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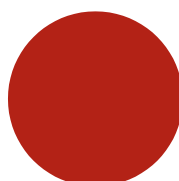
Detecting the Content of Gender Stereotypes in Videogame Characters

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To my mom.

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the content and nature of gender stereotypes embedded in traditional attributes portrayed by videogame characters. It presents a review of the main concepts that take part in this phenomenon. The findings were then put to test with two small-scale exploratory studies that corroborated the data. The most common depiction of female characters is as damsels in distress, and sexual objects, while the most common depiction of male characters is as heroes or aggressors. Finally, it proposes that the combined use of the data gathered and the dimensions of the Stereotype Content Model would be able to detect gender stereotypical traits in videogame characters.

Keywords: Gender, Bias, Stereotype, Role, Character, Videogame.

Resumo

O objetivo desta dissertação é compreender o conteúdo e a natureza dos estereótipos de género incorporados em atributos tradicionais retratados por personagens de videojogos. Ela apresenta uma revisão dos principais conceitos que participam deste fenómeno. Os resultados foram então testados com dois estudos exploratórios de pequena escala que os corroboraram. A representação mais comum de personagens femininas é como *donzelas em perigo* e objetos sexuais, enquanto a representação mais comum dos personagens masculinos é o role do herói ou do agressor. Finalmente, propõe que o uso combinado dos dados coletados e as dimensões do “Modelo de Conteúdo Estereotipado” possam detectar atributos de estereótipos de género em personagens de videojogos.

Palavras-chave: Género, Estereótipo, Preconceito, Role, Personagem, Videojogos.

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List of Abbreviations

APA	American Psychology Association
BIAS	Behavior from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes
CED	Cambridge English Dictionary
CDP	The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
EC	Etimologías de Chile
ESA	Entertainment Software Association
FFF	Female/Feminine/Femininity
OD	Oxford Dictionaries
OED	Online Etymology Dictionary
ISFE	Interactive Software Association of Europe
SCM	Stereotype Content Model

Structure of the dissertation

The first chapter offers both a study and a journey to find a suitable definition that would allow a better understanding of what are stereotypes and how these are constructed at a social level. It points out the different nuances of the main characteristics that define this complex concept and offers several perspectives that would help to clarify the most basic aspects that compose these dynamic constructions. Moreover, in this chapter, the concept of gender is presented and its main aspects are established, e.g. the way it shares with the concept of the ever mobile identity, and how that subjectivity that comes from both, establishing what gender identity is, and how is that this gender identity enacts social roles and confronts behaviours that are expected from each individual. Also, here we refer to the issues that arrive from gender role bias and discrimination, up to defining what a gender stereotype is and what are the similitudes between power relationships and gender relationships.

The second chapter tackles the portrayal of gender stereotypes in media, paying attention to the different depictions and attributes, as well as traits, that convey the idea of what each gender should do and how to behave, and the importance that these media have in the reproduction of those constructions. This is followed by a brief reference to different tropes used in horror and action movies. Here, it is possible to see the overall panorama regarding female and male characters.

The third chapter is dedicated to the elements in videogames that made them unique forms of narrative when compared with other media. Here, the definition of game and its differentiation from play is commented, and the very same concept of videogame is studied, with the help of several of its most dedicated academics. After this overview, the analysis focuses on literature relative to the portrayal of gender stereotypes in video games, looking for those traits and attributes that literature states are present in videogames.

The fourth chapter presents two small-scale studies, whose nature is basically exploratory. Both were conducted to further explore the subject from the point of view of the broad audience, through a survey regarding the evolution of a videogame female character, and then, through a series of interviews focused on a bottom-up perspective,

about the personal experience of gamers and their view of gender stereotypes present in video games.

The fifth chapter describes a framework, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), developed by a group of researchers in the early 2000's. This framework helps to identify and predict systematic principles that provoke changes in the content of stereotypes. Its importance lies in the fact that the way the SCM is built allows to be used as a tool to detect where the most common stereotypes and biases found in this research, concerning gender stereotypes in videogames, would locate characters and their relationships. Besides the SCM, there is a brief description of the BIAS map, a tool that complements the SCM by referring the usual behaviours that result from different combinations of the dimensions within the SCM. These tools can be used to detect where the sum of attributes of a given character, or the relationship among several characters, fall according to the SCM.

The sixth chapter presents the general conclusion of the work, presenting a series of questions that could be used when videogame characters are constructed, how specific common attributes showcase the way some characters are constructed, through stereotyping in videogames. Here there are also the final considerations of the research, as well as the limitations and future steps.

Introduction

Videogames have portrayed genders following a heteronormativity that favoured the perspective of the heterosexual young gamer. Or at least this is how the industry has been considered. An industry of men producing cultural products for men. However, things have been changing, and technological advances have promoted the incorporation of new ways to portray women in videogames.

Women were basically invisible in videogames up to few years ago. Characters like *Lara Croft*¹ presented a strong woman, with a sense of agency, performing acts that were reserved to men. However, not long time before that, a woman's place was as the background character, the supporting character that exchanged few lines with the male hero. The attributes that were associated with women were those of the weak, submissive, sexualized, brutalized, target of violence, girly, communal women. For some reason, the depiction of women was the depiction of an object.

It was not until recently that women began to take part in a bigger way in the videogame arena. But, as it will be seen in this work, the supposed new success of female characters didn't arrive without pitfalls. In order to balance these female characters, and avoid them from having agency, the female characters were as strong as their cleavage could bear. Basically, it was more about them being an object for the consumption of the target audience, than women in their own virtual world. These characters did not enjoy, at least as research suggests, their own sexuality but were still more of a fetish created for men, by men.

On the other hand, if women were violently treated, kidnapped and taken advantage off, due to their lack of skill and competence to save her own life, men also have had their own kind of invisibility. One of the problems with research on videogames regarding gender issues is that there is little to none investigation of the male characters, most of the literature is directed, first, to the dissection of female characters in order to find out how they are being tormented in the world of videogames, as well as the lack of

¹ Lara Croft is the titular character of the videogame franchise Tomb Raider, published by Eidos Interactive (1996-2009), and Square Enix (since 2010). This character is a skillful and resourceful archeologist, and she was one of the first female protagonists in a videogame franchise. See Chapters 3 and 4.

consideration for the female gamer. This situation has left the male characters analysed as a subproduct of the study of the female characters. Something important to bear in mind is that stereotypes work in an ambivalent way. If men have been the main hero, the aggressor of other men and women alike, the portrayal of women is not the only one that could be considered damaging, but also the portrayal of the *hypermasculine* man.

Nevertheless, several shifts have been revealed. One of them is an approach to the player. More and more, at least the literature suggests, research has passed from only caring about issues of representation inside the screen, to issues of representation outside of it.

What motivates this work is the idea that travelling is already part of the journey. Researchers and developers alike should work together in order to be able to identify certain things. However, it is not the intention here to tell creators what to create or how. If videogames are a form of art, then it wouldn't be honest to try to mediate because what has been made is not representative enough.

Gender, as will be talked about, is mostly a conversation with oneself, and as a way to live an identity, videogames offer possibilities that are not found in any other media. If a man played with a sexy female street fighter, not many people would, probably, judge that, but it might be more disruptive if this very same man put on a drag one night. Videogames are now like the *Tao*, you can go to your window and fly out without leaving your own room.

It is this at the end, the possibilities that videogames offer, with the immersion, agency and even ergodic journeys that create possible worlds to explore and live other identities. It is suggested here that gender stereotypes could be better used, if not avoided, in a more efficient way, if more researchers were concerned in studying them not as a matter of the problems of a gender, but as a matter of the complex universe that gender is.

Chapter 1 - Stereotypes and Gender

1.1. Overview of the Chapter

Schemas, constructions to understand the world, lenses or pictures that people make in their heads to draw a world, above a world... Stereotyping is a very pragmatic, or rather, functional way to interpret reality, and characters in different media are very often based on perceptions that groups have of other groups. They are an association that gives a kind of security, through generalization of group's attributes over individuals and vice versa, the feeling of knowing the other. However, the question of how real is that *other* still remains. Stereotypes work dynamically, but there is the tendency to try to immortalize the other into the boundaries of perceptions, of particular things that are assumed to be universal.

In the first part of this chapter, different definitions of what is a stereotype will be presented, along with their main characteristics, such as being considered as a mental picture of the possible world, as rigid associations, and as a way to differentiate among groups, when in fact they are dynamic constructions that say as much about the perceiver of the stereotype, as about the individual or group targeted.

The second part of this chapter will present the complex relationships that exist between the idea of 'who I am', as that relationship that exists between gender and identity, which is like an ever wondering about who is that person that the mirror reflects, the enacted roles that tell others one's place in society, and the pretended behaviour that others expect an individual to perform through one's gender roles, discrimination and gender bias, as well as what is a gender stereotype and the relationships that come from those elements.

1.2. Stereotype: what is it?

One of the main challenges of this work is to enclose in a single space, in a single definition, the main concept of study that would be used throughout. Stereotypes

somehow seem to be a phenomenon that doesn't allow itself to be grasped in a specific way, nor fixed under a specific definition. Even in terms of the academia, stereotypes are not easy to be defined by specialists. This happens basically because scientists, researchers and scholars base their conceptualization and terminology – in this case about what a stereotype is and what is its nature – on what they find in their respective scientific fields, which, as a consequence, leads to an amount of possible ways to define them, as the variety of scholar assumptions that these scientific fields consider (Lebedko 2014, 19). In simple words, defining stereotypes, and the act of stereotyping, becomes problematic because there is a wide variety of ways to define them (Stangor 2009). However, this challenge will be faced considering the best operative way to define stereotypes, based on different approaches and scientific literature.

The word “stereotype” comes from the conjunction of the Greek *stereo-*, which means solid, and *typos*, which means “impression”, “mold” (EC 2016b), and was initially meant to refer to the “method of printing from a plate” (OED 2017). The origin of this word basically described an activity related with printing through the use of an image, and was later adopted in social sciences.

The (CED 2016) refers to a stereotype, when considered as a noun, as a “set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong” (2016). There are two things to point out about this definition: that a stereotype is an idea that is “set” or fixed, held by people, and that has the particularity not being correct. Stereotypes might present an idea of certainty or accuracy to the individual or group that holds them. However, this is a problematic position, as stereotypes could be considered truthful, when they are not actually able to describe with perfect certainty all members of a given group, which makes them non-appropriate to be the basis of categorical knowledge in judging someone, action that could lead to a wrongful doing (Stangor 2009, 2).

1.2.1. Mental Picture

In one of the first uses of stereotype as a mental picture, in the book *Public Opinion* (1997), Lippman considers that people first define and then see, abstracting from what an individual's culture has already defined for them. People do not experience before constructing their stereotypes about others. This way to define stereotypes implies

that we don't decide *a priori* how the system of stereotypes lies at the core of every individual's tradition, and thus, they become a way to defend ourselves and our position in society. For this author, stereotypes are a picture that we make of the world, to which we adjust our socio-cultural actions, and even when it is not a complete picture of the world, stereotypes depict *a possible world to which we are adapted* (Lippmann 1997, 81, 95). So, the way we experience the world and our preconceptions work together as experience reinforces our beliefs, therefore if there is an idea that is reinforced by experience, we consider it will be repeated in the future. On the other hand, if there is a contradiction between the experience and the stereotype, a person has two options: either consider it as an exception, and look at the counter-evidence as flawed, or adapt it and modify their picture accordingly (Lippmann 1997, 99).

1.2.2. Associations

Stereotyping through false or misleading associations is what people often do when they link a certain group to an attribute, or a series of attributes, and is something that individuals held rigidly, and that is kept while resisting counter-evidence (Blum 2004). This perspective remarks the fixity and wrongfulness that stereotypes are supposed to encompass, and it adds a new element: the idea that people resist to give up these associations.

The influence of the individual who endorses a stereotype is not necessarily the only factor, or the drive behind these associations, that builds the way people stereotype groups. It has been said that stereotypes are misleading associations that someone links to an individual or group to some specific attributes, but stereotypes can be not just associations, but also *beliefs* that are held "about characteristics and attributes of a group and its members that shape how people think about and respond to the group" (Dovidio et al. 2010, 8). In this scenario, besides that link built around someone from a group and these series of attributes, stereotypes mold interactions among people, they are not just something that is given by culture, but they actively mold the way people dialogue among each other or, in other words, how they act and react to others.

However, stereotypes do not solely mould interactions, as the reactions to others, but also the perception that someone has about different groups, in a way that they see stereotypic characteristics even when they are not present in an individual or a group.

Although they are used often to generalize, individuals who use them, do not always endorse them, even when they hold them as a truthful belief or the way things are, and seldom link this picture, the stereotype, with themselves and their own group (as a contrast with the other individuals or groups), and associates certain attributes with an outgroup, without necessarily believing that generalization (Blum 2004). In any case, distortions in the way someone pictures an individual from another group might appear in the form of moral distancing, or the belief that members of a group are more alike than they really are, while being more different from other groups, leading to an intensification of the *otherness*; failing to see others as individuals and not just as a part of a group, ignoring the possible diversity within such group; and the falseness that comes with stereotypes, as their necessary condition renders them objectionable (Blum 2004).

According to Charles Stangor (2009), people want to establish differences among individuals and group them in categories that make them appear as similar as possible, within a dynamic of differentiation and similarity. As for how to define stereotypes these are not just difficult to define, but also to assess, because their study has been done more around laboratorial experiments than in the real world. For this author, there are several aspects to consider in terms of stereotypes. One of them is that people tend to formulate more negative stereotypes than positive ones, because even when positive ones are held, and expressed, people could consider that they would be judged as holding negative ones by default; for instance, when a someone says that an X member of a group is considered to be a potential good athlete because he/she belongs to that group, the listener might also consider that this person also holds the negative attributions that are related with that group. Another one is that there is a need to focus in stereotypes as social constructions rather than as individual ones. This position is more a critic to the social psychology perspective, which has explored stereotypes more from within the individuals and not from their interactions with each other (Stangor 2009, 2–4).

In the past, stereotyping was conceptualized as a static process, and, until later, its dynamic aspects have been object of study. Nowadays, among a diversity of explorations and research about the subject, stereotypes are considered schemas used by social agents to process information about others, and, in scientific fields such like sociology, there has been an interest about those who are the target of stereotypes, particularly the phenomena of tokenism and solo status (Dovidio et al. 2010). In other words, there is a shift from the idea that stereotypes are something, as a filter, that people use to see the world, or imagine

that possible world, to the interactions and, then, to the different agents that are part of these interactions, the individuals who stereotype and the individuals/groups who are stereotyped.

1.2.3. The paradox of stereotypes

Defining in few lines this complex subject is not an easy task, as stereotypes are not just a one way street. As Lebedko (2014) points out, there are two kind of stereotypes used to evaluate someone’s own group, and an out-group. These are the *auto-stereotypes*, which reflect the image a group about themselves; and the *hetero-stereotypes*, that reflect the perception held about others (2014, 13). What is important about this remark is that, people often consider that the auto-stereotypes are positive, and the hetero-stereotypes are negative, as the former are used to assess the in-group, and the latter to assess the out-group. However, the paradox is that stereotyping reflects aspects of both, the target and the perceiver, and this surfaces as a relationship of dependence (Table 1).

Table 1. The nature of stereotypes reflected in culture (Lebedko, 2014, 11–12)

The nature of stereotypes	The reflection in culture
Neutral yet dynamic	Can be used for good or bad purposes
Negative, based on prejudice and discrimination	Are extremely abusive
Simplified and emotional	Simplified knowledge and emotional attitude
Emotionally charged and axiological	Based on evaluative mechanisms of stereotype formation
Coherent and consistent	High degree of stereotypical assumption among the stereotyping group.
Stable	Rigidity to new information
Emotional and evaluative	Placed into the system of natural language and folklore texts
Dangerous	Vividly refers to marginalized communities. Ethnic stereotypes are unavoidable
Positive stereotypes may also be dangerous	Create an impression of objectivity and support the system of stereotypes
Changeable	Depend on situation (e.g., international, historical)

1.2.4. Summary

For the definition of stereotype as a working concept for this work, the following is considered:

- It offers an idea of certainty to the individual who holds them in their judgement to other people;
- It is often misleading about the associations that they represent;
- It is considered as fixed or rigid by the individual who holds them, while actually being a dynamic process;
- It is constructed from an individuals' culture and experience;
- It is used as an adaptable defensive mechanism;
- It is both positive and negative;
- It shapes how people think about and respond to a group;
- It intensifies the perception of otherness.

A stereotype is, therefore, an association that is the result of a dynamic process, in which at least an attribute or perception links an individual to a group, of which this individual is believed to belong by the perceiver, due to the influence of their culture and social context, and that happens to not be completely accurate.

1.3. Gender: What about it?

In the following pages, there would be an attempt to content a mobile term. Gender will be discussed, with an examination of the different possible definitions, and a short discussion to separate its meaning from that of sex, as they share a very close relationship. Gender has in it the impression of oneself relative to their body and their context. After tackling such a pivotal term, the other relationship gender/identity will be explored. Both, gender and identity hold an inherent subjectivity, wondering about their own attributes. Then, gender roles and their issues will be elaborate, as well as how these issues lead to the production of gender bias and the resulting discrimination expelled from it. Moving forward, gender stereotypes and the idea of what is appropriated to be performed, the behaviours and attributes that other expected from an individual, are going to be discussed

as a way to cement the path to analyse basic aspects of stereotyping related with social relationships and encountered identities.

1.3.1. Gender: a way of defining it

The word gender comes from the Latin stem *genus*, whose genitive is *generis*, and means “race, stock, family, kind, rank, order; species”, and may also refer to the female and male sex (OED 2016). Gender’s Proto Indo European (PIE) root is *gene*, which means “to give birth” (EC 2016a), and the meaning of the word is related with the idea of origin as well as with the idea of belonging to a certain group. The Oxford Dictionary (OD) defines this word as a noun that is “either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones” (OD 2017), establishing a relationship of the biological duplicity based in the division of the sexes, and the social context within this division occurs. Moreover, the definition by the OD incorporates to the broader meaning of this word a more specific one, adding that it conveys the “range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female”, and then, as a mass noun, it means the “fact or condition of belonging to or identifying with a particular gender” (OD 2017). In summary, these definitions encompass the idea of origins, the feel of belonging to a certain group, the relationship between sex and gender, and the broader non correspondence to a duality according to the biological division of the sexes.

1.3.2. How gender is not sex

From the get-go it’s important to establish a differentiation between the terms *sex* and *gender* (as they are usually interchangeable in the day by day use), and how they are going to be used throughout this dissertation, because considering gender in a loose manner might “lead to a definition that has little meaning” (Mayer and McHug 2016, 88). The word *sex* refers to the biological differences between men and women, hence, assuming a division based in physical and reproductive aspects; while the word “gender” is located in the realm of social relations, established between men and women, and it has the particularity of being socially constructed (Moser 1993). The American Psychology

Association (APA) defines the gender as:

n. the condition of being male, female, or neuter. In a human context, the distinction between gender and SEX reflects the usage of these terms: Sex usually refers to the biological aspects of maleness or femaleness, whereas gender implies the psychological, behavioral, social, and cultural aspects of being male or female (i.e. masculinity or femininity). (VandenBos 2015, 450)

This definition relates the meaning of gender with both the sociological and the psychological aspects in terms of being a male or female, and with the biological features of the individuals. In other words, how each gender/sex is envisioned depends on the fact of what epistemological context the individual is immersed in. The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology (CDP) follows a similar approach to the APA, but pointing out the fact that gender and sex only have been differentiated until recently (Matsumoto 2009, 216).

Sex can also be defined according to three categories: *genotypic sex*, referring to the two sex chromosomes (immutable); *phenotypic sex*, or internal and external genitalia, secondary sex characteristics and behaviour (modifiable); and gender itself, or “the subjective perception” of an individual’s sex and their sexual orientation, and it is determined by culture and biology (Purves et al. 2001). In this scenario the phenotypic traits and gender are not fixed, but keen to modification. On the other hand, the detachment between the social context and the biological sex’s categories/attributes might be contested, as gender is not the only of the two that could be influenced by the socio-cultural environment (Mayer and McHug 2016).

Even when sex involves the reproductive features of males and females (Matsumoto 2009, 488), in the working definition that is sought in this work, sex will not be completely assumed as being apart from what concerns to gender, because biology “is not destiny” (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 2001) or a sole cause/end itself.

Gender gathers a “panoply of theoretical and political positions” that make it a central issue in several debates (Teo 2014, 763). This is, the debate about gender bears different points views and perceptions about its nature. Hence, in order to delimit its meaning through these pages, gender will be considered here as the subjective perception each individual has about their sex and their sexual orientation, that is determined by this

individual's social and cultural contexts, as well as by their biological and psychological personal features.

1.3.3. Identity and Gender: close encounters of the first kind

Besides defining gender, it is also important to take into account the terms *gender identity* and *gender role* as key aspects of the dynamics of *gender stereotypes*, in order to analyse how is showcased in videogames, particularly through their characters. Moreover, it is important to point out, that the relationships among genders tend to follow what is typically believed that the member of a specific gender has to represent according to their gender roles:

Identity refers basically to the “who I am” relative to how an individual assumes her or his position in terms of being part of a group (like nationality, gender, and so on). It implies connectivity, and the sense of sameness related to specific identity categories that this person assumes contributes to the group they feel part of or belong to, and the debate around it presents questions about the uniqueness of individuals and their resemblance to others, as well as the question if identity is “a matter of who people are or what they do?” (Teo 2014, 933–34).

There is a particular relationship between identity and gender, as the latter is an important part of the study of the former:

If the study of identities is a key nodal point for interdisciplinary research in the social sciences and humanities, ‘gender’ remains a, if not the, pivotal point in the study of identities, with their continuously shifting frameworks, formations, sites and categories. (Segal 2010)

Borrowing the definition of *nation* by Benedict Anderson (1991), which is defined as an imagined community, with boundaries, yet flexible, conceived as deep (meaningful) horizontal comradeship (1991, 8), it's possible to find some parallelisms between both terms, in the sense that one's identity is, as subjective as it is, both personal and shared,

not possessed nor expressed by everyone the same way, and even if this identity is limited relative to other (in this case, gender) identities, it doesn't stop being flexible.

According to Stuart Hall (1991), the notion of identity is something that was once thought as a totality, but, nowadays, these identities can't be seen as something completely given, nor as something homogeneous, and they are "never completed, never finished", as ever going processes, beyond the western mold they historically have had. Moreover, for Hall, "the notion of identity that has to do with people that look the same, feel the same, call themselves the same, is nonsense", precisely because of its dynamic nature. Now, this notion of flexibility doesn't mean that individuals change their gender identity in a loose manner, but that the gender identity they feel in conformity with is not limited to a particular closed definition.

In the case of gender identity, this has been defined as the "identification of oneself as female or male" (Matsumoto 2009, 217), and as a "subjective, internal sense of being", part of a particular gender category, not limited to being a man or a woman, but open to be of any other gender as well (Mayer and McHug 2016, 86). This identity, despite the fact that it is an internal sense of being and/or belonging to a group or category, is not limited to it, nor is it a fixed entity.

Another important remark is that the notion of gender is related with that of behaviour, as individuals don't always act in a way that is acknowledged as following the parameters of their respective sexes. Individuals might change their behaviour, and this can occur precisely because of their social context and phenotypic features, and this change is not due to randomness in these behaviours, but might be because of reproductive and survival goals, as "both sexes can be socially sensitive or aggressive, given appropriate socialization and support from social normative, self-regulatory, and hormonal processes" (W. Wood and Eagly 2012, 57).

Moreover, gender identity shares with the notion of sexual identity that neither is fixed, while both are influenced by their sociocultural context, and that they might not be consistent with "other identity domains", while what is specific to sexual identity are aspects of each individual's sexuality, including sexual attractions, desires, relationships and so on (Teo 2014, 1739).

1.3.4. Gender Identity or Gender Roles: close encounters of the second kind

People are part of different groups, engage in activities in sociocultural contexts and play roles according to different needs. The identities of an individual are related with the role each person plays, and all the personal/social relationships that are established with others, such professions or occupations, etc. Additionally, identities can be modified in consonance with different situations, or, in other words, they are adaptable:

We construct identities by observing our own behavior and the responses of others to us as we enact these roles. For each role we enact, we develop a somewhat different view of who we are an identity. Because these identities are concepts of self in specific roles, they are called role identities. (DeLamater, Myers, and Collett 2015, 125)

Identities are basically this representation that people make of themselves. They include, on the one hand, what people *know*, in the sense of what each individual *enacts* within the context of each social role, the membership to categories, in-group favouritism and out-group stereotyping, what is learned and adopted as social identities, and are influenced by what is perceived from/by the others' reactions. On the other hand, identities are presented in the form of enacted roles, which are basically the chosen behaviours used to get feedback from others, with the intention to confirm the individual's identities. This implies a kind of agreement:

If members of a group agree on the meaning of particular identities and behaviors, they can plan, initiate, and control behavior to generate the meanings that establish the identities they wish to claim. If members do not agree in these meanings, however, people have difficulty establishing their preferred identities. (DeLamater, Myers, and Collett 2015, 132)

In other words, this agreement involves the idea of control and possible conflict between the individual's identity and the meanings within the group. This means that a scenario of conflict might be created, for instance, someone's idea of femininity has nothing in common with that of competitiveness and members of their group consider that being feminine means being non-competitive. In the need for support (of identity)

one can accept under certain circumstances, the members' idea that feminine equals non-competitive, and enact that identity. If that person decides to enact the identity's attributes that the group considers appropriate, and chooses to represent these ideas/meanings, this might result in poor performance due to stereotyping threats (DeLamater, Myers, and Collett 2015).

1.3.5. Gender roles and Gender bias

As with the roles that are enacted or performed when someone identifies as member of a group, when sharing a common meaning within the group, and with the consequences that might be derived from that, individuals tend to perform gender roles that are perceived as appropriate according to their biological sex and relative to their own sociocultural context. These gender roles are behaviours of what people should represent, in terms of what being a woman or man means, and are culturally based on sex differences:

These behaviors are so strongly associated with each sex that the set of behaviors comes to define masculinity and femininity in any given culture. The underlying basis for gender roles is biological sex differences, but most authorities agree that gender role behaviors are learned. (Matsumoto 2009, 217)

These roles are considered, basically, as "attitudes and activities that a society links to each sex" (Teo 2014, 761). However, the division of roles, according to biological features, assumes that each sex determines how someone's gender should be enacted. Even when this is might be correct to some extent (Cordón 2005, 44), biological determinism doesn't actually explain, nor delimits, the boundaries of gender identification, or neither how genders should be performed. While sex roles are somehow stable and based on the performativity of each sex' reproductive system, and in spite of the fact that individuals might exhibit non-typical behaviours that male or females are often perceived to perform (Mayer and McHug 2016, 89), gender roles are not solely established by biological features alone.

Gender bias might result from the assumptions of how individuals should behave according to their genders, or by what is called “gender role ideology” (Matsumoto 2009, 217). This bias is considered as “a preference or prejudice toward one gender over the other” (Teo 2014, 761). Here, gender relations can be seen as hierarchical, where a gender (men) has had an advantage over the other (women), permeating social institutions and generating expectations of what roles each member must follow (Reeves et al. 2000). This produces a sense of pressure to follow those sociocultural meanings that dictate what is that gender has to represent, and that people internalize when they regard gender roles as gender identities (W. Wood and Eagly 2012, 77).

This kind of bias results in gender discrimination, which refers as “the systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender”, and women are the ones who have been on the unfavourable side of the power relations hierarchy (Reeves et al. 2000). This doesn’t mean that bias is actively engaged by the *stereotyper*, as it can be either conscious and/or unconscious, manifested in different ways, both subtle and obvious, and imbedded in different social institutions and cultural manifestations (Teo 2014, 761–62).

1.3.6. Gender Stereotypes: close encounters of the third kind

Gender stereotypes are “the beliefs about differences between men and women and differences in what is appropriate for each that are generally held within a culture” (Matsumoto 2009, 218). These beliefs are not only limited to what is appropriate for each gender (based in their biological sex role), but also cover the attributes and characteristics that both, men and women, either possess or should possess, as well as the roles they should perform, according to their expected gender role. This kind of stereotypes implies that there is a relationship between the existing expectations about the behaviour of a group (and its members) and the stereotypes that are part of their social categories:

For example, individuals may expect that a group of girls would prefer to play with dolls as opposed to trucks; however, this expectation is stereotypic in nature because it assumes that all girls have this preference and does not allow for individual differences. (Cordón 2005, 183)

One of the characteristics of this kind of constructions is the differentiation among genders. This over or falsely differentiation of genders might result in biological reductionism, focusing in an individual difference and diverts attention from social inequalities, because it considers genders as homogenous groups that are unchangeable (Teo 2014, 1723–25). While genders are not the same, generalizations about their psychic conditions are often stated, but those conditions might be just an illusion (Cordón 2005, 150). Even in the scientific domain, the way language has been used in science has shown how relationships between men and women are a reflection gender stereotyping with favouritism for male related terminology as a common denominator. Moreover, this has generated confrontations with feminism, social constructionism and post-modernism, arguing that “science is profoundly political, not in a party politics sense, but in terms of the politics of power”, because, as Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2001) mention: “the way that language is used is powerfully implicated in the way people perceive and think about men and women” (2001, 1–2).

However, stereotypes can also disguise as something positive, and what causes them is an admiration or desirability of certain attributes. For instance, after the positive assessment of female stereotypes from different perspectives, women could follow or even take pride of communal stereotypical attributes that keep them in a relatively subordinate situation compared to men (W. Wood and Eagly 2012, 71). This happens because individuals tend to enact social identities that offer social profitability (DeLamater, Myers, and Collett 2015, 134).

One example of this is visible when people tend to see themselves as more prone to agency or to communion, in accord to the expected behaviours that are perceived a particular gender should follow. As social environment promotes how people form self-representations of their sex roles’ attributes, individuals consider that they show either more traits of agency (mastering the environment, experience of competence, achievement and power) or more traits of communion (desire to closely relate to and cooperate and merge with others), with men more prone to the former, while women the latter (Diehl, Owen, and Youngblade 2004), thus reproducing the idea of how people behave according to their gender stereotypes.

The dynamic nature of gender stereotypes is perceived strongly relative to women. Social role theory assumes that an individual’s role behaviour shapes this person’s stereotype, which is translated into groups and their members. It also predicts that sex

differences are perceived to be reduced as the similarity of roles that men and women play decreases. In this scenario, female stereotypes show a higher degree of dynamism. This happens because women's roles have changed more over time. They have taken traditional male gender roles, like career professional women, while having an overrepresentation in the traditionally gender roles that they have held, like being still in charge of the domestic tasks (Eagly and Diekman 2000). This means that, while stereotypes about masculinity or traditional men roles are seen as more static, women have broken gender roles barriers, since they began to enact roles that were traditionally (stereotypically) considered inherent to men.

This kind of social perception of change in terms of gender stereotypes, as defined for the change in role behaviours, stills considers that there are gender roles traditionally of men, and that these are being taken now by women. This occurs because there are gender ideologies that have defined what behaviour must be performed, and these tend to reinforce some kind of subordination by women relative to men (W. Wood and Eagly 2012). This gender subordination might result, among other things, in a tendency to perpetuate different kinds of violence, and contributes to the exploitation of women “as sexual objects, rather than individuals” (CEDAW 1992).

1.3.7. Gender relationships

Gender relationships can be paralleled with *power relationships*, with a supportive and creative force behind gender stereotyping. According to Michel Foucault, power relationships are dynamic, not of equals (as there is subordination and domination), and mobile, and create and recreate social situations in terms of economy, sexual issues, gender and so on. In order to understand them, it's necessary to navigate their web to see the discourses that allow them to prevail; considering the fact that power is not only a negative force, but also a creative one (Foucault 2014). This perspective about power and power relationships goes along with how gender stereotypes work. Gender relationships, understood as power relationships, mean that each individual had to enact their gender following those roles that were perceived as appropriate according to their biological sex, and where women, in particular, have been in a subordinate position, although, without being just passive agents. Besides that, socioeconomic and technological changes opened

the door for women to perform activities beyond the traditionally gender stereotypic ones, at a non-domestic level, breaking the typical role they previously had (W. Wood and Eagly 2012, 63–64).

1.3.8. Conclusion

In summary, someone's gender is basically constructed since before this individual comes to life, however, as time passes this person begins to learn more about the environment, the *loci* beyond anyone's imagination. The wonder of who someone is relies in the discovery that attracts the other. It's in those concrete relationships with the other, either direct or indirect, that ones' gender is manifest. Gender is not limited to biology, even though biological determination imprinted part of a static structure in which gender moves, around and away. Gender is influenced by the corporeal, and the question about one's self, own identity, is present within and manifested outside.

Chapter 2 - Gender Stereotypes and Media

2.1. Gender stereotypes: women have the looks, men got the bread

According to Wood (1994), media, in general, communicate images of the sexes in a way that portrays and perpetuates stereotypes, showcasing unrealistic traits and limiting the perceptions of the audience. In terms of numbers, women are underrepresented, implying that men “are the cultural standard”, while women are invisible; in terms of social ideas of how genders should be, both men and women are stereotypically portrayed; and in terms of their relationships, the traditional roles of each sex is emphasized, while, at the same time, there is a normalization of violent acts towards female characters. Wood points out that each gender (men and women in this particular case) is depicted in stereotypical ways. On one hand, women are portrayed mostly as beautiful, young, thin, interested about relationships, dumb, dependent, objectified, and are generally considered to be good. In contrast, if a woman shows traits that don't follow the stereotype, they are depicted as not so pretty, not so caring, as being *bitchy*, undesirable, and bad. On the other hand, men have been typically portrayed in media as active, non-temperamental, aggressive, independent, usually leaning to violent behaviour, not involved in family life, and not feminine at all. On top of that, women may only be considered strong and successful if they exemplify “traditional stereotypes of femininity-subservience, passivity, beauty, and an identity linked to one or more men” (J. T. Wood 1994, 33).

In summary, the relationships between men and women are drawn as opposite attitudes/behaviours: women are dependent of men to construct their identities, incompetent, their power lies in their looks and conventional femininity, caregivers and pleasing others, victims and sex objects; while men are independent, authority figures, saviours (of women and other men), breadwinners, and aggressors. This duality victim/aggressor is, basically, that of an irony:

The irony of this representation is that the very qualities women are encouraged to develop (beauty, sexiness, passivity, and powerlessness) in order to meet cultural ideals of femininity contribute to their victimization. Also, the qualities that men are urged to exemplify (aggressiveness, dominance, sexuality, and strength) are identical to those linked to abuse of women. (J. T. Wood 1994, 36)

2.2. Media: stereotypically influential

Media typically constructs an image of women, femininity, and female related issues, in a problematic way. Bryson and Bunker (2015) refer to these issues as causes of concern, pointing out at least three of them: life balance, where women are under social pressure relative to what is expected from them, like being able to “have it all”; the body image, which generates a preoccupation about the looks and the body shape; and growing in a culture that employs sexually offensive and abusive behaviour towards females. On TV and films, women are seen performing tasks that are typically expected from females, and, in a vast majority, without any visible occupation (even when a female character is said to have a profession, this is seldom considered story wise). The gender ratio of characters is always proportionally in favour of men; and with the particularity that there is a lack of older and real women (in appearance and situation), and women belonging to minorities. In terms of how the characters are constructed, the portrayal of gender is related with looks (how women look is more important than their personal skills and ambitions), sexualisation of female characters, while men are presented as one-dimensional characters. This happens mostly in TV shows, films, and media targeted to adults and teenagers, while children’s programming begins to challenge traditional stereotypes (Bryson and Bunker 2015).

Moreover, media is considered as instrumental in the role it plays for social transformation. Kumari and Joshi (2017) found, in a study about the perceptions of adolescents regarding sexual stereotyping of women in the media and its relationship with real life experiences, that teenage female students showed a higher level of agreement

with stereotypical depictions of women in traditional gender roles, and as sex objects, in the media than boys. According to their research, female characters usually perform household tasks, sacrifice for others, and are defined in the way men would like to see them (either as love interest or mother figures). As media has a different impact in their different audiences, in their study it is concluded that media should “take responsibilities of acting as a powerful instrument for bringing social change for women” (Kumari and Joshi 2017).

Discrimination and violence toward women is a recurrent issue in gender related studies concerning media. Media can help to normalize sexual violence against women, as well as gender inequalities, reproducing sexist stereotypes that put men in a dominant, and often aggressive, spot, while women are submissive to men (Vega Montiel 2014). Women are often sexual objects, or even just “mere body parts” in different kinds of media (from films to advertising), where “female sexuality is represented not as the sexual liberation of women but as the availability of women for male consumption”, and media is part of the problem and not the solution in terms of stopping this kind of violence (Vega Montiel 2014).

In a study for the European Parliament about women as subjects and media, Giomi, Sansonetti and Tota (2013) concluded that media representations “fail to reflect the continuous changes in society and the evolution of women’s roles”, pointing out that media contents reproduce “an ambivalent image of women” as either assertive, reliable and sexually powerful, or passive, objectified, and constructed for men’s expectations (Giomi, Sansonetti, and Tota 2013). Some of the findings in this study suggest that the empowerment of female characters is related with self-confidence and attractiveness; successful heroines are ambivalent, as they perform both, roles that are typically masculine and that are roles typically associated with women; that these characters reassured a stereotypical vision of gender identities, counteracting their innovative and subversive potential; there is a strong endorsement of sexual stereotyping of women, and the sexualisation has repercussions in women’s self-assessment of their own body; and that the recognition of sexism in media content has found a broad resistance. However, there has also been a progression in terms of representation of gender roles of female characters. The study concludes stating that media has is a central element in shaping gender identities, not only playing a “pivotal role in providing the ‘symbolic materials’ (images, role models, values, and narratives) that individuals are likely to use in the

process of constructing their identity” (Giomi, Sansonetti, and Tota 2013), but also doing it by employing stereotypes:

...they tend to use a simple language and provide a stereotyped representation of social reality, groups and phenomena, referring to preconceived ideas, whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. (Giomi, Sansonetti, and Tota 2013, 88)

2.3. Gender Stereotypes in Film

As cultural products, films and other media productions, impact the way viewers understand society and reproduce the situations present in them. In a study about gender inequality and asymmetry using an extension of the Bechdel Test² to analyze movies and social media, Garcia, Weber, and Garimella (2014) found that, of movies shared on Twitter, those that passed the test were more likely to be shared among female users. The study concludes that there was a generalized bias in the dependency that female characters had to the male characters, and that “trailers of male biased movies are more popular”, and shared on social media by males (Garcia, Weber, and Garimella 2014).

According to this study, gender bias is present in everyday life, and this affects social behaviours, perpetuating the creation of fictional works charged with this bias (Garcia, Weber, and Garimella 2014). In other words, the gender bias that is present in society influences fictional creations, and these creations, as cultural products, have an impact on social relationships.

² The Bechdel Test is a popular principle that appeared first published in 1985, in a strip named *The Rule*, from a the comic series *Dykes to Watch Out For*, by comic artist Alison Bechdel. The test is basically composed by three requirements related to the gender roles of female characters from a given movie. These requirements are that: 1) a movie has to have at least two women in it; 2) these women should talk to each other; and 3) the subject of their conversation were anything else but men.

2.3.1. Action and horror films: Get to the *choppa*, because Freddy is coming for you!

Some film genres present depictions that either challenge typical notions of womanhood and manhood, or reinforce them, and use formulas to develop their stories. In a study about gender and violence in contemporary action cinema, Roark (2011) asks if the characters in this genre were actually presented as women, if there was danger of sexualisation (of these characters), and if the female characters found their motivations subjugated. A complex landscape opens here, as it is not just action films that exploit female characters in favour of the main hero (usually a male character playing the role of an ideal stereotypical man), but that women have begun to be depicted with traits that were associated as masculine features, allowing a shift in their meanings: “By attributing masculine traits to these characters and then feminizing them, filmmakers are, in effect, feminizing, or at least neutralizing, those traits.” (Roark 2011, 65).

2.3.2. Women: killing aliens, vampires and surviving serial killers

Women have been presented in a wide variety of ways. In some of them, women are strong but given traditional gender stereotype motivations to engage in action; others are an evolution that can break the mould of their gender role; while in others, they might be having to choose between being sexualized and die, or being virginal and a survivor.

In the first scenario, there is the “phallic woman”, who is portrayed holding “a phallic weapon in her hand as an object of sexuality”, while being ideologically perceived as a man: “Because these characters wield a gun, they are often viewed ideologically as a man (...) This transplanting of historically masculine traits to the feminine threatens male viewers (castration anxiety)” (Roark 2011, 67).

Filmmakers usually employ two answers for that “misappropriation”, in order to play down the female character that depicts powerful features, usually with a “sexually compromising situation”, and with the restraining of the character’s motives, by means of giving a stereotypically feminine motivation that serves as a reason for their violent behaviour, such as a motherly figure (Roark 2011, 67–68).

Another way to depict female characters in films, and TV, has been one that allows them to perform what Goodwill (2009) refers as to “female masculinity” which is:

...a particular expression or performance of masculinity, an expression or performance that is entirely authentic, and that consists in female-bodied persons engaging in ways of thought and behaviour that have traditionally been considered masculine, such as claiming the right to authority, or displaying strength, courage, assertiveness, leadership, physicality (and sometimes violence), and very often heroism. (Goodwill 2009)

Therefore, female masculinity, in audiovisual productions, refers to what a woman does rather than how she looks (so she is not just a bad imitation of a male hero), and to the masculine traits that may be “displayed in a person who does not appear to be in any way male” (Goodwill 2009, 10–12). The idea, and meaning, behind the hero lies in the expectation that the hero would be a man; and the very same word, when applied to a female hero or heroine, falls into contradiction as “heroine should mean a hero who is a female” (Goodwill 2009, 14), because heroism has been associated with masculinity, in the sense of an individual who happens to be a male. This challenges old ideas of what masculinity means in terms of heroism, and that feminine traits don’t need to be neglected, as if they would undermine the agency of the hero. Moreover, the traditional division of gender, that followed what should be performed in concordance with the assumptions of the biological sex, is also challenged, exposing that that is not something “cast in biological stone” (Goodwill 2009, 129–30).

Besides the depiction of hero/heroine in action films, and the construction of female characters and the relationship of manhood/womanhood present in them, another genre where the role of female characters have been presented in a particular way, as the main character of the films, or the “final girl³”, is in horror and slasher⁴ films. In a study about the latter, and the stereotypical portrayal of women in these productions, Brewer (2009) analysed a series of films focusing on the stereotypic behaviours of female

³ The final girl is a film trope depicting a young virginal girl as the final survivor in a subgenre of horror films.

⁴ Slasher is a subgenre of horror, in which a serial killer stalks and murders several victims without having any apparent reason.

characters, and their interaction with other characters. Among the results of this analysis and in terms of stereotypical behaviour, the studied attitudes were: fighting behaviour, behaviours in moment of high stress or fear, and dialogue during times of stress and fear. In terms of *fighting behaviour*, in the original versions women did not fight back the killer/villain, and continued to be depicted as helpless. In *moments of high stress or fear*, female characters were portrayed as nervous and anxious, taking directions from male characters, and continued to be fearful and distressed. In terms of *dialogue during stressful moments and fear*, female characters spent most of the time gasping, screaming, crying, pleading, and so on; although, in contemporary slasher films, there was a presence of urgency in their language.

When female characters interacted with others, stereotypic behaviour was found. Also they were subjected more often to torture and violence, as well as to punishment or sexual obsession, and were more brutalized than the male characters. Overall, sexual behaviour was punished (it may be argued that this happens to male characters as well), and stereotypical traits prevailed (Brewer 2009, 28–32). There has been some change in the way women are depicted, however the only ones to get rid of the victim tag are the ones considered the *final girl*, which allows them to be the hero of the film. In order to do that, female characters “pass from being overtly feminine to convert to masculinity”, implying that masculine traits can save their lives, but only as a last resort (Brewer 2009, 38).

According to Newby (2009) there have been some changes present in this genre, and these depict a final girl/heroine with a more extrovert personality and agency (mostly with friends). Even though these films have more female characters as main leads, there are more men than women present in them. This results in more relationships with men than with women, and in situations where female characters are saved by men, or need to be rescued, even though their character is the final survivor. In terms of behaviour, motherly attributes were present in the final girl, with constant concern for others, or performing nurturing roles, while other secondary female characters engage in more nudity (even if they were outnumbered by male characters who were shown less in a sexual manner), with a strong presence of heterosexual normativity. In summary, the final girl behaviour is depicted inversely proportional as the film develops, having to perform a feminine role or a masculine one, and these roles are never blended:

The final girl is thus forced to choose between screaming (femininity, powerlessness) and grabbing a weapon and fighting back (masculinity, empowered). By choosing one, she is rejecting the other, at least for that moment. (Newby 2009, 30).

However, this is not just simply a negative phenomenon, as this situation offers the final girl the opportunity to both, perform a role as the stereotypical woman, and to engage in traits stereotypically attributed to men.

The heteronormativity goes in hand with the explicit stereotypical division of genders that is present in films. Women's sexuality is a recurrent tool used in horror and slasher films, or what is considered as *gynaehorror*, defined by Harrington as the group of films "that are concerned with female sex, sexuality and reproduction" (Harrington 2014, vii). They present an ambivalence not only between the gender division man/woman, but also as how women are depicted:

...for the most part, horror films engage with this binary construction of heteronormative female sexuality in an uncritical manner, very often relying upon such tropes as the feminised yet desexualised sacrificial virgin and the predatory, hypersexual vixen or she-demon. Moreover, in instances where there may be a greater degree of ambiguity, horror narratives force characters into these strict, sexualised roles. (Harrington 2014, 62)

Even though, as pointed out before, there is often an emphasized brutalization of the female body, sexualized for the heterosexual "male gaze", the industry has begun to open to more female voices, and this might lessen the marginalization of women (Harrington 2014, 278).

2.3. Conclusion

In overall, media have the tendency to portray women in way that shows a consistent gender bias against them. Women's traits are those related to the heterosexual

male fantasies. Female characters are seen as the seductive bitches, objects and overall made invisible in media, with a lack of agency in their portrayals. Men are the rude rough violent character, which, at the same time, shows more rationale, when compared to women. Their gender relations are marked by cooperative roles, when the man is the one in charge of the situation, rescuing the woman, or that of the violent aggression. Women must get a bargain by their looks, to gain agency. Basically, media influences, creates meaning and reproduces gender stereotypes in the population, in general.

Gender bias dominates the *silver screen*, where women have been constant victims. This doesn't mean that female characters are just passive agents. Slowly, female characters have obtained some agency, by pointing out a gun and shooting the aggressiveness and toughness that was reserved for men. However, such agency is balanced, as could represent a threat, with the aid of gender stereotypical motives for their actions. They, as phallic women, have to fight their ways to agency, while carrying a child in hands. Moreover, the final girl must retain chastity if she wants to survive the one and a half hour of killing spree, while men are more visible, muscle packed and ready to chew gum and kick ass. The damsel in distress awaits for her saviour, but the diehard consumer who could be influenced all the messages that media give, has some hope, when a new form of masculinity comes to the rescue, without needing to become a killing machine, without needing to get rid of her femininity, whatever the way she defines it.

Chapter 3 – Elements of videogames

3.1. What is a Game?

A game could be defined as “an activity that one engages in for amusement or fun”, which could be “a form of competitive activity or sport played according to rules” and/or “the equipment for a game, especially a board game or a video game” (OD 2017). This definition considers that a game implies some kind of action that results in some sort of amusement. Moreover, a game might very well mean an activity that follows rules, as well as it could refer to the equipment used in such activity. In other words, a game, according to this definition, implies that there would be some feedback that the person who engages in it will obtain, as well as the medium to get that feedback, in the form of amusement, while being performed under established rules. Thus, according to OD, a game is an activity that implies a teleology.

Eric Zimmerman (2004) defines a game as “a voluntary interactive activity, in which one or more players follow rules that constrain their behavior, enacting an artificial conflict that ends in a quantifiable outcome” (2004, 160). For Zimmerman, a game involves different features and elements that makes it a particular activity, and that go beyond the teleology that the OD points out. In a game, those participants who engage in it, do so voluntarily. The interactivity within it functions through the explicit participation of those who engage in it, by actually doing something, following the game’s rules. These rules constraint the behaviour of whom takes part in the game (the player), providing the structure that produces play. In a game there is artificiality, which means, as it is structured within boundaries in the real world, it might have different kinds of limits relative to time, space, and so on. A conflict is present, as “all games embody a contest of powers”, via the confrontation of the different players. And, finally, a game has final result that is quantifiable (Zimmerman 2004). This last aspect of a game means that a game, as quantifiable as it is, positions players according to their performances in the game. This definition incorporates competitiveness, via its conflict, and the structural rules.

Similar to Zimmerman, Gonzalo Frasca (2007) defines a game as a “form of play where players agree on a system of rules that assigns social status to their quantified performance” (2007, 70), which means that games have performances that are quantifiable, but with the added element of the social status that players are assigned, as a result of that. Frasca specifies that:

A game is to somebody an engaging activity in which players believe to have active participation and where they agree on a system of rules that assigns social status to their quantified performance. The activity constrains player’s immediate future to a set of probable scenarios, all of which they are willing to tolerate. (Frasca 2007, 70)

In other words, games are something that an individual engages in, where players can make quantifiable choices, under time constraints. Nevertheless, engaging in a game, for a player, is investing her immediate future in that activity, and limiting it to the scenarios the game might present. As there is an agreement on behalf of the participants, there is a will to tolerate those scenarios, making games a voluntary activity.

To compile and characterize in a singular definition what games are could be problematic (Newman 2004, 18). Hence, some of the main aspects that come from these few definitions mentioned, and that are important to consider in this dissertation, are that a game implies agreement among participants, a set of rules, for the participants to perform actions within the rules established, and with an outcome in the form of those probable scenarios that Frasca (2007) mentions.

3.2. How about videogames?

Nicolas Esposito (2005) defines videogame⁵ as “a *game* which we play thanks to an *audiovisual apparatus* and which can be based on a *story*” (Esposito 2005). This definition mentions the audiovisual apparatus, which is:

⁵ When referring specifically to videogames, the term “videogame” will be the one used in this dissertation, and not the two-word version of the term “video game”, as the literature has shown a preference for the

“...an electronic system with computing capabilities, input devices (controllers, mouse, keyboard, etc.), and output devices (screen, loudspeakers, etc.). It can be an arcade videogame, a videogame console, a handheld console, a computer, a personal digital assistant, a phone, etc. (Esposito 2005)

Such device, with input/output features and computing capabilities, brings a new aspect to consider, this idea of interactivity (Esposito 2005). A videogame presents these elements, but these elements themselves do not “make a videogame or help us to describe the uniqueness of the form” (Newman 2004, 15). This means that the simple presentation of these features, or the exclusive attention to one of those alone, will not translate necessarily into a videogame.

3.2.1. Ludus and Paidia: the winner takes it all

Johan Huizinga (1980) considered that one exceptionality and special position of play is “that it loves to surround itself with an air of secrecy” (Huizinga 1980, 12), within a specific play-community, where the outside world is not of matter at the moment of the play’s development. In fact, as previously observed, and as with games, play has rules, and, thus, becomes order: “Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it bring a temporary, a limited perfection. Play demands order absolute and supreme” (Huizinga 1980, 10). He then defines play as a “free activity” which remains outside the so called “ordinary” life and, although not being a serious activity, it absorbs the player in a deep fashion. Moreover, play, for Huizinga, is not connected with profit, as a final mean from it, by itself:

former. In this case, choosing one over the other is more a matter of uniformity in terms of conceptualization exclusively. The use of the one-word term has been critiqued, concerning what appeared to have been an arbitrary election, considering the two-word version has been used, in digital content (according to searching engines), over several times more than the one-word term “videogame” (Perron and Wolf 2009, 8). And this situation still stands up to the moment of this writing.

It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (Huizinga 1980, 13)

However, a critic to Huizinga's perspective about play comes from Roger Caillois and Elaine P. Halperin (1955), who observe that Huizinga's definition is at the same time "too broad and too narrow", as well as the posture that play "takes place at the expense of secrecy and mystery", and the fact that Huizinga leaves out of it the teleological mean, in terms of the profit that, through game, someone might expect to obtain (Caillois and Halperin 1955, 63–64).

For Caillois (2001) games "may be placed in a continuum representing the evolution from *paidia*, which is active, tumultuous, exuberant, and spontaneous, to *ludus*, representing calculation, contrivance, and subordination to rules" (Caillois 1958, x). *Paidia* is characterized by not having pre-established rules, allowing room for improvisation, and non-regulation; while *ludus* is filled with conventions, imperatives, basically ruled, and with a goal in mind. *Ludus*, according to Caillois is:

...complementary to and a refinement of *paidia*, which it disciplines and enriches. It provides an occasion for training and normally leads to the acquisition of a special skill, a particular mastery of the operation of one or another contraption or the discovery of a satisfactory solution to problems of a more conventional type. (Caillois 1958, 29)

Caillois, then, classifies games according to 4 groups: competition (*Agôn*), chance (*Alea*), simulation (*Mimicry*), and vertigo (*Ilinx*). These groups are composed for different games that are more or less close to either *paidia*, or *ludus* (Caillois 1958). This classification considers games such as betting, roulette, lottery, or any other game that is related with "chance" and odds, played with the intention of obtaining profit.

Frasca observes that Caillois approximation to ludus and paidia lacks of a strict definition and argues that “it is common to think that paidia has no rules, but this is not the case: a child who pretends to be a soldier is following the rule of behaving like a soldier and not as a doctor” (2003, 230). This brings the issue of differentiating game from play that, according to Frasca (1999) lies in the fact of the result derived by the rules of each one, and states that “games have a result: they define a winner and a loser; plays do not”, and even if both, play and game, have rules, a game can either be “goal-oriented” or “open-ended”.

Ludus processes, according to Frasca, are divided in three moments: first, ludus games have a defined set of rules, which the players acknowledge; then the game is played; and, as a final step, there is a result, which, according to the established rules, defines a winner and/or loser (1999). This designation is closely related with the three-act Aristotelian structure, which Frasca associates with the idea of a session:

Ludus sessions go through a first act in which the rules are acknowledge, a second act in which players perform, and, finally, a third act that concludes the game and draws the line between victors and losers (Frasca 2003, 230).

3.2.2. Narrative and (video)games: to rule them all, explicitly

To the question about how games and story relate to each other, Zimmerman (2004) affirms that understanding the relationship among different concepts, underlying or framed within the knot of these two terms, gives tools for study who they gather together. These concepts, which Zimmerman proposes to study the relationship game-story, are narrative, interactivity, play and games. In the case of the concept of *narrative*, it has different “events” arranged dialectically, that is in an initial state, then, a change in that state, which results in an insight produced by that change. However, a narrative is not just a *series of events*, but a *personification* of them “through a medium”. This is the narrative’s representational aspect, and it is “constituted by patterning and repetition”.

The second concept that Zimmerman tackles is *interactivity*, which is presented in several modes (relative to how it combines with narrative): cognitive or interpretive participation with a text (interactions with the content of a text); functional or utilitarian participation with a text (structural interaction with the material textual apparatus);

explicit, or participation with designed choices and procedures in a text (acting upon the rules of a game); and meta-interactivity or cultural participation with a text (beyond the single text, implies appropriation, reconstruction, participation in narrative worlds, and so on). In the case of games, explicit interactivity is the most clear, and this results in considering them as interactive narratives. Then, the third concept is *play*, which is “the free space of movement within a more rigid structure” and it exists “both because of and also despite the more rigid structure of a system”. The last concept in this interrelationship that gathers game-story is *game*. As mentioned in the definition of game, Zimmerman considers that a game is interactive, has rules that constrain behaviour, creates an artificial conflict, and has a quantifiable outcome. The way the concept of game relates to those of narrative, interactivity and play, is considering that games are narrative systems, present explicit interactivity, and have a formal quality. Zimmerman affirms that “a story is the experience of a narrative”, and proposes as an operative question “how games can be narrative systems in ways that other media cannot” (Zimmerman 2004).

In order to understand the implications that the relationship of game-story has with videogames, Zimmerman reflects in the elements that constitute a game-story and how they signify a narrative. Some of these are the story elements that “are not directly related to the gameplay”, such as printed images, covert art, cut-scenes, intros, non-interactive animations, text and so on. However, the element that is at the “heart” of what allows a videogame to be a narrative system different from other media is the gameplay. This gameplay allows for the emergency of a narrative distinct from what the non-interactive story elements offer: “As the player participates with the system, playing the game, exploring its rule-structures, finding the patterns of the free play which will let the game continue, a narrative unfolds in real time” (Zimmerman 2004). This narrative can be re-experience differently, even by the same player, although the full player’s experience is lived considering all the elements of the game (gameplay and non-interactive story elements).

3.2.3. Interactivity: press start

Interactivity has been pointed out basically in every definition and perspective exposed so far here. A videogame can be based or not in a particular story, and even when they are based on one, the core element of the player experience is the gameplay,

generating human-computer interactions, which ultimately translate into what is called interactivity, and this interactivity is linked to the gameplay (Esposito 2005). As a term, interactivity has found its problems among scholars because, as with the definition of game, could be too broad (Perron and Wolf 2003, 12). The nature of the interactions player-game is related with the choices that a player makes. As Pedro Cardoso (2016)⁶ points out, interactivity is one of those factors that fascinates players, and differentiates videogames from other media:

(...) video games were very different from every other piece of entertainment that we had until then experienced. In fact, in time we grew very fond of those kinds of graphics and sounds, but what really triggered our fascination was their inherent ability to interact with us. They had the means not only to immediately react to our actions, but also to challenges us, establishing what we felt (and still feel) to be a very powerful link of communication between us and the game system, (...) (Cardoso 2016, 27)

The relationship established between player and system, in this case, remains inherent as a condition of the very root of what a game is. As previously mentioned, someone can play games with an emotive teleology (playing them because amusement and fun are obtained from the activity); engages in them under certain rules that constrain the player's behaviour; and there is a response to a performance by having a quantifiable outcome assigned. In videogames, the element of the "audiovisual apparatus" is added, and this allows the player to give an input that, through the system, generates an output, hence, feedback. This interactivity is mostly explicit, and, thus, produces interactive narratives, as a result of the player's freedom within the established structure of rules.

Interaction in videogames happens in different ways and it is presented in different forms. It can be either diegetic, like the elements present in the game that the game characters can perceived, or non-diegetic, like the elements that just players can experience (Andrews 2010). Interactivity can occur "within the onscreen game space yet outside the game's diegetic world: for example, the choosing of avatar attributes or the

⁶ This author focused work on the effects that *actors* and their relationships have over the game analyzed through an action-oriented framework.

setting of other customizable factors such as difficulty level” (Perron and Wolf 2009). This means that the actions performed by the player are not only inserted in the world the character perceives in the game, but also present in the amount of choices the player makes and actions she performs, even beyond the eye of the characters. Newman (2004) states that the effort and activity of the player results in a response by the game, or simulation, and this is something that characterizes interactivity in videogames (Newman 2004, 26). However, the term interactivity (used relative to videogames), besides being too broad (as pointed out before), has been critiqued for being “nebulous and ideologically charged”, motivating the search for a better fit (Newman 2004, 26).

3.2.4. Enter the ergodic

Espen Aarseth (1997) introduces the term *ergodic* while defining the nature of the relationships between the reader and the text in what he calls *cybertext*. For this author, cybertext is a perspective that enlarges literary studies, related with forms of textuality that have been left outside by the field of literature. Such marginalization happened because scholars used narrative theory and literary tools to study an object whose processes and elements are different than those from literature (Aarseth 1997, 11). In the cybertext the user performs an action that is not the same in nature than that of the reader of a text: “during the cybertextual process, the user will have effectuated a semiotic sequence, and this selective movement is a work of physical construction that the various concepts of ‘reading’ do not account for” (Aarseth 1997, 1). Aarseth calls this phenomenon “ergodic”, and states that “in ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text”, and only makes sense if “nonergodic literature” also exists, in the sense that the activities the reader does that do imply “extranoematic responsibilities” (Aarseth 1997, 1). The difference between a reader and a player (or cybertext reader) lies in the fact that the reader is “powerless”, no matter how much is engaged in the act of reading and the narrative that unfolds upon him, acting just as an spectator, without influencing what happens in the text: “The reader’s pleasure is the pleasure of the voyeur. Safe, but impotent” (Aarseth 1997, 3). On the other hand, the cybertext reader is “not safe”, therefore becoming something different of a reader:

“The cybertext puts its would-be reader at risk: the risk of rejection. The effort and energy demanded by the cybertext of its reader raise the stakes of interpretation to those of intervention. Trying to know a cybertext is an investment of personal improvisation that can result in either intimacy or failure. The tensions at work in a cybertext, while not incompatible with those of narrative desire, are also something more: a struggle not merely for interpretative insight but also for narrative control: “I want this text to tell *my* story; the story that *could not be* without me.” In some cases this is literally true. In other cases, perhaps most, the sense of individual outcome is illusory, but nevertheless the aspect of coercion and manipulation is real.” (Aarseth 1997, 3)

This differentiation between the reader and the player considers elements of interaction, but specifies not only the interactivity itself beyond the narrative mode, and positions the player as creator of narrative through the actions performed. The non-triviality of the player’s actions is present as she brings a uniqueness to the story of the cybertext. The choices made present consequences, thus the player’s actions are important within the development of the events subscribed within the narrative. The constructive nature of the relationship cybertext-player, and the path traversed, is the ergodic.

Videogames, as cybertexts, are different from other kind of texts. These (computer) games became, according to Aarseth (2001), a phenomenon of cultural importance, even greater than other media, because they combine social and aesthetic elements in a way that those media could not. Videogames “are often *simulations*” (thanks to their communicative nature), being both an object and a process, and must be played:

Playing is integral, not coincidental like the appreciative reader or listener. The creative involvement is a necessary ingredient in the uses of games. The complex nature of simulations is such that a result can’t be predicted beforehand; it can vary greatly depending on the player’s luck, skill and creativity. (Aarseth 2001)

3.2.5. The traversal: bricks do hit back

Cardoso (2016) explores the emergent narrative that is the result of the player's experience while she journeys the *ergodic landscape of videogames*. This emergent narrative is different from that "hardcoded" narrative that is presented in the game. In the case of the former, the player engages in non-trivial efforts, which refers to the ergodic; whereas in the case of the latter, the player does not provide any input. This means that the interactions with the game system make that a particular kind of narrative occur, as the player's own personal experience emerges (261–62). Thanks to this, the game progresses and the narrative goes in hand with the players' actions, decisions and performance. This journey that the player experiences is what Cardoso (2016) calls traversal: "Traversal may be defined as traveling through something. In this particular context, it is related with how the player crosses the ergodic landscape of a video game." (262).

Two kinds of traversals are identified. On one hand, there is a non-ergodic traversal, characterized for being the result of a "system defined by static features, which produce a non-modifiable, non-editable, and fixed narrative". And, on the other hand, there are ergodic traversals, where the "player is potentially more active, an interactant", as the system can adapt to the player's input in a particular way, providing a unique and choice dependent experience (Cardoso 2016).

In videogames, information is gathered from the player's experience of the game, as well as by how the game world changes thanks to what the game system monitors from the player's actions. In other words, these actions "develop" the game, they move it forward (Cardoso 2008, 59).

However, players are not always able to experience "a game in its entirety", and each player's experiences of a game can differ, because a given videogame may be too large (Perron and Wolf 2009, 12). This is not meant to translate in an impossibility by the player's part to experience in her own way a game, but could imply, also, that even the own personal experience of a player might be revisited in terms of how a player plays a game, which she can do more than once. If the input received by the game system from a player varies, as this depends on the choices the player makes and translates those into particular outputs, the very same videogame is not "easily re-experienceable", not even by the same player (Cardoso 2016, 263).

The narratives that inhabit videogames work together within their realm. Uniqueness in the experience that each player lives, through the traversal of a videogame, comes from the relationship of two kinds of narratives: “one that is fixed, recognizable, that makes sense, whose dramatic arc is carefully calculated – the hardcoded narrative –, and the one that is fluid, dynamic, devoid of previously defined structure, strange and even abstract sometimes – the emergent narrative” (Cardoso 2016, 264).

The way these emergent and hardcoded narratives relate to each other generates different kinds of traversals. Cardoso (2016) explores 5 types:

1. Branching: player is able to choose from mutually exclusive paths.
 - a. Here, the player misses part of the narrative, as result of her choices, when she decides that one of the available paths offers narrative possibilities, while she can't explore, going back the path not walked.
2. Bending: player is able to engage in optional activities, expanding the narrative.
 - a. Non-mutually exclusive events may be explored, which prolongs the game.
 - b. The player is rewarded, and this changes the experience of play, as a result of her interaction with the rules of the game world, which allows the emergent narrative to appear.
3. Modulating: this traversal is determined by the disposition of the actors within the game world towards the player and towards each other.
 - a. It moulds the social fabric established between these elements, thus crafting relationships.
 - b. Action is meaningful, as it influences the player's progression.
 - c. New storylines can emerge as a product of this manipulation.
4. Profiling: the game system's actions are based on an analysis of the player's behaviour and on the interpretation of the patterns that from there emerge, consisting of a reflection of the player's behaviour.
 - a. The behaviour of the player is associated with the player's own personality or her current state of mind.
 - b. It can be either implicit or explicit: data is collected and interpreted, and the way the game system disclosures this along with the perceptiveness of the player play a role when considering profiling implicit or explicit.

- c. The game system creates balance to avoid player frustration/boredom resulting of the difficulty of lack thereof. The game system promotes unbalance to break the flow, surprise and give a sense of novelty.
 - d. Profiling can be either shallow or deep, depending on the analysis of the player's play history.
 - e. It is not limited to analyse player's issues or failures, but also to understand her competencies, in order to propose new challenges/adapt the narrative.
5. Exploiting: this is usually associated with cheating, or hacking into the game,

here:

The player resorts to a hidden side of the algorithm, exploiting glitches, errors, flaws in the game system, journeying through a world of unpredictable behaviors and events, which may ultimately break the game altogether. (Cardoso 2016, 261)

3.2.6. Conclusions: Moses and a path through the sea

A game represents first and foremost something someone engages in a way that the will of the participant(s) is respected. It takes time, it has rules, there is a structure that allows the player to know what the game is about. Players confront each other. But a game is not precisely a game. In games, there is a winner, some might say the only winner is the *house*. However, following Frasca (2007), game means that players believe in the ability to act, under an explicit set of rules. The idea of *paidia* is not having to lose, with or without rules, while *ludus* is ruled and presents the thought of something that can be lost. The will to act is something powerful that attracts the player, as these can bring something to the table, feeling that the game system respond in unique ways to her.

Huizinga's idea of play was surrounded by secrecy and was a free activity, while according to Caillois, the profit from the play was rightful and games were just a few meters away, covering under the umbrella of rules, while play was freely dancing in the rain. Frasca comes back, considering that is not as simple as it seems, because the little kid playing a soldier has a set of rules particular to that characterization, while the rules regarding medicine dictates that a doctor probably makes more money. Zimmerman is interested a bit more in explicit interactivity, which is that participation with choices designed and procedures in a text, or, simply put, acting upon the rules of a game.

Gameplay is the heart, the narrative constructed while playing unfolds for the player by those decisions made. Videogames offer that, in a way no other media do: there is a relationship with the system, it reacts to inputs, and the reward can be not only the discovery of those pre-made linear stories, but also the emergence of narratives that remind allow the reader to feel powerful. This reader walks, jumps and navigates Aarseth's cybertexts and finds the challenges and new emotions that those bricks that do hit back can offer. And for Cardoso, there are these traversals, revealing the narratives that were created due to the player's experience, every time she made the decision to traverse through the ergodic paths offered by the game system. Here, two important traversals appear: modulation (or the relationship among the actors within the game world, where the social fabric is moulded, with meaningful consequential action for the player), and profiling (or the system's way to tell the player that "it" is listening her steps, either whispering or by signing, trying to adapt in a way that balance is created). They are important because these particular kind of traversals are particularly good for immersion.

3.3. Gender Stereotypes in Videogames

3.3.1. Portrayal of female characters in Videogames: The invisible woman

Tracy Dietz (1998) performed a research focused in the portrayal of the gender roles assigned to females, and the use of violence in popular videogames for the *Nintendo* and *Sega* consoles. One of the considerations of the research was that gender roles are shaped by children's parents, even before they are born, and that technology has become an assistant in this process. Children toys are often designed to conform to stereotypical gender roles, and with videogames the same phenomenon is present. In the sample of 33 games analysed, women were mostly shown as *visions of beauty*, sex objects and prizes (based on physical appearance such as wearing revealing clothing or body shape or characterizations including women leaving with the male winner), victims (based upon women who had been kidnapped or assaulted as part of the plot), in feminine gender roles (based upon appearance, such as wearing pink, long dress and the like, and characterization, such as playing supportive roles to men). In the other hand, in just 15% of videogames in the sample, female characters were depicted as action characters or the

hero. Moreover, the most common representation of female characters in these games was their total absence, with the second most common portrayal being their stereotypical representation as damsels in distress (Dietz 1998).

3.3.2. Sexual objectification of female characters: the eye candy factor

Female characters, as pointed out, were, and have been, target of objectification in terms of their sexuality. Physical attributes have been used to exalt them as sexual objects, such as females with big breasts, hips and buttocks.

In the case of male characters, they were portrayed as dominants, with agency, protectors, or supervisors and victimizers or aggressor of the female character. Thus, their interactions were very few, limited to their stereotypical roles. In a study from 2002, Berry Beasley and Tracy C. Stanley (2002) found out that, even though female characters were underrepresented, when they did appear in the games, they were often less clothed than male characters, as well as leaning to be “dressed in clothing that emphasizes their sexuality by drawing attention to their breasts” (2002, 289). The clothing and body shape are recurrent elements to assess how gender roles are depicted in videogames. Traditionally, female characters have been associated with sexual objectification, in part for the way they appeared dressed and how their body is presented. They are considered provocatively dressed if their attire shows cleavage and their body proportions depict a big breast/small waist relationship. These attributes influence the perceptions that people generally have of them, and this results in a depiction of them as slutty, hookers, or as *easy* (Dill and Thill 2007).

Even when female characters slowly began to gain more active roles in videogames, becoming the playable character and, therefore, the hero of the game, their clothing and physical appearance continued to showcase them in a hypersexualized way (Jansz and Martis 2007). Moreover, in a small scale study about gender and racial stereotypes, focused in fixed narratives, such as intros, trailers and covert art of 19 different videogames, Mou Yi and We Peng (2008) found that in the trailers, over half of the female characters were depicted as unrealistically thin, and that 25% of them appeared with revealing clothes; in the case of the intros, over 80% of females were unrealistically thin, and 30% of them had a revealing attire; and relative to the covert art, all females were unrealistically thin and half of them had a partially revealing attire (Mou

and Peng 2008). In other words, even with the passing of time, female characters, through different forms, continued to be created as a male heterosexual fantasy. Even when they gained a better position in terms of getting active roles, thus gaining agency, they have been still depicted as highly sexualized (Jenson and de Castell 2010).

3.3.3. Male and Female characters: the hero, the villain and the victim

The gender role associated with weakness and passivity, makes the victim's qualities to be perceived as those that women stereotypically possess. And the female characters are believed to represent the stereotypical gender roles that are associated with femininity and womanhood. The hero, the man, the male, is the one who has been perceived as strong, skilful, and recognized as a saviour. Historically, women have had fairly non-significant roles, when they were not absent at all, in videogames; and female characters' second most common portrayal is that of the *damsel in distress*⁷, usually playing the role of the hero just about 1/6 of the time. Relative to the female character, male characters have been depicted in a, mostly, dual way as both, the villain or victimizer, and the hero or protector (Dietz 1998). In both cases, the male character's position in terms of gender relations is that of the dominant, while the female character is submissive (or passive). Furthermore, videogames have had the tendency to depict "stereotypic views of gender-appropriate behavior", where men were the ruthless aggressors, when they were the villains, and women were often the victims of that violence (Beasley and Standley 2002). Male characters are usually depicted as these *powerful aggressors* that are strong and muscular, warriors and superheroes; while females characters are helpless, subservient, and either polite or bitchy (Dill and Thill 2007). In comparison to female characters, male characters have more options in terms of the game roles that they can play, expressing themselves through violent acts that could be directed to both other men and women alike (Trinh 2013).

⁷ The damsel in distress is a common way to portray gender role bias and conglomerates several stereotypical traits associated with women. A lot of female characters are presented as damsels in distress, taking from them agency and leaving them at the mercy of both, the hero and the villain (both male characters). This character is "a plot device in which a female character is placed in a perilous situation from which she cannot escape on her own and must then be rescued by a male character, usually providing a core incentive or motivation for the protagonist's quest." (Sarkeesian 2013)

3.3.4. Winds of change

Videogames have matured, and the way women and men have been portrayed has changed with this growth. Even though female characters are still portrayed under some sort of sexual filter, there are more and more active roles for them, such as heroes or supporting characters, gaining more agency with time (Jenson and de Castell 2010). Jeroen Jansz and Raynel G. Martis (2007) refer to this as the *Lara phenomenon*, which is defined as “the appearance of a strong competent female character in a dominant position” (2007, 141). According to them, the particularity of the Lara phenomenon lies in the fact that as the roles played by women and men have changed, female characters have begun to occupy a fairly similar amount of leading roles as men, which gave them a position that was not accessible to women before. One consequence of this change is that male characters began to hold non-dominant positions, even when their characteristics and stereotypical gender traits have changed to a lesser extent, being still portrait as hypermuscular. Therefore, gender stereotyping continues, with female characters highly sexualized. However, “the Lara phenomenon may be empowering for female gamers. The female characters they are playing might look odd, but they are competent and occupy a powerful position in the virtual world of videogames” (Jansz and Martis 2007, 147).

3.4. What about the player?

In the same way videogames have changed, there has been a gradual shift for studying the impact and interactions of their content, not only from the game themselves and how these portray gender, but also from the perspective of their target audience. One of the aspects that have been studied is related with the assumptions about what women look for in a video game, based on their stereotypical gender traits; and what are the capabilities of each gender (in this case women and men) in terms of skills, and attractiveness that videogames have, under the perception that, for instance, men are naturally more inclined to play videogames, while women do not. The main questions are not related only with the number of women who like to play, neither with the fact that the industry of videogames has been constructed from a masculine perspective, but also with

what and how women (and men) play. These questions should consider that play is negotiable and context dependent: “there is a big difference between someone who reportedly plays online free puzzle games and someone else who is paying for multiple subscriptions to play in persistent world, massively multiplayer online games” (Jenson and de Castell 2010, 58). Moreover, the motives that drive players to engage in this activity are several and differ depending on various factors. Even gender targeted videogames can still offer opportunities that are not just stereotypical, where players can explore creative ways to create and present themselves, engage socially, practice and learn, if the game gives the players options and allows them to be active (van Reijmersdal et al. 2013).

According to Jenson and Castell (2010), both male character and the male player’s perspective have been neglected; and that more in depth studies must be done to understand more about players, not departing from the base of their genders, but from their experiences. Women and men alike seem to react to violent stimulus from videogames without existing differences based on their sex, in the same way that it doesn’t happen in other media. Moreover, for these authors, “research continue to compress gender-based differences into sex-based difference”, which results in a codification that restricts players, considering them either male or female. For them it’s important that research methodology and practice take into consideration “the fact that not all women need to be ladies and not all ladies are frail vessels” (Jenson and de Castell 2010, 64).

3.5. Agency: a violent problem solving technique

While it’s true that videogames often emphasize violence and aggression as problem solving techniques (Dietz 1998), these factors are not what actually attracts players to play videogames. Gender stereotyping is a reality in the world of videogames, because the use of stereotypes allows for easy recognition of traits that people associated with members of a group. Hence, stereotyping seems to be an easy and safe way to depict characters’ behaviours and traits. Most of the time, female characters are the victims of the male characters, are objectified for the assumed taste of the target audience, and/or are submissive to the dominion of the male characters. However, not always the violence

present in videogames has an agenda. According to Long Trinh (2013), while videogames influence gamers, but this influence is limited and doesn't have long term effects on them. What the gamers gain from video game is that they can incorporate part of their identities into the game, and this produces a gaming experience that is *a unique and personal process* that allows to experience a virtual identity. Reward and punishment here indicates that, nowadays, videogames focus more in the player than the characters. A consequence of this is that videogames offer to the player the opportunity to actively use videogames *to experience and identity that they want to explore*. This exploration is a key element of videogames, and the search for identification makes them highly attractive to the players. However, as mentioned, videogames tend to depict gender stereotypes, where male characters are often violent and occupy leading and primary roles. This results in the misconception that videogames simply promote violence behaviour, and that violent masculinity is the main attraction behind them (2013).

Although videogames are often depicting different violent acts, it's the agency found in videogames that makes them attractive to the players, as they can "experience self-expression and new identities that are otherwise unavailable in real life" (Trinh 2013, 14–15). This agency implies that the players have the capacity to act and the ability to observe the consequences of their actions. The, want, thus, to perceive that *what they do in the game matters*, where the sense of autonomy and competence gives them the motivation to play videogames. The relationship between agency and violence is that the latter is a shortcut of the former: "This is the way agency is easily mistaken for violence, since the latter is the most common expression of the former in the virtual world of videogames" (Trinh 2013, 14). So violence is just an easier way to manifest agency in the game, and what players seek is to have a better sense of agency, and not necessarily engage in violence. It is the capacity to act that allows the player to write their story in the game, which will unfold the emergent narrative. The player can identify better with the game as their immersion grows and their decisions matter. Videogames may present violent set ups, but it is the agency within the possibilities that the game offers, what makes the games attractive and which improve the player experience. With the advances in technology, the players can express themselves in new different ways:

On one hand, this newfound virtual agency lets the gamer try on different masculine identities that are otherwise unavailable to them in real life, due

to social constraints. (...) On the other hand, this agency simply reinforces their established values and moralities. The freedom of video game allows gamers to participate in situations where they can pursue their personal goals and values without any limit. (Trinh 2013, 50)

3.6. Conclusion

Videogames depict characters mostly according to established ideas of what each gender should represent. Female character have been supportive, without agency, as how it happens with other media, their agency is neutralised or balanced by elements that transform them in sexual objects, or that feed their intentions by the use of traditional traits associated with femininity or stereotypical female behaviour, such as being protective, supportive and communal. In the case of male characters, they have been the protectors, enemies and aggressors, of male and females alike. However, their relationships with female characters have been from a perceived hierarchy, where females have had to see upwards, from their often submissive position, to the higher spot male characters have had. This occurs because developers, in general, tend to use stereotypes as a way to avoid risks, and also as a shortcut to showcase different groups. Violence, as an agentic trait, has been used mostly because of its effectiveness, and this has led to consider videogames as violent products. As violence and agency are related somehow in the world of videogames, and male characters are the ones with the bigger present in active roles, male characters have engaged in more violent behaviours. Nevertheless, things have been changing, and advances in technology, along with inclusion of more agentic female characters, allow the industry to give more options for the players to explore the gameworld.

Chapter 4 – Exploration

4.1. Survey: Visual evolution of a videogame character

4.1.1. Brief Description

This study was based on a survey that was filled in by 100 participants. The main aspect of it was the idea to explore, on the one hand, some ideas that the literature has either suggested or stated and, on the other hand, to collect data, from discrete variables to qualitative data, in order to see if there are factors or considerations that must be taken into account, that might not be considered by the state of art, literature review and videogames analysis.

As this study was not meant to be a definitive answer to the problematic of the current dissertation, but as a way to generate knowledge, and thus complement the research, it was constructed in an ad-hoc way. Hence, its results might not be totally reliable as such, and it would need a further and more elaborated research base, in order to refine both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of it.

Some of the assumptions that the study was based on are that:

1. Videogame industry, and culture, are in constant change, where female representation has gained more attention from videogame production companies (Paaßen, Morgenroth, and Stratemeyer 2017);
2. That videogame characters are both, a “set of available capabilities and capacities” in their on-line (gameplay) version and a “characterization” in their off-line (during moments of not actual play, i.e. cut-scenes), being the latter where the “distinctiveness” of the character is constructed (Newman 2002);
3. That female characters, even in lead roles, in videogames are often sexualized (Jansz and Martis 2007) and present less clothing than male characters, perpetuating stereotypic views of “gender appropriated behavior” (Beasley and Standley 2002);

4. That videogames have been created, historically, by a small group of people, heterosexual young Men (Anthropy 2012);
5. And, lastly, that, in the case of Lara Croft, she has been presented beyond her gender in terms of gameplay, being, probably, more a “surrogate date” for the heterosexual male player (Dille and Platten 2007).

In summary, this exploratory study hypothesizes that videogames have been historically constructed from a heterosexual male perspective, where stereotyped female characters such as Lara Croft, even in lead roles, have been presented as sexualized objects (objectification), which is recognizable in their non-on-line version, but that this historical depiction might be changing due to the dynamic nature of the gaming community (gamers, videogame industry, etc.).

4.1.2. Method

The operative question of the survey was based in the analysis, by the participants, of a set of three images of a popular video game character, Lara Croft, of the videogame franchise *Tomb Raider*, published by Eidos Interactive (1996-2009) and Square Enix (since 2010), and consisting in 9 iterations of this character, that ran from the first game up to the 2013 release.

In order to obtain the sample for the survey, 9 forms were created, using Google forms, to gather the participants, mainly by distributing the questionnaire to people using the social network Facebook, as well as by people who attend different programs at the Faculties of Engineering and Fine Arts of the University of Porto (UP), and on different forums in websites dedicated to videogames. The sample was composed by 52 respondents from the UP, 24 from Facebook, and 24 from the different forums.

A total of 18 countries were listed among the total of participants, one more without specifying his country of origin, and 4 from the UK. Most of the participants, 67 of them, were from Portugal.

The total number of participants was 100, of which 42 identified themselves as Men, 3 as Other/Agender and 55 as Women. The average age of each group was: for Men 24.5 years old, for Women 24.03, and for Other/Agender 40.6 years old. The average age of the whole sample was 24.75 years old (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants: Age and Gender

Gender	No. of Participants	Age Average (%)
Man	42	24.55
Other	3	40.67
Woman	55	24.04
Grand Total	100	24.75

From the total sample, 76 participants were asked if they attended college, out of which 69 responded with “yes” for a 91% of attendance rate versus 7 participants who answered “no”, for a 9% of attendance out of the total number of participants to whom this question was proposed. There is no information about the rest (24) of participants. Related with this, in terms of gender, 50% of the participants who attend or have attended college (38 of the 76 who responded the question) identified themselves as Women; while 37% of the participants who answered this question identified themselves as Men. All the participants in the category of Other responded that they attend or have attended college.

4.1.3. Questionnaire and procedure

The survey was presented in several different forms, each one composed by 7 items, with questions looking for discrete data such as age, country, gender, *do you play videogames?* and *hours of playing*. One of the items asks from the participants to pay attention to three different sets of images and then continue with the last question, in which they were asked:

The images above (point 6) represent different iterations of a popular video game character (in chronological order of release). Could you point out anything that calls your attention about the evolution of this character's image and briefly explain why?

There were two variations in the different surveys, as some of them began to be applied before some modifications. One of these variations was to the question *How many hours per month you play videogames?*, which was left with blank space, hence representing an open question (factor that would have modified the data to continuous and not discrete) to be modified in order to be tabulated in a proper manner, and it was changed for the rest of the surveys to *In average, how many hours per week do you spend*

on playing video games?, with the proper grouped options, thus, facilitating the tabulation. The second variation was the inclusion of the close question *Did/do you attend college?*, which was necessary to differentiate any sample population, as the surveys were not randomly assigned, and a vast majority of the individuals were specifically asked to participate within a university space.



Figure 1. Image depicting the different iterations of the female character used for the survey⁹.

The surveys were translated and presented in three languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese.

4.1.4. First analysis: Semantic relationships

By the proportions of the sample's population, as there were 100 participants, each of them represented a 1% of the entire sample. However, when comparing the answers categories, the proportion between Women (55) to Men (42), led to consider a ratio of 1.3:1¹⁰.

Among all the answers, there was first a content analysis based in recurrent subjects that the participants pointed out. In a first moment, different words were counted according to their semantic relationship by selecting from the general corpora (the whole written text derived from the all the answers) that resulted from the 7th question in the survey, first by word frequency, and then adding the words that might appear relevant for the general subject, according to the literature review and main conceptualization. However, this first filter (process) was let out of the final analysis ran because of the

⁹ Author of the image unknown.

¹⁰ (Product of 55:42).

complications related with idiolects, different language uses of words and terminology, and weight of meaning relative to possible “keywords” (such as parts of the body) that differ from culture to culture (from a linguistic point of view).

Even though this first analysis was let out, some of the partial results suggested that those participants who identified themselves as Women employed more words, grouped according their semantic relationships, to refer to aspects related with “clothing”, “body”, “realism”, “sex” (as in “sexualized”), “object” (as in “objectification”), and “women”, in their answers compared to Men. This hinted a way to observe the population, in terms of the incoming analysis, suggesting that more Women than Men would refer to the character, through the different iterations, as being showcased by the physical (visual) attributes as “sexualized”.

4.1.5. Second analysis

The next step was to read the answers and group different categories or subjects that were common among the answers and notate numbers their appearances, considering one per answer. This resulted in the following set of 6 categories:

1. *Clothing* (clothes, attire, etc.),
2. *Body and Figure* (B and F, references to the character’s body, parts of it, or how it’s displayed),
3. *Design/Style*,
4. *Realism* (how the character’s reflects or represents reality),
5. *Objectification* (as in “sexual object”),
6. *Female/Feminine/Femininity* (FFF) references.

Concerning the categories of Clothing, B and F, Realism, Objectification and FFF, the analysis showed that, of the total amount of answers, Women referred to them 105 times combined (referring to at least one of them in each individual answer); whereas Men referred to these categories 58 times combined.

The frequency of appearances of the category “Design/Style” was 58 times among the total sample, with Men employing it a total of 26 times (45%), Women 30 times

(51.5%) and Other 2 times (3.5%). In other words, this category was employed 0.6 times by the total amount Men in each answer, and 0.55 times by the total amount of Women.

In the categories of “Design/Style”, “Objectification” and “B and F” combined, Men and Women had a relatively closer amount of frequencies for a total of 1.3 (approximately) appearances per individual. The same occurs when the category of “Clothing” is added to the previous ones in the recount of appearances, being the number around 1.7 times per individual.

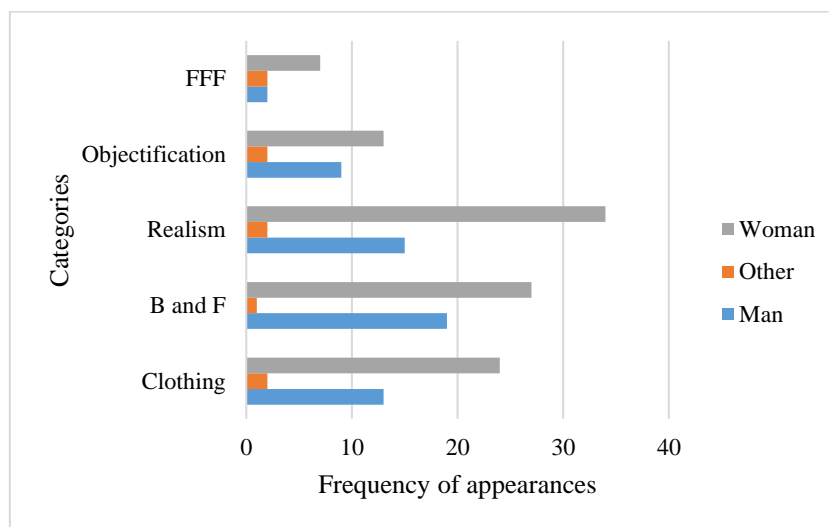


Figure 2. Frequency of number of times that every gender mentioned the category tabulated.

Within the 76 participants that were asked if they attend or have attended college, 39 (51.3%) are Women, 34 (44.7%) are Men and the 3 (4%) are the ones who choose Other. The relationship between the frequency of categories’ appearances and these participants is similar, proportionally, to the answers of the total of participants. In this case, for instance, in Design/Style category, Men employed it 18 times (0.5 times per answer), Women 23 times (0.58 times per answer). When adding the other categories, Women employed them 68 times (1.74 times per answer) and Men employed them 47 times (1.4 times per answer).

More Men (36 out of 42, or 85%) reported to play videogames, compared to the total of Women (29 out of 55, or 52%).

In terms of most time spent playing per week (in hours), the group of Men was the one with more relative time spent, with 10 of them (23%) playing over 10 hours per

week and 14 (33%) playing between 6 to 10 hours per week, which means that approximately 56% of them play at least 6 hours per week and about one quarter more than 10 hours. In the case of the Women, 3 of them (5.4%) play more than 10 hours per week and 4 of them (7.2%) play more between 6 to 10 hours per week, for a total of 12.6% playing at least 6 hours per week.

4.1.6. Third analysis: content analysis

One of the first noticeable things of the analysis of answers is that the group of Women and Other wrote longer answers, in average, more than the group of Men. While Women wrote an average of 33.3 words per answer, Men wrote 24 words in average per answer, which represents about 28% more words.

When the answers Men and Women included the category of “Objectification”, the average of words per answer increased to 35.7 and 52.8 respectively (with Women writing about 32% longer answers than men). About “Design/Style”, Women wrote 42.8 words per answer, while Men 25.6.

Of those who attended to college, Women wrote about 36.2 words per answer and Men wrote 28.9 words per answer, while the rest (those who said they do/did not attend college and the rest of the sample without information about it) wrote in average 26.9 words per answer for the Women, and 16.3 words per average for the men.

Answers employing few categories are usually shorter (2 or less), whereas longer answers tend to employ more categories (about 4 combined).

Examples:

The following is the answer of a participant who identifies himself as a Man, who attends or has attended college and plays videogames (up to 6 hours per week):

First thing I notice is the crescent quality of the graphics and therefore realism of the character. Another thing I noticed is that the last Lara Croft is not as sexualized as the previous ones, this can be seen in her clothes as well as in her actual body proportions which are much closer to what a realistic female figure looks like.

In this case he mentions different categories, such as the design/visuals, clothing or attire of the character, the objectification, the body and the realistic representation. He points out that the last iteration of the character is not as “sexualized as the previous ones”, and uses the body proportions and the clothing as key aspects that lead to “what a realistic female figure looks like.”

Now, the following is the answer of a participant who identifies herself as a Woman, who attends or has attended college, and plays videogames (up to 10 hours per week):

Over time, it's clear that Lara Croft's body was altered in order to look more realistic. For example, in the last models, her body is more rounded. Her face has also been altered in order to make her a prettier female. The last model is the odd one out because the game itself took a different direction from the previous ones - Lara stopped being only eye candy in order to seem more like a real person, an average woman/girl. I think that all these changes that occurred were done in order to attract more people to the game series, to draw more players (male, preferably) to play the game. Lara - even though she is a fictional character -, was objectified from the beginning of the Tomb Raider series.

The answer of this participant is longer than the previous examples. Here, she refers to categories such as the body, realism, objectification and the change in the visual design, and even about her point of view in terms of the evolution of this character and the attraction of more players, targeted, in this case to male audiences.

In overall, Women's answers draw attention to the fact that the character is becoming more realistic with time, resembling more a real human or woman, even when they mention as well, although not all the time, how the design goes on par with this change, and how the character has been objectified to look like a sexual object, but, at the same time, how the last character presents a big leap in terms of realistic presentation, including not only body proportions, graphics, textures, but the functionality of her outfit. In the case of the men, they mention a couple of times aspects related with the change according to times, the social justice warriors and the impact of feminism in the media. However, as Women do, Men notice that there has been a leap in terms of the des-

objectification of the character, although some of them answered focusing specifically in her body, as how attractive she looks for them. There are several recurrences to changes in graphics, visuals and changes in her body proportions, which seems to suggest that more of their answers, compared to those of Women, are related of how the visual change has been a development of the design and driven by technological advancement.

In the case of the 3 participants who marked Other as their gender, 2 employed at least 4 categories, with above average words per answer in both cases, and 1 employed one category, with below average words per answer, and the answer basically referred to the character as wearing “pants until recently”. The other 2 participants mentioned in their answers that the character has evolved from a “fantasy of a female from a heterosexual perspective” and that “their target audience was teenagers and ‘gamers’” from a “sub-culture, mostly dominated by Men and rampant misogyny”, and also that it was “created in a ‘puberty’-like state of the video-game industry’s journey”. These answers refer to the shift to a more “realistic” and “deeper, more believable character” and a more “mature audience”.

4.1.7. Discussion

The study showed that, for this sample population, the average age was 24.7 years old (approximately), the number of participants that identified as Other represented a very short sample, 3, therefore, their answers can’t be considered as representative of their population. The first analysis, based on the frequency of words, suggested that more Women than Men would notice that the character would present a sexual stereotyped of female characters. In general terms, participants mentioned certain aspects that were tabulated in categories, which basically implied change from abstract/unrealistic representation of the character, to a more realistic one, less sexualized and with improved graphics. Women referred to the set of categories related with the character’s body, clothing, objectification and realism, slightly more than Men in proportion to the number of participants of each gender. When the category related with the design of the character is combined with other categories such as objectification and body and figure, Women and Men alike mentioned them at basically the same rate per answer, suggesting that both genders, up to some point, are conscious of the objectification of the character, but at the same time, that there has been changes.

College attendance didn't change too much the rate of employment of these categories, even when combined, when compared to the whole group.

Most Men play videogames, 85% and a about half of them play at least from 6 to 10 hours per week; while 52% of the Women said they play videogames, but just 12.6% of them do it at least from 6 to 10 hours weekly; and 66% of the people who identified themselves as other gender said they play videogames.

Women wrote in average longer answers, across the different combinations of categories and variables studied. However, while all genders showed that there has been a tendency for more realism and less objectification of the character, Men were the only ones, some of them, to tie a stronger relationship between the visual development, the body and the turn to more realistic features. Women and Other more often explicitly mentioned the heterosexual male perspective behind videogame's history than men. However, a stronger case for this position might have been presented as an overall landscape implicitly throughout the answers of all participants.

4.1.8. Limitations

This study was not meant to be a final word in the subject of sexual stereotypes in videogames. It is focused on a very specific character that was considered a good example of how the videogame industry employs sexual stereotypes and how this issue has been changing. From a qualitative point of view, the sample size seems to draw a good representation of Women and men, but it lacks in terms of other genders. Moreover, as the instrument itself was updated, as previously explained, its reliability is not suitable to draw firm conclusions, even though it helped to delimit specific categories that could be tied to the literature and, then, adapted to future instruments.

4.2. Exploratory Interviews

As a follow-up of the literature analysis, and taking in consideration the knowledge obtained from it, and from the survey previously presented, several semi-structured interviews were conducted aimed to explore, from a holistic bottom-up perspective, the personal point of view of several videogame players regarding the subject of gender stereotypes in videogames.

4.2.1. Criteria for selection

The first criteria for the selection of the interviewees was that they were what was considered avid players – or enthusiasts – of videogames. To consider them as avid gamers, a minimum of at least 10 hours per week of gaming time was used as baseline. This number was chosen as criteria to be sure that these individuals dedicated more time than the average videogame consumer. According to *The 2016 Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry* report by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), in the US the average time spent per week by players who play multiplayer and online games is 6.5 hours online and 4.6 hours in-person with others (ESA 2016). Another report by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE), in conjunction with Ipsos Connect, and based on data gathered by GameTrack across the European market (UK, Germany, France and Spain), found that the average time spent playing games across any device per week by 45-64 year-old gamers was of 7.5 hours; while 25-34 year-old gamers spent 6.2 hours weekly on average (ISFE 2017). Moreover, the results of the study conducted showed that most of the people who took the survey played less than 10 hours per week.

4.2.2. Interviewees

The selection of the interviewees was purposive, and they were found by posting the request for the interview on different social media. Two of the interviewees were found on online forums that are specially targeted to gamers and videogames enthusiasts. The other two interviewees were found via contact with common friends. Three of the

interviews were done through an online voice chat service, while the remaining one was conducted in person. The nature of the interviews was anonymous, however, age and country of origin were asked. The interviewees were one female, 22 years old, from Portugal; one male, 18 years old, from Spain; one male, 27 years old, from Romania; and one male, 28 years old, from the United States. The languages used during the interviews were English, Spanish and Portuguese. All the interviews were recorded with a sound device or with audio recording software.

4.2.3. Themes discussed

By the nature of the interview, several selected themes were determined beforehand, specifically those related with the interviewee's point of view on:

1. Gender stereotypes: of players and characters alike.
2. Player - videogame character relationship, relative to identification and gender.
3. Narrative and interaction
4. Changes and shifts within the industry
5. Possible workarounds

4.2.4. Findings

In regards to the stereotyping of gamers by the videogame industry, the interviewees considered that the industry has considered videogames as a masculine territory, which translates into considering the target audience as masculine as well, for instance regarding the sexual objectification of female characters, being that very often games are made to attract male heterosexual gamers:

In fact, the main issue of having begun as an entirely masculine industry is that, from the beginning, the public has also been seen as entirely masculine. Therefore, the male characters have always begun as a fantasy of power,

while the female characters have always begun as a sexual fantasy. (Male, 18 years old)

This, in all four interviews, was a constant element considered, as the industry was pointed out as being more male focused. For them, developers create an idea of the target audience and assume their tastes. Such a phenomenon results in the target audience having to adapt to the medium, and sometimes to those ideas, voluntarily, in order to continue playing. Adrienne Shaw (2010) mentions that, when developers create games assuming their target audiences, usually these games are created for a heterosexual young male audience, and the developers think that these games would appeal to their target market. Players from marginalized groups will often accept, *begrudgingly*, that lack of representation and will play the games anyway (2010).

In the case of the portrayal of gender stereotypes in videogames, male characters were considered as unreal super-men, surrounded by the presence of hypermasculinity in a highly idealized escapism, intelligent, heterosexual, strong, leading men, and more complex than female characters. The interviewees referred to the male characters as subjects, usually playable and the main characters in the game. However, they refer to slow changes in the way these characters are depicted, being able to not just perform gender roles as heroes, but also as supporting characters, with the ability to show emotions, or being weak.

Female characters were considered as a sexual fantasy and more emotional than male characters. They depict finesse, delicacy, and sensitivity. The improvement in visuals, according to the interviewees, allowed the attempt to make them attractive to the (young male heterosexual) players. For them, women, in videogames, are shown as objects of desire and possession, as an information source, or as backup help. However, there have also been some changes in these characters. In the past, their personality was not taken into account, they were put in the background, being a narrative supporting character, who was probably never shown nor did anything, or, otherwise, as a plot device for the male character's goals. Nowadays, there are more female characters that act as real people, with more agency, and not simply constructed as a dramatic object or plot device.

4.2.5. Videogame character relationship relative to identification and gender, according to the interviewees.

The main points that were found relative to this aspect are:

1. Within the gaming community, it's difficult for gamers to not assume that characters belong to a binary category of gender, even when gender is not shown.
2. Physical abilities are associated with one gender or the other. However, a character's gender is not as important as the character's ideas and conflicts.
3. The character's set of skills are usually associated with specific visuals, so there is an assumption that in future games things will be similar. In the other hand, characters' skills are challenge dependent, and that fact might offend someone who is being represented by a specific characterization.
4. Developing empathy with the character stimulates immersion, and this helps to look at the character more than an object or tool. Thanks to this empathy and resulting immersion, the character's decisions become the player's decisions.
5. What is important is what the player thinks a particular character would do based on their background story.
6. If it's possible to customize the character and try to be the best version of themselves resemblance is sought, as it allows for a better virtual image of the player, a new identity – practically playing themselves as something/someone new. However, players are willing to neglect their own physical attributes, if they interfere with the ability to beat the game.
7. Players know that agency is an illusion, and what matters is if this illusion is believable when decisions are made.

In summary, for the interviewees, as players, in terms of character's identification and gender, there is a point of departure based on a biological division of the sexes. The different characters are gendered to their eyes, even if this is not explicit, and the skill set of the characters is usually associated with a particular gender. It's that behaviour that the

different characters present, and the association of that behaviour to what they recognize as appropriate to that gender, what leads them to associate the visuals and attributes of a character as belonging to a specific gender. This happens as a result of what developers give them in terms of the character's design, for instance, when a female character is shown to be faster than male characters that are bulkier and stronger. However, for them the immersion is more about the character's conflict within the game, and not so much related with the character's gender. Their decision to choose one character or another, based on their gender (player's gender), is not as important as beating the game. They want the "who I am" to take new forms, that is, their identities to be expressed in the game, but this is not always the sole reason to play, at least explicitly. In the end, it is a matter of having agency what allows them to immerse more and more, and the gender of a character is not, *a priori*, as important as what can be made out of that character itself. Thus, even when they recognize specific attributes given to characters based on their gender (traditionally portrait in media in general), and that they might expect the new game to bring more of the same, the interviewees do not feel conflicted by a character's gender, even though they engage in new identities in the gameworld.

4.2.6. Narrative and Interaction

In adventure games (or linear games) the character is not that complex, and it becomes easier to identify. Cut-scenes are considered the easiest way to bring or give information, although they are not the most powerful one. Moreover, some games allow the player to gain knowledge of the characters' story through gameplay without taking away agency. If the player is fed with a lot of information (eg. background info) about the character, this makes it seem as a different entity relative to the player, and not as an avatar. For the interviewees, when the player acts upon and has control over the character's attributes and decisions, this allows them to give part of their identity to the character, thus altering the basic identity the character had previously. When there are more interactions with the game world, it is better if every player could find representation in the characters and engage in action as the climax lies in the meaningful choices that the player makes. For this, it's important for developers to offer elements to which the player can act upon, letting them write some of the story themselves. And finally, the

narrative archetypes do not create the character's personality, it is important to consider that the story that is created goes along with these characters.

4.2.7. Changes within the industry

In the past: Videogames were related with toys and they were more focused on enjoyment. The characters were explicitly defined and had more importance than the player. This happened, according to the interviewees, due to graphic limitations, and the players were told who the character was mostly through texts and less through the gameplay. The intention of the publishers and developers was more easily perceivable. Finally, the depiction of a character's gender had to be explicit, or, in other words, had to be told, and was already defined.

Currently: Nowadays, it is common practice to construct games regarding players as a community, with videogames ready for different social interactions (among players and characters). This offers more variety, but not necessarily better stories. Although there have been changes related with how genders are depicted, these haven't worked in the same way for both, male and female characters. Female players' presence is still seen as disruptive in a gaming community. The target audience seems to be easily influenced and the drive is stimulated by profit, and to attract a broader audience, which is still perceived as mostly masculine. The identification with the characters is easier, due to an increased awareness about who the character is. The industry as a whole is more mature and even with its current drawbacks, the existence of games targeted to a female audience is important. This evolution within the industry, both technological and in narrative constructions, has brought more gender options, regardless of the story. A character is not completely defined beforehand anymore, in most of the cases:

Now it's about reading the book, watching the movie, and being able to have some decision power in the game. (Male, 27)

4.2.8. Possible workarounds

These workarounds are a summary of the main findings previously presented:

1. Characters should have a face (humanization).
2. Only real change is a moral one.
3. If audiences were not underestimated, there wouldn't be much of a problem to change stereotyping in the way it appears now.
4. In-group diversification: different attributes for characters of a same group.
5. Using totally opposite representations of the stereotype is not the solution.
6. Taking the risk of change can attract new players.
7. The use of details can aid to construct visual narratives, enrich gameplay, the character's background story, and make it more realistic and complex.
8. Give the players options, as this triggers the imagination and offers more immersion.
9. Making "a player's interview": basing characteristics of the gameplay according to player's reactions to certain options.

In summary, the interviewees consider that paying attention to the audience and taking risk may pay off the developers. For them, it's possible to work with how stereotypes have been used in the videogame industry, and elements such as using visual details that might give hints of what a character does, opposite to explicitly stating it, can aid the player to construct through the gameplay, her own idea of who that character is. The more choices the player can make, the more the immersion and identification, or, at least, the possibilities to express the player's identity within the gameworld. Profiling could work as a good way to personalize the experience. But, in any case, it is not thinking about characters as just beings that replicate their group (gender, society, class, etc.) behaviours, but as actual individuals that can have disruptive ways of acting.

Chapter 5 – Stereotype Content Model Analysis

5.1. The Stereotype Content Model

Developed by Susan T. Fiske, Amy J. C. Cuddy, Peter Glick and Jun Xu (2002), the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) is used to predict the systematic principles that provoke changes in the content of stereotypes. They proposed that if the contents of stereotypes change according to social pressure, then understanding the patterns of those social pressures may allow to know the origins of stereotype content. The first step to predict these principles is to identify common dimensions of content. To achieve this, they theorize that stereotypes are captured by two dimensions, and that different kind of stereotypes (positive or negative) are often functional consistent with each other:

We argue instead that stereotypes are captured by two dimensions (warmth and competence) and that subjectively positive stereotypes on one dimension do not contradict prejudice but often are functionally consistent with unflattering stereotypes on the other dimension. (Fiske et al. 2002, 878)

These dimensions, warmth and competence, are the result of interactions among groups and individuals, and are based on the functional knowledge of the perceived intents and capabilities that perceivers have of a certain group. In other words, in intergroup relations, one person wants to know the intentions of other individuals, and the capabilities that these individuals have to achieve them. The Warmth dimension indicates if someone has positive or negative intentions towards another individual/group, while the competence dimension indicates how capable this person is to carry on with these intentions. Warmth is related with the intents other people have, answering if someone is *a friend or a foe* (Cuddy, Glick, and Beninger 2011, 9), and competence with that capability to achieve it. The warmth dimension is particularly important when judgements are constructed:

Although warmth and competence dimensions emerge consistently, considerable evidence suggests that warmth judgments are primary: warmth

is judged before competence, and warmth judgments carry more weight in affective and behavioral reactions. From an evolutionary perspective, the primacy of warmth is fitting because another person's intent for good or ill is more important to survival than whether the other person can act on those intentions. (Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007, 77)

The SCM hypothesizes that stereotypes are not uniform, and that their characteristics are mixed along the warmth and competence dimensions. This mixture results in two kinds of mixed stereotypes. In one hand, the perception of a group as having low competence and high warmth is the result of *paternalistic stereotypes*, which assume that those groups, and/or their members, are unable to provoke harm to the in-group members. In the other hand, *envious stereotypes* consider that some groups are high in competence, but have low warmth (bad intentions) towards the in-group.

In the case of paternalistic stereotypes, these kind of mixed stereotypes “portray a group disrespected but pitied, which carries overtones of compassion, sympathy, and even tenderness, under the right conditions”, while envious stereotypes present a kind of threat, derived from the high competence and low warmth of a group (Fiske et al. 2002, 880). Both kinds are associated with gender prejudice: in one hand, paternalistic stereotypes describe women that depict traditional gender roles. On the other hand, envious stereotypes are related with non-traditional women that defy these traditional roles. The mixed dimensions occur because “both envious and paternalistic stereotypes maintain the status quo and defend the position of societal reference groups” (Fiske et al. 2002, 880).

These dimensions are predicted by two important variables: *status* and *competition*. Stereotypically, status is related with high competence, whereas competition is related with low warmth. In other words, when someone is perceived as having high status, relative to the in-group, this individual is assumed to have high competence as well. In the case of the perceived competition, if a group is perceived as highly competitive, they are assumed as having low warmth.

The dimensions are related with the perceptions and assumptions about attributes that individuals or groups possess. Both, competence and warmth have their own attributes, which are the ones that are perceived as possessed by these individuals or groups.

In the case of competence, the perceived attributes, mentioned by Fiske et al. (2002) are competent, capable, intelligent, efficient, skilful, and confident. In the case of warmth, the attributes perceived are warm, good-nature, sincere, friendly, well-intentioned, and trustworthy. In terms of the variables, perceived status is related with assumptions about professional positions, careers, economic success and so on; while perceived competition is related with situations where the in-group is at disadvantage, for instance when members of another group receive special treatment that may be threatening for the in-group members.

Table 3 - Combinations of Status and Competition and their relationship with Warmth and Competence (Fiske et al. 2002)

Competence		
Warmth	Low	High
High	Paternalistic Stereotype Low status, not competitive Pity, sympathy (e.g. Elderly people, disabled people, housewives)	Admiration High status, not competitive Pride, admiration (e.g., in-group, close allies)
Low	Contemptuous stereotype Low status, competitive Contempt, disgust, anger, resentment (e.g. Welfare recipients, poor people)	Envious Stereotype High status, competitive Envy, jealousy (e.g. Asians, Jews, rich people, feminists)

In terms of gender stereotypes, women are perceived as low in competence and high in warmth, which means they are stereotyped as warm, comprehensive, nurturing, and so on. In the other hand, men are perceived as high in competence and low in warmth, as men are often stereotyped as independent, ambitious, and competitive (Glick and Fiske 2001, 169–70). Moreover, both, men and women, are stereotyped mostly in a way that they can't be perceived as being warm and competent at the same time, as they have to be either "liked, but disrespected, or respected, but dislike" (2001, 170). However, in reality, these dimensions are not mutually exclusive, as people can be both warm and competent. This is the ambivalence nature of inter-groups relations, where in groups are often seen in a good fashion, while out-groups are perceived in an ambivalent way, as competent and not warm, or the other way around. This phenomenon is caused by the social structure present in intergroup relations, where there is a relationship between the relative status of different groups and their interdependence, where the other group can be perceived as cooperative or competitive. This interdependence between groups affects

the stereotypes about the perceived warmth of a particular group, where competitors are cold and self-interested, while cooperative groups are warm (2001, 173).

Different kinds of stereotyping (Table 3) perceive their targets (members of a group, of the whole group itself) in differentiated ways. In the first place, paternalistic stereotypes are usually related with benevolent stereotyping, and its targets are perceived as low status but cooperative (or non-threatening). In the second place, the targets of envious stereotypes are perceived as socioeconomically successful, but also as competitors. They are admired for their competence, but at the same time inspire fear. Hostility is present in this category, as women are perceived to be threatening when they have agency or don't fit traditional gender roles. However, this kind of stereotyping is common with men as well (e.g. when men are seen as powerful, and this creates resentment, resulting in the perception that they are cold and arrogant). In the third place, when a group is stereotyped as both, competent and warmth (usually in terms of in-group bias), they provoke admiration. However, there can be out-group admiration, for instance when women, who are in a subordinated position, perceive that men (higher status, low competence) are benevolent, as a result of a cooperative relationship (traditional roles of husband and wife). In the fourth place, contemptuous stereotypes perceived targets as lacking competence and warmth, producing reactions towards them in totally negative way, such as disgust, contempt, resentment, and so on (Glick and Fiske 2001, 174).

5.2. The BIAS map

The BIAS map refers to the *behavior from intergroup affect and stereotypes*, which predicts, according to Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2008), the expected behaviour that results from the emotions generated by combinations of warmth and competence (as present on the SCM: admiration, pity, envy and contempt). These authors point out that perceivers engage in different behaviours related with their perceptions of the targeted individual/group. These behaviours are either active or passive, and their valence can go from facilitation to harm. Active behaviours are “those conducted with directed effort to affect the target group; they overtly and directly act for or against the target group”, while passive behaviours are “those that are conducted or experienced with less directed effort, but still have repercussions of the outgroup; they act with or without the target group” (2008, 108). In terms of the valence of a behaviour, translated as facilitation or harm, this

is the *intended effect on others*, where facilitation seeks favourable outcomes for other groups, while harm leads to losses for other groups (2008, 109). In other words, behaviours can be active or passive, and they tend to seek either good or bad for other groups, in intergroups relations. These behaviours and their valence values mix, resulting in four different kind of phenomena (Table 4).

Table 4. Behaviours: Active and passive, facilitation and harm framework (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008, 108–9)

Behaviours	Intended effect	Kind of action
Active facilitation	(acting for) Explicitly aims to benefit a target.	Help, assisting, defending, hiring, promoting, befriending, anti-discrimination.
Active harm	(acting against) Explicitly intends to hurt a target and its interests.	Insults, bullying, attacks, epithets, sexual harassment, and hate crimes, discrimination, segregation.
Passive facilitation	(acting with) Accepts obligatory association or convenient cooperation with a target. Direct contact is not desired, but tolerated.	Obligatory association in commercial, educational and professional settings (hiring domestic help from outgroup members or working alongside members from groups considered smart).
Passive harm	(acting without) Demeans or distances others by diminishing their social worth.	Avoiding eye contact, being dismissive, and ignoring another person. Disregarding the needs of some groups, denying assistance, limiting access to necessary resources, invisibilization, exclusion, neglecting others.

The judgement based in the warmth and competence dimensions elicit active behaviours: Perceivers act against groups they consider have low warmth, resulting in active harm; and/or perceivers act for groups they consider have high warmth, resulting in active facilitation. In the case of competence judgements, these elicit passive behaviours: Perceivers act without groups they consider incompetent, resulting in passive harm; and/or perceivers act with groups they consider to be competent, resulting in passive facilitation (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008).

Table 5. The behaviour from intergroup affect and stereotypes (BIAS map) prediction on emotions over the SCM (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008)

Emotion	Dimensions	Behaviours
Pity	Low Competence-High Warmth	active facilitation and passive harm
Envy	High Competence-Low Warmth	passive facilitation and active harm
Contempt	Low Competence-Low Warmth	active harm and passive harm
Admiration	High Competence-High Warmth	active facilitation and passive facilitation

5.3. Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

According to Glick and Fiske (1996) sexism has been considered always relative to its hostile aspects, leaving out its apparent benevolent side. For them, sexism is multidimensional, and it is presented in two ways: as *benevolent sexism* (BS) and as *hostile sexism* (HS): hostile sexism is related with the idea that women are incompetent, lacking agency, which makes them unreliable for commanding or leading tasks. In the other hand, benevolent sexism rationalizes gender role behaviours related with tasks that women are meant to perform (1996, 492). The benevolent attitude of sexism is of importance because reduces the image of women to that of who needs help, and, at the same time, gives a positive feeling for whom engages in by hiding prejudice as a form of affection (Glick and Fiske 2011). These authors defined benevolent sexism as:

(...) a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helping) or intimacy-seeking (e.g., self-disclosure). (Glick and Fiske 1996, 491)

Hostile sexism can be found when sexuality is consider combative, there is competition in gender roles, or women are seen as potential challengers of male

dominance; whereas, benevolent sexism involves romantic relationships, complementary gender roles, subordination of women to dominant men (Glick and Fiske 2011).

Benevolent sexism is associated with paternalistic stereotypes, whereas hostile sexism is associated with envious stereotypes. In the case of women, they are usually judged according to how they are subtyped by the stereotypes that are constructed about them. In the case of hostile sexism, this is directed to women who depict behaviours that are considered non-traditional for women as a group. In the case of benevolent sexism, this is targeted to traditional women as a group. One individual can stereotype women and engage in either hostile or benevolent sexism, without having any problem, due to the fact that stereotyping can be ambivalent. Someone can engage in benevolent sexism, targeting paternalistic stereotyping to a traditional woman (e.g. housewife), feeling that she needs protection and carrying, and then engage in hostile sexism against a non-traditional woman (e.g. businesswoman) who is perceived as behaving in a transgressive way. This doesn't present any problem for the perceiver/stereotyper (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008, 122), as stereotypes are highly fluid and can be used for different situations.

According to Cikara and Fiske (2009), the paternalistic stereotyping works as a way to reward women who enact traditional roles expected by perceivers as correct according to their (women) gender. When women do not show that expected behaviour, they are cast in a negative light. Moreover, if a woman shows agentic traits, she is considered competent, but not warmth as she is competitive (opposite to the traditional woman, who is considered as non-competitive). Women are perceived, then, as either low warmth/high competence, or high warmth/low competence. This causes that they have to actively try to be both, warmth and competent:

The negative reactions that arise as a result of competition posed by non-traditional women justify the dominant group's resentment of them, resulting in the perception that successful women are competent but cold. (...) Thus, it seems incumbent on women to manage their images in a way that promotes warmth in addition to competence. However, given that people possess a negativity bias for warmth-related traits, one could imagine how a woman who has experienced a gain in status also has to fight an uphill battle. One inconsiderate remark and she is a bitch. (Cikara and Fiske 2009, 80)

This occurs because the way people perceive the dimensions of warmth and competence is related with negative and positive behaviours concerning each of these dimensions, respectively. Moreover, negative warmth information will have more weight over positive warmth information; while positive competence information will have more weight than negative competence information. In other words, an individual has to constantly act in a way that is considered warmth to be perceived as such, while just a negative behaviour would damage the warmth image this individual has. Any bad behaviour will damage the *good* image this individual holds in front of others. In the case of competence, someone considered skillful will still be considered as such, even when this person shows an incompetent behaviour once in a while, and damaging the competence image the other have of this person would take more than few moments showing that incompetent behaviour (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008).

As agentic traits are traditionally associated with men, and communion is associated with women, when non-traditional women enact agentic roles, they are seen as competitive, thus, a threat, as they engage in dominant behaviours. However, even though they are considered competitive, their dominant behaviours are not perceived as dominant as when a man enact them:

Not only are dominant behaviors seen as less dominant when displayed by women as compared with men, but dominant behaviors are also seen as more sexual when displayed by women as compared with men. (Cikara and Fiske 2009, 88)

This supports the use of hostile sexism as a way to minimize women agentic traits, as they are considered to be transgressive if they enact those behaviours. As Cikara and Fiske (2009) state: “attributing a woman’s status to her sexuality, aggression, or coldness suggests she gained her power illegitimately” (2009, 89).

5.4. Relevance of the framework

5.4.1. Recognition of stereotypical traits and gender roles

The portrayal of women in videogames has basically gone from being invisible beings to being more important and complex characters. In other words, there has been change in the way they are intended, according to the gender roles that the industry of videogames has assigned. And the same situation, although in a different way, has occurred with male characters. The findings presented in this dissertation, so far, have shown that, historically, women have been depicted as visions of beauty, with the objectification of their bodies, which led to their sexualization. In the case of male characters, these have been portrayed as heroes, villains or antagonists, and as aggressors of the female characters. With a muscular complexion, outnumbering women, men have been located in the main spot of what has been considered an industry with a male heterosexual ideology of some sort.

Several elements have been pointed out through the different parts of the research, concerning which attributes or traits and what gender roles female and male characters perform in videogames.

From the point of view of the players, the video game industry has considered videogames as a masculine entity, resulting in the assumption that the target audience was masculine as well. This had as a consequence that female characters became objects or passive beings, with no actions performed in the game, and used as plot devices. While men have been the subject in the game.

5.4.2. Gender stereotypes commonly found in videogames

Characters in videogames present several attributes, play several roles, within the game, and represent different stereotypes. Among the most common of those, the basic idea is that male characters are in charge, and women are to be taken care of. As have been discussed, not only the situation with female characters has been changing, but the overall situation with the videogame's industry. The player is able now, a lot of the time, to develop her own story, representing and expressing herself in different ways within the gameworld. Through the gameplay, stories can be written, which means that not only

non-ergodic ways to narrate the character's background are possible. This doesn't mean that characters are totally keen to be constructed from zero by the player, but that the player has more room to transgress or adapt their stories in a personalized way. In terms of the options, and choices, offered, videogame characters are still limited to the stereotypes that are often found in other media. Different gender stereotypes, gender bias and roles can still be seen in the videogame industry (Table 6). So, being able to recognize them, and later associate them with what the SCM shows about the dimensions and emotions in stereotyping can help to have more options at hand and detect if these characters are showing these common elements from traditional gender stereotypes.

Table 6. List of traditional portraits, attributes and roles found in videogames relative to gender stereotypes.

	Gender Role	Gender Bias	Gender Stereotype
Women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mother figure 2. Sentimental Partner 3. Supporting/ Background 4. Character 5. Source of Information 6. Femme Fatale 7. Damsel in Distress 8. Phallic Woman 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Underrepresentation 2. Invisibility 3. Sexual objectification 4. Sexual fantasy 5. Dependency 6. Target of violence (usually from men) 7. Passiveness/ Weakness 8. Object (of desire, source of information) 9. Must be protected/saved 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Beautiful 2. Young 3. Seductive/provocative 4. Interested in relationships (sentimental) 5. Shows community traits 6. Shows agency + exemplifies stereotypical traits 7. Submissive 8. Naïve/Inexperienced 9. Emotional/not rational 10. Non-violent 11. Incompetent 12. Heterosexual
Men	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hero 2. Villain 3. Anti-hero 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overrepresentation 2. Visibility 3. Independency (supposed) 4. Sexualized (not objectified) 5. Fantasy of power 6. Active 7. Strong/ Physically fit 8. Subject 9. Protects/saves (men and women) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shows agency 2. Dominant 3. Uses violence to solve problems 4. Competent 5. Heterosexual 6. Experienced/skillful 7. Not involved in family life 8. Tough

5.2.3. Reading through the Stereotype Content Model

These elements shown above can help to detect when a character is being constructed following traditional gender roles. As these element suggest, female characters have, indeed, been perceived low status, not competitive, who need to be rescued, and incompetent. According to the SCM, a paternalistic stereotype¹¹ has been used to construct these female characters. They have been seen, in terms of intergroup relations, as highly dependent of the male character (in both roles as hero or villain). Women have been perceived as low in competence and high in warmth, when being the damsel in distress in the eyes of the male hero (and the developer/audience); and low in competence and low in warmth in the eyes of the villain.

However, in the case of the male characters, something different used to happen. These characters have been traditionally depicted as playing two differentiated kind of roles, considered high in competence that female characters seldom played: Heroes and Villains.

Table 7. Combinations of Status and Competition and their relationship with Warmth and Competence.

	Competence	
Warmth	Low	High
High	Paternalistic Stereotype Low status, not competitive Pity, sympathy (Traditional female character: Damsel in distress)	Admiration High status, not competitive Pride, admiration (Traditional male hero)
Low	Contemptuous stereotype Low status, competitive Contempt, disgust, anger, resentment (Traditional female character)	Envious Stereotype High status, competitive Envy, jealousy (Traditional male villain/ Non- traditional female hero)

¹¹ Here the characters considered are the main characters in a videogame, either playable main character (usually the male hero); female characters (the victim or damsel in distress / non-traditional hero); and the villain (a male character).

When the male character was portrayed as the hero of the game (Table 7) the perception held about him has been that of having high status and being not competitive. This happens due to the fact that male characters have attributes such as agency, experience, are physically fit, and are competent. If his task is to save others, he is perceived as not competitive for those in need of help. The intergroup relations that the male character has with the female character are basically of cooperation, but he is in a dominant position, with higher status than hers. According to the SCM he is high in both the warmth and the competence dimension in the eyes of the damsel in distress. However, the way the hero is perceived by the villain can be either low status (not being as skilful as the villain), or high status (a real challenge to the villain). As the hero is considered to be competitive, the change in the status, low or high, would predict if he is perceived as having low competence, or high competence respectively.

On the other hand, if the male character is the villain, he is perceived as a threat to both the hero and the victim. In this scenario, he is perceived as having high status (due to the set of skills he has and the challenges that he presents to the hero), and as being competitive (due to his role as a villain). Hence, intergroup relations are characterized competitive, as he is aggressor of the victim, and foe to the hero (and also his aggressor). According to the SCM, he is perceived employing envious stereotyping to the eyes of both the victim and the hero.

5.3. Summary and conclusion

When videogames have characters that follow traditional gender stereotypes, the male characters present a higher degree of dynamicity and complexity than the female counterparts. This occurs because ambivalence is common at the moment to rate out-groups (either positive or negative), whereas in-group members are often rated favourably (just positive). For instance, in this particular case the hero is perceived as part of the same group by the victim (cooperates with her), and is considered as having high competence and high warmth, therefore, he is seen in positive way. The villain is perceived by the victim as belonging to an out-group (foe), and has high competence but low warmth. Therefore, both male characters, hero and villain, are perceived differently by the victim.

But then, there is the question of how is perceived the victim by both, the hero and the villain? Traditionally, the female character is portrayed as having attributes that do not allow her to go beyond the role of victim, or a transgressive hero. Added to that, feminine attributes are associated with weakness and passiveness. This results that to the eyes of both male characters, the feminine attributes of the victim were already attributes related with weakness. Thus, the female character is condemned to be both, low status and cooperative as far as she continues to be portrayed according to gender stereotypes when she is the victim; and as being competitive (non-cooperative) when she has high status, which results in a lack of warmth, which is usually balanced (raised) by her sexualized looks. For the hero, the victim will be low status/not competitive; whereas, for the villain, the victim will be, low status/competitive (as she has no warmth intentions with him). Simply put, being a female equals being a victim, in this particular scenario.

Chapter 6. General Conclusion

6.1. Functional questions

The most common gender roles, gender stereotypes and traits about gender bias exposed through this work can be used to recognize which attributes are used when, for instance, a relationship between the main (playable) character, who usually **is** the one that allows players to engage in the game, and any other supporting character, as follows:

Several questions can be asked to identify specific attributes:

- Is the character female or male?
- If the character is a female, which role does this character play?
- Relative to other characters in the game, how much does this character establish communication with other characters?
- How is this character dressed?
- Do the attributes of the attire have any real impact in the story?
- How would this character express emotions?
- Is this character trustworthy?
- Does any of the physical attributes of this character are created to appeal to a specific target audience?
- Which part of this character's body would be more important to get the attention of the audience?
- Does this character engage in violent acts in order to achieve specific goals?
- Does this character have dialogues with other characters of the same sex?
- Does this character have dialogues with other characters of the other sex?
- Is agency in female characters always accompanied by a sexualized look?
- Which characters function as helpful or supportive to the main character?
- Who is being saved by whom?

- Who attacks or engages in antagonistic behaviours?

Once these questions are made, using as much of this information, it is a matter of recognizing the traits in the character that are more prone to locate the character in area like benevolent sexism, paternalistic stereotypes, contemptuous stereotypes, or falling into tropes such as the final girl, damsel in distress, etc.

Evidence suggests that many of the main playable male characters would fall into warmth measurement, but always high in competence, whereas the female characters, even playable, if they are being gender stereotyped, would be located within the realm of the paternalistic stereotype (high warmth, low competence), with the variable of low status when a damsel in distress. In the case of characters such as Lara Croft, an iteration of the first games would probably be in the high competence dimension, and, thus, keen to be in a low warmth spot. This occurs because the agency that this character is showing comes from the gameplay and immersion in the narrative by the player, but the image that this character had was one of a woman with stereotypical masculine traits (men are active and resourceful), that was balanced with hypersexualized traits, as her looks is her biggest strength, necessary for her to attract the male heterosexual consumer. Hence, is not only that this female character is constructed to appeal the heterosexual male, but also that her agency is justifiable due to her looks, and not by her own skills, in order to maintain an *illusory* high warmth.

6.2. Final considerations

The question of stereotyping, in any kind of media, is not something that should be taken as simply inevitable, neither totally negative per se. Stereotypes work as tools, one key element of the definition of stereotypes is that they are perceived as being an actual representation of the target. Therefore, they allow the perceiver to make an idea of the world, that picture of the possible world. In the case of gender stereotypes, these are a reflect of the appropriate behaviour expected from men and women according to their gender, and that fact is revealing to better understand how characters can represent social reality and their relationships in the virtual world.

As the interviewees said, agency allows them to be more immersed in the story, but identification with the character is vital to allow players to live other possible lives. If the character is just a kind blank canvas, some players may still find it intriguing, and decide to draw their stories there on, together with the other elements of the game. However, if the character is already alive and offers enough agency, liberty and possibilities for customization, elements directing the focus to traversals like modulating and profiling can bring together the best of both worlds.

Agency, in this case, is not just the action that is offered to the player through violence, but the immersion could be achieved, altogether with the attractiveness of the visuals, a high quality gameplay, and so on, with the capabilities of a good character constructed without falling into tropes, clichés and stereotypes. A richer experience can be achieved by the simple fact of being able to predict and detect the common traits that will locate male and female characters alike in the typical gender roles that they have mostly been allowed play for so long.

6.3. Limitations

These findings and the suggestion of use and interpretation of the SCM dimensions of warmth and competence, take into account what was discussed in the early subchapters of this work, namely that gender and stereotypes are constructions that never stay still, even when people would like them to be static, in a fixed position. This means that an ever ongoing study of how stereotypes are perceived by players, and what attributes are used to construct the idea of the other, the male, the female, etc., it's a must to acquire better knowledge of those prescriptions.

Another important limitation is that this proposed exercise needs to be implemented and refined, as, for now, it works more as a hypothetical framework that helps to give a better understanding of how stereotypes are presented, and as how using different traits could lead to create a character that would fall into one of the stereotypical dimensions and their combinations. It's for this, that, in order to identify more and more traits and nuances and build a complex, yet simple corpora of traits, behaviours, attributes, roles, tropes and so on, and how they fit within the SCM, and how are the behaviours elicited from it, continuing this study will require a long-term commitment.

6.4. Future Steps

One of the steps ahead would be to construct a scale based on different characters from videogames that are strongly stereotyped, from different kinds of genres, as well as to explore the use of different elements, which are used to reduce the agency of female characters, such as tying sexual objectification with these characters' competitiveness and high status. As one of the interviewees mentioned, simple details help to construct a richer character. Then, analysing them can help gather data beyond the realm of the player, as a way to contextualize expected behaviours according to a character's gender through the elements within the game world, such as the use of colours, textures, shapes, and other elements whose patterns can be classified with some ease, and correlate how those objects take from the character status or makes them look low in warmth.

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Annexes

Annex 1 – Survey questions

2017-6-15

Short Survey

Short Survey

*Obrigatório

1. 1. Age *

2. 2. Country *

3. 3. Which gender do you most identify with? *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

Woman

Man

Outra: _____

4. 4. Did/do you attend college? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

Yes

No

5. 5. In average, how many hours per week do you spend on playing video games? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

Up to 6 hours

6 hours to 10 hours

More than 10 hours

6. Please pay close attention to the following images and then go to the point 7. (Images credit: author unknown)

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1vrxKhO2D05QW14OQ9IOVtyvzfy_uIo-sRiiT-MZpHBE/edit

1/3





6. 7. The images above (point 6) represent different iterations of a popular video game character (in chronological order of release). Could you point out anything that calls your attention about the evolution of this character's image and briefly explain why? *

Annex 2 – Survey answers

Age	Country	Gender (identifies with)	Plays video games	Attended college	Hrs/week playing videogames	Could you point out anything that calls your attention about the evolution of this character's image and briefly explain why?
16	Portugal	Man		No	>10 hrs	Boobs started out as pyramids, now are spheres
16	Argentina	Man		No	2-6 hrs	Me llamo muchisimo la atencion su evolución anal,estupendo ojete :D
20	Spain	Man		No	>10 hrs	More polygons
25	England	Woman		No	>10 hrs	each Lara Croft had more and more pixels which allowed Lara to stop looking blocky over time.
27	United Kingdom	Man		No	2-6 hrs	The character has become more realistic and more graphically detailed.
28	Portugal	Man		No	>10 hrs	More detail, less sexualization.
34	Portugal	Man		No	2-6 hrs	the last one has pants.
15	Spain	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	Just that the videogames nowadays focus more on the graphics than on the videogame, this could be seen in GTA V (GTA San Andreas is better).
18	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	It becomes more realistic, with progressively less exaggerated features, like the waist and boob size. It also progressively shows less skin, as it can be seen by the pants she ends up wearing instead of shorts.
18	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	As the character evolves, it gets more realistic.
18	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	Beside the fact that the graphics of the game are much better now, Lara is now not as sexualized as she was before.
18	Portugal	Man		Yes	>10 hrs	A personagem com a evolução está mais realística e humana
18	Spain	Man		Yes	>10 hrs	The face, the last one looks like asian, I think is the most different thing in the models.
18	Portugal	Man		Yes	>10 hrs	technology
18	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	The last character's are more interesting in my point of view, because they present more real features and forms which can make the game itself more real too.
18	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Perfection of shape, realism of clothes, hair, anatomy.
18	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	There's clearly an evolution
18	Portugal	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	the character design change a lot after the evolution of consoles/pc
19	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	first thing i notice is the crescent quality of the graphics and therefore realism of the character. Another thing i noticed is that the last lara croft is not as sexualized as the previous ones, this can be seen in her clothes as well as in her actual body proportions wich are much closer to what a realistic female figure looks like.
19	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	The last evolution of the chareter's image is accordant with what we now think is right, instead of a sex símbolo she is just a female

						character, instead of the short shorts she has pants, instead of the unachievable beauty ideals she is much more close to the real world
19	Portugal	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	The older iterations seem a lot more polygonal than the more recent ones. The character has become more human-like. The breasts are smaller in size. The color of the skin has changed. The clothes changed for the most recent iteration (she had always had the same clothes before).
19	Venezuela	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	El salto gráfico presente entre las generaciones, especialmente visible en el cambio en la calidad del cabello y la ropa, se puede notar mucho el avance y la evolución que un par de años pueden crear en este arte
20	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	With each version, the character's features became more and more realistic. Her legs and feet show a lot of improvement and differences through time, as well as her chest/boobs, and face. Her clothing items, the way they fit her body, also becomes more realistic. They go from looking like they are painted on, to having dimensions of their own and texture. Knowing the game, I also think it is relevant to point out that the clothes she is wearing in the latest version don't objectify her. She has actual pants!!!
20	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Para além de todas as alterações em termos de resolução penso que na verdade não seja isso que se pretende apontar. Claro que esta personagem sofreu uma revolução. A Lara Croft, jogo que sempre joguei em miúdo sempre foi vista a meu ver como uma personagem polémica. É muitas vezes questionado porque razão tem tão pouca roupa e ao longo dos anos, com todos os movimentos feministas penso que existiu uma evolução natural. A informação que atualmente existe é maior tal como a preocupação para tais problemas. A Lara Croft de hoje em dia é identificada como uma mulher forte corajosa tal como todas as outras.
20	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	The thing that calls my attention is the body proportions. As it evolves the character becomes more realistic, not only in the graphic aspect (that I believe is only possible now because of the advanced technology) but also in the representation of the female body.
21	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	She gets thinner and fitter, has less clothing and more body area exposed, with the exception of the last image, where the character is finally covered up, wearing trousers for the first time, and has a more "realistic" female figure.
21	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	increasingly realistic (in textures and shape): you can notice this particularly in the character's face from the first to the last. it's body is also more realistic in terms of proportions according to the real life woman: waist is now not as impossibly thin, in its

						relation to the rest of the body and breasts. legs get thinner, though - i suppose "thigh gap" came along. clothes have a major improvement in the last character presented: they look real and you can even tell they're dirty. the clothing drastically changes in this character, too. i suppose this last character is the most realistic in all ways, even compared to the one that came right before.
21	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	A estrutura torna-se mais realista, as formas cada vez mais similares ao corpo humano
21	Portugal	Man		Yes	>10 hrs	Detail of the curves, which became smoother. Facial detail.
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Começou a ter maior qualidade de imagem e mais pormenor, devido a um maior tamanho de ficheiro e mais dpi na imagem, dando maior liberdade a criar formatos, possibilitando o pormenor.
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Lara became more and more realistic, and that seems to apply to her body type too (the first games appealed to the fact that she was a sexy woman with exaggerated curves and although lara preserves the image of a strong sexy woman they piped down on the over exaggerated unrealistic body types.)
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	They seem to equate the evolution on the video game to the realism of the graphics
21	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Other than the technic evolution of representation (it gets more realistic over time) the last image/version of the character has been a lot desexualized. The character as it was originally designed (I suppose) always had this strong sexual presence and the last version is not overselling the gender factor so much.
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	The last one finally has some clothes on and her body has more logical proportions. I guess the first ones could be justified by the lack of resolution - less detail, simple shapes, so that we can identify the character as a woman. But from the 5th to the 8th one, it only shows how women are portrayed as mere sexual objects in videogames. Fortunately, nowadays i can see some more complex female characters in videogames, which gives me hope :)
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	The graphic evolution and the increasing realism of the character is notably the major noticeable difference
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	She's more realistic looking, but she's also suddenly more covered in clothes
21	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	Initials Lara Croft's graphics were too geometric but still suggested a thin woman with big features. Over the years, Lara started to look more human, but still on the same regist and somehow sexualized, until the last one, when they finally figured out that showing too much skin is not recommended to an archaeologist-adventurer that has to pass through many dangers.

21	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	improvement in general graphics
21	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	It has a less sexualized character design. Mostly due to the way that the character design focus stopped being so much on her sexual elements and mostly on her situation in her story (raiding tombs and all that)
21	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	O numero de polignos no modelo da persogem foi aumentando tornando-a cada vez mais como um humano, que é a mesma coisa que dizer que a persogem deixou de ter vertices que podem lesionar os olhos em caso de embate.
22	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	the first models were very low-poly and looked like dolls, the more recent ones look more realistic. I appreciate the fact that the last version of the character is being less sexualised— she looks more like an action hero and less like a Inflatable sex doll.
22	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	The place where I notice more the evolution is the face. I don't like the last one, it's more realistic but it doesn't look so good/fun
22	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	What most caught my attention was the "evolution" of the graphics, the way the avatar is more realistic, the shape of the body is more detailed, especially the face
22	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	the details are better
22	Brasil	Woman	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	A sexualização do corpo feminino e a relação roupa e função/situação que não condizem até a ultima modificação
22	Paraguay	Man		Yes	2-6 hrs	La ultima lara tiene menos tetas.
22	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	The clothings, it changed a lot in the last one maybe in an attempt of not sexualizing the character too much.
22	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	Over time: Higher Poly counts, better textures, added bump, normal, and other texture maps and subsurface scattering simulations for better materials and also an emphasis on accurate human proportions, with reduced breast sizes and wider waist on the last Lara Croft Model.
22	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	Body proportions. The latest iteration looks more like an average real person, without the anatomical exaggerations present in other iterations.
22	Portugal	Other	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	The initial Tomb Raider games were created in a "puberty"-like state of the video-game industry's journey. In fact, initially, their target audience was teenagers and "gamers" (the particular sub-culture, mostly dominated by men and rampant misogyny (among other characteristics)), and, therefore, female characters were designed mostly by straight men for other straight men. The first few images exemplify this male-focused culture. There is, however, the aspect of empowerment - Tomb Raider has always been associated with a strong female lead role, a role model of bravery that spearheaded the creation of better

						<p>female characters, probably due to the inclusion of more and more women in the games' development.</p> <p>The story is likely at least partially correct on both parts, especially with new iterations and extra character development. It is clear that the character has evolved from an "eye-candy" area to a deeper, more believable character, suited for a genre and audience that have matured alongside this game.</p> <p>While the old Tomb Raider games are still shrouded in nostalgia, it will be hard to confidently analyse them and their cultural role and message.</p>
22	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	<p>Over time, it's clear that Lara Croft's body was altered in order to look more realistic. For example, in the last models, her body is more rounded. Her face has also been altered in order to make her a prettier female. The last model is the odd one out because the game itself took a different direction from the previous ones - Lara stopped being only eye candy in order to seem more like a real person, an average woman/girl. I think that all these changes that occurred were done in order to attract more people to the game series, to draw more players (male, preferably) to play the game. Lara - even though she is a fictional character -, was objectified from the beginning of the Tomb Raider series.</p>
23	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	<p>A evolução do desenho do corpo, ha uma evolução no que toca ao detalhe e utilização de pixels.</p>
23	Portugal	Man		Yes	>10 hrs	<p>O que me salta á vista é a diminuição das características femininas do personagem em questao; reflexo da era politicamente correcta que vivemos mas errado a meu ver pois sempre considerei Lara Croft como uma mulher sim mas poderosa e mais que autosuficiente e a meu ver nada disto diminui o genero</p>
23	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	<p>the lines. the character is more real in the last iteration.</p>
23	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	<p>Outfit changed, Lara became less sexualized, got a more human-like shape and structure ratio</p>
23	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	<p>what i think its more notable are the more complicated or realistic mesh of the carachter, also the textures and propotions are in chronological line more realistic and complex.</p>
23	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	6-10 hrs	<p>less pixels all over the place, more colors, smaller boobs, no guns</p>
24	United Kingdom	Woman		Yes	>10 hrs	<p>She got hotter.</p>
24	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	<p>she seems more real now. real breasts, real clothes for the job. it reveals the game has become more feminist.</p>
24	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	<p>Increased sexulization and final normalization of the character's body. Noticed it because I</p>

						am familiar with the media outrage surrounding this character
25	Portugal	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	Na última imagem a personagem tem mais roupa e não se parece com uma super modelo. É uma evolução mais adequada aos dias de hoje principalmente com o grande movimento de SWJ.
26	Portugal	Man	No	Yes	0	the graphic quality of the character's image.
26	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Maybe the midle, because is very similar with Lara Croft.
26	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	I think it Lara's image has evolved to look more realistic, and more like "the girl next door". At least from the last of her looks... Her previous looks were very much sexualized, I think, and they differ a lot from the first/original "square like" figure, that hadn't very much sexualized features.
26	Belgium	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	Nothing really calls my attention out. The models are more detailed but that's it
27	Portugal	Woman	Yes	Yes	2 hrs	Evolution is present mainly in the human anatomy. the expression of the face being much more real. The technology and its tools change through the ages making the ideal of reality become closer to us.
28	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	Apesar do significativo melhoramento no aspecto gráfico da personagem e já colocando de parte o óbvio realce dado ao peito e anca, é de enaltecer o facto de a última personagem (a mais recente) tenha calças e tenha uma redução significativa de interesse visual pelas zonas mencionadas anteriormente.
28	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	the face, the clothes. More volume, not only textures.
28	Portugal	Woman		Yes	>10 hrs	The clothing patterns remained the same
30	Portugal	Man		Yes	>10 hrs	Lara as become less sexualized. The breasts got smaller, the waist more realistic and she has more clothe covering herself (mainly her legs) i also noticed that she as became what we view as a standard caucasian.
31	United Kingdom	Other	No	Yes	0	The latest image is higher in definition and looks more realistic (an average looking female) as oppose to a fantasy of a female from a heterosexual male perspective - as in tiny waist, big tits etc. The clothing is also more ordinary and not so revealing and sexual.
31	Portugal	Man	Yes	Yes	2-6 hrs	Increase in detail and drestic outfit change in the last iteration.
33	Portugal	Woman		Yes	2-6 hrs	Videogames characters image have being perfected from generation to generation. This evolution is close to achieve standard human looking characters.
33	Australia	Man		Yes	6-10 hrs	It's only at about the final image that Lara's waist/hip ratio is approaching something that looks like a human figure - the rest are mostly juvenlie Jessica Rabbit figurines, almost parody really. Also, imagine if Drake spent the Uncharted games running around in tiny shorts with thigh straps.

34	Portugal	Woman	No	Yes	0	In my opinion, Lara Croft is more human now. Since she was created, her knees become more real and the creators enhanced her curves. Although, the last character does not have a perfect body. Her breasts are smaller, less curves and more clothes but her face is more human. I think she does not have weapons in the last example. Maybe the creators of this character think that there is also girls playing this game and they have to adapt the character to this target. They started to give more attention to the character expressions instead of enhance the physical attributes. At the beginning, the target audience was masculine so they tried to enhance her curves. Now, there is a mixed audience so they have to balance the look of the character according the expectations of the public.
69	Anime Land	Other		Yes	6-10 hrs	Lara Croft hasn't worn pants until recently.
16	Costa Rica	Woman	No		0	No porque no me llama la atención los videojuegos.
16	Costa Rica	Woman	No		0	Me llama la atención de que cada vez se vuelve más realista, los gráficos mejoran
22	Portugal	Man	No		0	A principal coisa que me chamou a atenção foi a maneira como a forma da personagem é concebida. Primeiramente é perceptível que o corpo da personagem é composto por diferentes polígonos em que as suas arestas e vértices são bastante visíveis. Com a evolução estes foram-se extinguindo e todo o corpo da personagem parece concebido de uma vez só, apenas com superfícies redondas
26	United States	Woman	No		0	The last iteration is considerably different to the otherones with regards to body shape and clothing. I think the intention of the designers is to make the character look more like a normal woman
26	Romania	Woman	No		0	first image - all charesters are the same second image - they have different clothes third imagine - they have different shapes
26	Denmark	Man	Yes		>10 hrs	The final iteration is an obvious leap from all the others, due to the fact that the clothes she is wearing are different from the others (fx. Her long pants)
26	Russia	Woman	Yes		2 hrs	She has become way more realistic and less "perfect" (she is not loking like a Barbie doll anymore)
26	Romania	Woman	Yes		2-6 hrs	She looks fierce, but sexy. I see the way her image evolved as taking a curve towards sexier, once her features are more defined (images 5 and 6), but then it gets 'tamer' - in the last one especially, she looks a lot more covered. She could be switching between showing more or less skin? For the last version - maybe have a summer outfit and a 'winter' one. One thing that hasn't changed is the shape, curvy and well built - strong legs and tiny waist. The waist-hip-thigh ratio is

						definitely closer to reality in the last one, so maybe it follows the current trend of depicting 'real women' (while still keeping it attractive enough - who wants an ugly hero?)
27	Romania	Woman	No		0	Ive noticed how the standard regarding the women body image changes. at first the creators of the game tried and tried to make the womans body flawless. almost barbie like. but right at the end, the character doesnt have a tiny waist, huge boobs or almost no clothes on. i think its good progress. realistic.
27	The Netherlands	Woman	No		0	Getting step by step closer to a real image reflecting a human being, not a machine (robot).
27	Costa Rica	Woman	No		0	Son bastante similares, entre más reciente más intenta ser realista. La última versión es posible que sea un intento por "desobjetivizar" el cuerpo femenino, utilizando ropa más cubierta y cómoda para la labor que el personaje suele realizar, el busto menos pronunciado, la cintura menos pronunciada, el cabello más desaliñado, etc.
28	Costa Rica	Woman	No		0	El rostro y las dimensiones del cuerpo
28	Portugal	Man	Yes		2 hrs	Evolution of detail and evolution of realism
29	Portugal	Woman	No		0	The last version represents a woman with a lot more clothes.
30	Portugal	Woman	No		0	The complexity and detail of the 3D model as well as the textures has improved, becomingly much more realistic
32	Cabo Verde	Woman	No		0	Vestuario
35	Costa Rica	Woman	No		0	La última viste diferente, su blusa tapa todo su abdomen, ella no tiene la cintura tan marcada, sus piernas son más gruesas. Tiene un cuerpo un poco diferente, se ve como una chica más normal.
36	Costa Rica	Woman	Yes		6-10 hrs	Su cuerpo es menos sexualizado actualmente y eso me agrada.
36	Costa Rica	Man	Yes		2-6 hrs	Mejora en la calidad de las imagenes
38	Portugal	Man	No		0	The last one doesnt have guns
39	Costa Rica	Man	No		0	La disminución de los pechos . Creo que desde el principio estaban enfocados en ver al personaje como un simbolo sexual resaltando el tamaño del busto ,luego se nota que todo cambia y le ponen una forma mas adecuada para el tipo de heroína que es
40	Colombia	Man	No		0	El cuerpo se ve más real.
41	Brasil	Man	No		0	As pontas ficaram mais arredondadas, mais detalhes nas roupas e calçados, também na pele, com suor e incidência de luz, tornando a personagem mais realista.
33	Costa Rica	Woman	Yes		N/A	La última evolución no me gusta, la imagen que dá es poco femenina.