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FEMALE GAME CHARACTERS OF THE FUTURE

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The objective of the thesis was to study the characteristics and values that relatable female game characters possess. The thesis begins with the introduction of characters in general, female characters in the past and today and continues with observations about today's women and juvenile females. The thesis describes shortly the early days in video games and women as players and uses Overwatch-game as an example of the modern game with typical female character design. Example case demonstrated some of the problems that current style of portraying female game characters has caused when discussion boards and overall experience of Overwatch gameplay was analyzed.</p> <p>Conclusions were based on survey respondents' answers about female game characters. In the survey, the respondents answered questions according to their favorite game characters and features that were valued as well as their unfavorable characters and the values that made them inconvenient. The most favorite and unfavorable game characters are introduced briefly with respondents' opinions why they were popular or unpopular. Respondents were asked to vote for body positivity in games and encouraged to express their wishes towards future game characters. Data from the survey is also introduced as charts.</p> <p>The study showed that in the past there have been failures with the portrayal of female game characters that have made an impact on gameplay and player immersion. The unequal portrayal of females in games was proved to be a problem and the consumers of video games have expressed their expectations to see more variety and equality in female game characters in future. Those expectations towards future female characters have been explained in the conclusions. This thesis contains instructions how to create "good" female characters and what to avoid. The result of survey presents the example game character which respondents voted to be most suitable for a future game.</p>		
Keywords female game characters, equality, user survey, 3D model, female video game players		

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1 INTRODUCTION

Helen Cunningham wrote in her essay that she hopes that when more female designers enter the game industry, there will be more game genres, and more female characters will be available in games (1995, 197). She expressed that wish in 1995. This has indeed been a slow process because now, 23 years later, female characters are still a minority in games and their portrayal is not equal compared to male characters. What is taking so long in this process?

Recent movements like #metoo have raised awareness about the fair treatment of all women, and it would be ideal to find out how equal the gaming environment is with its female game characters and what the players feel about it. According to IGDA survey, approximately 75 per cent of game industry workers are men (2016, 10). The fact that majority of game designers are male, leads to a situation where the female game characters are a reflection of what most men desire in women (Parker et al, 2017). In 2017 and forward all players do deserve better female characters, more body positive and equal, strong, intelligent, better role models for growing young women. The time of damsels in distress has gone and it is time to have capable female characters with different body types that would empower female players and make all types of female bodies visible in games.

Over the past thirty years, players were imposed with unrealistic oversexualized female game characters. The purpose of this study is to explore what impact these female game characters have had on consumers in past decades, what type of negative effect undeveloped character design can have and what characteristics have had a positive impact on players. Other questions to answer are what features a popular female game character possesses, and what measurements, characteristics, and appearance appeal to respondents. Is it acceptable for a female character to be overweight, ordinary or unattractive looking and/or act unpleasantly like many male characters do? Do players wish to have more natural women in their games or is it a must to be thin and “beautiful” and have a stereotypical female character body?

While many respondents might not have been playing games for very long, the latest trend of playing retro games has made it possible for younger players to get to know older game characters like Lara Croft in Tomb Raider I or II. Respondents have voted their favorite game characters and described the characteristics that made them enjoyable to play with. A group of respondents got a possibility to answer 11 questions about female game characters and express their wishes about future character development.

The final product of this thesis will present the examples of future female game characters with brief backstory and a short description of their personality and inner world. These examples of characters have been created using Adobe Fuse and 3Ds Max, and some corrections are made in Photoshop. These three characters got chosen during a poll in the survey. The results are reflecting respondents' wishes and they could be used as a starting point for more profound character creation. An alternative result of this thesis might also point out that players are happy about the current situation and there is no need for more realistic game characters.

1.1 Characters in general

Most of the characters in books, cinema, and games are based on old archetypes that have existed in stories and plays through human history. These archetypes are believed to be a part of humans' collective consciousness as they are so widely recognized and known. They can come into people dreams or if people are just sketching in a relaxed state, the archetypes might appear in the paper. As the world changes these archetypes continue existing and therefore there is something very profoundly real in them like they are a core of being human.

According to Pearson (2012), the archetypes can be categorized as the innocent, the orphan, the seeker, the warrior, the caregiver, the destroyer, the lover, the creator, the fool, the sage, the magician and the ruler. There are other ways to categorize the archetypes, but these are familiar to any audience. The game player, the viewer of art, movie audience or a book reader can easily find these

archetypal characters in any book, picture, movie or game since they exist everywhere.

Video games are the newest medium of telling ancient tales in a modern way. In a game, the player controls a character that reacts to the player's actions. It is astounding to experience how a player can get attached to even the simplest character, like a block in a game *Thomas Was Alone* (Narcisse 2012). It has to be mentioned that in that game the narration is done with such emotion and talent that it deeply affects the player behind the screen. The player begins to form emotions towards sad little block that needs help and if a player can show feelings towards a block, it is natural to have feelings about more realistic game characters. This thesis focuses on feelings and wishes towards female characters.

1.2 Female characters

The character of a woman has developed from the prehistoric mother figure into the modern day's female character. While our ancestors admired women, who showed the obvious signs of good fertility like Earth Mother figurine in Figure 1, the modern day female game character Ivy in Figure 2 is modestly said inappropriate for an adolescent to watch.



Figure 1. Willendorf Venus (Ancient Wisdom) Figure 2. Ivy from Soulcalibur IV (Soulcalibur IV)

The model example of female game character is a narrow-waisted, abnormally big breasted “beautiful” young female that moves in a suggestive way. Ivy from *Soulcalibur IV* is one of the most exaggerated examples of modern female characters (*Soulcalibur IV* 2008). While most female game characters are not as oversexualized as Ivy, they still provide an unrealistic image of a female to players. Instead of providing acceptable female characters for all audience, most of them are made for a man to gaze. While the survey answers were analyzed, it was clear that these types of oversexualized characters are too shallow to be interesting or enjoyable as game characters and their bodies or equipment are not suitable for the actions that they need to perform in the game.

There was a time when females and males were equals in the world and even bloodlines continued through mothers since the role of a man during the conception was unfamiliar, but the mother of a child was always known. Such matrilineal societies are unusual in today’s world (Garrison 2017). At prehistoric times women were acknowledged as equal members of the society of hunter-gatherers (Dyble et al. 2015). The era of male dominance and great religions changed the situation and female became lesser than men, and according to the Bible and other religious sources, women were described to be the devils’ gateway where the evil can pass through to the world (Woodhead 2004, 147). Priests and popes misinterpreted writings of The Apostle Paul, Peter and Timothy and spend their time convincing that females are less intelligent and evil, always leading men to condemnation. Various movements that support the female rights to equal treatment and salary have been raising and disappearing several times through the history of mankind (Rampton 2015).

1.3 Today’s women

Life as a woman is not equal or easy. Today’s women face many types of expectations that are caused by society, by religion, by men, by other women and some of the high standards that women have of themselves. Finnish society is ranked third when it comes to gender equality (World Economic Forum 2017) but still women and men get different treatment. There are female professions and

male professions and discussion about gender-neutral names of professions. Conservative Laestadians are one example of religious alignment that treats women unequally making the reproducing to be one of the most important tasks for women and the elders of the church are carefully monitoring their member's behavior (Ruoho 2014, 10).

Generally, most females in modern world encounter variety of expectations such as one should be “beautiful”, use suitable amount of make-up, be in good shape, preferably thin, behave womanly, and avoid drinking or swearing. According to Davis (2012, 117) and Wolf (1991, 11–15), these expectations refer to old-fashioned standards that were created in the nineteenth century in western culture and are still used as the rules of feminine existence. According to Parker et al, characteristics that are valued in females in America are attractiveness, nurturing, intelligence, morality, ambition, good work ethic, financial success, dependability et cetera (2017). Idealizing these strict norms and failing in them is highly pressurizing for any female (Saarikoski 2001, 164).

At the same time, women get a low salary in important professions such as cleaning or nursing and the wage cap in other professions is usually close to 16 per cent in Finland (Tilastokeskus 2016). The wage gap has been carefully studied by erasing every other possible reason for different wages until gender was the only difference between workers.

It is natural that female game players enjoy a little break from all the demands of the outside world. To increase the immersion and relaxation effect in the games, the game designers should avoid situations where the gaming environment feels like the continuum of the real world. The game should give more than it takes, exchange players valuable time to feelings of success, relaxations, and fun and provide a little getaway from worries and expectations of the real world.

1.4 Today's juvenile females

Growing up in modern society is filled with gender stereotypical messages. It starts as an infant with clothes that are covered with pink frills, butterflies, and messages of beauty and cuteness or logos of athletic teams, cars, and dinosaurs. Female infants are presumed to have something pink on them so other people immediately recognize their gender. It feels unnecessary to point out the gender of an infant because it should not make any difference.

According to Article 2 of the Children's Rights Convention (UNICEF 1989), all children should be treated equally and get respected as persons, not members of their gender, race, religion et cetera. When children learn to read, they begin to pay attention to messages in their clothing and realize the differences of messages in male- and female clothing.

While some young females do not mind being cute and lovely, there are individuals that see the injustice in the messages that clothing is presenting to them. Juvenile females are encouraged to be "beautiful" and "fabulous", males are associated to be "strong", "heroes" and think "outside the box". It might feel discouraging to young females if the frills and meaningless texts in shirts do not fit into their personality and they feel outsiders because of the clothing. The section of children clothing is clearly divided into two departments and it is hard to find any clothing that would be gender neutral. The options for females are frilly and girly or "tomboy", there are not just plain clothes without gendered messages. The teenagers have a bit more variety in their clothes, but the preteenager's clothes are clearly divided into two sections. Figure 3 provides an example of messages that young females face every day.



Figure 3. Clothes for young males and for young females (Sirparanta 2018)

A quick investigation at a local clothing store revealed some examples of the messages that adolescent consumers get from the fashion industry. The shirts have prints that announce “Love”, “Love is Love”, “Dance all day long”, “Glitter chaser”, “Mermaids take shellfies” or “Choose to shine”. It was good to find out that there were also empowering messages for young females such as “Girl power”, “We will change the world”, “Learn-Discover-Enjoy”; but there was not a single clothing that would have suggested that females are intelligent, athletic, or being as themselves is enough.

Adolescent males are encouraged to be athletic, “heroes” and “champions” as seen in Figure 3. The colours in different clothing departments are also divided stereotypically: dark, bold male colours like blue and light, toned down female colours such as pink or lilac (Cunningham & Macrae 2011, 602). The color-coding phenomenon carries on to adulthood where sports clothes are color-coded, black for male and pink for female, and the pink tools in the hardware store tend to be low-quality and break easily (Amazon.com, 2017). It does not feel necessary to have pink items just to point out that you are a female, but designers seem to expect that females raised in the pink world need to have pink items as adults also.

Stereotypical expectations are visible everywhere. Even the culture directed to children uses old-fashioned role models, writes Maria Pettersson, mother of a young female, in her column at Yle (2017). Pettersson describes that her

daughter got impressed by a female fighter-character, *Rey*, in latest *Star Wars* movie series, *The Force Awakens* (2015). Pettersson's opinion is that adolescent females yearn to see female heroes.

Instead of powerful and equal female role models, the world of entertainment offers princesses who fall in love with princes, kissing scenes that make the adolescent audience embarrassed, films that have unnecessary romantic storylines as in *Walking with Dinosaurs* (2013) and stories where the happy ending is obligatory heterosexual marriage (Zipes 1995, 110—112). Why? The answer is because it has been done for many centuries in Western civilizations. Pettersson pleads that the producers of culture and investors would understand their possibilities to move borders and make this world to be more tolerant and diverse place (Appendix 7/2).

In the past, film producers like Disney have depicted female characters as trophies or weak helpless victims (Figure 4), waiting for princes or heroes to rescue them (Davis 2012, 9—10). Many Disney films follow certain patterns, such as the hero is always a white male, characters do not change for example from evil to good or vice versa and evil is a clearly recognizable character (Zipes 1995, 111).

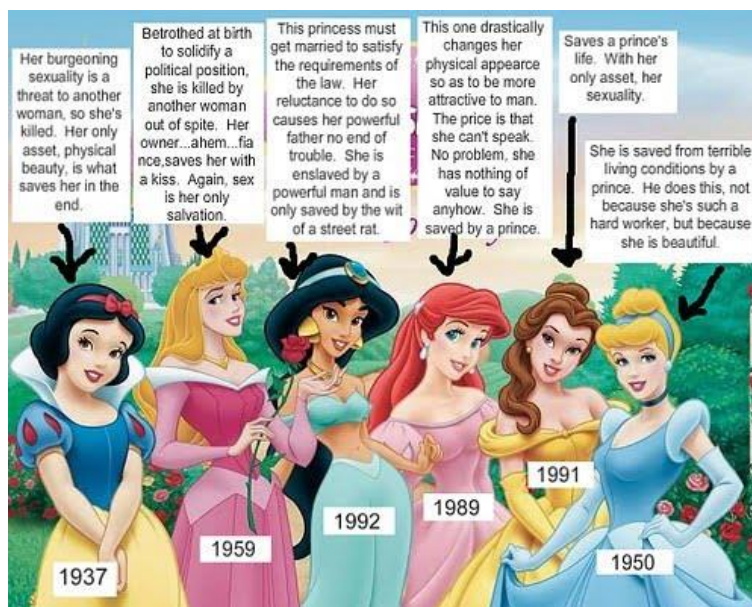


Figure 4. Princesses (Popularculture, 2014)

The later films like *Maleficent* (2014) and *Moana* (2016) and co-operation with animation studio Pixar have produced some variations, for example, *Finding Dory* (2016) or *Brave* (2012); to those old behavior patterns and character types. Still, even today the producers include old-fashioned values in the films without thinking any of the consequences. For example, *Frozen* (2013) has a complicated and powerful female main character *Elsa*, and her sister *Anna*. While *Elsa* builds a castle with her magical powers, *Anna's* goal is a happy heterosexual marriage with a white male character.

There would be several options for overused plotlines, for example, a female and a male could be just friends without anything romantic going on, the stepmother does not have to be evil, or if she is, she could change during the movie. There could be a happily ever after alone, with friends, animals, siblings, or as a single parent. There are several ways to depict old fairy tales in a modern way and they can be a more entertaining and reflect today's social state. A responsible story writer should use the chance to improve the world we live in and have something meaningful to say (Sheldon 2014, 512—514).

Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking formed to be a popular and empowering role model for juvenile females and her creation filled a certain void in Nordic culture says Apo (1995) according to Saarikoski (2001, 153). Despite the old-fashioned way of portrayal people with different race and the oddities about Pippi's family arrangements, she has fascinated adolescent audience for decades. Something about her determined redhaired little character and her abilities is impressive, who could imagine that a young female could lift a horse? She is a memorable character, in a similar way as some of the best game characters are.

As Schonmann states referring to Roses' study (1998, 58), the problem in children's entertainment was that it came from adults to children and children were not consulted enough in between, then there was an expectation that children would have liked the results. It seems that adults produced material that would please the child in themselves, not the children that it was directed to (2006, 20). Today's entertainment producers have been imposed on children

culture that was different than now, and therefore some old-fashioned presumptions continue existing. A similar phenomenon takes place in current game development, there are characters that appeal only to certain type of consumers.

2 EARLY DAYS OF VIDEO GAMES

First games that became popular in the 1980s had very simple characters like Mario, Donkey Kong, and Pacman, and they were considered suitable for everyone to play. Popular game genre in the 1980s and 1990s was fighting games where aggressive male characters and physically attractive female characters kicked and punched each other's (Youtube.com, 2017). In the 1980s game companies' marketing strategies included mainly games directed to juvenile male consumers and their fathers (Alchetron 2018) and the need of designing games to female consumers was not seen as important. Early reports show that in the 1980s the percentage of female players was between 20-30 per cent and the percentage started rising in the 1990s when games like Barbie Fashion Designer and other games designed for young females were released.

Helen Cunningham mentioned in her article that when she asked juvenile females opinion about the Barbie Fashion Designer game, the respondents preferred Mortal Kombat instead of a game that was directed to juvenile females. It was also mentioned that the video games were expensive and young female players did not think that the Barbie game was interesting enough to use their money to buy it. The article also mentions that parents of many households bought game consoles and home computers because they wanted their children to get to know the new technology and encourage especially their daughters to get involved to the computers (1995, 191,197.)

One exception to 1980s male-dominated game world was *Samus Aran* from *Metroid* (1986) in Figure 5, a game where the player guided a heavily armored character through the levels and at the very end it was revealed that the character was a female (Nickel 2010).

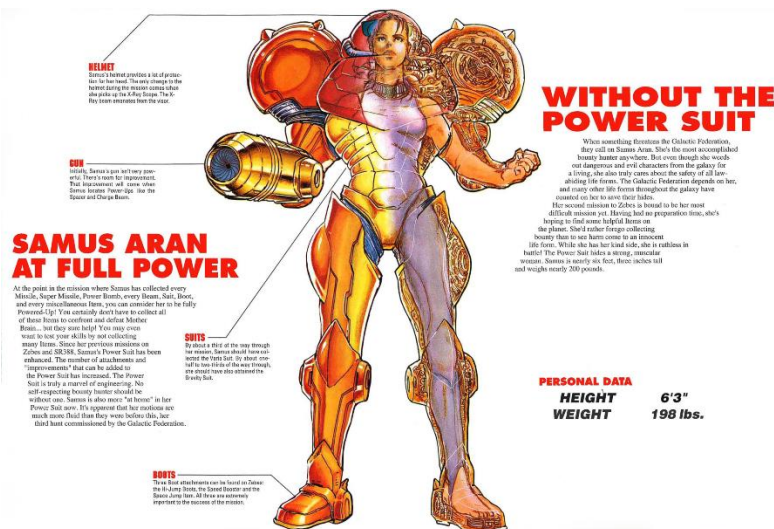


Figure 5. Samus Aran (Reddit.com, 2017)

Respondents of the survey liked the fact that “she’s not a stereotypical girl” and some of the respondents said that Samus is “strong and independent” and “she can handle herself”.

Game designers in Core Design created one of the first obviously female game main character, *Lara Croft*, and her appearance caused many speculations about her development. Jupiter Isidro wrote in iTech Post that while Core Design was designing her character, some coder accidentally made a programming error that made her breasts 150 per cent larger than they should have been (2016). The development team liked that so much that they decided to leave her character that way. Oversized breasts turned out to be beneficial to the marketing of Tomb Raider among the male audience, and the respondents of the survey tell what impact it did to them as players as later shown in this thesis.

3 WOMEN AS PLAYERS

Amongst female game players, the most popular game genres according to Nick Yee (2017) are *match3*, *family and farming simulators*, and *casual puzzle games*. Female players also like games with *atmospheric exploration and interactive drama* whenever such games with good characters and plot can be found. Unfortunately, most of the game development teams focus on creating main male

characters and female characters serve as supporting characters or as the main character's love interest.

As it comes to selling games to customers that would like to have equally portrayed female characters, too few of such characters can be found and characters that would be body positive or have atypical appearance do not exist at all. In a quick research amongst games that have been released within the last five years, there were just three examples of interesting or somewhat realistic female main characters. These games would be *Rise of the Tomb Raider*, *The Last of Us II*, and *Uncharted: The Lost Legacy*. These female characters can be viewed in Appendix 8, they provide a typical example of a homogeneous mass of idealistic bodied "beautiful" women.

According to this small survey (Appendix 1/1 and 1/2) with 106 respondents, the game players do want variety and relatable female characters in future games. While many of the games present us a strong male lead who is courageous, determined, strong and believable, there are just a few similarly portrayed female lead characters found. Currently, many of the game characters are as predictable as characters in Disney films, "beautiful" is always good and "ugly" is always bad. Players want variety and atypical characters, so they can be unattractive and good and attractive but bad, characters that are not so easily categorized by their looks, characters that player need to explore more closely to be able to reveal their true nature.

The gaming consumers point out that there is a lack of divergence in characters by size, race, religion, sexual preference or disabilities. If there happens to be a female character in the game, she is usually attractive, athletic, young and white. The consumers want female characters to appear in as many varieties as there are in a real world. One respondent pointed out that: "Look around, there are living examples of real women everywhere." Respondents of the survey have clearly expressed their hopes to see different varieties of female characters and generally much more female characters in the games.

Inequality in video games is a much-discussed topic these days. It can be easily verified by using such phrase in search engines, like Google, to get at least ten pages of results (Google, 2018). Every page contains a vast amount of comments about the subject and the discussion goes on for years around it. The gamer gender ratios for example in Finland, are close to 50–50 according to the report Videogames in Europe: Consumer study (Ipsos MediaCT 2012, 4). When the percentage of female workers in the game industry is slowly rising over 20 per cent (IGDA 2016, 10) and the number of female players is nearly 50 per cent, there is a growing change that game companies current style of portraying female characters would slowly change to the direction that the consumers wish. Based on the previous facts, it would be realistic to expect that in the next ten years there will be more realistic looking female characters and equal role models to young game players. If the game industry will not answer to the expectations of female consumers, they will lose a significant amount of potential income.

Constantly seeing unrealistic female figures everywhere can cause severe eating disorders and problems with mental health (Dakanalis et al. 2014, 36). Exposing adolescents to such images should be avoided, and it would be reasonable to include body positivity to game characters to prevent perpetuating stereotypes in young audiences (Figure 6). The positive sides of such actions could be beneficial to both male and female consumers and raise other features than appearance into an important role.

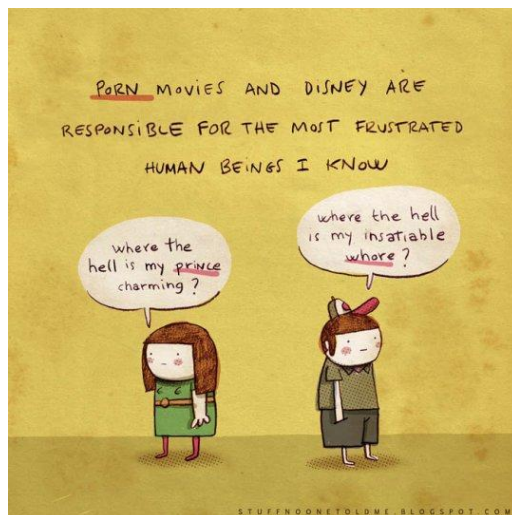


Figure 6. Stereotypes (Snotm.com, 2010)

Social view in gaming should also be taken seriously because in games lies a great opportunity to change the overall attitude towards females, inequality and old-fashioned expectations. It can be done so subtly that the players might not even notice that they have re-defined their values. In the recent news was told that game company Rovio has joined to Fair Play Alliance (FBA), an organization which aims to reduce the poisonous atmosphere, harassment and discrimination in games (Rovio Entertainment, 2018). Since there are currently around 30 gaming companies that have joined to the FBA, the changes do not cover the whole game industry, but it is a start.

4 THE EXAMPLE CASE: THE GAME CALLED OVERWATCH

The following part serves as an example of relatively new and popular game that has a considerable number of players. Discussion forums and actual game experience including gameplay, chat and voice chat were examined and interpreted as part of the study. Overwatch is one of the most popular player versus player (PvP) cooperative (co-op) game at the moment this thesis was written. In April 2017 it was reported to have over 30 million registered players (Barrett 2017). According to McKeand and Liu, the number of female gamers in Overwatch is estimated to be near five million (2017).

The game company, Blizzard, has done a lot of development with characters in Overwatch, trying to offer more diversity and equally powerful female characters than in an average online multiplayer first-person shooter (Overwatch Wiki 2016). There are still problems such as oversexualized female characters, their suggestive poses (Church 2016), and culture borrowing in an unacceptable way, therefore Overwatch has been described “slightly less racist than the rest of the AAA game industry” (wundergeek 2016).

Blizzard organizes gaming tournaments for professional players but according to Kellen Beck, there are 12 teams in spring 2018 but not a single female competitor (2018). Since there are approximately 5 million female players in Overwatch, it

does seem strange that not even one was chosen to play in the latest eSports league. On the other hand, pro-gaming has been described in League of Legends discussion board to be extremely hostile to female players and it is understandable that reasonable persons would like to avoid toxicity and hatred pointed towards them (2017).

4.1 Latest trends in female characters

According to IGDA's employment report, the game industry is populated by young white heterosexual males (2016, 7–10). This allows a situation where designers can follow their desire of creating only “perfect” women, something from the daydream of 15-year old male. The female characters in relatively new games follow the consistency of main characters being young, “beautiful” and relatively thin. Lara Croft in Rise of the Tomb Raider is a young female with “beautiful” face and “perfect” body and Ellie in Last of Us II is a young attractive female. The female main characters in Uncharted have “perfect” bodies, but it was nice to notice that Chloe and Nadine have faces that are more individual and characteristic than in most of the games previously mentioned (Appendix 8). If the designers have to create many different game characters quickly, they can just make minor adjustments to faces or replace heads to another body. According to thesis survey, designing similar looking characters does not make them memorable or realistic.

Widowmaker, in Figure 7, is used as an example of modern female game character. Amelie Lacroix alias Widowmaker is equipped with a heavy sniper gun, poisonous mines, and infravision visor. She takes down most of her enemies with a single shot to head but she is weak in close range combat. Widowmaker got her name because she killed her husband Gérard after enemies brainwashed her.



Figure 7. Widowmaker (Powerlisting 2016)

Realistic observation of her character pay attention to the following: Overall proportions are abnormal, her bottom is oversized, her waist is too narrow, she wears unnecessary revealing and shiny outfit and high-heeled boots, which realistically can make any kind of high-speed action impossible. Her skin color points toward an evilness of the character. According to data found on her character sheet, she is 1.75 m tall. Her upper body muscles show no sign of lifting and carrying a heavy weapon all day long. The curve of her back spine is unnatural. While playing on the same team with Widowmaker especially with short characters it becomes embarrassing to watch her non-proportional figure and the tight shiny outfit that follows every curve.

4.2 The Cautions

Examining opinions of Widowmaker through discussion forums, the following opinions were expressed: some players think that she is “generally attractive”, “sexiest character in the game” but others think that there is “too much wrong with her” and her proportions are “weird” (Blizzard, 2017). Her voice is described pleasant. Some players write that she is the most useless character to play with since in close combat her weapon is ineffective and requires reloading frequently. She offers just a little obstacle to tanks like Reinhardt, who is a big armored knight with a powerful shield and hammer. Even if Widowmakers body does not reflect the studies about perfect female figure made in Texas University by Lewis

et al. (2015), it is still an objectified character. Answers to the survey done for this thesis and findings from the discussion forums did not show that Overwatch players would especially like her character.

Obviously, a character design affects players but are the designers really after the following type of effect? Here are direct quotes as an example of an average discussion about Widowmaker and her proportions from Overwatch discussion forum, also available in Appendix 3/2 and 3/3:

"Widowmaker is very lengthy. She's got a much smaller upper body than Mercy, with much more focus on her lower half. For even having some extremely long legs, she's got a LOT of build in her upper thighs and glutes, which slim down to normal to skinny sized calves and ankles. I don't think she is as proportionate."

"I believe during Talon's processing of Widowmaker they removed her spine. Her hip angle is all kinds of cartoony. Mercy is better overall. At least you won't have to hear so many spider stories and, "feeling alive," rants."

Making love to Widow

Widowmaker: "I almost feel something"

Silently walk away.

"Widowmaker. Her !@# is a masterpiece!"

"If you want booty, go Widow."

"Beautiful. Honestly, booty is the best part."

There are also comments about her breasts being small, her outfit being too tight and about her purple skin color but no mention of her arms being too thin or neck and waist being too thin. In Appendix 4, there is a picture of an altered version of Widowmaker whose body would be closer to reality. Her upper body would be more muscular, she would be shorter and her waistline would not be so unnatural. The alterations are based on the measurements of an average French female body (Disabled World 2017). The character is still looking pleasant and feminine without exaggeration.

4.3 General discussion about female Overwatch characters

In Overwatch discussion forum question “so is there any real reason why Blizzard made the females of Overwatch so god damn sexy” was asked and the direct answer for that was “hot chicks sell video games” (2017). Screen captures of Overwatch -discussion are available in Appendix 3/3. Some other forum members think that they deserve to have nice things in the game, including “pretty” faces and nice “booties”. Quite common opinion is that Blizzard has a nice balance with Overwatch character designs. In the discussion, the overall gaming experience is praised for its friendly and welcoming atmosphere and volume of female players. According to discussions forum, amount of harassing during the gameplay appears to be low when compared to other popular first-person shooter-games. Harassing can appear verbally or written in Chat-areas and during the game testing, there were not mentionable misbehavior between players¹.

One member of discussion forum wondered why the characters have little breasts, the other players pointed out that they would get in the way while fighting. Larger female characters could have larger breasts, but the original questioner was judged for unrealistic hopes for size 0 waist and large breasts. Female discussion participants were quick to express their opinions and support each other's against oppression toward females. Discussions revealed that female players do not want sexual objectifying in games. The term of “walking ham planet” was brought up. Discussion forum member redshirt4life in Appendix 3/1 said about oversexualized female characters: “Sure if you think crippling back problems and anorexia is sexy. I see so many more beautiful women on the day who actually have human figures rather than this cartoonized(sic) version of the Hollywood ideal woman”.

¹ It must be mentioned that there are players that use different alphabets and languages in Overwatch European-servers, so there might have been some harassment that the game tester could not understand.

Disadvantages of lack of effort with character designing are clearly visible as the following example in Figure 8 shows. Various female Overwatch characters look very similar compared to each other's and this phenomenon is called the "same face syndrome". Character designers have made only small adjustments to the faces, adding scars or changing skin color and there you have a "new" character. The latest Overwatch character Brigitte (Figure 8, left bottom) can be viewed as an example of cut through designing.

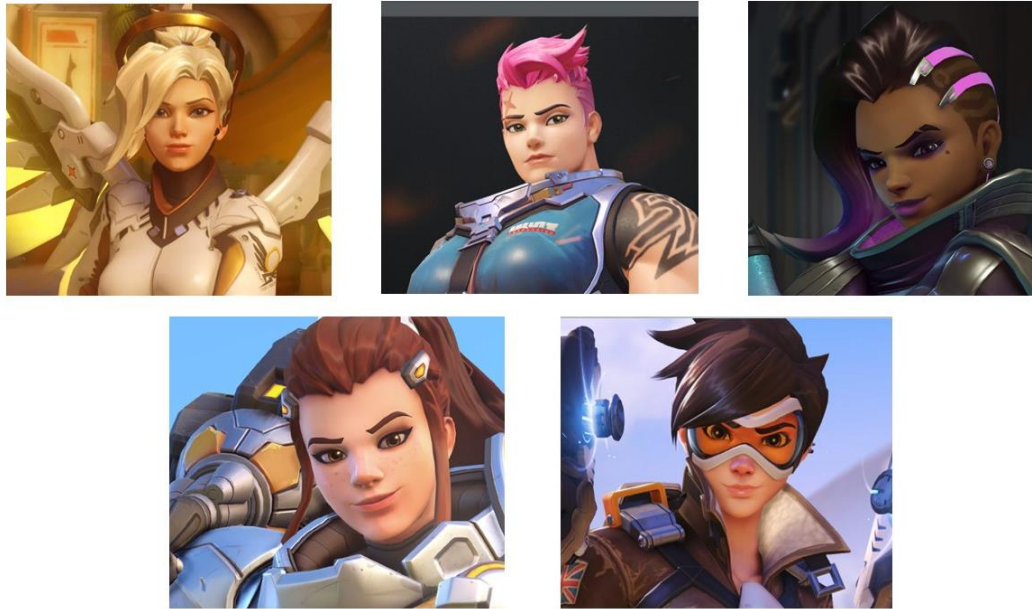


Figure 8. Overwatch-characters with similar faces (Playoverwatch 2018)

The shape of the face, nose, mouth, and eyes are similar, and most of the differences can be found in game action and in characters equipment. Some Overwatch characters use same voice lines regularly since there are too few lines made for that specific character. The game continues developing all the time, there are constantly new events, voice lines, skins and other collectibles that are added in the game. That development is causing weekly updates since they must keep correcting and adding game data to maintain the player's interest and satisfaction.

5 SURVEY ABOUT FEMALE GAME CHARACTERS

The survey was released on Facebook in January 2018 and it received 106 answers. Survey questions are found in Appendix 1/1 and 1/2 and larger images of female game characters in the survey can be found in Appendix 6/1—6/6. Following parts contain straight quotes from respondents' answers.

5.1 Questions

In the survey, there were questions about respondents' favorite and non-favorite characters, their wishes for future characters and a poll about body-types and body positivity in games. The gender of respondents was not asked so the social desirability factor would not influence the answers. These survey topics should be discussed as general opinions of players, not as opinions of female players. The results reflect the hopes of the players in general.

5.2 Respondents and responses

There were 106 responses to the survey that was released in specific gaming- and game industry worker-groups in Facebook and in personal Facebook page for friends and family. Since the respondents got to answer anonymously and without telling their gender they remained anonymous. During the survey the email addresses were not collected, only the Google survey required to log in with a google account, to be certain that the respondents are actual people, not robots. The data was analyzed as a general player data and respondents were free to express their opinions without any censorship or strict guidance. Most of the answers were appropriate, respondents took their role seriously and wanted to be part of the research. Answers provided useful aspects and revealed interesting details about failures in game design. Since some games are released exclusively to one platform, respondents provided information of interesting characters that were previously unknown for the author. Data from the survey in the form of statistics can be found in Appendix 2/1—2/6.

5.2.1 Most popular female game characters

The top four of favorite characters were female *Commander Shepard* from *Mass Effect*, *Lara Croft* from *Tomb Raider*, *Aloy* from *Horizon Zero Dawn* and *Ellie* from *Last of Us*. They all are strong characters, able to take care of themselves and they have their own personality and attitude. All these characteristics fit the definition of “kick-ass”, the word that came out from many of the answers. These four games have a well-written story with many interesting characters and meaningful dialogues between characters. The sceneries have been made with great effort, details are correct, and characters have suitable equipment for the role they have and important goals to reach. Players like characters that are determined, strong and able to seek their own way in the world and they wish to see different varieties of strong, intelligent female lead characters in games.

5.2.2 Survey respondents' thoughts about their favorite characters

Commander Jane Shepard from *Mass Effect* is portrayed as well written and acted, strong, independent character in a great story. The player can choose whether she would be a bad or good, ability to be mean and ruthless was fascinating to some respondents but she can also be caring and gentle. Voice actor did a good work, and characters appearance was highly customizable. The storyline was similar for both male and female characters, not dependent on the characters gender choice. Who would not like to be a woman who saves the galaxy?

Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider* is both liked and disliked, a divisive character. Many respondents said that they grew up playing *Tomb Raider*. She was described to be a “bad-ass”, self-reliant, strong, smart and fearless, passionate mystery solver, easy to relate to and able to show all kinds of feelings. Player enjoyed her ability to grow as a character. Some answerers liked the old character more because of her

“kick-ass” attitude and some preferred the new, more realistically shaped character with all her weaknesses.

Ellie Williams from *Last of Us* is young and remarkable female character that emerged from the survey answers. She travels in the zombie-infested post-apocalyptic world together with Joel. Her relationship with the male lead was considered touching and her character was well written. Her character has a clear goal, she is a “kick-ass” but still friendly and likable, her attitude is great, respondents described her as a brave young woman who was easy to relate.

Aloy from *Horizon Zero Dawn* is archer and hunter of the Nora-tribe in a post-apocalyptic world. She was highly praised for her practical non-sexualised design, strong, fearless, and compassionate personality and smart dialogue. It was considered a virtue that she did not fall into a relationship every time when a male character expressed affection to her. She is only eighteen years old but seems much older and wiser. Respondents said that it was a pleasure to observe her dialogue with other characters because she did not seem to get speechless in any situation.

Results of the popular and unpopular characters are shown in Figure 9, where the green pillars show the popular characters and orange pillars show the unpopular characters.

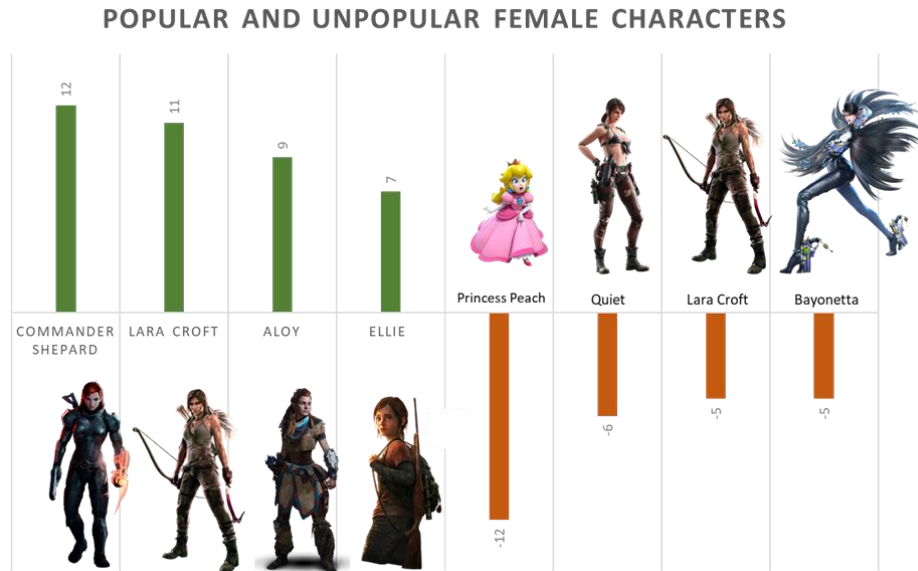


Figure 9. Popular and unpopular female characters (Sirparanta 2018)

Characters from the left are Commander Jane Shepard from Mass Effect, Lara Croft from Tomb Raider, Aloy from Horizon Zero Dawn and Ellie from Last of Us. Unpopular Princess Peach from Mario Bros. series gathered many votes compared to Quiet from Metal Gear Solid 5, Lara Croft or Bayonetta. All popular and unpopular characters are easily available for investigation on YouTube. Since games like Last of Us and Horizon Zero Dawn are published exclusively to PlayStation, the author did not have access to actual gameplay. Instead, gameplay videos were explored to get familiar with some of the characters.

5.2.3 Most unpopular female game characters

The most disliked character of all time was a surprise, the majority of votes went to *Princess Peach*. This passive pink princess seemed to have annoyed players for years by her constant need to be saved and lack of gratitude after saving. Princess Peach has existed in Super Mario Bros. game series for over thirty years and she has managed to stay annoying despite the many changes the game designers made to her appearance. In Super Mario games she acts as a passive reward for the main character to collect, and in the newest games she fights

with a parasol or throwing tantrums. Without playtesting Super Mario games, her character's superpower of being annoying remains as a mystery, as she seems to be cute and innocent in gameplay videos. Numerous votes and opinions tell the fact that she is the most disliked character of all times according to these survey responses. Princess Peach fits into the category of helpless passive victims, a trophy.

Quiet from Metal Gear Solid 5 is a curvy sharpshooter with a very little clothing. Respondents say that she has a ridiculous outfit for a stupid reason that she breathes through her skin. The respondents disapproved this explanation as an excuse to add nudity in the game. Even her name "*Quiet*" was described to be stupid and given by men. She is in the game just to be sexy eye candy and respondents said that she can be categorized as a hollow useless prop in the game. Respondents stated that her appearance shows clearly that the designers of Metal Gear Solid 5 think that female characters should be sex objects in the game. There were not provided any explanations for her behavior, such as rolling on the carrier deck in the rain. *Quiets'* category would be overly sexualized female character.

Lara Croft was described to be shallow, unlikeable and boring in newer games compared to older games where she had more of the bad-ass attitude. Her insecurity which was revealed in gameplay when she was making notes to her personal diary, annoyed players. She was described as a stereotypical bombshell, too basic and her archaeological methods did not get much approval. It was interesting to see that many respondents liked Lara Croft overall appearance more in new games such as in Rise of the Tomb Raider but the weakness of the character, emotional fragility and her tendency to die all the time was considered annoying. Some respondents liked her early versions more despite the exaggerated character design and they described Lara's attitude to feel empowering and "kick-ass". Lara belongs to the category of underdeveloped or stereotypical characters.

Bayonetta is so highly sexualized character that she is, in fact, a caricature of a woman. Every little detail or angle of view has been used to create an impression of a playable soft porn movie. While analyzing her character, there was a video found where teenagers tested *Bayonetta* for the first time and it was clear that those scenes which contained erotic material made the teenagers embarrassed or wondering if they really were a necessary part of the gameplay. One opinion about *Bayonetta* was that she is supposed to be a witch, but who would respect that type of a witch? Even during the fighting scenes, *Bayonetta* has always time for erotic poses, moaning, or other suggestive gestures. *Bayonetta* belongs to the category of oversexualized game characters.

Features that connect these unpopular characters are being useless props in the gameplay, oversexualized design, and insecurity. Princess Peach, Quiet, and *Bayonetta* do not seem to be particularly intelligent or able to do anything to help other characters. Lara Croft, on the other hand, suffers from harsh expectations from the past. The designers have given her more vulnerability hoping that she would be easier to relate to but they did not manage to keep her character as strong, independent and “kick-ass” as the players hoped for.

Features like an unpractical outfit, the character being superficial, oversexualized, naïve, passively waiting to be saved, or weak are examples that generated negative comments from players. If a character acts in an unrealistic way, does injustice to others, or seeks male attention all the time the players could get frustrated with the game and stop playing it. Voice acting has an important role, irritating voice acting and repeating same lines too often can be a reason why some female characters were found hardly relatable and disliked.

5.3 Data about the respondents

Most of the respondents belonged to the age group 26–30 years old. The second largest player group was 21–25 years old. Majority of the respondents estimated that they have played 16–20 years and 26 of the respondents said that they have played 21–25 years. The playing usually begins at the age of 6–9 while second-biggest starting age appeared to be at the age of 10–14 years. Many of the respondents have started even earlier, before kindergarten or even as young as three years old (Appendix 2/1 and 2/2). The overall experience of gaming in years in this survey group is large and should be taken seriously even if the sampling is just 106 answers.

5.4 Conclusions from the survey

Characteristics that respondents wished to see in female characters in future, also found in Appendix 2/5:

Personality: Strong, independent, characters that grow during the gameplay, personas that are easily relatable, respectable, intelligent, confident, credible, active, complex, and fearless. Respondents pointed out that the character should be strongminded, and able, and there should be different types of personality. Characteristics that respondents valued were positivity and intelligence, self-respect and respect for others, memorable attitude and personality that differs from usual stereotypes portrayed in female game characters. Including these desired features is important for any good character. The characters should also speak and behave like normal people. The voice acting is an important part of the character as well as the things that the character says.

Appearance: Respondents wanted to have more variety in ethnicity, size, looks, and sexual orientation to the game characters. Create characters that are considered to be overweight, small breasted, freckled, black, yellow, scarred, thin, tall or short. Respondents' advice to game creators is to take an

example from any woman that can be seen around in everyday life. The world is full of interesting people that can be converted into interesting game characters. Normal looking women, not too sexualized design, and design that would fit into their role in the game. Characters should be strong, diverse, even faulty, and ugly looking characters do not have to be evil. There should be also disabled characters in games.

Characters can look physically attractive but there must be also other qualities in them. The characters should have imperfections, as one respondent stated “Human: failing, trying, compassionate, brave, dumb at times”. Another respondent wrote: “I think the main thing is to concentrate on writing generally good characters that gamers can relate to, gender often does not matter in that case”.

In the poll, respondents were presented with various female body types and races and the average shaped dark-skinned female got most of the voices. Two other rather ordinary looking body types were also popular in the poll when compared to large breasted characters that resemble the usual female characters in games. Big breasted or models with what it has been thought to be an ideal body shape, were not so popular. Minding the fact that people naturally feel the ideal waist ratio 0.67-0.8 to be appealing (Burne 1994), such characters did not get many votes in the poll.

Background story: Respondents value complex, well thought and written stories with real meaning. If the game is related to the real world the story should be realistic. Respondents expressed their hopes that story writers should avoid stereotypical stories although they are easy to write. The background story should be believable and emotionally touching. There should not be an unnecessary tragedy in the lives of the characters. There does not have to be raping, beating, or another kind of intense cruelty.

People encounter suffering from actions such as bullying, neglect or alcoholism, and some new games have used such topics to create awareness of the causes they provoke. For example, Lydia tells a story of a

young female whose life is affected by alcoholism (Platonic Partnership 2017). The game got much attention when it was released in October 2017 and while the subject is dark, it must be discussed. Games are stories about feelings and characters wanting to do what is right. The story does not always have to be about a galaxy that needs saving, there is injustice everywhere which could be considered useful, empowering, and educational topics to use in games.

6 FUTURE CHARACTER: LEILANI

The answers from survey respondents defined the appearance, personality and background information of a future action hero, Leilani (Figure 10). Usual stereotypes were avoided and instead of being a “busty eye candy”, she is short and “ordinary looking” female, and the respondents gave her most votes at the body type poll. More info about Leilani and her crew is available in Appendix 5.



Figure 10. Leilani, a female action hero (Sirparanta 2018)

Respondents said about this character that “she looks like a soldier”, “she is close to respondents’ own body type”, she would be “suitable for action- or first-person shooter-game”, her “proportions are balanced”, she looks “capable” and “looks like a soldier”. Other attributes such as normal, average, fit, pretty, healthy, strong, not uncanny and best overall shape were also mentioned.

Appearance: According to the survey, the character should have a normal female body. Leilani is relatively short, fit and some may even say thin. She is not a beauty pageant, nor does she need to be like that. She looks like average Jane Doe, there is nothing exaggerated in her appearance. She could act as some spy or undercover police in any of the current tv-series. She is in a good shape and able to shoot, run, climb or help others. She doesn’t look like a superficial person, instead, it would be interesting to have a conversation with her. There is not a similar character like Leilani in any current games, black women are a minority and women with the similar body type as Leilani has, cannot be found at all.

Characteristics: Leilani is a strongminded female who has suffered from bullying at school. Despite her family being poor, she managed to educate herself to many different areas of her interest. She also learned self-defense and shooting so she could protect herself. She learned to dance disco and ballet as balancing act for her serious side. Leilani has a good sense of humor but sometimes she suffers from anxiety and sadness. She acknowledges that her abilities and knowledge is an important part of her current situation while her crew is protecting and saving survivors of Virus-Y from all around the world. She cares about her mission and crewmembers although there have been some conflicts between her and other crew members. Her low voice is persuasive and pleasant, and she manages to speak sense even to the most difficult persons. Her aim is to create better future for the remaining population of the world.

Background story: Leilani’s parents were poor; her father was away a lot leaving Leilani and her sister to take care of their home and overweighed mother. The children at school used these excuses to tease Leilani and her sister and they did stop only after she started to give back to the bullies. Leilani learned judo

in women's defense courses that were held for free in the basement of the local small church. She was able to banish her bullies and protect her sister, and she got so confident that she didn't let anyone stop her doing what she wanted. She managed to get help for her mother, work placement for her father and they slowly raised from poverty to decent income levels. After Leilani graduated and got a well-paid position, she was able to get her parents a nice apartment near services and a stylish home for herself. Her sister was studying marine biology and spends most of her time at sea. Leilani was the leader of a program that studied human genetics in National Human Genome Research Institute in Rockville, Maryland.

In 2023 scientists were making experiments with a new type of virus that affected only to human males, hoping to find a chemical weapon for military use. Despite strict security procedures, the virus got loose and started spreading through the world faster than anyone expected and affecting only to men. The researchers learned that the Virus-Y was effective, fast, and impossible to stop. The good news was that the Virus-Y did not survive active longer than few months and some survivors could be found if they did stay isolated from the disease. Those survivors must be gathered into safe forts and they must help the humankind survive by impregnating as many fertile eggs as possible.

7 CONCLUSIONS

During this thesis, the author got inside information about the expectations that were addressed to future female characters. Previously unknown female heroes became familiar to the author as well as facts and characteristics that made those characters popular. The level that characters design and story writing should reach in realism and believability is high but when reached, it offers the gaming experience that the consumer expects to get. Interpretation of the survey answers was interesting and at some points surprising, many respondents had similar thoughts about previous game characters and finding answers to questions about unpopular and popular characters was easy.

Since there is no precise information about the games the players have played in the 1980s and 1990s, assumptions about the suitability for the games for young players cannot be made. There is a possibility that young players might have played games that were not directed for their age group. While there have always been recommendations about the suitability of the games for different age groups there has also been lack of supervision around the matter. The suitability of early games and their effects to young players is an area that would need more research.

According to the survey, some observations about characters in the past have appeared. Lara Croft seems to have the most significant impression on adolescent players during the past decades. Since there were over ten Tomb Raider games published, her character became familiar for a large audience and she was both liked and disliked. The players in the early gaming years did not mind her absurd proportions, all they saw was an amazing “kick-ass” female character who seemed to be able to handle any situation. Juvenile players experienced gaming with her character empowering and fun. There are harsh expectations towards her character that the newest games might not have fulfilled and that has created the division to her popularity.

Some characters like Princess Peach that are just a trophy for male game character, useless, helpless damsel in distress, have caused feelings of anger and frustration that respondents remember years afterward. Continuously portraying female characters as reasons for male action or rewards was considered old-fashioned. Characters like Samus Aran who revealed to be female at the end of the game and Giana Sisters, counterpunch for Mario Brothers, were welcomed change at the 1980s gaming scene which was mainly targeted to young males and their fathers. Some players understood the oppression and unfair portrayal of female characters and chose to play with male characters instead. The lack of suitable equipment for the tasks that game characters should accomplish was felt as an unfair detail. Heroes should have fully covering armors, adventurers enough coverage from the environment and

there should not be shallow characters just for decorating the scene or fill up gender requirements.

What has been considered as failures during past three decades?

Oversexualizing female characters just to please male players was considered as a common problem. If there are physically attractive female characters in the game, there should be a reason behind that, and they should be accompanied by similarly portrayed male characters. *The Witcher III* (2015) can be used as an example of balanced character designing since there is a male main character that can be considered as good-looking but also female characters considered to be very attractive. In too many cases there were shallow female characters that were just decorations without any real usability during the gameplay.

One of the problems that occur in the world of game designing is this; how can the game producers predict what female players want if they do not ask them? Lack of interaction and research leads to this current situation where there is a void of relatable female game characters that would provide those empowering examples of women and equality for players. The immersive game consists of good story writing and strong and complex characters that are not stereotypical and can surprise the players. They should have a carefully considered personality, characters that player need to explore more closely to be able to reveal their true nature. That would give a valuable lesson to view deeper than at the surface, like in a real world where things are not always what they appear to be.

With careful research and time used in thorough character creation, any game company could increase its profitability.

Respondents state that there are too few women in important roles or protagonist in games. Characters designers should avoid stereotypical, non-memorable characters and pay more attention to the overall appearance. All details from what the character is wearing or using to her behavior should be suitable for the profession or role of the character. Designers should pay attention to all possible situations that their character could get into and provide suitable equipment that

helps with proceeding from those situations. Players can get frustrated if their character would have to crawl into a cave in a bikini without a clear reason. Game designers should avoid naivety, trophy characters and helpless weak damsels that need to be saved, and “badass bimbos” without real personality (Appendix 2/6). The frustrated consumer will likely abandon a game that will not create satisfaction during the gameplay. It is also questionable whether characters should have large breasts or tight outfits in games that have large amounts of players in the age group 7—12 years old. The designers should pay more attention to gameplay instead of making characters trousers tight and shining, or feminine armors.

How have these characters affected players? As the survey shows, some characters have had a significant effect on respondents so that years after playing they can still remember how annoying or stupid these characters have been. Also, successful character creation had formed long-lasting memories and empowering feelings and the best games are those that are played again. Obviously, there are various games that were considered not worthy of playing because of faulty character design or storyline. Respondents disapproved situations when characters behaved in a bad way (egoism, bullying, manipulating) and it was considered normal behavior in the gameplay.

Respondents wanted to have characters who they can relate to, but if the characters were half-clothed or sexually portrayed, there was a lack of immersion in the gameplay. Some characters were portrayed as highly pornographic material and the respondent felt that no reasons whatever would make that character believable. There were even some respondents that refused to play with such character. Some respondents have realized clearly how the characters have been portrayed in a wrong way, and to whom have the designers created them. Realizing that there was and is malpractice inside games helps to fight against inequality and avoid it in future.

If there is a lesson in every fairy tale or movie, there can also be a lesson in every game. Lee Sheldon tells about writers’ responsibility in his book *Character*

Development and Storytelling for Games (2014, 510—514). Games can and should be used as tools of teaching good values and acceptance of differences to the players of all age. Games should talk about difficult matters such as domestic violence, alcoholism, poverty, and harassment and advice people what they can do when that kind of problems occur.

All game players and especially generations born after millennium deserve better game characters and safe gaming environment. There should be ethical rules regarding games and game characters and all the game companies should follow those rules. General guidelines of what kind of role models are considered acceptable should be made. The Fair Play Alliance or other organization could concentrate on these issues of making socially acceptable games.

Portraying females as equals instead of oppression and making them fit old-fashioned standards is an important role that game designers should take account while making games for the current audience. Producers should do careful research within the target audience to fulfill their wishes. Females are the half of the humanity and they would like to have relatable characters to play with.

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Figure 5. Samus Aran. 2017. Available at: https://www.reddit.com/r/Metroid/comments/6lh71/samus_aran_at_full_power_nintendo_power_excerpt/?st=jg4lusix&sh=a2c5989b [Accessed: 18 April 2018].

Figure 6. Stereotypes. 2010. Available at: <http://www.snotm.com/2010/06/blog-post.html> [Accessed: 18 April 2018].

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Figure 10. Leilani, a female action hero. Sirparanta, N. March 2018.

Survey about female game characters

Researching the affect of female game characters to players. Answers will be analyzed anonymously. Your answer helps development of future female game characters.

1. Your age and how many years you have played video games?

Short-answer text

2. Where are you from? *

Short-answer text

3. Who is your favorite female game character? *

Short-answer text

4. Can you describe why this character is your favorite?

Long-answer text

5. A female game character that you liked the least? *

Short-answer text

6. Can you describe why you disliked this character

Long-answer text

7. What should the ideal female character be like? *

Long-answer text

...

8. Would you wish to see more body positive



☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe



Multiple choice

9. Which body type would be your favorite amongst these game characters?

☐ Option 1



☐ Option 2



☐ Option 4



☐ Option 5



☐ Option 7



☐ Option 8



☐ Option 3



☐ Option 6



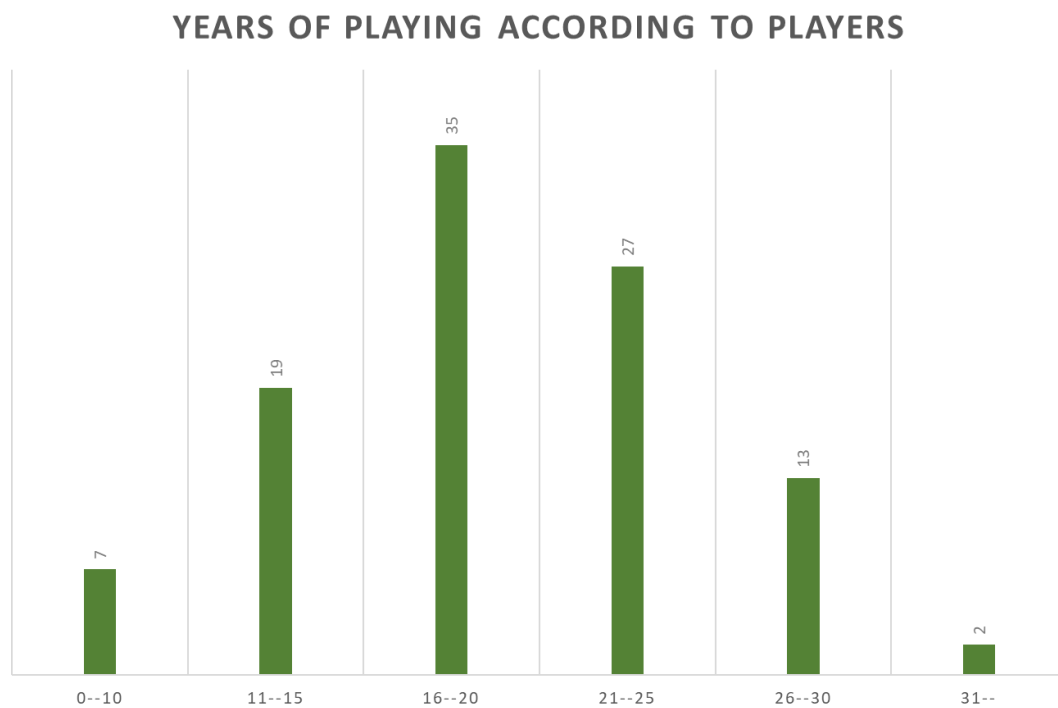
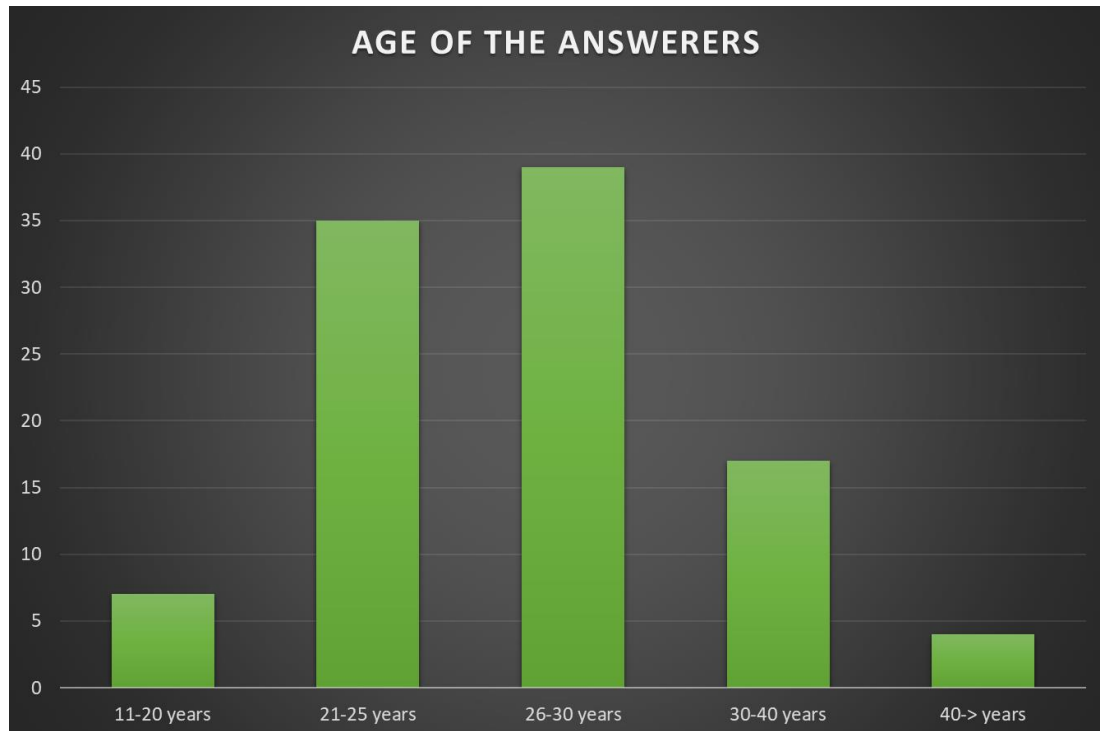
10. Can you explain why this character would be your choice?

Long-answer text

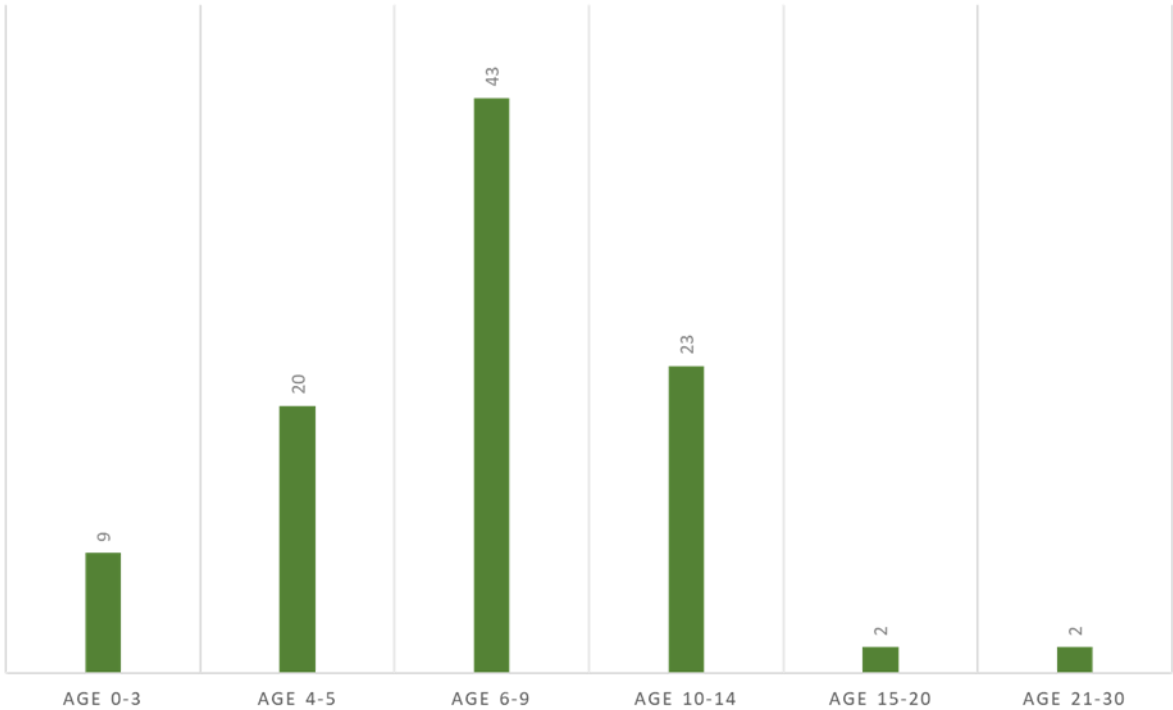
11. Do you have anything else to say about female game characters?

Long-answer text

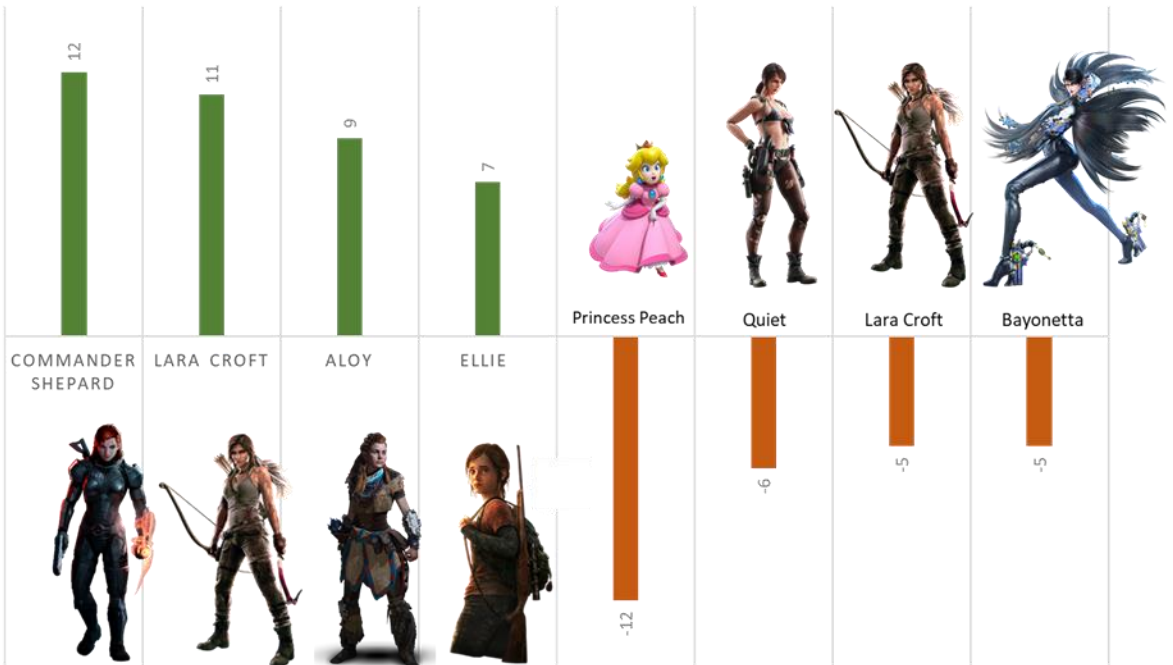
Statistics of survey:



STARTING AGE ACCORDING TO PLAYERS

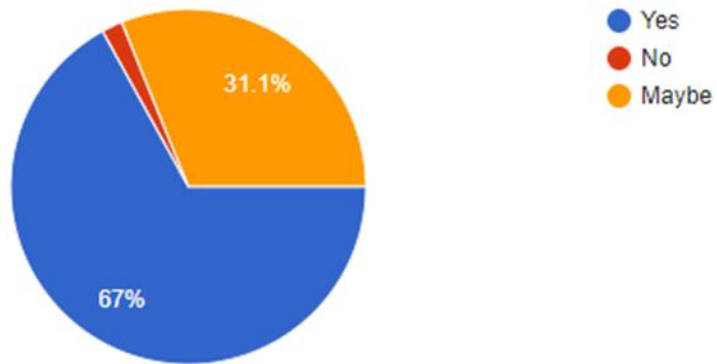


POPULAR AND UNPOPULAR FEMALE CHARACTERS



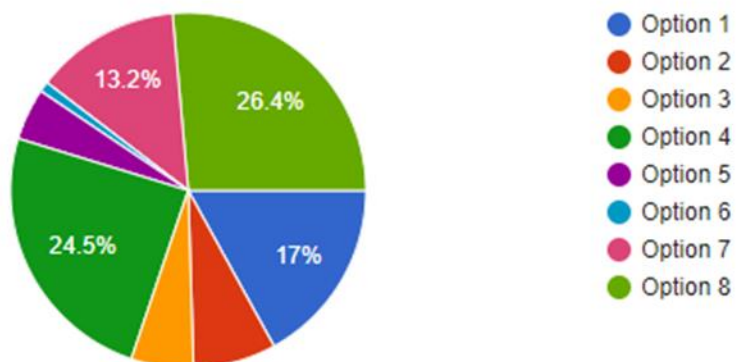
8. Would you wish to see more body positive female characters in games?

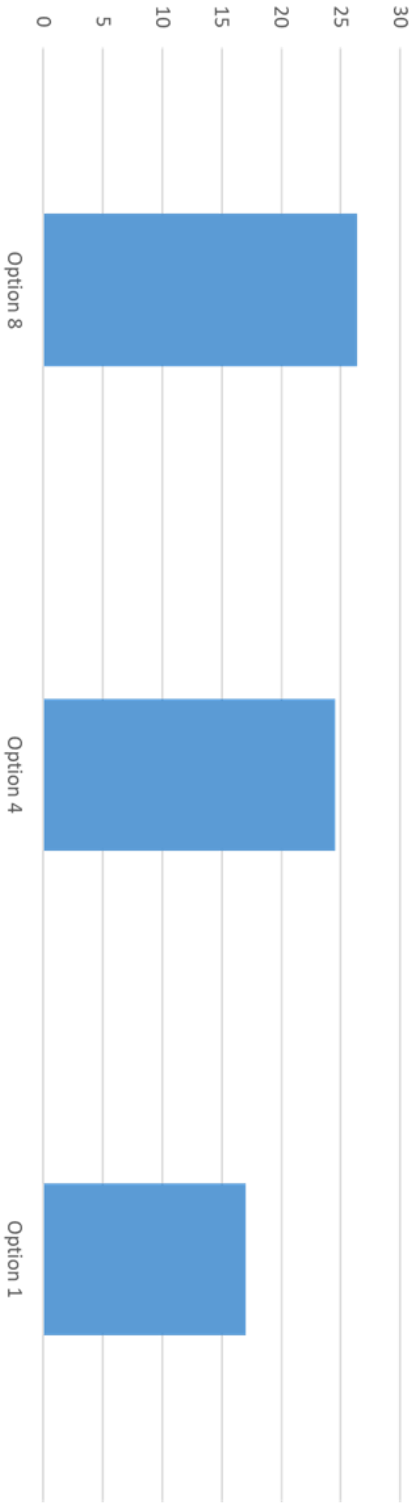
106 responses

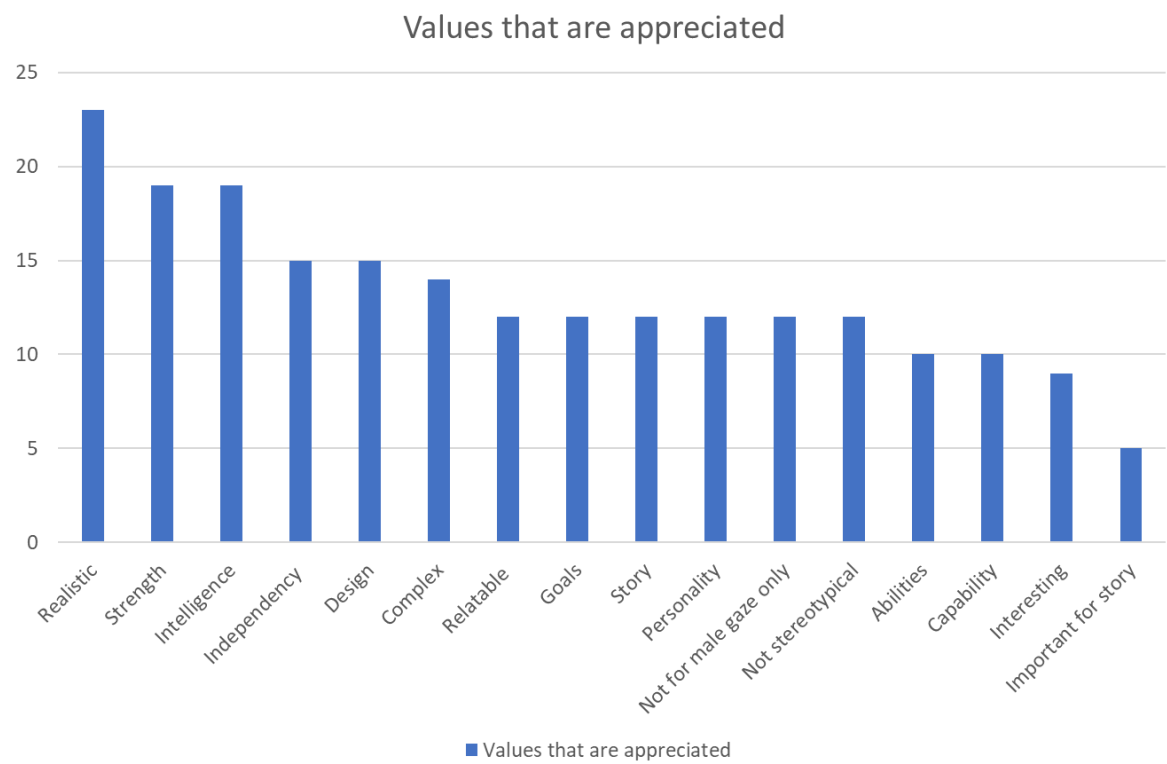
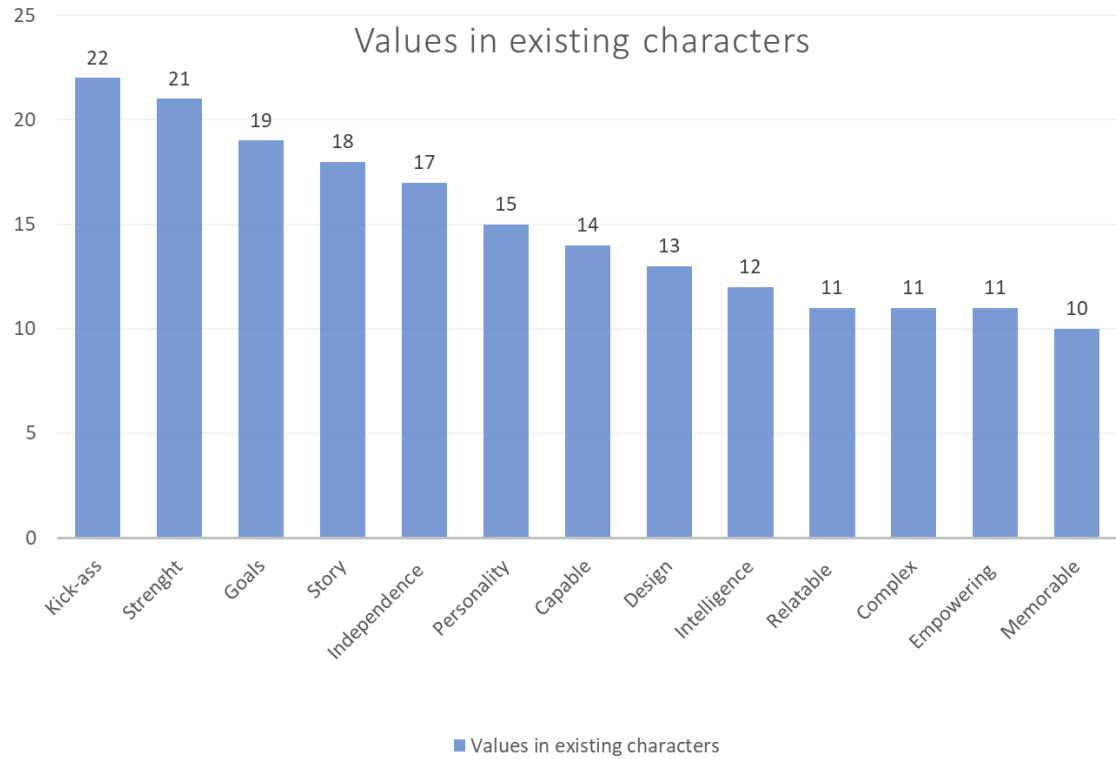


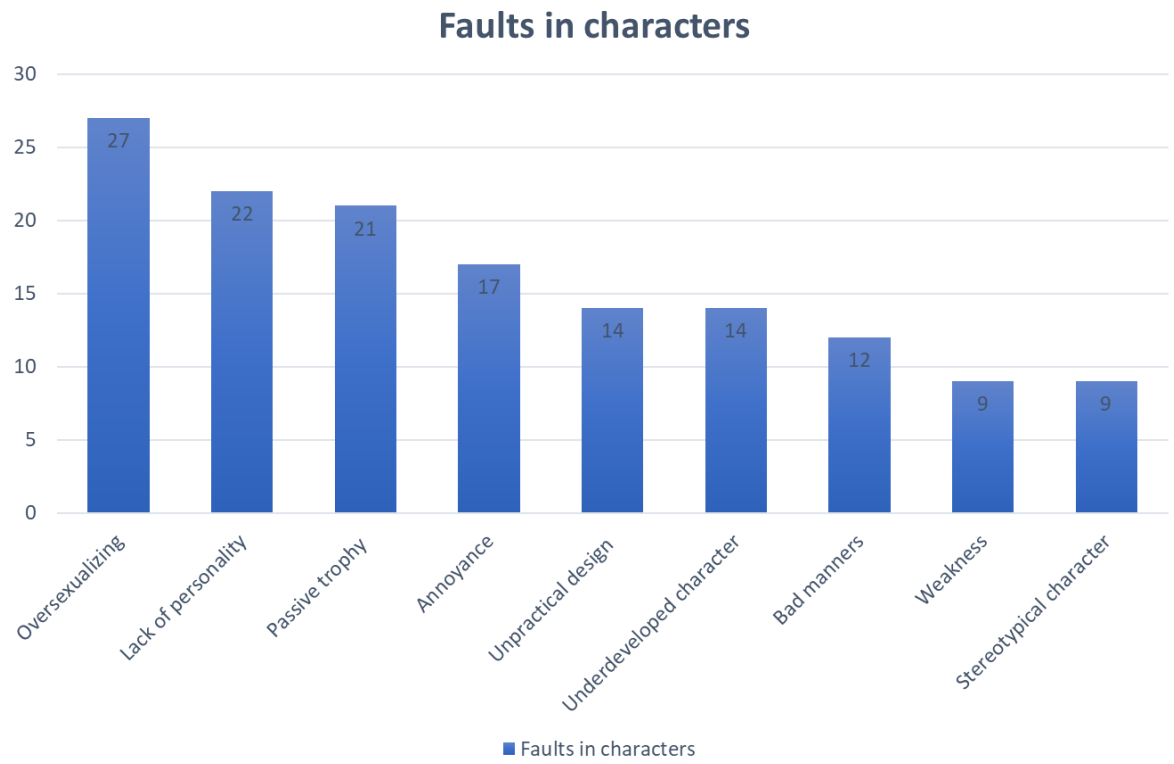
9. Which body type would be your favorite amongst these game characters?


106 responses














redshirtdlife
1649 posts


Mar 13  4

When I first looked at Overwatch, Tracer's menu icon made me think she was a guy PF.
I don't mind it though, she's adorable! :D and really that was a 'first look' without any knowledge of the game. Now that I've known, played the game, the whole 'guy look' isn't something I see anymore.
Edit: not sure why I'm getting dislikes? I love Tracer as a character, I'm simply stating with no game knowledge her ICON looks male.




MasterJJ
2077 posts


Mar 13  2

Mar 13 (Edited)  -1


Because if your in combat, your not going to be out of shape. Roadhog withstanding since hes basically all muscle with a big belly.
Tell me, when have you ever seen an in action soldier who was super out of shape?




ArchmageMC
2960 posts

Mar 13 (Edited)  1

Because if your in combat, your not going to be out of shape. Roadhog withstanding since hes basically all muscle with a big belly.
Tell me, when have you ever seen an in action soldier who was super out of shape?



MercyMaker
5116 posts


Jul 5 (Edited)  11

Posted by **Archmage203**
I believe during Talon's processing of Widowmaker they removed her spine. Her hip angle is all kinds of cartoony. Mercy is better overall. At least you won't have to hear so many spider stories and, "feeling alive," rants.
07/04/2017 08:11 PM


Making love to Widow

Widowmaker: "I almost feel something"


Silently walk away.




Bot01
142 posts

Mar 10  2


Do you want a walking ham planet or do you want a aesthetically pleasing female hero?




Synova
2808 posts

Mar 10 (Edited)  1


Posted by **Bot01**
Do you want a walking ham planet or do you want a aesthetically pleasing female hero?
03/10/2017 02:56 PM




MareScale
276 posts

Mar 10  3

So the choice is between land whale and stick figure with no boobs. Now I'm the one babbling about wanting "real women figures".
Welcome to the hero spotlight of Walking Ham Planet, the walking ham planet.



Vorock
1418 posts

Jul 5 (Edited)  1

Widowmaker. Her (@# is a masterpiece!)

Posted by **Mercy**
If you want boobs, go Mercy.
If you want booty, go Widow.
If you want legs, go Orisa.
07/04/2017 08:06 PM

Beautiful. Honestly, booty is the best part.

Artemus • 4 pistoles troublemaker edition
Nothing in *Overwatch* is realistic, all of the characters are highly stylized. Just take a look at Roadhog, does he look well-proportioned to you?

Panel 8 (5) *pride* "humiliated" *alms*

Of course not, he's a fucking mutant lol

However not all males look unrealistic, whereas it seems like all human females are like this with the one exception of Mei.

I'm not complaining, just wondering if there is someone out there that could tell us "no, that skeleton doesn't occur in nature lol"

4/24/2017

 **Asterisk** - 2 pixels thumbnail editon
Well besides Mei there's Zarya who is not really "conforming to beauty standards" and Ana is a 60 year old grandma. Generally speaking the only overly sexualized female in the game is Widowmaker and to some extent Tracer. Other females have sexualized skins (e.g. Witch Mercy, Tulum Sombra) but are not in their default appearance.

 **Tracy**


 **Fastq_3 [S]** - 1 pixel thumbnail editon
True I neglected to mention Zarya and forgot about Ana.
However even though Sombra and Mercy were added as sexualized as widow...their proportions are the same. I recently noticed this when looking at one of Sombra's victory poses; her legs actually confort to fit the position (the one where she's kneeling down). I also noticed how absurdly far her knees jut out from her when she's doing her sit emote.

When i sit on my toes like Sombra does, my knees are roughly 1.5 feet from my chest. (I'm 5 foot 2.) Sombra's away like almost 2.5 feet away lol

 **Tracy**

 **Iconosphere** - 2 pixels thumbnail editon
The real travesty is that to failed to mention the sexiest stud in OW, Zen. He doesn't have shoes, he doesn't have shirts, and he doesn't have problems.


 **Tracy**



Smashkoffy - 4 points


Do those legs go all the way up?

Why yes, they do.




Thibautessprince - 3 points

I don't know about that, but widowmaker and mercy have broken spines or something like just look at their backs, that isn't healthy



Beyerdancers - 3 points


Wearing high heels will change the alignment of your body making your butt poke out and your spine curve



Crisdelawee - 1 point

The World Record for longest legs belong to a woman named Svetlana Pavlovskaya. However, it's worth noting that Svetlana is also very tall. Widowmaker and Mercy are around average height.


This is her



Farski - 1 point

Yeah with Overwatch girls it's not their height, it's how much of their height is from their legs.

That Svetlana seems to have normal proportions, it's just that her entire frame is tall.



Crisdelawee - 3 points

Her legs are close to your estimates for Widowmaker.

Bayoglosses • 1 pirate • *Unlabeled edition*

they exaggerate the features they would normally have to stylize them.

also how is *heimtadit* realistic? and is no one going to mention that most of the male cast have these with thin legs but a massive chest width that makes no sense for their height and weight?

it's just a game, they're made to look appealing

people like attractive women and strong men, shocking

replay 100% 100% 100% 100%

Marmot • 1 pirate • *Unlabeled edition*

The only hero that looks impossible to me (besides the obvious gorilla and sentient robot) is Widow. Y. In insane proportions, but she's a tucking spider, of course she's got a nonexistent waist and long legs

replay 100% 100% 100% 100%

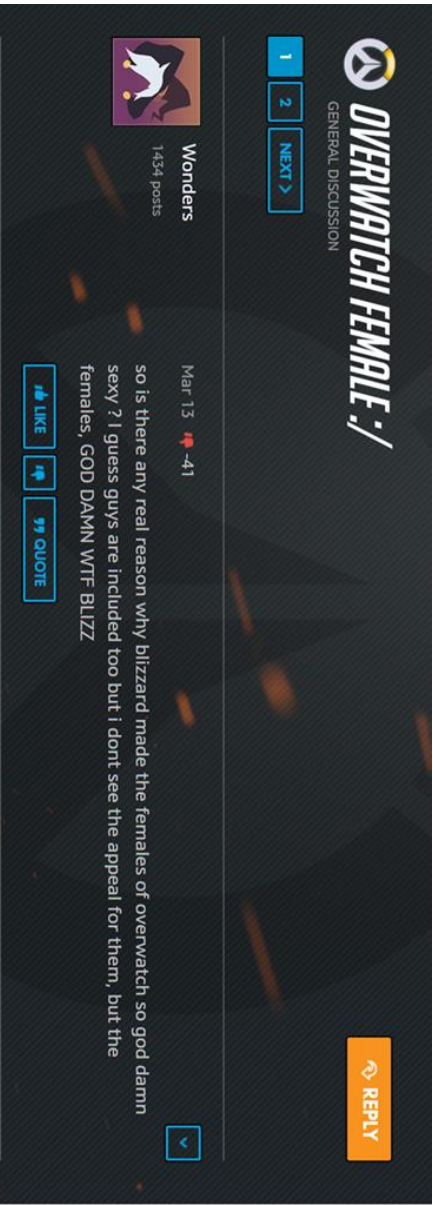
 **AJ STYLES** - 1 post • 1 thread(s) often
Never really noticed the long legs except for on Widowmaker and Moira. Probably because I'm busy looting.

 reply

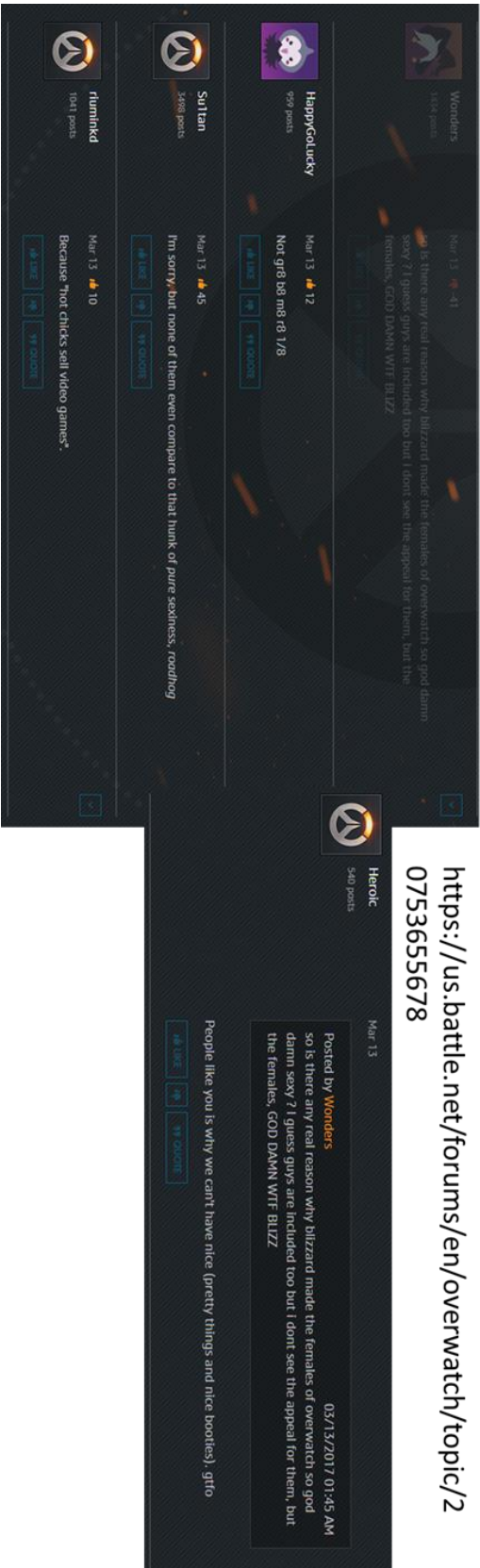
 **Zoltan** - 1 post • 1 thread(s) often
Take a look at most female dolls or renderers of female characters in most CGI movies.
From the Disney Princesses like Rapunzel, Elsa, etc. to the Monster High/Batz/Bardie whatever other market.

It's just a common style choice to draw/render women with a 60/40 to 70/30 leg-to-torso ratio, as it's aesthetically pleasing to the average viewer, and it also helps accentuate the hips, since female skeletons hips than males.

There's a similar practice for males to e drawn with broader shoulders, which can be observed in many Overwatch makes as well.



[https://us.battle.net/forums/en/overwatch/topic/2](https://us.battle.net/forums/en/overwatch/topic/20753655678)





According to Blizzard character sheet, Widowmaker is 1.75 m tall. Approximate height of French female is 1,62 m. Based on character sheets pictures her weight could be around 60 kilos. In the picture on the right can be seen that her upper body is very narrow and muscles very small, her pelvis is abnormally large and buttocks round and big. At the same time, there's a gap between her thighs. Widowmakers' arm muscles and thin neck do not support the fact that she's carrying and lifting heavy gun all day long. That much exercise would also give her buttocks more muscular square shape rather than round one and create straighter waistline than in the picture on the right.

The shorter Widowmaker on the left side is closer to a real French female who would carry a heavy gun all day long and proportionally more realistic. This type of realism should be considered as body positive approach to the female game character. While designing characters it does not require more work but careful thinking about proportions and looks, character designers could create excepting and positive feelings about female characters. The characters are both "beautiful" women, but the one on the right is not realistic.

Picture available at:

https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/overwatch/images/2/2c/Widowmaker_overtheshoulder.png/revision/latest?cb=20160825104208

Accessed: 19 April 2018

Leilani

Responders voted **Leilani** to be their favorite game character.

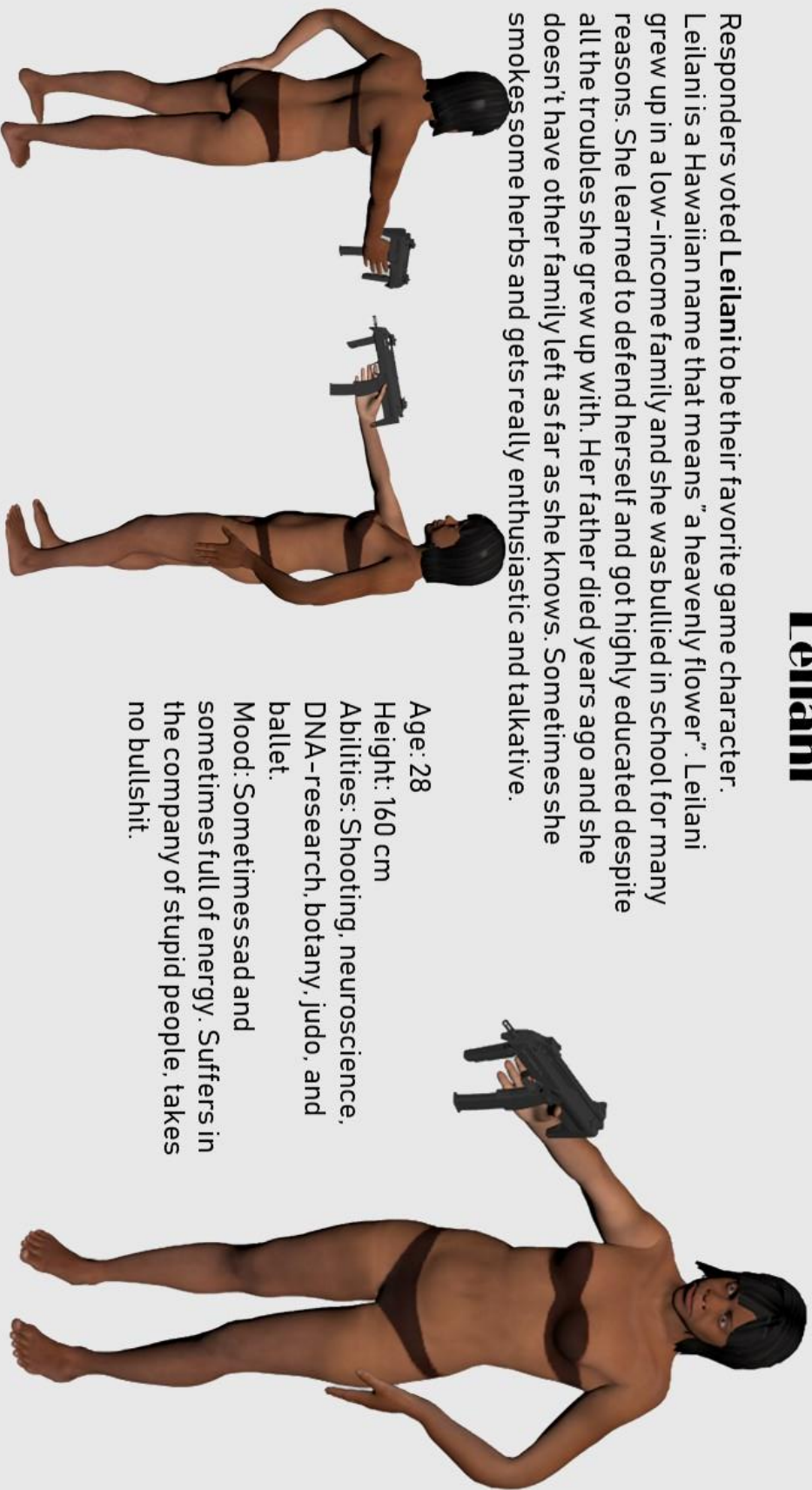
Leilani is a Hawaiian name that means "a heavenly flower". Leilani grew up in a low-income family and she was bullied in school for many reasons. She learned to defend herself and got highly educated despite all the troubles she grew up with. Her father died years ago and she doesn't have other family left as far as she knows. Sometimes she smokes some herbs and gets really enthusiastic and talkative.

Age: 28

Height: 160 cm

Abilities: Shooting, neuroscience, DNA-research, botany, judo, and ballet.

Mood: Sometimes sad and sometimes full of energy. Suffers in the company of stupid people, takes no bullshit.





This is Leilanis' unit. The woman in the middle is **Sarah, a former soldier**, capable of defending herself and the group, a mighty soldier in action but a warmhearted woman who would like to have lots of children. Sarah loves baking and cute animal videos.

Age: 30

Height: 189 cm

Abilities: Shooting, fighting, commanding, protecting others.

History: Sarah lived in a happy family with lot's of siblings, their kitchen was always full of people and laughter. Her brothers were in the military and she decided to work there too. She got promoted fast to be a major of her unit and she was a respected leader of her group. Since the army suffered losses through the virus-Y, she was transported to investigation group wich gathers valuable DNA-sources from the surviving males in the world. She hopes to find a donator so she would get her own children some day. Two of her brothers remained safe during the virus-Y, they were having a drill in northern Lapland and they got isolated when the news reached them. She wishes to see her brothers when the situation improves. Mood: Hopeful and positive. Caring, protective, sometimes dreaming too much.



The woman on the right is **Brigitte**, a **handy mechanic** who can fix everything and acts as the driver of the group. She can fly a helicopter, airplane or drive anything, even tanks.

Age: 39

Height: 152 cm

Abilities: Repairing, flying, driving

History: Brigitte lost her son when virus-Y spread through the world. They lived in Halmstad, in a small apartment near the old castle. She worked in the Armed Forces Technical School repairing their equipment. She was married to the local elementary school teacher and they had one son at the moment the virus started spreading. All her male family members died except her grandfather who lives in some isolated cottage in the countryside. They have been emailing to each other ever since and she is worried is her grandfather is safe and doesn't leave his house.

Mood: Sad but tries her best. Cynical. Loves her grandfather, mother, and sisters.



Virus-Y has spread through the world, killing every male that got the infection. Only survivors live in isolated places and they must be found and kept at safe. The unit needs to gather DNA-samples from those men so the humankind can survive and produce children.

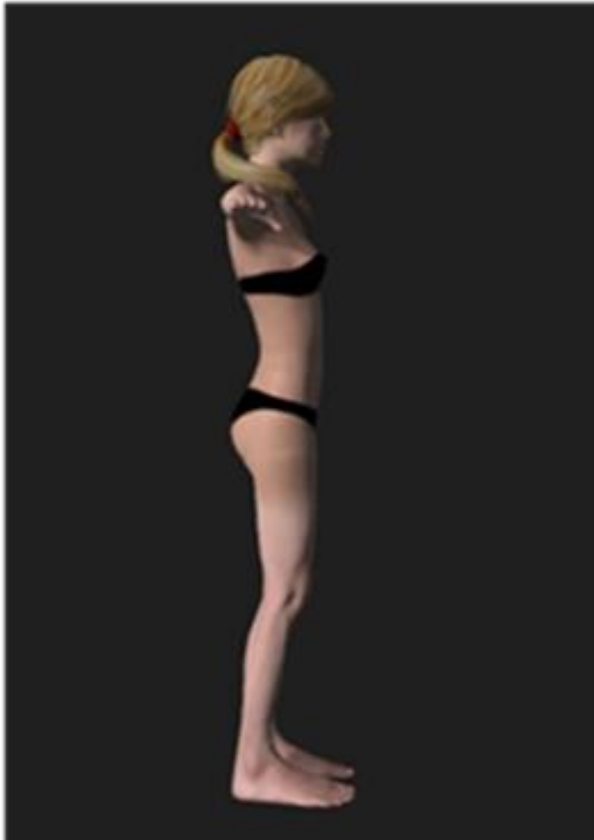
Locations of some survivors















Translation of quotes

Ruoho, A. 2014, 10.

"Perhesuunnittelu on vanhoillislestadiolaisessa yhteisössä edelleen tuomittava ja kadotukseen johtava teko. Niinpä moni nainen suorittaa uskonkuuliaisuuttaan omalla ruumiillaan ja kokee todennäköisesti olevansa itse Jumalan apulainen luodessaan uutta elämää maan päälle ja taivasta varten. Vanhoillislestadiolainen liike opettaa, että "uskova", toisin sanoen vanhoillislestadiolaisen liikkeen jäsen, ei halua ehkäistä vaan hän haluaa ottaa kaikki lapset vastaan."

"Family planning in Conservative Laestadians community is still disapproved act and leads to damnation. Therefore, many of the women fulfill their obedience towards their religion with their own bodies, probably feeling to be Gods assistant while creating new life on earth and for the heaven. Conservative Laestadians movement teaches that the "believer", in other words, member of Conservative Laestadians movement, does not want to contracept rather wants to except every child."

Saarikoski 2001, 164.

"Voidaan puhua ylistämällä alistamisesta (samoin kuin neitsyt Marian palvonnan kohdalla): tiukasti normitetun naiskauneuden ihannointi tuottaa naiselle kuin naiselle jatkuvasti toistuvia epäonnistumisen, normista poikkeamisen kokemuksia."

"We may talk about dominating with praising (likewise with Virgin Mary): idealizing strictly normalized female beauty causes continuously repetitive feelings of failure or deviation of the norm."

Saarikoski, 2001, 153.

"Tällainen tyttöahmo on kuitenkin Pohjoismaissa saavuttanut valtaisan suosien, varmaankin vastauksena erittäin monien (ehkä joka useimpien) tyttöjen omaksuman "poikatyön" identiteetin luomaan kulttuuriseen tilaukseen myönteisestä samaistumiskohteesta."

"This type of girl character has reached impressive popularity in Nordic countries, probably as an answer to fill a cultural order of positive object of identification to the "tomboy" identity that many (or most) girls had adapted."

Pettersson, M. 2017.

"Lapsille suunnattu kulttuuri pelaa ikivanhoilla roolimalleilla. Aikuiset näyttävät pikkutyttöille prinsessasatuja, koska aikuisetkin on kasvatettu aikanaan samalla romanttisella hutulla, kirjoittaa Maria Pettersson."

"Culture directed to children plays with ancient role models. Grown-ups show princess stories to little girls because they have been raised with similar romantic nonsense, writes Maria Pettersson."

"Hävittyäni kahdeksan kertaa valomiekkataistelun kysyin, miksi viisivuotias oli yhtäkkiä kiinnostunut Tähtien sodasta. Se oli väärä kysymys. Hän ilmoitti, ettei ole kiinnostunut Tähtien sodasta vaan Reystä."

Appendix 7/2

"After losing lightsaber fight for eight times I asked why five-year-old was suddenly interested in Star Wars. That was a wrong question. She stated that she wasn't interested in Star Wars, but Rey."

"Pikkutyöt janoavat naissankareita. He tarvitsevat idoleikseen vahvoja, itsenäisiä sankarittaria, jotka auttavat heitä kasvamaan vahvoiksi, itsenäisiksi sankarittariksi."

"Little girls yearn for female heroes. They need idols, strong independent heroines, that help them to grow to be strong independent heroines."

"Mutta se romantiikka. Oletteko huomanneet, mitä pienet tytöt tekevät, kun prinssi Disney-elokuvan lopussa suutelee prinsessaa? Piiloutuvat sohvatyynyn taakse ja sanovat yäk."

"But the romanticism. Have you noticed what the little girls do when a prince at the end of Disney-movie kisses the princess? They hide behind the sofa pillow and say yuck."

"Kulttuurin tekijöiden ja erityisesti sen rahoittajien täytyy ymmärtää asemansa. Vetoan teihin. Te olette eturintamassa tekemässä tästä maailmasta monimuotoisempaa, suvaitsevaisempaa ja hienompaa paikkaa. Läpimurrot tehdään teidän kentällänne. Te siirrätte rajoja, te raivaatte sorretuille tilaa hengittää."

"Producers of culture and especially their funders must understand their position. I plea to you. You are in the front row when making this world more diverse, more tolerant and a greater place. Breakthroughs are made in your field. You move the borders, you make the breathing space for the oppressed."



Characters from left to right: Ellie (Last of Us), Lara Croft (Tomb Raider), Nadine, and Chloe (Uncharted 4)

Ellie: picture available at: <https://www.polygon.com/2016/12/3/13830334/the-last-of-us-2-main-character-playstation-experience>

Lara Croft: picture available at:

<http://www.thevideogamegallery.com/gallery/image:23625/tomb-raider-2013:cover-art-v4>

Nadine: picture available at: <https://www.artstation.com/artwork/dgkv1>

Chloe: picture available at: <https://www.artstation.com/artwork/GPDVV>

Accessed: 10 April 2018

Appendix 9



sex equality by m.
dyble.pdf