feminism became a strong movement, males and females learned that women’s interests, pleasures and views can be affected and shaped by various cultural forces (Castell & Bryson, 2000). The problems of stereotyping are that most of the beliefs and explanations about gender and gaming are based on incorrect data, which are used to represent the whole gender. The wrong sample of the age group of women that do not have time to play video games or prefer to play something short such as puzzle or Tetris can be used as a representation of the whole female gender. Based on this statement it can be presented that women do not like playing action or first-role games. In a similar way, teenage guys are used to represent the whole male perspective (Hayes, 2005).

The obsession with gender and the differences might be actually reasons for complexity, stereotyping and separation between female and male gamers (Reynolds, 2005). However, it is impossible to ignore its importance in our daily life, including our identities and social experiences (Hayes, 2005). This shows that there is a need for finding a balance in representing female gender (as well as male) for both genders and creating video games for everyone and not only one gendered target groups. There are still going to be video games, which are designed directly only for females and only for males. It is impossible to avoid that, but it is important and necessary to create video games or at least start advertising them in such a way that both genders will be interested in playing them.

## 2.5 Case studies

The purpose of the case studies is to show in particular video game examples how females are portrayed in video games. Although there are numerous video games available today, due to the constraints of this assignment, the decision to analyze only two of them was made: “*Tomb Raider: Lara Croft*” and “*Massive Effect*”. These two video games were chosen because of their rich background history and popularity among video game players. “*Tomb Raider: Lara Croft*” is one of the most popular video games with a female protagonist and “*Massive Effect*” is famous for its diversity in both gender and race.

### 2.5.1 “*Tomb Raider: Lara Croft*”

“*Tomb Raider: Lara Croft*” was the first female protagonist video game which was released in 1996 by the game studio called Square Enix (previously named Eidos Interactive). It overcame the barriers which were created for females and showed the world that a woman can be the main heroine of a video game as well as.

The story of Lara Croft started in 1996 when the game was first released under the name “Tomb Raider”. It is an action-adventure video game which was originally made for MS-DOS, PlayStation and Sega Saturn. The first game starts with a the quest for Lara Croft, where she needs to find pieces of a talisman for a wealthy businesswoman called “Scion” in Central and South America, Greece and Egypt.



**Image 2 The examples of different video game styling of Lara Croft**

Lara finds out about the real price and purpose of the talisman and tries to stop the businesswoman and her collaborators from collecting the rest of the pieces. At the end, she destroys the talisman and survives the final battle. After the first release, 11 more games were created in the same style and idea, with Lara Croft as the main character. With each game the look of Lara was changed according to the progress of game design and technology. In 2013, the game was rebooted by Square Enix and Crystal Dynamics. These game studios gave the most realistic and natural look to Lara Croft in comparison to all the previous ones.

Lara Croft is an adventurer, or in other words she is a female version of Indiana Jones. She is smart, strong, and wealthy and she is not scared of dangerous adventures, quests and tasks. Lara was born in an aristocrat family on 14<sup>th</sup> of February, 1968 (after a reboot of the game in 2013 her year of birth changed to 1992) (Stellalune) in London. Both of her parents died under unknown circumstances before she turned 18. She had become an archeologist and discovered several unknown archeological sites. Although, according to her story some people did not believe that she was a real archeologist rather than just a



Image 3 Lara Croft on the cover of “The Face” magazine

treasure hunter (The Meteoric Rise of Lara Croft, 2014). Also, she is talented in writing as well as gymnastics.

The success of this video game cannot be described in a better way than this comment: "Lara's phenomenal success wasn't just about a cracking adventure, other games had that too. Lara had something that hooked the gamers like nothing has before. At the center of Tomb Raider was a fantasy female figure. Each of her provocative curves was as much part of the game as the tombs she raided. She had a secret weapon in the world of gaming, well... actually two of them" (Lethal &

Loaded, 2001). This comment shows that Lara was not just a first female protagonist of a video game, but also an object of sexual desire and attraction.

It seems Lara Croft is a perfect woman – smart, strong, independent and with a perfect body; a dream for both genders, female and male. This unbelievable body is actually physically unreal. Her breasts are big while her waist is tiny and her hips are perfectly round. She has big lips and “cat” eyes. Moreover, she is dressed in the sleeveless t-shirt with deep cleavage and tight shorts. There is no doubt why the “Tomb Raider” video game brought up so many discussions. At the same time, the game studio tried to portray a strong woman who can stand up for herself, but created her with unreal body proportions and dressed her in the extremely tight clothing so it can sell better.

“*Tomb Raider: Lara Croft*” was initially targeted at both genders and producers hoped that it would attract more female video game players. Video games entered the market at the right time in 90's which were “girlpower” and “laddette” times (Kennedy, 2002). With successful marketing campaigns, such as the cover image in “The Face” magazine, where she was compared to Yoda and Pamela Anderson (Kennedy, 2002), Lara Croft became a pop-icon for girls and boys at the same time.

Therefore Lara Croft is a good example of commonly stereotyped representation of females but at the same time it is a great case to show an independent and adventurous woman in a video game (Mikula, 2003).

### 2.5.2 "Mass Effect"



Image 4 The representation of video game characters.

"*Mass Effect*" is a science fiction action role-playing third person shooter video game created by the Canadian video game company "BioWare" in 2007. By now it has three releases in total with additional downloadable content. The latest release was in 2012. The video game has become known worldwide. There are sets of comics based on the game and several planned films and animated movies.

The idea of this video game is to save the Earth from different mechanical invasion and future attacks. The player receives quests which he/she needs to accomplish to be able to move further. The sequels of the game follow each other in chronological order. All three games are connected and the player can use the same character that he/she used for completing the previous game by saving the files with the character and its history. The decisions made in the previous game affect the plot of the next game. Therefore, players follow different scenarios because they not only create their own character but they also create the whole game plot.

The uniqueness of this video game is that the player is able to choose to play with a female or male character as the protagonist of the game. The structure of the game including the dialogs and quests do not differ from gender of the protagonist and are completely the same and equal. "*Mass Effect*" contains not only the human race but also non-human races, such as aliens and mechanical creatures. Also, there is the possibility for a main protagonist to get into romantic relationships. If the first and second parts of

“*Mass Effect*” were limited with only opposite genders in “*Mass Effect 3*” it is possible to build homosexual romantic relationship.



**Image 5** Male and female version of a protagonist in “*Mass Effect 3*”

Unfortunately, during the marketing campaign the male character was mostly used, while the female character appeared only once in the trailer and on the showcase. So even if the video game is based on equal rights of both genders, the marketing campaign preferred to use one character to represent the game and it was the male one.

Even though, the gamer society appreciated and liked the female character, only 18% of the gamers chose to play with her as the protagonist (Cork, 2011).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The theories and case studies, which were previously discussed, give a clearer view of the current situation in the game industry market and its research. Very little research has been conducted into video games and gender representation, although, there are a substantial number of articles about video games, violence, and childhood obesity. Thus, it is important to analyze if there is a negative or positive representation of female gender in video games.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that, even if video games give both genders equal opportunity to be the protagonist, the selection by the players is not. It might be that marketing is one of the reasons why female protagonists are not well-known and desired in video games.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to change the perception of marketing campaigns of video games as well as possible negative representations of female gender.

In the next chapter, the questionnaire and questions for the interviews, which are based on these three theories, are going to be discussed and analyzed. The Uses and gratifications theory and the Cultivation theory will be the main theories for this research while the Feminist theory will be used as a supportive one.

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Design, Methodology and Data Analysis

This research was conducted in cooperation with the Game Design Department of Uppsala University and its lecturers, Gamer League and participants from Facebook posts. The research included quantitative research based on questionnaires and interviews.

The research included one target group survey – game players. There were no strict limitations on who could participate in the questionnaires. It was advised to answer the questionnaire only if the participant is a video game player or if he/she occasionally plays video games. The questionnaire was distributed using different social media tools such as Facebook, emails, Vkontake and game forums. More detailed explanations on why these social media channels were used will be discussed later in this chapter. A total number of 234 people responded to this survey.

#### 3.1 Questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain answers on the questions which were based on the following Policy and Research questions:

Policy Question: How can stereotyping of female gender in video games be changed?

Research Question: How is female gender generally represented in various genres of video games?

Therefore, by answering the supporting sub questions of the Research and Policy questions, participants and interviewees gave a clearer idea and image of the current situation of gender representation in video games and also gave suggestions on how to change it. These answers were used in the data analysis and final conclusion as well as in giving professional advice.

To be able to answer the Research and Policy questions, the participants of the survey needed to answer 19 multiple choice and open-ended questions based on:

- Demographics of the respondent
- His/Her favorite video game and its genre
- Why does the respondent play video games
- Based on his/her game experience does he/she think that female gender is stereotyped

- What kind of stereotypes and why

A full example of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 of this research paper or by the following [link](#)<sup>ii</sup>. The questions of the questionnaire were based on the previously discussed theories such as Uses and Gratifications, Cultivation and Feminist theory.

The questionnaire was created on [thesistools.com](http://thesistools.com) which is very useful for collecting data online. The website does not ask a respondent to register and provides an easy and simple layout which helps to concentrate and understand the questions. However, when conducting the survey a technical mistake happened. Some of the answers of the respondents, especially ones which were asking to specify the answers on questions with Yes/No answer, were not fully recorded due to the characters limitation in these questions. This mistake was realized only after the survey was finished and due to the anonymous settings of the questionnaire, it was impossible to ask the same respondents to answer the questionnaire again by using another service. Therefore, it was decided to use these answers carefully and to not constitute important decisions based on them.

After the data was collected, the website provided an Excel sheet with all of the answers as well as online statistics per questions. When the survey was finished the Excel file was downloaded and used in the SPSS program.

### **3.2 Social Media tools**

Several Social Media channels were used for attracting video game players to participate in the questionnaire.

#### **1. Facebook**

The request to fill in the questionnaire was posted on the personal profile of the student. The participants were friends, acquaintances as well as friends who were tagged in the post. Also, the post was shared by three people, which expanded the amount of possible participants. The print screen of the personal Facebook page of the student can be found in Appendix 3 Images. Due to privacy issues, names and profile pictures are hidden on this screen shot.

The same request was also published in the ICM (International Communication and Media) Facebook group. The screen shot of this Facebook group can be found in Appendix 3 Images. Due to privacy issues, names and profile pictures of the respondents are hidden.

#### **2. Gamer League**

Another Social Media tool which was used is called [Vkontakte.com](http://Vkontakte.com). This is a Russian “Facebook” website. It also consists of the personal profiles, groups and pages. It was decided to use a group called “Gamer League” due to its well-known popularity and quite large amount of participants (3350 people).

The request was sent to the administration of the group. The moderator of the group agreed to publish the post with the link to the questionnaire and stated (in Russian) that it is a research for a graduation assignment. Also, it was mentioned that the questionnaire is in English because most of the participants of the group are Russian speakers. The screen shot of the post is also added to the Appendix 3 Images. The group can be accessed by following this [link](#)<sup>iii</sup> but might require registration on the website.

### 3. Game forums

The questionnaire was also posted on one of the game forums called “[GAMESPOT](#)<sup>iv</sup>” which was found with Google search by typing in “video game forums”. A new profile account was created under a nickname and without stating the gender of the researcher. This was done so that the gender of the researcher would not affect the responses of the participants. Unfortunately, the post was blocked due to game forum policies, which does not allow outside links to be posted on their platform. A request was sent to the moderators of the forum asking for permission to conduct the research, but this did not solve the problem. It is unknown if any of the game forum readers participated in the questionnaire. Another game forum named “[NeoGAF](#)<sup>v</sup>” also did not reply to the request about posting the questionnaire on their game forum.

The screen shots of the game forums and requests are added to the Appendix 3 Images.

### 4. Emails

As it was mentioned above, the Game Design Department of Uppsala University participated in the research by sending the questionnaire to their students and coworkers. Two professors, who were also interviewed, reached out their students and asked them to fill in the questionnaire. Due to the privacy it is impossible to attach the screen shot of the email conversation between the researcher of this paper and professors of Uppsala University.

## 3.3 Interviews

As a part of the research, two experts in game design and programming were interviewed. The initial idea was to conduct the interview face-to-face via Skype but due to time

constraints of the experts and some technical problems with Skype, the interview questions were directly sent to the interviewees via email.

The interview consisted of the same questions as the questionnaire plus several additional questions which were supposed to clarify the opinions and thoughts of the experts about gender and video games issues.

The additional questions were:

- Has there been any change in the representation of female gender in video games overtime?
- What do game companies think about female gender representation issues in video games?
- Do they want to change them or will they keep representing them in this way?
- Do you have any additional comments?

The answers were collected via email, which was directly sent to the researcher of this research paper.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The questionnaire results were analyzed in a statistical program called SPSS, created by IBM Company. It is a program that helps to collect, analyze and deploy research data (IBM, 2014).

The collected data from thesistools.com was uploaded into SPSS program as an Excel file, which makes it easier to work with tables and graphs. The needed clarification and variables were added with which the data was analyzed by tables, graphs and charts (can be found in the Appendix).

The questionnaires were analyzed per question as well as in a correlation to each other. The most important information, which can assist in answering on Research and Policy questions, was recorded in tables, charts and graphs and analyzed in the next Chapter. Based on the analysis of this data, professional advice was offered in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings and conclusions

#### 4.1 Introduction

The questionnaire is a key part of this research. As mentioned before, the questionnaire was targeted at video game players and distributed among various Social Media tools. The final amount of respondents who participated in the questionnaire was 234 people. At the same time, there were two interviews held with two professors from Uppsala University, Sweden.

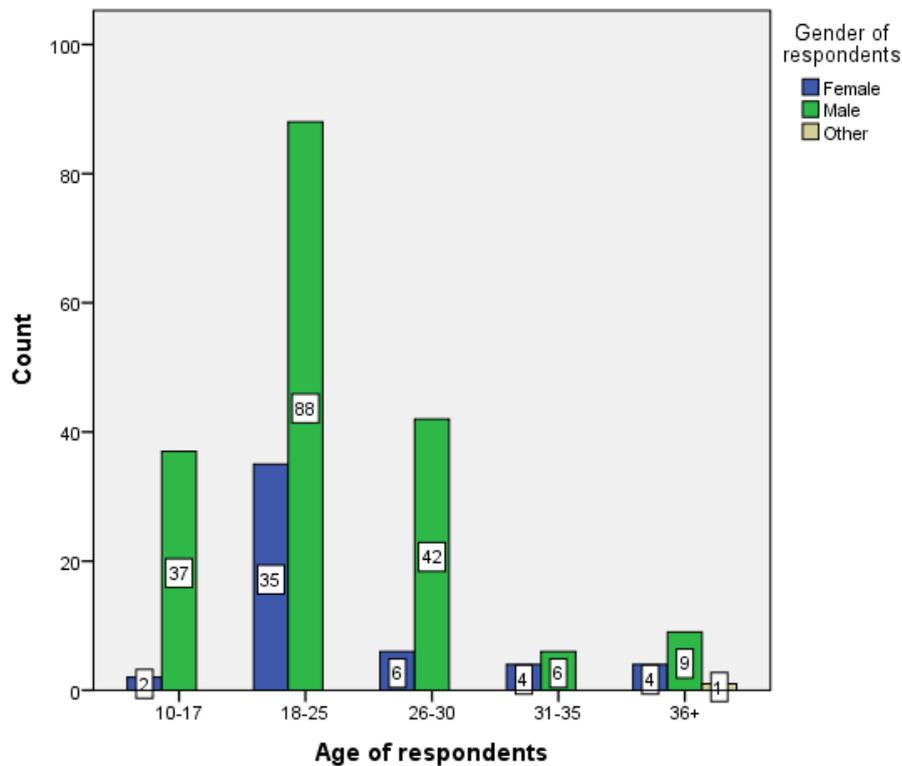
This chapter will mainly consist of the most important findings from the questionnaire and interviews. The collected data and results are going to be continuously referred to the theories discussed in Chapter 2.

The additional graphs and figures can be found in Appendix 4, 4.2 Figures as well as tables with more data can be found in Appendix 4, 4.1 Tables.

#### 4.2 Findings - Questionnaire

##### 4.2.1 Gender and age

Most of the respondents of this questionnaire were males, 77.78%, while 21.79% were females. The questionnaire was sent out through different Social Media channels so it was impossible to predict the amount of female and male gender participants. According to the previous statistics, which were mentioned in the background research, there are more male than female players. Therefore, these numbers are not surprising and match the real numbers of video game players. From these 77.78% of male players there are 88 males who belong to the age group 18-25 years old. This is the biggest age group of male respondents in this research. It is the same situation for females. The biggest age group of female respondents is 18-25 years as well. The chart below shows, in detail, the age and gender of the 234 participants. Only one participant preferred not to state his/her gender.



Graph 1 Bar Chart showing the correlation of gender to the age of the respondents of the survey

#### 4.2.2 Frequency and duration

According to the results of the survey most of the participants spend more than four hours per game playing a video game. The percentage of the respondents that are playing more than four hours is 36.32%. 31.62% spend 1-2 hours per game and 25.64% spend 2-4 hours. This means that if the participants start to play a video game then they are most likely to spend at least two hours on this video game.

When it comes to the frequency, most of the participants (39.32%) preferred to answer “Very often”. The possible answer “Always” received 20.51% and “Fairly often” 19.66%.

#### 4.2.3 Type of genre of video games

Adventure and Role Playing Games (RPG) are the most played games according to the survey results. Adventure was chosen by 156 respondents (12.4%) and RPG 151 respondents (12.0%). First person shooters and Strategy are also quite popular video game genres among the participants, with 10.4% and 10.0%, respectively.

22 respondents additionally specified other genres of video games that they like to play. Below, there is the list of them. These genres of video games are not ranked and are shown in random order:

- (Car) racing
- Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA)
- Stealth
- Horror
- Roguelikes
- Turn based strategy
- Puzzle
- Card games
- Indie games
- Muds & survival

#### ***4.2.4 Gratifications***

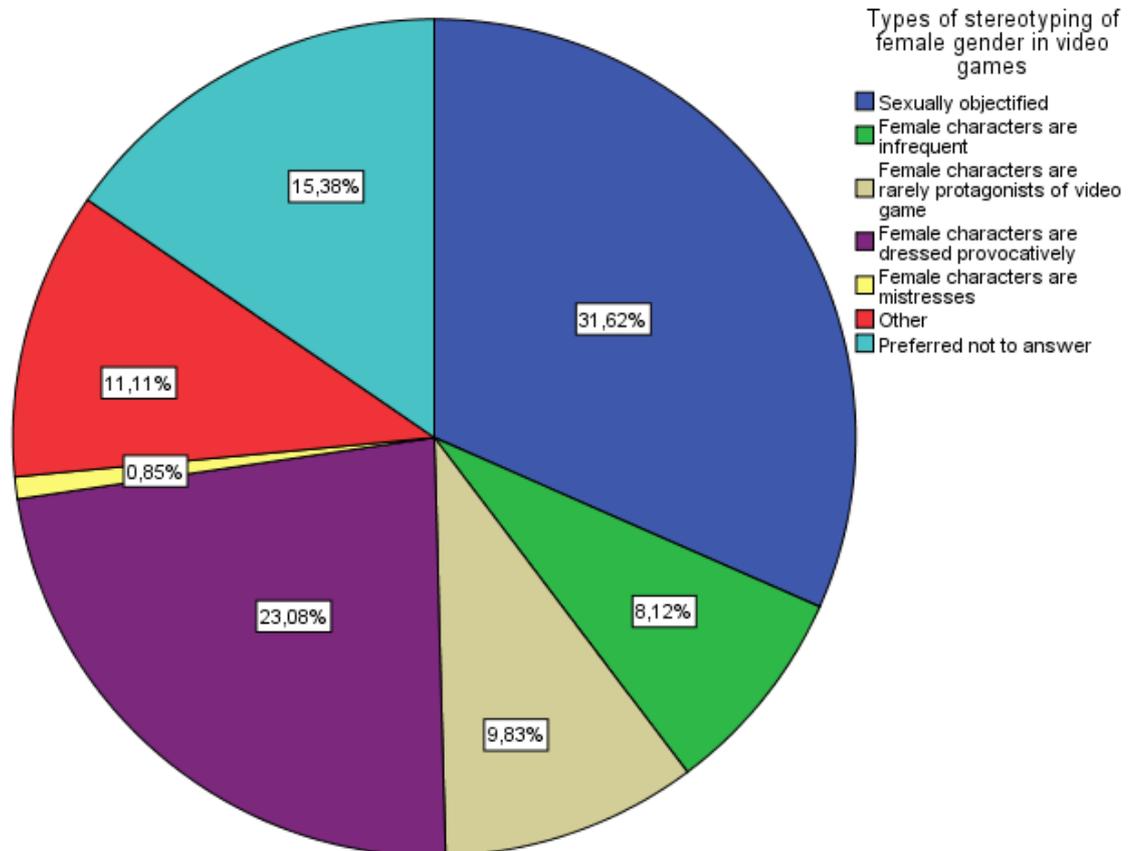
Question based on the Uses and Gratification theory shows us that most of the respondents play video games for relaxation (20.1%) and fantasy (13.1%). As it was predicted relaxation is one of the most important and popular gratification among the respondents, since video games allow players to relax and enjoy the game. Although, surprisingly, the percentage of respondents which indicated avoidance as motivator to play their video games is lower than expected. The avoidance gratification got only 4.7% or 41 participants. Below you can find a list of all the gratifications per percentage:

- Relaxation – 20.1%
- Fantasy – 13.1%
- Diversion and escape – 11.1%
- Competition/Self-Challenge – 9.6%
- Filling time – 9.3%
- Emotional release – 8.1%
- Social contact – 7.2%
- Education – 5.9%
- It's a habit – 5.4%
- Avoidance – 4.7%
- Identifying yourself – 3.0%
- Other – 2.6%

23 respondents also answered on “Other” as a gratification where they needed to specify what kind of other gratifications might be their motivator to play video games. Some of them had almost the same gratifications as mentioned above but with a little bit more detailed information. Those answers can be also viewed in their original form (grammar and punctuation are not changed) in Table 3, 4.1 Tables, Appendix 4.

#### 4.2.5 Stereotyping of women in video games

According to the results of the survey 180 (76.9%) participants out of 234 think that female gender is stereotyped in video games. As it was mentioned before, 51 respondent of this survey identified themselves as females. 78.4% female participants agreed that there is stereotyping of female gender in video games when 21.6% did not. When it comes to males, which are 182 respondents of the survey, 76.4% of them replied “Yes” and 23.6% said “No”. The participants who replied “Yes” were asked to specify what kind of stereotyping of female gender they think or they meet in video games. If the participants answered “NO”, he/she was asked to specify why he/she thinks so. The table with specified “No” reply can be found in the Appendix 4, 4.1 Tables, Table 8. The chart with the types of stereotyping can be found below.

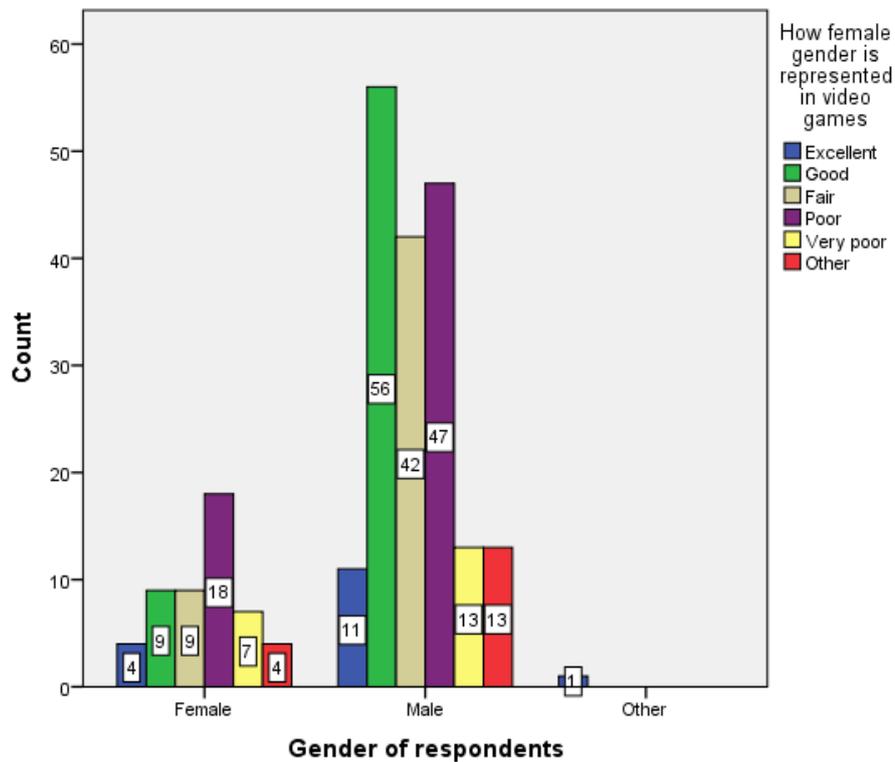


Graph 2 Types of stereotyping of female gender in video games according to the replies of the respondents

31.62% of respondents agreed with the statement that female gender is sexually objectified in video games and that female characters are dressed provocatively (23.08%). The participants who did not choose “Yes” as an answer in the previous questions and respondents who preferred not to answer composed 15.38% can be found on the chart under “Preferred not to answer”.

Some of the respondents answered “Other” and mentioned “All of the above” or “Mostly all of them” as a detailed answer. The list of all answers can be found in Table 6, 4.1 Tables, Appendix 4.

The question “Based on your gaming experience how do you think female gender is represented in video games?” showed that answers “Good” and “Poor” received the same amount of responses. Of the 65 people for “Good” 17.6% of the respondents were females and 30.8% for males, and for “Poor” 35.3% were females and 25.8% males. More detailed information about this question and its answers can be found in the Appendix 4, 4.2 Figures, Graph 8. Below, there is a chart showing correlation between gender and opinions about female representation in video games among the respondents of the survey. It shows that females are more unsatisfied with the amount of female gender characters in video games rather than males. Most of female respondents (18 out of 51) replied that they think there is poor representation of female gender in video games, while 56 out of 182 male respondents think that the representation is good. However, the percentage of unsatisfied males is pretty substantial as well – 47 respondents. Other 42 males think that there is fair representation.



**Graph 3 Correlation between gender and views about female gender representation in video games**

The respondents could also answer “Other” as a reply to this question. It seems like some of the participants did not clearly understand the question and described different way of representing females. For example:

- either someone who you sleep with and/or need to save, or the almost naked female sexy superhero
- I think both genders are represented equally stereotyped. Men are all muscle-bound and violent and women are curvaceous and sexy.
- physically unrealistic
- like bi\*\*\*es (the word was censored due to the rude language)
- Exactly like in movies
- Depending on a game or even a particular developer. Some might be represented quite realistically, while others focus more on gaining attention for male gamers

But these answers give more information about the way women are stereotyped so these statements can still be used in this research.

Others preferred to specify their choice of answer by these statements:

- I don't know, because I play every time only male character
- it depends on a game so far.. tomb raider for example is pretty good otherwise call of duty and etc

- Poorly but it's improved vastly in the last few years.
- all characters have a back story, and in none of the stories the female characters are really put in a less favorable light than male characters
- Quantity wise: poor. Quality wise: Fair - Good. Like Lara Croft, Fighting characters, Customization in MMO, its up to the player though, etc
- It varies but many games have some weird objectification going on.
- I like it but I think it's better with more female characters
- Varying greatly
- It depends. I want more variation that is for sure.

#### ***4.2.6 Video games and real life***

The results of the survey show that according to most respondents (67.09%), video games do not affect their real life decision and behavior. 24.36% stated that video games affect their real life. If the respondent answered "Yes" on this question, he/she was requested to specify how video games affect his/her real life decisions and behavior. Some of the respondents replied that it is a source of education for them as well as a self-esteem booster. Another stated that video games affected their future job choice and they would like to work in video game industry. All full answers can be found in Appendix 4, 4.1 Tables and Table 7. The grammar and punctuation are not corrected by the researcher and kept in their original state.

According to Graph 9 in 4.2 Figures, Appendix 4 most of the respondents do not think that there are any possible consequence of representation female gender in video games. 58.55% said "No" when 41.45% said "Yes". The possibility to explain the choice of "Yes" answer was offered and most of the respondents who replied "Yes" wrote about negative stereotyping which might affect women and men's perceptions, morals and identities.

#### **4.3 Findings - Interview**

Both experts answered the interview questions which were sent via private email. One of expert is Ulf Benjaminsson, 28 years old, who is a Program Coordinator for Game Design and Programming at University of Uppsala. The second one is Adam Mayes, 46 years old, who is a Subject Responsible for Game Design at Uppsala University as well.

The experts had to answer the same questions as the game players in the questionnaire with several additional questions which helped to show the opinion of the expert of the game industry.

Both experts agreed that female gender is misrepresented in video games and that there are diversity issues, which include ethnic and race discrimination. Benjaminsson also added that actually both genders are stereotyped and not only females. Based on his gaming experience, which includes video games from 80s, the entire 90s and modern games, there is a lack of characters that “define their own roles, instead of being defined by their role character that are allowed to make personal choices for \*his\* or \*her\* reasons” and “females that doesn’t have to give up their femininity (as \*she\* defines it) to advance her aims females that struggle against stereotyping without being completely defined by this activism” (Benjaminsson, 2014). Mayes noted that most common stereotypes of female gender in video games where women are hypersexualised or they are victims or prizes.

Benjaminsson and Mayes agreed that there are consequences of representation of female gender in video games, which are affecting the consumers and game industry. As they said that this is a vicious circle where “We don’t have developers creating strong women, so publishers and developers don’t think that games with women sell, so they don’t make games with strong women” (Mayes, 2014) and by that “it makes young men (in particular) intellectually lazy” (Benjaminsson, 2014).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The questionnaire collected 234 responses from around the world. As it was mentioned before, it was targeted at video game players to find out what they think and feel about the topic of the research. The majority of the respondents were males. Since the questionnaire was spread out through Social Media channels it was impossible to collect the same amount of male and female participants.

The results of the questionnaire give a clearer view of what the target audience of video games expects from video games and if they want to have changes in video games. The collected data shows that most of the respondents do realize that there is still negative stereotyping in video games and the majority of them do want to have changes. This concerns not only negative representation of female gender but also male. Most of the respondents agreed that female gender stereotyping in video games happens because of the predominant male target audience even though the amount of female game players is

growing. Game companies want to sell as much as possible and therefore create a good marketing tool such as undressed or provocatively dressed female character which might not be even in the game in the end.

Another opinion, which was commonly shared, is the lack of professionals in the game industry who are aware of gender studies and are qualified in them. Some of the respondents assumed that the game industry is so accustomed to creating stereotypical characters that it does not want to re-create or change that because it will cost more money and time. At the same time, quite a lot of respondents tried to point out that not only females are stereotyped but also males.

The participants were also asked how the current situation in video games could be changed in order to represent females in a better way, without stereotypes. Based on their open-ended questions, they can be divided in the several of the following groups:

- There is no need to change the representation of female gender in video games
- There is a need to change the representation of female gender in video games but I do not know how
- There is a need and to do that more female game developers should be introduced to the industry
- More female game players should be attracted to play video games
- More female protagonist should be created and if they are they should be not objectified or sexualized by the game designers

These groups can represent the main ideas of the respondents of this survey. More detailed answers can be found in Appendix 4, 4.1 Tables, Table 10 and 11

According to the answers of both experts, there is a slow change in the representation of female gender in video games overtime by developing and increasing graphics and creation of new independent game companies, which are interested in creating alternative content for video games. Although, the mainstream game companies, which continue creating video games with the stereotypes, still have the main focus of the game players. However, according to Benjaminsson and Mayes it will change in the future. Nowadays, most of the game companies are more interested in earning money. There is only hope “for an educated and critical audience to reward and appreciate challenging and thoughtful games” (Benjaminsson, 2014) so it is possible to improve the current situation

and to speed up the process of changing the representation not only of gender but also race and ethnicity.

Therefore, based on the results of the questionnaire and answers of the experts it is clear that the current representation of female gender is still negative (in comparison with 80s and 90s), but there is a slight change in this issue. More games are being created with a better image and representation of females and numerous video games include female protagonists. However, these video games with main character as female (or possibility to play for female) not always reach a higher amount of target audience – video game players – because they are mostly created by unknown or less known game companies.

All collected data can be viewed in more details in Appendix 4, 4.1 Tables and 4.2 Figures. The grammar and punctuation of the answers are kept in their original state so be aware that it might contain grammatical mistakes as well as strong language. Due to the website (thesistools.com) issues, some of the multiple answers with specified section were not recorded fully.

The next chapter includes a professional recommendation on how to change the current situation with gender representation. This advice is based on the results and answers of the participants of this research paper as well as previous research papers and their suggestions.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusions

This research paper was directed to analyze the current situation of female representation in video games. The goal of this research was to determine if representations and stereotyping of females in video games are carrying negative or positive image and how do they affect males and females in real life. For this purpose, the questionnaire was created to interview game players about their thoughts and feeling about this topic as well as two interviews were conducted with two experts in the game industry. The survey and interviews were based on the theories, which are Cultivation Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory and Feminist Theory, that were found and chosen during desk research of previous studies on this topic.

The recommendations are based on the results of the survey and interviews which were carried out during this research paper as well as policy and research questions which were:

Policy Question: How can stereotyping of female gender in video games be changed?

Research Question: How female gender is generally represented in various genres of video games?

Based on the replies of the respondents of the survey the most popular ways of stereotyping females in video games is by creating female characters which are sexually provocative and are almost undressed or dressed in a seductive way. Also, there is a lack of female protagonist in video games which can represent female as strong and independent. However, according to the results of the Open-ended questions, where participants could express themselves and their thoughts, it seems like the situation, even for the game players, is changing. As many of them stated that there are more and more games which are trying to have equally represented females and males as well as female protagonists. Therefore, it seems like the situation with the mostly only negative representation of females (as mistress, damsel in distress and sexual objects) is slowly changing and improving. Also, according to the experts opinion's the current representation of female gender in video games is better in comparison with video games in 80s and 90s and it is slowly changing because of the new independent game companies which are interested in creating new types of video games with their diverse characters.

There were mentioned three main reasons by the participants why this process takes such long time:

1. Marketing. As it was said by some of the respondents “sexuality” and “sex” sell best. The game companies want to earn more money therefore they create characters without story but with stereotyped characteristic such as big breasts, small hips, big eyes and seductive behavior. Until the game companies are going to be interested only in earning money and not bringing other values, the female and other characters are going to be stereotyped. This also depends on the consumers. If they keep buying this kind of video games they are going to stimulate the market. As many respondents in the questionnaire stated, most of their video games that they’re playing do not contain stereotyped characters because “they are different type of video games”.

However, even when female character is created in an equal way as male, e.g. “Mass Effect” from case study which was described earlier, she might not be used in marketing campaigns to promote the video game.

2. Lack of female game developers and game players. Though, there are more and more female game players it is still strange, especially for male gamers, to see a female playing the same video game as them. As one of the respondents wrote: “Unusual to see a girl shooting a machine gun, crumbling head zombie, etc.”
3. Lack of game professionals which are aware of gender issues and studies. Some of the respondents agreed that the lack of game developers who know or studied gender studies might cause negative representation of female characters. As many of participants said that “poor writing of the plot/script and characterization” and “... industry and game creators tend to both repeat based on what they are used to, and to live up to what they believe are expectations from future users...” might lead to the poor representation of females in video games.

Thus, this research and its outcomes show that there is a slow change in the representation of female gender in video games. There is a growing tendency of video games which represent females as strong and independent characters which have equal rights as male ones. Such games as “Mass Effect”, “Tomb Raided”, “BioShock Infinite”, “Final Fantasy” etc. are on the way of changing the typical stereotyping for both genders female and male.

Although there is still a lot that needs to be improved or changed such as marketing campaigns which are just trying to target males by attracting them with female characters

with unreal bodies which might not be even included in the game. As in case of “Mass Effect” where the game was promoted only by male characters even though the video game gives a chance to choose male or female protagonist, the marketing department of the company decided that its players were interested to see only the male character on the advertisements. Only after some time, the company realized that the fans of the game liked female protagonist, they have created one more trailer with her.

Based on these conclusions, professional advice has been offered which hopefully will help in changing the current representation of female gender in video games. Next chapter will describe which media tools can be used in solving out the issue with female representation.

During the desk research and data analysis of the questionnaire and interviews it became clear that video games stereotype not only female gender but also males as well as race and ethnicities. Further research should also focus on analyzing current situation of male representation in video games since it also has its possible effect on video game players.

## CHAPTER 6

### Professional advices

This chapter of this research paper will focus on the professional advices which are going to be based on the previously discussed theories, questionnaires and their analyzed results as well as interview's answers of the experts.

When it comes to gender issues it is always hard to say how to change the problem. There is no easy way of changing it and it will obviously take some time to do it. As it took more than two decades for video games and its companies to understand that there are issues in representing genders and races in video games, it might take some time to start changing them. It is a long process which is going to include not only game companies and its developers but also game players and their interests. Therefore, the recommendations, which are going to be offered in this research paper, include several steps and it will be directed to Uppsala University, Game Design and Programming Department.

Every year, Gotland campus of Uppsala University organizes international public "Gotland Game Conference" where it presents several speakers from different countries, which are related to the game industry, and has a show floor of the graduation assignments of its students. The first time this game conference (previously named as Gotland Game awards) was held in 2006. Therefore, it seems like an ideal place for the awareness campaign about gender misrepresentation and video games, how to change it and where to start. However, the recommendation will start with the suggestion of adding additional subjects in the educational program of the Game Design and Department itself.

It is worth mentioning that Gotland Game Conference in 2013 was dedicated to the discussion about gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability. They already made some attempts in changing the current situation with the negative representation in video games. However, one year dedication is not enough to change the whole industry and it is needed to repeat these attempts every year.

#### 6.1 Step 1 - Educational institute

Uppsala University, Gotland campus offers Game Design degree which means it prepares future graduates in game design development and programming. These students are most likely going to be responsible for the future representation of gender in video games. Thus, it is important, based on the questionnaire results and interviewee's answers, to educate them about gender and video games by offering a compulsory course where

special speakers or the professors of the university will explain directly to the students the importance of correct and trustworthy representation of genders and races by giving the examples based on video games which are trying to show equal representation. Gender studies should become an indivisible part of the Game Design Department of any educational institute that teaches game design and programming thence without educating future game design professionals it is unfair and impossible to expect changing in gender representation in video games.

### **Professional Advice #1:**

*Add a compulsory course based on gender studies into the Game Design and Programming degree at Gotland Campus of Uppsala University*

### **6.2 Step 2 – Awareness campaign**

The second step is includes an awareness campaign which is going to be based and promoted via print, social media and an exhibition. Due to unknown budget possibilities of Game Design Department of Gotland Campus, Uppsala University, this professional advice will not include planned budget and specified amount of advertising material.

The target audience of this awareness campaign is going to be university staff, students and visitors of the Gotland Game Conference 2015.

#### **6.2.1 Media Strategy - Media Selection**

##### **Print**

Print media such as posters still plays an important role in advertising and creating awareness that is why it is suggested to use this type of advertising for the awareness campaign about misrepresentation of genders in video games. Posters, flyers, postcards and stickers can be created and distributed among the university and its students. Posters can represent famous females' protagonists and contain such slogans as “We want more of girls like these ones” as well as short information about the exposition stand on the upcoming Game Conference. The same design can be used on flyers and postcards while stickers can contain fewer words and more visuals.

All of these printed media should contain a link to the devoted Facebook page or website link of the university where more detailed information can be found about gender studies and video games issues in representation gender (females) in these games. The link can be represented as a QR-code or just as a traditional link. QR-code is a matrix barcode which can contain information and links to other websites. It can be read by the special

application on the smartphone which can be downloaded for free from its application store.

The same print media can be used during the exposition at the Gotland Game Conference 2015 and it can be hung around in hallways as posters or given to the visitors as flyers.

### ***Social Media***

Social Media is one of the biggest mediums today. It can be the main communication channel for the campaign and especially an awareness one. However, this awareness campaign, it is not going to be the main media channel but a supportive one for an exposition at the Gotland Game Conference.

Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter (also possible Instagram) can be essential tools in creating and promoting an awareness campaign, its facts and figures and ideas. There should be at least weekly updates about the awareness campaign and upcoming events. By promoting the campaign and event on Facebook or Twitter page it would be possible to start dialogs between awareness campaign creators, specialist in gender studies and people who are interested in the topic or want to express their opinion.

Since print media is connected to social media by mentioning the link on its advertisements, the needed information should be presented on the social media from the beginning of the campaign. Thus people, who want to check on the campaign, can find all needed and relevant information as soon as print media is rolled out.

Finally, the Facebook page or event page can be promoted together with the conference page and invite people to the stand where they can find more information about gender representation, gender studies and video games.

### ***Exposition***

On the day of the conference, the university can devote a special stand with the professional speaker(s) who can introduce and tell to the visitors of the conference about arising issues in the current game development and gender representation.

By creating a stand with the special speakers, who are experts in gender and video games, it will increase the awareness of certain amount of people and game players which are going to visit the conference. It will give first effect to the people who did not think about that and hopefully will get more interested in the topic in future.

It is worth mentioning that it is strongly advised to not just accuse video games and its developers in the unequal representation but better to show that the target audience, video game players, are actually more interested in seeing more strong and independent female protagonists as well as more interesting plots and stories of the characters.

The print media such as posters, postcards and flyers can lead to the same Facebook page which will continually develop in the future. Otherwise, they can also link to the website of the Gotland Game Conference.

### **6.2.2 Media Strategy - Planning**

This year “Gotland Game Conference” was held on 29-30 May, 2014. Next year’s date is unavailable at this moment thus this recommendation will use the same date for planning for next year.

It is advised to start advertising the awareness campaign at least 3 months in advance - end of February or beginning of March which is approximately 14 weeks. This type of advertising is called continuous and targeted for creation of awareness about the brand or issue during the whole campaign. Print and social media should be connected and introduced to the public at the same time. As it was mentioned before, the QR-code can be introduced and included in print media thus it and social media are going to be connected.

**Table 2 Timing of plan**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>
Print Media			
Social Media			
Exposition			

### **6.2.3 Media Strategy - SMART**

#### **S- SPECIFIC**

The goal and objective of this recommendation (awareness campaign) is to increase awareness about issues with gender representation in video games amongst society. This campaign will spread the awareness and involve people into the dialog which will build two-way communication between game industry and its target audience.

#### **M-MEASURABLE**

As mentioned before, it is hard to achieve the desired goals and objectives of this awareness campaign immediately. This process might take a while and the success of the

campaign cannot be measured immediately. It can be partly evaluated through social media pages with the numbers of followers and participations through statistics. Another measurement which can be used is the future student's works which are going to be represented on the upcoming conference. If there is any change in the representation of females and males in video games then the awareness campaign can be considered successful.

#### ***A-ACHIEVABLE***

Today our society has different standards and morals than previous decades. The ideas of how women should look like and behave are totally different than before and this was accomplished through a hard and long process of fighting for equal rights.

Therefore, it is complicated to state that this awareness campaign's objectives are achievable in the 14 weeks. It might need a longer process which might take several years but as we can see from the history it is doable and achievable.

#### ***R-RELEVANT***

This awareness campaign about misrepresentation of genders in video games is relevant for our days and society. With growing amount of video games and their increasing popularity, there is a need of truthful representation of female gender which are according to current standards of society and not be based on the past decades interests.

#### ***T-TIMED***

The advised period of the campaign is three months before the Gotland Game Conference. Due to unknown date for the next year conference, there is no strict timing advised.

#### ***6.2.3 Media Strategy - Implementation issues***

There are several issues that might arise in the implementation of this awareness campaign such as:

- Lack of university staff that can be responsible for the social media
- Lack of budget for print and social media as well as exposition stand
- Students and conference visitors might not be interested following the topic after the conference

These three points might differently but strongly affect the awareness campaign. The lack of university staff might not allow the university to create and promote the Facebook page devoted to the gender representation in video games and upcoming conference event

where this topic will be discussed. Therefore, only print media will be the main source of information about the issues and upcoming event.

Since the budget is unknown, it is possible that there might be no budget for advertising and promoting the awareness campaign by print and social media. Even though, social media is a free media channel, it is time consuming and needs to be covered for the staff which is going to work on it. At the same time, budget of the University might not cover the creation of the exposition stand and speakers.

Social Media and Exposition stand issue might be solved by volunteers which can be students of the Game Design Department or any other one which is related to the topic. In case with print media, it fully depends on the budget of the Department as well as University.

The main goal of the awareness campaign is to create awareness about the issue which needs to be improved or solved. However, it is also important to create an interest and involvement of the target audience and others so the issue will be discussed and solved in future. Accordingly, it is important to continue spreading and promoting awareness among target audience of this campaign after the exposition.

#### ***6.2.4 Media Strategy - Evaluation***

This awareness campaign was prepared for the Game Design and Programming Department of Gotland Campus, Uppsala University event “Gotland Game Conference” which is held annually and became international public event for video gamers and professionals of video game industry.

The campaign is targeted at video game players, university staff such as lecturers and professors and professionals of the video game industry. The goal of the campaign is to create and promote awareness about unequal misrepresentation of female gender in video games. The main idea is to stimulate the already existing idea of creating more strong and independent female protagonists in video games as well as decrease the amount of sexualization and objectification of female characters. The campaign needs to show that the actual video game players are interested in these characters and want to see them more in upcoming video games.

For promoting the campaign and the goals themselves supportive social media channels and print media needs to be used. Creation and advertising of these media channels will promote the campaign, the event and issues themselves. The message that will appear on

these media channels needs to catch the attention of the target audience and should not bring negative message such as criticism of video games and their creators. It should better suggest the creation of more powerful plots with their own individual and interesting characters instead of using stereotyped old-style roles.

**Professional Advice #2:**

*Create an awareness campaign with the supporting cross-media channels for the Gotland Game Conference.*

**6.3 Conclusion**

All these steps can be used at any game conference or education institute or video game community. Every year there are approximately 100 game conference events worldwide<sup>vi</sup> where it is most likely to see the highest concentration of the game companies and game players together. Such conferences are one of the best ways to promote the awareness about gender issues in video games and to analyze the situation of gender representation. At the same time, without needed education in gender studies there will still be a lack of the game developers which are going to be interested in changing the current situation in video game design world. Additionally, it is going to be hard to change the representation of female gender in video games without participation of video game players. There is a need to explain to the target audience that this misrepresentation might affect them or others and it needs to be changed. Therefore, various awareness campaigns with usage of cross-media such as social, print and television media should be started so they can target video game players and other people and explain them the importance of changing the current image of females as well as males in video games.

Finally, further research about gender representation, and not only females but males as well, in video games needs to be conducted. It might be better to focus on the specific genres on video games in future since not all of them represent females and males in a negative way. Therefore, there is a need to find which genres are still lean on the stereotypes and misrepresentation.

## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Entertainment Software Association is an American association which is dedicated to the computer games and game industry <http://www.theesa.com/>

<sup>ii</sup> Online questionnaire <http://www.thesistools.com/web/?id=412588>

<sup>iii</sup> Invitation to participate in the online survey on Russian Social Media [http://vk.com/pikabugamersleague?w=wall-70374972\\_3453](http://vk.com/pikabugamersleague?w=wall-70374972_3453)

<sup>iv</sup> Invitation to participate in the online survey on the game forum GAMESPOT <http://www.gamespot.com/forums/offtopic-discussion-314159273/help-me-out-with-my-graduation-31253849/?messageId=342376444#js-message-12>

<sup>v</sup> Link to the game forum NeoGAF <http://www.neogaf.com/forum/>

<sup>vi</sup> A directory of game industry events <http://www.gameconfs.com/year/2014>

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Image 4 <http://www.popbioethics.com/2012/02/why-mass-effect-is-the-most-important-science-fiction-universe-of-our-generation/>

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## APPENDIX 1

### Questionnaire - Gamers

1. Gender
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Other
2. How old are you?
  - a. 10-17
  - b. 18-25
  - c. 26-30
  - d. 31-35
  - e. 36+
3. What nationality are you?
4. Current education level
  - a. Secondary school
  - b. High school
  - c. College
  - d. Bachelor degree
  - e. Master Degree
  - f. Other
5. Do you play video games?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. How often do you play video games?
  - a. Always
  - b. Very often
  - c. Fairly often
  - d. Sometimes
  - e. Almost never
  - f. Never
  - g. Other (please specify)
7. How much time do you spend playing per game?
  - a. Less than 30 mins
  - b. 1-2 hours
  - c. 2-4 hours

- d. More than 4 hours
8. What age have been playing video games?
- a. 4-8 years old
  - b. 9-12years old
  - c. 13-17 years old
  - d. 18-25 years old
  - e. 26+
9. What kind of video games do you usually play?
- a. Adventure
  - b. Fighting
  - c. First person shooters
  - d. Massively multiplayer online role playing games
  - e. Multi-user domain
  - f. Platform
  - g. Role playing games
  - h. Shooters
  - i. Strategy
  - j. Real Time Strategy
  - k. Simulations
  - l. Sport Games
  - m. Third person shooters
  - n. Other (specify)
10. Please list the name(s) of your favorite video game(s) and its video game genre
11. Previously you specified your favorite video game and its genre. Please indicate which following gratification is a motivator for you to play your favorite video game?
- a. Education (I want to learn something from this video game)
  - b. Relaxation (I want to relax by playing this video game)
  - c. Diversion and escape (I want to focus on something else and escape my problems/issues)
  - d. Avoidance (I want to avoid to do another task)
  - e. Social Contact (I want to talk to other video game users or play a game with my friends/family)
  - f. Identifying yourself (I want to feel that I belong to this video game community)

- g. Emotional release (I want to forget about my emotions)
  - h. Filling time ( I have nothing better to do)
  - i. Curiosity (I am interested and excited to play this video game)
  - j. Competition/(Self)-challenge
  - k. Fantasy
  - l. It's a habit
  - m. Other (please specify)
12. Do video games influence your behavior and decisions in “real life?”
- a. Yes (if yes please specify)
  - b. No
  - c. Other
13. Do you have active female characters in your favorite game?
14. Based on your gaming experience how do you think how female gender is represented in video games?
- a. Excellent
  - b. Good
  - c. Fair
  - d. Poor
  - e. Very poor
  - f. Other (please specify)
15. Do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?
- a. Yes
  - b. No (please specify)
16. If yes, please indicate what kind of stereotypes have you seen in video games that you have played?
- a. Sexually objectified
  - b. Female characters are infrequent
  - c. Female characters are rarely protagonists of video game
  - d. Female characters are dressed provocatively
  - e. Female characters are mistresses
  - f. Other (please specify)
17. Why female gender is stereotyped in video games?
18. Do you think there are consequences of representation of female gender in video games for females in real life and society?
- a. Yes (please specify)

b. No

19. How do you think how can stereotypes about female gender in video games be changed?

## APPENDIX 2

### Interview questions

1. Name
2. Age
3. Occupation
4. Education level
5. Country of origin
6. Do you play video games?
7. What kind of video games do you play?
8. Based on your gaming experience how do you think female gender is represented in video games?
9. Do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?
10. If yes, please explain what kind of stereotypes you have seen in video games that you have played?
11. How do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?
12. Do you think there are consequences of representation of female gender in video games for females in real life and society? If yes, please explain
13. How do you think stereotypes about female gender in video games can be changed?
14. Has there been any change in the representation of female gender in video games overtime?
15. What do game companies think about female gender representation issues in video games?
16. Do they want to change them or will they keep representing them in this way?
17. Do you have any additional comments?

## Interview answers

### Interviewee #1

1. Name  
Ulf Benjaminsson
2. Age  
28
3. Occupation  
Program Coordinator for Game Design and Programming, at University of Uppsala
4. Education Level  
Bachelor of Arts in Game development
5. Country of origin  
Sweden
6. Do you play videogames?  
Yes. Video games are one of the primary cultural forms of my life.
7. What kind of video games do you play?  
PC, portable consoles and mobile. I grew up on Nintendo consoles but at this point in my life I can't imagine booting up a dedicated device and sit in a living room to play. Play happens when it's available. Living room is the opposite of available.
8. Based on your gaming experience how do you think female gender is represented in video games?  
Poorly, if at all. My play history includes most of the late 80s, the entire 90s, a short break in early 2000 and then back on. It's only towards the very end of this period that the issue of representation has been an active discussion within the games industry. So, based on *\*my\** gaming experience, women are mostly non-existent, background character or poorly conceived heroines or villains.
9. Do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?  
I think all genders are stereotyped in video games. And most other culture too, to be frank.
10. If yes, please explain what kind of stereotypes you have seen in video games that you have played?  
Let's do the opposite, and look at what I largely haven't seen characters that define their own roles, instead of being defined by their role character that are allowed to make personal choices for *\*his\** or *\*her\** reasons. (Eg. governed by

their character, no their gender) females that doesn't have to give up their femininity (as \*she\* defines it!) to advance her aims females that struggle against stereotyping without being completely defined by this activism

11. How do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?

see above. But also, through a massive lack of diversity. There is a pretty strict age, sexuality and beauty standard maintained by almost all game characters. Race is becoming slightly better on a character basis, but looking at the larger context of an entire game we still pretty much only killing people of color.

12. Do you think there are consequences of representation of female gender in video games for females in real life and society? If yes, please explain

It certainly drives consumers from the medium, which - in effect, drives future developers and designers from the culture. The lack of critical reflection in the medium is also troubling, as I believe it makes young men (in particular) intellectually lazy.

13. How do you think stereotypes about female gender in video games can be changed?

The most direct way will be by teaching the creative workers at game studios to argue for diversity and complexity-of-character from an economic perspective. Like we learned at the Gotland Game Conference last year - diversity equals dollar. There's hard data to back the argument up.

14. Has there been any change in the representation of female gender in video games overtime?

Slowly, and not were people are looking. Like any social change; there are no new ideas, only old men that die. Ergo: the change has come mostly from new, mostly independent, mostly alternative developers and game types. The AAA dinosaurs are still stuck in the stone age, with too much of the attention pie being given to them. This will change.

15. What do game companies think about female gender representation issues in video games?

This is a question about corporate culture, which is too varied to speculate in.

16. Do they want to change them or will they keep representing them in this way?

On average, companies and their values move with the money. We'll just have to hope for an educated and critical audience to reward and appreciate challenging and thoughtful games.

17. Do you have any additional comments?

I believe the best way to affect change is to be the change. Start a studio, make games. Start a review site, inform a readership. Spread the word, be a vocal fan. Be critical and make your voice heard. I said the best way is to be the change, and speak up. There is another side, a lot more accessible, of that coin: starve the toxic sources. My original answers read a lot like "don your asbestos suits and fight bullies and argue with trolls in all gaming forums everywhere!". But it's equally valid to, just fucking leave those spaces. Find the gaming communities that celebrate diversity and keeps a high community standard. Buy the games that represent your values, and shun the fuckers who can only think of black characters when the story calls for betrayal. Don't attend bullying circle jerk conferences or expos, don't waste you eyeballs on shitty game review sites. Look for the gems and reward them, starve the shit out.

It's passive, it's safe and it doesn't require you to hunker down and build your own communities and games.

## Interviewee #2

1. Name  
Adam Mayes
2. Age  
46
3. Occupation  
Subject Responsible for Game Design at Uppsala University
4. Education level  
Bachelors
5. Country of origin  
England
6. Do you play video games?  
Yes
7. What kind of video games do you play?  
MMO, Casual, RTS, FPS - a range
8. Based on your gaming experience how do you think female gender is represented in video games?  
On the whole, shallow. While most characters aren't very deep in games - most reduced to easily read body types to suggest roles and actions - female character's roles in games seem more limited
9. Do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?

They are. "Realistic breast bounce" seems to be the thing that most developers aim for.

10. If yes, please explain what kind of stereotypes you have seen in video games that you have played?

Hypersexualised women, women as victim, women as prize

11. How do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?

Image and action. As all characters have roles, and the graphics define that role - side kick, love interest, weak, endangered victim etc. - the graphics play that up.

12. Do you think there are consequences of representation of female gender in video games for females in real life and society? If yes, please explain

I think it does. Having a reinforced set of images of women reinforces what is seen as roles of women. But it's a chicken and egg issue - We don't have developers creating strong women, so publishers and developers don't think that games with women sell, so they don't make games with strong women.

13. How do you think stereotypes about female gender in video games can be changed?

This is a broad question. Stereotypes across all media needs to be changed, roles for women across society need to be looked at. Even now we see adverts for skin cream where female CEOs need to worry about wrinkles. Western society is, still, beset with the virgin/whore image and, now, men's rights groups are "fighting for the right to exist" or...some such rubbish (Men's Rights Groups annoy me). We live in an age where Pick Up Artists are a thing, and that the method they use to pick up women is to psychologically damage them.

The way we portray women needs to change at a fundamental level and that can be lead through games, with designers/artists creating positive roles, and role models - or it can be a reflection of this in a wider society.

14. Has there been any change in the representation of female gender in video games overtime?

Not entirely. We've all been aware of the problem. Now we have better graphics. And that's not really fair. Chel is a female character and Portal is one of the finest story telling games. Even if she's a silent protagonist. But, despite the overtly sexualised imagery that Lara Croft has been through, she remains a strong, independent woman, beating men at their own game.

15. What do game companies think about female gender representation issues in video games?

Nothing. Unless someone calls them on their sexist behavior, and then they'll apologise. Maybe a couple of companies want to push the boundaries, but on the whole, nothing.

16. Do they want to change them or will they keep representing them in this way?

I think they will want to if they see it makes more financial sense to do so. The simple case in point is Big Fish Games. They've been profitable for over 10 years, making hidden object games, casual games etc. They're making money on a largely female audience and, as such, have a more mature take on female characters. No one knows they even exist. Unless you know they're there, you won't have heard of them.

17. Do you have any additional comments?

The entire topic, the more you look at it, is a much wider issue. And the massive backlash about even talking about this subject is an example of how ingrained the image of a less powerful woman is. I remember making a game from a book. The author said "There's only 2 types of women in my universe. Sexy violent ones who will betray you, and old kindly ones who will look after you. Let's not bring any kind of feminist attitudes into this world." He looked horrified that my (then) wife was a fan of Fight Club and would cheer-lead the movie to all her friends.

And this stretches beyond women - people of colour, diverse sexuality - no one except White Hero Male are catered to.

## APPENDIX 3

### Additional Images

Image 6 Screenshot of the personal Facebook page where the request to fill in the questionnaire was published



Image 7 Screenshot of the ICM Facebook group page where the request to fill in the questionnaire was published

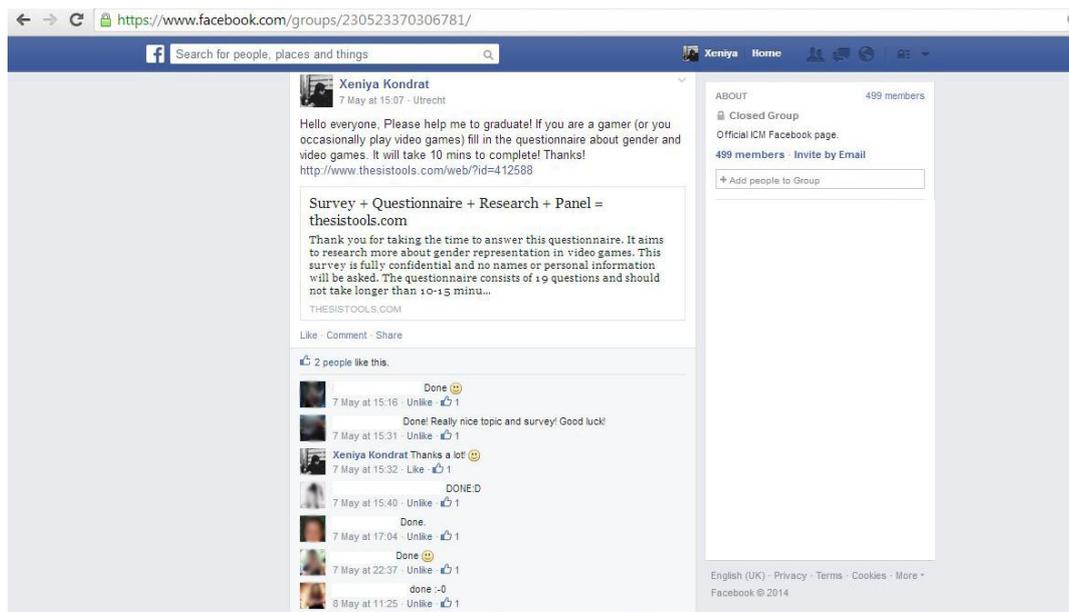


Image 8 Screenshot of the “Gamer League” on website called Vkontake where the request to fill in the questionnaire was published

Лига Геймеров Пикабу  
7 мая 2014 в 14:55

Друзья, поможем Пикабушнице Xeniya Kondrat ?

Нужно всего лишь заполнить анкету для дипломной работы здесь:  
<http://www.thesistools.com/web/?id=412588>

Какая связь с Лигой Геймеров? Тема дипломной работы связана с изображением женщин в видеоиграх и направлена на то, чтобы привлечь девушек играть.

Заполнение не займет у вас много времени, но добавит в вашу карму +20 очков. Осторожно, английский язык.

Сайт: [www.thesistools.com](http://www.thesistools.com)  
Survey + Questionnaire + Research + Panel = thesistools.com

Image 9 Screenshot from the game forum “GAMESPOT” with the post where it was asked to fill in the questionnaire

← → ↻ [www.gamespot.com/forums/offtopic-discussion-314159273/help-me-out-with-my-graduation-31253849/?messageId=342376](http://www.gamespot.com/forums/offtopic-discussion-314159273/help-me-out-with-my-graduation-31253849/?messageId=342376)

**GAMESPOT** Games Reviews News Videos Community

Reply to this topic Unwatch this topic

 This topic is locked from further discussion.

  
**Burninglvy**  
Member Since:  
May 9, 2014  
Posts:  
10

#1 Edited by Burninglvy (10 posts) - 6 days, 4 hours ago

Hello everyone,

I know I'm just registered here, but I need your help with my graduation. I'm studying International Communication and Media at the Hogeschool Utrecht (The Netherlands).

**My thesis is about video games and gender representation. That is why I need you, gamers, to complete a short questionnaire (19 questions) and help me to understand if there is a misrepresentation of gender or not in video games. I want to know what you think about this topic and how you feel about it.**

Based on your answers, I hope I will be able to provide a good advice to the game industry in how to change (if it's needed) the representation of gender and how to attract new customers!

It will take 10 mins to complete! The questionnaire is completely confidential and no personal information will be asked. You do not need to register or fill in your email. To answer on the questionnaire please click on the link: <http://www.thesistools.com/web/?id=412588>

If you have any question please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks!

Cheers,

Burninglvy

## APPENDIX 4

### 4.1 Tables

**Table 3 Frequency of different types of gratifications**

<b>Gratifications Frequencies</b>				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Gratifications results <sup>a</sup>	Education (I want to learn something from this video game)	52	5,9%	22,6%
	Relaxation (I want to relax by playing this video game)	177	20,1%	77,0%
	Diversion and escape (I want to focus on something else and escape my problems/issues)	98	11,1%	42,6%
	Avoidance (I want to avoid to do another task)	41	4,7%	17,8%
	Social Contact (I want to talk to other video game users or play a game with my friends/family)	63	7,2%	27,4%
	Identifying yourself (I want to feel that I belong to this video game community)	26	3,0%	11,3%
	Emotional release (I want to forget about my emotions)	71	8,1%	30,9%
	Filling time (I have nothing better to do)	82	9,3%	35,7%
	Competition/(Self)-challenge	85	9,6%	37,0%
	Fantasy	115	13,1%	50,0%
	It's a habit	48	5,4%	20,9%
	Other (please specify)	23	2,6%	10,0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>383,0%</b>

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Table 4 Questionnaire replies on gratification answer “Other”**

<b>Respondent #</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Respondent 41	nostalgia
Respondent 84	immerse in a story
Respondent 95	it's better than tv, books, movies
Respondent 102	admiration – art and animation
Respondent 103	cooperation play
Respondent 123	gamer
Respondent 136	escapism
Respondent 145	want to have an adventure
Respondent 146	drive
Respondent 149	just like a book, the feeling you immerse yourself into a story/world
Respondent 152	exploration, sense pleasure
Respondent 161	it's a hobby
Respondent 168	humour
Respondent 171	Immersion - I want to play this game and feel a part of it
Respondent 178	meditation
Respondent 184	Ecstasy? I feel good of playing games, i love art and beautiful thing
Respondent 185	Exploring the medium, and seeing the best it has to offer and the world
Respondent 190	Progression
Respondent 195	For the excitement/thrills
Respondent 203	excitement (I want to be thrilled)
Respondent 207	if I do play it, it's for reminiscing
Respondent 209	Inspiration
Respondent 214	Sometimes it's a bit of a social experiment and playground for my own
Respondent 215	fun
Respondent 216	Inspiration for my own narratives
Respondent 222	the amazing music
Respondent 227	Self-challenge in the form of efficiency
Respondent 230	Admiration of video games as an art form

**Table 5 Type of genres of video games which are played by the respondents**

<b>\$Genre Frequencies</b>				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Type of genres of video games <sup>a</sup>	Adventure	156	12,4%	67,0%
	Fighting	66	5,3%	28,3%
	First person shooters	130	10,4%	55,8%
	Massively multiplayer online role playing games	96	7,7%	41,2%
	Multi-user domain	20	1,6%	8,6%
	Platform	69	5,5%	29,6%
	Role playing games	151	12,0%	64,8%
	Shooters	99	7,9%	42,5%
	Strategy	125	10,0%	53,6%
	Real Time Strategy	101	8,1%	43,3%
	Simulations	82	6,5%	35,2%
	Sport Games	52	4,1%	22,3%
	Third person shooters	85	6,8%	36,5%
	Other (specify)	22	1,8%	9,4%
	Total	1254	100,0%	538,2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Table 6 The correlation of gender and opinion about female stereotyping in video games**

**The correlation of gender and opinion about female stereotyping in video games**

			Do you think female gender is stereotyped in video games?		Total
			Yes	No	
Gender of respondents	Female	Count % within Gender of respondents	40 78,4%	11 21,6%	51 100,0%
	Male	Count % within Gender of respondents	139 76,4%	43 23,6%	182 100,0%
	Other	Count % within Gender of respondents	1 100,0%	0 0,0%	1 100,0%
Total		Count % within Gender of respondents	180 76,9%	54 23,1%	234 100,0%

**Table 7 Types of stereotyping of female gender in video games**

<b>Respondent #</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Respondent 34	All above
Respondent 41	Sexually objectified, Female characters are dressed provocatively, Female characters are mistress
Respondent 81	All above
Respondent 89	I\`ve seen all manner of stereotypes portrayed of women in videogames.
Respondent 106	All of the above. Though it has approved vastly in the last few years.
Respondent 112	basically all top four, but i can\`t select more than one (Sexually objectified, Female characters are infrequent; Female characters are rarely protagonists of video game; Female characters are dressed provocatively)
Respondent 131	sex, beauty, infrequent
Respondent 140	All but 2&3 (Female characters are infrequent; Female characters are rarely protagonists of video game); and more
Respondent 141	all of the above except the last (Sexually objectified, Female characters are infrequent; Female characters are rarely protagonists of video game; Female characters are dressed provocatively)

Respondent 152	all of the above
Respondent 171	All of the above, other than mistresses
Respondent 174	All of them, but also none of them happens. It's a broad statement.
Respondent 175	ALL OF THE ABOVE
Respondent 176	I've seen all these available options in games.
Respondent 184	The four first are often true, but male are also often sexually object
Respondent 200	often all of the above
Respondent 203	all of the above
Respondent 204	Apparently I couldn't select more than one option, but I see all of t
Respondent 207	All of the above
Respondent 209	all of the above
Respondent 210	I would like to mark all of them.
Respondent 214	Give us an option to specify more than one thing please.
Respondent 219	Variety of issues, from being poorly written to sexual objectification
Respondent 222	All of the above.
Respondent 224	Sexually objectified + Weaker
Respondent 227	All of the above

**Table 8 Detailed answers of the respondents on how video games affect their real life decisions and behavior**

<b>Respondent #</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Respondent 6	do fun me
Respondent 18	I kill people like in GTA :D
Respondent 26	Yes It shapes my interests
Respondent 27	It's good for my self esteem and I learn from characters with good morals or stories with interesting themes such as racism (tales of symphonia)
Respondent 37	I became a strategic
Respondent 66	fus ro dah, babe
Respondent 81	I procrastinate and play games when I should be doing something else.
Respondent 82	I'm a writer, and VG are really nutritious for my imagination.
Respondent 85	some smoothy moves you know
Respondent 86	It makes you funnier, happier and creative. It also makes you identify yourself with a character and be more self-confident.
Respondent 91	Strategy, perception, imagination
Respondent 97	Giving a different insight of things
Respondent 103	I don't take societal conflicts as seriously as others.
Respondent 106	I research / read about them in free time
Respondent 111	i call beer "Social Elixir" and i think they give

	me extra Charm Points,
Respondent 116	I became lonely
Respondent 123	LOL
Respondent 127	Instagram
Respondent 131	Learned history, because of AC-series :D
Respondent 136	only on short term,
Respondent 137	Happy
Respondent 145	I study to be a computer game journalist
Respondent 160	You think multidimensionally
Respondent 161	improved decision making
Respondent 164	I think so much about decision because i knew there isnt a save file in real life to revert to.
Respondent 165	Another perspective on the world
Respondent 176	Everything is political and Art, Music, Films or Games are of course no different. If a game provokes me, politically, I will stand up to it, in
Respondent 178	I think more about systems and dynamics in real life.
Respondent 179	video agmes give me ideas to try in real life
Respondent 183	I long to get home to play a new game
Respondent 184	As with all experiences you learn from them, it have boosted my ego, trained my spatial reasoning. A good book can change how you see the world,
Respondent 189	It's my job, so it influences my work. Otherwise no.
Respondent 190	Topics of conversation and debate
Respondent 191	Cognitive Science
Respondent 193	I act differently towards people who play video games than I would to other people. More openly mostly.
Respondent 194	Decisions
Respondent 203	depends; discwolrd mud has worked as a testing area for real world creativity, and sometimes I have preferred to play a game to doing what I "sho
Respondent 205	Actions I have made in different video-games have had consequences in the game mode, and psychologically I am certain that this has affected how
Respondent 207	It made me choose my profession which is in the Video Game business.
Respondent 210	No idea what you mean by "real" and yes since playing video games takes time it influences everything i do because when i play video games i cant
Respondent 214	Sometimes, I\ve learned a lot about leadership and communication from online gaming, and I take that with me into "real life" situations. It can
Respondent 219	Based my whole career path around them

Respondent 220	After playing a lot I feel like I need to interact with more people. As opposed to just going back to watching tv shows.
Respondent 222	my thought patterns are influenced in subtle ways, and I have noticed certain games put me in certain moods or levels of attention for long after
Respondent 229	going against the odds
Respondent 230	Things I've learned from games influence who I've grown up to be as a person, and helping design games through data analysis gives me a better
Respondent 231	Influences dreams, mainly.

**Table 9 Specified replies on “No” answer for question about if females are stereotyped in video games or not**

<b>Respondent #</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Respondent 11	Different games - Different heroes
Respondent 30	female gender in video games its normal
Respondent 46	characters are very different
Respondent 47	Once again - depending on game, its\ background story, lore, etc. I cannot say, that it\s not stereotyped, though. It\s just far from being stereotyped everywhere.
Respondent 56	I dont know how to specify and Im lazy ass -_-
Respondent 59	different types in different games= no stereotype
Respondent 64	Bullshit
Respondent 66	I don\t play games like Saint\s Row. In Skyrim female gender is strong and awesome!
Respondent 69	different for many games
Respondent 75	All female characters are diferent between
Respondent 76	tend towards a sexier representation
Respondent 82	I can\t see the real problem. Men are stereotyped to. Its a matter of fantasy.
Respondent 85	it\s different I guess, but mostly they almost all have a good attraction thou
Respondent 95	depends on the game
Respondent 102	depends on the direction of the design concept
Respondent 103	How come I have to specify "no"?? I don\t think one gender is more stereotyped than the other.
Respondent 121	in my favourite games are no female or male characters. in the ego-shooters i have played were no female characters at all and in the story-based games, like role playing games, the female gender was represented very good.
Respondent 126	they mostly look sexy, but so do the male characters
Respondent 128	in different games womens represented

	differently
Respondent 131	I don't think so
Respondent 135	No, some strong woman in most games, look at Samus aran
Respondent 140	Very few, far and between games manage to not stereotype video games. The rest is extremely objectified.
Respondent 145	sometimes not - e.g. Ellie for The last of us or Ellie from Dead Space 3 are quite not stereotypic characters(and there are many such examples)
Respondent 157	Their behavior and skills are just like any male character, with the exception of maybe too much focus on their appearance in order to sell more something that happens on every male character anyway (cool kick ass guys etc).
Respondent 161	in some yes, but improvements have been done lately.
Respondent 163	Potomychto (Russian – “That’s why”)
Respondent 166	its normal
Respondent 169	different Charakters and appearance are possible.
Respondent 174	Both yes and no, depends on the game. One can't argue that all games are the same.
Respondent 179	they act like all my exes
Respondent 186	I don't believe that there exists any group of people that isn't stereotyped by any media. Stereotyping is what we actively use in video games to distance ourselves from the game.
Respondent 191	Mass Effect
Respondent 195	When playing games as female characters vary depending on which game it is, it is so varied that I can not generalize. It feels more like it's the concept of the games that are stereotype rather an aesthetic.
Respondent 208	Yes - as much as the men are
Respondent 220	Okay, yes, but not more than males.

**Table 10 Specified replies on answer “Yes’ about if there are consequences of representation females in video games**

<b>Respondent #</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Respondent 26	It all depends on what else the person is exposed to. If only vidogames and porn, then yes.
Respondent 27	Because especially young men will think it's okay to objectify women like that. They should respect women as human beings instead.
Respondent 41	might be, kind of setting the standards and norms too high (influence on younger people)
Respondent 47	there probably are, though people have to differentiate gaming and real life

Respondent 58	Youngsters learn about gender from games as well.
Respondent 74	Yes, but not sure how
Respondent 76	Female gamers may feel the desire to live up to the stereotype
Respondent 77	Somewhat
Respondent 82	Of course. It is a hard task to make happy an entire diverse public.
Respondent 91	Children grow up objectifying women
Respondent 97	Less respect by males
Respondent 103	Not more than male representation
Respondent 107	Bad role models sometimes
Respondent 108	It can influence the gamers point of view about women
Respondent 111	but small and worthless
Respondent 112	both: consciously, as most gamers will be able to distinguish between a game and reality, but maybe subconsciously
Respondent 136	women are less attracted to video games and men can see women as objects
Respondent 137	Maybe ^ ^
Respondent 141	There is always the risk that people mistake the stereotype for the reality
Respondent 145	female players still surprise
Respondent 150	Just like any TV program or magazine showing "hot" girls
Respondent 154	I think that especially in puberty, boys AND girls will (like in other media) use these depictions as orientation and compare themselves to them..
Respondent 155	Bluf
Respondent 160	false expectations
Respondent 165	Big Boobs
Respondent 167	Presenting and repeating a stereotype just reinforces the vicious circle of its existence and strengthening by time.
Respondent 171	Games are the primary entertainment course for 126 million millennials. A constant, subconscious, stream of accepted roles and imagery will eventu
Respondent 174	We are all different, that's why we're so alike. Some people, both men and women, love these kind of characters, and some people don't. There w
Respondent 175	It's the same consequences as in the other visual industries (advertisement etc)
Respondent 176	The risk is: Generations of hardcore gamers become misogynistic pricks that look down on women.
Respondent 178	They enforce us to behave in certain patterns just as all other media makes us.

Respondent 179	theyre not very realistic im scared of women becoming too much like lowpoly characters in game
Respondent 180	Everything have influence, if not controlled
Respondent 183	Misoguny
Respondent 184	Everything has a possible effect. Even if Hard Rock and Metall don\'t cause the apocalypse it causes its audiance to go to certain pubs and dress
Respondent 185	Absolutely. If male entitlement is perpetuated by a popular medium, it likely only works to cement the idea further.
Respondent 188	Sadly
Respondent 190	Stereotypes are pushed on people. Females are generally badly represented in games, and that keeps getting hammered down in the minds of people.
Respondent 191	Mass Effect
Respondent 193	I don\'t know what the consequence would be, but there are consequences for everything we do.
Respondent 194	Discriminating behavior
Respondent 196	Establishes a certain stereotype for both men and women to uphold. Reinforces
Respondent 200	perpetuates age-old views on the female gender as established in nigh-prehistoric times.
Respondent 204	Yes. A crappy representation of women in games, or in any media form, contributes to a crappy view of women in real life.
Respondent 205	For starters, It will make the gamers feel uncomfortable if they cannot identify with the characters.
Respondent 207	There are studies that show the damage advertisement does, and that is just by passively looking at an image or commercial. Now imagine either pla
Respondent 208	As with all stereotypes
Respondent 210	There are a thousand papers on what impact objectification and other things do to society and perception etc etc. This is not a survey answerable
Respondent 211	we learn to objectify
Respondent 212	by stereotyping women in videogames, but also in advertisements, tv shows etc. the general stereotype against women is not easy to abandon
Respondent 214	Media affects us, quite simply. If females are underrepresented in media and portrayed without variation it contributes to a grander message and s
Respondent 215	We get worse treatment from people
Respondent 216	The false belief that women should be sexy and

	lack their own agency and submit to men
Respondent 219	Representation of females in popular media enforce their stereotype in society.
Respondent 220	Feminists will get angry.
Respondent 222	It doesn't take much more than a google search to find websites filled with articles on this.
Respondent 223	although I think it is not the most influential factor (no more than the representation of women in other media and the role that society still gi
Respondent 227	This kind of thing tends to create a vicious cycle where sexism inspires more sexism.
Respondent 230	Boys growing up are getting the wrong impression of women.
Respondent 232	Yes, but depends on the game genre

**Table 11 The respondents thoughts about why female gender is stereotyped**

<b>Respondents #</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Respondent 1	Because - it is women
Respondent 3	I don't know
Respondent 6	because it is not heroes
Respondent 10	Why not? :D
Respondent 11	Cause men often play game, than women
Respondent 12	Because a lot of game was made by males
Respondent 14	`cause man want to see a sexual, pretty woman
Respondent 15	Many players like to play female characters in mind their appearance
Respondent 16	really i donnow
Respondent 19	Dont know
Respondent 22	I don't know.
Respondent 26	Sex sells, and people are horny
Respondent 27	It is still widely believed that mostly guys plat the video games.
Respondent 28	Because most gamers are guys. Obviously.
Respondent 29	Even though it is a changing trend, gamer community has been majorly composed by men. Seeing this, I believe game developers create an objectifying aspect for women on games to increase its game's appeal to the male audience.
Respondent 33	i dont know
Respondent 34	to draw attention to game (and money).
Respondent 38	Not discriminate female gender in game
Respondent 39	Laziness to create less stereotyped, thus mor complex characters.
Respondent 41	Because men play the most video games and sex sells
Respondent 42	Probably because of the same reason why every male hero is handsome or somehow attractive.
Respondent 47	Female character is not stereotyped, if it's good

	game :)
Respondent 48	One possible answer, as listed above - to gain more attention from young male gamers, who were supposed to be the main target group. The second possible reason - lack of female point of view during the development stages. However, both problems are already being solved
Respondent 49	??
Respondent 51	On average male games are more than female gamers, sex sells, similar kind of stereotypes that you find in movies
Respondent 52	In my honest opinion, I do believe that a majority of gamers are male. I believe that these gaming companies (sometimes) use female characters to attract or catch the attention of these male gamers. However, sexually objectified female characters are not always present, they are just more frequent in male-dominant games.
Respondent 55	Idk
Respondent 56	Because the majority of players is willing sex virgins
Respondent 59	In order to add to the story of the game
Respondent 62	Games in most made by male
Respondent 63	i dont know
Respondent 65	More men than women
Respondent 67	I don't know
Respondent 69	because it sells
Respondent 72	To create a persona
Respondent 73	to attract attention of male audience, who are mainly gamers
Respondent 74	Social pressure and expectations.
Respondent 75	to attract a larger audience to play the game
Respondent 77	Geared towards a male audience
Respondent 78	To appeal to male gamers
Respondent 79	I'm Batman
Respondent 80	To attract more male gamers
Respondent 82	It is a known fact that the gaming community is more male than female, even though the number of female gamers is increasing. Men want to see sexy female characters, and it's a game, so why not?
Respondent 83	In VG, literature, comics, etc. the users are searching another reality where everything is more exciting in every mode. That include men and women stereotypes, special powers and bizarre situations.
Respondent 85	Because video games are fantasy and this adds to the fantasy. It's the same reason there are boobs in Game of Thrones. BTW, I think men are sexually objectified in video games as well.
Respondent 86	who knows, probably because of creators?

Respondent 87	It's stereotyped because at the beginning it was a industry made to men(mostly) and by men(mostly). So a female character that has a good looking apparience makes more money.
Respondent 88	Zcx
Respondent 90	Videogames were once a primarily male dominated medium. As such, developers made games to appeal to male fantasies and desires much of which are changing throughout the years.
Respondent 91	Because this way it is more appealing to males, which are thought to be the main players of videogames.
Respondent 92	To entice a mainly male audience.
Respondent 93	Because it's too hard to do individual character
Respondent 94	Tomb Raider
Respondent 95	Assuming the majority of players is male, they sexualize the female characters to make it more \\ 'attractive\\ ' for the players.
Respondent 96	its only stereotyped to those who are not familiar with video games. men are equally stereotyped as muscular heros when in reality 90% of the gamers playing the game cant achive their looks and attitude. Women are usually sexy and powerfull in video games. so unless their is a game about a housewife trying to not burn the potroast id say the stereotype is equal.
Respondent 98	Because in this fantasy world, females can be what men would like them to be in real life
Respondent 99	Because those games are mainly played by males.
Respondent 102	Because gamers are basically boys, and designers make female to look attractive to them
Respondent 103	Depends on the direction the studio wants to take.
Respondent 104	It is not.
Respondent 106	Games I play usually represent strong/confident women, with a sense of action and fantasy
Respondent 108	To appease gamers; sell games
Respondent 109	To make money
Respondent 110	dont know
Respondent 111	because they are created for men
Respondent 112	because its easy, it also happens with male gender roles, there are a lot of \\ 'macho\\ ' action guys, it depends on the game, most gamers are looking for action and not to get to know the characters of the game
Respondent 113	i would think that it's because when playing a game you want to be a hero, and this role has been assigned to men (for some reason).
Respondent 116	Because it's attractive for guys as they play games the most

Respondent 117	Unusual to see a girl shooting a machine gun, crumbling head zombie, etc.
Respondent 118	Everything is stereotyped in video games, male, female, animals. The question is why is it stereotyped in a supernatural way?
Respondent 119	Because of 14-years-old boys
Respondent 122	i guess in some games the female gender is stereotyped for the same reason as it is stereotyped in tv: the reason is the targeted audience group like young man
Respondent 124	... stereotypes
Respondent 127	I don't think it's stereotyped, if it is I don't mind it being a female myself.
Respondent 128	I don't know
Respondent 130	video games are aimed at males as a target buyer that's why women are a sex object here
Respondent 132	I couldn't find
Respondent 133	because men make the games
Respondent 135	Easier recognition and association with the characters
Respondent 136	Why are guys stereotyped. Most of the audience are guys so maybe that is why.
Respondent 137	because manly men play video games
Respondent 138	Because Female gender is always sexy
Respondent 139	There are assumptions that video games are only targeted towards male players. Also, gaming is considered a male dominant world.
Respondent 141	Primary marketing target is usually male 12-30
Respondent 142	I guess often because it is easier to create a character that is just a stereotype than a truly original one.
Respondent 143	+
Respondent 145	do not know, do not care
Respondent 146	because of men
Respondent 148	Maybe the games are created by men
Respondent 150	The target market is mainly male and you want to identify yourself with your character when you play so males are usually the main protagonists and females usually the sidekicks. Also gamedesigners etc are still mainly man
Respondent 151	To consistently please the eye of the players. Btw, male characters are not lacking muscles and sleeveless shirt either.....
Respondent 152	I don't know
Respondent 153	the female gender is stereotyped in most popular culture.
Respondent 155	I think because the predominant audience of video games are men and I'm sure they enjoy looking at an attractive, although stereotyped woman. It probably contributes to their sense of self in the game and their control of the game. Perhaps it is also the ritualized male gaze (like

	was identified in cinema) that comes into play. Laura Mulvey has some interesting stuff to say about that.
Respondent 156	Cus
Respondent 160	They have big boobs and semi-undressed
Respondent 161	Perhaps because the targeted audience are males?
Respondent 162	the majority of gamers are male
Respondent 163	because mainly the public of the games are men
Respondent 166	Cause of man
Respondent 168	The "traditional female role model" has been stereotyped first in actual life. Video games just followed, presenting and repeating this already existing stereotype.
Respondent 169	Attract the gamers (mostly male)
Respondent 171	Good looking big breasts sexy look
Respondent 172	too many male developers without perspective
Respondent 174	Sex-appeal. No fuzz about that, it's true. As a straight-male, im drawn to women, so the sex-appeal works on me. I'd never play a game solely based on that though.
Respondent 175	Habit. The facts haven't caught up with action yet.
Respondent 176	Because the target audience of teenage boys picks up games if there are boobs in them, or if they are clearly defined power-male fantasy's.
Respondent 177	Designers giving in to what sells for immature audience
Respondent 178	Sex sells. And straight males have been the major market historically. Those two combined creates stereotypes. Also, poor writing and characterisation. So we end up with poor characters with boring stereotypes. This is relevant for both genders, both men and women. But also age, ethnicity and social status.
Respondent 179	only a few
Respondent 180	Old men running the engine for small boys.
Respondent 181	My guess is that it's because it is a male dominated industry.
Respondent 182	old habbit from when most of the gamers where just horny teenagers, also known fact sex sells
Respondent 183	Most videogame creators are men
Respondent 184	The world has for a long time been a structurally patriarchic world which can be seen in most of the available media. Its way easier to avoid responsibilty and just keep doing the same thing. Many don't see the problem and many don't think its their fight to pick.
Respondent 185	Because of misconceptions about gaming audience, the still very young industry and the sexism that permeates most layers of society
Respondent 187	Lack of gender awareness within games design

Respondent 188	The (mainstream) industry hasn't successfully grown up. And is lazy, too.
Respondent 189	There's a (false) assumption that the target group (male) is attracted to it
Respondent 190	Only guesses, but in the beginning of video game development it was probably dominated by men. Then when the graphics got more advanced, sexualized female characters were used as a selling point. Then they became stereotypes, which had proven would sell alot. Good sale ratings led to that becoming the standard and now we find ourselves in an ugly situation where it is difficult to break
Respondent 191	Bound to change
Respondent 192	Misogyny and sexism
Respondent 193	I don't know. To lessen the strain of the male dominant market brains when it comes to understanding characters that they are now used to?
Respondent 194	Tried and true method of marketing and monetary design
Respondent 196	Because Gamers and the Game designers are deliberately creating games for men and men only, and they think sex sells.
Respondent 197	Because it's been a very male dominated hobby for decades and a lot of that lingers.
Respondent 198	They think their audiences are only men.
Respondent 199	Too many men making games.
Respondent 200	because much of the game industry seems to be pandering to sexually immature men
Respondent 201	Most developers are male and identify as such, when coming up with protagonists. Most games are action orientated, and there has been little tradition for female action protagonists.
Respondent 202	Cause the business wants to sell sexiness. They objectify women and give them the shapes of the average dream woman in order to sell their games better.
Respondent 203	Hard to answer in a simple way, industry and game creators tend to both repeat based on what they are used to, and to live up to what they believe are expectations from future users. But there are more things at play.
Respondent 204	The main issue in my view is the status quo in the games industry. Designers aren't used to creating interesting female characters, so if there are any, there is one female character with few characteristics apart from being female. This is a problem in society and in media in general. This is why George Martin get the comment in an interview, how fascinating it is that he writes female

Respondent 205	Its a bad habit, or a plague that lays over the gaming industry, if you will, but I believe we are on our way to curing it.
Respondent 206	the game industry is in stone age and mostly represented by men
Respondent 208	Because game developers work with archetypes.
Respondent 209	Because of uneducated artists, designers, producers and gate keepers.
Respondent 210	Badly formulated question, i can not answer why it is that way i can only guess and make an assumption. I think it is because the majority of people are idiots and idiots care for female characters with boob physics.
Respondent 211	because sex sells, easy trope to use.
Respondent 212	There is the belief and maybe also reality, that boys that play videogames are more in numbers, and presenting women in a sexual way is attractive to them
Respondent 213	uneven creatorbase, developers like to make games they enjoy, men enjoy playing as men, and men are making up most of the gamesindustry
Respondent 214	I think what is really needed is more females making games. Sure there\'s sexism going on and etc but, for the most part, I think it\'s men having an easier time making believable male characters than female ones because it\'s easier to relate. And when you can\'t relate, you go to stereotypes intead. More femmes in the industry pls! I think it\'d fix a lot. Then ofc they need to be wel
Respondent 215	Because of society and male game developers making games for male players and doesn\'t think twice about what they are really doing.
Respondent 216	BEcause of the stupid misconception that most gamers are 18-30 year old boys
Respondent 217	To make it easier for gamers to relate to them
Respondent 218	Generally lack of female interest in gaming in the past, thus developers target male audiences more frequently.
Respondent 219	Male-dominated game industry (and IT industry in general)
Respondent 220	sexyness?
Respondent 221	Because - how else? Guys are still the majority among gamers (I\'d think)
Respondent 222	Force of habit, minimum risk for big studios with big male audiences, "sex sells", etc.
Respondent 223	Mainly because it\'s a male-dominated industry.
Respondent 224	Most of the gamers are male; so it is a male-dominated world.
Respondent 225	For additional appeal to the target audience
Respondent 226	not many female developers

Respondent 227	Video games tend to be created by men (though it's been getting better lately)
Respondent 229	Because the purpose of a female lead is (sadly) very often to be the male lead's romantic interest.
Respondent 230	Because the most visible percentage of players used to be male.
Respondent 231	A long time ago, more men played games than women. I just think the gaming industry hasn't yet caught up. I think (and hope) that it will.
Respondent 232	Because this is more appealing towards male gender players.
Respondent 233	Because it is stereotyped in any other media as well
Respondent 234	Attract more players (Lara Croft)

**Table 12 Types of video games played by the respondents**

1.	Captain Price
2.	Fallout 2
3.	Counter-Strike 1.6 - classic first person shooters
4.	TES: Skyrim
5.	I do not know
6.	Carmageddon, DiRT, Max Payne, Grand theft Auto, TF2
7.	DayZ, Call of Duty, Battlefield
8.	Elder Scrolls
9.	Half-Life (First person shooter)
10.	RPG, Adventure
11.	Neverwinter nights RPG
12.	Oblivion - Action RPG
13.	TES: Skyrim, Mass Effect, Fifa
14.	Team Fortress 2 - Shooter
15.	Dante. Max Payne. Squoll. Leon Scott Kennedy -> Shooter, RPG.
16.	Need for Speed Most Wanted
17.	Dota 2 (Action RTS) , CS Go (First person shooter)
18.	Dota 2, GTA, Counter-Strike
19.	War Thunder, action
20.	DOTA 2, SC2, Gothic 2, Fallout 3.
21.	Diablo3, RPG
22.	TES:Skyrim(adventure, rpg), Far Cry 3(rpg, shooter), Devil May Cry(slasher, rpg)
23.	Crysis, World of Warcraft, Civilization
24.	world of taks MMO Farcry 3 First person shooters
25.	HoMM3(Strategy),NFS(Simulations),WoT(MMO)
26.	All from the Total War series and Warcraft Series
27.	Tales of Symphonia (role playing game), Zelda: Marjora's Mask (adventure), Zelda: Ocarina of Time (adventure)
28.	warcraft(rts), WoW(mmorpg),Hearthstone(ccg),The Elder Scrolls Online(mmorpg),warsow(fps),
29.	Battlefield series - FPS World of tanks - TPS Total War games-

	STRATEGY Mass Effect Trilogy - TPS/RPG Eve Online - MMORPG
30.	mass effect
31.	Battlefield, Mortal Kombat, Star Wars, Uncharted, Call of Duty, Total War, Heroes of Might and Magic, Borderlands, Diablo, The Elder Scrolls etc
32.	glados
33.	Dark souls
34.	Too many of them
35.	star wars knights of the old republic 1/2
36.	Rome: Total War
37.	mass effect action
38.	FIFA Sports
39.	rpg
40.	FIFA (Sport Games)
41.	Sims series, Diablo series, Sacred series, some older platform games like mario or similar style eg. Giana sisters, but also TekkenxStreetfighter and other 3rd person RPGs
42.	to many
43.	Dota
44.	Fallout New Vegas (RPG), Mount and Blabe (Strategy, 3rd Person)
45.	skyrim, saints row, metro 2033, outlast and fallout
46.	Devil May Cry (1-4) - slasher; Black & White 2 - RTS; Assassin\'s Creed; Need for speed: Most Wanted; Panzar: Forged by chaos, DOTA 2;
47.	Dragon Age: Origins - RPG
48.	Mount & Blade
49.	DOTA 2, LoL Strategy
50.	Guilty Gear, Blazblue, Persona 4 Ultimate Arena, Final Fantasy, World of Warcraft
51.	Sims, Don\'t Starve, Alice: Madness Returns, Ragnarok, Little Big Planet, Skyrim, Beyond Two Souls, etc.
52.	The elder scrolls: Oblivion, skyrim; diablo II, III; World of tanks
53.	Assassin\'s creed, Titanfall, Battlefield 3 and 4, Call of Duty, Civilization, Far cry 3
54.	Dota2, Gta
55.	Jane Shepard, Alyx Vance, Gordon Freeman
56.	TimeShift - first person shooter, Warhammer 40K-SpaceMarine - third person shooter
57.	World of Tanks, Battlefield, Civilization, Mass Effect
58.	Hidden-object games- all that I can find!- Dark parables in particular; Role-palying- SIm City; Aventure- All Monkey Island games
59.	fight; street fight, tekken, police
60.	Mirror\'s Edge, Assassin\'s Creed, Dota 2, Titanfall, Need for Speed
61.	tes: oblivion, rpg
62.	Newerwinter Nights (RPG), Planescape: Torment (RPG), Arcanum (RPG)
63.	Skyrim MMO
64.	Max Payne
65.	DotA 2, Titan Quest, World of Tanks
66.	Dark Souls(I & II), RPG, Skyrim, RPG
67.	stronghold
68.	Biochok, FPS
69.	Skyrim LOTRO

70.	Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, PAYDAY 2, Grand Theft Auto IV, STALKER
71.	Call of duty
72.	American McGee's Alice, BloodRayne, Silent Hill, Resident evil
73.	Final Fantasy Series (Adventure)
74.	Red Alert 2, platform
75.	Portal/Portal2.Quest
76.	Elder Scrolls Oblivion Xbox 360 - Role Playing
77.	Elder Scrolls: Oblivion RPG
78.	Saints Row 4
79.	Battlefield, FPS
80.	Counter strike, mass effect, fable
81.	Final Fantasy series / RPG, World of Warcraft / MMORPG, Dota 2 / MOBA
82.	The legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time - Adventure
83.	Dota
84.	Assassin's Creed franchise, GTA franchise, Red Dead Redemption, Uncharted (adventure)
85.	Halo 3, reach, 4. shooter I guess
86.	Golden Sun(RPG), Dark Souls(RPG), Pokemon(RPG), Super Mario(Platform), Crash(Platform) Sonic(platform) Godmode(3rd person shooter) WoW(MMORPG) Dota(MOBA) Smite(MOBA) DIABLO(RPG) Monster Hunter (RPG), Age of Empires(strategy) Total War Saga(strategy) Heroes of Might And Magic saga(Strategy) Tekken(fighting) Street fighter(fighting) Soul Calibur(fighting) Minecraft, Legacy Of Cain Saga(adventure) Castlevania saga(adventure) Legend Of Zelda Saga(Adventure)
87.	Bioshock 1, 3; Dota; Tomb Rider; Singularity; CS
88.	&-1052;&-1072;&-1092;&-1080;&-1103;
89.	Final Fantasy VII Role-Playing Game
90.	Dragon Age 1, RPG; The Witcher 1 and 2, RPG
91.	Halo - FPS Madden - sports World of Warcraft - MMO
92.	Sleeping Dogs (3rd person shooter), Need for Speed Underground 2 (Racing), Crash Bandicoot 2 (Platform), Heroes of Might & Magic II (Strategy)
93.	Super Mario
94.	League of legends, (MMO)
95.	halo fps, mario platformer, final fantasy rpg
96.	street fighters, fighting
97.	Tomb Raider (female), Deus Ex (male), Resident Evil (male and female), Spyro the Dragon (male)
98.	Football Manager (Sports/Simulation), NBA 2K (Sports)
99.	Heroes Might and Magic (strategy)
100.	Super mario, assassins creed (adventure)
101.	DOTA 2 (Mass online battle arena), Guitar Hero (Arcade), Minecraft (Sandbox)
102.	1. Jak and Daxter - platformer
103.	super mario boss , platformer
104.	Ace Attorney (quest), Battlefield (FPS), Assassin's Creed (adventure), The Witcher (rpg), Mass Effect (rpg), Hitman (stealth/tps), Deus Ex (stealth/fps/rpg), Batman Arkham (adventure)

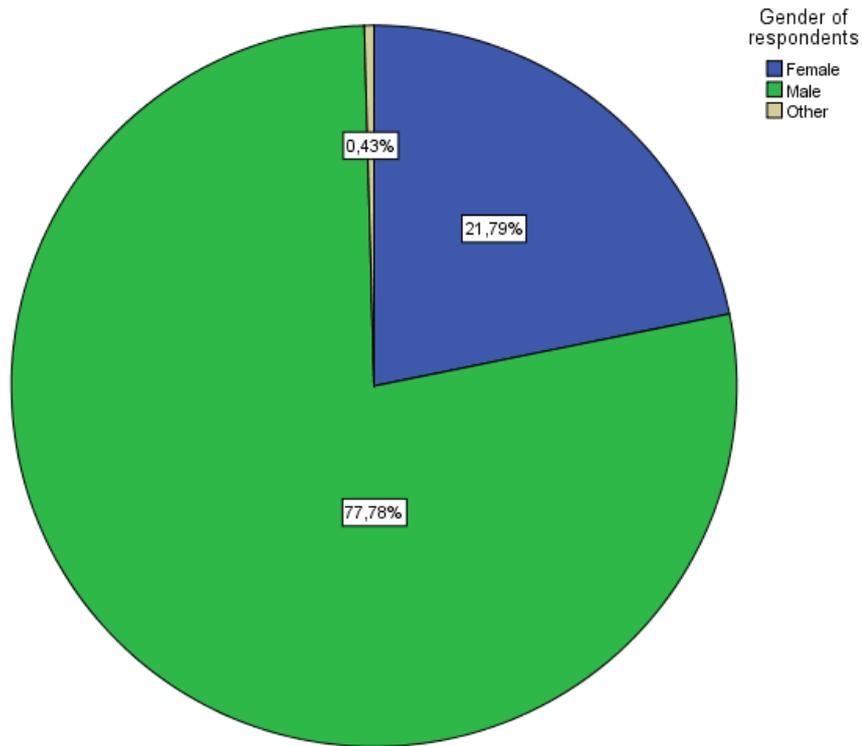
105.	Assassins creed (rpg) - crime city/kingdom age (online rpg) - tomb raider (action) - need for speed (racing) - prince of Persia (platform) - and several others
106.	Dota 2 Online Competitive Multiplayer
107.	Mass effect trilogy RPG
108.	League of Legends, MOBA
109.	Dota 2 (MOBA), Mass Effect 1-3(RPG), Resident Evil 1-6(3rd person shooter), FIFA (sport), Dragon Age(RPG)
110.	dota 2 - moba, civilization - strategy
111.	1. C&C Generals (RTS) 2. EARTHBOUND (RPG)
112.	League of legends RTS game
113.	DC Universe online, mmorpg
114.	Resident Evil (horror)
115.	FIFA 14 / Sport Game
116.	Defence of the Ancients 2?, MOBA
117.	The last of us (adventure), guacamelee (action, platform), bayonetta (action adventure), final fantasy 7 (role play game)
118.	Warcraft III real time strategy
119.	InFamous Second Son, Skyrim, Portal1-2,The Last Of Us, Borderlands1-2
120.	Portal, Mass Effect, Team Fortress 2
121.	Europa Universalis 4 (Real Time Strategy), World of Tanks (Shooter)
122.	Assassin\'s Creed (Action-adventure)
123.	Adventure: Monkey Island, FPS: Call Of duty, noidea:Scribblenutts, mmorg:Lineage etc etc
124.	Heroes 3(strategy), The Last of Us(3-person shooter), DayZ(simulation) and many others.
125.	League of Legends, MOBA
126.	Warframe - 1st person shooter, Lord of the Rings online - MMORPG, Tomb Raider - 3d person shooter, Path of Exile - MMORPG, Team Fortress 2 - 1st person shooter
127.	Battlefield
128.	gta (third person shooter), the elder scrolls (role playing game), batman (fightingadventure), dayz standalone (simulationthird person shooter)
129.	Call of Duty, The Sims
130.	Heroes of Newerth, Multiplayer online battle arena
131.	Dark Souls II, RPG
132.	Mass Effect 1-3 (RPG), Fallout New Vegas (RPG), Flatout 2 (Race), Sims 3 (Simulator), TES IV Oblivion (RPG), TES V Skyrim (RPG), Syberia 1-2 (Adventure)
133.	FIFA, Hearthstone, Civilization, WoW, DOta, COD
134.	Final Fantasy 8, Role Playing Game
135.	Metal gear solid- action/3rd person , halo - first person shooter , the legend of Zelda - adventure
136.	the sims, harry potter, pokemon
137.	Final Fantasy X ROL
138.	League of Legend, MOBA
139.	south park
140.	FPS: W:ET
141.	Fallout - RPG
142.	diablo
143.	Call of duty, uncharted,

144.	Counter Strike, First Person Multiplayer online game
145.	Assassin\'s creed (all,stealth), Mass Effect (all,action RPG,third-person shooter), FEZ (indie platformer), Deus ex: Human Revolution (stealth-action,first-person shooter), Portal (all, kinda logical shooter), Dead Space (survival horror, third-person shooter), Skyrim (RPG),etc.
146.	First person shooters-titanfall
147.	Drakan, adventure
148.	fallout, sc2, diablo, dota 2, lol, portal, bastion, legend of grimrock
149.	The Elder Scrolls series (RPG)
150.	Tomb Raider, League of Legends,CS, Half life, Teken
151.	dragon age origins(role-playing), total war series (real time strategy), assassin\'s creed series (role playing)
152.	Thief Deadly Shadows (first person sneaker), Beyond Good And Evil (3rd person action adventure), Faster Than Light (rougelike)
153.	mass effect, dargon age, pes, payday, fable
154.	Sonic the hedge hock, mario cart,
155.	Kip
156.	Call of Duty, Splinter Cell, Far Cry, Hitman, GTA
157.	Badlur\'s Gate (RPG), Morrowind(RPG), Starcraft (Real Time Strategy)
158.	gta, WoT, rust
159.	Metal Gear Solid (Action/Third Person Shooter/infiltration) Assasins Creed (Infiltration/adventure) Smite (MOBA)
160.	Fallout- MMO RPG and Tropico 4- Strategy games
161.	LoL - MOBA, Diablo - Multiplayer Online RPG, StarCraft - Multiplayer Strategy
162.	rift // mmorpg
163.	dota2, terraria, Super Meat Boy
164.	Skyrim - rpg, dark souls 1 & 2 - rpg, all legend of zelda games - action/adventure
165.	Fallout- RPG
166.	portal, portal 2, dishonored
167.	Pokemon (RPG), Neverwinter nights (RPG)
168.	Monkey Island Adventure
169.	Kingdom age =massively multiplayer online role playing game/ strategy game
170.	World of warcraft
171.	Nethack - Rogue/RPG; Portal - First Person Puzzler, Avalon - Text MUD, Borderlands, FPSRPG
172.	Company of Heroes (RTS), XCOM (Tactical Turnbased), Dark Souls (Action RPG), Dragon Age (RPG)
173.	Eve Online - MMO
174.	Diavlo 3 RPG, Guild Wars 2 MMORPG, Titanfall FPS, Darksiders 3rd Person, NHL Sports, Soul Calibur Fighting
175.	League of legends Multiplayer online battle arena, Call of duty first person shooter
176.	Metal Gear Solid - Sneak \'em up, World of Warcraft - Themepark MMO, Red Dead Redemtion - Open World Action Adventure, Skyrim - Open world Action RPG, Jak and Daxter - Platform Adventure, Beyond Good and Evil - Platform Adventure
177.	Gabriel Knight adventure, Beneath a steel sky adventure, Broken Sword adventure

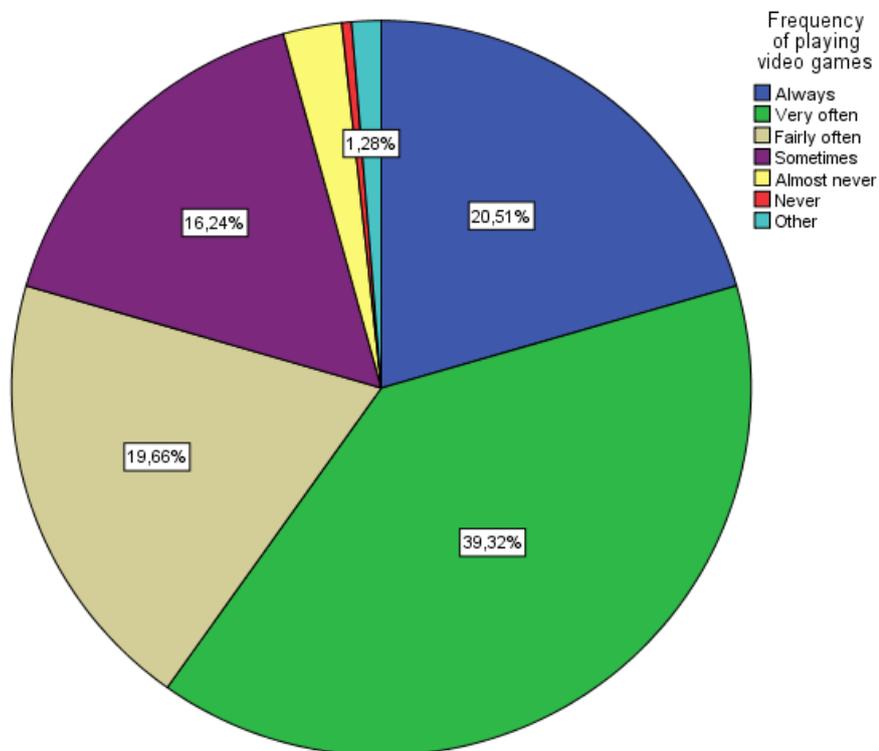
178.	Abe\`s Exoddus, Platform. Stronghold, RTS. Diablo 1, RPG. Planescape: Torment, RPG. FF9, RPG. The Witcher 2, RPG. Fallout 1, RPG. Baten Kaitos: Origins, RPG. System Shock 1, RPG/FPS. Space Station 13, Multi-user domain. From Dust, Simulations.
179.	Leisure Suit Larry, Simulator
180.	Silent Hill, Survival Horror
181.	The Tribes, Happy Street, The Blockheads (not sure how to categorize them, but they are not shooters)
182.	Final fantasy series, RPG. Hitman FPS
183.	Titanfall, First Person Shooter
184.	The world ends with you, action rpg
185.	System Shock 2 - action/adventure/horror, Gone Home - exploration/interactive narrative, Chrono Trigger - RPG, The Longest Journey - point and click adventure, Thief 2 - stealth
186.	Deus Ex: Human Revolution, Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
187.	Warcraft (mmorpg), Civilization (Strategy), Football Manager (Strategy), Hearthstone (Strategy)
188.	Mario (platform), Tempest (shooter), Speedball (Sport)
189.	Batman-series (3rd person action), Dead Space-series (3rd person action), Braid (platform), Journey (adventure),
190.	Dark Souls. Third person hack and slash
191.	Dark Souls, Fallout
192.	The elder scrolls v: skyrim, RPG
193.	Civilisation (stategy), Team fortress 2 (First person shooter), The Binding of Isaac (adventure?), The Elder Scrolls V Skyrim(RPG), Fallout New Vegas (RPG), Battlefield (first person shooter), Pokemon(RPG), Bastion (Adventure), Super Meat Boy (platform) Mass Effect (third person shooter/RPG)
194.	Final fantasy - RPG, Starcraft 2 - RTS, Go - Strategy
195.	thomb raider, lords of the rings
196.	Ocarina of Time, Half-Life 2, Cave Story, Dark Messiah
197.	Bionic Commando (platform), Mass Effect (Roleplaying game), Fallout (Roleplaying Games)
198.	Skyrim, RPG
199.	Legend of Zelda. Adventure
200.	Diablo 2, role playing game (Clicking simulator subgenre)
201.	Quake(FPS), WoW(MMO), Starcraft, Dawn of War(RTS), Metal Gear Solid(3rd per.)
202.	Dota 2(MOBA), DayZ (Survival mmo) and Counter strike: Global offensive (FPS)
203.	hearthstone (online card game), project zomboid (survival horror), discworld mud (mud roleplaying), skyrim (roleplaying/adventure), dawn of war (rts), civilization (strategy)
204.	Shelter (Indie/adventure/undefined), Resident Evil 4 (shooter/action), Dragon Age Origins (roleplaying game)
205.	Fable: the lost chapter (RPG), Halo (FPS), Psychonauts (Adventure), Mass Effect 1-2 (RPG)
206.	Grim Fandango, dark comedy neo-noir adventure. Second Life, MUD adventure. Age of Empires III, real-time strategy.
207.	Final Fantasy X, JRPG. Currently I am playing Wolf Among Us and Guild Wars 2, though.

208.	FPS: Doom. RTS: Starcraft 2. Adventure: Grim Fandango. Simulation: DayZ. TPS: Gears of War
209.	Dark Souls (RPG), X-Com (Strategy)
210.	Old SSI RPGs (Champions of Krynn series, Pools of Radiance, Ravenloft, Thunderscape, Eye of the Beholder etc)
211.	Counter strike, Dota 2, FTL, Dominion 4, Binding of Isaac, LoL
212.	Skyrim - Adventure
213.	Eve online, Call of Duty, Europa Universalis, sandbox,FPS, strategy
214.	I hope PC games are included? For me video games are console games. Anyways. World of Warcraft, Dota 2, Zelda series, Metroid series, Tekken series, Final Fantasy Tactics series belong to my favourites.
215.	Pokemon - RPG, Halo - FPS, World of Warcraft - MMO, Megaman - Platform
216.	Dragon age, Elder scrolls, KotOR (RPG), Guild wars 2 (MMORPG) SW Republic Commando (FPS) Mass Effect(s) (ARPG?)I have a hard time adding more titles seeing as I vary A LOT
217.	I don't have a favourite game
218.	Bioshock/Red Dead Redemption/Mass Effect - (Adventure/Shooter/RPG)

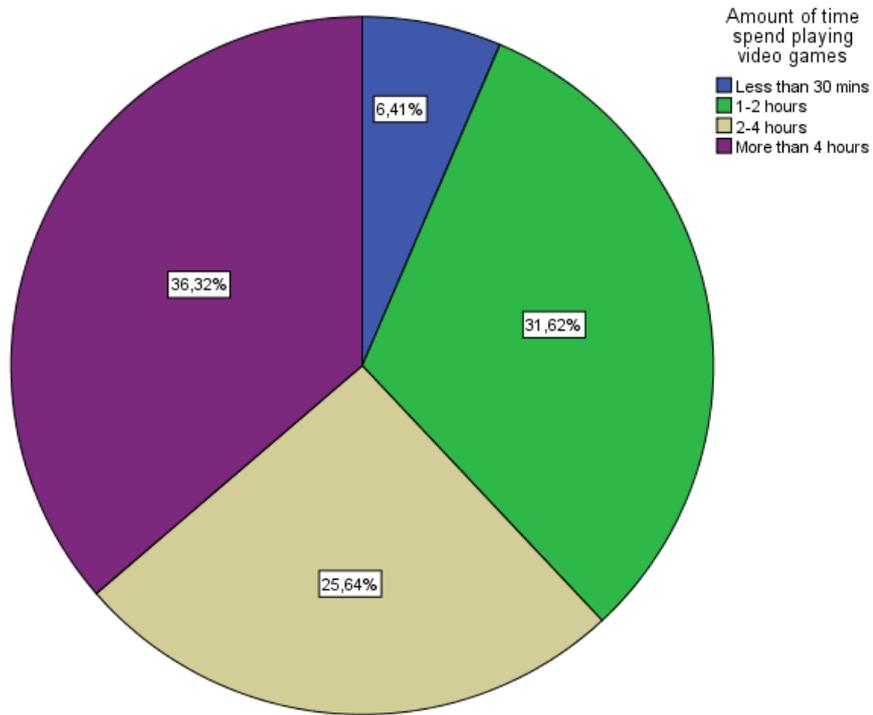
## 4.2 Figures



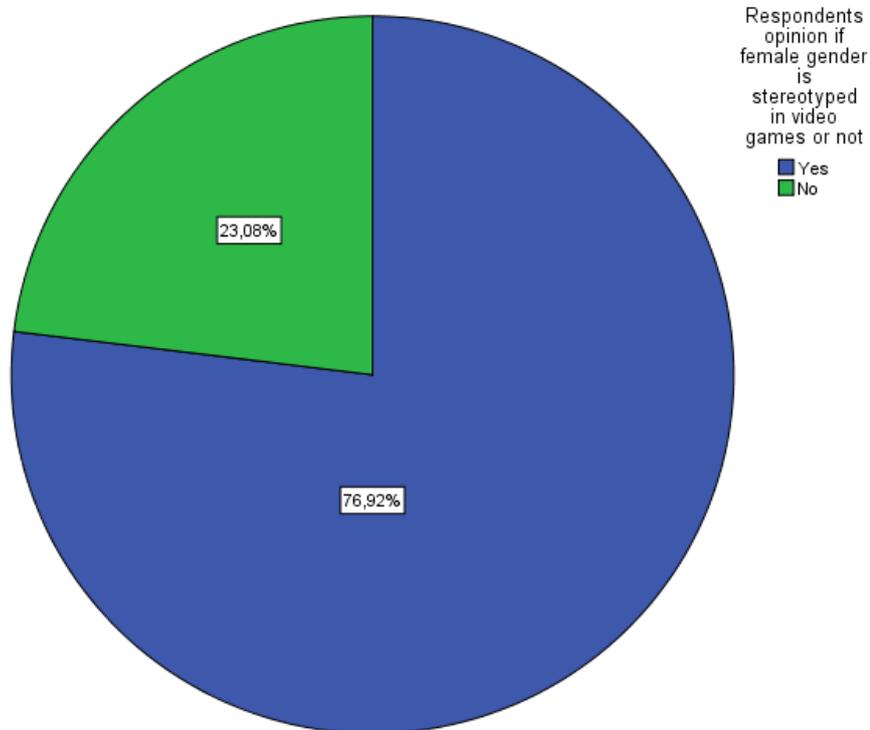
Graph 4 Pie chart representing gender of the participants



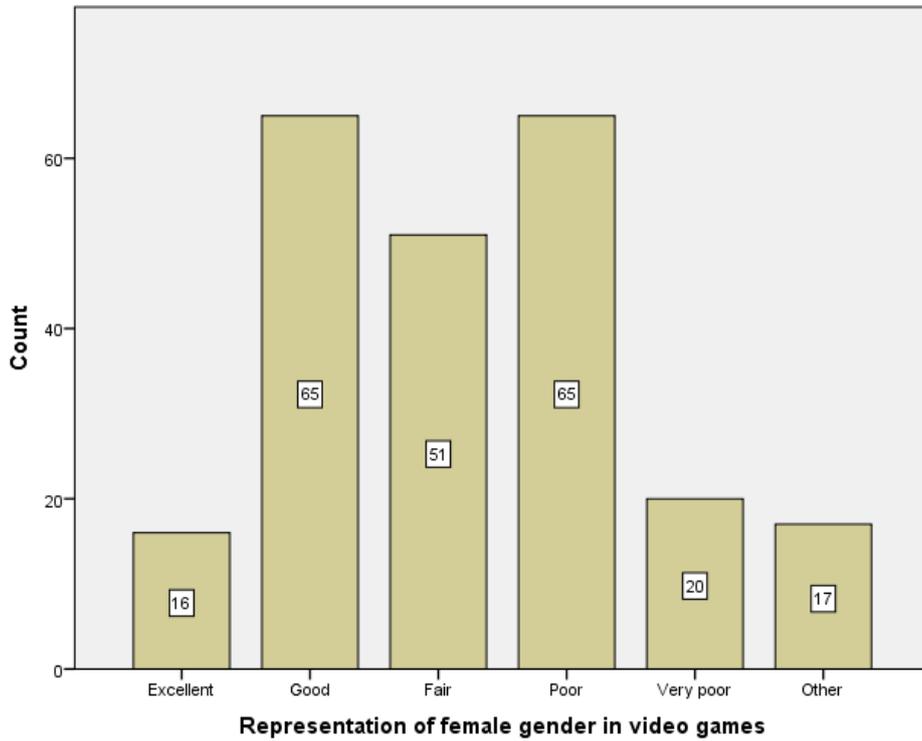
Graph 5 Frequency of playing video games among the respondents



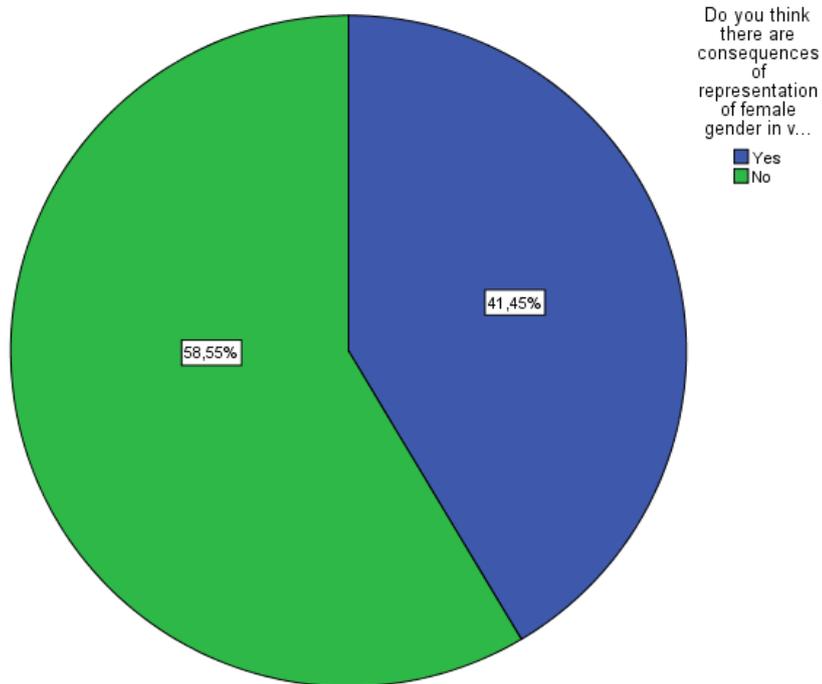
**Graph 6 Amount of time spend playing video game per game among the respondents**



**Graph 7 Respondents opinion of female gender is stereotyped in video games or not**



**Graph 8 Representation of female gender in video games according to the answers of the respondents of the survey**



**Graph 9 The opinion of the respondents about possible consequences of representation female gender in video games for females in real life**