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ETHNIC AND GENDER REPRESENTATION IN GAMES
Diversifying character design

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**Thesis title**

Ethnic and gender representation in games

Diversifying character design

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**Supervisor**

Brenda Jiménez Rodriguez, Lecturer

**Abstract**

Video games are severely lacking when it comes to ethnic and gender representation in leading characters. The objective of the thesis was to create a prototype that could not only help in designing more diverse characters, but also to observe what kind of faces the users found most attractive and examine the reasons why. There was also research done on the current situation of representation in the western game industry and how it could be improved. It was largely compared to the film industry, as the two are similar in their story telling methods and the film industry is more extensively researched.

The thesis details the process of creating the web browser based face construction tool prototype from the art process to the coding of the web page, and the finished product was then tested by peers. The participants could answer a short survey that aimed to gather information about the usability of the prototype, as well as to find out which facial features the users gravitated towards the most, and why. 13 people took part in the survey, one of which answered the survey twice.

The survey results provided an insight on how awareness of ethnic representation has risen in twenty to thirty year olds, as they were more likely to pick the darker skin colours for their characters. The gender of the character was most often perceived as androgynous, suggesting that gender might not affect how sympathetic the character is to the viewer. While the thesis was aiming to uncover which facial features were rated as most attractive the survey revealed that there is little to no correlation between liking a character and their attractiveness. Most of the participants described their characters as friendly, or appealing, while also rating them mid to low on the attractiveness scale.

Research suggests that the shift in ethnic and gender awareness could be the result of racially ambiguous media targeting millennials and generation Z, as well as the prevalence of social media. Young people are no longer alienated, but instead may freely interact with anyone on the internet, and have themselves worked on projects that promote acceptance.

**Keywords**

Character design, ethnicity, gender, representation, video games
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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis details the creation of a prototype designed to aid in creating more diverse faces for characters through a browser based facial construction tool, and examines the importance of representation and diversification, especially within the western videogame industry. The purpose is not to discuss in detail the different minorities and their individual representational issues, but instead to concentrate on video games and the industry, why ethnic and gender representation is disproportionate, and the effects of the lack of representation. Because the study of games and the game industry is still new and incomplete, many parallels are drawn from the film industry, to hypothesize and inspect occurrences that could be replicable in the game industry as well.

The prototype was tested by a small number of game design students, as well as by some not so well versed in games and character design, and they were asked to answer a questionnaire to provide details the functionality of the prototype and how they used it. The survey aimed to find out if the prototype had been able to give the user new ideas for characters, as well as to see, which skin colours and facial features they gravitated towards the most. These answers guided the analysis portion of this thesis, where the possible reasons for the results are examined and explained.

For full transparency, the author of this thesis is not of an ethnic minority but became interested in learning why the default image of a person in the minds of many is white, and why especially in games the protagonist is almost always a white male, often irritable in temperament. This fascination emerged from personal experience in growing up with people of different ethnicities, thought only becoming conscious of that fact in their teens, and continuously gaining more understanding and curiosity on the topic, as well as from feelings of not being adequately represented themselves in games and other media. This together with a desire to design more varying and unique characters created a necessity for a tool that could elevate one’s character design to be more diverse and inclusive, as well as distinctive, while being respectful to minorities.
1.1 Defining terminology

The definitions of ethnicity vary depending on whether the term is explained anthropologically, sociologically or even politically, but there are two main preconceptions that need to be disentangled: the word ethnicity does not equate minority, nor does race entail a specific ethnicity, or lack thereof. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, ethnicity is defined as belonging to a group of “common national or cultural tradition”. This means any people who share traditions can be classified as or classify themselves as being of the same ethnicity. For the purposes of this thesis however, the focus will be on minority ethnicities in western countries, which are defined by The United Nations (UN) as a group, who is numerically inferior to the state’s population and in a non-dominant position in said state, as nationals of it, and whose members possess differing ethnic characteristics, and show a will for preserving their traditions. This is a useful and flexible definition though it fails to include ethnicities that cross state boundaries by being nomadic in nature, such as Roma Travelers (Alia & Bull 2005). Therefore, it is important to emphasize the will of preserving one’s culture – as this implies a strong awareness of a cultural identity that is shared by a group of people that truly defines ethnicity – in conjunction with their non-dominant position.

In the context of western media and video games most, if not all, people of colour (sometimes referred to as POC) or non-white people could be considered of being ethnic minorities. The terms people of colour and non-white both have their pro et contra depending on who you ask, however for the purposes of this thesis, the author has opted to use the term people of colour, as might be the most politically correct and inclusive term, and also seems to currently be the most widely used (Dyer 1997).

In the context of character design, the term “same face syndrome” will be mentioned multiple times. This is an unofficial way to identify artists, who tend to draw or model the same basic facial shape and features on all their character concepts, resulting in remarkably similar looking characters that can truly only be differentiated through their hair or clothes and accessories. It was originated
around 2009 to refer to people who look the same in every picture taken of them and was quickly adopted into the internet artist communities, such as deviantART, and started gaining traction around 2011 and 2012 (Hood 2010; SKMReid 2012). The artist or their characters will be said to “have same face syndrome”.

1.2 Character archetypes

What sparked the idea for this project was not only the desire to design more dynamic, recognizable and visually interesting characters, but also an observation that most mainstream games with the highest development budgets feature a white male as a protagonist, who all seem to look somewhat similar. This phenomenon is as evident in Hollywood and other visual media as well, although especially in video games the main character is most often a white male, with short brown hair, a strong jawline and often a stubble, and an average to lean physicality (Figure 1). Particularly in game media the hero archetype is also often paired with a pessimistic, snarky, and/or sarcastic demeanour, so much so that it has sparked some more or less humorous top ten lists such as the one featured in a Kotaku article by MacDonald (2017).

Women in games, notably in drawn media such as comics and animation, are often victims of *same face syndrome*, where every female character has more or less the same facial structure of a rounded and soft face, big eyes, small, button nose and pouty lips. They are also most of the time white or have some facial features that more resemble Caucasians. However, instead of being cursed with the same personality as the next character, they sometimes do not have personalities at all. Any deviation from this form also seems to indicate that the character is evil or the antagonist in the game, especially when used together with a dark colour palette (Dryer 1997). This is particularly evident in the game Overwatch (2016), which has received a lot of backlash from their players specifically because of the lack of diversity in the facial designs of their female characters. As a response to this criticism they created Moira, the mad scientist
of Blackwatch, and now a part of Talon, an organization that seeks to create conflict with the goal of “strengthening the human race”. She was purposefully designed to look “ugly” with her elongated proportions, and her menacing aura is amplified with a black and purple colour scheme, similar to other female members of Talon: Widowmaker and Sombra. However, with the addition of the newest female characters, Brigitte and Ashe, Blizzard seems to have reverted into their comfort zone. (Figure 2.)

There has been a noticeable improvement in more inclusive and diverse character design in recent years, but a lot of that must be contributed to better technology. Actors’ faces can now be accurately rendered in 3D, resulting in more realistic and visually interesting characters, although this is only true for games that aim for realism (Ninja Theory 2016). Games with a stylized art direction, such as Overwatch and Fortnite (2017), still suffer greatly from same face syndrome and gender bias when character design is in question.

1.3 Game developers reasoning for the lack of representation

When Assassin's Creed Unity came out in 2014 it nearly immediately rose to infamy. The game was poorly balanced, and was clearly released too early into the production, rendering it nearly unplayable on purchase. What really stuck in the minds of people was the creative directors and level designer’s comments about women being too hard to animate, which sprung from a purposefully demeaning twitter hashtag (Farokhmanesh 2014; feministfrequency 2016). It can be argued that his intent was to explain the lack of production time as the reason to not being able to create to a completely new playable character, but the public opinion had already gained enough traction for people’s negative opinion to be imbedded. Ubisoft attempted to mend the damage this comment caused the franchise with the 2018 game Assassin’s Creed Odyssey by giving the option of a female playable character and stating her to be the canonical main character.

The director of Far Cry 4 (2014) went on record to say that they were disappointed to not be able to include a playable female character for co-op. He told Polygon that they had character models for the female option, yet lacked the
time to make unique animations and voice lines for it. He did promise to prioritize making a playable female character for the next Far Cry game and delivered that promise in 2018. However, some players noticed that from the perspective of the writing of Far Cry 5, the female character felt out of place and like an afterthought, or a forced attempt of inclusion. A lot of the dialogue was directed as if to a male character (i.e. bro, man, dude), and some characters even used male pronouns when addressing the main character, regardless of which gender the player chose, or used the gender neutral *they*. (Anon 2018; Corriea 2014.) This was likely done to cut down on voice lines, but resulted in an awkward and impersonal experience. Some games such as Mass Effect (2007, 2010, 2012, 2017) and Borderlands (2009, 2012) opt to use the name or title of the character (Shepard or Commander in Mass Effect) or have unique nicknames to the main character (Slab, Killer, Sugar, etc. in Borderlands).

![Figure 3. The protagonist of the first four Mortal Kombat games a. Liu Kang and the Villain of Far Cry 4 b. Pagan Min (Midway Games 1992; Ubisoft 2014.)](image)

All people of colour are discriminated in game character design and Asian people make up a sizeable portion of those people. East-Asian characters in western games often suffer the fate of being the villain, highly sexualized or are a blatant stereotype of a martial artist (Figure 3). They have started to gain a better
foothold in mainstream games though, through characters like Morgan Yu of Prey (2017) and Faith of Mirror’s Edge (2008), both lacking many of the stereotypes mentioned before, or transforming them into something new, such as Faith being an expert in parkour rather than kung-fu (Le 2016.) Still, not many games reference any of the history of Asian people, or their experiences as colonized countries. Most games based on wars that happened on East-Asian soil or against East-Asian people, often the Vietnam War, are played from the perspective of the invaders: white men. It can be an especially jarring experience to play such a game when the enemy is speaking one’s mother tongue, and as such extremely alienating (Phi 2009).

2 RELEVANCE OF REPRESENTATION IN GAMES

It has become the rule, as well as commonplace, so much so that even being normal in a group of atypical people (disabled, LGBT) is to be white (Dyer 1997). Whiteness can be seen as neutral, giving the impression that it is a piece of paper on which to project oneself. Feelings of identifying with a character are especially strong while playing video games, as the player is an active participator in the progression of the story and in some cases directly influence the outcome of the story. Putting these two presumptions together, it would explain why so many game developers choose to have white protagonists in their games.

In a study conducted by Cicchirillo (2014), they randomly assigned white and black people to play Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (2001) which has a white protagonist, or Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (2004) which has a black protagonist. They reported that the players identified most strongly with the character that was of the same ethnicity, yet also concluded that the white player’s enjoyment of the game was not affected by the ethnicity of the character. Black players reported less enjoyment than the white players when playing with the black protagonist, which was likely due to the social biases that black people face, as the depiction of black people in the game is stereotypical and violent. This not only demonstrates the need for unbiased or non-stereotypical representation, but also shows that white people, who often do not see
themselves as being a part of an ethnicity, are not affected negatively by the ethnicity of the main character of a game and as such it would be safe to presume that having a character of colour as the protagonist should not negatively affect the success of a video game (Dryer 1997).

As a place where the player can do anything without real life consequences, games can be an important part of a player’s self-discovery. They can freely explore and experience the lives of people they themselves are not, and are not experienced in (Frissen et al. 2006; Marjomaa et al. 2018.) By adding representation in their games, game developers inadvertently lower the player’s, as well as the industry’s, threshold of acceptance in games and by extension in real life (Friman 2018; Hallikainen 2018).

2.1 Position of women and people of colour in the video game industry

There are countless testimonials by women working in the video game industry, where they retell in gruesome detail how they are treated as lesser than their male counterparts and are often the victims of sexual harassment and even sexual assault in the workplace (Bort 2013; CBC Radio 2014; D’Anastasio 2018). While in the Finnish game industry approximately 20% of workers are female, improvements are still needed worldwide. The phenomena of “booth babes” is quite prevalent in the gaming convention scene. They are attractive women hired by the respective companies to advertise games by inviting men to take pictures with them in front of their booth, usually while wearing revealing clothing, such as miniskirts and cleavage showcasing-shirts. Many women visiting these events have noted that these advertisers may not even acknowledge them, and this can be an alienating experience. This coupled with the fact that being an environment where one is already considered a minority, and where sexism is considered an everyday experience, women are actively avoiding participating in gaming culture (Friman 2018; Hallikainen 2018; Nikulainen 2018.) This alienation from the community must deter potential female game developers from ever entering the industry for fear of exclusion or ridicule.
According to Twist, there are not enough black and Asian people working in the industry and that it is reflected in representation in video games. This observation is echoed by Ramanan, adding that the issue can be seen in gender and class diversity within the workplace as well. But why are there not as many people of colour in the industry? It is hard to say whether this is because fewer people of colour are interested in working in the western game industry, or if it is because it is harder to get hired, despite one's abilities and talents. Tanvir is of the opinion that there is no diversity problem in the industry, and that the British game industry is very open to all minorities. He also brings up the fact that shoe horning in minority characters could come off as disrespectful, which of course is true when done haphazardly, and adds that including minority characters needs to “make sense”, however it is often hard to justify when a character should or should not be of a specific ethnicity or minority rather than white, and vice versa. (Sheikh 2017.)

It may sound like a stereotype, but there is truth in the assumption that traditional Asian parents tend to have very specific expectations of their children. Hirani elaborates that his parents did not support his wish to work in the game industry. He highlights that seeing someone like oneself already working and being successful in one’s dream industry can give them the courage to pursue that dream. This way representation in the industry itself can positively affect representation in media as well, which is a notion that Shefta brings up as well (Sheik 2017.) Another spokesperson on the topic is the actor comedian Ken Jeong, who has most recently starred in the movie Crazy Rich Asians which was the first all Asian-American cast Hollywood film in the last 25 years at its release in 2018. Just prior to this film he also wrote, directed, produced and acted in his own show, Dr. Ken, which he created for the sole purpose of showcasing Asian-American talent on a major network. After the success of the movie, he has seen a major shift in the Hollywood industry to becoming more accepting to Asian-American made projects. (You Complete Me, Ho 2019.) The video game industry could benefit from similar phenomenon (Sheikh 2017).
2.2 Villainization of POC characters

Portrayals of black people in the news have a tendency of being more negative than those of their white counterparts, giving a false assumption that black people are somehow more violent or more prone to being criminals. They may go as far as portraying white people who have committed the same crime in a more humanizing manner by showing, for example, family pictures instead of mugshots. (Alia & Bull 2005; Dyer 1997; Malik 2001.) This bias can be extremely damaging to black people as a whole, the effects of which can be seen in the especially troubling police brutality cases against young black Americans that have happened in the recent years, which sparked the Black Lives Matter movement (Black Lives Matter 2019). Immigrants, especially from the Middle-East and Mexico, have been the victims of similar treatment, but as they do not have a stable place in the societies they have migrated to, they also do not have the voice they need to retaliate. Instead, countless white nationalist movements have sparked against them, making their lives increasingly unsafe (Murphy 2017; Yle 2016).

The criminalization of people of colour in news and media trickles down into character design. In his book Creative Character Design (2011), Marvel comic book artist Bryan Tillman repeatedly gives examples of hero characters as 30-year-old Caucasian males with a “face that is of a hero”, and depicts villain characters as racially ambiguous or black. The female characters he gives examples of are all busty and wearing very revealing clothing, meant more as “eye candy” to complete the hero, rather than as a supporting character. It is not until the end of Tillman’s book that examples are given of more diverse and “creative” designs by various artists, but by that point the reader could have been very effectively led into the mindset that a hero is a white male, and a villain is a person of colour. This phenomenon is made increasingly perplexing by the fact that the author Tillman himself is a person of colour, showing that this state of mind is not exclusive to white people.

There is a danger of creating a narrative of otherness, where the subject that is seen as something different and exotic and this is the driving force of the story,
making a spectacle of it (Hall, 1997). While creating representation for people of colour when being white can end up being seen as problematic and sensationalistic, there is also an argument to be made that if done well, it can create more opportunities for people of colour to create the representation themselves. News coverage made by outsiders is often seen as more objective, and has the power give a more positive associations for minorities in the eyes of the public. It stands to reason that this could be applied in game design as well. When doing this though, special care should be taken to ensure that the messages sent borrow the voices of people of colour instead of speaking for them, and to be truthful in one’s story of a person of colour. (Alia & Bull 2005; Malik 2001.)

2.3 Conscious character creation

To choose a skin colour for a character in a piece of visual art is a conscious choice for many. It takes an immense amount self-awareness to not perpetuate the media’s image of what and who is “normal” and acceptable. Hallikainen (2018) confesses that when her game company Colossal Order was developing their first game the central characters were all white. It took an outsider’s comment on how Eurocentric the game looks for the team of five to notice the lack of representation in the game, and to adjust accordingly. Situations like these also lead to stereotypical depictions of race and gender, as the creator only relies on the preconceived notions they have observed in media.

Chimamanda (2009) talks of how only knowing one side or version of a story will drive creators into making more of the same, incomplete story, which then becomes the only way society views the subjects of said story, further perpetuating the stereotypes and archetypes we see in media. It takes away from the dimensionality of characters and makes it seem that there is only one way to talk about certain topics, which in turn makes stories feel cliché and uninteresting when done enough times. This may be part of the movement of wanting more representation in media. The audience has become exhausted of hearing and seeing the same story repeatedly, and wish to finally experience something new (Ganesh & Sobliye 2016).
3 CHARACTER CREATORS

Due to the nature of the genre, many role-playing games (referred to as RPGs) begin with the player being given the chance to create their own characters, or at the very least give an option to choose from a limited amount of presets, often being a choice between a male and a female avatar. Japanese RPGs are more notably known to create a roster of characters that the player will meet and add into their party throughout the game, famous examples of this being the Final Fantasy (1987) and Persona series that start with the game Revelations: Persona (1996). These systems are primarily in place to help the player immerse themselves to the story and to relate to the playable character, as it may feel like a part of themselves rather than a separate character that the player is only observing (Cicchirillo 2015). The genre that may go the furthest in character creator engines may be MMORPGs, or massively multiplayer online RPGs. There is great emphasis put on creating a unique character that will act as a memorable avatar for the player and can be differentiated from the rest of the population, being a very important part of the player’s identity in this virtual environment.

The MMORPG that has most recently been widely regarded as having one of, if not the most powerful character customization tools is Black Desert Online (2015). Players were already impressed during the beta release of the game in 2015, and the high-resolution character creator was possibly one of the main reasons for its early popularity (Fahey 2015). Since there have been updates to both graphics and the engine itself, and the current remastered PC version of the game offers 17 different classes, each of which is represented by a different character that can then be customized to the player’s liking. The player first chooses from a set amount of presets and may either choose to use that preset as is or continue to tweak and finesse every detail of the character’s facial features, hair and physicality through the use of sliders, as well as by manipulating the different facial planes with a mouse, as shown in figure 4. The finished product may also be uploaded into the Black Desert Online’s own database for other players to use, so those enthusiastic about character creation
may easily share their work, and those less so only need to browse the catalogue of thousands of potential characters to choose what best fits their needs.

Figure 4. Black Desert Online character creator (Pearl Abyss 2015.)

A character creator in a video game may be a fun tool to play with, however often this work cannot be exported to be used in one’s personal or professional projects. Autodesk has its own character generator that is specifically targeted for game developers and animators to use as a tool to create 3D characters that they can then use in their own products. It offers character presets that can then be customized by combining them in the builder, as well as accessorized and rigged for animation, but high-quality exporting to use in other programs such as Unity requires the client to buy the premium version of the program (Autodesk Inc. 2019). While being incredibly helpful in its field and affordable, it may not be a tool that would only be used as referencing tool by illustrators or other private entrepreneurs, who do not require the animating and exporting services for example. Character creators in games are often more accessible and even quite powerful, but they can also be very time consuming and that, too, may deter independent creators from using these tools when designing their own characters.
4 PROJECT

While the clothes, physique and overall posture of a character are very important in visual storytelling, the amount of information human beings gather on one’s character just from looking at a face cannot be understated. The psychological study of face recognition is still new, but there has been an exponential increase in studies which has progressed the field significantly. In fact one’s identity is primarily perceived through their face, and humans can, with approximately an 80% to 90% accuracy, determine the sex and age of a person, and make judgements of character that do not vary greatly between subjects, however incorrect they may be in reality. Curiously, just by changing the lower part of someone’s face with another person’s face you can create the illusion of a completely new facial identity, even if those faces are familiar to the viewer. However, for this illusion to work, the switch must be fairly seamless. (Calder 2011; Todorox et al. 2011.)

The challenge of creating distinct facial identities was one of the main motivations of this project. The original concept was to create a face constructor that would be helpful in creating interesting and diverse character designs and help break away from same face syndrome. Inspiration for the functionality of the prototype came from dress-up games that have now been emerging especially in app stores for smartphones like Monster Girl Maker (2019) and Live Portrait Makers (2018). These dress-up games leave a lot to be desired in diversity however, as in there is only one jawline in both Monster Girl Maker and Live Portrait Makers, and the facial features are rarely drastically different from each other. Additionally, the facial features are highly stylized, and as such they may not be helpful in diversifying character creation (Figure 5).

The prototype was going to be created as its own application in Unity or other similar engine, but accessibility was a prime concern during the concept stage. Because of this, the plan changed for the project to be accessible through a browser. From the start the different facial features were to be chosen with a drop-down menu system where the different options would only be numbered to achieve maximum neutrality. Another function that the author wanted was a
randomizing button that would combine random features to create a new face every time it was clicked. This would have made the prototype more dynamic to use, though unfortunately it was not included in this project.

Figure 5. Marketing material from a. Live Portrait Maker and b. Monster Girl Maker (He 2018; GHOULKISS 2019)

There was talk with the supervisors of creating a prototype of a prototype in the way of an interactive PDF or with a user experience/user interface design tool such as Adobe XD. Although trying out the randomize function in this environment would have been beneficial, the idea was quickly scrapped as coding the prototype would be less labour inducive in comparison to manually building each possible combination.
4.1 The art process

The process was started by gathering potential reference material, consisting of portrait photography of varied ethnicities. This material was divided by the facial features that were deemed the most interesting and diverse for the purposes of this project. As the prototype was kept minimal for the purposes of keeping in schedule, some of the references were chosen specifically to research some features that are often deemed stereotypes (Figure 6). This was done to ensure that the facial features in the prototype would be both ethnically recognizable, as well as to provide a starker diversity between the limited number of features.

Figure 6. Examples of images used as reference (Sinding 2016; Plummer 2013; Nagayama 2014; Schröder 2014; Gellineau 2014)

The different references were used to create five unique faces that in the prototype would have interchangeable features that are pictured in appendix 1. The faces created aimed to resemble a broadly African person, two mixed race people of broadly African, South-American and European descent, an East-Asian person, and a broadly Eastern to Southern European person. While there was a desire to include more diversity in the skin tones represented, it was opted to try and represent multiple undertones within the limited range of colours. The overall expression of the faces was to be neutral, as that would result in a more of a blank canvas to build a character from.

Although the facial features were designed to be balanced on each face, the purpose was not to adhere to the golden ratio. Each face was to be distinctive, believable, and somewhat familiar feeling. To add to realism to the stylized approach, the faces were drawn by hand, using a Wacom drawing tablet, with
minimal aid from the mirroring tool. Only obvious and bone structure breaking asymmetry was corrected, and even then, the outcome was purposely left imperfect.

To ensure that the proportions of all five faces match, a loose template was created. The sketches of each face were then resized to match the template, thus ensuring the interchangeableness of the different faces even when their features have variety. Only slight adjustments needed to be made so that the eyes, nose, ears and mouth all lied in approximately the same spot on each face, without compromising the overall proportions of each face. These sketches were then drawn over to create the line art for each face, with each of the facial features being drawn on their own layer. The first prototype was made using only the line art as a proof of concept, and to aid in further adjustments to ensure the compatibility of the different combinations.

The art style of the prototype was under consideration up until the colouring stage of the art production. The goal was to aim for a more realistic look, though the plan was changed quickly due to the time restraints. The medium of a browser-based tool was also to be considered. The different features would have to blend into each other seamlessly, while also having some depth and three-dimensionality.

From the beginning, the shading of each feature was to be a part of that particular layer, instead of being only on the base layer, in this case the jaw. This way the changes of each feature would be more apparent and have a bigger impact on the face as a whole, giving a better idea of what the face would look like not only from the front, but in a three-dimensional space, thus being a more significant help for character designers. Having only the base layer of colour was experimented with, however the hypothesis of the overall picture becoming too flat was proven correct. Another problem was the method of shading. As per the original plan, the shading was first executed very softly and realistically. The outcome, however, did not seem to fit the overall aesthetic, and was very time consuming. It could also have created problems when adjusting each skin colour
to match throughout the facial features, making the prototype inconsistent. During the sketching phase of the shading the author found that the cell shaded approach seemed to work better than the original plan, and so the approach was completely changed to better fit the new aesthetic. The cell shaded look also lent itself to be more easily modified whenever there were changes to the structure, or corrections in placement.

The art phase of the project on was finished on schedule and the outcome can be considered satisfactory. The compiling and coding phase could therefore be initiated. The different facial feature layers were isolated and saved as their own transparent image files. These files were then uploaded to an image sharing service that would allow the images to be used in the HTML code.

4.2 The coding and programming process

The overall layout of the site that the prototype would be compiled on was easy enough to create with the author’s prior knowledge of HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and CSS (Cascading Style Sheet), the most known Markup languages used to make and stylize websites. The real challenge came from the lack of knowledge of JavaScript and jQuery needed to create a working product.

The layout of the prototype site was to be very simple and only if the coding process of the actual product were to progress faster than expected was it to be made visually pleasing. While there was no excess time to stylize the site to be more aesthetically pleasing the site was still made responsive to allow the prototype to be easily accessed and used with any device. This means the site takes into consideration what device is being used to view the site and react accordingly. In practice the HTML and CSS respond to the resolution of the device making the site rearrange and resize itself to fit the screen. This was achieved through the use of responsive type sizing (vw, where the font-size is relative to the width of the viewport) that also affects the size of the drop-down menus used to choose the wanted facial features, as well as repositioning the menu and image elements from being next to each other to on top of each other (Figure 7). It created an interesting dynamic as the screen resolutions of phones
have been growing to the scale of desktop monitors (1080 pixels). What this means is that if viewed in landscape mode on mobile, the site might revert into its desktop state on very high-resolution devices. This should not pose any problems, only slight inconvenience for people who wish to use the prototype in landscape mode as the drop-down menus may become too small to use.

![Figure 7. Desktop site versus mobile site](image)

The basic functionality of the prototype would be that the user chooses a skin colour or a facial feature from a drop-down menu that would then display the corresponding image. To see which image would be displayed, two options were considered: (1) change the displayed images URL to represent the chosen image or (2) have all images hidden in the layout and choose which image is set to display. Option two was chosen, as the service used to compile the prototype in did not allow images to be uploaded on the server and as such they would have to be fetched externally, possibly affecting the image’s load times. In option two the images would load when the user opens the site, giving a snappy and responsive feeling to the prototype when used.

The first iteration of the prototype was built with the help of a freely available piece of JavaScript that was slightly altered to fit the needs of this prototype. This code allowed the displaying of images as per selection, but only affected the selected feature, and could not affect anything else. This is why the first work in
progress version of the prototype was black and white, only having the line art of each facial feature, with no colour or shading. This allowed the concept to be tested, and the relationships of the different feature combinations to be checked and corrected before colouring. At this point the code affected the image elements themselves, rather than the image URLs, by finding images with the desired class attribute (jaw, ear, eye, etc.) that corresponded with the selector. When finding the right element, the code would change its display state to “show”, and subsequently change the display state of all other possibilities within that feature to “hide”, resulting in only the chosen feature to be displayed, while all others are hidden. Each drop down selector corresponds to a different facial feature and each of the selections has a value, in this case a number from 1 to 5. The code then checks the value of the selection, and adds it to the classification of the image element that the selector corresponds to (i.e ear-1 or nose-4), finds that element, and makes it visible.

Choosing a different skin colour would have to affect every feature simultaneously to correspond to the chosen colour. From the beginning it was clear that an “if” statement would be needed to be able to change the images based on the skin colour. An “if” statement gives the code a condition under which it will be executed. Otherwise the code within the statement is bypassed, and has no effect on the functionality of the code as a whole. In the case of this prototype, the “if” statement needed two conditions: the chosen skin colour and the chosen facial feature (Figure 8b). A combination of these inputs would then allow the correct corresponding image to display. This also means that the image elements must have multiple selectors. Originally the images had a class and an id which corresponded with the content of the image, for example “eye” for class to inform that this image contains the eyes and “eye-1” for id to show which of the five eye features the image is. The element now also required there to be a skin colour selector that would work somewhat similarly to the id, but HTML does not support multiple ids on elements. This was easily bypassed by giving the element multiple classes instead, making the class “eye skin-1” and so on (Figure 8a). This way the code would have to find a specific combination of classes and ids to choose the correct images to display.
When hitting an obstacle, the most challenging part was attempting to find an answer one does not know the question to. The coding community has a wide range of specific vocabulary for different problems and finding the right words to search would often take longer than finding the answer itself. Thankfully the communities are very informative and ample allowing it to not be challenging to adapt and apply solutions to one’s questions.

4.3 The finished product

The prototype was finished within the schedule, with the art process progressing swiftly and slightly ahead of the production schedule to give much needed time for the coding. This ensured that the prototype was completed in time allowing a few days to test it and have it approved for public testing by the supervisor.

The learning curve from almost no prior knowledge of JavaScript to being able to compile a relatively simple prototype felt steep therefore not being perfectly satisfactory. Multiple ways of coding the prototype while keeping to the original, simpler build were tried, but ultimately the only working version that the author managed to produce within the time restraint deviated from the original by a considerable amount and resulted in an unprofessional outcome. Nevertheless, in its current state the prototype is stable and completely functional. Were the
prototype expanded with new facial features, the code would have to be simplified to allow for more stress. While the process was challenging and the end product may not be in its most poised state, being able to create a finished product was satisfying in its own right.

The prototype succeeded in its primary goals. While the overall layout and aesthetic may not be very pleasing to most people, it functions both on desktop and mobile, making it highly accessible. The pictures also have no latency in loading as designed early in the production ensuring fast feedback and a swift feeling when using it. The only piece missing is the randomization button, though it could very well be included in a later iteration.

5 SURVEY

Early on the plan was to test the prototype on a small group of people to not only gauge the functionality and creative value of the prototype, but also to see which facial features participants gravitated towards the most, and how attractive they found the combination they had created. The author was hoping to see if there is any bias towards a specific skin colour or facial feature, and to compare those findings to the current images in media and analyse why these current biases exist. This is why the participators were not explicitly told that their submissions would be used to research these biases.

The prototype was shared with university students studying in the game design field as they largely fit the target audience of the product, and were easily reached through social media and online chat servers. However, people with no prior experience or interest in character design were also encouraged to participate to create a slightly less biased base line. Some non-game designers also tested the prototype.

5.1 Survey making process

There was an intention to conduct in person interviews, so as to observe how people use the prototype and to gather which facial features they ended up
finding the most appealing, but the usage of Google Forms was chosen instead because offered a very intuitive and convenient way of doing the latter, while also getting visualized statistics from the multiple choice questions automatically, as can be seen in appendix 2/2. It allowed the survey to be shared online to give a better access to anyone who might be interested in participating.

Open questions often repel potential participants. This was alleviated by making the open questions optional and have it accommodated by a one to five scale that was mandatory to use. There is also a danger of the wording of the questions to have an effect on the answers (Schwartz 1999). The questions were worded as plainly and objectively as is possible in a survey that is heavily based on subjective observations, and while long answers can give a better insight in how the participant feels and their justifications for their preferences, short answers were encouraged. This too was to invite more answers rather than to drive them away.

Appendix 2/1 shows how the survey consistent of three main parts: the participant's demographic profile, their results when using the prototype and how they found using the prototype. The profile portion asked for the participant's age, gender, and experience in character design. As the prototype was to primarily be shared with university peers the age range was limited from under fifteen to over 35 with 5-year intervals in between, as these would be the most likely ages of participants. The subject's options for gender were male, female or other, or they could choose to not disclose this information. The nationality of the participants was especially important, as it leads a large role in the subjects' perception of the world. They were also asked to fill in their cultural background, as that would very likely change their viewpoints of especially ethnicity. When it came to the experience of the participants, there were four categories to choose from: not at all [experience], minimal [experience], enthusiast or professional. There was a slight problem when the survey was published, where this section of it would appear twice, but that was solved very soon into the testing period.
The second part of the survey was dedicated to the prototype. The participants were first asked to show on a gridded system which facial features they had chosen and asked to rate the faces attractiveness on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all attractive and 5 very attractive. They were then encouraged to elaborate on why they had chosen this combination of features and given short adjectives (cute, funny, etc.) as examples to mimic. The survey would transition to the functionality and benefits of the prototype next. The participant was again asked to rate the prototype on a 1 to 5 scale how inspiring the participant found the prototype, 1 being not at all inspiring and 5 very inspiring. The purpose of this question was to gauge whether the participant would use the prototype to help in creating new characters, and if they might use it again. The second question was about the usability of the prototype asking how easy the user found it, 1 being not easy at all, 5 very easy. As a follow up question, the participant was asked to elaborate why or why not they found the prototype inspirational or easy to use.

The questions in this survey had to be left very subjective because of the nature of the project. As such, the answers are not usable as scientific, be it sociological or psychological, evidence. The extremely limited scope of the survey also eliminates it from having any sort of conclusive proof, and this was expected when the target participants were chosen.

5.2 Results

The goal was to reach 20 unique participants, but unfortunately only 13 people answered the survey, and out of those 13, one answered a second time. The lack of subjects can be attributed to the author’s lack of pushing the survey to more people and the limited platforms that the prototype was advertised in. The number of people that visited the site was not tracked, and as such it is not known how many people chose to not answer the survey. It needs to be taken into account that at least two of the participants were familiar with the subject of the thesis, and would as such likely be more mindful of their answers.

Encouraging short answers in open ended questions seems to have worked, as most participants did write an answer. Some chose to be more verbose in their
responses, while others only wrote a word or two, but insights from both were gathered. It was helpful to be able to contextualize their reports. If no-one had answered these questions, the analysis of the results would have been too vague and inaccurate, and nothing of value would have been gained.

5.2.1 Participant demographic

Majority of the participants were either 20 to 25 years of age, or 25 to 30 years of age, as suspected. Only one participant reported being over 35. Slightly over 60% of the participants were female, while the other half was split almost evenly between male and other. The participants were mostly Finnish, with 3 participants being from Eastern-Europe. Almost all participants reported being of the same cultural background as their nationality, with one participant being half Ethiopian. Almost all participants felt that they either had minimal experience in character design or were enthusiasts, with one person being a professional.

Although there were not as many participants as desired, the demographic of the participants matched the expectations of being predominantly Finnish and white. The age of participants was also predicted quite accurately with the target group being university students. More male and other identifying people would have been ideal to better balance the female participants. The experience in character design was also heavily dominated with people who had at least some experience, so even a few participants with no experience could have provided some interesting insights.

5.2.2 About prototype

None of the participants found the prototype difficult to use, yet there was a clear divide on whether the participants liked or disliked the drop-down menu system. There were quite a few critiques that suggested either sliders or buttons to change the facial features, both of which could elevate the functionality, especially on mobile devices, and both of which were considered during the conceptual phase of the project.
There were also some wishes for a refreshing button that would reset the prototype. While the participants felt that the UI was a bit cumbersome, no-one reported having a problem while using it. One participant hoped that the face would be visible when starting, as the prototype does not display anything when only the skin colour is chosen. This problem was encountered by the author as well, and the design of the participant having to choose the skin colour first was deliberate, as the facial features will not display at all if the skin colour has not been chosen.

Majority of the participants found the prototype to be at least moderately inspiring to them, but there was not enough evidence that would suggest that this prototype is helpful in character creation, as most comments were directed to the functionality of the prototype because of the wording and placement of the question. There was some enthusiasm about possibly expanding the prototype, which would suggest that the prototypes core function was well received though lacking.

5.2.3 Face results

When asked about the attractiveness of the face, a clear trend was somewhat attractive, with two responses that rated the face as not at all attractive, and none rated as very attractive. Nevertheless, most subjects described their creations with positive attributes, such as friendly, appealing or pleasing to the eye. There were two submissions that were labelled as funny or weird. One participant created a face with all their favourite features, yet did not find the result attractive. These responses explain the slightly negative trend in attraction evaluation. Especially friendly faces seemed to be popular, suggesting that participants enjoyed faces that were either familiar or approachable to them and in fact two of the submissions that were labelled as a 4 on the attractiveness scale were specifically made to resemble a significant other and a previously designed character. A few participants shared their experiences either in person or through an online messenger, and their first instinct was to try and create their own faces with the prototype, with varying success.
The colours, as all features of the face, were numbered from 1 to 5, darkest to lightest (Figure 9). The most chosen skin colour was the second one, having been chosen 6 times, while the runner ups were the first and third colours, both with 3 entries. The lightest colours were only chosen once, each. This result would directly contradict the media outlook on ethnicity and how people of colour are perceived. The one person who chose the fifth skin colour as the friendliest was also the oldest participant, which could indicate a shift in perceptions of people of colour between generations. More research should be made to better gauge the differences in perceiving friendly and approachable faces between different age groups. Another point that cannot go understated is the bias of the participants. It is unclear whether they chose the darker skin colours because they genuinely felt that they better represented their ideals, or because they wanted to come across as more “progressive” or accepting of people of colour.
The least chosen features were all ones that could be perceived as being in the more extreme ends of the spectrum, in this prototype coincidentally also at either end of the numerical values. The first, fourth and fifth options were consistently the least chosen, except in the ear category. The bigger, more prominent fourth ears, as well as the angular second ears were chosen the least, while the fifth, pointy ears were the most popular. However, like one of the participants noticed, combining the most chosen options may not result in a face that is perceived as being attractive as a whole. In the case of this project, the middle options that were chosen the most are all quite balanced in their averageness, resulting in a face that does not clash and as such could likely be considered as at least moderately attractive, but may not provide enough visual interest to be memorable, or friendly or familiar feeling. (Figure 10.)

Most of the submissions were perceived by the participants as androgynous, not particularly masculine or feminine. The rest of the responses were mostly male, with one female submission. The one female submission was created specifically of a female character the participant had in mind, showing a trend to finding either male or androgynous faces the most appealing. This is likely explained by the number of female and other identifying participants, although this is not conclusive as the sexual orientation of the participants was not inquired.

6 ANALYSIS

Within the small quantity of survey statistics that are available, the concepts of attractive characters and likeable characters do not meet. This would indicate that aiming to create a visually appealing character may not be as important as making them someone easy to identify or sympathise with. Though attractiveness would certainly help in gaining more potential buyers for a game, it could be argued that it is not necessary in order to increase enjoyment during gameplay. Additionally, the amount of androgynous responses could suggest that the gender of the character is an insignificant factor of attractiveness, or in the case of this prototype more specifically approachableness. If these trends were to repeat in a more extensive study, it could very well indicate that gender of a
character, as well as their attractiveness, do not affect the perception of said character as much as media portrays.

Although it was unexpected that the participants of the survey preferred the darker skin colours, it does mirror clear shift in society to better appreciate minority cultures and ethnicities, especially within younger generations. Still, the results of the survey were limited and should be analysed with a degree of scepticism. For example, the environment of the game design degree, which most of the participants were studying in, is very international, forcing the students to venture out of their comfort zones, to accept new cultural concepts with little to no expectations, and to embrace them. Additionally, the range of skin colours that was available in the prototype was not extensive enough to come to a clear conclusion. When examining the results of the testing, it was noted that the third colour option could be light enough for the user to see it as a tanned white person, or otherwise racially ambiguous or mixed. How colour is displayed changes from device to device, and this can have a substantial impact on how the user perceives that colour. As the participants were not asked whether they saw the character they created as a white person or a person of colour, it is impossible to say how they perceived the character.

The nearly homogenous participator pool of white people leaves a lot to be interpreted, but it is an interesting insight in the shift from preferring white people over people of colour, or in other words the reduction of the “us versus them” mentality in young, twenty-something year old white people. This result has of course occurred in a very specific environment, and it cannot be generalized to be fitting to all people. While it is hard to specify why these results occurred, there are some very clear reasons for the lack of representation on media, as well as the changes regarding diversifying that have been forming in the western society.

6.1 Historical reasons

While Europeans did not invent the conquest of countries and its people, their technological advancements in the 1800s did make it seem like child's play. And when a race has control over 80% of the world, they must somehow reinforce this
control (Segrest 1994). As such, Europeans created a hierarchy that favoured themselves and those who appeared more European in their features. Systematic oppression like this is not easily eradicated, and its effects are still visible across life – especially in the colonized countries – and subsequently media, resulting in the normal of whiteness and the otherness of people of colour. (Dryer 1997; Russell et al. 1992.)

It is not only white people who discriminate people of colour, however. Colourism is the act of discriminating specific ethnic qualities in favour of a more Eurocentric appearance, typically within a race or ethnicity. A historical example of this is the East-Asian class system, where those with a higher social or economic status did not need to work outdoors kept their skins fair, while those of lower working class had darker, tanned skin, which in turn affected how they were treated in society, and this mind set still has an effect on people’s everyday lives (Li et al. 2008). In the western media colourism is most evident in when people of colour with lighter skin, small mouths and noses, or other more European features are more likely to be cast in movies and TV shows, and darker skinned people are often in roles that belittle them or paint them as less desirable, and this is especially clear with female characters. While there has been a noticeable shift in mass media through movies like Black Panther (2018), which was also directed by a person of colour, some conscious effort is still needed for colourism to lessen across all media. (Bivens 2017.)

Women have experienced similar discrimination as people of colour in media. It was not until the 1970’s that people started to take note of the depictions of women as traditionally domestic housewives and/or sex objects in most media outlets worldwide, and to fight against this stereotype (Bryerly & Ross 2006). These stereotypical stories circle back into everyone’s daily lives and reinforce these “traditional” roles, making it harder to break away from them and end the cycle (Gallagher 1979). It is hard to do so, however, as the most effective way to increase female representation in media is to employ an equal number of women in meaningful positions during production, but the number of women in the film industry for example has been stagnant for the past ten to twenty years (French...
The shift is noticeable though, and the younger generations are becoming increasingly aware of the imbalance in both our lives and in media and have a desire to make a change. In fact, there are instances where white people have become over protective of minority cultures, and become offended for them, instead of with them, and end up speaking over the minority group in the process (Radford 2016). This kind of behaviour, while well meaning, can be problematic as there is a danger of new stereotypes forming out of the control of the ethnicity, culture, or race the white person or people are “defending”. It is a delicate line to thread, and one of the main ways to avoid these situations is by including representatives of that minority in the discussions. (T1J 2019.)

6.2 Influence of marketing and social media

The result that young, twenty to thirty-year olds, preferred the more tanned and darker skin colours may be supported by media targeted to this age group. Bedley found in her study that racially ambiguous people are easier to use for marketing, because more people can identify with them and feel included. She says this is a tactic advertisers are using to specifically target millennials (people born between the early 1980’s and mid to late 1990’s) (Stetler 2013.) There are many currently incredibly successful pop-artist and influencers who appear racially ambiguous, and whose target audiences are millennials and generation Z (people born after mid 1990’s). One of them is Ariana Grande, whose music videos amass tens of millions of views in a matter of days and top the music charts, making her one of the most successful artists today (Fitzmaurice 2019). She is as often mistaken to be a Latina, despite being Italian (Grande 2010).

Other racially ambiguous figures are the Kardashians, whose presence in both mass media as well as social media has had an impact on many trend movements in the 2010’s. For example, they brought on the popularity of
“Instagram models” and “influencers”, who often sport a tan, glowing skin, and attempt to emulate the Kardashians’ image online.

People of colour have felt out of place in white societies for as long as they can remember, and that has resulted in people steering away from discussing their ethnicities publicly in fear of alienation or being misunderstood (Fizer 2015). The recent feeling of being included by media has also sparked many internet users to also disclose their ethnicity or ethnicities in their social media profiles as a way to embrace their cultural roots. It was the beginning of Nathan Zed’s (2017) “Good Enough” clothing line that directly addresses the feelings of not being what society expects of young people, and especially of people of colour.

On the opposite end of people embracing their ethnicities, there are white people who use makeup and photo editing to appear racially ambiguous, or even pass as a different race entirely (Cumberbatch 2018). White people who can pass as another race are privileged because they are not affected by the discrimination minorities face (Muñoz 2018). They can choose to look a certain way as it is convenient, and may engage in different cultural or ethnic traditions, the originators of which would be shunned for, without the fear of repercussions. They are more likely to be seen as “edgy” or cultured in some way and bypass any negative connotations those traditions and markers of ethnicity might elicit in other people. While appreciating a culture is encouraged, taking advantage of it for any reason, such as monetary gain or for the sake of appearing ethnic, is considered extremely offensive and should be taken into consideration, especially when creating characters for a monetized product. (Smith 2012, T1J 2019.)

7 CONCLUSION

The prototype’s functionality was a success overall, even if the code could use optimising, and the overall user experience could be made smoother. The learning curve from knowing little to no JavaScript to being able to create a functional prototype was intense, but rewarding nonetheless. The art process was might have been too comfortable, as the possible improvements were
noticed only after the prototype was already in testing. For example some adjustments could be made in the skin colours by making the intervals between colours more even and as a result possibly more inclusive.

A lot was learned in making and executing the survey, such as the importance of clear line of questioning that the “about the prototype” section could have benefited from. While there was no clear consensus on how inspirational the prototype was for character designers, it was very eye opening to find out what the participants found the most important aspects of a likeable character to be. The value of friendliness seemed to outweigh attractiveness, gender, and race and ethnicity in the predominantly white twenty-something year olds, although further examination in the older, as well as younger generations could be very beneficial. It could aid in understanding how society has evolved in terms of inclusivity and the reasons why.

Media still has a bit of catching up to do when it comes to providing more inclusive media for the generation born in and after 1990’s. There have been some very rapid changes in the game industry in just a few years, and each year it seems that the progress is gaining speed. The people now entering the field are more educated and aware of the nuances of minority representation. They may understand that the most effective way to increase diversity in media and games is to not only through creating unique characters, but also by hiring minority people in executive roles, and giving them the opportunity to create representation themselves. By excluding women and people of colour from their spaces, the game industry is robbing itself from more diverse and impactful stories.
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Figure 7. Comparing desktop and mobile versions of the prototype.

Figure 8a. Excerpt of the HTML code.

Figure 8b. Excerpt of the JavaScript code.

Figure 9. Skin colours available in the prototype.

Figure 10. Most and least popular facial features compiled.
THE FIVE BASE FACES
THE SURVEY

Before you take this survey

Go to
http://ainocharlotte.me/proto

I’d like you to play with this prototype and create a face you like, for any reason. Keep it open in a separate tab or window, so that you may easily refer back to it when needed.

You may answer this survey as many times as you’d like, but please remember to choose the “not my first time” option when submitting new results.

By continuing you agree that your answers may be analyzed as part of my research *

- I agree, and this is my first time answering this survey
- I agree, and this is NOT my first time answering this survey

NEXT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
Your personal background

This information is completely anonymous and is designed to give a better sociological profile.

Age *
Choose

Gender *
- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Nationality *
Your answer

Cultural Background, if it differs from your nationality
Your answer

Experience in Character Design *
- None at all
- Minimal
- Enthusiast
- Professional
### About the Face

Please tell me which facial features you chose, and shortly explain why you chose this specific combination, whether it was attractive, funny, interesting, etc.

#### What kind of a face did you create *

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#### What do you perceive the face as?

- [ ] Feminine
- [ ] Masculine
- [ ] Androgynous

#### How attractive do you find it? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not attractive at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very attractive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Why did you choose it? (E.g. it looked weird/funny/cute...)

Your answer
About the Prototype

Please tell me how you found using the prototype.

**Was the prototype inspiring? * **

Not inspiring at all

1  2  3  4  5

Very inspiring

**Was the prototype easy to use? * **

Not easy at all

1  2  3  4  5

Very easy

Why, why not?

Your answer

BACK  NEXT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Bachelors Thesis Survey

Thank You!

If you use the prototype again, please feel free to fill out this form again.

Let me know if there is anything you feel could be improved, what you found especially good and/or useful, etc.

Comments

Your answer

BACK  SUBMIT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
The survey results

Before you take this survey

By continuing you agree that your answers may be analyzed as part of my research
14 responses

Your personal background

Age
13 responses
Cultural Background, if it differs from your nationality
2 responses

- Finnish
- Ethiopian/Finnish

Experience in Character Design
13 responses

- 69.2% None at all
- 23.1% Minimal
- 7.7% Enthusiast
- Professional
Prototype Survey

About the Face

What kind of a face did you create

[Bar chart showing ratings for different facial features (Skin, Jaw, Eyes, Brows, Nose, Lips, Ears) with color-coded bars indicating different responses.]
What do you perceive the face as?
14 responses

![Pie chart]

How attractive do you find it?
14 responses

![Bar chart]
Why did you choose it? (E.g. it looked weird/funny/cute...)
13 responses

- It looked like my boyfriend
- It looked pretty and it reminded me of a character I once made.
- Tried making the weirdest face possible.
- It looked the friendliest of the options
- I found it an interesting and unusual, but an appealing combination of features.
- Individual features pleased my eye, the whole face, however, didn't
- Interesting
- It looked nice and friendly
- It fit the personality I created for the character before I made the face.
- I tried a few options and liked the way this one turned out.
- It looked appealing to me
- It looked like normal face
- It looked funny.
Was the prototype inspiring?
14 responses

Was the prototype easy to use?
14 responses
Why, why not?

10 responses

I don't like drop down menus, sliders switching between the options would be easier to use.

The website could be refreshed to reset the choices, but a simple reset button would've also been welcome.

The logical next step for usability would be sliders, or pictures to click on.

How much easier could one even go with a creator like that, before it goes to just choosing a template.

The prototype was very clear and simple, easy to understand.

It was very easy to use, illustrations were very clean and neat. It brought the sims games to my mind. I feel like it would be hard to evaluate the actual purpose of the prototype as it was so brief. And well, it was brief because it was a prototype. But for me it would require much more options for it to feel inspirational. Different fantasy and sci-fi races, options to write details about the character, hair, different body types and clothing etc. Anyway, good luck with your thesis and keep up the good work!

The drop down menus are a little clunky, having a button for each option or putting them on a slider would feel better and reduce needed clicks. Also having a face visible when you start would be nice, or have the face shape be the first option to select. For a moment there I was unsure if it was working.

simple UI, simple to use

It's a rather simple prototype but the good thing is that it's very easy and quick to use.

The choices should have probably been buttons instead of dropdown menus to cut down on the constant clicking.

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Thank You!

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Comments

4 responses

It seems your survey has the same page twice.

I've been to the seminars and know the things

Oh yeah, I feel like asking "How experienced are you in character design" needs more options, as I felt there were only options for never or once doing character design in your life or always doing it and being professional. So maybe use different words, or have more options, to express doing character design every now and then.

I have been to the seminars