

Every Game is for Girls:

Change in gender representation in the video game industry
from the perspectives of customers and of producers

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Summary

This paper looks at the changes in gender-representation in the distribution of female and male gamers and professionals in the video game industry. Based on historical figures and current information, the reasons for the disparities are described. The impact the 2020 pandemic will have on the economy is still very unclear, but the video game industry is thriving at this time. Additionally, the advancement for gender diversity has been greatly affected by the #MeToo movement. Research in the field as well as journal and magazine articles to include current events and describe the prevailing state of the industry, are used as sources. In the early years of video games, a stereotypical image of a gamer was sold to the public by big companies. Nowadays the proportion of female gamers is on the brink of reaching 50% of the total users. However, the representation of women in the workforce is much lower. Gender-bias and the specificities of the industry give rise to high entry barriers for potential female workers. Conclusions and recommendations have been drawn based on data available for Europe and North America. The booming industry has a lot to offer but must make changes if it wants to keep up with the developments in society. The burden not only lies on employers, but also teachers, parents, and government. Everyone can help make gaming an inclusive activity.

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List of abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGI	Computer-Generated Imagery
DSS	Developer Satisfaction Survey
ESA	Entertainment Software Association
ESAC	Entertainment Software Association of Canada
EU	European/European Union
GB	Great Britain
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGDA	International Game Developers Association
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISFE	Interactive Software Federation of Europe
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
RPG	Role-Playing Game
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
USA	United States of America
WW II	World War II

1. Introduction

1.1. Increased sales during pandemic

Who would have thought we would be told by our government to stay home and play games? However, this is exactly what is happening right now. The global video games industry launched the initiative 'Play Apart Together' to encourage people to stay inside, play video games and help flatten the curve of infections. The goal is to promote the health guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). The initiative has gathered the support of 18 industry leaders, who came together to support the campaign (Haasch, 2020). Gaming has been dubbed a safe social activity and as Activision Blizzard's CEO, Bobby Kotick, declared: "Games are the perfect platform because they connect people through the lens of joy, purpose and meaning." (Business Wire, 2020). 'Play Apart Together' is one of many ways the industry has responded to the outbreak. Just recently in the United Kingdom, a new collaboration 'Games for Carers' has seen the industry come together and offer 85,000 free games and gaming subscriptions to National Health Service workers on the frontline of the pandemic (Jeffrey, 2020).

With the world currently on hold, most businesses had to shut or slow down their production. However, a few industries like postal services and e-commerce are thriving during these times. The global video game industry is another sector that is booming during lockdown. With the stay-at-home orders put in place in many countries, people are searching for ways to entertain themselves. Many turn to video games as a pastime because it is a distraction and they are unable to work or leave their house. Additionally, with social distancing measures in place, many have decided to use online or multiplayer games to connect with family and friends. For all those reasons, the activity has seen a massive enlargement of the audience, of established and new players (Hall, 2020).

Amongst the companies that have seen great success lately, Nintendo stands out. The company released its new game Animal Crossing: New Horizons mid-March this year. The sales have skyrocketed and surpassed sales of all past instalments in the franchise. The firm differentiates itself from the war-like action movies and promotes the Animal Crossing franchise as "part of its own genre: inclusionary games" (Stark,

2014). A category that people of all gender and ages can play. Animal Crossing games have a simple plot, the player assumes the role of a character who moves into a town, where he can spend time socializing with fellow villagers, performing activities or collecting items. A particular feature of the new edition is the control the player has over the choice of character, house, and town. Nintendo eliminated gender restrictions and now allows customizations of gender-free face features, hairstyles, and outfits in the game (Favis, 2020). It is a step towards the right direction, and it has been very well received by the public who appreciated the freedom given to personalizing their protagonist. Nintendo has always been a leader in the industry, the question is if other companies will follow.

Part of the success is the situation of lockdown a lot of people are finding themselves in. However, the franchise has always seen great success, particularly with female gamers. This genre greatly appeals to women, a topic we will be discussing in a further part of the paper. We can assume that the boom of the new released game can be attributed to the fact that it differs from the typical action-adventure video games that come out every year and get a lot of attention in the media. The craze that erupted on social media might also be due to the high number of bored people scrolling through their timelines during lockdown more often than usual. Social networks have users of all age, gender, and level of gaming expertise. The company will therefore benefit from it and broaden its potential following that it might not have found in “normal” times. A new feature on the Nintendo Switch, the device Animal Crossing: New Horizons is played on, is a “share” button that allows players to upload pictures and videos in one click (Hernandez, 2020). The social aspect of the game makes it very appealing. It allows users to connect, talk and meet new people. A person can “visit” a friend’s in-game home and have an interaction. It is a safe space to connect in times when in-person meetings are impossible. Although, research would have to be done to confirm both conjectures.

The often-overlooked video game industry has now been pushed into the spotlight. During its short, fifty-year life, the industry has converted from a hobby to a multi-billion-euro industry. It not only helps people to disconnect from the world around them, but also allows them to be heroes, villains, athletes or whoever they want to be. Video games have become entertainment products and an accustomed part of pop-culture, mixing with more traditional media. Many do not realize the vastness of the industry.

The sector is often associated with the criticism of video games like sexualised or violent content, the addictive effect of gaming or lack of gender diversity.

1.2. Lack of diversity in entertainment industry

Another reason to analyse the topic, are the big news coming out of the movie industry, another branch of entertainment. Starting from the #MeToo movement up to the outrage over the lack of diversity in nominations for the Oscars, a negative light has been cast onto the industry. Video games, another part of the entertainment enterprise, have not been part of the controversy. However, the #Gamergate debate attracted a lot of attention in 2014. It has now been 6 years since and the question to ask is if there has been any change. Are the stereotypes of “only guys are into computers and video games” still prevalent? Were they ever true? How far have we come in the last decade? What can we expect of the video game industry in the future? To answer those questions, we will be looking at the numbers and research done over the past years. The exploration will cover studies completed in Europe and North America.

With the internet widely available, access to information and a wide range of games is not extraordinary anymore. With the Nintendo, PlayStation and Xbox, the era for home game consoles was at its high point in 2012/2013 (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, 2016). At that time, many avid gamers had different platforms and games at their disposal. Forums, fandoms, and conventions, whole communities were building around the activity, the various consoles, and games. There is a whole different world out there for people who are passionate about defeating the villain, levelling up and getting the highest possible score.

First and foremost, we need to become familiar with the two main topics that will be addressed in this paper: gender balance and video games. Thereafter we will discuss the methods for our analysis, present the current situation and bring forward the many correlations that can be found in the field.

1.3. Gender equality: definition and brief history

According to the Europe Institute for Gender Equality, gender balance is defined as “human resources and equal participation of women and men in all areas of work, projects or programmes” (United Nations Statistics Division, n.d.). In a setting, where genders are equal, men and women would have the same rate of participation in the population (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). However, that is the ideal scenario. We have come a long way since women’s suffrage was granted in many countries around the world, the introduction of International Women’s Day in 1911, the United Nations affirming in its charter international cooperation to achieve equality for all in 1945 and legalization of same-sex marriage in 30 countries starting in the year 2000 up until now. However, the issue is still as present and pressing as it was before.

Regarding gender, we will mostly take a binary approach. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community has also been strongly advocating for a greater diversity in gaming and should be included in future papers.

1.4. Video games: history and current state of the industry

Games have existed for thousands of years, with the earliest dating from before 2600 BCE (Soubeyrand, 2000). It is an activity people use to distract themselves, entertain and interact with one another, sometimes also used for educational purposes. Over the years, they evolved from pencil-and-paper over card or board games to arcade, computer, and console games. The first video game Tennis for Two was created by physicist William Higinbotham in 1958, a simple tennis play exhibited in Brookhaven National Laboratory (Chodos, 2008; Kowert & Quandt, 2015, p. 2). Some might disagree with this statement as in the 1950s games were restricted to research labs at universities or at large corporations. Their purpose was not mass distribution, so they were not publicized and remain undiscovered by contemporary researchers (Cortada, 2006, p. 415).

Before going deeper into the subject, we should first define video games. Different research describes the category in different ways and having disparate characteristics. Wolf (2008) for example has a few key components he expects to find in a computerized game: conflict, rules, necessity for the player to have a skill and a sort of outcome that has a value (Wolf, 2008, p. 3). Other researchers provide us with

different definitions, nonetheless Esposito (2005) explains it in a short way: “A videogame is a game which we play thanks to an audiovisual apparatus and which can be based on a story.” (Esposito, 2005). It is a broad definition, which does not constrain us to a certain description.

However, to understand the future, we must first go look at the past. PONG was the first mass-produced commercial arcade game (Kowert & Quandt, 2015, p. 5). It was a simple simulation of table tennis, which started as an arcade game. Later Home PONG was released, and it included the same sounds and on-screen scoring system as the arcade version. Even though it was a simple game, it was a great success. During the holiday season after its release in 1975, 150,000 units were sold (The Centre for Computing History, n.d.). The digital branch is a fairly new addition to the mass media entertainment, and it has come a long way since then. It is due not only to the development and improvement of computer hardware but also the software side. For video games specifically, the graphics have improved, different perspectives have been introduced and online multiplayer mode has allowed to connect fans all around the world. The video game industry is larger and more influential than it has ever been before. According to data from industry watcher Newzoo, a source for games and esports analytics, the global games market will grow to \$196 billion by 2022. With \$61.1 billion of the total generated by the console segment. In 2022 the region Asia-Pacific will still represent the biggest share with 48% of total global game revenues. North America will be the second-largest region (26%), followed by Europe, Middle East, and Africa (22%). In general, the games market is in a healthy state, with every segment showing growth (Newzoo, 2019a). Over the course of the years, several game types and genres have appeared, where the type describes the game play and the genre the narrative content of the game. Games can be categorized into 9 types: action, RPG (role-playing game), sports, adventure, puzzle, simulation fighting, strategy and racing. The genres are drama, crime, fantasy, horror, mystery, science fiction, war, and espionage as well as western/frontier.

The development has been so huge that the act of watching another person play a game, has become a popular pastime. A new category of celebrities has emerged, the so-called gaming YouTube stars, some of whom have a yearly income of more than 10 million dollars (in 2017) (Clark, 2019). Worldwide tournaments attract sponsors and celebrity players to the competition, which are watched by millions of people. For example, in 2019, the League of Legends World Championship, which ran during almost one month, amassed a total of 137 million hours watched (Fitch, 2020). The leading streaming platform Twitch, which focuses on video game live streaming, grew from 102,000 average concurrent viewers in 2012 to almost 1,9 million in 2020 (TwitchTracker, n.d.).

We have now clearly introduced the main keywords for this paper and data showing the possible bright future the industry has. In the following part, we will present the methodology used to examine the concept of gender representation of makers and buyers of video games.

2. Analysis of the change in gender representation

2.1. Methodology

There are many overlapping ways to address the issues of gender balance in video games. The representation of female protagonists in gameplay and the way they are represented, are key factors powering change. A correlation between the proportion of female professionals and female protagonists can certainly be found and should not be omitted in broader analysis. In this paper, we will focus on the gender divide in two areas: makers, and buyers. The two different groups frequently interact with games. To clearly present the issue, we will talk about the ones who produce and the ones who play video games. These two categories of people interact with each other and one person may be part of only one or of the two groups. Additionally, one group can influence the other. A gamer who is video game enthusiastic might choose to become part of the workforce for example as a creator or founder of a company. In that case that person influences the two classifications. We will see in the later chapter that most industry workers are passionate about the product and either have been or become gamers once they start working in the industry.

In the following chapter, the point of view of the customers and users, who buy and play the games, will be presented. Looking at statistical data in four European (EU) countries, Canada, and United States of America (USA), we will discuss the conclusions that have been made by researchers about the change in figures. The historic developments of computer games will be part of the analysis as well as online harassment.

Next, we will look at the female-male proportions in employment. Looking at the historical statistics, we will present a list of reasons explaining the numbers.

In the subsequent chapter, we will be discussing the correlation between the two groups: the makers and the buyers. The many ways that one can influence the other and force to change its view of women in the industry.

Using the two sides i.e. the people who produce the product and the ones who buy it, the paper aims to explain the complicated relation of video games and gender to an audience that is not familiar with the topic and does not know much about its development in the past decades.

To answer the questions, posed in the previous section, the extensive research, and data available for the industry will be used. Theory, statistics, and reports from different associations will be used to prove that there is a prevalent issue. Papers written by researchers and articles from industry magazines will help prove the point and give concrete examples. The topic can be discussed and looked at from many different perspectives. We have chosen the aforementioned two as they are the main stakeholders in the industry that can push for change.

2.2. The viewpoint of the customer

In the previous years, many researchers have wondered about the disparities in the number of females versus male gamers. If we look at societal attitudes and stereotypes in culture, video games are for boys and men. Masculinity, violence, and lack of female representation are being cited as problematic aspects of this leisure activity. Gendering of gaming is reinforced by myth that “[...] video games are for males. They're the makers, the buyers and the players.” (Lien, 2013). The question is: is it still the case in 2020?

At the beginning of video game creation, the knowledge and skills were not well developed. Teams wanted to create an innovative product. Coming up with an entertaining and fun idea was the main goal. There was no motivation to produce games specifically for girls or guys. Studios producing computerized games at that time had more male employees than female, which was a consequence of the field of computer science being predominantly male (Lien, 2013). Therefore, as Lori Cole, a female developer at the time, explains: "Those games weren't exactly female-targeted, but it was guys who were making them, and they were trying to make what they could with this technology... so I don't think it was a case of the games being designed for guys. They were just designed by guys." (Kapriyelov, 2015). We will get back to the status of predominance of male developers in a later chapter. Additionally, in the 70's and 80's, research about male and female preferences and motivations was just

starting to get developed with mostly face-to-face collection of data. Experiments like field observation, surveys, focus groups and coin collection data had a sample size in the low hundreds (Norman & Kirakowski, 2017, pp. 299–300; R. Kowert & Quandt, 2015, p. 87). There were hardly any reliable market research techniques available to prompt companies to produce games for a specific audience. There were no roadmap and no experts in the field. The simplicity of games kept them gender neutral. For example, in the late 1980's, the legendary GameBoy was used by both genders (Cortada, 2006, p. 428). It is also important to notice that the device has “boy” in its name. There is surprisingly little research about the reasons why ads started to target a male audience at a later stage. One can presume that, at that time, men were the head of the household, and they were the main users of a computer (National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Studies, 2001). Therefore, companies had to convince men to buy their product, because they had the decision-making power in the house.

This divide, further enforced by the saturation of the video game market with low-quality games was a key factor of the industry crash in 1983 (Montfort & Bogost, 2009, p. 133). The episode brought big changes; companies were not able to produce a massive number of games anymore. They had to start focusing on what was going to sell. Finding out who was the most profitable demographic became important. During studies done in that period, the time commitment to games of boys was clearly higher than the one of girls (Administration for Children and Families, 1996). There might be many more complex reasons for it but as a result, advertisements started to target boys and men, rarely featuring women or non-white players (Chess, Evans, & Baines, 2016, p. 40). The choice of a primary audience had been made.

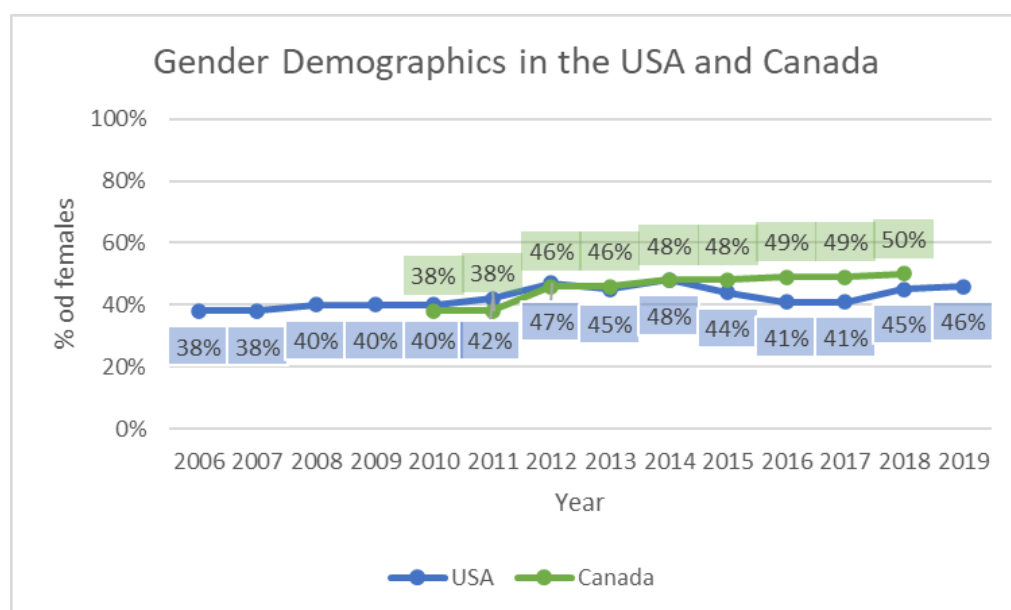
One of the key principles of marketing is that one cannot market to everybody (Petrovski & Pestana, 2017). A defined group of people is targeted to get the best results. Anything from packaging to colour and smell is being examined to theorize consumer behaviour. Often a persona is created and gets attributed a range of characteristics, in the case of the video game industry it was a straight, teenage white boy. So, looking at the hard data and analytics, it is not surprising that big games companies pursued a male audience. They focused their resources on a particular part of the population: evaluating characteristics like gender, income, and age group. From a marketing perspective, it makes sense. The desire to increase the likelihood for a successful product was greater than making sure that nobody felt left out. The effect of advertisements on an individual's attitudes has been widely researched. It is not surprising that society adapted those views. The cultivation theory devised by G. Gerbner already in 1969, presented a general hypothesis that media, in this case study, television, influences the idea and perception that audience has of the world (Wright, 2015, p. 30). Also, it has been established by researchers that the perceptions of stereotypes and behaviour towards cultural groups of a person are influenced by advertising (Garst & Bodenhausen, 1997, p. 567).

The 2000's saw a transformation with video game companies releasing games like Guitar Hero and Dance Dance Revolution to appeal to a larger audience. The diversification of genre and addition of the social component of those games as well as the online experience became a driver for the whole industry (Batchelor, 2008, pp. 123-124; Cortada, 2006, p. 430). Years later, while investigating the question of diversity in video game commercials in 2013, Chess et al. (2016) reported a shift and an "increased inclusivity" (Chess et al., 2016, p. 53). Even though most advertisements still represented the common gamer as a white male, some companies tried to include women. They criticize that this perception builds up barriers of entry for new female players. Commercials, which are there to encourage people to buy and play, should expand the representation to capture the attention of a bigger audience (Chess et al., 2016, pp. 53-54). And the audience has changed in the last 20 years.

Looking at statistics of the previous years, female gamers do represent a considerable audience and a big opportunity for companies. "Gaming as a pastime is now more or less equally distributed across gender" (Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2014). This can be confirmed by statistics from around the globe. According to Newzoo's 2019 Global Games Market Report, the top 10 games markets, looking at revenues, are in a descending order: China, USA, Japan, Republic of Korea, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Canada, Spain and lastly Italy (Newzoo, 2019b). Therefore, we will have a look at the demographic distribution of gender in the aforementioned countries where data is accessible. The statistics for countries in Asian countries are scarce, but data from the US, Canada and four European countries has been documented. However, further analysis should include the big Asian market and consider cultural differences.

In USA, the collection of data has been more detailed than in other parts of the world as pictured in figure 1. The earliest report available online published by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) in 2006, shows that only 38% of game players were female. The ratio stayed similar with two out of five gamers being women during the following years. 2012 saw a big jump to 47% and reaching an all-time high of almost half in 2014 (48%). A possible explanation to the change in the early 2010's was the introduction of casual games that could be played on a mobile phone or a tablet. And as we will see in the following part, women are the main players for this platform. However, from then the number started to steadily go down, only picking back up in 2018. According to the most recent industry statistics, in 2019, 46% of game players were female. Taking into account the data gathered in figure 1, Canada has not seen a drop in the percentage of female players. From 38% in 2010, the industry had an 8% increase. From that point on, the proportion of women gamers kept rising steadily until reaching 50% in 2018.

Figure 1. Summary of Research on Gender Demographics for Video Game Players in the United States of America and Canada¹



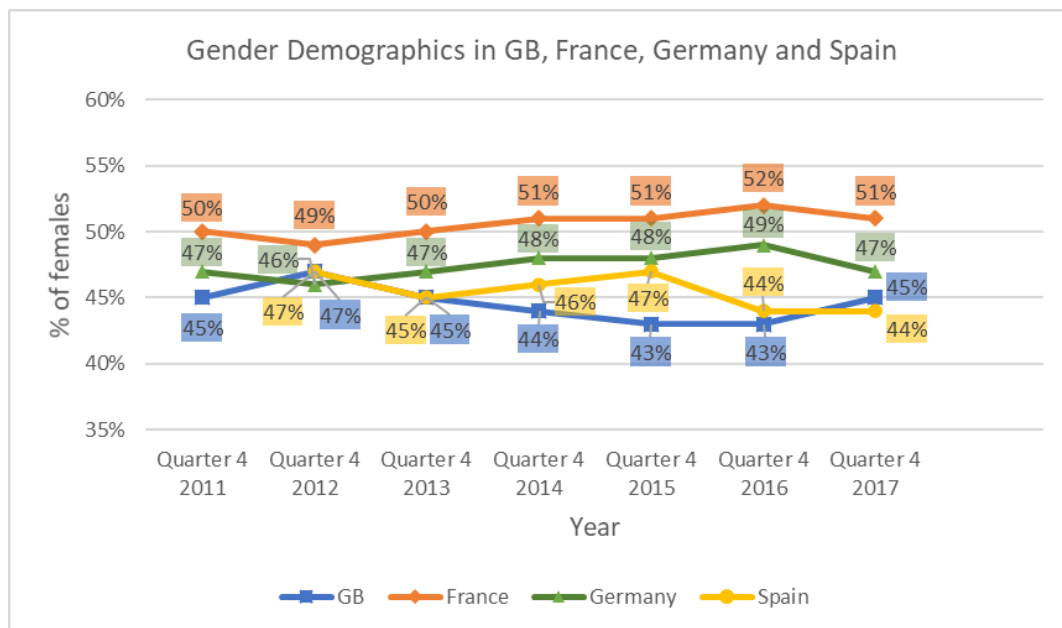
Note 1: in the United States of America, survey conducted by Ipsos Connect for ESA

Note 2: in Canada, survey conducted prepared for Entertainment Software Association of Canada (ESAC) by Nordicity

¹ Data compiled from the ESA Essential Facts About The Computer And Video Game Industry reports from the years 2006 to 2019; and from ESAC Essential Facts About The Canadian Video Game Industry from the years 2011 to 2019

The statistics concerning European (EU) gamers are very limited and only numbers from Great Britain (GB), France, Germany and Spain starting from 2011 have been collected by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE) and are presented in figure 2. Three of the countries (GB, Germany and Spain) followed an analogous pattern. The percentage of female gamers over a period of 7 years (2011-2017) did not vary much, with the numbers between 43% and 49%, but never getting to half of the total number of gamers. France, however, was the only nation that female gamers made up 50% of the total, dipping to 49% in 2012, but going back up in the following year. In 2014, the number of women engaging in gaming surpassed their male counterparts and stayed on top for the next 3 years. Surprisingly enough, from 2016 to 2017, the proportion of female gamers decreased or stayed the same in all the countries apart from GB, where it rose by 2 percentage points.

Figure 2. Summary of Research on Gender Demographics for Video Game Players in Europe²

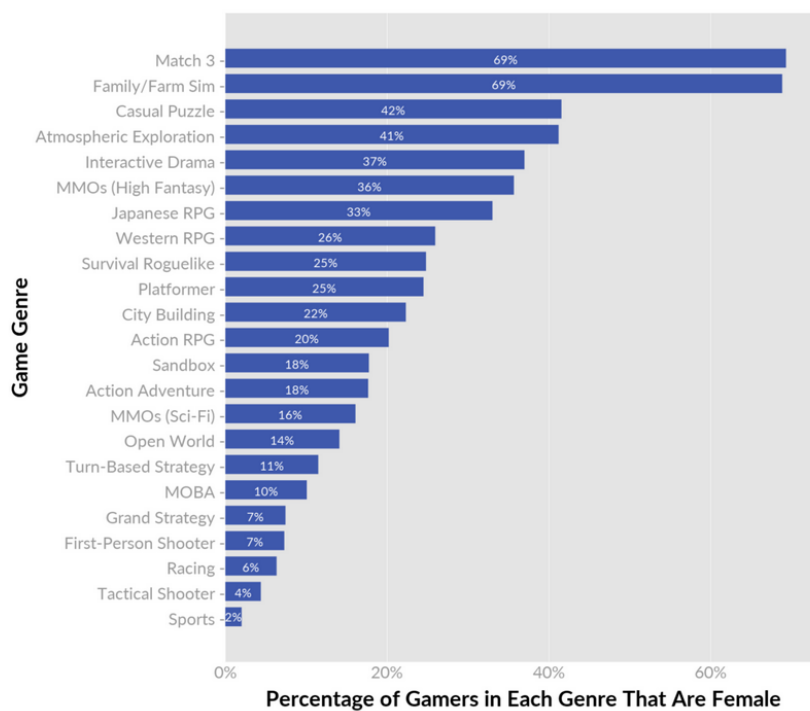


Note 1: There was no data available for Spain in Quarter 4 2011

² Profile of gamers with a base: age 6-64 playing any type of game. Data compiled from GameTrack (ISFE/Ipsos Connect) surveys data summary from the years: 2011,2012,2013,2014,2015,2016 and 2017. The exact metrics for the years 2018 and 2019 are not yet available.

According to ISFE, in 2018 46% of EU gamers were women (keeping in mind that Europe is represented by the four countries mentioned above). As we can see there has been only a slight difference in the distribution of male and female gamers over the past years. However, the statistics above consider any time of games. If we start looking at the different genres, we will be able to see a greater discrepancy. A survey done in 2017 by the video game analytics company Quantic Foundry considered 270,000 gamers to try and find out if there are any preference differences (figure 3). The percentages represent the proportion of female players within each genre. The study finds that for match 3 (i.e. tile-matching games) and family/farm sim (i.e. farming simulator) genres the gamers are most likely to be women. Sports and tactical shooter games are least likely to be played by women (Yee, 2018).

Figure 3. Percentage of female gamers in each genre³



³ Quantic Foundry. (2017). Percentage of Gamers in Each Genre That Are Female. Retrieved May 12, 2020, from <https://quanticfoundry.com/2017/01/19/female-gamers-by-genre/>

The numbers are further confirmed by other studies done on preferences and motivations. In 2008, an interesting research done at Stanford university suggests that because of the neural circuitry in a male's brain, they are more bound to feel rewarded by a "game with a territorial component and then more motivated to continue game-playing behavior" than women (Brandt , 2008). Additionally, a study on German players, found that females enjoy a high level of rich social interaction and dislike violent content as well as "heavy gender-stereotyping in the presentation of characters" (Hartmann & Klimmt, 2006, p. 924). Another characteristic is that women were less interested in winning and were less competitive. A majority of computer games are competition oriented. In addition, if they include violence, characters designed on stereotypes, a low amount of social interaction, women are not interested in the available products.

All those factors help explain why certain game genres (RPG's, first-person shooters) are less popular with females. Furthermore, exactly these categories of games are the top selling ones according to ISFE, with FIFA 19, Red Dead Redemption 2, Call Of Duty: Black Ops 4, Grand Theft Auto V and FIFA 18 being the 5 top selling games by units in 2018 (ISFE, 2019).

On the one hand, the elevated interest of women to start playing video games, in the previous years, can be attributed to the increase of family-friendly and so-called casual games and the emergence of games available on new platforms like mobile phones and tablets (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016, p. 80). Already in 2011, Vermeulen and Van Looy (2014), found by conducting a survey on a sample of 983 gamers that female gamers played casual games more often than their male counterparts, (Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2014). The evidence can still be found nowadays. According to the ESA, in the United States in each generation category (millennial, Gen X and Boomer), a high number of females most often play casual games (76%, 81% and 78% respectively) (ESA, 2019). On the other side of the globe, ISFE also found that among female gamers 63% play on smartphones and tablets compared to 54% on computers and 44% on consoles in 2018. And women represent 52% of all mobile and tablet gamers (ISFE, 2019).

On the other hand, boys still prevail in “hardcore” gaming. The difference in preferences enforces a new divide: girls play “easy” and “simple” games on their smartphones and tablets (called “casual” gamers) and boys play the “real” games on console and PC (Gjelsvik & Schubart, 2016, pp. 80-81). It is important to note that the perception itself already creates the divide and reinforces and feeds into stereotypes. The undermining of female gamers partaking in the leisure activity, entrains another issue: the harassment and discrimination of women who do enjoy more violent, highly competitive, and fast-moving games. Being a gamer is one thing, admitting that you are a gamer is another. Many female gamers still fear to reveal their identity online to fellow video games enthusiasts. There are different forms of harassment directed toward female gamers, from swearing, slurs, insults over a player’s skill to exclusion from participation. The level of hostility is high. Sexual harassment is not unusual either, situation where women are targets of sexist and sexualized comments, requests for sexual favours, threats or even rape jokes are made towards them (Kowert, Breuer, & Quandt, 2017, pp. 204-205; Shaer, Westendorf, Knouf, & Pederson, 2017, p. 1548; Fox & Tang, 2016, p. 1300). Out of 874 participants to an online survey, 63.3% of female players responded that they had experienced harassment, four times more than men (15.7%) (Matthew, 2012). The consequences for victims of misogynistic harassment begin with hiding their gender by playing a male character or communicating by text to avoid talking to fellow gamers. However, it can go as far as a complete withdrawal from gaming (Fox & Tang, 2016, p. 1320). The materialization of all those issues came in the form of the GamerGate controversy. It caught the attention of mainstream media and highlighted the toxic environment women and transgender individuals have to face when gaming (Kowert, Breuer, & Quandt, 2017, p. 205).

An argument against putting in more female actors in games is that the game will lose authenticity and become unrealistic. Although, isn't it more unrealistic that half of the population is not present in those works of fiction or only depicted in the background as passive entities? (MacDonald, 2014). An example is the game *Battlefield V*, for which the trailer was released in May 2018 and sparked negative feedback. A minority of fans disliked the fact a woman was represented fighting on the frontlines in a game mirroring World War II (WW II). They criticised that historical authenticity was being sacrificed for political correctness, even though it has been proved that women played a variety of roles during WWII (Farokhmanesh, 2018). Producers responded that they will not exclude female characters, adding "accept it, or don't buy the game" (Hutt, 2018).

As we can see, a part of the community does not want to change, some want to change but do not want companies to force diversity and some are too afraid to speak up in fear of backlash. What can producer, designers and developers do? Do they also face a hostile environment? In the next chapter, we will be discussing the issues women face in the employment in the game industry.

2.2. The viewpoint of the producer

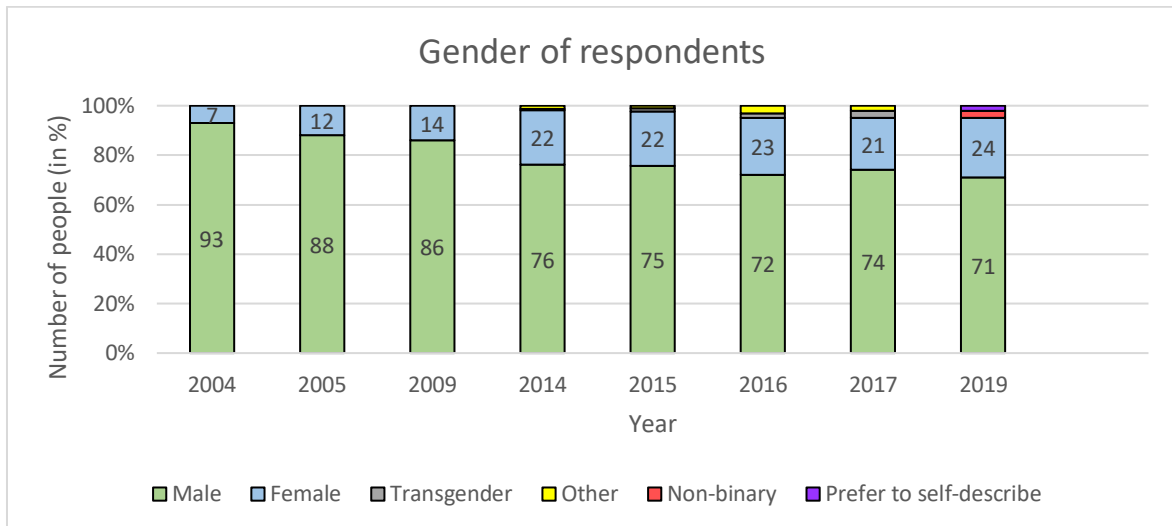
Online harassment not only gives rise to a cycle of exclusion of women from playing games, but also has an impact on the gaming culture and employment in the industry (Shaer, Westendorf, Knouf, & Pederson, 2017b, p. 1551). Similarly to the behaviour of gamers facing harassment online, female professionals are likely to quit their job, especially if the employee does not feel protected or the employer does not react properly or at all to claims (Fox & Tang, 2016b, pp. 1293-1294). In 2019, video game workers were asked whether they felt that there is "equal treatment and opportunity for all in the game industry?". 65% of them gave a negative answer, reported the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) (International Game Developers Association, 2019). The figure has risen in the past years from 50% in 2017 and 58% in 2016.

The employment sector of our economy does have many problems related to ongoing discrimination and inequality in the workplace including gender (Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality, n.d.). The issue manifests itself in the wage gap, unequal opportunities as well as the above-mentioned harassment. The issue is not only restricted to the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector to which video games development belongs to. The International Labour Organization (ILO), a United Nations agency whose goal is to promote decent work for all women and men, examined the matter in their World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 document. According to the report published in 2018, women, with a labour force participation rate of 48.5%, remain much less likely to engage in the labour market than men, which have a participation rate 26.5 percentage points higher (75%) (International Labour Office, 2018). In the past 30 years, we have not seen much progress with a reduction of the gap by 2 percentage points since 1990. The same trend is visible if we narrow the analysis down to Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and jobs, and the ICT sector. The video game business is an artistic-technical type of industry. The different jobs include all kinds of professional groups and competencies from programmers/software engineers, analysts, writers, game designers and visual artists to producers or project managers. The following survey encompasses all those different positions.

We will first address the available data to assess the distribution of the working force in the industry. IGDA conducts a yearly (in 2019 deciding to administer the survey on a two-year cycle) Developer Satisfaction Survey (DSS) among people with various connections to the video game industry including different positions and jobs. In the past years, IDGA summarized its data by creating a persona. For the past 6 years, a typical game industry worker has been a white male between 30 and 36 years old who has a university degree and lives in North America and does not have any children.

The predominance of male workers in the industry is evident, from a very high 93% in 2004 to a still reasonably high 71% in 2019 as seen in figure 4. The positive increase in the proportion of non-male workers is clearly visible but remains under 30% of the total of workers in 2019 versus 7% 15 years earlier.

Figure 4. Gender of video game workers⁴



Note 1: Options “Transgender” and “Other” started to be given in 2014 and changed to “Non-binary” and “Prefer to self-describe” in 2019

Note 2: the “Transgender” category includes people that identified themselves as male-to-female and as female-to-male transgender

It is not possible to point to one reason for the relatively low number of females during all those years and the steady but slow climb of the female representation in the video game industry. While exploring the topic, one can gathered four reasons that vouch for the low numbers and are holding the industry back but also three other key facts that invite a positive evolvement.

First, historically, women were thought of as having reduced intellectual or natural understanding, and not having the abilities and capacities to join a certain industry. Bourdieu talks about a ‘masculine order’ that imposes the masculine domination in certain domains as normal and common (Styhre, Remneland-Wikhamn, Szczepanska, & Ljungberg, 2016, p. 247). The marginalization and the prevalence of women in subordinate positions in many professions has been analysed and

⁴ Data compiled from the IGDA Developer Satisfaction Survey 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019 and Diversity Among Videogame Developers, 2004-2015.

discussed in length in various areas. Even the video game industry, which is relatively new, approximately five decades, struggles with inequities. The worldwide problem of a hostile environment is experienced by female co-workers, where their gender is perceived as a drawback rather than an advantage to a successful career. Information and Communications Technology is a sector where women are greatly outnumbered by men. In a study done in Europe in 2018, only 9% of developers and 19% of people in management positions were women (European Parliament, 2018). The pre-existing biases and the perception of gaming as a masculine activity also keep new possible candidates at bay. They refrain from joining the sector as women are still vastly under-represented in all roles and levels in the male-centric activity. An additional divide is clearly visible in the types of jobs women can be found in. Only very few are in core content creation roles like programming, software engineering, audio, game, or technical design. The majority of female workers had functions in administrative department for example human resources, marketing, public relations, or sales (Prescott & Bogg, 2010, p. 143; IGDA, 2016).

Moreover, a controversy, present in many fields including the video game industry, is the absence of females holding higher positions. Even though, almost an equal number of management position are held by women (37%) and men (38%), the disproportion can be seen if we look at senior management. Women (19%) are less likely to be at the highest level of an organization compared to men (23%). In its report, IGDA warns that we should not jump to conclusions as to the small gap between the percentages. The data might have been influenced by more women managers answering the survey or holding managerial roles in the administrative subdivisions mentioned before. The largest discrepancy shows while 10% of men are part of the highest income bracket, earning \$150,000 or more, only 3% of women reach the same salary range (IGDA, 2016). In 2012, the hashtag #1ReasonWhy on Twitter started a conversation about the gender divide in technology. The community shared their experience, which revealed that the rules and standards are different for women. Compared to their male colleagues, they face the accusations of achieving something because of their physical appearance. They gave examples of times when their work was belittled, or their contributions not properly recognized. The need to defend their work, their skills and expertise makes working in the industry an everyday battle for women (Kafai, Richard, & Tynes, 2017, p. 146). The lack of representation in the

games i.e. low number of female characters and in the employment field, in addition to lack of information about careers or popular role models further deepens the idea that the video games industry is a male dominated field. The high barriers to entry along with society's negative perception of the industry, act as a deterrent to potential female employees. The androcentrism of the activity and employment environment is and will present a challenge for any employer, who wants to present women with more opportunities.

Next, the growing industry of video games is regarded as attractive but flawed. Starting from bad working conditions including long hours and salary secrecy, to sexism and racism. Many involved in the development are in it not only for the money, but also because they are passionate about games (Prescott & Bogg, 2010, p. 142). So, the environment is rather unwelcoming for non-gamers. Working conditions and sexism among gamers were both top factors influencing negative perception of the game industry according to industry workers. Both were selected by more than 70% of participants according to the DSS 2019. Other reasons, where more than half of people surveyed agreed, were sexism in games and in the workforce, perceived link to violence and racism among gamers (IGDA, 2019). Under bad working conditions, long working hours during a regular schedule and even longer days during crunch time are a dominant feature of the industry. 19% of respondents indicated that they worked more than 45 hours per week (with 40 hours 'standard' workweek). During crunch time i.e. a period of intense pressure, usually before a release or a deadline, 87% worked more than 45 hours per week (IGDA, 2019). The practice of crunch time has been widely criticised, especially as the additional hours are rarely compensated. For women, with caring responsibilities for children and duty for the majority of domestic labour, work and life become hard to balance. Their absence and inability to have flexible and long workdays gives them a disadvantage in career development and promotions. Additionally, women with families are often reluctant to relocate, a feature of the industry which has become more and more common. Furthermore, the salary secrecy in the industry fuels the gender pay gap. In the sector, women earn on average 18.9% less than their male counterparts (European Parliament, 2018). Negotiated pay and bonuses are common and put women in a disadvantaged position. The portrayal of female characters in video games is another major cause for lack of women in the business. However, the way females are presented in gameplay, either in a sexual

manner or as victims that need to be saved (Styhre et al., 2016, p. 252) should be further discussed in other papers (Prescott & Bogg, 2010, p. 143).

Last, the educational process has been described as a reason for the problem. Ridgeway, Walters, and Pau (2013) report that the issue can be found at every stage of the system (Ridgeway, Walters, & Pau, 2013). The industry has been plagued by the “the pipeline shrinkage problem”, where the number of females in the early study years shrinks to a lower figure in the following years, from high school to graduate school, but also at the bachelor's level. The issue may lie in the fact that after a few years of studying in a male dominated field, students are fatigued and chose not to continue their education in that direction (Camp & Gürer, 2002). Recommendations from different scholars are similar. They agree that the promotion of women in Computing should be vastly improved to diversify the industry. The key is to get girls excited about the subject at a young age and show them the possibilities in a future career related to computing. Specifically, for computer games industry, Gürer and Camp (2002) suggest educating game makers, game designers and parents. The former two should discover the opportunities that lie in producing games oriented towards girls. Parents should buy games and software for their daughters, put pressure on companies to develop them by creating a high demand.

Another minor factor is “the lack of a good model to follow”, as explains IGDA’s former executive director Kate Edwards. The creative but also technical aspects of the video game industry can be compared to the movie business. A series of similarities can be made between the two. With low numbers of female directors and producers i.e. people in managing roles, Hollywood does not provide a good model. In the area of technological development, Silicon Valley or the city of Beijing are comparable. However, the popular hubs also struggle with diversity (Sinclair, 2016).

Nevertheless, three major developments in society and in the video game industry had beneficial effects on the number of women participating in it: the societal view on female participation in the employment market, the rising popularity of independent games (also called “indie” games) and a more current switch to mobiles and tablets as preferred platforms for playing games.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the rise of the Internet and the digital distribution gave the opportunity to smaller and independent developers to bring their products to the market without having to worry about producing and distributing a large number of physical copies of the game. Before the turn of the millennium, console makers were controlling a large share of the market. This was largely due to the fact that after the crash of 1983 Nintendo, wanting to keep control over the quality of games released, started to equip their games with an authentication chip on the console. The devices would only recognize games that had the right key. However, currently the technological advancements allow developers to enjoy creative freedom without having to rely on publishers to distribute their work. If they have the necessary knowledge and skills, they can develop a product. Lower costs and risks, along with available platforms for publishing and getting funds, permit anyone to bring out an indie game, even without the support of a big publisher. A good example is the platform Twine that enables enthusiasts to create their own narrative and promote it online (Shaer et al, 2017, p. 1544). Furthermore, to show how popular the practice of crowdfunding is, we can look at the project “Star Citizen”. The venture gathered over 2,5 million backers, who pledged a total amount of nearly 290 million dollars (as of March 2020) to help develop this project (Roberts Space Industries, 2014). A newer crowdfunding initiative, started in March 2020 and has already raised over 2,1 million dollars⁵ The project “The Wonderful 101: Remastered” makes versions of the game available for different platforms (Kickstarter, 2020). On 30 May 2020, there were over 14,000 active projects in the category “video games” on the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter (Kickstarter, n.d.).

Styhre et al. (2016) bring two further arguments for the change. Both are different elements pressuring the industry from the outside: the first pressure from society and the second from the market. (Styhre et al., 2016).

⁵ ~ ¥235,320,528, at the exchange rate on 28 May 2020

Studies of gender equality in various industries indicate professions historically dominated by men have high entry barriers for female entrants, including resistance to change, sexism and gendered conceptions. Modern societal views on female employment in general have changed immensely in the past years. Women are no longer discouraged from working and expected to take care of the home and the children. They can choose to be housewives or businesswomen or combine both. This does not mean that the employment market makes it easy, which we discussed in a previous point. However, stakeholders know the potential that women hold. Governmental entities and major companies have created associations, organize events, and launched initiatives to promote the participation of women in the video game industry. Examples include “We Are” created by the ESA Foundation and Red Bull, a not for profit organisation Women in Games WIGJ, the EU Prize for Women Innovators and many more. Big industry players are also involved in creating for example the agency Women in Gaming Initiative from Facebook, the campaign Putting the G into Gaming or Global Gaming Women. All the parties aim to boost diversity and promote women in leadership positions in the video game industry.

An explanation is also brought by the evolving games market. In the recent year, the mobile games have become a huge part of the profits. Newzoo reports that in 2019 smartphone and tablet games represent 45% of the total revenues and predict a rise to 49% in 2022 (Newzoo, 2019). Furthermore, women are the main users of the booming mobile games market. Companies, eager to exploit the new niche market, depend on female video game developers to attract the new audience. However, this entails another issue: women are hired to consult on women’s preferences rather than for their skills.

After having clearly identified the main issues in the two main concepts, we will now proceed to forming hypothesis for how makers and buyers interact.

3. Discussion, conclusion, and recommendations

3.1 Discussion

Looking at the ample research done on gender-fairness in video games, there is not one reason that explains why gaming is viewed as a male-centric activity. We will discuss certain societal movements that are happening right now and mistakes of the past.

The narrative we would like to see is how customers influence a positive change into the employment sector. In return, the companies and their employees change societal views and push new products that are intended for any gender and race. In an ideal scenario, as more users are female and enjoy playing video games, they chose to start a career in the industry. As a result of hard work and dedication, they achieve new goals and get promoted to higher roles. They can then produce games that cater for women and include female protagonists. After having experienced the bias in their work life, they take up initiatives to encourage other women to play, produce games and be part of the blooming video game industry. We will mention the importance of role models at a later stage. Unfortunately, there are no success stories of this scenario. It might seem as a logical evolution of facts, but the data we are seeing contradicts this theory. Examples of two countries, where gamer demographics show an almost equal distribution, France and Canada, do not have the same positive figures in the employment sector. France, the only country in Europe (for which statistics are available), that has seen a fairly balanced distribution in the demographics of gamers (figure 2), reported that in 2019 only 14% (same as in 2018) of employees in development studios are female and 2% defined themselves as non-binary (IDATE DigiWorld & Syndicat National du Jeu Vidéo, 2020). Canada also presents an equal proportion of male and non-male gamers (figure 1), but Dyer-Witthford and Sharmans estimate only 10%-15% of Canada's games-workforce is female (Dyer-Witthford & Sharman, 2005, p. 203). Both markets do not present the expected evolution of figures. To find a definite answer, more calculations must be performed considering factors like number of people in the population, location of the country, people's access to internet, governmental initiatives, values, and cultural

differences. However, we can clearly state that the increase of proportion of female versus male worker is much slower than the change in the gamer demographics.

Another conjecture about the current state of the employment sector in the gaming community can allude to the age of professionals. 1970's was the time when video games became available to the public. In the late 80's, the advertisement started to specifically target a male rather than the wide audience. The perception of games changed into being a toy for boys and men and stereotypes on this topic started to develop. If we assume, that at that time the children who played games, were between eight and fifteen years old. In 2020, they are in their thirties and most probably have chosen their career. And there is ample research that proves that it is the ones who play video games, that most often chose a job in that field. The people currently working, grew up in a period, where girls did not play video games. If girls were told that the activity is for boys, they would certainly not work in a company that produces and designs computerized games. The marketing of the early times of video games might have influenced the workplace sector of the industry, effects which only start to manifest themselves now. Only at the beginning of the last decade has the industry started to open and the impression towards the activity started to change. The industry is still fairly young, and we might be able to see the positive results this will have on the diversity in the labour pool in a few years.

A straightforward answer to the gender-divide would be to blame 1980's marketing, where ads for video games started to include scantily dressed women to make the merchandise more appealing to men. With companies focusing their attention on boys and trying to convince them to buy new games and consoles, gaming became a male activity. Research shows that boys enjoy RPG, first person shooters or sport games. While looking at their rampant sales and statistics, producers can clearly see what sells and what does not. They have learned the likes and dislikes of their primary audience. To cater to the needs of "gamer boys", they design products that include competition, territorial gains, and fast-pacing gameplay. We have seen that the girls enjoy a calmer type of entertainment where they get to connect with fellow players and discover more about the characters they are playing. Obviously, that's a broad generalization, but to prove that "Making games that appeal to women and girls attracts more women to work on games, resulting in the creation of more games that appeal to women and girls." (Fullerton, Fron, Pearce, & Morie, 2007), we bring the

example of the original Sims game. 50% of the designers were female as well as 40% of the producers. The demographic of players up to this date, is skewed female. However, many big companies have established huge franchises based around a certain type of game. As mentioned earlier the top five selling games of 2018, by units, include two new versions of the football game simulator, FIFA, which have been released annually since 1993; Red Dead Redemption 2, a sequel action-adventure game of the first game, the famous Grand Theft Auto V, the sixteenth release in the franchise and Call Of Duty: Black Ops 4, which also has had fifteen previous versions (ISFE, 2019). It might seem surprising that the same big franchises are on top of the charts each year, but with improvements of graphics, mechanics and plotlines, the games are still exciting to gamers. Moreover, the big industry leaders put a lot of effort and capital into advertisement, into creating a “hype” around the whole brand, even before the game is released. Selling millions of copies and in-game purchases, these games have brought and will bring in very high revenues for the company. It seems obvious, as each game in the franchise brings high profits, companies try to capitalize on the success and produce sequels or spin-offs of past releases. And again, customers buy the popular video games and give further incentive to the producers to continue making the same games. The industry is stuck in a vicious cycle. In comparison, indie movies or games produced by smaller studios do not get the same amount of attention and they are the ones that are giving their clients innovative and entertaining narratives. Girls see the same games being release each year, and do not feel inclined to dive into the universe of football players or soldiers. Producers in big companies are lagging behind in terms of diversity in respect to the changing needs and preferences of their consumers.

The film industry is a sector that, in 2017, experienced a big wake-up call and sparked a shift in the way we view the whole entertainment industry. Being another branch of the business producing mass-media divertissements for the wider public, there are similarities between the movie and the video games. Position and jobs are comparable, both needing technical and creative skills. They have a major influence on the culture and people’s perception of society. Their products are a medium for people to tell their story. On one hand, movies have existed for approximately 125 years, provide a distraction for a few hours, and require less engagement from the users than games do. On the other hand, video games take up a lot of time an effort

but give to the player a long immersive experience with a high degree of interaction. The young industry of games has leap from 2D arcade games like Pac-Man to realistic fantasy worlds like in The Witcher series in just 50 years. In comparison, movies have been slowly evolving and have only in the recent years been produced in high definition with visual and sound effects and lifelike Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI). The demographic for both media also varies greatly, with an average age of a gamer in the European Union being 31 years old (ISFE, 2019). Movies have a wider reach and attract audiences of any age. The two sectors rarely interact, except in instances when a game becomes a movie or vice-versa. Examples include Marvel's Spider-Man game built on movies about the hero with the same namesake or Assassin's Creed and the Tomb Raider movies which are based on protagonists from the game.

In 2017, the #MeToo movement rocked the world. The toxic masculinity was denounced, and many women came out with accusations against high-ranked and prominent directors, producers, and head of studios. It has brought into light a deep-rooted issue that many were too scared to address for a long time. The impact the movement has had and will have on the movie sector, the whole entertainment industry, and society is hard to summarize. It is important to remember that it is not just scandal. For many it did not just start three years ago but has been the reality for half of the population for much longer. Being born in the 1980's, the video game industry has been spared the sexist influence of the years preceding its conception. It is not to say that in the following years, patriarchy and male privilege, violence, discrimination, and objectification of women were not present in society. The effects are still visible today. The 2014 harassment campaign Gamergate that targeted several women, showed the immensity and high occurrence of harassment in the video game industry. It demonstrated how powerful social networks are and how they can be abused by bad actors for hateful purposes. The uproar was nowhere near the impact the exposure of sexual-abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein in early October 2017, had on the industry. In an ideal case scenario, there would be no harassment in the video game industry. However, it has been widely disproven that that is not the case. In the bad-case scenario, the harassment is not as serious. It is impossible to never have harassment, which is a sad but true reality. Although, with stronger regulations, the repercussions would be swifter and more severe. The

behaviour will be slow to change, but it is important that people start to understand that their behaviour will not be tolerated, and that can start with the people in charge setting the right example. Every kind of harassment should be taken seriously, no matter the gravity of it. From mental abuse over sexual comments to assault, it is unacceptable, and every claim deserves to be addressed. In the worst-case scenario, harassment is present, but victims are reluctant to speak up and report inappropriate behaviour. Indeed, industry reports insist that claims or criticism of the industry are being squashed by employers but also by gamers (Fox & Tang, 2016, p. 1294). A prime example being the backlash against female reporters that prompted the Gamergate scandal. The last scenario means that the wave of exposure that has swept over Hollywood is yet to arrive in the video game industry.

Comparing to books or films, in games the identification with the protagonist is much stronger. By taking the controller, making decisions, and owning actions performed by the character, we identify ourselves with the fictional person, especially in the first-person viewpoint. It has been proven that there is a phenomenon of “a merging of self and the character” and “ In this sense the player could see characters as identifiably human beings that they want to aspire to be or to know.” Schoenau-Fog’s research concludes that “the more we can relate to the character the more we want to play a game.” (Stuart, 2014). It proves the importance for little girls to see themselves as main characters in media, especially movies. The presence of non-male professionals on and off-screen can have a big impact on a child’s perception of society. Also, the importance of role models and female avatars in games cannot be dismissed. Kafai, Heeter, Denner and Sun (2008) confirm that the solution is a long-term project addressing kids from their childhood upwards. “It is vital to encourage girls at school to be confident and comfortable working with technology and to provide strong and visible role models for the next generations of game designer.” (Westecott, 2009). Women, like Carol Shaw, the first female game designer and programmer in the video game industry, have brought the industry where it is now. She created the jet pilot shooting game River Raid for Activision in 1982. Girls should become familiar with women like the BAFTA-award winning game designer and artist Brenda Romero, Ashly Burch, the actress in Horizon Zero Dawn, Borderlands 2, Jay-Ann Lopez, founder the online community Black Girl Gamers or Brenda Laurel interface and game designer, who worked at Atari and Apple. In 1997 she launched Purple Moon

Software, that produced interactive games for girls (The Entertainment Software Association, 2020). If girls do not see or know female professionals working in the video game industry, they might not even know that there is a place for them there. If at a young age they have been told by parents, teachers, friends that video games are “for boys”, a career in that field will seem intimidating or impossible. The spread of the misconception of gaming being a boy’s toy, makes the industry miss out on all the amazing female developers and designers.

3.2. Conclusion and recommendations

The development in the industry has been stagnant regarding the increase of diversity. There is still a long way to go. One might think that it is the big companies that need to lead a change but people, not only gamers, can contribute.

Firstly, society needs to remove the negative connotation associated with the word “gamer”. In the back of our mind, we might all still have the image of the “typical” player. A teenage boy who sits in his room all day and stares at his PC screen, accused of to being lazy, unsociable, and overweight. It is worth noticing that the persona was created by companies in the early days of video games. They were trying to portray the player as a “cool” teenage boy. The image that later vilified using the violent content or the addictive effect gaming had on kids. Shaw (2011) reports that many people did not identify themselves as “gamers” because they consider it “a guilty pleasure, a juvenile pastime, and as a medium that is inherently unimportant.” (Shaw, 2011, p. 40). We have learned earlier on that that image is completely wrong. The rising popularity of mobile games makes the activity more common and helps eliminate the stigma attached to gaming. Every person that plays Candy Crush on their phone, can technically be considered a gamer. The task ahead is to assure people that being called a gamer is not an insult or a criticism. Parents need to realize that video games help their children develop hand to eye coordination, a faster reflex and a become resilient to finishing a task. Gaming requires a certain set of skills and only by perfecting them will the player be able to advance. It can also spark an interest in a domain like computing or graphic design. Not only do parents need to help remove the mistaken belief about a gaming person, but also association, governments and

companies should keep raising awareness and educating people with various campaigns and initiatives.

Secondly, it is important to support indie games. Instead of feeding into the vicious cycle described earlier, players should try new games. They might enjoy it, spread the word, and help innovation in the industry. Gamers might even get inspired and decide they want to create a game of their own. They can develop their own games and distribute the content instantly and effortlessly to the entire world. With this opportunity within reach, a hobby can become a profession. The freedom related to indie games can further help incorporate greater female representation and diversity in the whole sector.

Thirdly, the industry needs to become more diverse in terms of genre of games it produces. The recommendation is mainly directed toward video game producers, but also independent game developers and designers. The important distinction is that there is no need to make games especially for girls. Every game is for girls. What girls need is the freedom to choose: choose a character that looks more like them, a game that is closer to their taste and stimulates them. Shaw (2011) recommends: rather than creating video games targeted for one single audience, designers should focus on creating games that incorporate diversity and to “normalize” the activity by incorporating it into people’s everyday lives. (Shaw, 2011, p. 40). If we start developing “girly” games, we are sending the message that a girl is a “different” kind of gamer. We alienate girls and boys alike and create a new division. All video game enthusiasts should be brought together under one umbrella of “gamer”, no matter the gender, race, preferred platform, or genre.

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