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FAKULTA ELEKTROTECHNIKY
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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
ÚSTAV JAZYKŮ

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN GAMING ENVIRONMENT
GENDEROVÉ STEREOTYPY V HERNÍM PROSTŘEDÍ

BACHELOR'S THESIS
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Bakalářská práce

bakalářský studijní obor **Angličtina v elektrotechnice a informatice**

Ústav jazyků

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NÁZEV TÉMATU:

Genderové stereotypy v herním prostředí

POKYNY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

Analyzujte genderové stereotypy, jež se objevují v herním prostředí vybraných online her. Zaměřte se na příběhovou linii her.

DOPORUČENÁ LITERATURA:

[1] Shaw, Adrienne. Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture. 1st ed. Minnesota: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2015.

[2] Heussner,T. et al. The Game Narrative Toolbox (Focal Press Game Design Workshops). 1st ed. New York: Routledge, 2015.

[3] Howard, Jeff. Quests: Design, Theory, and History in Games and Narratives. 1st ed. Wellesley: Mass.: A.K. Peters, 2008.

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Abstrakt

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je analýza genderových stereotypů ve vypravěčské linii a designu videoher. Jsou zde také vyjmenovány klíčové historické momenty pro zásadní pochopení videoherního průmyslu a přítomnosti genderových stereotypů v něm. Dává příležitost vidět, jak události v reálném světě a veřejné mínění ovlivňují videohry a vytvářejí nebo snižují genderové stereotypy v nich. Teze nabízí vhled do problematiky nadměrné sexualizace mužů i žen, včetně toho, jak může ovlivnit vnímání sebepojetí u různých lidí. Otázka sexualizace je posuzována z několika pohledů, mezi nimiž existuje kulturní rozdíl mezi východními a západními zeměmi. V této práci je navíc představen seznam stereotypních genderových rolí, do nichž jsou lidé často zařazováni. Přináší světlo na důsledky, které z rolí vyplývají.

Klíčová slova

Videohry, herní průmysl, sexualizace, gender, stereotypy, role ve společnosti.

Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the analysis of gender stereotypes in the storyline and design of video games. Having been essential for the understanding of the video game industry and the presence of gender stereotypes in it, there are also listed key historical moments. It gives an opportunity to see how real-world events and public opinion influence video games, and produce or reduce gender stereotypes in them. The thesis offers an insight into the matter of over-sexualisation of both men and women, including how it may affect a self-perception of various people. The issue of sexualisation is considered from several perspectives, among which there is a cultural difference between East and West countries. Moreover, a list of stereotypical gender roles into which people are often put is presented in this paper. It brings light onto the consequences that emerge from the roles.

Key Words

Video games, game, video games industry, male, female, men, women, gender, stereotype, role.

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PROHLÁŠENÍ

Prohlašuji, že svou bakalářskou práci na téma *Genderové stereotypy v herním prostředí* jsem vypracoval samostatně pod vedením vedoucího semestrálního projektu a s použitím odborné literatury a dalších informačních zdrojů, které jsou všechny citovány v práci a uvedeny v seznamu literatury na konci práce.

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Introduction

Video games have become an essential part of the world`s entertainment industry. Hundreds of thousands of people work in the video game industry (IBISWorld, 2019) as developers, scriptwriters, game designers and at other different positions. Through their work, more than two billion gamers (WePC, 2019) around the world dive into new stories and worlds. There is a vast variety of games from mobile to PC games, from small and free indie to big AAA[1] games costing around 60 euros, also called "blockbusters" from the world of video gaming. The whole industry has made a long way from the primitive "walk and shoot" games to real masterpieces, which are trying to deconstruct the image of the society and raising questions about the price of life. All this could not but lead the gaming industry to become art (Funk, 2011) on the same level as music, theatre, literature, cinematography etc. When this small, niche hobby had grown up to the level of a huge industry, some issues had gone public. Among them there were problems with salaries, undefined working hours, an offensive attitude of superiors to employees and, central for this paper, gender stereotypes and attitude to women (Rivera, 2019).

Modern society is a result of dozens of changed beliefs, which have succeeded one another throughout the history of human civilisation. For this reason, we have to continue exploring this world and people around us to make it better. Involuntary depiction of gender stereotypes in video games, except those that are created to maintain a plot or an in-game world, only reflects the gender role attitude in the real world. If people understand why gender stereotypes in video games are inappropriate, it may lead to the elimination of such stereotypes in the real world. Lile Jia, Edward R. Hirt and Samuel C. Karpen declare that people give a better solution for the problem when a psychological distance exists between them (2009). This suggests that the example of gender stereotypes in video games may work better than the example of them in real life. For this reason, the most problematical and insulting gender stereotypes will be described in this thesis.

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[1] AAA game – a game made by a big company full of professionals, for a broad audience, with the highest development budget (Steinberg, 2007).

1. Gender stereotypes

1.1 Gender

Discussion about gender stereotypes and gender discrimination is one of the most relevant and often reflects problems of modern society. Still what does "gender" mean? According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), *gender* is "the behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex". The concept of gender is often confused and misused with the idea of sex. However, these two terms have different meanings, which were well described by Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman at their lectures and later in their article "Doing Gender" (1987). The authors explained that sex is what people are born with, and connected with the biological branch of life: anatomy, physiology, hormones. On the other hand, gender is an achieved behavioural model related to cultural, social and physiological means. For the majority of cultures, this means, that a newborn male needs a masculine upbringing and have to grow up with manliness set of qualities, such as self-confidence, strength, courage, emotionless and dedication. Similarly, a newborn female will have a feminine upbringing and is expected to have a womanliness set of qualities: patience, mercifulness, tenderness, emotionality and maternal instinct. Scottish kilt is an illustration of gender model based on culture. It is a skirt, which is considered to be an item of feminine clothing in most of the world, but not for Scots.

1.2 Gender stereotypes theory

The *stereotype* is "a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, n.d.). Consequently, gender stereotype is a common belief or prejudice about the characteristics or social roles, which male or female have to perform. Gender stereotypes are closely related to the existing gender roles of society and serve to maintain and reproduce them. And gender role is a set of social norms defining which types of behaviour are permissible and desirable, basing on a human's gender (Alters & Schiff, 2009).

Gender stereotypes influence modern life and not in a positive way. People, from all corners of the world, suffer because of the inability to do whatever they want. Stereotypes about gender roles are not equal, and vary from state to state and culture to culture. While a man in the USA cannot have a small talk with a child, without being accused of paedophilia, women in most of the Muslim countries are considered to be a property of their fathers and husbands.

2. Video gaming

2.1 Games

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), the definition of the game is "a physical or mental competition conducted according to rules with the participants in direct opposition to each other". In contrast, the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) says that it is "an entertaining activity or sport, especially one played by children" and both of these definitions are possible. Games had appeared long before the first Homo habilis used a chopping tool to cut meat or fruits – animals were the first "gamers". Some mammals play with their offspring to create some parental and emotional connection, such as chimpanzees who gently touch and stroke their young ones. Other animals can play to have some fun, but first of all, it is a training for them, where they develop their musculature, respiratory system, reflexes and other body systems required for a healthy life. Furthermore, baby animals explore the world around them through the process of playing; they learn how it works: its rules, possibilities and prohibitions. Their movements during the game are the same as during the haunting, fighting or sexual activity: a small kitten's play with a ball of wool is similar to how it haunts the mouse and movements of its paws while playing with a teaser wand are identical to how cats catch birds (Špinka, Newberry & Bekoff. 2001).

Humans or Homo Sapiens are also belong to the mammalian class and therefore all the previous reasons for playing suit them too. Same as animals, babies explore the world around them through games. They play with toys and in this way learn that objects can be solid or soft, smooth or rough, light or heavy, etc., and this exploration is an essential part of growing up. Along with the growth of children, the games they play change too, they become physically and intellectually more complicated, so that children could increase their mental skills and physical condition. For instance, Lego is suitable for fine motor skills, children's magazines offer useful logical exercises, playing catch-up, hide and seek and even more various games with other kids improves body health and social skills which are significantly crucial for living in the modern society.

Even though some people believe that games are only for children, they have never been such; adult games always existed in one form or another. In ancient times, they were mostly connected with sports and physical activities: the most famous of them are the Olympic games and the gladiator games. Not everyone participated in these events, yet watching such an entertaining performance made people feel included. Much later appeared Indian game *chaturanga* which is the ancestor of modern chess, Japanese shogi and some other analogues (Cazaux & Knowlton,

2017). Since then, dozens of different games have been invented: sports games, card games, gambling, board games, role-playing games and computer games.

2.2 History of video games

First attempts to create a video game were made before the Second World War, and in 1947 the first known computer game-like entertainment was developed – a simulation of shooting at enemy planes using rockets. Moreover, the next year Alan Turing, most known for creating a decryption machine during the Second World War, and David Champernowne made a theoretical program, called *Turochamp*, for playing chess on the computer. Unfortunately, this program was too advanced for machines of that time, and it took five more years to be able to test it, and even then, Turing had to perform each step on his own to use the program. In 1952 Alexander Shafto Douglas created the tic-tac-toe game called *OXO* which is generally considered to be the first computer game. William Higinbotham, one of the scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project, designed a game Tennis for two in 1958, in which people could play primitive version of tennis against each other using special controllers. Tristan Donovan mentions in his book that, thanks to William Higinbotham, the concept of video game became one step closer (2010).

The average citizen, sixty years ago, could not afford to purchase a computer, and only members of the military facilities, research facilities or universities, where was a computer, could work on it. Such was the group of students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who developed the game *Spacewar!* in 1962. In this game, players had to fly a spaceship firing missiles at other spacecrafts; furthermore, a big black hole in the centre of the battleground was placed to create xan additional danger. Paul Glancey, in his book "The Complete History of Computer and Video Games", gave a description of *Spacewar!* as a "simple game…but in those days of valves and vacuum tubes it was an advanced piece of programming that took the available technology to its limits" (1996:6). *Spacewar!* had become increasingly popular in the world and gave rise to the video gaming niche in the entertainment industry. Creation of this game had also led to one of the most nostalgic periods of the past — computer technology breakthrough of the 1970s–1980s.

The leading symbol of that time, arcade game machine, was created in 1971 and it was a reworked and improved version of *Spacewar!*, placed in the high box and called *Computer Space machine*. Because of its complexity, *Computer Space machines* was not financially successful, still the same cannot be said about the arcade game called Pong, first installed a year later. This upgraded version of Tennis for two had phenomenal success and the fact selling about 200 000 of Pong arcade machines by 1974 (Donovan), showed to the whole world that video gaming has great potential. By the end of the decade, the most famous Japanese representatives of

arcade games – Space Invaders and Pacman – were released, and these caused spreading of arcade machines in all places, of the big cities, with a high concentration of people.

While arcade machines were gaining popularity and companies making money on them, enthusiastic students, from all over the world, had been trying to make an exciting and entertaining game. They did not have any funding, and all their attempts were entirely voluntary, which in turn slowed down the progress in portable computer gaming. On the other hand, not being bound by any commercial interest, gave those students a free space for the flight of imagination and for testing diverse possible variations of creating games.

The 1980s were marked by the competition between arcade cabinets and video game consoles. Video game console is a computer device, which has to be connected to the computer monitor or a TV to display a video game that can be played by one or a group of people. Video game companies were fighting for every customer attempting to improve their products and to become an industry leader. Expectedly, more convenient and progressive video game consoles crowed out arcade cabinets from the market. However, chiefs of companies producing video game consoles, because of that competition, did not notice growing and expanding the market of home personal computers. Personal computers became an affordable and understandable device for a regular user by the middle of the 1990s. In other words, companies creating games for personal computers got half of the gaming market, and similarly, companies creating video games consoles got another half. Technologies and games have been developing for more than twenty years, but this trend is continuing. During this period, dozens of famous and essential games were published. Yet even mentioning of the most famous and significant of them would take too much place, so that would be better to continue with modern and vital for this work games.

2.3 Modern video gaming

At present, video games developed from a hobby for students from technical universities into a vast industry with millions of working places and thousands of big and small companies developing games in all corners of the Earth. About thirty years ago, companies, which were creating video game consoles, also had to develop a game for it, but the times have changed. As a result, currently, individual companies create video game consoles or parts for personal computers and other develop games. An enormous amount of video games is in free or paid access to each one, who wants it today. However, all of them can be classified by the five main parameters: platform, genre, number of possible players, setting and budget.

According to Cambridge Dictionary *platform* is "the type of computer system or smartphone you are using, in relation to the type of software[2] (= computer programs) you can use on it". There are three main gaming platforms: personal computers, video game consoles and mobile phones. Newzoo – a company that provides games and esports analytics, states that, by the end of 2018, people spent on mobile games about 70 billion of dollars, which is 51 % of the global games market, meanwhile computers and consoles have about 25 % and 24 % respectively. The statistics are striking, nevertheless the truth is that mobile games are mainly created for killing time and do not provide a deeply written story or an active gameplay. Moreover, most of them look like visually upgraded games from the 1980s. Usually, games are created only for one platform, because they have different types of software and making the game for more than one requires a lot of money and time. For this reason, only a few wealthy and famous companies can afford to do it, but if they do, such game is called cross-platform.

The genre is defined by the way how particular game is played, its story and goals of completion. Actually, in theory, each game can have its genre, yet they can be more   generalised (Adams, 2014):

- Action – active and full of various battles, which tests a player's concentration and reaction;
- Adventure – slow and intellectual game, which demands to solve the riddle, explore the world or to go through a story of the main character;
- Strategy – requires the player to use his tactical and strategic skills, usually represented by historical and economic-based games;
- Sports – simulations of all types of sports games from football to water polo;
- Fighting – simulation of the hand-to-hand combat between specific characters on the battleground with some restrictions;
- Shooter – a subgenre of action game, in which player participates in based on real events and fictional battles using different firearms;
- Survival – a subgenre of action game, in which player has to survive in the restricted environment;
- Educational – player learns during the game, usually used for kids.

Games are divided into *singleplayer* and *multiplayer*. Singleplayer game is created for one person, usually has a strong plot with the beginning and ending, which motivates to play it. Therefore, the multiplayer game is for two and more players, the amount of people playing depends

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[2] Software is a set of instructions that control what a computer does (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)

on the type of game. The fighting game *Mortal Combat*, for instance, needs only two players, and by contrast, *Fortnite*, a shooter-survival game, has up to 100 players per one session. Some multiplayer games do not have a good story, and each session repeats the previous one, but with new enemies and additional small changes, which gives them high replay value. Other are designed in such a way, that gamer has to play with a friend to finish it.

If the genre of the game answers to the question "what?" then setting answers to "when?" and "where?". The setting defines place, time and conditions inside the world of the game. It is commonly closely linked and similar to the description of worlds in books and cinema. The main types of fictional worlds (Rozelle, 2005):

- Real-world – imitation of our world;
- Parallel worlds – reproduction of our planet and transitions to other worlds;
- Fantasy – fairy world, usually medieval based, populated by orcs, elves, dwarves;
- Ancient mythology – the game occurs in the ancient world, with the addition of magic, gods and supernatural events;
- Modern mythology – apocalypses, invasion of aliens or zombies;
- Alternative history – alternative versions of historical events.

Commonly, the game can take place in any historical era from the birth of life to the far future. The last setting defining parameter is conditions inside the world: a place with the particular culture (totalitarian state, Wild West, an Arab country, East-culture country) and climatic zone (desert, arctic, space, underwater, mountains, etc.).

Quality and the scope of the project is generally depending on its financing, and this leads to existence of budget division of games (Steinberg, 2007):

- AAA – a game made by a big company full of professionals, for a broad audience, with the highest development budget;
- Professional game – is also made by a professional team though has less budget then AAA game; thus it is limited in special effects and locations however is still a high-level game;
- Indie-game – small game with a low budget, created by one high skilled author or a small group of developers, and commonly do not have excellent computer graphics. Instead, stories of indie-games have narrative strength and engaging characters;
- Amateur game – created by one or more of enthusiastic non-professionals, who know the basics of game development, but do not have any experience. Habitually, such games are low-quality and exciting for an inner circle of people.

2.4 The real-world influence on gender stereotypes in video games

As we know from paragraphs above, relatively active game development started in the 1960s–1970s in the laboratories of technical universities. An overwhelming majority of first game developers were men due to the lack of female interest in game development and technical specialities in general, so for example in 1969 there were only 217 female students in the class by the whole of 3955 (Robert M. Gray, 2017). So obviously, they had been creating games, which were interesting for themselves: fighting, shooting, racing and other competitive games. In light of that, the fact that women were not interested in first arcade games is not surprising at all. And the trend of male games lasted until one Japanese developer, Toru Iwatani, decided to create a game for a wider audience. He united a pizza without one slice, maze game and cute enemies, and had received the most recognisable game called *Pac-man*.

Some companies decided to ignore the fact that women appeared in the video game community, and continued their production of games for boys. A few other made a wager on female auditory, and it turned out pretty well for them. Nevertheless, the majority of game companies noted changes in the market and tried to adapt to them (Donovan:2010). One of the first and most successful games, which introduced a female main character was a Tomb Rider in 1996. The main character Lara Croft, which is a female counterpart to Indiana Jones, travels to various ancient ruins and tombs, searching for lost artefacts. Then video games still were perceived, as a male hobby, and the idea that a male audience would play for a woman was risky. However, more than 7 million sold copies worldwide, showed that video games do not have to centre only on male characters to gain popularity.

Sign of each period of history can be easily seen in its arts, poetry, music and even cinema, since the worldview of the creators was limited to the times in which they lived (Kokhanova:2009). Whatever weird or unreal the game looks like it is always a reflection of our world; this can be a political, social or any other context (Muriel & Crawford, 2018). For instance, In the game *Metro: Exodus,* developed by Ukrainians in 2019, the quest "Decommunization", where a player has to destroy a Statue of Lenin, was added. It refers to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2014, after which the decommunization process was carried out, and all communist symbols were banned. Another example is a 2019 first-person shooter video game called *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, which can be described as good soldiers fighting against bad ones. The action of the game mostly takes place in fictional countries Urzikstan and Kastovia, but it is inspired by real modern military conflicts, such as the Syrian Civil War, the War in Donbass, the Iraq War and the Gulf War. Also, the influence of tension between Russian and American governments can be seen in this game. The Infinity Ward, Inc., which is an American developer company, who created the Call of Duty

series, has been criticised many times for pushing a pro-American and anti-Russian agenda by depicting American soldiers as saviours and Russian soldiers as murderers (BBC, 2019). Social context is also present in video games and used by developers to tell their stories. For example, the game Detroit: Become Human tells about androids (robots that look like ordinary people and were created to serve them), which realised their individuality, and want to get freedom and equal rights for themselves. The game quotes Martin Luther King, depicts transportation segregation, studies the attitude of people to aggressive manifestations of civil position (vandalism, for example) and allows the player to claim the right to vote and the right to have a private property for androids. It is a rather opaque allusion to the problem of racism and the struggle for the rights of the black population in the USA.

Gender stereotypes in video games are also reflected in the same way. Since the advent of the first computer games to the present moment, the positions of men and women in society have been changing and transforming. And just like women became more and more visible in society and men began to be allowed to show emotions, female characters began to become key figures in video games, and male characters turned from walking mountains of muscles into deep characters with an interesting story. However, gender stereotypes are still present in all forms of mass culture, from where smoothly and quietly leaking into the game worlds. They are manifested both in visual and story parts of games, sometimes caused by companies' desire to make money, sometimes without any malice and sometimes deliberately to show an existing problem.

3. Sexualisation

3.1 Sexualisation theory

Sexualisation is ascribing of an erotic component to objects and events. Applying this term to games, it is usually about endowing characters and situations with erotic elements, the main of which is the emphasised sexuality of the body. James DeRosa (2009) mentioned in his article that when resorting to sexualisation, developers always appeal to the player's sexual instinct to enjoy it through scopophilia (satisfying the sexual instinct by peeping) or narcissistic identification (the ability to present oneself in an attractive role). To clarify, the one wants to look at sexuality and consciously or subconsciously wants to have sex with an object that embodies this sexuality.

The problem of sexualisation is considered to be one of the most famous and common mentioned stereotypes in video gaming. One does not have to play a game or to be experienced in the gaming industry to see that sexual stereotypes of the character`s appearance are highly

pronounced. Also, what is needed to be mentioned, exploitation of sexualisation first appeared in the TV and advertising areas, and only then migrated to video games (Gad, 2007). James Bond or Indiana Jones charming new woman each film to show their masculinity or singers with almost-naked girls of model appearance, establishing it as a norm, on the background were common forty years ago and are common these days (Bates, 2014).

Female sexualisation has various manifestations from a tightened girl in a skintight suit, which strongly accentuates her female figure, to a thin woman in a swimsuit with eighth size breasts and disproportionally big hips; the diversity of male preferences is represented in this variety. Despite popular belief, men are also sexualised in video games, being depicted as high, muscular, six-pack abs and handsome guys. It is hard to find a main male character, who would not act and look like a symbol of masculinity.

3.2 Outfit issue

Character's outfit is another regular issue raised during the discussion of sexualisation. If the setting of the game is not connected with the real world, sexualised costumes may appear with a much more possibility. Women wear skintight latex costumes, low décolletaged dresses or miniskirts for the in-game events, where these clothes are impractical. To illustrate, Lara Croft is the protagonist of the game series *Tomb Raider*, in which she hunts for ancient artefacts. She travels to the multiple parts of the world: from medieval Greek monasteries to the mountains of Peru. During her hunt, Lara has to fight against animals, armed men and temple traps; and Croft had been doing it in a short top and mini shorts for about seventeen years. She had had this, inappropriate for her occupation, suit since the first game was out, in 1996. Only in 2013 game designers gave her pants and a long t-shirt.

Men, as usual, have a more practical outfit, but the bare torso, showing all muscles, is a kind of a rule. Game developers of the famous fighting game series *Mortal Kombat* were often accused of oversexualising women in their games. It is hard to argue with these accusations because women were on the verge of nudity and sometimes players could only wonder how these rags, somehow called clothes, did not fall off of the characters during brutal fights. However, in Mortal Kombat II, outfits for all female heroes were redesigned, made more corresponding the situation and less sexualised. Figure 1 illustrates the difference in clothing for the character called Skarlet; her outfit from the Mortal Kombat 11 (2019) on the left and the Mortal Kombat 9 (2011) on the right. Ed Boon, one of the Mortal Kombat series creator, in the interview to Playboy magazine (Macis, 2019), declared that new design is connected with logical issues, technological

possibilities and their personal growth. On the other hand, male characters did not get such rework, and the player can hardly find a man whose muscular chest will not appear on the screen.

Figure 1

Another issue connected with the character`s outfit usually appears in the games with a fantasy setting. Heroes in fantasy games wear different types of armour; this can be an iron armour, leather armour or even armour made of dragon bones. And the point is, armour for males is designed as something, that can protect from injuries and diversity of weather conditions: protecting plates are thick and cover all the body. On the contrary, armour for female characters often provided as lingerie made of iron or another "protective" material. Needless to say, this cosmetic armour cannot protect from arrows, swords or warm up in the cold weather. Such outfit is contrary to the laws of logic, but despite this, it is still used in most fantasy games.

3.3 Collision of cultures

Modern video game industry can be divided into "Western" and "Eastern". Video game companies from Japan, China and South Korea are representatives of the East, and Europe, Russia and the USA are representing the West. Historical and cultural differences between the Western and the Eastern worlds led to opposing views on game development. Game mechanics, character design and even perception of the difficulty level differ in these two parts of the industry.

In Western games, developers are trying to depict heroes' body more realistically, albeit idealised. They emphasise the areas of breasts and buttocks, make the body fit or muscular, and still it can be a body of a real human. Modelling of real human faces is used to create the character`s faces. Conversely, in Eastern games, female bodies have little in common with reality, taking into account the Asian race. They are high, abnormally thin, have big breasts and relatively young face.

The same goes for the outfit design in video games. Western game designers are trying to make it sexualised but comfortable and suitable for the situation. The Eastern ones focus their attention more on appearance than practicality.

Moreover, the Eastern game industry has its type of games, which are created only there. These games may be similar to ordinary fighting or sports games, but with one significant distinction – all the characters are young girls in swimsuits or any other sexualised clothes.

It would be a horrible mistake to show the Western world video game industry as decent and respectful to gender problems against the background of Eastern vulgarity. Japan and the USA are compared here because of their strong influences on the cultures of Eastern and Western worlds, respectively. The truth is that in Japan, they have manga[3] and anime[4], which cultivate some views on how imaginary girls should look like, and their industry adapts to customer needs. Nevertheless, women are respected in modern Japanese society, and a certain cult of matriarchy is remaining there (Kancaid, 2013). In the USA of the previous century and early 2000s, DC and Marvel comics also sexualised the image of a woman. However, under the pressure of the feminist movement, they had to redefine the company policy. Oriental consumers are satisfied with such a course of affairs, and things will not change until they do not decide to bring something new in their culture.

3.4 Influence of sexualisation

Unfortunately, video gaming is perceived to be a childish activity not suitable for adults, and only after another tragedy with shooting at school, people remember about video games to blame them for what happened (Trump, 2019). This leads to the complete absence of qualitative researches in this field and this, in turn, causes incessant arguing on the Internet about the influence of video games on players (The Amplifier Magazine, 2017). Nonetheless, little studies, usually university-based, are published from time to time. Those cannot provide enough evidence regarding the understanding of video games influence, just only a blurry vision.

Video games causing violence and aggression is a popular theme among journalists. Jonathan Burnay, Brad J. Bushman and Frank Laroy decided to check it in the aspect of sexualisation. They wanted to know whether or not playing the game with sexualised female content will cause female sexual harassment. Two hundred and eleven people participated in their experiment; they were divided into two groups: one was playing a game with sexualised content and another without it. After playing, participants had to choose jokes from the given slides and

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[3] Japanese comic books and graphic novels considered collectively as a genre (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.).
[4] Japanese cartoons, usually based on a plot from the particular manga (Aeschliman, n.d.)

send them to their partners via Skype. The researchers achieved a result, which showed that participants who played the sexualised game had a higher level of sexual harassment towards women.

Sexualised females in video games make real women feel shame for their bodies – another frequently discussed issue (Szymanski, Moffitt & Carr, 2010). To find out the truth, Christopher J. Ferguson and Danielle Lindner, professors with the opposing points of view on the problem, conducted a study based on this topic. They selected 100 women, and all of them had to play the game *Tomb Raider*, the difference was only in the main protagonist's outfit. One half of women had to play for Lara Croft dressed in cargo pants and a shirt, and Lara Croft of the other half was wearing "bikini bottoms and a form-fitting long-sleeved wetsuit top". After playing, women completed a particular test, which described their attitude towards themselves. Achieved results indicate that playing for the sexualised female character does not affect women's self-perception.

These researches may give a theoretical understanding of video games' influence over people, on the other hand, they may be completely wrong. The number of participants is too low for such studies: a sample of hundreds of people cannot give a definite result on the opinion on a certain topic by millions of people. Moreover, each culture, in its way relates to the sexuality of the human body, which makes it impossible to obtain an accurate result by the standard survey of a large number of respondents. Such studies should be conducted relying on the cultural features of different nations. In addition, researching methods are not verified and accurate enough. Therefore, it is a purely personal decision to believe these studies or not.

4. Female in-game role

4.1 Damsel in distress

Damsel in distress is a stereotypical depiction of a woman in trouble, which she cannot handle herself, and for this reason, needs a saviour. This theme has ancient roots and was even used in Greek mythology. A myth about Perseus and Andromeda is an excellent illustration of it. Andromeda is chained to the rock and completely helpless, people are going to sacrifice her to a monster. Perseus is struck by her beauty and is going to save her by killing the beast. However, this topic achieved widespread usage and fame only in medieval literature, especially among chivalric romances (Huizinga, 1922). A knight on a white horse, overcoming great hardships for

the beloved lady is a well-established image. Nowadays, this stereotype has evolved and adapted to modern realities, yet its core is the same as 2000 and as 600 years ago.

Princess Peach in the *Mario* game series is a classic example of the damsel in distress. She is imprisoned by the main antagonist Bowser and does nothing except waiting when Mario will save her. Mario, meanwhile, overcomes difficulties and fights various enemies to reach the bright future together with his princess. The game was stunningly successful and popular; a few years later, the same company published another game called *The Legend of Zelda*, which was also based on the damsel in stress stereotype. This led to the rooting of the stereotype among developers and the audience.

On the other hand, video game development companies are searching for new ways of storytelling, avoiding such clichéd stereotypes (Healy, 2017). And CD Project Red, Polish video game developer mostly known for creating *The Witcher* game series, is one of their best representatives. *The Witcher* is a fantasy game based on the set of novels with the same name. Slavic mythology, Middle Ages and Grimms' Fairy Tales is the mix on which the world of *The Witcher* is built. In this harsh and cruel world full of dangers, exists a small duchy of Toussaint, which is very different from the other world. Chivalry is thriving there, and every knight wants to accomplish a feat for the sake of his beloved. And that is where CD Project Red game developers showed their position. They caricatured these knights and their beliefs, showed that murderers and rapists are hiding under bravado of chivalrous duty. Developers, furthermore, created strong female characters, who did not need anyone's help.

4.2 Woman as an object

Going back to the middle ages, the Divine Comedy, written by Dante Alighieri, illustrates the issue derived from the topic. A woman is not an individual character with her desires, feelings, dreams and thoughts, but an object, essential for the main protagonist or the whole story. Beatrice is the object of Dante's wishes, and the opportunity to meet her pushes him on a journey. The same attitude to female characters can be seen in all kinds of the entertainment industry, including video games.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt has an illustration of the well-written female character. The protagonist called Geralt of Rivia finds out that his adopted daughter Ciri is in serious trouble and he decides to find her to help. At first glance, it might seem that this is just another game where a female is an object of the protagonist. The developers did not choose this way, instead, they mixed the gameplay for Geralt with the gameplay for Ciri. Watching Ciri dealing with difficulties and fighting various enemies, the player understands that this girl does not need any protection. When

Geralt and Ciri, finally, reunite, a player has to use the gained experience and whether to stop patronising Ciri or to continue considering her a small child, who needs custody. At the end of the game, Ciri has a choice which defines the final of the game, and whatever Geralt says her, he does not influence her at the moment. She is only affected by the player's earlier actions. If the player chooses to stop controlling the girl, it leads to a happy ending, otherwise, to the bad one. This moment is empathetic and vital, showing that trust and healthy relationships are better than total control and mistrust.

4.3 Psychology

A large development teams usually make AAA games, however, those teams mostly consist of men. They commonly have a pretty narrow understanding of women's psychology, make wrong assumptions and then add them to games. Even if they want to create a strong female character, working on it, they look through the prism of the male worldview. Developers create conflicts, which would never appear in real life, and neglect significant opportunities.

Some game developers believe that all women's problems are connected with men, what is upright wrong. And still, they concentrate their female characters on men and create so-called Electra complex. It is a girl's sexual attraction to her father and competition with the mother for him (Jung, 1915). For example, Elizabeth, from the *Bioshock Infinite*[5], did not have a father in her childhood, and this led to psychological problems when speaking to another man.

Among men exists a grand delusion, that one heroic act or a big gift can help to conquer a girl's heart. Nevertheless, John Gray states that women appreciate small but regular gifts or acts of love much more than rare but great ones (1992). This means that giving one rose to a girl every day is more profitable than one hundred roses once in three months. This fact nullifies dozens of games, films and books created on the principle of women being an award for accomplishing a great feat.

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[5] Bioshock Infinite is a shooter, whose main plot unfolds in the airborne city of Columbia. The protagonist Booker has to save the girl Elizabeth from the tower. Throughout the game, these two are trying to get out of the city and to understand why everyone around is hunting them.

5. Gender stereotypes in The Witcher 3

5.1 Attitude towards women in the world

Initially, The Witcher game was based on a series of books, which in turn were based on Slavic and Scandinavian mythology and placed in Medieval settings. Andrzej Sapkowski and later developers of the game tried to show the spirit of that time, including its lack of equality, racism (elves and dwarves considered to be worse than humans), the gap between rich aristocracy and the poor peasants. In the game, the player will never hear that characters live in the patriarchal world, that women have fewer rights than men, but all this can be understood by the player just by following dialogues. For example, a random male NPC[6], such as peasant or trader, can ask Geralt this question: "I see you are a man well travelled, so tell me something, should I beat me wench once a week or oftener?" (Figure 2). It shows that for poor people of the Neverland beating a woman is similar to whipping the horse, so it moves faster.

Figure 2

In the art of creating movies, there is a commonly used technique "Show, don`t tell", which means that the story should be experienced through the actions of characters, not the author's exposition. However, it could be rephrased in "Convey, don`t explain", with the meaning that some actions and conveys of the world should not be directly explained, but transferred in a form that does not destroy the perception of the integrity of the world and, at the same time, gives all

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[6] NPC – non-player character, a character in the role game, who is controlled by a computer.

the necessary information to the recipient. Another dialogue that shows the attitude towards women, takes place between Ciri and a soldier. After a hunt, where Ciri killed a boar using only a sword, the soldier wondered:

Soldier: A woman could swing a sword – I've knowed one. But never seen a lady mount anythin` but a cock proper. All tipsy on `orseback. Nothin` strange on account they bloody mount them sideways.

Ciri: Perhaps you`d care to wager?

Soldier: Think you can outrun me on an `orse? Hahahah, naturally!

Even after seeing how Ciri killed a boar with a sword, which in itself is surprising, the soldier does not believe, that she can ride a horse, on a level good enough to compete with him.

On the other hand, when a player moves from small villages to big cities, NPC`s attitude to women changes. Townsmen do not let themselves to tell bawdy jokes about women and mostly speak to them with respect. The higher the position in society and the better the person's education, the more respect he shows to others, regardless of gender. This reflects the situation of the Medieval era in our world, where only those women, who were fortunate enough to born in prosperous families, could feel relatively healthy attitude towards themselves (Bovey, 2015). And in many ways, it reflects the modern world, where the less a person is educated, the more likely the one will be aggressive towards everybody different from himself, whether a person of the opposite sex, sexual orientation, another race or nationality.

All of the above is connected with the country called The Northern Kingdoms; however, there are two more lands, which player can visit: the Isles of Skellige and the duchy of Toussaint, and each of them is radically different from the rest.

The Isles of Skellige are based on the Scandinavian folklore and culture. Whereas men are dominant at these lands, women are equal to them; they are warriors and protectors of their lands just like males. Moreover, no man will insult a woman, because she can call him up for a duel, and it is unclear, who will win. The Isles are divided between clans, each clan has its leader, and all of them obey the King of the Skellige Islands. When the player for the first time comes to the Islands, the King dies and a new ruler should be elected, otherwise, clans will start a war between each other. Two main contestants are sister and brother, Cerys an Craite and Hjalmar an Craite

respectively. The player can complete personal quests[7] with Cerys and Hjalmar to get to know each of them better. After completing those quests, a player can give his opinion (which is a decisive factor), which of them better fits for the role of the new Skellige ruler. This decision affects the future of the Islands. If Hjalmar becomes a King, he follows the path of the ancestors and continues to raid the shores of the continent. Such actions will cost his men`s lives, but for the people of Skellige, there is no more glorious death, than in a fight (Figure 3). If Cerys becomes a Queen, she, contrariwise, starts developing her lands and cares more about increasing the prosperity of her territories, than plundering of neighbours (Figure 4). This could lead to a gender stereotype, where men are aggressive and reckless, while women are judicious and peaceable. Nevertheless, in the framework of the setting and the book as a source, where the characters' natures, to one degree or another, were presented, this cannot be called a mistake made by the developers. Rather, it is the logical completion of the characters` arches.

Figure 3

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[7] Quest – a special task in a video game, which a player may complete to receive a reward.

Figure 4

The duchy of Toussaint is a reflection of a typical medieval romance. Noble knights protecting the land in the name of the duchess, rich society, vineyards and idle life. Woman in this country is a subject of adoration, each man wants to accomplish a feat in the name of his love. No one dares to insult a woman in Toussaint, as any man will be ready to intercede for her and challenge the offender to a duel. Actually, the concept of "the damsel in distress", in its absolute, rules Toussaint`s society.

The game developers worked out ideas, which were introduced in the books. They showed three different societies in each of which the role of the woman is different. They are not trying to tell which is the right one or to show one type way more attractive, but to expand the gamer`s knowledge about the world itself and to let the player make his own decision.

5.2 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is an awful problem inherent in any time. Nothing can justify an abuser who uses his physical or mental superiority to humiliate a partner. Nonetheless, when such situations are made public, the victim automatically achieves the presumption of innocence and any reasons for violence, except that the abuser is aggressive and unstable, are unaccepted. A similar story is told in the game. Phillip Strenger, also known as a Bloody Baron, was beating his

wife and one day she ran away with her daughter. After that, Phillip asks a player to find his family. Bloody Baron is an aggressive man, who uses foul language a lot, drinks much alcohol and does not want to plead his guilty to what happened. The player sees a very unattractive person who is difficult to empathise. However, the more information a gamer receives, the more human the Baron seems.

Phillip was a soldier, Anna was treating him after an injury, and they fell in love, a typical Florence Nightingale effect[8]. They got married and then had a baby, but Baron was a commander of a troop of soldiers, so he had to go to war. Later he found out that Anna had been cheating on him for three years; when he returned home, she had already gone to her new lover and took the daughter with her. He went after them, intending only to bring them back, but could not control himself and killed his wife's lover (Figure 5). Anna attacked the Baron, saying that he had killed her love, that she hated him and, not knowing how to calm his wife, Phillip hit her for the first time.

Figure 5

After that, their life can hardly be called happy, at times he got drunk and could not control himself, at times she tried to provoke and hurt him in every way. As Bloody Baron said: "Twenty years we`ve known each other. She's seen me drunk and sober, she was there to greet me when I

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[8] Florence Nightingale effect - a psychological effect, when a caregiver falls in love with a patient.

returned the victor, she was there to patch me up in defeat. Like no other, she knew where to press, where to pinch, so it would hurt". It is a story of two people who could not forgive each other, who had made too many mistakes and who had to pay for the rest of their lives for these mistakes. This story has no good ending and all that remains is to draw a lesson from it.

Domestic violence by a man most often comes from his physical superiority, while women are more likely to exert psychological pressure. Both of these facts are gender stereotypes, however, one of them is often mentioned in mass media, while the other is hushed up. But the fact is that the problem cannot be solved if one of its` parts is ignored.

5.3 Sex in The Witcher

Sex is an integral part of The Witcher universe. Andrzej Sapkowski tried to create a world in which the characters would be as close as possible to real people with all their joys, sorrows, flaws, achievements and sins, and therefore he could not get around the topic of sex. Especially when it comes to the witcher who must maintain his physical form to fight against monsters, and sorceresses who, with the help of magic, can create any appearance they only wish. Consequently, it is not surprising that the creators of the game adopted this inherent feature of the book series.

Before seeing what role sexual intercourse plays in The Witcher 3, it is worth understanding how sex was presented in The Witcher 1 and what kind of work the developers did between these games. Players and critics well received and praised The Witcher 1 after the release; the game received several prizes at various gaming exhibitions and awards from gaming magazines (Adams, 2007). Nevertheless, the sexual aspect of the game caused somewhat disapproval (Duncan, 2014). In the game, the player can gain the favour of the woman by speaking with her and completing requests or small quests. As a reward, Geralt gets an unforgettable night and a card with a picture of his mistress as on the Figure 6. Among the women with whom Geralt may have such sexual relations are sorceresses, officials, peasant women, even a vampire and a goddess.

Figure 6

If in some situations the possibility of coitus with a girl is quite justified, such as with a prostitute or with a long-standing girlfriend with whom they had a romantic relationship, then in others the reason for sex is absurd. For example, Geralt saves a girl from bandits, who molested and tried to rape her, then he leads her home to prevent anyone from attacking. After that, the girl invites the witcher to meet in a private place where she could "thank" him for help. Finally, in the evening, Geralt takes the wine, they meet at the mill and have sex. Frankly speaking, this situation is more like the plot of not the highest quality porn video, than the real situation that can happen in life. A person who has nearly been sexually abused will never offer sex to a stranger right after such an incident.

In total, the player can collect 25 different romance cards, one for each woman. This leads to the fact that the player begins to perceive women not as characters with their background, but as a sexual object through which one can get a prize in the form of a card. The game offers no other way than sex to get these romance cards, which only strengthens the gender stereotype of women as a sexual object and men who should have sex with as many women as possible.

It must be admitted that CD Project Red learn from their mistakes, and in The Witcher 3, sexual intercourse has a completely different plot meaning. First of all, promiscuous sexual

intercourses with a large number of women were removed from the game; apart from prostitutes, Geralt may have a sexual relationship with four women. Two of these women are the main character's love interest, and the player can go through the development of a romantic relationship with each of them to understand whom to choose. Only when the choice is made, and the hero confesses one of the girls in love, they have sex. That is, the creation of an emotional connection between the player and the characters comes to the fore, and only then coitus. The game allows the player to declare love to both girls and have sex with each of them. After a while, the girls find out about this, tell Geralt that they are not offended, and even vice versa, they offer to have a threesome. If the player agrees, women rivet Geralt to the bed, but instead of having sex, just leave him naked and chained, until his friend comes to "save" him. In this way, the developers say: you can do bad things, but you will be punished for it.

A second important moment is that not only Geralt uses sex to get something he needs (like cards in the first game), but also women can use sex to get something from Geralt. During his wanderings, the witcher meets a long-time familiar sorceress, he carries out one of her quests, after which he receives an invitation to dinner. The usual dinner smoothly flows into a romantic, and then into sexual intercourse. Having woken up from an unusually deep sleep in the morning, Geralt realises that a sorceress used him to find out the necessary information and get to a certain place while he was sleeping. This destroys the gender stereotype of a man, which, if he desires, can achieve the favour of any girl, moreover, shows that the decision of a woman can be not only equal but even more significant and valuable in such situations.

6. Gender stereotypes in Mortal Kombat

6.1 Reasons of the high popularity

Mortal Kombat is a video game series in fighting genre developed in 1992. First Mortal Kombat games were created for playing on arcade machines and later ported to different platforms. Nowadays, Mortal Kombat is a huge media franchise, which includes not only video games but also comic books, movies, animated TV shows, TV series and a card game. MK[9] is one of the most famous fighting video games with a wide fanbase, but more people know about something,

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[9] MK – an abbreviation for the Mortal Kombat

the more opinions about it exist. This has led MK to be accused of over-sexualisation from time to time (Myers, 2011).

To start with mechanics of the game and reasons for its high popularity should be understood. In Mortal Kombat a player chooses a character from a certain list and uses it to fight versus another character, which can be controlled by a computer or another player. Each character has its fighting style and uses different combat techniques: high punch, low punch, high kick, low kick, front punch, back punch, front kick, back kick, block, leg sweep, uppercut, range attack, special weapon attacks, etc. Characters can use hands (some of them have four hands), weapons, magic or even insects in the fight, and this defines the battle style of each of them. Also, every character has its finishing move, called *Fatality,* which allows the player to finish off the opponent with a special animation. All the variety of combat techniques used in the game are performed by a player using a combination of different buttons on his/her controller, as showed on the Figure 7.
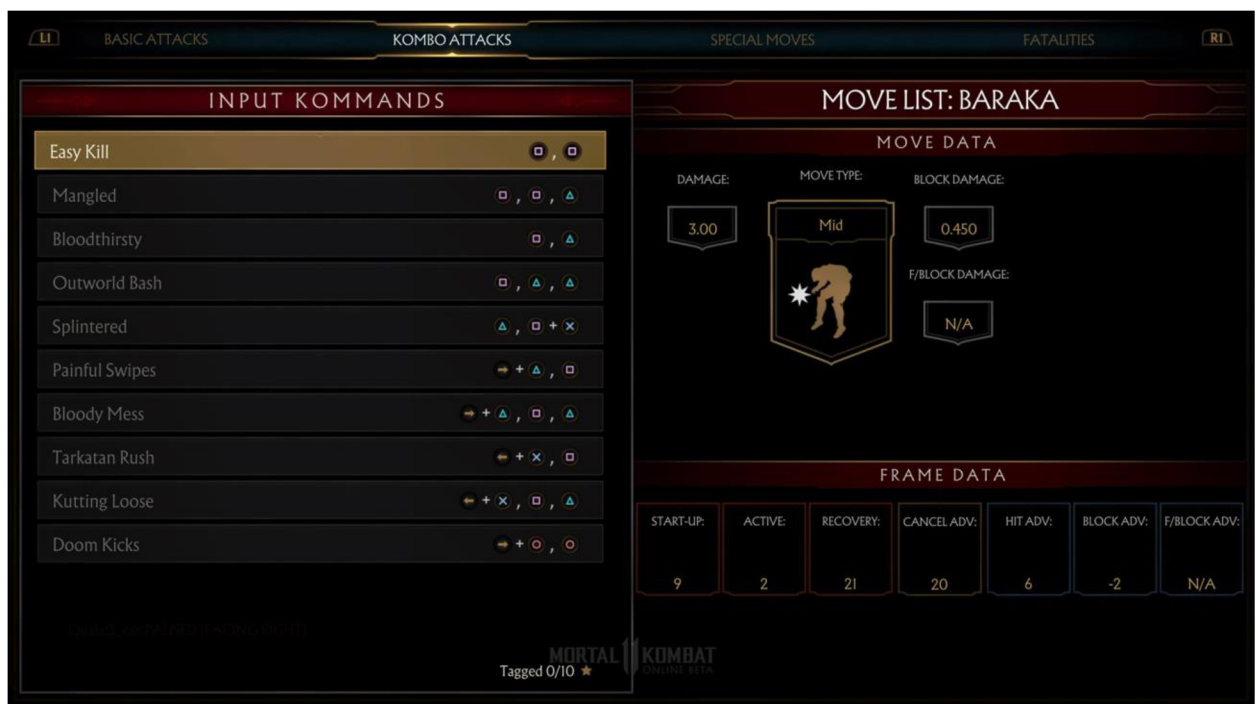

Figure 7

The game appearance is one of the aspects that won the hearts of players. The developers of the Mortal Kombat invited real actors to record their movements, then digitalised those movements and used them in the game. By the standards of 1992, the image on the screen was very realistic, and gamers were attracted by the characters who moved and looked like real humans. Also, much of bloody violence was portrayed in the game, usually in Fatalities, where a player could kill an opponent in different ways. Again, for that time, it was something new and

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extraordinary. However, critics and politicians criticised the game for an unjustified amount of violence (Crossley, 2014), which, in 1994, led to the creation of the Entertainment Software Rating Board – organisation, that assigns age rating for the games, depending on the presence of certain content in them. Multiplayer is another reason of Mortal Combat success. It requires a high skill of playing to know all the commands and combinations, and use them in the right time, which certainly leads to competition between players. Multiplayer makes it possible not only to compete in who can kill an enemy faster but to fight against each other and to show who is the best player in the room.

6.2 Mortal Kombat 9 vs Mortal Kombat 11

From the point of view of gender stereotypes, comparison of the games Mortal Kombat 9 published in 2011 and Mortal Kombat 11 published in 2019 can be made in two dimensions: the plot and the character design. Both of them play an important role in creating an impression of the game, and both are significant for creating characters through which gender stereotypes are usually depicted.

6.2.1 Plot

As was mentioned before, the Mortal Kombat series was created at a time when relatively realistic combat system and bloody fights where enough to be loved by gamers and become popular. In the first MK games player just had to fight opponents one after another, without being explained why they fight. Later, the Mortal Kombat setting had been expanded by comic books, but still, in games, there were only a few text clarifications of what is happening. However, the industry was developing and the moment, when these clarifications were not enough, had come. In 2011 was published the 9th game of the series, named Mortal Kombat 9, in which completely new element appeared – in-game storyline videos. Each fight was triggered for certain reasons caused by the plot.

Women as fighters always existed in the Mortal Kombat series, and they always were equal in strength to men. This means that usual woman, a soldier of the United States Special Forces, can defeat a two-meter height and fourhanded monster, and it remained in the Mortal Kombat 9. Furthermore, this game series has never had one main character around which the plot would revolve, and the MK 9 is not an exception. The plot unfolds around the heroes of the Earth, who are trying to save our world from the invasion of dark forces. The player observes how different characters, both male and female, are trying to stop the invasion and what steps they are taking, in

the hope of making a contribution to save Earth. Also, both forces of good and evil have male and female leaders, who are equal in their leadership and trying to guide their teams to the victory.

In the Mortal Kombat 11, the characters of different genders are still given roughly the same attention of the player. Although should be mentioned that in the Mortal Kombat X, which is a previous game of the series, a new character Cassie Cage was introduced. She is a daughter of two iconic for MK universe characters Johnny Cage and Sonya Blade. She represents a new generation of the Earth defenders, who will replace the old ones. On her storyline was made an emphasis in the last two games, which is not a bad decision, but it destroys the plot equality of the characters.

Despite this, the game shows that both men and women can be fighters, as in one of the first scenes of the game, where depicted a group of soldiers consisting of representatives of different genders (Figure 8). Strong male and female characters are the basis of the game. However, in controversy to strong female characters, which refute the gender stereotype of weak women, in these games can be hardly found weak male character. From one point of view it is failed representation of different types of people, while from the other, there is no need to add a weak character to the game, where everyone fights and have to be approximately on one level of strength.

Figure 8

6.2.2   Characters design

The over-sexualised appearance of characters is the main topic, which has been calling criticism towards Mortal Kombat through years. As was mentioned in one of the previous chapters, initially, video games were developed mostly for the male audience, which entailed certain stereotypes in the depiction of men and women. Characters in Mortal Kombat always had a minimum of clothes on them, regardless of gender, and it was one of the games` distinctive features.

The Mortal Kombat 9 was a visual continuation of the previous games and completely adopted the style of characters design. However, in Mortal Kombat 11, the publisher decided to rework some character models and their appearances to lower the level of the sexuality of the characters; this reasonable decision was executed in a very controversial way.

The plot of the Mortal Kombat 11 is related to the machinations with time, due to which in present appeared copies of different characters from the past, which occurred at the time of MK 9. By the time of MK 11, some characters have become older, and the fact that they started wearing more clothes is logical, at the same time their copies from the past should wear fewer clothes to correspond their images from the MK 9. An example of Johnny Cage depicts it perfectly, it can be seen on the Figure 9, that young Johnny Cage from MK 11 and Johnny Cage from MK 9 look almost the same, while old Johnny Cage (Figure 10) is more mature and dressed up.

Figure 9. Young Johnny Cage MK 11 (left) vs Young Johnny Cage MK 9 (right)

Figure 10. Old Johnny Cage MK 11

The same goes for the old version of Sonya Blade, who is a commander of the army, and has to look solidly and arouse respect, not like a sex doll (Figure 11). But when comparing young Sonya Blade from MK 11 and Sonya Blade from MK 9 (Figure 12)**,** the difference in their appearances and outfit is striking. For making character`s outfit look real, this change is fully rational and has a strong foundation. It is much more convenient to fight in a closed suit than in a vest, that hardly closes secondary sex characteristics and certainly will not protect against any types of damage. On the other hand, this outfit change destroys immersion of the player to the game world because young Sonya Blade from Mortal Kombat 11 rather looks like a new character than the familiar one from the past. Moreover, the developers did not even try to explain the difference in the outfit through dialogues. For example, Sonya Blade from the past could appear in her sexual outfit, but characters from the present would offer her other clothes, which would better suit for a certain situation.

Figure 11. Old Sonya Blade MK 11

Figure 12.Young Sonya Blade MK 11 (left) vs Young Sonya Blade MK 9 (right)

The same covering by clothes happened with each female character in the game, which could not but entail a response from the audience. Opinions were divided, some people found this decision to be correct and noted a positive movement towards the eradication of gender stereotypes (Brockway, 2019), others felt that such a gross change in the appearance of the characters ruins

the whole structure of the narrative (Arenas, 2019), while the third just wanted to look at the half-naked girls in the game.

Figure 13. Young Jade MK 11 (left) vs Young Jade 9 (right)

Figure 14. Young Kitana MK 11 (bot) vs Young Kitana MK 9 (top)

Steve Beran, art director of the studio that created Mortal Kombat 11, commented on the changes that they have done to the characters: "Our character lead, Brendan George, has been a breath of fresh air of just introducing new ideas," Beran said. "Our design is just getting more mature and respectful. You're not going to wear a bikini to a fight. You're not going to be showing so much skin. I think it's just what the game is about: You're going in to fight for your life, and you're not going to be wearing such scantily clad items."(Hall, 2019) This statement is reasonable since it is a good point to make the design more mature and respectful, and it could be a good explanation of characters redesign, but it was not. Players noticed that outfit redesign only affected female characters, while male ones remained half-naked or even more naked than they have been in previous games as on the Figure 15. This caused a wave of indignation among the gamers, since even assuming that most Mortal Kombat players are heterosexual males, and a half-naked man is not an object of their sexual desire, such double standards are offensive.
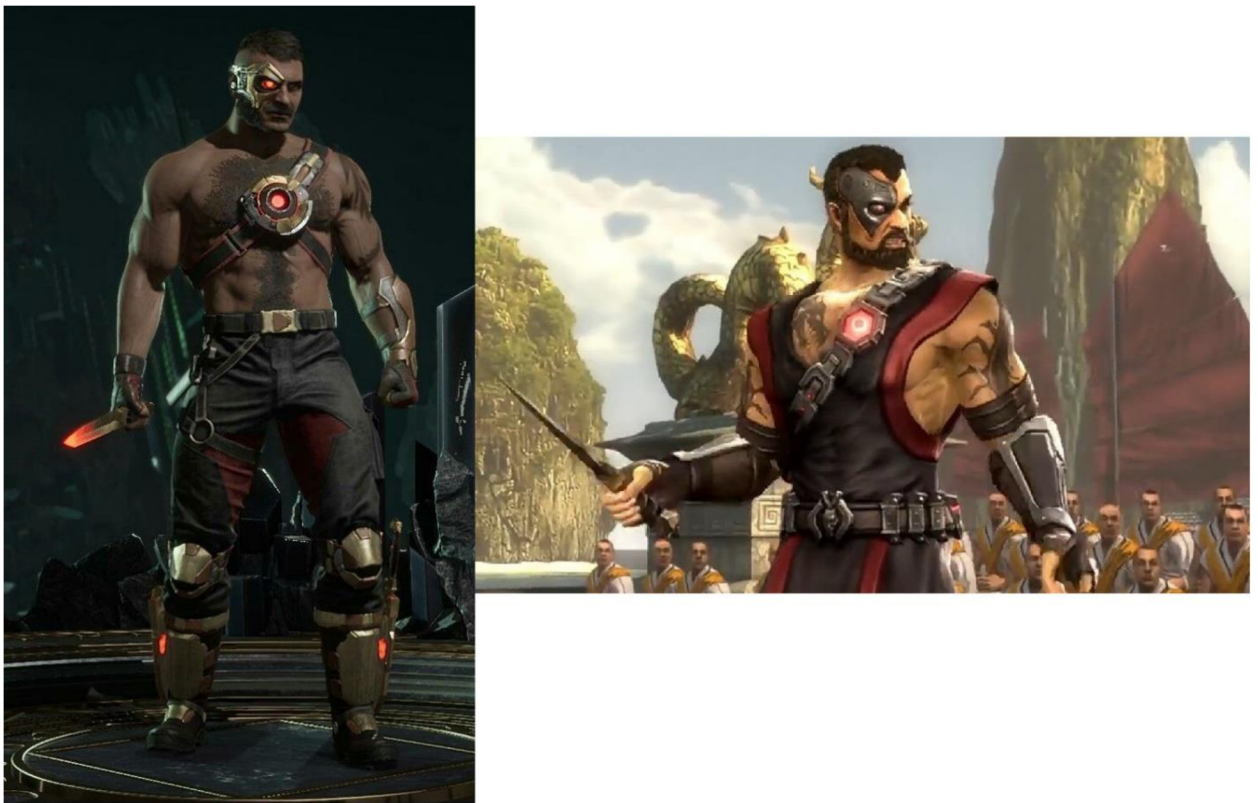

Figure 15.Young Kano MK 11 (left) vs Young Kano MK 9 (right)

In the game where the player is faced to gods, time travels, monsters, undeads, aliens, magic and situations, where during the fight characters bones are broken and the heart is torn from the chest but after he is alive and feels good, the statement that outfit design was made for better

realism, sounds untruthful. And for most of the players, change of the female characters design was not the main problem, but the unfair male character design and outright lie, instead of revealing the true reasons.
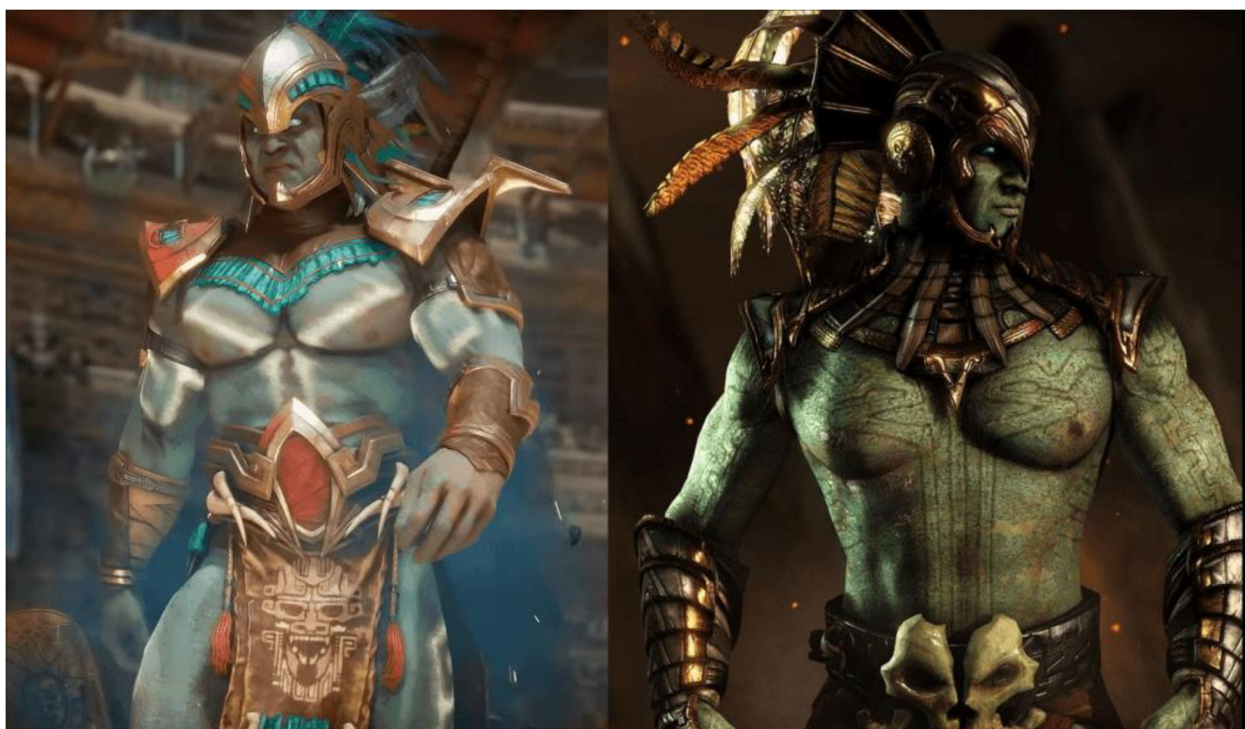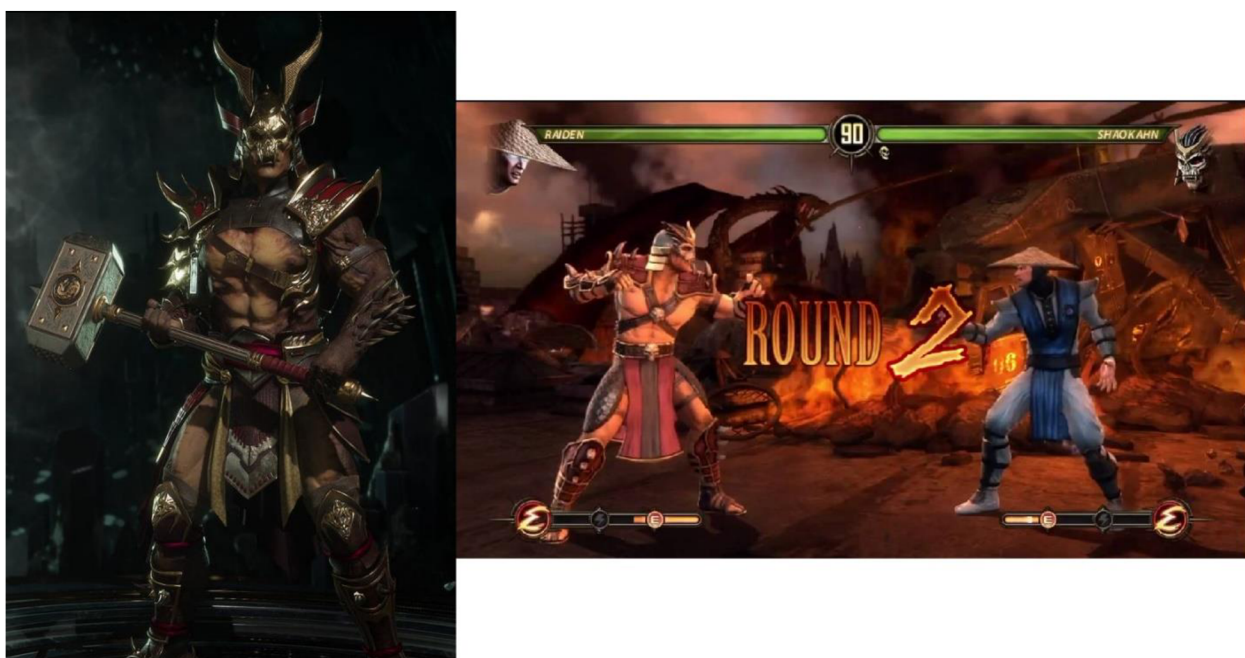

Figure 16. Kotal Kahn MK 11

Figure 17. Shao Kahn MK 11 (left) vs Shao Kahn MK 9 (right)

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to analyse gender stereotypes in the storyline and design of videogames. The history of the creation of first video games and the development of the video game industry led to the emergence of gender stereotypes in games. Games evolved, from the hobby most attainable and interesting for young men to an activity that captivates millions of various people all over the world. The depiction of characters and situations, in which stories occur, also have been changing in parallel with the changing views of the society on interpersonal relationships. Image of a male evolved from an unemotional muscular guy with a gun to a man that can have feelings, personal drama and ordinary human desires (without discarding the fact that the first option may well exist in its setting). Image of a female also developed, and now it is not a sex reward or a person to save, but an individual character with goals and desires; a character who can handle own problems by herself. It correlates with an image of a woman in the real world, which changed from a usual housewife to a strong businesswoman (again without discarding a possibility and normality of the first option).

Over-sexualisation of human's body may make people feel less confident and sometimes be ashamed of oneself. The topic is still not studied well, and while one types of research confirm this statement, others completely reject it. Lack of proper study methods, respondents and people not interested in obtaining a clear conclusion lead to the subjectivity of obtained results. Also, it should be mentioned that attitude toward over-sexualisation may vary depending on sex, age, cultural and social affiliations, making it impossible to conduct a research that will give a universal answer on this topic. All that remains now is to respect the opinions of people who are in favour and against sexualisation in video games and try to come to a compromise that would suit everyone. However, sexualisation is present in video games, regardless of people's attitude towards it, and usually expressed by behaviour, outfit or movements of a character in such a way, that player will never miss this sexualised message.

A woman put in stereotypical position or role of a victim, whose main purpose of being in the game — is to give the protagonist a reason for an adventure, was a common damsel in distress theme at the times of first video games for personal computers. Nevertheless, it is more commonly used in literature and cinematography than in modern video games. This trope is used in games where gameplay is on the first place, and the plot works as a justification of the in-game events. In other cases, it doesn't work, because players are more interested in having thoughtful and deep motivation than just in a reward at the end of the path.

The issue of gender stereotypes in video games should be discussed, and video game development companies play an important role in this discussion. First of all, it is their money,

their product and their audience, which are inextricably linked between each other; making bad games causes an audience outflow that in turn causes a decrease in profit. Unfortunately, a normal conversation between developers and gamers does not exist. Instead, a new game is being released under the slogan of gender equality and absence of stereotypes, but in reality, it turns out that some stereotypes were replaced by others, and equality just meant the elevation of some characters by lowering the others.

Gender stereotypes is rather a controversial topic, which is actively discussed in the video game community. While some types of gender stereotypes have an extremely negative effect on people, others may not have any influence at all. Since video gaming is a global industry with millions of customers, the issue of gender stereotypes must be discussed publicly to open up the possibility of conducting a series of global studies on this topic around the world. Only by obtaining unbiased research results, it will be possible to stop the debate and speculation related to gender stereotypes in video games.

Český abstrakt

Videohry jsou nedílnou součástí moderního globálního zábavního průmyslu. Statisíce lidí pracují ve videoherním průmyslu na nejrůznějších pozicích. Svou prací dávají příležitost ponořit se do nových nezmapovaných světů více než dvěma miliardám hráčů. Hry se vyvinuly z malého nichového koníčku do obrovského průmyslu, což vedlo k odhalení některých jejích negativních aspektů, včetně genderových stereotypů.

Genderový stereotyp je běžné přesvědčení nebo předsudky o vlastnostech nebo sociálních rolích, které musí muž nebo žena plnit. Genderové stereotypy úzce souvisejí se stávajícími genderovými rolemi společnosti a slouží k jejich udržování a reprodukci. A genderová role je souborem společenských norem definujících, které typy chování jsou přípustné a žádoucí, a to na základě lidského pohlaví. Genderové stereotypy negativně ovlivňují moderní život. Lidé ze všech koutů světa trpí kvůli neschopnosti dělat si, co chtějí. Stereotypy genderových rolí nejsou stejné a liší se stát od státu a kultura od kultury. Zatímco muž v USA nemůže vést malý rozhovor s dítětem, aniž by byl obviněn z pedofilie, ženy ve většině muslimských zemí jsou považovány za majetek svých otců a manželů.

První videohry byly vyvinuty v 60. letech v laboratořích technických univerzit studenty, z nichž většina byli muži. Souviselo to s vnímáním technických oborů, jako mužských, a kultivováním názoru, že žena dokáže jen lámat techniku, což se dá také nazvat genderovým stereotypem. Protože se studenti muži zabývali vytvářením prvních videoher, dělali to z hlediska svého světovnímání a svých zájmů. Kromě toho byly hry distribuovány pouze v místní univerzitní síti a cizi k nim neměli přístup, takže proč by dělali hru pro dívky, která není pro tvůrce zajímavá a které dívky ani nemohou hrát. Z tohoto důvodu jsou první videohry spojeny se střelbou, ničením mimozemšťanů a rozmanitými nestvůrami. Běžely roky, vyvíjely se technologie, zlepšovala se kvalita videoher, začaly se objevovat první domácí videoherní konzole, které globalizovaly videohry, ale pro dívky tak nikdo nic nevyvíjel. Jenže přišel rok 1996 a jedna společnost vývojáře videoher se odhodlala k odvážnému kroku, vydali hru nazvanou Tomb Raider s ženskou postavou v hlavní roli. Byl to riskantní krok, protože muži by se museli sdružovat s ženskou postavou a v té době to bylo nové. Nikdo nevěděl, co lze očekávat, a samotný nápadvýpadal jako komerční sebevražda, ale ke všeobecnému překvapení ji velmi dobře přijali herci a prodalo se více než 7 milionů kopií hry. Od této chvíle bylo pro videoherní komunitu jasné, že hry hrají i dívky, a tak se průmysl začal přizpůsobovat ženskému publiku vytvářením videoher pro ně.

Za zmínku stojí, že videohry odrážejí dění v reálném světě podobně jako kinematografie a literatura. Z tohoto důvodu se určité genderové stereotypy objevovaly a vymýtily z videoher v souladu se změnou veřejného vztahu k nim. Vize mužů a žen a jejich postavení ve společnosti se za posledních 70 let dost výrazně změnily. Ženy z domácností se proměnily v plnohodnotné členy společnosti, kteří mohou usilovat o své osobní životní cíle a zastávat jakékoliv pozici. Společnost začala být neutrálnější vůči projevům emocí u mužů a přestala vnucovat určité vlastnosti, které „musí být přítomny" u muže. Ve videohrách došlo přesně ke stejným změnám. Obraz ženy, kterou má hlavní hrdina zachránit ve jménu jejich lásky, se proměnil v samostatnou postavu, se svými cíli a touhami, kktérá sama může být hlavní postavou. Podobně i obraz muže z neosobního svalnatého chlapa se zbraní se proměnil v postavu s emocemi, vlastně dramatem a běžnými lidskými touhami.

Sexualizace je jedním z nejviditelnějších a nejznámějších genderových stereotypů ve videohrách. Spočívá v dotování postav a situací erotickými prvky, z nichž hlavní je zdůrazňovaná sexualita těla. Tvrdí se, že obrázek idealizovaných a nadmíru sexualizovaných těl postav ve videohrách vyvolává nejistotu v sobě samém a někdy i stud za vlastní tělo. Toto tvrzení není možné potvrdit ani vyvrátit, protože v současné době neexistuje žádný důkladný výzkum na toto téma a stávající studie jsou příliš malé a dávají radikálně opačné výsledky. Postoje k sexualitě se navíc mohou lišit podle pohlaví, věku, kulturní a sociální příslušnosti, což znemožňuje provedení studie, která poskytne univerzální odpověď na toto téma.

Přesto se firmy na vývoj videoher snaží bojovat se sexualizací ve svých hrách, ale některé z nich to dělají v podivné formě. Například vývojáři videohry v bojovém žánru Mortal Kombat byli obviňováni z příliš silné sexualizace ženských postav, které bojovaly téměř nahé. Ve své nové hře Mortal Kombat 11 se totiž vývojáři rozhodli polepšit, a proto plně oblékli všechny ženské postavy, což velmi kontrastuje s jejich designem v předchozích hrách. Vývojáři vysvětlili změnu designu postav realismem a tím, že lidé bojující o život to nemohou dělat polonazí. Zcela logické vysvětlení pouze vyvolalo rozhořčení fanoušků, protože znělo pokrytecky na pozadí toho, že design změnili jen pro ženské postavy, zatímco mužská tak zůstala se svými polonahými těly. V této situaci se změny vzhledu postav podobají spíše ústupkům ve prospěch určité kategorie lidí než samostatnému řešení firmy.

Dáma v nouzi je stereotypním obrazem dívky, která se ocitla v těžké situaci, ze které se nedokáže dostat bez pomoci hrdiny-muže. První příběhy vzniklé na základě tohoto obrazu se objevovaly již v mytologii starověkého Řecka, ale zvláštní popularitu si získal ve středověku a často se používal v rytířských románech. Není divu, že obraz dámy v nouzi má v moderní literatuře i kinematografii, vždyť za tolik staletí je silně zakořeněn v lidském vědomí. Hlavní problém

spočívá v tom, že žena není vnímána jako samostatná osobnost, ale jen jako odměna za úspěchy a hrdinství hlavní postavy. Tato technika byla obzvláště často používána na úsvitu vytváření videoher, když spiknutí jako takové nebylo v nich a pro hru bylo zapotřebí cíle a konečného bodu. Nejznámějším příkladem je hra Super Mario Bros., kde hlavní postava prochází úrovní za úrovní, že by na konci zachránil princeznu. Nutno podotknout, že videohry se od svého vzniku dost výrazně změnily, a proto je obraz dámy v nouzi málokdy k vidění v moderních videohrách.

Důležitým faktorem přítomnosti či absence genderových stereotypů ve hře je to, která společnost tuto hru vytváří. Polská společnost vývojář videoher CD Project Red, která vytvořila sérii her Zaklínač, je ukázkou dobrého vývojáře, v jehož hrách je vše propracováno do nejmenších detailů. Pokud se v Zaklínače nahlíží na genderový stereotyp nebo útlak, je to podloženo námětem nebo světem, ve kterém se děje. Ve hře je přítomno několik druhů genderových stereotypů včetně sexualizace, dáma v nouzi, vztah k ženám obecně a domácí násilí, ale každý z nich byl diskutován námětem a pokud to bylo potřeba, zesměšněn.

Genderové stereotypy jsou nejednoznačné téma. Zatímco některé z nich rozhodně mají extrémně negativní dopad na lidi, jiné nemusí mít vůbec žádný vliv. Vzhledem k tomu, že videohry jsou světový průmysl s miliony zákazníků, problém genderových stereotypů musí být věnován publicitě, což otevírá možnost provádět globální výzkum na toto téma po celém světě. Pouze získáním nezaujatých výsledků výzkumu bude možné zastavit debatu a spekulace týkající se genderových stereotypů ve videohrách.

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