

Introduction Extract

Title: Girls behind the games: An investigation into the Gender Disparity and Hegemonic Representations of Women in Gaming Culture and Esports.

The image that immediately comes to mind is a geeky boy roughly twelve to twenty-five years old sitting in a dark room among junk food and caffeinated drinks. Glaring at a glowing white screen, as his mouse clicks rapidly to target the enemy and a combo move is completed. Watching one... then two enemies fall to the ground: *Double kill*. Now, substitute that boy with a girl, and the entire concept becomes unusual and foreign. The reality is that the vast majority of persons disregard gender when they hear or think about the term 'gamers'.

All cultures are complex and never static, and inevitably video game culture is the same as it is diverse, intricate, and constantly evolving. The introduction of competitive gaming, known as Esports, is one of the fastest-growing areas in the video game industry that consists of professional players, or teams using technologies on a macro level to connect with audiences globally. In 2019, there was a significant increase in the global Esports viewership as 1.57 billion persons were aware of the gaming industry, as the industry saw a spike in revenue growth.¹ As I was watching streams of macro Esport events, I noticed that my micro level interest was lacking in persons like me - a female gamer. I started to question myself: why are female gamers considered taboo in this digital environment? Aren't persons playing behind a screen... How does gender impact their abilities to perform? The philosophy was a new concept that has formed my Personal Interest Project topic: **The Gender Disparity and Hegemonic Representations of Women in Gaming Culture**.

To begin my research, I intend to use a questionnaire, interview and a content analysis. Through the use of a content analysis of Youtube videos and Netflix documentaries about Esports communities and even representations of women within a gaming environment will enable me to illuminate my PIP from different gaming communities, perspectives and professional female opinions about their experiences within the industry. Primary research involves an online questionnaire for males and females who are deeply involved in video gaming culture. This will assist me to gain quantitative and qualitative information on their beliefs regarding the distinct gender disparity and stereotypical representation of women, creating a clear cross-cultural analysis of answers. Conducting interviews is vital for my PIP in order to understand

¹ Influencer Marketing Hub. 2020. The Incredible Growth of eSports. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/growth-of-esports-stats/> [Accessed 27 July 2020].

the views on this topic from professional persons or experienced streamers. It will provide an opportunity to explore whether this prevailing gender issue by encouraging their fan base in an attempt to break or move away from contemporary stereotypes regarding women in Esports.

As a female researching the gender disparity in Esports, this investigation elucidates female players who are just as good, if not better than male gamers as an indication for change in female empowerment. I hypothesise that the cause of this gender disparity is due to the lack of knowledge, awareness or consideration of an inclusive environment. It should assist with the analysis of continuity and change as I assess gaming companies that promote or oppose female gamers participation with this digital culture. Thus, this creates social and cultural awareness in an environment that in tradition, is usually dominated by men.