MULTIPLAYER ONLINE GAMERS' SUBCULTURAL INTERACTIONS: BODY AS A BRIDGE IN BETWEEN REAL AND VIRTUAL LIVES

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ABSTRACT

MULTIPLAYER ONLINE GAMERS' SUBCULTURAL INTERACTIONS: BODY AS A BRIDGE IN BETWEEN REAL AND VIRTUAL LIVES

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This research discusses the gamer community as a subculture and the experience of gamers through computer gaming hardware and software. This includes their experiences in and around gameplay, online and offline relationships. The aim of this thesis is to understand both realities and highlight the connections between the two with the help of real gamers. The fieldwork of this thesis formed of two sections. First is an autoethnographic study with the aim of understanding practitioners' (a gamer's) bodily practices. Second is a series of interviews followed by participant observations with multiplayer online game players (gamers). Through observations and literature search, it is argued that gaming tools and gaming community is closely linked in the gamer's experience. Based on fieldwork and literature search, this thesis offers five main conclusions regarding this relationship. First, gamer is a compact concept formed of three elements; in real life identity, virtual identity and body. Second, metaculture and gaming culture have an existence that is not limited with in-game moments. Third, there is a perception in gaming subculture that being a true gamer depends on skill and practice. Fourth, embodiment in gaming context should not be considered as limited to only one of the worlds it might take place in; virtual or real. Lastly, this thesis' conclusions and findings have implications on design practice that designers should work with respect to the cultural value of their design productions. The results of the study suggest a new perspective towards gaming culture and its elements as a wholesome, multidisciplinary issue.

Keywords: Subculture, Multiplayer Online Gaming, Embodiment, Segmented Identity, Game Design

ÖZ

ÇOK OYUNCULU ÇEVRİMİÇİ OYUN OYUNCULARININ ALT KÜLTÜREL ETKİLEŞİMLERİ: GERÇEK VE SANAL YAŞAMLAR ARASINDA BİR KÖPRÜ OLARAK BEDEN

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Bu araştırma oyuncuların bilgisayar donanımı ve yazılımı ile etkileşimini ve bir alt kültür olarak oyun topluğunu konu almaktadır. Bunlar, oyuncuların oyun içindeki ve dışındaki ilişiklerini içermektedir. Bu tezin amacı sanal ve gerçek dünya arasındaki bağlantıları gerçek oyuncuların yardımıyla anlayabilmektir. Bunun için yapılmış olan alan çalışması iki kısımdan oluşmaktadır. Bunlardan ilki bir otoetnografik çalışmadır ve oyuncunun bedensel pratiklerini hedef almaktadır. İkincisi ise röportajlar ve onları takip eden katılımcı gözlemleridir. Kaynak taraması ve gözlemler üzerinden, oyun araçlarının ve oyun topluluğunun oyuncunun deneyimiyle yakın ilişkisi tartışılmaktadır. Saha araştırmaları ve kaynak taramasına dayanarak, bu ilişkiye dair beş ana çıkarım yapılmıştır. İlk olarak, oyuncu üç parçadan oluşmaktadır: gerçek benlik, sanal benlik ve beden. İkinci çıkarıma göre, oyun kültürü ve metakültürü varlıklarını oyun dışında da sürdürmektedirler. Üçüncü olarak ise oyun kültürüne göre gerçek bir oyuncu olmak beceri ve pratikle ölçülmektedir. Dördüncü çıkarım, tecessümün (*embodiment*) yalnızca sanal veya gerçek hayat açısından ele alınmasının yanlış olduğunu tartışmaktadır. Son olarak, bu tezin tasarım pratiğine dair çıkarımları vardır. Tasarımcılar tasarımlarının kültürel değerinin bilincinde olarak oyuna dair ürünler çıkarmalıdır. Bu tezin sonuçları, oyuna bütüncül ve çok disiplinli bir alan olarak bakılmasını önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alt Kültür, Çok Oyunculu Oyun, Çok Parçalı Benlik, Oyun Tasarımı

To My Family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years of non-stopping expansion within the gaming world and the internet, it was inevitable to have web-based environments that serve explicitly to game lovers. Such environments and their followers form a culture that was initiated with the emergence of personal computers. (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p.1) With the help of the technologies for accessing both games and the internet from home, the concept of gaming stopped being individual, and became a communal practice of gamers all over the world. Today gaming cultures are sustained by an online synergy that was originally initiated by multiple occasions in gaming history.

As the complexity and reach of gaming technologies increased, a variety of games together with their enthusiasts emerged from the gaming culture at large, giving rise to many subcultures within the gaming subculture itself. As one of the foundations of gaming culture, online games are an example of that. They helped and still help the formation of game-based relationships in the global scale. Especially in Turkey, *World of Warcraft*, *Counter Strike* and *Dota* have provided such connections according to many gamers including those I interviewed for this thesis.

Such online relationships between people create a duality of realities between which gamers move. (Kent, 2001, p.20) While existing both in game and in real life (often shortened as IRL) realities, gamers adopt different identities. Especially, certain game types such as role playing games encourage this duality by offering gamers the tools and environments to develop intricate social lives. As such, the lines between the player and the in-game character has blurred over the years. (Cogburn and Silcox, 2009, p. 16)

While one is known as a student in real life, he might also be a successful warrior in another reality where he spends equal time as he does as a student. Especially, games have started to require a larger range of and increasingly finer skills throughout the years. (Trefry, 2010, p.6) Although gamers can fly only in their virtual lives, they can only do so as a result of the skillful actions that they perform in real life, that is, in front of their computers and consoles. In a way, gamers learn to fly by training themselves and investing several hours. Indeed, among gamers, bodily skills have become a signifier of a true gamer. (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p.82)

Skills cannot be thought without the tools. Online identities and skills are bounded with one another through hardware. If there is no mouse or keyboard to use, there are no flying characters. It is the same for screens and headsets; their absence means no audio-visual data to interact with. In that sense, designer has a great role in processes of obtaining and sustaining of such skills.

The gaming elements I mentioned here (gaming subcultures, games and their realities, the skills, the hardware) are closely related with each other. Gaming culture can be seen as what Ingold (2006, p.xii) called a "meshwork", defined as "a texture of interwoven threads". This is because of their coexistence; depending and causing others to exist.

To sum up, as a design researcher and a gamer, I wanted to approach gamers' experience with all its layers. Only through such an approach, relationship between elements of that experience can be revealed.

1.1. Aim and the Scope of the Study

Considering many layers of gaming culture, this thesis aims to highlight gaming experience as a meshwork. The connection between all the gaming elements cannot be traced linearly, however due to the structure of written media, I attempt to do so.

This thesis is designed as a result of a prior literature research. I observed that there is a rich literature dedicated to gaming and virtual everyday life. However, not much research deals with how these physical and virtual realities are connected to one another, as also indicated by other sources. (Brown et al., 2015; Caroux et al, 2015, p.3) (see section 2.1.2.6) The aim of this thesis is to understand both realities and highlight the connections between the two with the help of real gamers. In that sense, I aim to reveal the value of multiplayer online gamers' interactions and experiences in and around gameplay with respect to their subcultural community.

With this aim, I do the following investigations. The first is scanning existing studies and practices regarding game design, subculture of gaming, gaming hardware and gaming identity in order to understand multiplayer online gaming as a cultural practice. The second is understanding and presenting bodily and emotional processes of acquiring and using gaming skills. The final and the most important understanding how gamers claim and sustain an online presence within the gaming community, in and outside of playing time, using tools of interaction that help them move between real and virtual environments. This was made possible by observing their practices and listening to their experiences in relation to gaming subculture at first hand.

1.2. Research Questions

The main research question in this research is

- What are the meanings and significance of multiplayer online gamers' interactions and experiences in and around gameplay, including those with gaming hardware, software and as a subcultural community?

The sub-questions that help in the way of answering main research question are

- How is the gaming subculture experienced by gamers, in social media, gaming environment and real life? What are the bodily and emotional aspects of that experience?
- What is the relationship between game environment and real life for multiplayer online gamers? How do gamers bridge the game environment and real life through avatars, bodies and gaming hardware?
- What is the value and significance of peripherals, such as keyboard, mouse, headset and screen in and outside of playing time? What are the implications of the gaming communities' experiences on game-related design?

1.3. Significance of the Study

Throughout recent years, gaming technologies have improved massively. Developments within that area created a new reality, a virtually designed one. Much research focused on gaming culture, virtual presences and lives of gamers. However, game controls are not analyzed enough in terms of interaction. (see section 2.1.2.6) As a result, gamer's presence within the virtual environments are often discussed separately from his physical presence. In addressing this gap, this research aims to contribute to the study of gaming by including physical interaction and design aspects. It also contributes to areas of game and hardware design by arguing its findings from a holistic approach by pointing out the relationship between different gaming elements.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter 1, *Introduction*, presents a brief introduction to the issues of this research regarding gaming culture and it points out the aim and research questions of this thesis. Lastly, it summarizes the structure of the thesis by briefly explaining each chapter's subject.

Chapter 2, *Literature Review*, focuses on game-related literature. It discusses ideas from a variety of perspectives, including history of video games, game design, psychology,

anthropology, industrial design and cultural studies. Within the scope of this thesis, it does not provide detailed arguments on each perspective, however it aims to highlight how many perspectives must be considered when discussing game-related issues and how they should not be separated from one another within the gaming context.

Chapter 3, *Methodology*, presents the qualitative research methods that are adopted throughout this thesis. Firstly, it explains how a study should be designed when researcher is a member of studied group, which is the case in this study. Afterwards it describes the ethnographic and autoethnographic studies and how they were conducted. It discusses the in-depth semi-structured interviews, held with interviewees reached out through non-probability sampling method. Lastly, it presents the analysis method.

Chapter 4, *Analysis*, presents the findings of both interviews and the autoethnographic analysis. It develops on the concepts acquired through the literature review by adding to them the insights from the two field studies that are held within this research. It gathers and discusses the theory and practice on gaming culture, gamer practices and their interaction tools within the gaming community.

Chapter 5, *Conclusion*, presents the overall conclusions of this research by revisiting the research questions and discussing related outcomes. Additionally, it discusses the limitations and offers recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review my aim is to present an overall perspective on the range of issues that are related with gamers and gaming culture. I do not discuss each topic at length even though each is large enough to be discussed in a separate research; I instead relate to each topic only to the extent that is required by the scope of the thesis, which is limited to the cultural and bodily experiences of gamers. First, I start with the history of video games and how they improved to their current state. I continue with explaining how games are classified and designed. Second, I highlight the issue of subcultures and why gaming culture fits into this definition. Lastly, I present the link in between gaming, self and body through related literature.

2.1. Video Games

In the first section, I present a brief history of video games and how it took shape into what we know of today. Second section will be on design and what game designers and researchers considered and highlighted about it. Lastly, I will be explaining video game genres that are important in context of this research along with user types defined by literature. Before starting, I present two definitions of game from related literature. According to Harteveld (2011, p.22) play is what formed game. "It involves make-believe, competition, engagement, rules and all other aspects that are characteristic to games and not to other sorts of tools or media". In addition to Harteveld, Juul and Koster (2005, p.12) define game as a structure of rules that has outcomes and consequences as a result of player's effort. After these definitions, I go on with history of games as a start.

2.1.1. History of Video Games

Throughout this section, in order to provide a background argument for later discussion, I depict the history of video games through related literature.

As Kirkpatrick quotes Huthamo (2005) "electronic gaming can not be traced back into a single source. It emerges from a slowly evolving, complex web of manifold cultural threads and nodes" (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p.38). That is how three sources gave importance on different issues, which I will argue throughout this section. While some resources align the historical starting point of video games with the history of home computing and entertainment consoles (Kirkpatrick, 2013; Julier, 2017; Moore, 2011), Nielsen, Smith and Tosca start with *Senet*, the first game ever known to Ancient Egypt, 3100 BC. Throughout the centuries, it transformed into many forms at various locations. Most important is how it gave birth to current game styles. According to Kriegsspiel, the first game based on simulation of real world activities developed in 1824, by Georg von Reisswitz. He was a Prussian lieutenant and game was shaped around war events. (Tosca et al., 2008 p.45). It is trackable that, *Sennet* led into first commercialized game ever *The Mansion of Happiness* in 1843 which is a follow up of *Kriegsspiel* as a decidedly more peaceful version due to lack of war related concepts. The reason why *The Mansion of Happiness* and *Senet* are important for today's video games, as tabletop/ board games themselves, is their implications over video games that we know today. They have an impact on current design practices due to their derivation from these very first games. The third important game that shaped what gamers play today was *Dungeons and Dragons*. As the grand grand child of *The Mansion of Happiness*, its importance is on them both being role playing games. On the other hand Dungeons and Dragons became first fantasy role playing game. So Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson's idea of being represented in non-everyday like environments inspired developing electronic games of that time as well. (Overview, 2017) The transition in between board

games and electronic games should be highlighted since D&D is depicted in the literature as a bridge between the very first game and current role playing computer games that are frequently mentioned during this research. This is just one historical lineage that focuses on board and card games.

In addition to board games, arcade games represent a second precursor to computer games of today. (Kirkpatrick, 2013). Although it was not playable at home, *Tennis for Two* (1958) by William Higinbotham is cited as one of the first commercial electronic games invented followed by *Spacewar!* (1962) and *Adventure* (1975) (Tosca et al., 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2103; Moore, 2011).

70's technological experiments introduced users the concept of "home computer" alongside with "home entertainment systems" which should be emphasized due to their affordance for solitude. While initially it was only possible to enjoy games in public spaces, through home entertainment systems, there was no need for users to go out of their houses. Regarding this research it is important to highlight solitude due to its implications over the structure of gaming culture, which I will explain deeply in next chapters. For Julier (2017), this environmental change started through *Nintendo Entertainment Systems* (NES) and followed by many home entertainment systems including home computers.

Kent (2001) represents a different perspective on the hierarchy and importance of events. His timeline is between 1889 and 2001. He places emphasis on companies and their founders' timelines along with their game related releases. (Kent, 2011, pp.xi-xvi). So his perspective is mostly related with gaming market achievements and people who had a role in them, which is a more economy related approach.

As Kirkpatrick's quote reveals at the start of this section, gaming history is far from being linear. That is why I emphasize how different researchers valued events

differently. In my presentation I highlight the value of historical happenings from three different perspectives. First, from the perspective of board games followed by the first game ever. Second, home entertainment systems and arcade games. Lastly, from a more economical perspective, companies and their founders. In this section, I aimed to enlighten historical background of current videogames briefly. Next section will present how a video game should be from the perspective of game designers and researchers.

2.1.2. Classification of Video Games

Anthropy believes that classifying games and users is an obstacle to creativity, so she states that her opinion is against this classification. (Anthropy and Clarke, 2014). However, this paper aims for currently designed games which all have a genre that fits in the standards explicated by upcoming authors. According to this viewpoint, classifying video games is very important in terms of following game design and player evaluations rightly. During further chapters, I will be referring to this section which intends to serve as a guide for game types mentioned throughout the paper.

2.1.2.1. Video Game Types

In this section, I focus on game design concepts and terms that are highlighted in literature. Firstly, I present the difference between casual and non-casual games. Then, the issue of serious games takes place. Lastly virtual environments are discussed. These three game types are used to highlight variety of game environment purposes which I focus during this research. After these, there will be the discussion of fun and immersion and how they are related to one another. Related disciplines from the perspective of Keith Burgun will take place next. Finally, the last two sections will be around game mechanics, gameplay, communication and user experience.

Casual Games and Non-Casual Games

The reason why I point out the structure of casual games, and what it expects from player, is to help explain what non-casual games offer and expect. As Trefry (2010) defines, casual games are designed to fit in players' everyday life. He exemplifies *Windows Solitaire* and various *Facebook* games such as *Bejeweled* as casual games. On the other hand, Addams (2014) has an opposite approach where he groups some games as "games for entertainment" which are games that stand at the opposite side of "casual games"

Trefry (2010, p.1) also explains that the term "casual game" got blurred. In order to regain its meaning, he mentions four common elements that need to be accomplished for a game to be "casual". According to him, "rules and goals must be clear, players need to be able to quickly reach proficiency, casual game play adapts to player's life and schedule and game concepts borrow familiar content and themes from life". As observable in Trefry's (2010, p.1) set of main rules, this kind of games do not require a commitment which enables user to impulsively decide whether he will play or not. "You can play over and over and over, all while eating your lunch with your free hand". he says. (Trefry, 2010, p.4) One of the most important issues here is the fact that, there is no need of immersion; not bodily or mindly. What he further explains in his book is the demanding skill requirements. Trefry (2010, pp.10-11) claims that video games started to require "true skill which dedicated can reach" and since this level of dedication is not expectable from every player, casual games provide a ground where unskilled players are also invited. To sum up briefly, casual games do not require time or skill which separates them from non-casual games. They are a part of everyday life instead of creating a fictional one.

To continue further with this separation, I highlight the issue of serious games which is another design issue.

Serious Games

One of the purposes of electronic virtual environments is to teach. Games carrying this concern are called "serious games" and they are explained in detail at Ernest Addams's book; *Fundamentals of Game Design*. "Serious games are games that solve real-world problems. They are not designed purely for entertainment but to accomplish something meaningful in the real world". Serious games might be fun as well, yet as Addams (2013) expresses, main purpose is a form of education where fun might be an achievement coming from the concept of gaming. The reason why I wanted to highlight this type, as Addams did in his book, is, to separate serious games from non-casual games mentioned throughout this research. It does create a virtual environment, yet it differs from other games in terms of purpose.

Harteveld (2011) explains how games need to have a degree of realness, a sort of relatability with every day events, yet these events should be at their highest levels when it comes to serious games since they are expected to have a different level of real life implications.

Virtual Environments

According to Bartle's (2003, p.22) definition of virtual worlds, they are "implemented by a computer (or network computers) that simulates an environment". He further explains multi-user environments and how they are persistent through users' sharing and affecting them simultaneously. So, virtual environments are living environments that can be affected by its sustainers: users. This formation is especially important due to their implications over users' life. It is beneficial to understand what makes these worlds an environment, a space, and design purposes formed around them. As I explained in the history section, role playing is a way of interacting with alternative world designs, whether electronic or not. In that case, role playing is an important issue for the discussion of games offering virtual environments. Gürşimşek's (2014) argument of

being the “residents” of virtually designed environment and forming cultures linked to them is role playing. So, it is important to separate game environments according to their purposes and culture formed around them. The issue of culture explained in detail in upcoming sections, yet in this chapter it serves as the point where I set the line. Up to this point, I aimed to refine the area I highlight. Games that provide visual content might be separated by how designers expect users to spend their time, which is the distinction between casual and non-casual games. After leaving casual gaming behind, there is the issue of games with a variety of purposes. Although there are many purposes, for the sake of this research it is important to understand serious games and how they are less related with virtual environments, and more convenient for community formation. It is also crucial to point out the importance of serious games and their upcoming importance on bodily learnings, however in this chapter, stripping out first casual, and then serious games would take us further in the way of understanding video games that are issued during this research. After refining the area and dimming the scope down to fun purposed virtual environment games, the concept of fun and immersion are natural new issues to discuss in upcoming sections.

2.1.2.2. Video Game Genres

“Genres are categories of games characterized by particular kinds of challenge, regardless of setting or game-world content”. (Addams, 2014)

There are many genres in many types of games. In this section, these genres tackled from the perspectives of Burgun (2013) and Addams (2014). As shown in the previous chapter, *Dungeons and Dragons*’ effect on role playing video games is a good example of transitions between different game environments. In this section, I issue relevant video game genres in context of this research. To start with, Burgun (2013) points out a few problems of classification in general. Burgun (2013, p.95) indicates that classifying video games into genres is difficult since “there are all kinds of differing opinions out

there about which games belong in which games" (Burgun, 2013, p.95). In that sense, his argument can be linked to Anthropy's. Anthropy argues that genres are creativity obstacles needed to be passed through while Burgun claims that designed games can not be fitted into genres due to their various options. So, unlike Anthrophy, he sees current games creative enough. However, he finds genres, that games are trying to be fitted into, are not innovative enough just like Anthrophy does. (Anthrophy, 2014; Burgun, 2013). So, it is not always easy to identify a video game through genre. However, I list related genres in order to explain what type of interactions and fantasy worlds gamers expect when a game marketed in such classification.

Addams (2014) highlights the difference between main and sub-genres. Genres help grouping games according to their world, and in game actions. As Burgun (2013) briefly explains, sub-genres are categories derived from main genres as a type of them. They can be created due to differences of perspective, player number or even game map type. In order to achieve a purer guideline for next chapters, I list mentioned genres without separating them as main or sub genres.

Strategy Games

Strategy games are built on long-term planning where the player needs to prepare a strategic setting for upcoming in game events. Usually these events are war-related, like an enemy raid, where the user is challenged to build an enduring setting using in-game elements. Burgun (2013, p.99) finds the term "strategy" vague since it exists in every game, and prefers calling these games "war strategy games" due to their war based structure.

Figure 1: Strategy Game Screenshot, *Starcraft* (ign.com, 2017)

Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs)

MMORPGs are Role playing games (RPGs) that take place at virtually designed online environments. In order to explain its properties, I present RPGs through related literature. As Burgun (2013, p.109) reveals "every game includes role playing no matter its genre". On the other hand, games classified as RPG have specific properties. In-game maps of these games are usually big, and available for exploration. Players experience these worlds from the eyes of their characters which evolve and gain new abilities throughout their play. There are challenges and events in such games which result in success or failure. However, there are no winning or losing. It is a never ending game; an alternative life simulation enhanced with designed events. "Most RPGs also offer an experience impossible in the real world: a sense of growing from an ordinary person into

a superhero with amazing powers". As Addams (2014) also claims, online RPGs, MMORPGs provide experience of another world. These worlds allow player to become a "citizen" through an avatar and have a virtual everyday life in a fictional world (Gürşimşek, 2015). "I'm referring specifically to games that are heavily thematic and story-laden with leveling up, inventories, parties, and usually, turn based combat" (Burgun, 2013, p. 101). Although Burgun (2013) and Addams (2014) mention avatars with enhanced abilities as fictional creatures, everyday like experiences are also classified as RPGs. Gürşimşek (2015) gives *The Sims* and *Second Life* as examples to these kinds of RPGs where avatars are humans living in world-like settings. The most important issue separating MMORPGs from RPGs is the internet. Player can interact with one another within MMORPGs which creates a social environment for role playing.

Figure 2: Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game Screenshot, *World of Warcraft* (*MildlyToxic*, 2017)

First Person Shooter Games (FPSs)

First person shooter games are a sub-genre of shooter games. First person is referring to the point of view throughout the game. This point of view allows player to see the game environment from the eyes of their avatar, which is a form of perspective. As Addams (2014) also clarifies, the player uses ranged or melee weapons to take action and defeats in-game enemies. Although there might be weapons in many games, they are tools that player might or might not choose to use, while in first person shooter games the condition of winning is tied to attacking.

Figure 3: First Person Shooter Game Screenshot, *Left for Dead II* (2017)

Adventure Games

Adventure games usually have a storyline which players experience through their avatars. Usually there are actions and decisions to take as these characters and they give the feeling of an interactive visual story. In order to have a clear separation between RPGs and adventure games Addams' (2014) clarification is beneficial;

> Although both adventure games and role-playing games possess this quality, RPGs normally offer a heavily number-based character-growth system (levels, weapons, skills, and so on), while adventure games do not—their character growth is dramatic, not numeric.

So, in adventure games, there are events taking place and a variety of reactions for player to choose from. Storyline is settled while in game choices and actions are in favor of moving towards designed events. Mostly, adventure games have a start and an end.

Figure 4: Adventure Game Screenshot, *Ori and the Blind Forest* (2017)

Multiplayer Online Battle Arena Games (MOBAs)

MOBA games are based "primarily on combat to determine the ultimate outcome of the game" as Yang et al. (2014, p.1) explains. Mostly, there are matches for each game and characters built throughout the match, so there is no character continuity between matches. Usually, combat happens on a map with two bases placed on opposite sides.

Each team, vary in numbers of people, tries to devastate other team's base. There might be other map based scenarios and challenges. However, it is always a competition and a battle.

Throughout this section, I introduce game genres that are mentioned throughout this research. These genres are; strategy games, role playing (RPG) games, first person shooter (FPS) games, adventure games and multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games. In the next section, I will discuss player types and their classification through related literature in order to understand player-genre relationships.

Figure 5: MOBA Game Screenshot, *Heroes of the Storm* (2017)

2.1.2.3. Game Elements According to Players

Throughout this research, I focus on consumption, and not marketing purposes of game design and development. However, the literature marks that gaming has a position in the economic market. Especially, Kirkpatrick (2013) accents this over and over again throughout his chapters. I do not address the issue due to its irrelevancy with this

research yet, there is one point that it serves well in terms of understanding players. Since games are seen as products, from that perspective targeted audience is also classified just like game genres.

Pearce (2002) points out the importance of developing a new game audience instead of reaching out for an existing one, according to her conversation with Louis Castle. On the other hand, Anna Anthropy (2014) finds game development is currently lacking creativity. Even reaching for new audience is still based on the current audience who admires violence-centered games. So as long as these genres are there, there will be audience seeking what is already existing.

In this section, I present Richard A. Bartle's (2017) four main player types; achievers, killers, socializers and explorers. For him, there must be an in-game balance according to the type of audience that designer is aiming to reach out. In his *Interest Graph*, Figure 6, each type is represented with two of their main interests.

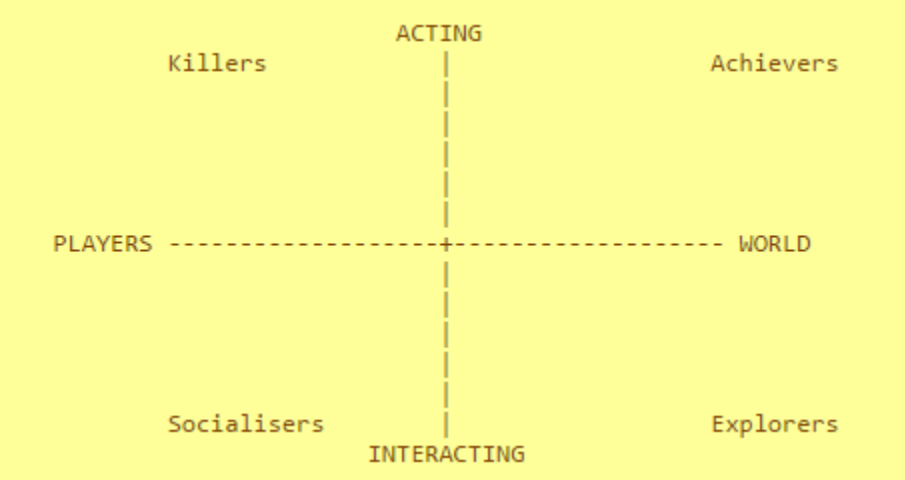


Figure 6: Interest Graph (Bartle, 2017)

For example, socialisers are mainly interested in other players and interacting, while achievers are into acting and the game world. Although this is a rough abstraction, it

helps understanding relationship between genres and players. Moore (2011, p.25) defends that there must be a distribution of actions in a game. His approach aligns with Bartle's perspective on different user's needs. Distribution of actions is discussed further in upcoming sections.

2.1.2.4. Fun and Immersion

In this section, I tackle fun and immersion and their relationship with one another. First, I explain the issue of immersion and its types.. A brief explanation of success as a tactical immersion method used by designers follows this section. Lastly, fun is addressed.

"Immersion is the feeling of being submerged in a form of entertainment, or rather, being unaware that you are experiencing an artificial world". (Addams, 2014) In the case of gaming, that unawareness becomes a key point of having fun as I point out in next paragraphs. In his book, Addams (2014) also lists the types of immersions that a game might provide. These types are also closely related with the way designers will chose to design and develop their world.

> Tactical immersion is, the sense of being "in the groove" in high-speed action games. When playing such a game, the action is so fast that your brain has no time for anything else.
>
> Strategic immersion occurs when you are deeply involved in trying to win a game, like the immersion of the chess master: observing, calculating, and planning.
>
> Spatial immersion is, the sense of being in a place other than the one you're actually in.

> Narrative immersion is, the feeling of being inside a story; the player is completely involved and accepts the world and events of the story as real". (Addams, 2014)

The reason why I include Addams' types of immersion is them being aligned with design tactics and player attraction methods designers and researchers express within the related literature that I will be covering. In addition to Addams' approach, Burgun (2013, p.57) explains how important the sense of achievement is as a strategical design tool borrowed by psychology. He highlights the concept of "skinner box" which he later explains its importance in the sense of game as "rewarding achievements". Through that concept, designers reward almost every action and impose player the feeling of success even when the achievement is not that significant. This approach keeps player active and provides a user continuity for the game.

However, as Moore (2011) points out, fun is one of the main aspects of immersion. Furthermore, fun is a state of mind when there is a new data that brain can process, as Koster explains in his book *A Theory of Fun for Game Design*. (2005). In his book, he tries to analyze the link between his children's patterns of playing and understanding games. At the same time, he observes the conditions of having fun and getting bored during the computer gaming sessions. He emphasizes the importance of patterns. "Seeing patterns in how kids learn is evidence of how pattern-driven our brains are. We pattern-seek the process of pattern-seeking!" (Koster, 2005, p.16) As he explains in this quote, he implies the importance of having fun and its relationship with our mind processes. He further goes and explains that after seeing a pattern, we indigenize it and get bored with the issue. (2005, p.19) On the other hand, he also adds that "When we meet noise, and fail to see a pattern in it, we get frustrated and give up". (2005, p.25)

Koster explains three states of our mind can interpret patterns. First one is us playing a game until we master the pattern, when we achieve that state, game stops teaching us

and we feel bored. “When you feel a piece of music is repetitive or derivative, it grows boring because it presents no cognitive challenge” (Koster, 2005, p.42). Second one is the “sensory overload”. That is the opposite of brain’s hunger for new data which is the first situation. This means mind’s inability of catching up with the pattern, fail at processing or behaving along with it. (2005, p.42) As a result, the third state becomes the absence of these two states which leads players into having ‘fun.’ That brings the immerse as a result. Although this is a backwards approach towards fun, Koster describes the absence of it very detailed, which enlightens the issue of fun and games massively.

This enlightenment helps building an understanding on the issue of casual games and how Trefry accented the issue of getting bored due to skill requirements. They now can be explained as getting bored due to lack of analyzing patterns by timeless players.

Lastly, I would like to introduce Koster’s list of reasons players may offer as a result of two points of boredom I initially introduced. In his list, he covers expressions as “too easy”, “repetitive”, “got too hard too fast” etc. (Koster, 2005, p.44)

The aim of this section is to provide a link between fun and immersion through related literature. As a result, Addams’ (2014) discussion of immersiveness and its types are combined with Koster’s approach in this chapter.

2.1.2.5. On Game Mechanics, Gameplay and Communicating

In this section, I analyze gameplay, game mechanics and communication in relationship with one another.

According to Kirkpatrick (2013, pp.76-77), the term gameplay covers a mixture of everything that helps players experience the game, including controls, game environments, mechanics and interface. He connects the term to the emergence of game

magazines along with video games. In the United States, one of the most popular magazines of the 80s and 90s was *Computer and Video Games*. According to the author, gameplay is the experience provided by a game and it is the most important tool of communication between player and designer.

I continue with language which is in direct relation with gameplay. The issue of language is raised by Anthropy (2014). As she points out, the game language is used in order to define or comment games, however it is highly limited, which in turn limits designers' approach. She explains that games are made of rules which she defines as verbs such as jump, run, climb etc. While these verbs have interaction with one another, they also provide player a form of freedom that is limited within the scope of game mechanics that designer created. She further goes with highlighting the importance of these verbs in terms of giving player choices which she values the most. One example to this can be found in documentary of the game *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*. In the documentary, there are partial interviews with game designers and developers at the company *Naughty Dog*. The interviews explain the importance of participating in the story (2016, m.21:29) and the significance of options. Although game has a storyline to follow, it is not always linear, mostly not, due to their concern with proving more interaction and endless combinations one can achieve to key points throughout the story. (2016, m.24:49)

Their approach on freedom is parallel to Anthrophy's. While designers from *Naughty Dog* call that as "providing more interaction", Anthrophy defines it as the variety of "verbs" and their usage.

In addition to designers' perspective, Anthropy points out how players perceive the link between verbs and rules through language.

> Every rule has a context that helps the player relate to it, understand it. This

> context can be reinforced by the way the game looks and sounds: something that can hurt the protagonist is covered in spikes, something that we want to direct the player toward is valuable-looking. (Anthropy, 2014, p.36)

In fact, these rules are a part of game mechanics which I discuss lastly.

Along with Anthrophy's rules and verbs, Moore (2011) also puts emphasis on game mechanics and how they need to "work properly" and "communicate with the player". He further goes, "they should be explained in detail by helping game mechanics, mostly coders, to understand how exactly interactions in between the player and gameplay will take place". Moore (2011, p.29).

Moore (2011) also has a guideline in his book, addressing how to keep the player occupied where he gives example from an RPG gameplay through its mechanics. In his guideline, he explains that there is a need for deciding percentages of actions. He explains that different genres would require different hierarchical settings, and percentages, in their game mechanics. However his explication on key elements of an RPG and their weightages is adaptable to other games. He sets combat, exploration, interaction with non-player characters (NPCs), storytelling, puzzle-solving, inventory management and buying/selling game objects as his primary and secondary key elements (elements of fun) for an RPG game. Later, he creates a hierarchy between them, regarding the characteristics of RPGs and their player profile.

> Exploration—60%.
>
> Combat—15%.
>
> Interacting with non-player characters (NPCs)—10%.
>
> Puzzle-solving—5%.
>
> Storytelling—5%.
>
> Inventory management—3%.

Buying/selling game objects—2%.

(Moore, 2011, p.25)

So, game mechanics formed of settled rules and what and how much designers expect players to experience in-game attractions, are key elements.

Throughout this section I will explain gameplay and its content: controls, game environments, mechanics and interface. In addition to that, I will also enlighten the issue of communication with the player and game mechanics. As pointed out earlier in this section, each issue is connected to one another and can not be argued without mentioning others.

2.1.2.6. Game Design

Up to this point, I have depended largely on game design literature, but gameplay elements have also been analyzed from a Human Computer Interaction perspective, which I will briefly mention in this section through gaming literature. I first start with iterative design then move to a variety of perspectives on user integration through design process. Next, I highlight opinions regarding game control researches. Lastly, I argue that game and game interaction are an interactive form of art.

Game Design Process

First, on iterative design I introduce Katie Salen's perspective. In her book, she highlights the importance of iterative design as a tool of communication. This communication occurs during the design process. "Iterative design is a play-based design process. Emphasizing playtesting and prototyping, iterative design is a method in which design decisions are made based on the experience of playing a game while it is in development". (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p.23) Although not every source names this process as "iterative design," process of user testing is an important step most

sources indicate. Especially, Emily Brown (2015) emphasizes the importance of the issue. She also insists on implementing tools and related academic researches that help improving user experience more than it is with contemporary practices. She suggests a more monolith game design process, a collaboration between researches including users and industry. McAllister and White (2015, p.109) propose a very similar approach, again including user testing. They borrow the quote of Clanton (1997) and show the importance of user experience and its relationship with gameplay, how a game is mainly judged by its gameplay.

Similar with Brown (2015) and Salen and Zimmerman (2004), McAllister and White (2015) present important processes of game design under the name of "Game Development Life Circle". Their order is: concept, prototyping, pre-production, production and alpha – beta – gold. User testing takes place at the parts alpha and beta, where developers and designers test their products on a representative group. (McAllister and White, 2015, pp. 111-113) Although both Brown and McAllister and White value users, alpha-beta is the point that Brown finds "late" due to her opinion on having a more user-centered design process before even production.

Moreover, I highlight the artistic approach towards game interaction that mainly implemented by Kirkpatrick, in the section "Art, Play and Critique". In this section he takes art as a primary object of sensation in the context of games. He states that, "This analysis positions gameplay at a strange point in cultural life: it is a site in which we indulge our facility for enjoying sensations and permutations of sensible experience for their own sake" (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p.170). So, to him, game is a form of art that allows interaction through design rules and elements and he calls that "a sensible experience". From that viewpoint, art books are another tool of interaction design that prepares the experience Kirkpatrick (2013) mentions. In art books, there can be found design processes of game environments and interactions as items and characters. How the

player should experience the game as an environment is considered as the main issue of game experience, in this regard art books are a supplementation to Salen's and Zimmerman's (2004) and Brown's (2015) points with an artistic approach.

Game Design Teams

In order to provide a better grip on designers' standing in game design, I present roles that a game design team incorporates through Bossom's and Danning's (2016, p.52) classification. They explain the structure of such a team through seven main roles.

To start with, "Producer" is responsible from business part of the game. He manages issues as budgets and timelines while being on top of every other team member. "Creative Director" is the person who is responsible from the project as a whole and he is in direct relationship with every other role. "Writer" creates the overall story, dialogues and what players will read on the menus. "Game Designer" balances the game mechanics and the overall game. His responsibilities overlap with other team members most of the time as well. "Lead Level Designer" must have knowledge on both technical and design issues. He helps compensating in between these elements. "Level Designer" is responsible from the overall experience including battles grounds, non-playable characters and other interactions player experiences. Finally, "Lead Programmer" implements designed elements and environments as a playable game. (Bossom and Danning, 2016, p.52)

User Experience in Game Design

In this section, I briefly present the main issues raised regarding gamers' interaction with games within related literature. Heuristics and play tests are highlighted as one of the main concerns of game related experience along with the importance of understanding what makes a game immersive and successful.

To start with, one of the main issues that is stressed over and over is the issue of fun and

challenge. According to Cherny et al. (1997, p.1), “Fun and user-friendly being poorly understood. Fun and easy to use are often confused and conflated”. To them, fun does not necessarily come from ease of use while an easily operated game does not bring fun. To support that, Jorgensen (2004, p.395) also highlights one of Rouse’s (2001) principles “players want a challenge and players expect to fail”.

Secondly, Desurvire et al. (2004, p.1509) define game usability as an issue that “addresses the interface and encompasses the elements the user utilizes to interact with the game (e.g. mouse, keyboard, controller, game shell, heads-up display)”. In that sense, during the development process of games, player testing becomes crucial. In fact, both Cornett (2004) and Jorgensen (2004) highlight *Microsoft* as one of the pioneers of user testing by forming the first player test group. According to Pinelle et al. (2008, p. 1453) play test is considered as a great method to involve users. However, it requires a “playable prototype” which can be achieved closer to the final stages of game development. At this point, according to literature, there are two different opinions. First is parallel with Pinelle et al. (2008, p.1453) which suggest use of heuristics. Heuristics offer a guideline through usability principles and they are found to be most useful during early stages of game design (McAllister and White, 2015, p.2). As a result, the data regarding users remains accessible even before play test. Second idea is against the pure use of heuristics which is linked to immerse and fun by Desurvire et al. (2004, p.1510) According to them, play test is an extremely important step. In their paper, they point out that heuristics can be helpful up to one point since players’ experience can not be predicted entirely. Although they value heuristics greatly, they give emphasis on the importance of play test, and how crucial it is to create a valuable game experience which is in direct relationship with fun and immerse (2004, p.1512).

There are also tools that provide extremely detailed and actionable information about usability. However, there is a great deal of potential to develop new tools and integrate

them into the process. To do this, there needs to be more active discussion between academic research and the industry. (Brown et al., 2015, p.85)

In addition, Brown et al. and Caroux et al. state that video game controls are not deeply explored in terms of interactions, which is one of the starting points of this research. (Brown et al., 2015; Caroux et al., 2015, p.3). "In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of computer game focused on HCI research, but the impact of controller-related issues on user experience remains relatively unexplored". (Brown et al., 2015, p.210) In their paper, they present and compare interaction methods through three tools including computer keyboard. Their conclusion is on the importance of understanding purposes and types of games players will be interacting with, since this would change the ideal method for each case. (Brown et al., 2015)

To sum up, first, I discussed iterative design and its meaning. Then, I argued when and where to include users through related literature. Also, I pointed out that the issue of interaction through controls is not analyzed enough in current literature. Afterwards, I argued for the artistic approach towards user interaction and games over art books. Lastly, I briefly explained the importance of user experience in game design. I pointed out the issue of play test, heuristics and the overall importance of understanding the user. Even though user experience is a very rich and detailed subject, I refrain from going to further detail since, in this thesis, I present gaming from a more cultural perspective.

2.2. Gaming as a Subculture

In this section, I present subcultures, gaming as a subculture and its elements.

2.2.1. Definition of ‘Gamer’ in Literature

In this section, I present how the term “gamer” is depicted through related literature. First, I address stereotypes regarding gamers. Second, I argue player types.

To begin with, it is a common thought that there is a stereotypical approach towards who the gamers are. (Deshbandhu, 2016; Shaw, 2010; Stratemeyer et al., 2017) There are three dimensions of this approach, regarding age, gender, and socialness. Although each of them has substantial issues to argue in itself, I briefly present all these dimensions in order to address elements of stereotypical approach correctly.

Gender in video games is a highly controversial issue formed of multiple layers. Female characters and their oversexualized appearance compared to male characters constitute one of the prominent debates. Also there is the issue of male friendly games, which target male gamer audience only through their content. Furthermore, community’s underestimation of female gamers is another issue. However, these issues are just brief parts of the whole polemic. (Stratemeyer et al., 2017) According to Stratemeyer et al. (2017, p.422), lack of female gamers is a very old social construct proven to be wrong. In fact, both Stratemeyer et al. (2017) and Cade and Gates (2017) explain that almost half of gamers are females in contrast to the general idea. According to *Entertainment Software Association*'s report, (2016) 41% of gamers are female. So, this situation would be expected to wipe masculinity of gamer off from stereotypes. On the other hand, researchers claim that it does not happen very fast, but there is an effort towards achieving the right image of female gamers. (Deshbandhu, 2016; Stratemeyer et al., 2017; Cade and Gates, 2017)

Age is another issue mentioned along with gender. (Deshbandhu, 2016; Shaw, 2010; Stratemeyer et al., 2017; Cade and Gates, 2017). Stereotypical depictions of gamers always focus on males and teenagers, which is not a correct representation of current

gamers according to Cade and Gates (2017). They explain that the main age group was once teenagers, yet they grew up to be gamer adults while new gamers from a variety of age groups joined the gaming culture. They also present the data of *Entertainment Software Association* (2015) showing that the average gamer is 35 years old. (Cade and Gates, 2017, p.2)

The last stereotype regarding gamers regards their social capabilities. Combined with gender and age, both Stratemeyer et al. (2017, p.421) and Deshbandhu (2016, p.2) refer to Williams' (2005, p.5) depiction of stereotypical gamer as "isolated, pale skinned teenage boys sitting hunched forward on a sofa in some dark basement space, obsessively smashing buttons". So, in addition to masculinity and teenagers social isolation and unattractiveness is a part of the gamer cliché. Deshbandhu (2016, p.2) also puts emphasis on popular culture, where gamers are described as socially undesirable. In contrast, Stratemeyer et al. (2017, p.430) explain that this cliché might be starting to dissolve, in fact, gaming can be seen as "cool" and it can lead one into higher social positions.

As a result, the term gamer is simpler than "pale skinned teenage boys" (Deshbandhu, 2016; Stratemeyer et al., 2017) As Deshbandhu (2016, p.1) explains the term is simple as "anyone who plays video games as a preferred leisure activity," yet it gained different implications through society and culture as I presented up to this point.

Casual and Hardcore Gamers

In this section, I present casual and hardcore gamers in addition to the distinction between them due to their relationship with stereotypes.

Shaw (2010) and Deshbandhu (2016) claim that there should be acknowledged types of gamers in order to tranquilize arguments over who "counts" as a part of gaming culture. (Shaw, 2010, p.4) Shaw and Deshbandhu suggest that audiences of different game types

should be categorized accordingly under the name of gamer. (Shaw, 2010, p.408; Deshbandhu, 2016, p.12). They both explain some hardcore gamers consider casual gamers as non-gamers due to their lack of time investment and casual games' unchallenging skill requirements. Deshbandhu (2016, p.2) also narrates how these two types of gamers got culturally diverged:

> Most gamer stereotypes in popular culture stem from this construction of the ideal hardcore gamer. The notion of hardcore gamers has also led to the creation of casual players which in turn has spawned the serious gaming/casual playing binary among players of video games.

Similar with game types Deshbandhu (2016) classifies gamers as, *casual players, hardcore (serious) gamers* and *professional gamers* throughout her article. Through her interviews with a variety of gamers, she also points out how the definition of gamer varies from person to person. In addition, Shaw (2010, p.408) claims that along with game play's development, there should be an understanding emerging on "advanced types of play", which aligns with Deshbandhu's suggestion. Lastly, Deshbandhu (2016, p.12) explains that, invested time, level of engagement and attributed value should be valued the most when arguing seriousness level of a player.

In conclusion, the issue of gamer is argued in the literature from a cultural perspective. Aspects as gender, age and social acceptance are the core of arguments on gamer cliché. In addition to stereotypes, I so far depicted various discussions and solutions on who should be considered a gamer. These discussions are over game types and amount of gaming time. Suggested solutions are on inner classification of gamers, so that the shared title "gamer" would include players with different habits and preferences.

In the next chapter, I present subculture and mod through related literature in order to further highlight gaming culture. I argued that every player can be considered as a

gamer in this section. However, in the next section, through related literature, I explain that this approach is not valid within the gaming subculture.

2.2.2. Gaming Culture as a Culture

In this section, I depict the approach towards culture and subculture through literature, in order to pave the way for highlighting literature acknowledging gaming as a cultural formation; a subculture. To begin with, I present subcultures and how they are formed. Second, I depict what gaming culture is and how it is formed. Next, I depict the issue of communication and its non-physical tools within the community. Lastly, I present the issue of game communication network and metaculture followed by smaller communities within the gaming subculture.

2.2.2.1. Subculture

In this section, I briefly address the issue of subculture through culture, mod and neo-tribes.

To begin with, in order to present subculture, it is important to address what is culture. As Longhurst et al. (2008, p.19) explain that culture is a wide concept.

> The term "culture" has a complex history and diverse range of meanings in contemporary discourse. Culture can refer to Shakespeare or Superman comics, opera or football, who does the washing-up at home or how the office of the President of the United States of America is organized.

This approach includes smaller cultural formations as a part of culture as well. It is highlighted that everyone "have their own cultures, but they may also share a wider culture with others" (Longhurst et al., 2008, p.19) Also, they highlight the difference between culture and society by claiming that "for many large-scale, modern societies it may make more sense to say that several cultures coexist (not always harmoniously)

within the society". (Longhurst et al., 2008, p.21) Here, what is called as "several cultures" serves as an introduction to subcultures that I present through related literature.

As a cultural derivation of groups of people with specific interests, subcultures have a long past. (Bennet and Harris, 2004, p.1) Bennet and Harris (2004) explain that the beginning of term "subculture" is based on youth, especially on style, music and leisure of the 70s. Also, these studies are around that time's rebellious acts of youth culture through music, style and lifestyle. (Hall et al, 2005) In that sense, Hebdige's (2006) "Mod," a sign of resistance to everyday practices through gaining an identity by lifestyle, music and fashion, is an example of 70s subcultural formations. Another example of such subcultures is the Punk culture which also targets everyday dullness and resists it. However, "Mod" is an idealized "identity" by its subculture; working class teenagers. It is a goal regarding lifestyle and behavior.

Beside "Mod" and its subculture, St. John (2003) depicts neo-tribe in a similar sense. Mod represents a goal regarding identities and belongs to a subculture. In contrast to that neo-tribe is differentiated from sub-cultures by being more holistic. St. John explains neo-tribe with a similar approach: youth, music and dance. In neo-tribe, the allegiance comes from "sensory, consumer and spatial practices" that are "de-individualized". (St. John, 2003, p.66) Also, neo-tribalism is depicted as temporary gatherings for fun, togetherness, leisure and relaxation by Benney and Harris (2014, p.12) which matches with St John's depiction.

In addition, Bennet and Harris (2014, p.17) employ the term "lifestyle" which is more correct than "subculture" in order to "address and interpret the shifting identity politics and stylistic associations of contemporary youth". In contrast with St. John (2003), while calling these social formations a "lifestyle", they align neo-tribe along with a more music oriented one. So, although neo-tribes' definition is a common idea, where they belong is not.

Lastly, although youth studies, subculture, mod and neotribe are based on a rebellious expression through music, style and identity, the term widened throughout the years, which allows other contemporary social occurrences that I highlight in the next section. (Bennet and Harris, 2004, p.18)

To sum up, through related literature, I briefly depicted culture and how it is different in each society. In a culture, people get together through shared values and practices. In a society there can be a variety of cultures. Moreover, I tackled the issue of subculture and how it derived as a resistance towards everyday life's alienating aspects. I continue with explaining mod, a part of subculture, and the difference between subculture and neo-tribe through their main ideas. I highlight all these concepts in order to have a grasp on what is gaming and where to place it in presented social concepts through its own shared practices and values. In literature, gaming is accepted as a subculture which I will explain in detail in the next section.

2.2.2.2. Origins and Definitions

In this section, I argue how gaming is considered as a subculture through related literature.

As Crawford et al. (2011, p.3) indicate the origins of gaming culture highlight the "symbiotic" relationship between internet and video games. They further go by explaining the importance of this relationship in terms of contemporary gaming cultures, namely, "allowing games to be accessed, distributed, modified and discussed over network connections". In addition, Kirkpatrick (2013, p.72) quotes Bourdieu's (1995) term "possibility space" in order to express the cultural implications of game-related developments of the 80s. He also highlights gameplay as distinctive practices and spatial experiences of culture in this "new possibility space". So according to both analyses, gaming culture and its origins are highly related with the network space created through internet.

According to Tosca et al. (2008, p.146) connection is not enough by itself. In game communication network, there is a "complex form of interaction" that prevents games from being "just an empty entertainment" of leisure, which they highlight as implication of a culture. In addition to these properties, they point gaming as an "escapist leisure" (p.147). According to these authors, the term involves leisure activities that haul people out from their everyday life by providing an alternative reality. There are two types of escapist leisure; active and passive. While there is an interaction in active escapist leisure, passive one is the opposite. Gaming, as an active escapist leisure, includes interaction which is a performance that leads into cultural formation. So, their definition of gaming culture includes an isolation in order to cast everyday events out. In that sense it has similarities with rebellious subcultures of the 70s.

However, according to Dovey and Kennedy (2006, p.2) games culture is more fluid between every day and virtual environments. They define this culture as "an intensification in which we learn how to flow seamlessly between virtual and the actual, with our experiences in one being just as affecting as those in the other".

Bradford and Crowe (2007) also have a similar approach. According to them, "the distinction between virtual and material "existence" is not clear-cut and oppositional but porous and mutually defining - a shifting dynamic rather than a rigid division". So, both Dovey and Kennedy, and Bradford and Crowe see virtual and real environments more in contact at various points which draws an active relationship in between compared to Tosca et al.'s perspective.

On top of that, Jones and Kucker (2001, p.213) look at the issue from the perspective of communication. They point out internet and gaming as just one of many communication tools that can not be separated as another reality. They also claim that internet creates "virtual cultures" and community network is a culture. So, their approach is on how online gaming allows communication which is tied to creation of communities.

Lastly, I introduce a term referenced multiple times; “magic circle” (Tosca et al, 2008; Crawford et al., 2001; Salen and Zimmerman, 2014). As Crawford et al. (2001, p.10) explain, it originally belongs to Huizinga (1944).

For Huizinga, the magic circle is one example, within a list of others, of places where play takes place; places that are bound and defined by specific and temporary rules and norms, which do not necessarily apply outside of the circle. (Crawford et al. 2001, p.10)

In that sense, authors point out how gaming environment could be seen as a “magical circle”. While Tosca et al. (2008) have a similar approach, Crawford et al. (2001, p.10) confute the perspective they present by explaining how these kinds of concepts “draw distinctions between play and everyday life”.

To sum up, I present four perspectives on what makes gaming a culture. First is a separation between real and virtual world, which serves as an escapist leisure. Other remarks are on the opposite side, pointing an intimate relationship between the two worlds. One of these remarks highlights a seamless transaction in between while the other defines a mutually defining and dynamic relationship. Last point of view puts emphasis on communicational network. Furthermore, I also present the “magic circle,” which is a concept mentioned in game related literature frequently. Although all perspectives present different explanations, their common ground is the fact that gaming is a culture.

2.2.2.3. Gaming Subculture as a Communication Network

As Jones and Kucker (2001) I state that gaming culture is built on a communication network and it is not physical most of the times. In this section, I present highlighted elements of gaming network through related literature.

Initially, I introduce the term “cyber communication”. Jones' and Kucker’s (2011,

p.213) article presents Stare et al.'s (1996) term in order to highlight relationship between internet based communication and spaces. "Communication adjusted to meet the demands and biases of cyberspace is cybercommunication, and as communication and culture are intimately linked (to some they are consubstantial), culture itself is altered". In addition to these authors, Tosca et al. (2008, p.152) address that the gaming community exists as internet. They explain how virtual communities connect over the internet unlike physical ones. So according to both resources, communication is an important aspect of culture. However, as Tosca et al. also highlighted, online community does not just communicate but they "meet". The action of meeting indicates a space, which brings up Crawford et al.'s (2001, p.11) term "cyberspace". They present this space as another life which takes place on cyber network. In addition to these, the alternative life taking place on cyberspace has social constructions just like it is in the real life.

Lastly, in order to grasp the gaming culture and its communication network better, I briefly introduce Tosca et al's (2008, p.152) social classification: metaculture. As they express, metaculture is where the culture lives outside the games. It includes forums, magazines, competitions, conventions etc. According to Tosca et al. (2008, 157) meta-culture of gaming derived from a hunger of sustaining the game outside the context of playing. "As players congregate, they form subcultures centered around a specific game but which also place the players in the wider culture of a specific genre and in the culture of gaming itself" (Tosca et al., 2008, p.157).

To conclude, gaming subculture is based on communication. In an internet-based community lies in gaming, this communication is still as valuable as real life meetings. In fact, it is one of the main elements of its formation. In addition, the communication is not limited to in-game moments. The metaculture, game-related practices out of gaming time, sustains the entire culture. Such social practices and constructions form smaller communities within the network, which I highlight in the next section.

2.2.2.4. Smaller Game Communities

An important aspect of gaming culture is the existence of smaller communities. They are communities within the communities, which present a multi-layered structure within such institutions.

Crawford et al. (2001), Ferrero (2007) and Bradford and Crowe (2017) give emphasis on social structure among gamers which creates and is created by these communities. Bradford and Crowe (2007) give the example of a fishing clan from *Runescape* in order to present the cultural structure of guilds and clans as part of smaller communities. "Formalised and disciplined with a recognized internal structure, clans invariably have their own ritual practices, symbols and distinctive styles". (Bradford and Crowe, 2007, p. 228) As they highlight, there are smaller communities as a part of larger communities.

Another issue they present is how every member of this smaller community have a "role and function within the virtual culture". These roles are given through division of labor in order to sustain the community. According to Bradford and Crowe (2007, p.225) and Crawford et al. (2001, p.13) sustainability of culture is also maintained through a hierarchical order within these community roles and it is based on meritocracy. Hierarchy is based on a common respect on skills, knowledge and knowhow. Crawford et al. (2001, p.13) explain that hierarchy is not imposed by the game, yet it is constituted by gamers and it creates a communal supervision of acceptable behavior and reputation.

In addition, Crawford et al. (2001, p.26) discuss the issue of common sense in gaming community. It is regarding behavior within guilds or clans, as important smaller communities from MMORPGs. They also put emphasis on learning and behaving in a certain way to get accepted by a favorable in game group. Similar to Crawford et.al. (2001, p.26), Tosca et al. (2008, p.154) claim that the variety of smaller cultures comes from variety of perspectives. They give the example from *Battlefield* communities.

Camping (the jargon for not moving around the map while staying near health and ammo resources during encounters with opponent team) is not considered an acceptable behavior in the gaming community; therefore some groups claim that it is forbidden. They accept players that play with the respect of this decision, although game mechanics allows camping. They call such community formations "using game space to create a sense of continuity". They also add that:

> As more and more groups follow suit, what emerges is a series of subcultures built around the game but each with their own peculiarities, which in turn increases the devotion of its players.

As a result, online games may create their own smaller communities with a variety of practices and cultures. In related literature, these communities depicted as results of different practices and perspectives. Also they impose a behavioral order for gamers to be accepted which is tied to these practices and perspectives. Lastly, most of these groups have a hierarchical social order based on meritocracy, where every member has a role to accomplish in order to maintain the community. These roles are identified and sustained through knowhow and skills. These forms respect and acknowledge community practices.

2.3 Gaming and Interaction

In this section, I review how interaction and embodiment is depicted through related literature. In this section, I present embodiment from different perspectives. First, embodiment as a synergy between self and character belongs to the virtual part of gaming. Second, I consider embodiment and interaction from the perspective of physical environment, through tools and physical body.

2.3.1. Gamer and Self in Game Environment

In this section, I present the issue of gamers' self through related literature. Although I mention gamer many times throughout this research, this section is dedicated to what gamers mean when they say "I" as Cogburn and Silcox (2009, p.17) highlight in addition to how self is expressed in the game environment.

Kirkpatrick (2013, p.85) explains how gamers refer to their characters that have changed over the years. As I mention in the previous section (see section 2.2.2.3), game-related media developed along with games themselves. In that sense, Kirkpatrick explains that how the characters are called was included in this development process. He claims that initial addressings were not associated with gamers' identity as it is today. In magazines, characters were called as "your little man" or a similar name that puts a distance in between the character and the gamer. Whereas, in current media, in-game actions are depicted as "you jump", "you run" etc. As a result he claims that "I", as an expression, is not formed by gamers only, the community supports that unification between characters and gamers. This community support encourages gamers to attach themselves with their characters.

Moreover, I present Cogburn and Silcox's (2009, p.4) point of view on this issue. They argue that there is a thin line between self and character. They explain how these are mixed with one another in terms of defined actions. They give two examples from players' usage of "I". First is on bodily actions that are made possible by character's abilities. When gamer says "I fought with a dragon," it is clear that his physical body was sitting on a chair during the whole encounter. On the other hand, when he says something like "I noticed that" or "I met with a friend," these actions are valid in real life as well, although they took place at a virtual environment. As a result, Cogburn and Silcox (2009, p.16) see this as a philosophical dilemma and calls that state as "vague self". In addition, he explains that vague self continuously evolves as "we are now

developing ways to spatio-temporally extend ourselves".

Furthermore, Tronstad (2008, p.251) separates identity into three sections: "empathic identity," "sameness identity" and "character identity". He uses the sameness identity as being the character, which is close to Cogburn and Silcox's (2009) "I".

The empathic identity is used to define a lighter attachment, the one closer to what people feel during movies or while reading books, in a sense that is similar with Tosca et al.'s (2008, p.146) "passive leisure". There is an association between character and self. However, it is not strong enough to fully identify self as the character.

On the other hand, while in the sameness identity, player feels "identical" to his character, the emphatic identity is based on "empathy" (Tronstad, 2009, p. 251). The sameness identity is the full association with the character, that is to say this identity perceives events as him.

Lastly, Tronstad uses the term "character identity" to claim character's existence beside user's. In that approach, character has a different self than player's and they are separated.

Kirkpatrick also has another approach with different terminology. He highlights the contrast among players who are "normal" and "role players" (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p. 137). According to Kirkpatrick, most of the players are normal players while role players are a minority. They are so bounded with their character that, they often refuse to get involved in conversation out of character during the game.

On the other hand, Kirkpatrick (2013, p.26) approaches the issue from a different perspective, and calls players' in-game self-expression as "fragmentary forms of selfhood" or "fragmented self". He explains that through gaming, people are able to sculpt a sense of self through networked society and they create new identities. He also

explains the issue of “social self” which is the wish of being conceived as socially acceptable. He claims that avatars are a tool of “social self” in the context of game environment (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p.144).

Moreover, Dovey and Kennedy (2006, p.91) see avatar as an embodied vehicle of identity. They explain that bodies of avatars are “occupied” by players which is a form of embodiment. They also address Carr’s (2002) words that it is a link between off-screen participant and on screen world “and enables their agency within that world” (Dovey and Kennedy, 2006, p. 91). Their opinion on the relationship with the gamer is different than association of self with “character identity” (Tronstad, 2009, p.251). Avatars are bodies to utilize in order to experience the in-game environment. As a combination of Kirkpatrick’s (2013) and Dovey and Kennedy’s (2006) perspectives, bodies of avatars are the objects of embodiment.

In this section, I explain the issue of self within the gaming environment. First, I tackled the issue of “I” through the concept of vague self. I explained that it is due to the association of avatar with gamer’s self. Then, in relation with such association, I discussed identities and how they are classified in related literature. While the emphatic self is a lighter association similar to empathy of movie or book characters, the

sameness identity is a full association. Lastly, I explained the term fragmented self and creation of new identities along with the social self and avatars as vehicles. In fragmented self, avatars are approached as bodies to use, which is another fragment of self. In that sense, it is another body, so there is no avatar to associate with.

In the next section, I present embodiment again, but this time it is from the real world side of computer gaming.

2.3.2. Training of Body: Skills and Embodiment

In this section, I present the issue of training and bodily skills. First, I explain the coding of body, followed by narrative relationship between skill and tool. Lastly, I issue tool, skill and embodiment from a more holistic approach.

First, I start with Foucault (1975, p.152) and his concept of "disciplined body". In his study of modern disciplinary apparatuses, including prisons, hospitals and military institutions, Foucault comments on how the subjects' bodies are shaped by the objects, such as desks and rifles. While explaining "the body-object articulation," he gives the example of the relationship between body and rifle in the military context. He refers to the influence of bringing rifle in three stages as "the instrumental coding of the body". He further explains the coherence as "It consists of a breakdown of the total gesture into two parallel series: that of the parts of the body to be used and that of the parts of the object manipulated" (Foucault, 1975, p.153). Moreover, he explains how this "syntax" is called as "manoeuvre" by the eighteenth-century military theorists.

In that sense, Ingold's (2006) approach is highly similar in terms of built relationship between tool and skill. He explains manoeuvre and skill with saw as a tool. He begins his explanation with the analogy between tool and storytelling. According to Ingold (2006, p.56), we think of tools over their functions, whereas their functions come from their "narratives" and not "attributes". Narratives present relationships within the field

of activity. On the other hand, attributes are reduced into the tool itself and not the story of its relationships. So, his thoughts align with using gaming tools to create "verbs" (Anthropy, 2014) that make sense in the context of game.

Moreover, Ingold explains the issue of skill by separating it from gestures. He defines skill, in his example of sawing, as an integrity.

> The practice of sawing issues as much from the trestle plank as from the saw, as much from the saw as from the carpenter, as much from the carpenter's eyes and ears as rom his hands, as much from his ears and hands from his mind. You only get sawing when all these things, and more are bound together and work in unison (Ingold, 2006, p.58).

He also calls that unity as "multisensory coupling" is the key of skilled practice. Multisensory coupling approaches skill from a more holistic approach. It targets the entire action and its elements instead of focusing the tool as the signifier of the skill.

In addition, he puts emphasis on the issue of concentration which is an outcome of experience. This analysis implicates that skill can be delivered by competent practitioner and only then, it would become an embodiment.

Lastly, I point out Pallasmaa's (2017 p. 96) perspective. The author calls that "training of the hand" is a knowledge of skills which "resides in the sensory and muscular memory, directly embedded and encoded in the situations of life". He further goes by explaining that our body is also embodied and our identities are manipulated. Moreover, he explains that our consciousness is embodied through our physical bodies. Based on his opinion, it can be said that embodiment of game characters is not different from our bodies.

As a result, in this section I tackled the training of body and skills from three perspectives. First is Foucault's "disciplined body", where he explains coding of body. It is associated with objects and the trained body is to move in coherence with objects to achieve object-body articulation. Second, I issue Ingold's approach towards skill from the perspective of the practitioner. He explains that skill is a combination of many things at once and they work in coherence in order to have a meaningful outcome and tools are tools because of their narratives. The experienced practitioner can deliver the skill in

coherence with all the elements within the narrative. Lastly, I address Pallasmaa's point of view, which is about the trained body and the embodiment of the body by our consciousness. The combination of these three opinions can form an understanding on gaming tools and theoretical approach while evaluating their relationship with the body. They target the embodiment of tools and the coherence between tools and body.

In the next section, I explain the issue of awareness. It is related with consciousness and embodiment, and also is connected to the holistic approach of these three perspectives that I presented in this chapter.

2.3.3. Awareness of Body during Game

To start with, according to Dovey and Kennedy (2006, p.104), intense gaming has a description related with loss of sense of time, place or self which he calls as immersion. He explains that this immersion is enhanced with players' skill development.

In previous sections, I also mention that he sees avatars as a body that is occupied by the player (Dovey and Kennedy, 2006, p.91). In that sense, the embodiment is related with developed skills.

Also, Penny (2006, p.74) explains that during the moment of embodiment, the activity becomes a reflex and it is not conscious. He further goes by explaining that in modeled 3D worlds, in game representations, for example a gun, becomes "embodied aspects of simulation influence representation in real time" (Penny, 2006, p.74). His descriptions on embodiment include production of meaning in real time; however, in his opinion the

players are "not conscious". That can be interpreted as a bodily unawareness. There is a difference between his definition of embodiment and Dovey and Kennedy's. While Dovey and Kennedy (2006, p.91) explain that a virtual body is embodied, Penny claims that an in-game object is embodied. Penny's approach can be seen as a virtual version of Foucault.

Moreover, Taylor (2003, p.1) expresses the issue of being in the game as “telepresent state”. According to her, that state means that “ the subject exists in multiple areas in such a way as to be able to effect change in that (or those) other areas while also being able to effect change in the subject's physical space”. She also adds that during that state, it is possible to forget main bodily needs as sleeping, eating etc. (Taylor, 2003, p.10).

On the other hand, Pallasmaa’s perspective takes consciousness as its core. He claims that our physical body is not the only tool of senses. “We are connected with the world through our senses. However, the senses are not merely passive receptors of stimuli, and the body is not only a point of viewing the world from a central perspective” (Pallasmaa, 2017, p.100). So, his approach is in favor of having real experiences through avatars apart from our physical bodies, in a way, by forgetting them.

Lastly, according to Kirkpatrick (2013, p.82) gaming body can be explained by two concepts, embodiment and habitus. He explains that the embodiment of interaction tools is a must in order to have a meaningful experience and that is possible by gaming habitus.

> Computer games are inserted into the human sensorium in a unique way: no other medium interfaces with human beings on so many levels at once. Games provide sounds, sights and somatic stimuli that have to be processed and responded to using eyes, hands and other parts of the body.

While Kirkpatrick’s approach is very close to Pallasmaa, it also encapsulates the unity described by Ingold. Overall senses, tools and body create meaning for habitus which he borrowed from Bourdieu (1995). In this habitus body loses its significance as body becomes an interaction method. So, while it is highly significant as a tool, it is not there as the physical representation of consciousness.

To sum up, in this section I argued awareness of body during gaming through related literature. First, I present how embodiment and unawareness is achieved through training of body. Then, I argued the embodiment in game tools. Next I explained telepresent state which may result in complete unawareness of physical body which is followed by embodiment through the perspective of senses and consciousness. Finally, I briefly presented embodiment as gaming habitus.

2.4. Summary

Throughout this chapter, I explain gaming, game culture and gamers through related literature.

In first section, I presented history of video games and their close relationship with board games throughout the history. These historically valuable games also have implications over genres and classification of current video games. Then, I presented game types; casual and non-casual games. Non-casual games are also referred as serious games which have high skill demands unlike casual games. Other than these types, there are game genres. Due to their excessive amount, I explained genres that are important in the context of this research: strategy games, MMORPGs, FPSs, adventure games and MOBAs. Later, I highlighted basic gamer types through Bartle's (2017) interest graph; (see section 2.1.2.3) killers, achievers, socializers and explorers. From this point forth, I explained that there might be different game elements each gamer type can be interested at, which I related with fun and immersion. As an extension of this topic, I presented gameplay and mechanics. I also displayed the relationship of them with game controls. However, game controls are not deeply argued from the perspective of game interacting in related literature. (Brown et al., 2015; Caroux et al., 2015, p.3)

In second section, I approached gaming as a subculture through related literature. I explained casual and hardcore gamers in addition to their social roles in gaming

community. Also, I highlighted the issue of subcultures and how gaming is considered as one. Additionally, I depicted origins of gaming subculture and how it emerged. Afterwards, I presented smaller communities in gaming culture.

In last section, I argued gaming and interaction through related literature. I explained gamers' relationship with their avatar and characters. To do so, I discussed the issue of "I" (Cogburn and Silcox, 2009, p.17) as the way most gamers use to refer their characters. I linked this issue with three identities Tronstad suggests (2008, p.251); empathic, sameness and character identities. According to him, there are levels of gamer's self-association with their characters. These three identities reflect varying levels. Also, I introduced Kirkpatrick's (2013, p.26) "fragmented self" where gamer adopts a variety of identities during his online interactions. In addition to this approach, I presented Dovey's and Kennedy's (2006, p.91) perspective where they argue that avatar is a body serving as a vehicle.

Moreover, I raised the issue of body. I discussed training and practice through related literature. I highlighted Foucault's (1975, p.152) "the body object articulation" in addition to Ingold's (2006, p.58) "multisensory coupling" where he focuses the entire action instead of the tool body interacts with. Through these approaches, I argued immersion and "gamer habitus". (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p.82)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I explain the methodological approach I adopt to understand the meanings and significance of gamers' experiences in and around gameplay, including those with gaming hardware, software and as a subcultural community. Initially, I clarify my research approach by highlighting the use of a qualitative research methodology in addition to insider and outsider discussion. Afterwards, I explain each research stage and its methodology separately. Lastly, I explain how I analyzed the data I gathered, the outcome of which forms the next chapter; "Analysis".

3.1. Research Approach

As a part of social and behavioral research, qualitative and quantitative methods are both used to provide meaningful research data. Qualitative methods offer a more close-up outcome conducted in a less controlled research setting, due to researcher's closer interaction with participants. On the other hand, quantitative research methods can construct numeric data such as ratings. (Wienclaw, 2017) In this research, I adopted a qualitative method. That is because my aim is to study individual bodily and cultural experiences of gamers which require a closer and in-depth interaction with participants. In qualitative methods, researcher can be a part of the research process. In this research, that is the case which is also a motive in adopting qualitative methods due to the need of close-up examination.

3.1.1. Qualitative and interpretive approaches

Qualitative methods have many instruments of conducting such as observations, questionnaires and document analysis. Its results do not appear instantly, they require "a

processing stage often involving the editing of notes and transcribing of tape recordings". (Gray, 2004, p.142) Three main instruments of qualitative research are field observation (either participatory or non-participatory), survey research and secondary analysis. (Wienclaw, 2017) Moreover, qualitative research methods are highly relevant with the studies of social relations due to the pluralization of life worlds. (Flick, 2009, p.12) Pluralization of life worlds important in context of this research due to multiple realities and cultural layers that gaming provides.

In this research, my aim is to seek practices of multiplayer online game players in terms of their experiences within the gaming culture. I adopt qualitative research methods due to the fact that they are the typical method in the analysis of cultural studies (Flick, 2009, p.234)

In addition, I briefly present positivism and interpretivism which represents how I look at my data, my epistemology.

Positivism is the approach where the truth can be acquired through empirical experience. Physical senses, scientific observation and facts are the main ways of evaluating the truth. (Gray, 2004, p. 18) The scientific method is superior to values. (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.6). On the other hand, interpretivism is based on perception, understanding, senses and practical reason unlike positivism's scientific reason. I follow interpretivism during this research which mostly associated with qualitative methods. (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003. p.8)

Considering the scope of this research, interacting with gamers and acquiring their insights for enlightening their practices and experiences is the aim. Such data is possible to acquire by following interpretivism with a qualitative method. In next sections I explain how I conducted this research through this methodology.

3.1.2. Being an Insider

Firstly, I present the issue of being an insider of researched group. It is a highly controversial issue due to its implications on objectivity. Although being an insider provides prior knowledge about the issue, researcher must be very careful. Although he should use his insight to be more attentive he should also approach as if he knows nothing about the field. (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.55)

Moreover, there are three "membership roles" that Adler and Adler (1998) suggest in order to determine researcher's standing in such cultural studies.

- peripheral member researchers, who do not participate in the core activities of group members
- active member researchers, who become involved with the central activities of the group without fully committing themselves to the members' values and goals;
- complete member researchers, who are already members of the group or who become fully affiliated during the course of the research.

(Adler and Adler, 1998)

Within the lead of this knowledge, it can be said that I am an insider of my researched group as a gamer. I can be considered as a complete member researcher due to my relevancy with gaming culture out of this thesis' context.

My interest in gaming is centered on *YouTube* community. The very first game that I felt interested was *Silent Hill III*. I came across to it in an issue of the game magazine *Level* when I was in high school, at 2007. Since I was scared of its tension based game environment, I tried to find people who recorded their playing experience of *Silent Hill III* and introduced myself to game related channels within *YouTube.* As a result, I started

to watch content creators and gained a great knowledge on games even the ones I did not play personally. Examples to such games can ben *Last of Us, Heavy Rain, Walking Dead, Uncharted 4, Beyond: Two Souls, Infamous: Second Son* and *Life is Strange*. Watching instead of playing made me realize that I am more interested in story based games which are single player games most of the times. However, I played *DC Universe Online, World of Warcraft, Heroes of the Storm, Dota II* and Left for *Dead II* which are all online games. Although I also played some of these games, my main connection is based on knowledge not knowhow. I spent more time watching and reading about games than playing. In that sense, as a gamer I might not be developed enough skill wise, but I have an extensive knowledge on games, companies and their stories. I still continue watching games after 10 years. I mainly play adventure indie games, games that are produced by independent developers, since I find the art and storyline more valuable in these games. Weekly, I play video games around 5 or 6 hours and watch or read about them approximately for 10 hours.

3.2. Research Phases

In order to explain methodological structure of this research, I separate it into three sections: Preliminary Study, Research Phase I: Autoethnography and Research Phase II: Interviews.

The preliminary study is a term paper that I prepared in January 2016 for the graduate course *Critique of Design II* instructed by *Assist. Prof. Dr. Harun Kaygan*. Although it is a term paper, the literature research that I conducted in the process of preparation went beyond its purpose and turned into a research interest requiring a detailed study. It pointed out that there might be game related issues which did not covered fully in related literature. In that sense, the preliminary study is the origin of this thesis with the literature research and the brief case study it presents. Afterwards, as the second and main section of methodologic structure, a deeper literature research along with *Research Phases I* and *II*, in addition to analysis, are conducted. During *Phase I*, I conducted an

autoethnographic research. I recorded my playing sessions of an unfamiliar video game through a journal. I mainly focused on my bodily interaction. At the end, I analyzed my findings through data coding.

In *Phase II*, I interviewed with six gamers through in-depth open ended interview questions. I also recorded one hour of their gaming sessions. Later, I also analyzed the data I acquired through interviews and participant observation. I present the structure and relationships in between research phases on the chart below.

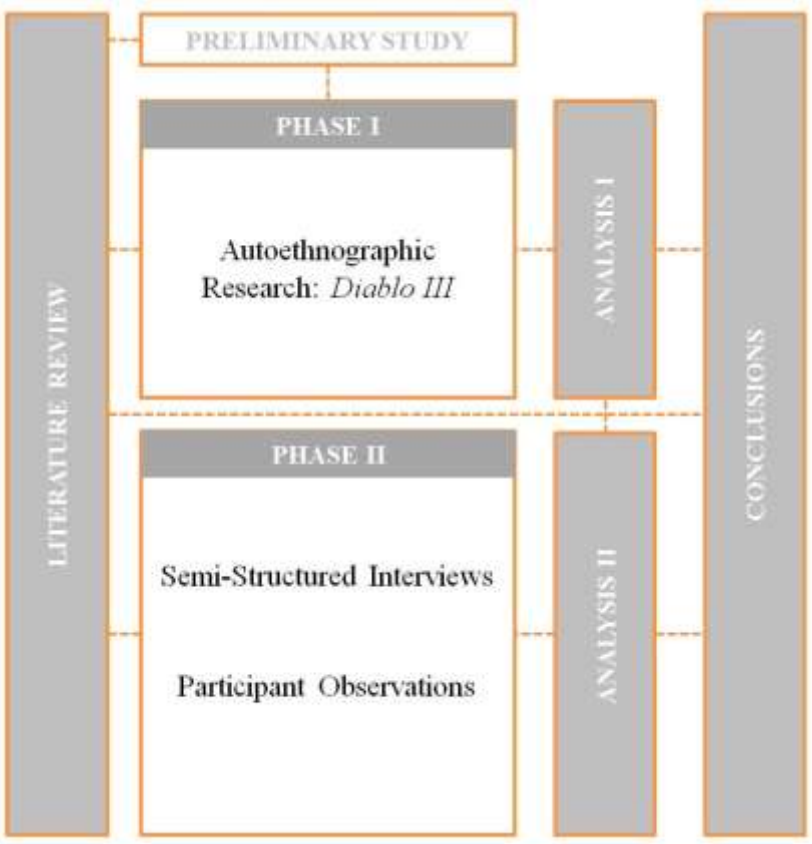


Figure 7: Methodology Chart

3.3. Preliminary Study

Preliminary study argues "Relationship of Body, Mind and Gaming Mouse with Keyboard and Subculture of Gaming" as it is highlighted through its title. Due to its

implications over game related literature, it is an important, yet small, first step to this research. In this section, I present its stages and how they are conducted briefly in order to present how it motivated the main phases of the research.

To begin with, I conducted a literature research regarding gaming tools and their implications over gaming. I built up a list of game related theoretical concepts. Some of them are used to build and design the literature research that I held for this thesis (*Phases I* and *II*), as well. However, I could not find many resources enlightening gaming tools' cultural value regarding gaming and game interaction through them. In order to understand if they are actually valuable in these senses, I conducted case studies with two gamers using different gaming mice. I observed their use of gaming mice. At the end of preliminary study, I argued that gaming mice are important interaction tools that are valuable within the gaming community. Also, there might be more complex relationships within the community which is not highlighted enough within the related literature.

In addition, during the observation part, I saw that I can be considered as an insider of the gaming community. That finding led up to *Phase I* of this research where I conduct an autoethnographic research in order to elude from negative impact that I might obtain from my nonacademic familiarity with gaming. During the case study section, I also observed that game interacting methods may vary from one gamer to another and this variation is based on both impacts of body and gaming culture. This section became the basepoint for *Phase II* and *Phase III* of this research where I conduct in depth interviews and analyze them through qualitative research methods. Lastly, the argument of

preliminary study reflects the approach that I adopted throughout this research by tackling gamers and gaming culture as a complex mesh of relationships.

As a result, preliminary study I highly valuable due to its parts' transition into this research. In next section, I depict *Phase I*, which is the autoethnographic research conducted through documentation of my *Diablo III* play.

3.4. Research Phase I: Autoethnographic Study: *Diablo III*

I played a computer game that I have no experience on, as a first step of *Phase I*. Observing these steps led me into having an objective approach and value social and bodily practices that were natural to me before this phase of my research. In next section, I depict the methodology of this step in addition to how they are used.

3.4.1. Autoethnography

For this phase of the study, I played *Diablo III*, an unfamiliar game compared to my previous gaming experience and recorded my process. In order to highlight methodological structure of *Phase I*, I depict characteristics of ethnographic and autoethnographic research.

Ethnography and Autoethnography

Ethnographic analysis includes an observation on cultural practices. In such studies, researcher participates the process so that they can record and analyze it. (Flick, 2009, p.137) It gives in-depth, very close up and genuine data that is unavailable by other means.

Since the practice that I observed was my own, autoethnography is the right way of naming the method. Aligning with the discussion of "membership roles" from previous section, Ellis (2006, p. 437) has a similar perspective on autoethnographic analysis.

According to her, autoethnography is a beneficial tool when the researcher is

- A full member of the research group or setting
- Committed to developing theoretical understanding of broader social phenomena.

Due to my relationship with gaming, in addition to my commitment of understanding the culture further, autoethnography was the most appropriate way to study and understand my own interaction processes. Although this part of the study was related with remaining my objectivity towards the rest of the research, due to my position as an insider, autoethnographic study had another primary focus. I took it as a very good chance to study bodily interactions from the practitioner's perspectives. I aimed to observe my own, a gamer's, steps of developing gaming skills along with connection methods with the community. Most importantly, due to autoethnographic research, I gained the ability of observing the very personal and bodily process of developing game related habits regarding learnings, interactions and communications. If I did not hold that study, I would not be able to study the role of the community in seemingly individual play experience.

Conducting the Process

I played *Diablo III*, an online RPG, for a total of sixteen hours. I picked this game due to its distance with my accustomed game genre. Until this research, I did not have the experience of playing an online game with isometric perspective and related controls. In that sense, my unfamiliarity served as a new experience that I can not use my game related habits.

During my gameplay, I followed the storyline which is called as "campaign" within the

game. Unlike “adventure mode”, there is a storyline to follow in order to complete the game. Since adventure mode does not have a start and an end, campaign served better for the purpose of this phase; challenging myself. Throughout the campaign mode character travels different locations and encounter local bosses at these areas. Location changes happen at the end of “acts” which are small chapters of the overall storyline. There are four acts varying in length. I separated my sessions according to those acts.

Figure 8: Screenshot, *Diablo III*, 2016

I played each act without interruption and took diary notes right afterwards, within twenty four hours, as it is suggested by Bernard. (2011) In addition, since I was able to write on my diary at the end of playing sessions, I video recorded myself to make sure that I do not miss any data.

Fieldnotes

Ethnographic analysis depends on documentation of observation. This documentation is possible by taking field notes. For this step, I adapted field note techniques of “descriptive notes” on a “journal” (Bernard, 2011) (see Figure 9). Field jottings are

what get you through the day. Human memory is a very poor recording device, especially for the kind of details that make the difference between good and so-so ethnographic research" (Bochner, 2001, p.12) Due to Bochner's claim, field notes are necessary for this research since I had two roles of both recording and being recorded. In addition to my journal I also video recorded my plays in order to have a visual data

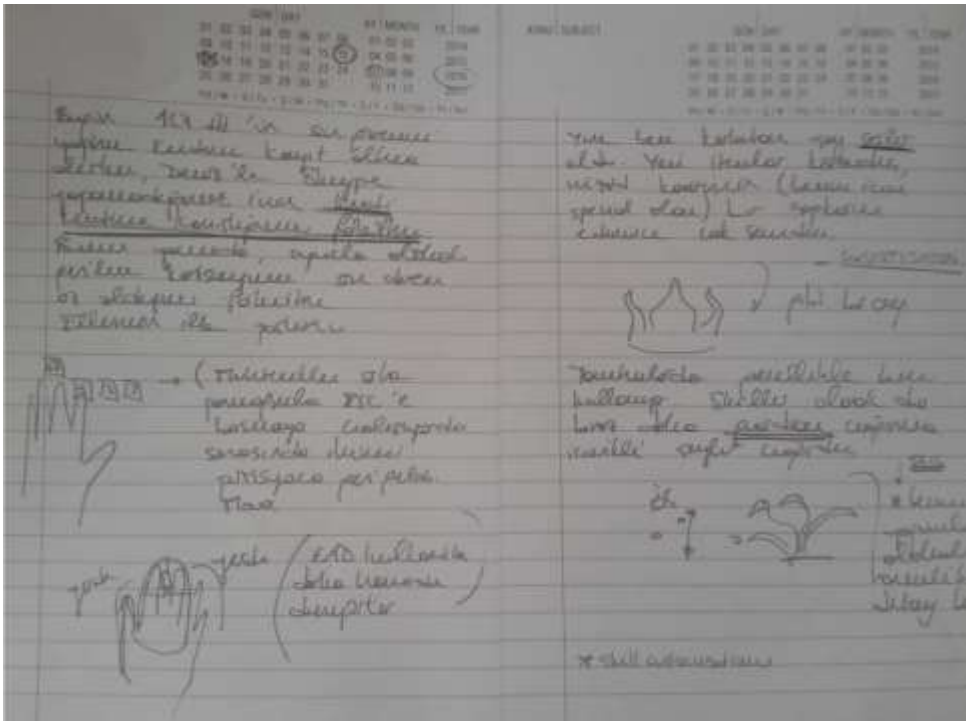


Figure 9: Autoethnographic Study Journal

since my notes had to be taken after my playing sessions, to make sure that no data gets lost. In next section, I present the analysis of my gaming sessions through field notes.

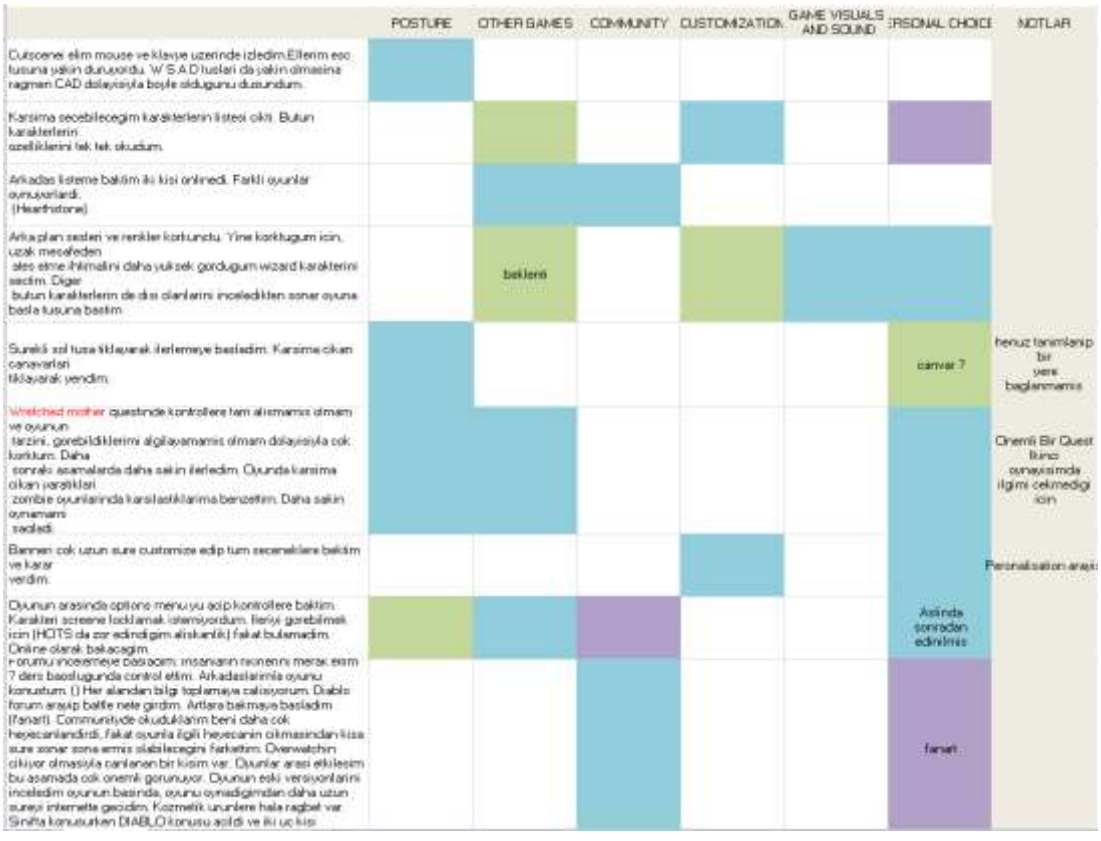
3.4.2. Analysis

In order to explain how I converted my observations into themes of discussion, as a part of the thematic analysis, I present coding method briefly. Coding is an important stage

that allows researcher to gather notes together through systematically classifying them. (Bernard, 2011, p.399) Although there are more complex coding methods including dedicated coding programs, I organized my codes manually on the diary. I approached this stage's findings as a patterned data. I coded them according to their "similarity" as a method introduced in Saldana's (2009, p.6) book. While searching codes according to similarity, I detected things that happen the same way. Also, I used the codes I generated in this phase in the analysis of second page.

For the analysis, I coded my findings and formed my concepts around these codes. Later, I organized the data around these themes. I also color coded my entries according to their relevancy with the concepts.

Table 1: Autoethnographic Analysis



3.5. Research Phase II: Interviews and Observations

In this section, I present the methodology of the interviews and participant observations that I held. First, I start with sampling, explaining how I recruited my participants. Second, I depict the structure of interviews and participant observations. Lastly, I explain methods that I used to analyse the data collected through interviews.

3.5.1. Sampling

In order to pick participants that I interviewed, I used non-probability sampling method, which is considered as more appropriate or qualitative researches. In Non-probability sampling, participants are not intended to be representative of a statistical value, instead, characteristics of the population is valued. In that sense, this method is beneficial for small scaled in depth studies (Ritchie and Lewis, 2013, p.78) In that sense, I aimed to achieve participants that are hardcore gamers (see section 2.2.1) and multiplayer online game players. I also interviewed participant with a minimum 12 years of experience, due to ADSLs introduction to Turkey at 2005. (Türkiye'de İnternet, 2017). So that I aimed to acquire data regarding their introduction to online community.

As an insider, I paid attention not to interview my circle of gaming friends in order to maintain the distance required by this research. However, I still used my position as an insider. I aimed to reach their friends from different gaming groups. I reached gamers that my friends play with.

When I was seeking participants, not everyone accepted to take place in my research. I reached 10 people matching the criteria. However, only 6 of them agreed to interview.

I got introduced to one group while playing *World of Warcraft.* They were 2 people from the same gaming group. I later continued my conversation with them over texting and phone, yet they did not agree to host me at their houses.

Another group that initially agreed to interview had 2 people. One of them did not prefer to host me at his house. Second member of this group found the interview too lengthy. I got introduced to one of the participants by a gaming friend of mine, during a night out. He agreed to take part in my research and introduced me to his girlfriend who they play together.

I met with other 3 players on the phone, through two texting groups headed by my friends who introduced us. First texting group had two participant who later helped recruiting another participant from their gaming group. Second texting group had the last participant who did not bring any other player to interview.

I did not to pick more than three people from the same gaming group in order to reach a variety of insights. As a result, I interviewed six gamers. As I highlighted, it was difficult to find participants who would agree to the long and personal interview protocol. First, I asked them to accept me at their houses. It was the hardest part due to participants' unfamiliarity with me. Also, gaming environment is a private area and setting which may not easy to compromise. Second, I asked them to spare almost half of their days for my research, which relies fully on personal depictions. Lastly, I asked to record their play time which is another issue that participants hesitated to agree. On the other hand, these protocols also generated a very large data. Since interviews' flow were intentionally friendly, almost a structured chat in between two gamers, the data that I acquired was very large as a result of almost half a day spent with each participant.

As I explained in last paragraph, the interviews revealed a very personal data including real identities of online gamers. That is why, with the respect to their personal life, I kept their identities anonymous. Due to the requirement of anonymity, I asked each participant to pick a game-like nickname. These nicknames reflect how they want to be represented, which aligns with the concept of this thesis. I present their gaming experience, preferred game genre and sex. (see Table 2. Participants marked with *

represents a group of friends that regularly play together. Participants marked with ° represents a couple who were interviewed together.)

Table 2: Participants

PARTICIPANT NICKNAME	EXPERIENCE (Y)	FAVOURITE GENRE	SEX
ALLY*	20	MOBA	M
ARVELDIS	15	MMORPG	M
BLACKCANARY°	11	MOBA	F
MILDLY TOXIC*	16	FPS	M
NATHAN DRAKE°	15	MOBA	M
THERALION*	15	MMORPG	M

3.5.2. Research Phase II: Interview Protocol

In order to grasp each gamer's perspective, I conducted an interview and observation session with them. First one is a semi-structured, in depth interview and the second one is non-participant observation of an online game played by them.

3.5.2.1. Interview

In-depth interviews focus on individuals. "They provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of each person's personal perspective". (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.58) In semi-structured, interviews, researcher prepares a list of issues to be covered. However, unlike structured interviews, the order to questions might be shifted while also new questions can be added according to course of events. It is desirable to acquire stories, opinions through expanded answers. (Gray, 2004, pp.216-7) Due to the qualitative approach that I adopted throughout this research, in the second phase I aimed for gamers to depict their insights, regarding their game related experiences in detail, as if they are around their friends. That is why, the interview that I prepared is semi-structured and in

depth. It allows gamers to speak freely within the margins of this research's purposes.

According to Gray (2004, p.165) observations can happen in several ways. Researcher might be a participant or a non participant. Also his observation can be overt or covert. In participant observation, researcher joins the program as a participant. However during a non-participant observation, researcher does not take place in the study, but observes. If he conducts an overt observation, participants know that he is holding a research. Whereas during a covert research, participants does not know about the researcher's identity. In my case, I held an overt non-participatory observation while recording y participants.

Moreover, two of the participants were a couple playing together. I held a paired interview including both of them due to their unique case. In paired interviews there are multiple people interviewed at the same time. Such interviews are beneficial when "two people form a naturally occurring unit" ((Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.37)

In order to be able to observe them in their regular gaming environment, I asked each potential participant if I could interview them at their house or where they usually play video games. I also explained the flow of the interview in order to help them feel more comfortable and prepared. I went to their house with small gifts, mostly desserts to thank them for sparing almost half of their days for the sake of this research. Moreover, they signed a consent form (Appendix A) in order to understand how I will use the data and its purpose.

As I mentioned before, I am also a gamer. Although I conducted *Phase I* in order to regain my objectivity, I also felt the need of implying my position as a gamer during the interviews. According to my experience, gamers were more willing to share when they sensed that I am a gamer as well. Our common knowledge made their explanations

shorter while making the overall narration more detailed since they felt that I can relate to their stories. However, in some cases this situation lead them to assume that I had insight on the things I was not familiar with. These things were genre specific knowledge most of the time. In such cases, I needed to interrupt the flow, or took notes to ask later, so that I could understand their depictions better. Also, sometimes even if I knew about the information they are giving, I pretended that I did not. In these cases, I acquired gamer' perspectives on some issues they would not mention or pass quickly.

Consequently, I used my gamer identity as needed and in different levels. In other words, I improvised about presenting my game knowledge in favor of this research which is considered as a key aspect of semi-structured interviews. (Gray, 2004, p.225)

Each interview lasted approximately two hours. I recorded each interview through a voice recorder. First, I held a pilot interview with *Arveldis* and controlled the scope of interview questions. Questions were adequate. However, I changed their order from generic to specific and from past to current issues. (see Appendix B)

Interview schedule designed to cover five main issues.

- Gaming past and habits
- Gaming environment
- Perspective on computer games in general
- Perspective on computer games interviewee is good at
- About the gaming community

These issues aimed to have an understanding on each aspects of gaming regarding its cultural, physical and social aspects for gamers. Although I shifted the questions' order after the pilot interview, I could not ask them in the order that I structured. Due to the

semi-structured interview, questions mostly reached out other issues and I slightly directed them in order to remain participants' flow. Interview questions as a checklist to make sure that I received all the data I aimed to do so.

3.5.2.2. Gaming Session

In order to analyze gamers' interaction practices deeper, I recorded them playing a short term game of their choices after the interview. I held this section second to make sure that gaming performances would not affect the interviews. All played MOBA games while I record. I picked this genre for two main reasons; time and acquiring a coherent data. I needed a game type that would have matches, so that it would begin and end within the time participants asked to spare. Second, all gamers needed to play the same genre, so that their gestures could be interpreted with same criteria. From genres that match these criteria, I picked MOBA. MOBA games have the closest controls and perspective view to *Diablo III*, which I played during my autoethnographic study. Through having similar interaction requirements I aimed to achieve a coherent data that can be interpreted together. In order to get an extensive data, I aimed for a recording perspective where both screen and participants' hands can be seen on the scene together. (see Figure 10)

3.5.2.3. Analysis

In this section, I explain how I analyzed the data that I collected. I explain transcribing the data, followed by coding and analysis.

Transcribing the Data

Transcription is a method used for transforming a recorded data into the text form. Although there are different transcription methods, each of these methods leads the research into having different outcomes by laying emphasis on different points of interviews. (Flick, 2009, p. 299) Although transcriptions are not meant to be seen by

anyone other than me, I still used a similar method with Flick's (2009, p.302) suggestion in order to distinguish who speaks. I used initials of each interviewee, and organized transcription as a dialogue, without describing participants' body language.

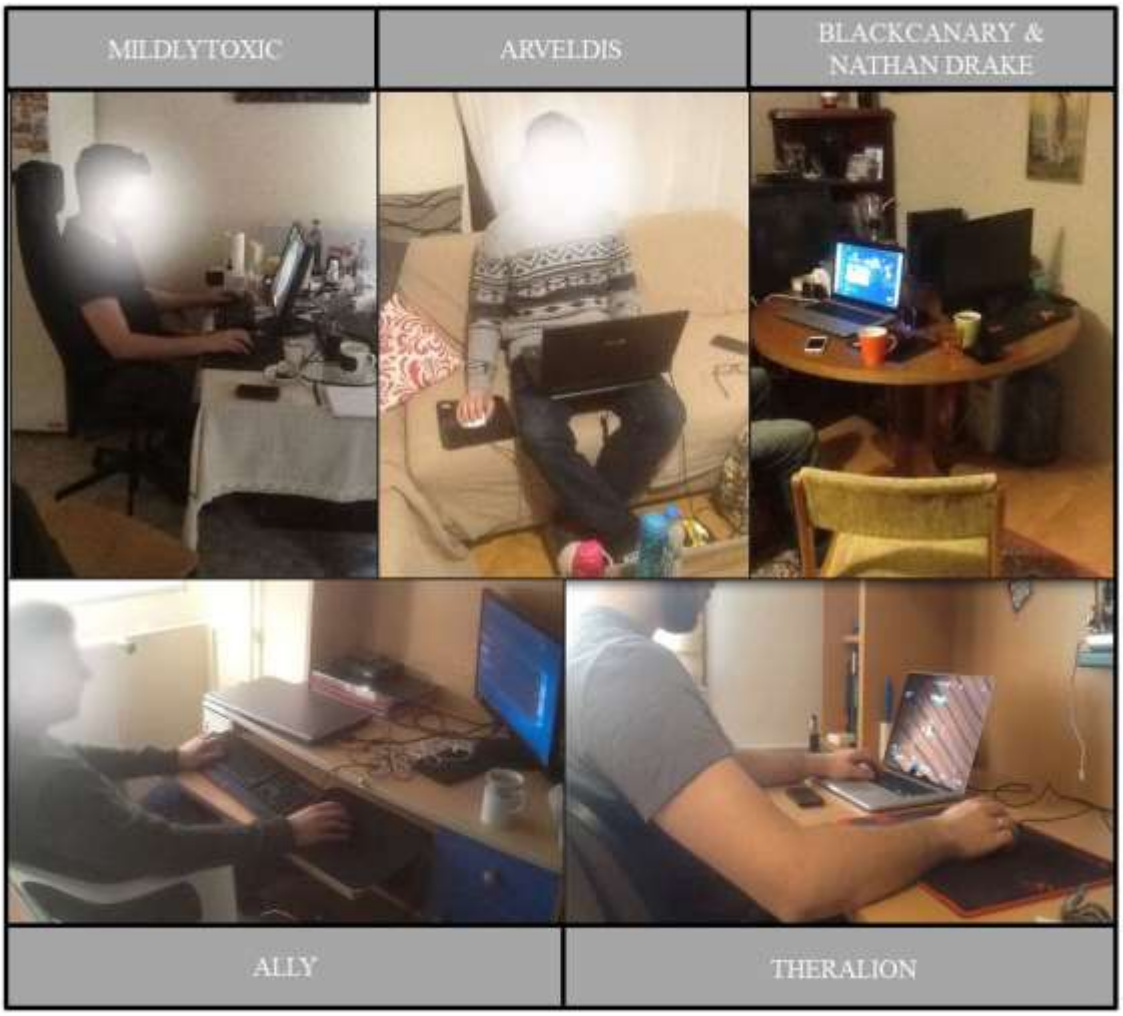


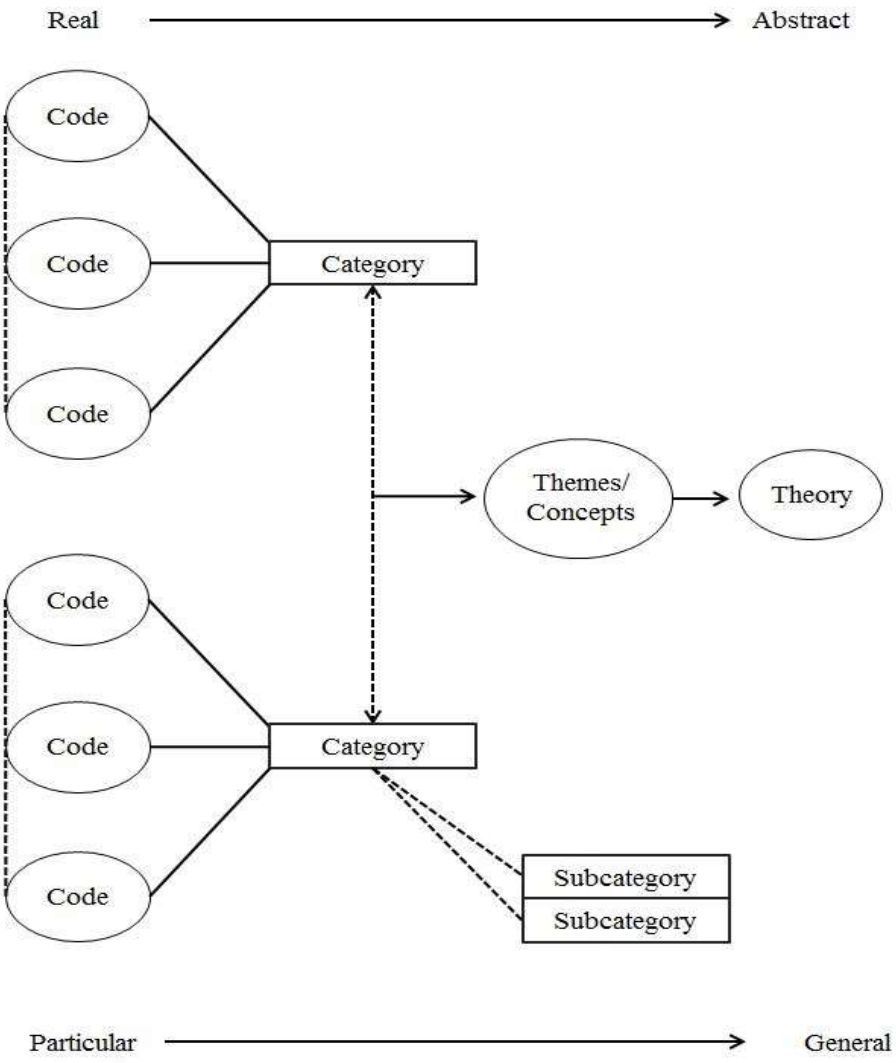
Figure 10: Participant Observation

Coding

Similar to the coding process in *Phase I*, I coded the data manually; however the larger data of *Phase II* required a more complex coding method. Saldana's (2009, p.12)

method became a guideline in order to understand relationships of themes and codes. (see Table 3) Firstly, I started with creating the initial codes where I worked directly on transcriptions. These are called first cycle codes according to Saldana (2009). Without the concern of categorizing, I noted every single subject that interviews are issuing. As an outcome, I obtained a rich amount of codes. (see Figure 11)

Table 3: Coding Chart, (Saldana, 2009, p.12)



Afterwards, I started grouping codes, according to their similarities, as I did with the autoethnographic study. Classification of initial codes leaded into a more refined set of codes, which I Saldana (2009) refers as second cycle codes. Later, I revisited initial codes and paired initial and main codes in order to make sure that I am not losing any of my valuable data in the process of refining. (see Figure 12) After making sure that second cycle codes cover entire issues depicted throughout the interviews, I formed categories and subcategories of main codes. Lastly, through the categorization I reached

Figure 11: First and Second Cycle Codes

main themes of analysis. I revisited transcriptions once again, and created a relevancy chart as I did with my previous analysis. (see Table 4) In this second chart, I used shades of one color in order to visualize relevancy of selected quotation to each theme. Also I prepared an additional set of column; hardware and software, in order to

differentiate platforms that participants depicting, which is necessary in the context of this research.

I matched themes with transcribed interview data on a table. Whereas, since interview codes might be about multiple themes at the same time, I turned the table into a relevancy chart. As a result, while I matched each quote with the teams it is related, I also marked its relevancy degree with each theme. On the table (see Table 4) blue marks represent primary teams and relevancy degrees. Green marks reflect the platform, hardware or software, quote is referring to. Also, I translated used data to English from Turkish.

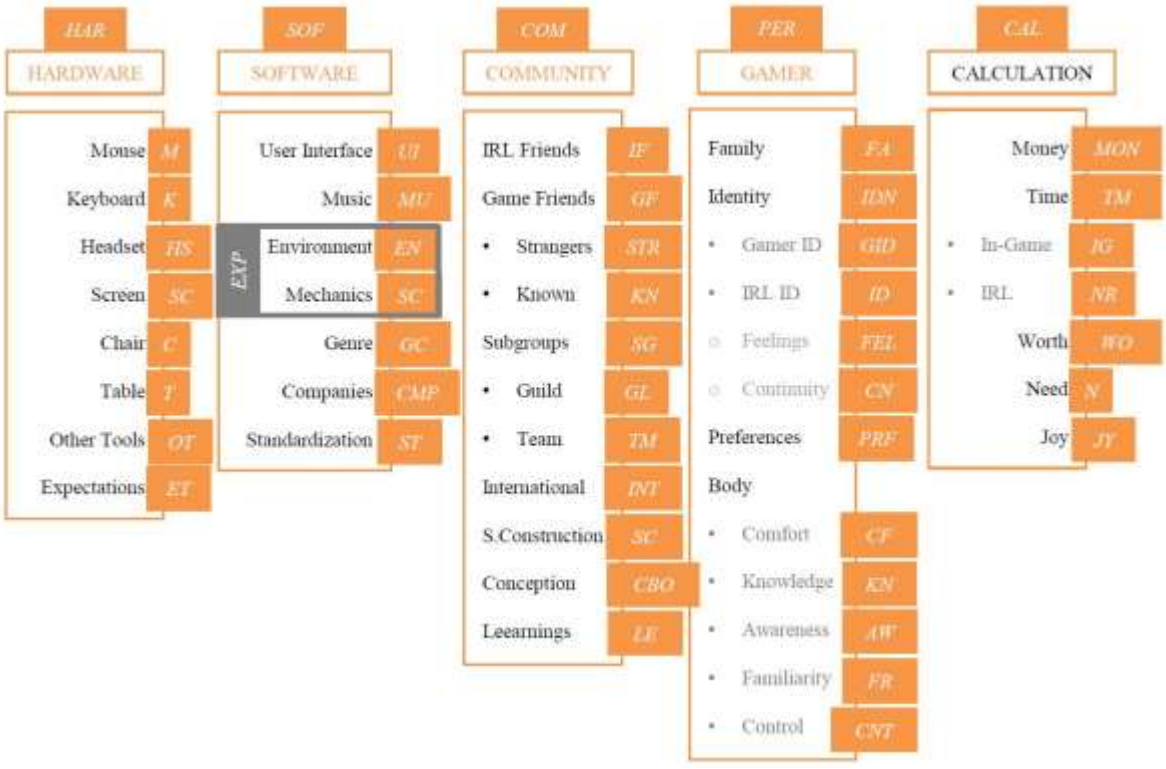
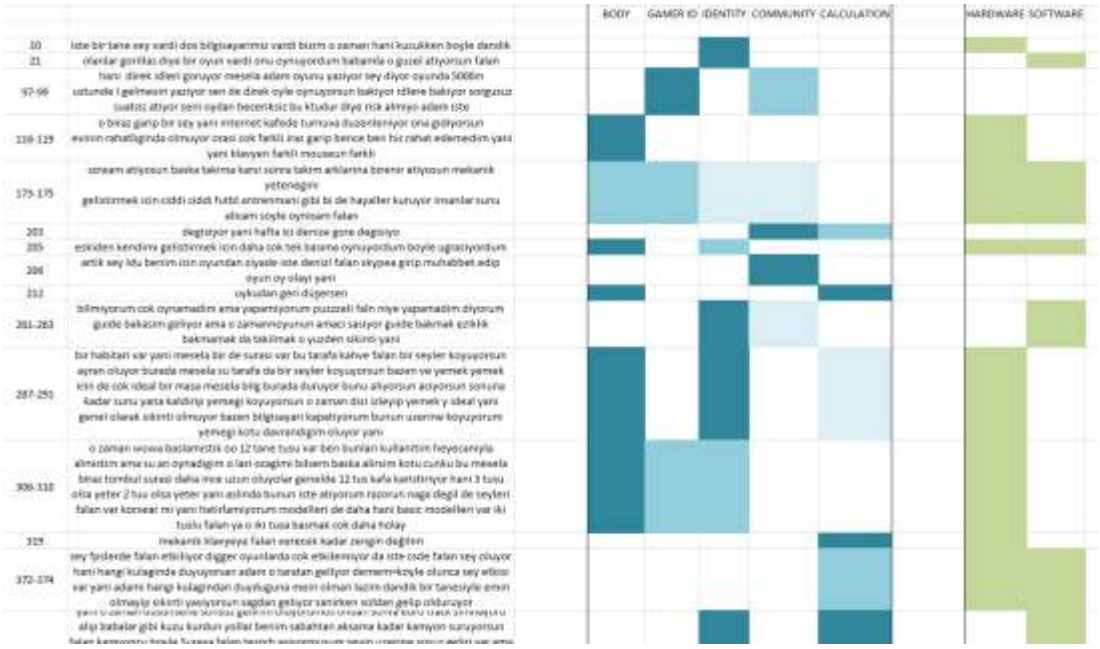


Figure 12: Second Cycle Codes and Themes

Table 4: Relevancy Chart



Analysis of the Video Content

After the interviews, I recorded videos of each participant playing a MOBA game. These videos served in the process of analyzing bodily interactions since they not possible to fully acquire by only interviewing the participants. I approached videos with an ethnographic survey perspective. I noted the participant's' posture with an objective approach, by only defining and highlighting them, in order to prepare grounds or a deeper analysis. I watched each video and took notes of bodily and behavioral acts. As Gray (2004, p.245) shows through the adapted steps by Ellen (1984) visual data can transformed into written data so that they can be serviceable during analysis.

In next section, I explain how I prepared analysis chapter as a mixture of my two analyses and video content that I acquired after the interviews.

3.6. Summary

In this section, I present each phase of my thesis my explaining research methods that I used throughout the process. In *Phase I*, I conducted an autoethnographic research where observed my own behavior while playing *Diablo III*. In that phase, I analyzed the data that I acquired by using a simple coding method. Afterwards I interviewed and observed six participants in *Phase II*. I also video recorded gaming sessions where they play MOBA games. Lastly, in *Phase III*, I transcribed interviews and coded them with a more comprehensive method due to richness of data. Also, I analyzed the video content by noting participants' behavior and highlighting their actions in the video. As a result, I combined each phases' outcome in order to provide an extensive analysis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings of the autoethnographic study and those of the interviews are presented together in this chapter. Throughout the analysis, the main focus is on what was depicted by the players. The analysis will be presented in threefold: First, I explain the gamer community and how it is depicted by the interviewees. Second, I discuss the issue of competitiveness, which focuses on the issues of value and investment. Last, I confer the issue of identity, which includes gamers themselves and their bodies.

4.1. The Gamer Community

In this section, I highlight the relationship between gamers within the community. I point out how they form a culture through their network and its elements.

I discuss these elements in two sections: First section focuses on communication between gamers, while the second section conveys the concept of internationality where the scale of community according to participants' experiences is provided.

4.1.1. Communication of Gamers

In this section, I present how shared interests and practices help developing gaming culture with the help of communication. In addition, I highlight how this communication happened and in which forms. My aim is not to classify and explain every single method; instead, I present the communication ways depicted by participants.

Throughout the interviews, players depicted how valuable it is to find people with shared interests. *MildlyToxic* explains how excited he got when he found someone who understood his *World of Warcraft* related reference.

> In high school, when one of our instructors wrote "bvl" on the blackboard, I yelled "Blackwing Lair". [A friend] got surprised and asked "So you play too?" That is how we met, we even went to preparatory school together and started playing together. We still do.

In addition, *Arveldis* tells how hard it is to find someone with common taste in games.

> I believe there are not many people playing the kind of game I am interested in. Especially in Turkey, there are many people playing FPS games but when I come across someone playing games that I am interested in [MMORPGs], it is easier for me to get along with them or share things.

Besides gaming in general being important to *Arveldis*, this shows that playing a game within the same genre is also quite important for *Arveldis* to get along with someone. Based on these two statements, having a shared knowledge and interest on games provides bonding. Moreover, according to the participants, communication technologies changed their way of interaction with the gaming community and helped them find people with shared knowledge and interests. *MildlyToxic* says "during our childhood, the internet was not as prevalent as it is today". He claims, since internet was not common he did not know how many more people were also playing video games like him. He explains this through an example about *Counter Strike*:

> I realized that everyone around the world was playing *Counter Strike*, we just did not know it. When we heard about it, we found common points, like "I used to do that", "you used to do this"... Especially Russians have a similar a past with us in that sense.

It can also be interpreted from the quote that, hearing about other people having similar gaming experiences may act as a community binder at the international scale as well. In the past, people were playing by themselves or with their friends that were physically

near. As mentioned before in the literature chapter, internet connected gaming is a relatively young concept. (see chapter 3.1.1) *MildlyToxic* exhibits how he grew up with it and how it changed throughout the years. According to him, communication was the missing element in exceeding physical limitations within the community. In that sense, his quote highlights that gaming is a community which lives online. Also, *Arveldis* and *MildlyToxic* both imply that small scaled communities get acknowledged by the growth and resemblances found in between members through that growth. This causes gaming to be referred as a culture once they get to know one another through an online connection, as depicted by the participants. So, the community's online get together is viewed as an important event due to gamers' new ability to find people with common interests. There are many people sharing a particular culture without knowing one another, yet processing it the same way.

In this section, I depict communication of gamers through online media. Participants consist of people who follow social media, which enables them to hear news from non-game related sources. For example, when I ask *Arveldis* about how he follows game related news, he explains his social media connection as a second nature: "I mean university is very busy at the moment. I cannot follow closely but I am connected to internet like everyone else. So, of course I do follow somewhat". Although he does not explicitly spare time to get game related news, he still follows "somewhat". The importance of this issue lies at the mesh of online network which is depicted as "somewhat" by *Arveldis*.

I tackle the issue of online media in two subsections. First, I present "Non-Gaming Social Media**"** where users are online but the main intention of connection is not

reaching just game related content. Second, I present gaming social media where the main purpose is only reaching game related content.

Non-Gaming Social Media

Social media platforms vary in intention and use. I do not intend to analyze each of them separately. However, it is necessary to concentrate on platforms mentioned during interviews and briefly review how each social medium works in order to highlight their use within the gaming community. During the interviews, there were five non-gaming social media platforms mentioned; *Facebook, Twitter, 9gag, YouTube* and *Reddit.*

On *Twitter* and *Facebook*, users are allowed to 'follow' one another. This forms personalized news feed that contains what the people followed by the user shares. Anyone can follow and be followed. This situation allows a variety of celebrities, authority figures and influencers to have a say out of the medium they are represented.

On the other hand, *Reddit* and *9gag* have more shared environments. In these two websites, users create content and hand it over to the rest of the users to argue over, like or dislike. Unlike *Facebook* and *Twitter,* the information comes from a mass instead of individuals being followed for who they are.

Youtube has some similarities with all four media. *Youtube* has channels which are dedicated to a variety of subjects. There are two types of users; content creators (youtubers) and subscribers. Again, it is a mutual relationship; every user can be one or both of these two types. The main difference of *Youtube* is that, shared content is only in the form of a video. While individuals follow specific content creators, there is also a shared environment which makes *Youtube* both similar and distinct when compared to the rest of the discussed media.

After this brief introduction to relevant social media platforms, I continue with explaining the usage of these media within the gaming community. What is important

here is how they are converted into or used as a tool of gaming network by the gamers. Throughout the interviews, the participants explained how they receive news from non-

gaming related social media by following game related accounts besides following their friends. For example, when I asked *Nathan Drake* about his methods of staying in contact with the community, he points out the following: "I follow accounts of my

favorite gamers or game producers on *Twitter* or something". In his words, "*Twitter* or something" does not only refer to game based news platforms but also customizable media that allows *Nathan Drake*, and other players to have a chance to create their own personalized news feed. In addition, here is how *BlackCanary* explains her own connection patterns:

> I do not follow a lot of people [gamers and game companies] on social media but when there is something new, for example when a game that I have been waiting launches, I hear about it somehow. My circle of friends mostly consists of people who play games, so someone shares what is new on somewhere for sure.

These two quotes exemplify two ways social media can be molded into a tool for receiving gaming news. *Nathan Drake* follows sources directly while *BlackCanary* receives gaming news through her friends who play games; she almost counts on them as parts of her network. Due to her presence in community, *BlackCanary* follows people from gaming community as her friends. This allows her to have a direct access to trending gaming topics. Both *Nathan Drake*'s and *BlackCanary*'s cases not only show that the media they use is purposed to share game related content but also show how they transformed it to serve in that way.

In addition to these, while *MildlyToxic* was talking about the issue of cheating in *Counter Strike*, he shared with me the news he acquired through *Reddit*: "This year, on *Reddit* – Ask Me Anything, Gabe Newell [the founder of *Valve*, *Counter Strike*'s

production company] told that they will try to deal with cheating". Although cheating is a very unique topic, it is observable that *Reddit* is manipulated by gaming community in order to create a discussion in between game producers and gamers. So, social media is not only purposeful for sharing news but also convenient for creating a conversation between people who have different roles in the community. *MildlyToxic* further explains that, if there is game related news that is worth sharing, it might cause excitement within the community: "Usually games create hype within the market. When someone creates a good game, every gamer learns about it. For example it may come up on *9gag*, *Facebook* or such places".

MildlyToxic also listed the game trailers on *Youtube* as a way of advertising and creating expectation on game related issues, which is a part of the "hype" he mentions.

> Gamers learn about new releases immediately through *Youtube*. For example, Overwatch trailers; *Blizzard* does that very successfully. They create a hype then release their product. I think it is rather important for a game to meet the created expectation. There is a fragile balance in this: if a game is beautiful but not advertised properly, it fails to be noticed; however when a game fails to meet the hype, the producing company greatly loses reputation. *Assasin's Creed* is an example for that; they keep making one game worse than the other. There are *Youtube* videos highlighting even that.

Here, *MildlyToxic*'s statement has two implications. First one is the fact that advertisement, especially on *Youtube*, has a very crucial role in developing expectation for and advertising a game. Second one is how he considers himself and rest of the community as critics whose taste is important for a game's success.
In addition, *BlackCanary* mentions how she got the news of the release of a long waited

sequence for a game; a first-person shooter game she said she loved *Last of Us 2* by *Naughty Dog*:

> We follow a lot of *Youtub*e channels [with *Nathan Drake*]. So we definitely get the news. For example, we learned about the trailer of *Last of Us 2* on spec. Even if we did not notice it, we would have seen the reaction videos. The next day, everyone shot a reaction video on *Youtube*. Even regular gaming channels did that. They usually do not shoot reaction videos but such news are very big for everyone, so they do.

The term "everyone" used by *BlackCanary* reflects how much she feels as a part the community. She surrounds herself by the members of gaming community; when there is exciting news, every person around her knows about it. *BlackCanary*'s this statement also shows how widespread the news sources are. When the news are big enough, "everyone", including the content creators and her friends prepare or share a secondary production, a reaction video, which serves as a news source while allowing people to share their opinions publicly.

All in all, most of the participants explain their process of receiving game related news almost aleatoric as "somehow" or "appearing" on certain social media sites. However, it is a result of their choices regarding which game company or producer to follow and whom to be friends with. As it is with *MildlyToxic'*s Gabe Newell example and *BlackCanary*'s *Last of Us 2* trailer example, social media can be used to create a universal conversation where everyone can join. Consequently, they create a mesh of communication.

So far I have discussed how such media are important for following news about games, spreading these news, advertisement and the communication between game producers and gamers.

In addition to all these, the consumers of these mediums can also become content creators as I initially explained. *Ally* describes *YouTube* as a way of being known in the community through success:

> People who make those videos are content creators. There are also such people for *Counter Strike* and *Dota*. People watch their videos and be like "Wow, he is very good!" It happened to me as well. I did some nice moves with a hero, I did an escape move, and knocked the opposing team's socks off [*top etmek*]. They could not kill me and all of them died eventually. I sent it to a content creator and came first in weekly Top 10 moves video. So I have a moment of glory like that. Also we had a clan video as a team, which makes me very happy when I watch, I am proud to be there.

Here, *Ally* highlights many different aspects of the community. First, there is a group of people creating video content that focuses on players' successful in-game moments. Weekly Top 10's creators almost hold a never ending competition. Winning, getting his moment into one of these videos involves appreciation, sharing, aggrandizing and most importantly, encouragement.

Also, these content creators place themselves as authority figures in terms of knowing how a good game move would look like and their authority is accepted and well respected by other people within the community. However, if community did not agree with their choices their channel would not be valued much. So there is a balance of authority. In that case being picked by community through content creators becomes a "moment of glory" in *Ally*'s words.

Moreover, *Dota*'s allowance of recording the game is another issue. This situation implies that matches are valuable in other senses as well; they can be further used outside of the moment of gaming. In this example, it is for the exhibition of gaming skills.

In addition, *Ally*'s enthusiasm of showing his success is another issue. He claims his presence within the community through social media by being spectated and acknowledged by other members. This situation makes *Ally* to become a voluntary contributor as well.

Lastly, clan video reflects this issue of contribution and need of being acknowledged in a larger scale. As *Ally* explains, in *World of Warcraft 3*, clans were smaller, almost the size of a team, around five people. The clan video is a compilation of "glory moments" in his words. It is different from a Top 10 video at two points. First, clan videos focus on

successful group efforts rather than individuals. Second, they are created and published by the clan itself. Again, as a group, clan members seek acknowledgement and appreciation through the video content of *Youtube*. Additionally, "being there" and being a part of a successful clan is something to be proud about.

In this section I presented depicted uses of non-game related social media. First, I presented news related usage. It includes following game companies and friends, the affordance of social media regarding the communication between gamers and game developers advertising the games and dispersion of news within the community. Second, I issue the gamer as a contributor, during his seek of acknowledgement within the community.

In next chapter, I present gaming social media that were brought up by the participants during the interviews.

Gaming Social Media

Throughout this section, I present the mentioned gaming related websites during the interviews with the gamers. I briefly review how each medium works throughout the section in order to highlight their purpose and use within the community. Gaming social

media that are mentioned by interviewees are *IGN*, *Twitch*, *Steam* and *Battle.net* alongside with online forums and local game web pages such as *Geekyapar [Geekmakes]* and *Oyun Günlüğü [Game Journal]*.

To begin with, *Ally* mentions *IGN* as an online alternative, an upgraded version of the game magazines he used to buy. *IGN* is a "Media Brand for Games, Entertainment and Fan Culture" as they present themselves in their international web page (IGN.com, 2017). The website has a grading system where users and *IGN*'s writers can evaluate games. Although they offer content in twenty eight languages, including Turkish, the interviewees who mentioned I*GN* always referred to its English website.

> I used to be very up to date. Before, there was *Level*, then they split up and became today's *Oyungezer*. I used to buy every issue of *Level* and I kept buying when it became *Oyungezer*. I used to read every corner of it and I was aware of everything going on. Nowadays I mostly follow news from the internet, they do not matter anymore.

Here *Ally* refers to printed media as well, but according to him, they are outdated. It might be parallel with the globalization of gaming culture, where gamers can get updates from multiple sources simultaneously.

Although gamers I interviewed were more interested in getting news from international sources that I listed, they also mentioned a few local websites they occasionally like to follow; *Geekyapar* and *Oyun Günlüğü*. These websites create their own content in Turkish instead of simply translating it from other sources. They can be seen as modern game magazines as well. *Arveldis* explained that *Oyun Günlüğü* also provides video content through *YouTube* as well and he enjoys following those too.

Also, game related websites can be used as tools of self-evaluation. They assist gamers to have an approximate understanding on where they stand within their community

performance-wise by watching other people play. As a given example to such websites, *Twitch* is a streaming website where gamers can broadcast their play online. On the main page, there are games listed with respect to their popularity. People can choose and watch a live stream from that list while they can also search for a particular game they want to see. *Ally* states:

> One day my friend came up and said that he found a match [*Dota*] with an internationally-known team. In your own little world, you think that you are a good player but once you play with them, they kill you, they humiliate you [*ağzına vurmak*], it is wicked. Of course back then [2008] gaming is not as online as it is today, there are no tournaments or *Twitch*. So you do not see how good other people are.

Ally's choice of words is very important here. He defines his gaming knowledge and evaluation values he had before *Twitch* (tournaments can be reached through *Twitch* as well) as his "own little world". In that sense, game related social media not only helps gamers to compare themselves with other players but also reshapes standards and increments the limits. I argue the implications of watching other gamers play and tournaments in next sections. In this chapter's context, in *Ally*'s words, this media enlightens "how good people are" outside a gamer's physical circle, which is a tool of self-evaluation. A secondary implication of this quote is how globalized he feels through his current social media connection.

Apart from getting news and forming a scale of self-evaluation, users can argue game related topics under a variety of titles which allows them to share their knowledge and learn from others. There are online platforms where users can argue on anything under a related title which allows them to share their knowledge and learn from others. Game's private websites and gaming forums serve for that purpose.

When I filmed *Theralion*'s *Heroes of the Storm* match, he told me that he needs to look up how he should build his skills. Then, he paused and checked *hotslogs.com* in order to get an online advice on which build would work the best for him. According to him, this

website is not formed from content that gamers provide, so it cannot be categorized as a forum. It takes statistical data from previous matches and provides win rates according to heroes' skill builds. Here, playing starts to dissociate from fun, but becomes a mathematical problem, an issue of finding optimum setting in order to perform the best.

In addition, especially *Ally* was highly enthusiastic about gaming forums and how they build a connection within the community: "I mean, you are a part of the community, you are known, you find forums and share things, write stuff. I used to be more active in the community. I mean you have a place there, you post after all". According to him, forums are a solid way of existing and being known within the community. He finds his existence to be more powerful because of his contribution.

Last two online environments mentioned are *Steam* and *Battle.net*. *Steam* allows users to have a profile where they can add friends, buy games and comment on them. It also has its own currency that allows gamers to buy games and items. Also, through their friends list, gamers can see who plays which game at any given moment and which games they have in their *Steam* library.

According to my observations, these two applications used as a tool of building up small scaled communities. For example, *MildlyToxic* showed me how he manages his *Steam* friends especially, since it is important to him:

> Here I have my friends [he shows his *Steam* profile's friends section]. For example, I click here; I have seven people on favorites. I have seventy eight friends in this section. Let's see, I have thirty two friends online at the moment. [He starts to introduce some of the names on the screen] G. is one of my old

> friends, he is Polish. This is my cousin. I think one of my cousins left steam, his name is gone. This is my V. group, the other [serious, non-casual] group I mentioned.

As *MildlyToxic* explains, *Steam* provides ability of organizing friends. Although it is discussed within the subculture section, separating friends according to their degree of closeness, seriousness and game genres is a way of creating smaller communities and assigning roles or them. He explained how he grouped people and who they are in detail. They were mainly separated in terms of their seriousness level or games that they play together which can be interpreted as their roles within *MildlyToxic*'s community.

Apart from organizing friends, there is also the issue of economical circulation through social media. In fact, that is the highlighted part about *Steam* according to *Nathan Drake*: "Especially on *Steam*, there is a circulation of currency. If you do not like an item, or it got valued since you bought it, you sell it and buy another item". Therefore, *Steam* economy is a complete different and huge issue but recycled money through communication is prioritized by *Nathan Drake* which matters in scope of this research.

Although I highlight the issue of trailers and advertisement in previous section, the advertisement is a valid issue in game dedicated media as well.

Unlike *Steam*, *Blizzard* only offers its own games through *Battle.net*.According to *Theralion*, they always offer something worth having a look at: "If *Blizzard* does something new, I check it for sure. It is *Blizzard* after all". *MildlyToxic* also has a similar approach: "It appears here what *Blizzard* will release [he shows *Battle.net*'s main page], you see and check from here". Although *Blizzard* represents an inner circle within the gaming network, every gamer I interviewed mentioned it at least once. So, along with non-game related media, game-related media is a strong tool of creating "hype" and reputation within the gaming community.

To sum up, there are lots of gaming social media functions highlighted during the interviews. In this section, I initially mentioned the function of getting the news. This function is separated into two sections as printed and online media. While printed media

is declared to be obsolete, online sources were highlighted as current. Then, I presented news providers that target local communities in Turkey. After the issue of news, I mentioned watching other players' games and its implications such as self-evaluating. Then I moved on to specific game related websites which have two kinds. One is statistic providers, where the issue is finding the optimal in-game setting in order to success. The other is forums where gamers share their knowledge and experience on related games. Lastly, I mentioned media formations that have multiple aspects. Their depicted functions are managing gaming friends, being involved in a community economy and creating excitement within the community through advertisement.

In conclusion, I presented gaming community's communication methods in two sections; non-gaming and gaming social media. I showcased functions of both media and how they are used or manipulated as a tool of communication within gamers. *Arveldis* states:

> For example, news usually show up on *9gag* or it can be *Facebook*. Also there are gaming sites like *Oyun Günlüğü* [Game Journal] or example. My friend runs that site, he creates content. He films videos as well. There are also people that I follow on *Youtub*e like that as well. So, I hear about news this way.

When I asked about how they keep up with the community, every single participant gave a mixed media list similar to what *Arveldis* says. So, although I presented the issue in two separate sections, interviewed users declared that they use a mixture of all media as a way of existing in the community network.

Overall, websites and platforms mentioned were, *IGN*, *YouTube*, *Twitch*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Steam*, *Battle.net Geekyapar [Geekmakes]* and *Oyun Günlüğü [Game Journal]*.

My analysis so far already indicates that having access to World Wide Web creates a very multicultural environment with people from everywhere from the world. Users mentioned many international names throughout the interviews while describing their community experience. The next section is on internationality and how this affects players overall game experience.

4.1.2. Internationality

Here, I discuss issues of gamer stereotypes in international scale, international time zone and worldwide friendships from the perspective of gamers.

In the sense of having international friendships through gaming, *MildlyToxic* and *Arveldis* were the most enthusiastic. Especially *Arveldis* shows his interest in Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games due their possibility of socializing in an international degree.

> I continued playing these types of games. Especially for the last 5-10 years, my point of interest has been RPG games or MMORPGs. It is because I love the online platform very much, I have friends from different countries and I can still play with my friends from here. Also, I can get together with people from different cities.

In addition to *Arveldis*' statement, almost every gamer I interviewed named at least one person they know through gaming from another country. When I asked *MildlyToxic* about who he prefers to play with the most he did not name a single person sharing his nationality

> Who I play with the most... There is [a friend], one of the guys, he is from Sweden. Also, [another friend], he is from England. [A third friend], he is also British but has Russian origin. He helps us as a translator with his beautiful
>
> British accent. Who else... We also have an extension of this group. There are hundreds of people coming from all over the world. It is a very crowded group. Sometimes Swedish people are being the majority, other times it is British people. I am the only Turkish most of the times, but is is a lot of fun to play with them.

For *MildlyToxic* and *Ally*, having interaction with different countries creates an understanding on typical behaviors of different nationalities within the gaming context. They explain how cultural stereotypes shaped around international gamer's behavior which is completely different from conventional stereotyping, it is related with gaming culture. For example *MildlyToxic* explains that there are many Russian *Counter Strike* players in the game, playing actively and how he is not happy with the behavior of young ones:

> We have to be all together because as many Russians means so many teammates that we cannot understand and get along properly. If that happens we lose and it is not even fun. On one hand, we lose by laughing on the other hand we stuck in between three Russians.

Although this stereotyping might not be an ideal approach within the gaming community, another related issue is highlighted by *Ally*. He addresses *StarCraft* as Korea's most played e-sport, and how active they are in online gaming platforms: "people, especially Koreans dominated *StarCraft* as they do with most games at the moment".

Moreover another issue pointed out by gamers is the international time zone which is a result of gamers living in different time zones while wanting to play with people from

different time zones. When I asked *Ally* about his gaming habits, he said that the time of the day in which he plays changes according to one of his friends living in United States. *MildlyToxic* also referred to this issue as he talked about the *World of Warcraft* community he is in:

> There are online gaming circles and environments. In fact, everyone, every guild start their raid at the same time; Wednesday, around seven-eight. [Due the location of *Blizzard Entertainment*'s main base, Paris' time zone]

Although the issue of guilds and teams will be handled in next sections, it is possible to see the solution they created for Ally's problem of not knowing when exactly to play due to time zone differences. In a sense, they create an international time zone specific for that community. However, *Ally*'s situation is very secluded; it is in between two people while *MildlyToxic* participates a non-personal system that targets international community members in a universal scale.

To sum up, this section was an analysis of gamers' implications over internationality while they were depicting their experiences on friendship and time. I explained the positive aspects of interaction in international scale narrated by gamers; friendship and ability of finding people with similar interests within a larger range. As gamers state, there is also a stereotypical approach towards gamers with different nationalities which is not necessarily positive all the time. I also mentioned the time related issues that arise with international gaming. Main issue regarding time is the effort of adjusting self in correlation with other gamers' time zones. While this can be an individual effort in between two people, it can also be at an international scale as it is with the example of *World of Warcraft*.

The next section is on subgroups that are highlighted throughout the interviews.

4.2. Subgroups

In this section, I discuss subgroups throughout the interviews. First "friends" are discussed in two subcategories: friends in real life and in-game friends. Second, guilds and teams are analyzed from the scope of gamers.

4.2.1. Friends

Throughout the interviews with gamers, the term friends were brought up many times. Although "friends" in general was used for all the players in the gaming community, friends in real life also shared the friendships that took place in the real world besides being connected in the gaming community. Whereas, game friendships were acquired online and relationship was sustained through gaming.

4.2.1.1. Friends in Real Life

During the interviews, playing computer games with friends in real life was mentioned for several times. Main highlighted issues related to playing games with friends in real life were; internet cafe community, fun, strategy and impact of playing games on existing relationships.

Playing Together in the Same Physical Environment

First, internet café culture and playing an online game with a friend while being also physically together were the two points that came up. In fact, these points were linked with one another for most of the participants.

> At an internet cafe, it was very alluring to play all together. Then we started to think about what we could do to play at home. Could we install these games to our computers and make them work? We had computers at our homes, then why were we paying money to play together? We installed *Counter Strike* on our

> computers with my friend [a friend]. Of course, it was not like this then, it was very hard to make it work on the network. We were getting connected to internet with beeping sounds, 64k. We decided that it was unbearable to wait that long, modem also did not use to have multiple ports etc. Later, we found a transposition cable for network and made it work, and started to play at our house with 4-5 people. We started to connect our computers and have LAN parties. Our parents got happier since we were around them and spending less money. We started to receive homemade food and tea which was great. However, there were no laptops back then, so we were carrying huge screens and cases as little kids from home to home.

As *MildlyToxic* depicts, internet cafes were the reason for him to start playing and enjoying video games with his friends in a common physical environment. Here, he describes his process of moving into houses with his childhood friends as creating an alternative space for internet cafes. Although it was hard to carry their hardware, he states that it was worth it due to joy of being at the same physical environment while playing online games.

BlackCanary and *Nathan Drake* narrate that they like to play in the same room with one another in an unusual setting as well. They like to watch each other play when it comes to single player games. They also refer this experience as "playing together" too. Although they do not have an in-game connection, they sit side by side in real life. "We have games that we play together. For example, I watch him play *Bloodborne* and he watches me play *Witcher*". On top of *BlackCanary*'s quotation, they express that their playing together hours are not limited to just one person's spectacle but it also includes sharing opinions. They both agree that each person have different skills with different tactics and opinions. "We both played *Last of Us* a lot. In fact, I was having the combats and she was collecting items around, it was nice". While *Nathan Drake* describes this as

sharing game work; they later relate this to their individual interests. *BlackCanary* likes to explore game maps while *Nathan Drake* is more interested in combat. *BlackCanary* says that sometimes they watch each other during multiplayer online games too. Here, she does not describe a share of workload yet, there is a defined expertise of in-game roles.

> Sometimes I watch *Nathan Drake* play alone, he also watches me. For example he stands somewhere [she talks about *Overwatch*] then tries to go and heal someone at a completely opposite direction. Since healing is my job, I tell him not to go and if he goes and dies I feel like "I have told you". Sometimes he says "There is a guy at your right, be careful" and if I do not care and get backstabbed by that guy, this time he says "I have told you". We advise and warn each other when we feel something is going wrong. We have an overall positive effect on each other.

So, they are having fun while watching one another. Besides fun, they share their knowledge while looking after each other by joining the game as a second pair of eyes and ears. In that sense, their togetherness brings in advantages to the game. *BlackCanary* also describes this togetherness as a strategic advantage.

> It is very distracting to turn the game on, immediately press a button, try to speak all in a rush. However, it is way faster when he is near me. I can say things like "There is that, be careful" or "Come near me" and if he does not hear, you can always poke him. It is great. Other than that, I see his screen and can view the game from a different angle as well. For example when I stand at a certain spot where I cannot see her. I look at *Nathan Drake*'s screen and notice her and say "Oh, so she is there" and change my position accordingly. It is absolutely better to play side by side.

Ally also tells “He was next to me, so I turned and punched him” as a perk of playing side by side. So, interviewees see physical togetherness as a positive indicator in terms of both fun and strategy.

In addition, during my autoethnographic study, my real life friends offered me to teach how to interact with the game properly side by side. “They taught me how I should interact with the game. In fact, [a friend] decided to teach me how to operate using the mouse and keyboard when I am playing”.

In here, playing side by side has an implication on learning and teaching. I am taught to use peripherals in person who can be considered as another strategical approach.

Moreover, *MildlyToxic* tells how much he still loves to play with his friends in the same room and he remembers how this was derived from his internet café days as a child.

> At [a friend]’s house we usually get settled with [another friend] and [a third friend]. It is a great pleasure for us, since it is the thing we were trying to accomplish during our childhood. It was our biggest project to achieve. During summer break, we used to leave our stuff at someone’s house for a week, leave our computers, so that we could have a LAN party [playing together in a network] the next day. When you think about it today, it is ridiculous. However, we were leaving them with a great care, so that they would not get damaged and hinder the household. That is why as little kids, we used to try pack our things and place them neatly, so that there will be no accidents such as broken hardware. Afterwards we used to come back and play, it was a lot of fun.

As a result, playing side by side with friends in real life can be summed up as fun and strategic while it is also an achievement regarding the past.

Internet Cafe Culture as an Initiator

Nathan Drake points out another impact of internet cafes' as being social game environments. He describes such an environment as the very first step of becoming a gamer. Although he tells in a very casual way that, "I also started to play games by getting used to them through internet cafe culture". It has obviously shaped his current approach towards gaming. Internet cafes are commemorated by the same way by both *Ally* and *MildlyToxic*. *MildlyToxic*'s first introduction to community and gaming happened, physically, through similar events.

> How did I meet with gaming community… We used to play with my friends at the internet cafe and it spread from there. What else... I used to go to internet cafe with my friends since prep school. That was the place where I met with internet cafe people. They are the friends I raid with at the moment. [Playing *World of Warcraft*]

MildlyToxic still has a combination of friends from prep school and internet cafe as his base gaming group. Although his current groups of gaming friends are not limited to people he mentions in the quotation, those people also are still connected and play with him.

Both he and *Ally* call gamers at internet café as "internet café people" and that is usually how they refer them during their stories. They are not simply called friends, so internet cafe is another culture that lives within the gaming community. Here, *MildlyToxic* and *Ally* refer to another community that lives in the internet cafe and people's identifications are tied to that space.

According to *MildlyToxic* the characteristics of internet cafes still define a space of childhood and childish aims as showing off of gaming skills.

> People enjoy showing off, saying “I did this”, “I did that” [skill wise]. It was the thing with competitive games at the beginning, during our childhood. Everyone aims to show their capabilities, it is the main reason of improving their skills, people like praises

Here, the community of internet cafe works as a motivation of improving skills, however, *MildlyToxic* finds it immature to show them off.

Impact on Real Life Relationships

Another issue that gamers laid emphasis on was benefits of gaming on a real life based relationship. In fact, *Nathan Drake* and *BlackCanary* see gaming as one of the most bonding activities they involve in as a couple. “I taught my best friends how to play *Dota* as well. While this might have been a misdeed, I thought having another common point would strengthen their relationship greatly”. *Nathan Drake* went further with highlighting the importance of gaming in knowing one another and how in-game

decisions and acts revealed one’s real personality.

> A person that you have a weak relationship with starts to trust you more because of gaming. For example, I was not good friends with [a friend] before starting to play *Dota* with her. When we started to play, I taught, protected and warned her as necessary during the game. Trust within the game reflected to our relationship and we became closer friends.

Teaching is another bond builder since the process results in trust and more time spent together. In *Nathan Drake*’s case, it transformed an acquaintance into a real friendship. So, although their friendship improved in real life, its impulsion was the gaming environment. *BlackCanary* also has a similar experience. “We sit around three or four hours and then we both go home. However, we almost meet back at home when we play

games together. So that we spend more time and get closer, have a stronger relationship". She defines playing online game as another way of spending time without separating virtual environment from the physical one.

Although the interviewees mainly point out benefits, as *MildlyToxic* says, it is not always a good thing to play with friends from real life. He says that he picks games to play according to the structure of his friend groups. He praises *Counter Strike Global Offence* as opposed to *Dota* in that sense.

> I got really happy when I first found it [*Counter Strike*] because of the competitiveness I was seeking. In games like *Dota*, friendships break down when we lose a match. However when you lose a match in *Counter Strike*, second one is a fresh start. In *Dota*, when we play poorly in first three minutes, remaining half an hour is trashing. *Ally* does that a lot. He is always like "We should not have done that", "You should have done this" and when I make fun of him, he rages out [*rage'e gelmek*]. So, our friendship gets frayed for no reason.
>
> For example, one day we came on to [a friend] and he quitted playing for six or seven months. It was not fun at all. In *Counter Strike*, that is not the case. Everybody can do anything they want to. No matter how crazy they act, there is a second and new round after two minutes.

Although *MildlyToxic* mentions the difference in terms of games, it is also important to highlight how the duration of games and approaches towards them have an impact on relationships. While a more strategical and serious approach is expected in a game with longer matches, shorter terms can be disregarded. In that sense, gamers' variety of approach towards games and their behavior centered around this approach are also important issues in-game related relationships.

Lastly, some users I interviewed benefit from in-game social possibilities in order to cover their lack of physical interaction with friends in real life. *Ally* is an example of such behavior: “Now it is more about logging in to *Skype* and chat with [a friend] than just playing”. As he tells, his friend is one of his best with whom he is accustomed to play online games. Since the friend is abroad, gaming has created an interaction model replacing physical interaction which is impossible in real life.

In this section the interviews I presented pointed out two kinds of game related interaction methods possible among friends in real life. First interaction method originates from the wish of playing at the same environment with these friends. The internet cafe culture in childhood is interpreted as an indicator and a reason to start gaming. Real life reflections of online gaming with friends was argued both from the perspectives of friendship and game strategy. Finally, gaming was discussed with respect to its positive and negative effects on friendship relationships. Gaming can be bonding and may be utilized in order to compensate for the lack of physical interaction, but has also the potential to damage friendship relationships through in-game disagreements.

In the next section, issues related to in-game friends are discussed based on interviews.

4.2.1.2. In-Game Friends

In this section, I discuss friendships acquired through online gaming. I asked users how they were able develop their current in-game friendships. Most of them explained its similarities with the process of building a real life friendship. *MildlyToxic* told me about his process of enlarging his gaming friend group.

> Yes, I met them in the game. One of them was the brother of a friend from prep school. Others were friends of his brother too. They had also met in the game over the years through guilds. Some of them also knew each other in real life.

> When I join an online group it usually ends up being a group of online and real life friends. For example [a friend] joined us when I had recently found a new group. Sometimes [another friend] came with [a friend]. They were friends in real life. We became members of online groups like that. Eventually we met new people there and if something did not work, people left and merged with another guild. So there is always a constant movement, through which you settle with whom you can get along.

Here, *MildlyToxic* explains how he changes gaming groups with his gaming friends in real life. He implies that in-game friendships are also important. According to him, meeting with people online through his in-game connections is an opportunity, and getting along is an important determinant for "settling" with them. Settling refers to playing games regularly. Playing on a regular basis and enjoying other's company are important factors in finding new in-game friends. .

Ally's explanation backs up the description of "settling" process by comparing it to dating.

> We used to turn the game on and press "play" so that it would search and find people to play with. It is not like that anymore. It is very rare to approach someone by saying "we are good together" after playing with him for the first time. After a couple of times you say something like "I have been seeing you around". It is like flirting with someone. For example, you do not approach a girl when you see her at the first time at a cafe, but you rather wait until you see her for a couple of times more before you make move towards her. It is almost the same story.

Participants' experience in building online friendships is not very much different from the conventional approach, apart from being a bit more accelerated. . Gaming is

described as an environment to "see around" which makes its perception closer to a real social environment. *Ally* also describes closeness of gamers as "bases" of friendships that are built online: "After you develop an intimacy, you kind of leap into first name base from nickname, as if you leveled up". According to *Ally*, calling a gamer with his real name is a signifier of closeness. In fact, he expresses that it is also an indicator of closeness to switch in between games with people he meets during a game. "Once, a guy added me on *Hearth Stone* during the arena. He started to chat and proposed to play *Smite* together". *Ally* describes this situation as "a little weird" due to the freshness of their relationship. Building a relationship although online, is a further step, especially if it leads to playing together on a regular basis. In this case, *Ally* feels rushed. According to both *Ally* and *MildlyToxic* natural flow of such online relationships rely on several games and getting along, and is a longer process.

On the other hand, when I asked *Theralion* if he developed any friendships through gaming, he told me that he did not like such friendships at all. "To be honest, I never tried to build such relationships. I like to leave it in the game. I do not enjoy having conversations on where I live or hang out". So, unlike *MildlyToxic* and *Ally* he does not enjoy such connections, and has never acquired a friend through online gaming.

Most of the users told that they had a main and settled gaming group which mainly included IRL friends, yet they also had different groups for different games. *Ally* says that "each game might have its own squad". *MildlyToxic* explains that he likes to play *World of Warcraft* with his IRL friends but they tend to get too busy or uninterested after some time periods and he likes to be consistent. His quotation adds another level to the friendship issue. Building an online originated relationship requires series of steps, there can be different groups simultaneously. Having such groups has its own advantages such as consistency. That is why he creates a variety of avatars so that he can play with different people under different conditions as it is also the case with *Ally'*s

different groups. For instance, *MildlyToxic* explains how different his *Counter Strike Global Defense* group is from those whom he plays *World of Warcraft* with. He explains that these two games are his favorites at the moment and he spends a lot of time. Since his IRL gamer friends are not always available to attend, he has built himself a different social in-game circle. In that sense *Ally* gives his real life and in-game friend living in the United States as an example, and tries to explain how difficult it is to deal with the time difference. When gamers are living in different time zones, it is difficult to play together. Therefore, not only game types and proximity are important but also time difference is effective in having in-game friends among a variety of gaming groups.

Another aspect is to know people through community network. An example is pointed out by *BlackCanary*, who explains how she became friends with people she never saw before through *Overwatch*;

> I did not know any of the guys [her current gaming group] but I have heard them from *Nathan Drake*. Although I never saw them or spoke with them in real life, we are like best friends because of gaming now. We only speak on voice chat and I know them as if I have met them in person.

I have discussed effect of gaming on existing relationships in the previous chapter. In

this quote, the affect is the same. However, the whole relationship is built online. *BlackCanary* claims that she knows them as if they are close friends in real life. In that sense, this might be considered as an advanced "base" of such friendships.

Moreover, in some cases socializing becomes the main goal just like it is with friendships in real life. *Arveldis* explains how much fun he had during his interactions beyond the scope of game's purpose.

> We had so much fun, laughed a lot at that zone. We chatted for 4 hours. I mean you are in the game but do not touch the mouse or keyboard, just wearing headset, speaking with people. We did nothing. We have such memories. It happened many times in our group. We chatted until next morning without playing within the game.

The atmosphere *Arveldis* describes is very social and it is as if gaming is a secondary aim. As a group they stay in the game without playing, which is the main purpose of game. However, they shift the purpose of gaming into socializing with people they have ever met in person.

In this section, in-game friendships are discussed. First, how these friendships are built is defined and resemblance of the process with real life experience is demonstrated. Second, how gamers might have different gaming friends for different games is highlighted. Lastly, the shifting of purpose; from gaming to socializing is discussed.

In the next chapter guilds and teams are discussed as the secondary type of subgroups.

4.2.2. Guilds and Teams

In this chapter I evaluate teams and guilds and how they are different in the eyes of gamers. According to interviewees, playing in teams is usually possible in MOBAs and MMORPG tasks require more than one person. While MOBAs require playing in teams, MMORPGs can be more individual. However, some missions within the game need to be approached with multiple gamers.

Teams

The main issue regarding the teams was the interaction in between gamers, throughout the interviews. To begin with, I must highlight the issue of professional teams in relation

with team coherence. In order to explain professional teams, I briefly clarify who a professional gamer is. Professional players can be described as e-sport, computer game, contenders with a variety of sponsorships mostly from game related companies. Usually, they focus in one game and train for the contest throughout the year with a similar discipline to Olympic athletes. So, professional teams train as teams and in order to practice playing together and enhance each member's skills. For instance, *Theralion* explains coherence of a professional team by explaining how it would be if he was in one: "I will pick these in order to help me create a position and the team picks their supports, tanks accordingly and play to create a position for me".

Here, he explains that, even when picking which character to play with, professional teams think how they can support each other to create the best outcome possible as a team. After this quote, he compares randomized and friend teams in the same sense:

> However, if you do that at a regular quickplay [quickplay matches gamers randomly in order to create a team so that they can play together], you can use such an ability [the one he would pick if he was in a professional team], requiring synergy, three times the most. Then, rest of the team would start accusing you with not dealing enough damage and playing bad. So, synergy is very important. In fact, personal capabilities are very important but overall it is more crucial for five people [team] to know and complement one another. Especially in *Heroes of the Storm*, one hero can not carry [*carrylemek*] the game by himself like he could do in *Dota*.

In these two quotes, he highlights three types of teams. . First, is a professional team, second is a randomized team and third is a team formed of friends where coherence is highly important. *Ally*'s depiction on professional teams supports *Theralion*'s argument. According to *Ally* gaming teams, whether they are professional or nonprofessional, train regularly and transfer gamers like any sports team in real life.

> Well, you train [*train atmak*] for 2-3 hours like a regular sports team in order to be strong against other teams. Then you discuss your mistakes on *Ventrilo* [an online audio communication application] as five people. We used to do that with my team, and joined some tournaments. I went to Istanbul to join one.

Ally further describes their training sessions as very serious and says: "You come home at night and play three matches [*maç atmak*]" Although their team was not professional, *Ally* explains that such training sessions were crucial in order to gain coherence and know one another better in context of gaming. *Ally* highlights, the transformation of gaming into something "job-like" when it comes to training and states that it is the way to have the coherence that *Theralion* have mentioned.

Moreover, *Arveldis* states that, being in teams with strangers triggers building in-game friendships yet, it is possible by team coherence. *Arveldis* transfers his experience through an assigned team by his guild:

> We started with the aim of coming to a strong position. We decided that 5 of us were good together. Everyone knew what each person would do, before even telling him what to do. Sometimes we used to play a hard dungeon [an in-game fighting event]. We used to succeed without saying one word while everyone covered mistakes of others. I used to know what my friend would do in a second and move accordingly. That was how we could get somewhere. We were able to know each other well, we could proceed with the game together. At that point, you realize that you move in harmony. When you realize this you say "I learned this game and so did my friends".

Quote of *Arveldis* has many implications over harmony and coherence in between teammates. He explains intuition that comes from knowing one another. Then, he values harmony as an event of surprise and joy. Also, he mentions learning the game besides

another. So there is a competence with the game along with in-game friends. Lastly, he calls “proceeding” the game, not simply succeeding. The harmony and coherence brings something different than winning or losing; a common experience and an interaction in a loving manner.

MildlyToxic’s comments below explain why it is important to have a certain approach among teammates in team play in general. He says that patience is the key when there are lots of people to deal with in both teams and guild tasks demand a group effort,

> In fact, it is up to patience. For example, we start the content with 20 people and one moment of distraction from someone, his failure drags everyone to death immediately. That is why it is not possible for everyone to play perfectly for six straight hours and everyone is having his own turn to fail. It is up to patience, for example after 5 minutes into a fight we might die. Sometimes we might die again and again after the exact same 5 minutes into a fight. Sometimes it happens so that we all die all of a sudden when the boss is at 10% [of its maximum health], so you should be patient with people.

On top of *Arvedis*’ implications on harmony, *MildlyToxic* describes an understanding in between the team. He explains that it is important to be prepared for a long process since teams may have many gamers with different characters in their organization. Although his claims are related to coexisting rather than coordination, they highlight an understanding on overall issue of being a team.

To sum up, the main issue I discussed in this section was coherence and harmony. I presented two views regarding these aspects. First perspective is on training in order to acquire coherence. Second perspective is more on the hazardousness of coherence and harmony which is also related to knowing teammates in time. Lastly, I highlighted the issue of patience and understanding within the team.

In the next section I depict guilds from the perspectives of interviewees.

Guilds

Guilds have a different structure when compared to teams. First, a guild is more systematic and planned as *Arveldis* describes:

> Of course, we used to get accepted after long interviews, like a job interview. I was an officer of that guild, and when someone wants to join, I was one of the people who did interviews. We used to talk for long hours. After all, you will spend so much time and play together. You have to do some things together. There are contents exclusive to guilds. When we do them, we will be in contact with this person. If he will get along with our guild or we will... There should not be a problem. In order to process systematically, we must know him. So we were recruiting accordingly.

As he explains, this system is almost company-like. Just like it is with a job interview, both sides evaluate one another in a serious manner. Getting along and accountability are the main qualities that they are looking for. Additionally, he states he was an officer, this shows there are roles and tasks for every member within the community. He defines this system a method of success in the game.

MildlyToxic explains how tightly controlled members in guild system are. Here, he talks about a guild he was a member of in *World of Warcraft*. "They keep log records of my each keyboard move, everything. So you have to be a gamer that can answer for your every move. That is why it was a successful community".

In that sense, *MildlyToxic* and *Arveldis* express their experiences differently. While *MildlyToxic* found this monitored playing sessions and mandatory in-game events "stressing", *Arveldis* mentioned them with a great joy. Also, *MildlyToxic* calls his guild

as “them” while *Arveldis* calls his guild as “we” throughout the interview; which is a signifier of embracement and feeling as a part of that community.

Additionally, *MildlyToxic* and *Arveldis* both point out a hierarchy within the guild structure. *Arveldis*’ describes his guild as:

> Our guild consisted of 95 people and we had 10 officers. We used to hand people to these officers in groups and they would be responsible from their group. They would get informed about player in their group and tell someone else. Then that person would inform the leader. Also there would be meetings held with officers only. It was very systematic with us there; there was a strong hierarchy. We used to make decisions and solve problems together, if there were any problems. That is why I love playing so much. We still have the same system.

As he states, guild members take the game very seriously. They have meetings in order to organize their community and make decisions. Also, they train new members while keeping the guild leader in the know about the process. So, *Arveldis*’ description of guild structure creates both a problem solving and teaching mechanism in game. In addition, *MildlyToxic* mentions that although some guilds do not seem serious enough, they may have inner relationships similar to his university charity groups, which are known to be very strict:

> This is a common phenomenon in most games... People get raised with a similar order within a charity group. I mean, for example the name of our guild is something silly however we are very dedicated. Gamers act according to their own advantage, I mean, I am like that myself.

Here, although he explains the strictness, he also says that players should behave in their own favor which is a more pragmatic approach than *Arveldis*'.

All in all, according to the interviewees, guilds and teams are different structures and they create different commitments. Teams can be either professional, randomized or friend-based. While professional teams have a job-like process in terms of training, other two types are more leisure-like. Harmony and friendliness were highlighted for both game-generated and friend-based teams, while friendliness is the most important for teams with strangers. There were two approaches I highlighted regarding guilds; one is more pragmatic than the other. Guilds are described as very structured organizations with strict rules and customs where players are expected to teach and allowed to learn.

In the next section I will discuss gamers, their identities and bodies.

4.3. Gamer

In this section, I discuss being a gamer from three different aspects. First, I tackle the identity of the gamer by focusing on the personality of the gamer and its components. Then, I talk about the body of the gamer, followed by immersion and audiovisual aspects of games.

4.3.1. Gaming Identity

In this section, I discuss the conception of gamers by other people in the community through interviews. According to the gamers, in-game profile pages, the avatars and items on the avatars are the most important elements of the initial perception of the gamers.

In Game Profiles

According to the gamers, what is written on the profile pages (see Appendix E) is one of the most important introductory signs a gamer can have. For instance, when I asked *Nathan Drake* about how he would like to be perceived by other gamers, he simply started to talk about his user profile on *Overwatch*:

> I would like people to see for how long I have been playing in addition to heroes that I have played with. I would like them to see that I can play a variety of heroes and my abilities are not limited with only one role like offence or defense. For example, on my top three [top three heroes he played with the most] there is a tank, a healer and an offence hero. I mean, I want them to see that I can play anything.

In his description, his profile serves almost as a CV where he tries to show his capabilities the best.

However, not all concerns regarding the content of user profile are always positive. *BlackCanary* was afraid that others would look at her past game statistics on *Overwatch* and judge her based on that information: "To be honest, I am a little concerned. What if someone thinks that I cannot be a damage dealer in competitive mode simply because I only play damage dealers in quick play". In order to analyze concern, it is important to briefly highlight the game system of *Overwatch*. In *Overwatch,* there is a similar system with *Heroes of the Storm* as I have explained in previous sections. (see section 4.2.2) In quick play, there are random teammates playing individually while in competitive mode gamers join as a team. So, *BlackCanary* is afraid that people would not think she can play with a variety of heroes. She explains that when she plays alone, she enjoys playing a damage dealer hero; however she has a settled role as a healer in her group which she plays in competitive section with. So, she does not think that her profile reflects her abilities the best.

Moreover, *MildlyToxic* highlighted a system within *Counter Strike*. In there, there are badges in addition to profiles. They are gained through a variety of achievements. After a badge is gained, it is possible to "wear" it. As *MildlyToxic* showed me during our interview, if gamers chose to wear them, they appear on the left side of their usernames.

Although there is more information available on a gamer's profile page, these badges are important due to their connotation which is directly related with the gamer's conception by others.

Avatars and Characters

Characters are virtual creatures that the gamers play the games as. In this section I present the connection in between the gamers and their characters as a tool for virtual presence. There are two main issues highlighted by the interviewees regarding their avatars: First is related with appearance and its implications over gaming capabilities. Second is reflecting the self through avatars.

Arveldis, *Ally*, *BlackCanary* and *Nathan Drake* share the opinion of how important a character's looks when it comes to perception. According to them, items play a great role on that matter. *Arveldis* claims that distinctiveness is a signifier of power: "It is very satisfactory to be noticed when you enter a room. I have that ego in games. It is great to make people notice my achievements and things I have done". According to *Arveldis*, being noticed through his character and items on him are signifiers of power. In a way, character becomes an exhibition of serious gaming. He wants the initial thought on him to be his gaming capabilities. *Ally* has a similar approach towards characters and items regarding their implications over gaming identity:

> On the battlegrounds, you would notice a guy that has a tier 2 set from far away. This shows he achieved something of value and this implies status. For example there are some iconic items, like a shield that drops [rewarded for killing] from a very last boss. If you have that shield, you can do anything. These items are important. For example when a guy has a legendary item [a very rare item that can usually be acquired through a lot of in game time] you see him from far and shunt. It is the same for people with a good set [overall items that character has on], you shunt.

Here, Ally depicts *Arveldis*' issue of being noticed from the opposite side. When a character has significant items equipped on, they speak for the gamer. They represent what the gamer has done so far in the game which is highly related with the gamer's in-game identity. In this case, items say that this gamer has skills and commitment to have certain achievements.

Consequently, looks are very important due to their implications over who they are facing with according to the interviewees. However, gaming skills are not the only way of acquiring powerful items. Although it is possible to buy some items in exchange of real money, it is not welcomed among the gamers I interviewed with. While these items are less valuable in their eyes, an item that signifies a battle or a certain victory acts as a trophy which tells a lot about a gamer's level of dedication, level and achievements. That is why such items that can be bought are almost shameful. *BlackCanary* explains such cases: "For example, Assume that I cannot play well, I am bad at gaming. If I pay real money and buy an armor, it means I boosted [*boostlamak*] [gaining an undeserved advantage] myself". *Nathan Drake* strictly clarifies that he never did such a shameful thing. As a result, items that are purchased via resources outside the game are seen as a weakness, a lack of skill, almost cheating. In that sense, items that are originally meant to provide additional attributes, becomes a tool of in-game social understanding by revealing gaming identity of players.

Moreover, during my autoethnographic study, I was also very excited by the items in terms of representation and power boost:

> There are items that are expected to be collected by players. When a creature is defeated it is likely to "drop an item" that enhances the character's powers in a variety of ways. Other than enhancement, items are also visible on the character and change how the character looks. So, whenever I had a new item I paused the game just to see how my hero looks. Since the appearance of a character changes

> with respect to the level of the character, the items become another signifier of your level visually instead of a simple written description in your character information screen. Also, combats and creatures were in a proportioned growth of strength with my own.

Here, I have a similar approach with *Arveldis* and *Ally*. While I am happy with the power boost, what excites me the most is my character's appearance which signifies power through a potentially aesthetic item.

Reflecting self through avatars is regarded by *Ally* and *MildlyToxic* in a different way than the item related discussion that I held up to this point. *MildlyToxic* explains that he is very mobile when it comes to what kind of a role he would like to have in the game. He explains that, until the very last minute he remains doubtful about his choices and ends up having many characters with a variety of abilities:

> It is different with every class. I want my characters to be closer to what I like. I usually pick casters [characters with magical abilities that usually fight in a range instead of close combat] but since I cannot make up my mind I pick Druids [a class in *World of Warcraft*]. I am an indecisive person and a Druid can do anything. It is the only class with four specialties [forms of playing the character], melee and ranged damage dealer, healer, and tank.

Here, it is observable that his character becomes a signifier of his indecisiveness. Although this might not be obvious from the outside as items are, it is still a choice that has been made as a result of is identity. In addition to that, he shoved me his characters and explained their roles. According to him, there are characters that he works [*kasmak*] seriously on progression through the game and ones that he plays purely for fun. He also explains that it is common to have multiple characters since "they are all different". In order to argue the implications of "different", here is *Ally*'s perspective on the issue of characters:

> I mean, you like and get used to them [the characters] while playing. For example I have a character, a gnome warrior with pink funny hair. Could she reflect me? Of course not... She is very cute, I named her *Minicik* [Dinky], she was hanging around. She was so cute. I created her to have a sympathetic character. I mean, I did not know, I felt like creating her.

Although he claims that this character can not be an accurate representation of him, *Minicik* is a segment in him. His in-game body might be very different compared to his real life body, yet he picks that one with that class as a representation of his playful side. In that sense, this behavior is similar to *MildlyToxic*'s characters with multiple purposes. So, "different" stands for separate layers of their personalities.

In-Game Behavior

The gaming community, as a subculture has its own set of social rules, as it was pointed out in the friends section. According to the gamers, just like real life, socially acceptable behavior is crucial in online games in order to maintain relationships with other players and exist in that reality. *MildlyToxic* explains that behavior is more important than it was before:

> You used to learn them after a while. People did not change their names or servers very often back then. But now, you can join a random server anytime, so interaction is not as important. I mean even if 100 people hated you, you would still have like 1000 people who did not know you. So, you used to have such a responsibility within the old servers, you needed to be kind.

Here, *MildlyToxic* complains about the growth in number of servers and their effects on the community of *World of Warcraft*. However, there are still several games operate with smaller servers. In that sense, behavior is an important aspect in order to coexist with other gamers. In fact, he also claims that due to his well known reputation, he is

always, even now, able to find someone who knows him even outside of the server they met and he just unlocked a new character. He says that such acquaintances help him reach higher levels faster by helping him. “I have a lot of friends in *World of Warcraft*. For example, I create a new character in a server that I don’t usually play and someone recognizes me and carries me [*taşımak*] [greatly help progress faster] for sure”.

As I mentioned in previous sections, in some games, players may join randomized teams. Such teams are formed of gamers who are unfamiliar with one another. Having strangers in such teams comes with several issues as *BlackCanary* states

> When someone says things like “you idiots”, “moron team” and speaks madly, I get infuriated. I start swearing unreservedly because he gives me that right. If he can insult me, then I can do the same. However I do not really get angry, I only focus on provoking him.

According to her, in-game behavior should be proper in order to play together in peace. If someone starts being disrespectful, it leads into fights which eventually result in losing the game.

Lastly, I highlight personal traits and their effect on in-game behavior. I discuss the gamers’ personalities in the scope of their descriptions.

Competitiveness and ego are the main traits that I observed throughout the interviews. These two traits change form and degree; yet they are the main motives of each player. For example, *Ally* is the most competitive of all the interviewees:

> You play the game [*Dota*] for 40 minutes in order to win. You want to reap the fruits of these 40 minutes. So, when someone makes a huge mistake you get angry. Especially *MildlyToxic* does that. Once, I told him that if he goes into a specific direction, the opponents will catch and kill him. He did not listen, went

there and got killed. It was obvious, I knew that. It is not on the map but you can guess it.

Here, *Ally* describes a competitive gameplay. His competitiveness and confidence show themselves as a certain behavior which is in a controlling way. He feels responsible to coach his teammates to ensure that he can win.

On the other hand, *MildlyToxic* is not as competitive as *Ally*. He states that he usually remains peaceful:

> For the remaining 40 minutes [Dota] "you should not have done this", "it was not supposed to be like that", he is like C*aptain Hindsight* from *South Park* [TV Series]; should have, would have, could have. This has no use for other than to offend people. It is okay to share your knowledge when we are speaking in between two matches. However, they enter the queue for the next game right after a loss and then speak for the first 5 minutes and when they lose the rest of the game; *Hindsight*. Sometimes someone out-skills the opposing team,[to beat in terms of skill] we start to snowball [to increase one's lead incrementally] and win the game while chitchatting. Here is the difference of a casual gamer. I think it is more fun, otherwise we should boot camp and not speak. Heroes have synergy, for example, we never care for that. Someone begins the game with 0
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> gold, someone is not there went to get tea and Theralion texting his girlfriend AFK [Away From Keyboard; means he is not playing] in the base. So it is okay to lose, there should not be a high expectation, we do not have as much time as dedicated players.

Unlike *Ally*, *MildlyToxic* does not expect winning or being in a good position from every single game. As it is highlighted in the friendship section, *MildlyToxic* sets different levels of competitiveness for each game and group. Since he does not expect a

serious game from this group, he behaves accordingly. In that sense, he is not competitive for every game and he is calm that is why he does not approve an oppressive behavior.

As a result, according to the participants, behaving well in-game is a very important element of conception. It might have many benefits related with success and acceptance within the community as I highlight through the interviews.

In this section I explained gaming identity and conception by others through three main aspects that are mentioned by gamers. First one was in the game profile which acts as a CV and built up through game experience. Second one was the character which signifies both progress and personality segments of the gamers. Last one was in game behavior, which is affected by gamers' personal traits and valued due to its importance on coexisting in the community. In that sense, highlighted traits were competitiveness and ego which differs in form from user to user while also being in varying degrees. In the next section, I tackle the issue of competition and training as a follow up of this section.

4.3.2. Competition

Throughout the interviews, the issue of competition has been highlighted for many times. In this section, I will highlight it from the perspectives of value and investment. In section 4.3.2.1, I will present the relationship between the tools and the performance

while I argue the issue of time and training in section 4.3.2.2.

4.3.2.1. Value: Tools and performance

Throughout the interviews, concept of value regarding the tools was built mainly on performance. In this section, I depict the relationship between the tools and performance through the interviews.

While *MildlyToxic* explained the importance of a mechanical keyboard and how it uplifts his gaming quality and performance, *Ally* was almost indifferent about that, saying "I am not rich enough to pay for mechanical keyboard". As *MildlyToxic* explains, mechanical keyboards transmit data faster, which results in a quicker response. In a way, a mechanical keyboard is more efficient in terms of embodiment which enhances performance in online games, when there is a requirement for good reflexes. The way the participants value computer accessories and peripherals and invest in them are related to their preferences of game genres. For instance, here is the importance of having a well performing headset in FPS games alongside with a mechanical keyboard, according to *MildlyToxic:*

> Well, it affects the FPSs the most. It is not that important in other genres but for example in *Counter Strike*, from which ear you hear the sounds from determines the direction of an approaching enemy. So, you should be sure about from which ear you hear and with a poor quality headset you cannot do that and will have some troubles.

According to *MildlyToxic*, a valuable audio experience can happen through a good quality product which is directly related with immersion and related performance. While a good headset is important for immersion, this immersion has performance related implications in FPSs. In that sense, although *Ally* and *MildlyToxic* have different perspectives on what they individually need, they are at the same point on certain genre requirements. Moreover, *Theralion* explains his system of economical valuing of a headset;

> To be honest, even iPhone headphones are enough. My perspective on this issue is built on utility in-game versus the money spent. When you want to gain more utility, you need to add around $200 more for each utility; it is an exponential growth. So, for me, it is enough to use iPhone headphones.

Here he measures the utilities he would gain for his money and he finds them unrewarding when compared to what he needs to spend. On the other hand, the way *MildlyToxic* talks about his "gaming gear" shows that he finds them crucial in order to perform the way he does.

Although *Ally* was not excited about buying tools that would enhance his performance, he was still interested in the ways he can improve his performance, especially his timing in MOBA games. When he expresses how he convinced one of his friends to use a different shooting setting, an option provided by game software in *Dota*; "I told him, you are losing time, even a 100 milliseconds is important after all". While *Ally*'s understanding of timing can be enhanced through the help of some software and enough training, *MildlyToxic* feels the need of having a high end tools in order to perform better. The matter of worth and how enhancements, or "utilities" as *Theralion* says, are acquired changes from one person to another as it is shown with these three examples.

In this section, I explain performance and its ways of improving it, which is important

due to the competitive nature of gaming. According to the interviews, it can be improved by purchasing better devices, such as a mouse, a keyboard and a headset. Also, every gamer's idea of what is valuable depends on their habits, budget and game genres they play.

4.3.2.2. Investment

According to the interviewees, gaming is not just for fun, but there must be a meaningful outcome for the hours spent gaming. As an example, *Arveldis* differentiates watching a television show from gaming in a very strict way:

> Gaming is something like this: If you only sit in front of a screen, turn your brain off and watch that screen in an hypnotized way, it means you are not improving

> yourself in any way. You are only killing some time. You could just watch the television instead.

According to him, gaming is a serious action in which the players have the choice of either improving themselves or have no meaningful outcome as a result of playing. Three gamers that I interviewed (*Ally*, *MildlyToxic* and *Arveldis*) had this opinion; there are two ways to play a game. First way is what they call being a "casual player" in that case, training and investing is not relevant in here since the focus is on the moment of joy a player has during his game session. *Ally* calls these gamers "filthy casual".

The others are more dedicated, serious, players who practice in order to develop their gaming abilities including their bodies and knowhow. In this case, they read, study, practice and invest time in gaming as if it is a musical instrument or a sports discipline. *Ally* explains the difference in between these players and their perspective of gaming:

> It is up to gamer himself. If the he wants to play together and puts effort in it you start to try as well. You start being like "I should have done this", "you could
>
> have done that". However, some people do not want that. For example [a friend] says that he plays for fun, and not to develop himself; he simply does not care enough. So, every comment you deliver is a problem as you take away from his fun. For example, [another friend] is not like that. He is like "we spend our time
>
> on this game, it should not get wasted, we should develop ourselves. So, commenting on his play is beneficial. Again, you should not criticize someone who plays just for fun. It is a problem as well.

While some of the teammates put joy as the primary outcome of gaming, others find it insufficient for the time they are sparing for gaming and having less fun due to their competitive stature. *Theralion* is accused of being a "casual player", due to his lack of

skills and unwillingness to develop himself by investing time, by *MildlyToxic* and *Ally*. *MildlyToxic* sees spending time as a form of investment. To him, it is important to dedicate certain amount of time for gaming, in order to have visible results in terms of skills and knowhow. He explains how much time a player should invest in order to train himself in *Counter Strike*: "Well the game requires some time to learn. You must invest around at least 1000 hours to be intermediate level player". Also, he explains his definition of a good player which, according to him, entails to be dedicated and serious:

> I qualify gamers as good when they are within the 1% or 5 in 1000 in terms of their skills. On the other hand, you would not expect anything from someone plays an hour per week. These people form first 30% at the bottom. Then, people who spare a little more time comes. Then, people who spares even more; so on and so forth. In anyway, it is actually the top 10% who wants to play the game seriously.

Here, *MildlyToxic* explains what should be expected from people with different amounts of time spared. Top tiers are formed by people who invest time and train themselves.

They are the ones who are serious gamers according to *MildlyToxic*. He also says that being too ambitious is not the right way to act when there is not enough investment made:

> What I cannot understand is, in our group everyone has the mentality of winning. They are like "we must play excellent", "we must win every match we make". However, we do not put the necessary effort into it. We do not watch professional matches, follow how meta-game changes or try to understand which items are utilized [*kasmak*]. We do not have justification for our in-game actions. We play casually without knowing why we do things. So, when you play casually, you should expect casual outcomes and not worry too much.

Here, besides the investment of time, *MildyToxic* argues what should be done in order to improve at gaming and to become an aspiring gamer. To him, the investment is not limited within game time only but it should also include following professional players, software updates in addition to training. He calculates the value, in terms of win rate, and how ambitious he should get according to how much time was invested as a team in total. So, while he expects to chat with his friends and maybe win a game or two, he understands that it is very different from the competitive environment he is in with other people who he trains himself with.

The understanding of investment varies in between the interviewees. *Ally* also expresses that he plays competitive games in order to win after spending 40 minutes on each match. However, it does not mean that he does not enjoy the casual games just as much and sometimes even more. Moreover, he highlights the importance of dedication and consistency if the intention is to be good instead of being a casual player:

> You have to be a little persistent to begin with. If you get bored and quit playing, it won't work. I mean, for example let say you want to be good at playing *Dota*. If you get bored and want to play different games, that is a problem. You have to spend all your time playing that game in order to have success. I mean as many hours you spare, as successful you get. So you have to be persistent and focus on developing yourself. You should try to be a critic for your play after the match.

He almost describes a study session, a consistency, not giving up and analyzing mistakes, studying them with friends, taking advices. So, *Ally*'s understanding of investment in order to be successful as a gamer is similar to that of *MildlyToxic*. However, his is more focused on persistence and spending time in a certain game only.

To sum up, time is seen as an investment from the scope of the users. Reported gains in return are in-game performance, real life learning and joy. For some cases, time spent in training and its outcome brings joy. Others see the moment of gaming as a joyful way of

spending time instead of hours spent on performance enhancing work. Finally, the fact that real life knowledge can be acquired through gaming is seen as valuable as it makes the time invested in a game better than conventional leisure time activities.

In the next section, I depict my findings from the autoethnographic study I performed. Due to its relationship with the body, I feel it is necessary to restate it before discussing the body with respect to the interviews.

4.3.3. Body of a Practitioner: Autoethnographic Findings

One of the main focus points of my autoethnographic research is the posture of the hands. It is inevitable to focus on the rest of the body while making research in this field and on this topic. Because the hands play one of the major roles in the gaming process, my primary aim is to concentrate on the hands, and keep my focus on the posture and gestures of the hands. I photographed my hands (see Figure 13) as a visual demonstration of what I have encountered about "hands" during my analysis. While I was trying to categorize my findings, I realized that the categories I was trying to fit my research into, would be insufficient no matter what. There is always a connection, a concept of interest that needs to be added. As a result, I subcategorized each topic and analyzed them accordingly, in terms of their relationships.

4.3.3.1. Hands and Hand Memory

My profession requires the usage of a computer aided design program throughout the day, resulting in approximately 10 hours of *AutoCAD* exposure for my hands. During the research period, I had several hours of professional work and my gaming time was very limited during the weekdays. On the contrary I was able to spare my entire weekend for gaming. This routine practice helped me a lot in understanding how my hand memory works and how time affects this memory, through observing my own

hands. There was an obvious contrast between the postures of my hands while working and when I turned on the computer for gaming.

Office Hands versus Game Hands

One of the first diary entries that I have is about my initial hand posture in the beginning of the game: "My left hand was on ESC button all the time". The importance of that one button rises from the fact that ESC key is one of the most used buttons in *AutoCAD* due to its constant need. It is used to end selections and commands. It can be seen as the moments of lifting hand when drawing with pen and paper. An *AutoCAD* user's one hand is always somewhere close to ESC button if not on top of it. At the start of every weekday, I experienced this transition in the opposite direction. As I mentioned, I was mostly able to concentrate on my research fully throughout the whole weekend, as much as sixteen hours, without any kind of interruption from other computer programs.

Figure 13: Office Hands and Game Hands

This time, my experience was in contrast with my experience on work days. My initial hand posture was in the form of game hands instead. Although converting from game

hands into office hands did not take long, about half an hour, there was a clear switch in between office and game hands.

As a result, my initial hand gestures varied according to the computer program I was exposed previously for long hours. Game and office hands can be explained through Foucault's concept of docile bodies (see section 2.3.2). Although his theory is built around military training, his implications on muscle memory matches with my findings. What I name as game and office hands can be seen as a trained body through muscle memory in the light of his arguments.

Although I would not consider myself as a hardcore gamer (see section 2.2.1), it would be unfair to neglect the generous amount of time I have spent playing games. I usually spend around thirty hours doing game related activities, in a week. That includes watching videos, reading forums and playing. Although I do not contribute directly to the culture, I am always on *Steam* and chatting with my game friends that I met through online games. That is why I was familiar with some of the issues I aim observing in the context of gaming culture. For my autoethnography I picked a game that I would not normally approach, so that I could be more attentive to how I use my hands which would also serve for the second step of my research.

As a result, the process of getting used to the controls was one of the things that I aimed to observe while building the structure of this part of my research. My long existing interest in gaming showed itself as a set of skills and habits on game controls. However, this was a new experience so that I could not utilize some of my habits as I am used to. As a result, I experienced the struggle of gaining new skills while observing how my hand posture switched in between my old learnings and new ones.

In an RPG with isometric perspective (see Image 8, section 3.4.1) it is possible to see some amount of the environment with the character in the middle. In such perspectives,

character appears much smaller when compared to the environment on the screen. I realized that on screen perspective triggers related game control habits that I built up. As I mentioned in the diary, first few hours was hard to get a grip on the controls:

> While playing, I opened options menu and checked the controls. I did not want to lock character in the middle of screen. I want to check what I have ahead of me (I got this habit from [a friend] while playing *Heroes of the Storm*). But I could not see such option; I will check online to see if such an option exists.

Here, I seek a similar experience with previous games that I have been playing, in terms of perspective and character control through that perspective. Until I got used to this new perspective, I felt highly uncomfortable. I felt as if I was less in control, since I was not able to control the game environment as I was used to. I did not realize my routine of checking what is ahead of me and where I currently am at, on the world map before this research. Also, I struggled controlling my character and did not feel in full control of it. As it is noted in the quote, I checked online sources whether there is a way to

change this setting and look around without moving my character. As a result, my existing gaming knowledge did not include isometric perspective game with a locked screen. So my comfort zone was limited to certain fields of visions which were serving as a tool of a fuller virtual presence coming from identification. In this case, I could not feel fully engaged for some time, at the beginning.

These observations show that my habits and choices are based on the very first games that I have played along with my daily practices involving mouse and keyboard. In addition to my daily *AutoCAD* use, I try to create a similar interaction experience that I had during the previous games which I built my gaming habits around. That is the reason why I seek a way of creating similarities, so that I can feel more engaged with the game, faster. My skillset might not be built around my choices; it can be a result of the

games I played initially. Up to this point, I discuss my personal experience on switching between programs and games. In that sense, having similar key bindings and control methods on different games become meaningful. It creates an easy transition along with buildable skills through a variety of games. According to my self observations, there are three aspects that affect my level of engagement with a game. First is visual data. It serves as a reminder on how I should engage and what kind of a game I have in front of me. Second is controls, which are highly related with the amount of time invested. Although I engage with the same tool, interaction is still separated with respect to the purpose of interaction. In that sense, different games create different game hand configurations in my case. Also the perspective and similar visual aspects trigger certain muscle memories, which is another reason why I tried to call a previous one, so that I could feel more in control. From this point, the value of years spent in the gaming community makes more sense. Because, all the years of investment in gaming, is actually an investment on muscle memory we have in games.

While I was playing the game, one of the most visible physical effects was hand sweat I left on keys after a certain amount of intense sessions of playing. Whenever I encountered a tight or scary situation and tried to fight my way through the game, my fingers were getting sweaty. This situation enabled me to track the levels of risk and anxiety on my play style and how it reflects on my gameplay. The fact that I had a very physical reaction actually shows my emotional state which is a result of all these elements combined together.

I argue the issue of familiarity further, with regards to my two very distinct reactions when I played the very first episode in a storyline called “Wretched Mother”. While the first time was very scary and intense as an experience, second time was almost dull and boring. Familiarity brought a decrease in anxiety and my moot shifted to bore from nervous since there were no unexpected elements at that point. These elements include

storyline, visual and audio elements in addition to controls. As a whole, I knew how to interact, what to interact and expect within the game.

4.3.4. Body

Body was one of the most prominent issues during the interviews. In this section my aim is to classify arguments regarding the body and demonstrate their relationship with one another. First, cover the issues of needs, controls and posture. Then, I convey the audiovisual elements of games and their implications from the perspective of the interviewees.

In this section, gamers' explications on game control related issues takes place along with bodily needs. I also provide a discussion of each gamer's natural posture while also showing them through photographs and videos taken during interviews.

4.3.4.1. Bodily Needs and Awareness

As *Ally* explains, game immersion can cause players to forget their bodily existences. During the interview, he mentioned a story where gamers accidentally caused a fire in their dorm room and did not even notice it due to their gaming. He also explains that bodily needs should not be underestimated since they might be forgotten while playing games: "You should not fall behind on your sleep". *Arveldis* also refers to one of his gaming sessions: "There have been times I played for 48 straight hours, just to better improve my character". This shows that gamers might suspend their needs even while training.

MildlyToxic has similarities with *Arveldis*' approach:

> It depends on whether it is school time or not. During the summer break, I play 8-10 hours straight until a possible plan with my friends. I do not have any limits other than cooking and toilet breaks. This is the upper limit.

MildlyToxic calls bodily needs as a "limit" that needed to be transcended beyond too. So, it can be interpreted that, although body is a tool of in-game progress, its needs are almost an interruption.

4.3.4.2. Bodily Skills through Training

Second issue is habits and training. As mentioned before, most gamers find it important to train themselves. (see section 4.3.2.2) In this section I mention training the body in a more mechanical way as almost memorizing the moves. *Ally* explains his tools of improving skills through *Dota*:

> You play scrims [*scrim atmak*] [training matches between competitive teams] with other teams, or play with your own teammates so that you can improve your
>
> mechanical skills. It is very similar with serious football practices. Also people get more used to playing a hero in a certain way, planning item purchases and play style.

According to him, in order to improve bodily capabilities, mechanical skills as he calls, practice is crucial. This practice includes challenging other teams and his teammates. He also explains his motivation for training as "planning". This motivation is based on set goals including playing capabilities. In addition, he explains the density of these practices, so that gamers can improve their bodies, mechanical skills, accordingly:

> It is not always like what it seems. In some games, for example *Counter Strike*, there are practice maps [in-game environments that gamers interact with]. People play on them for 2 hours per day while you do not even play the regular game for that long. During practice a player learns to randomly shoot things that appear. Players play on the practice map so that they can improve their reflexes. Or on *Dota* when creeps [in-game creatures] appear, you should not miss dealing

> the last point of damage them. [Players gain in-game currency when they do this in *Dota*.] When you miss, you lose money, you should acquire gold as quick as possible. How strong you are with a hero mainly depends on this. [With in-game currency, every player can buy enhancing items.] People focus on optimizing their play with a hero, be like "I will not miss any creep", "I will kill these when I am not busy", "I will clear [*kesmek*] these camps [locations where in-game creatures can be found and killed in order to gain currency]. Besides playing, people try to make such optimizations. If you have a drive, an obsession like this, you can be successful and improve yourself. There are also in-house leagues to practice.

Here, *Ally* highlights practice techniques. He introduces: "practice map". As he describes, it is purposed to develop better reflexes and it is not related with game itself. He also distinguishes people playing such maps. They spend more time into training their bodies compared to a regular player's time spent just playing. This can be associated with investment and dedication that I mention in the previous section. In addition, he calls that as "optimization". It can be defined as training the body to perform its best, so that through that trained body, gamer can achieve the most that can be achieved within the game. Although he associates this with an obsession, according to him, these are the techniques that players can use to train their bodies and achieve success. In-house leagues can be associated with challenging teammates, due to its motivations. It is a friendly league in between familiar gamers with the purpose of improving certain skills. He also says that "It is not related with talent, they get improved in time if you want to work for it" So, he takes talent out of the equation and relates good skill with training and investment of time only. Moreover, *MildlyToxic* explains the approach of several companies towards training:

> *Valve* [for *Dota*] does that 2-3 months before each international tournament. It adds a major update to the game and changes a lot of things. This drives people

> to boot camp and start a new meta-game, so that everybody can start fresh. This means the hand practice and game knowledge acquired past 8 months is somehow wasted; you would need to get accustomed to the new mechanics and create an automated response to certain new game states. I think that it is fair because it evens the playfield out. For example professional gamers (see section 2.2.1) play full time but there are semi-pros, students, people who do not want to spend all their time into this. This reset gives them a chance too. There were many successful semi-pros this year.

Here, *MildlyToxic* explains the relationship between bodily skills and time. While professional players train harder, not everyone has the same time to invest. As a result, *Dota* offers an alternative. Although it still requires bodily training and investment of time, it still offers a chance to more casual players and their improvement and dedication within a month.

Moreover, during the interviews, habits that come from long term practice were discussed. For instance, *Ally* explained the issue of habit: "If I see it again, I will probably remember. I mean you do not remember your password but type it with your hand without a mistake almost automatically; this is the same, you see the hero and remember". In this situation, his past time spent playing certain characters, brings back the stored skills. When I asked about habit, *Ally* and *BlackCanary* both compared gaming to riding a bicycle which is related with bodily habits due to practice. *Theralion* props *Ally's* and *BlackCanary's* claim through how he used to use his hands while playing an older version of *Dota*

> You used to memorize the keys and place your hand on the keyboard accordingly. You would imagine what you want to make happen when you press a button. Basically, you needed to set your hand-eye coordination before the game starts because you usually do not have time for that in the game. As long

> as you held your hand in that position, there was no problem, even when you switched between two heroes.

In a sense, *Theralion* explains his habits and how he recalls them by placing his hand accordingly which is similar with the act of riding a bicycle in terms of imagining and achieving.

4.3.4.3. Use of Body in Relationship with Hardware

Another issue is how gamers get comfortable with their hardware and postures. According to their depictions, their preferences of tools are in relation with their habits and preferences. *Ally* explains his regret in his choice of mouse as follows:

> I was very excited when we started playing *World of Warcraft* so I bought a mouse that had 12 buttons. I thought I would use it to its full potential. If I knew back then I would be playing the games I play now, I wouldn't have bought it. It is bad because this part [he shows a part on his mouse] is fat, other mice usually have it thinner and 12 buttons are very confusing. Three would have been enough, maybe even two. For example, *Razer* and *Corsair* [gaming peripheral companies] have better mice. I mean I do not remember names of the models but they have more basic models with two buttons which are much easier to use.

Ally explains that due to his selection of game genre, the mouse he uses is not ideal for his performance and he is uncomfortable using it. Also, he knows a variety of models, so he follows the market and tries to pick the best option for his comfort, which is related to his performance, in relationship with his bodily choices. In a way, he knows what would be the best for himself in context of body and gaming.

On the other hand, what he addressed as a drawback is what *Arveldis* likes the most in his own mouse:

> I have this mouse that I especially picked. My favourite genre is MMORPG, so I bought a mouse specifically designed for it. *Logitech* [another hardware company] has a mouse, it has 12 buttons on it. If you switch to a different profile through pressing a button, you can set 12 more bindings. With another button you can do the same thing three times. I have a mouse that you can play without even touching to the keyboard. To be honest, it simplifies my life. I play on the couch, so it is comfortable. I am very used to it so it is much faster for me.

All in all, while *Ally* finds many buttons to be disturbing in terms of comfort and performance, for *Arveldis* such setting is the best option. Although this is related with preferences in terms of genre preferences, the main issue here is performance that is

acquired through special tools and unique gaming postures. Different gamers have different practices and preferences. As another example, *MildlyToxic* explains how his gaming setting should be in order for him to be comfortable and perform his best:

> I do not have the luxury of moving my thumb much. My hand should have the posture that I got used to. It is memorized reflex, I have to do very sudden moves to have a headshot, for example [*Counter Strike*]. It is pure reflex, so sometimes I use this button [at the side of his mouse] for team speak in order to communicate with my teammates. Other than that, right and left buttons and the one in the middle. In addition, the height of the table is very important. Where I place my keyboard and mouse, they should not be under the screen; that is why I use externals [keyboard, mouse and screen]. Besides, the chair must be comfortable as when you play games a large amount of time within a day, if your back hurts and you cannot stand upright; that is a problem.

MildlyToxic has a very specific setting for his practices. First, he prefers mice with fewer buttons due to their ease of use in moments requiring reflexes. He explains that

his body is used to perform in a specific way and he needs to provide that in order to perform his best. Additionally, he does not only consider his hands but his entire body as a part of gaming activity. That is why, the chair and the table become important elements of gaming for him. *BlackCanary* also relates her performance with her mouse in a similar way. "Games that we play depend on fast hand gestures; that is why I would not want a bulky mouse". While *Arveldis*, *MildlyToxic*, *BlackCanary* and *Ally* finds tools important in terms of performance, *Theralion* also explains his mouse's customizability and how he uses it in order to perform in a variety of games. "In *Razor*'s settings screen, I was changing the DPI [sensitivity of the mouse], acceleration and frequency rate according to the game I was about to play". So, in this case, there is not a single preference but a shifting set of preferences according to the game which differs from the rest of the interviewees.

4.3.4.4. Software

In addition to interaction with gaming hardware physically, there is also the issue of gaming software where key bindings are adjusted. In this section, I present the interviewees statements on controls regarding their tools and software. "Usually, all games have the same controls. So I play the game first and then if there is something that I do not enjoy ergonomically, I change it the way I want to". As *BlackCanary* also claims, there might be a need for adjustment due to habits and choices. "For example, I look at a key binding and it does not fit there, I cannot take my hand there, I assign it to another key that is more comfortable for me". "Fitting" is, again, an indicator of habit. Besides that, she also judges the game; she implies that assigned keys might be a bad choice that does not fit in well with the other keys. Although the interviewees evaluate whether a key is comfortable or not, they also state that their idea of comfort is related with their habits developed through settled customs. *Nathan Drake* explains that there is a convention regarding movement controls:

> There is a convention regarding controls. I mean W, A, S, D, maps to forward, left, back, right. If this remains the same and they do not do a mad thing like making 1-2-3 forward and back, I usually do not have any problems with controls.

Here, he sees an unconventional setting as "madness" that creates problem within the gameplay. *Ally* has a similar say on the same issue:

> I mean it is standardized after one point. We got used to W, A, S, D if someone makes it differently, then it is annoying. My hand usually is on these keys and the ones around, so if I have to raise my hand and put it somewhere else, I would get annoyed.

As *MildlyToxi*c and *Theralion* mentioned, there was an additional unofficial program

called *WarKeys*, which allowed to assign a single set of keys to operate every hero without having to memorize each key. Later as *Ally* also explains, when *Valve* came up with the current version of *Dota*, they almost invented a guideline for all MOBA games. The keys Q, W, E and R were assigned to the set of skills each hero has. Also they had the gradual development, which means unlocking skills with greater impacts later in the game, as the numbers go by. As *Theralion* explains, "it was a game that shaped my experience, I would go on using same key bindings 19 years from now as well".

Another close point is *Nathan Drake*'s casual quotation while explaining a different concept "you know how MOBA games are, skills are on Q W E R keys" he says. Here, it is possible to understand the impact of design decisions of game developers on users' personal preferences as well. Although they have the ability of 'shaping' as *Theralion* says; *WarKeys*, mentioned by users, showed that there is still a need for a common ground.

Moreover, *Ally* explains that he never used *WarKeys* and had the memorization of key bindings for each skill of every hero. He was the only interviewee who did not use that program among total of four people who mentioned the old version of *Dota*.

Consequently, the views on *WarKeys* can be grouped into two. Some people accepted the given key bindings while others tried to find a solution but still did not reject the game for being unappealing in terms of controls. From the interviews, it is understandable that after the first game, there was a concerned crowd which found casting skills harder than it should be. Later, when the newer version came out, the "experience shaping" one, it had the reasonable controlling. In that sense, It is arguable that *WarKeys* might have served as user testing.

In this section I presented the issue of software in relation with gaming controls. I explained that there are conventions regarding controls. These conventions are built

through games and additional programs. However, gamers use software related control mechanisms and customize these controls according to their habits coming from this standardization.

In the next section, I depict audiovisual elements as tools of interaction and immersion.

4.3.5. Audiovisual Elements

In this section, audiovisual elements will be discussed in relation with the interviewees' bodies.

In-game sounds are highly important in terms of both tactics and emergence with game environment, according to users. First, I highlight the issue of familiarity and association. According to *Ally*, music is a strong reminder:

> I think music is important. It defines some games, for example *Bastion, Civilization, Heroes of Might and Magic 3*. When you listen to their soundtracks later, you remember the game and desire to play it once again. However, it should not be disrupting the game.

To him, music acts a reminder that triggers the desire to play. In that sense, *MildlyToxic* has a similar approach:

> They make soundtracks at the same level with Hollywood movies. I mean everyone who plays *World of Warcraft* recognizes its music no matter where it plays. Any *World of Warcraft* player would feel like they are home when the listen to the game's soundtrack.

For *Arveldis*, music should have high quality; it should be created for the game specifically and be related with in game events and emotions instead of a just mundane, repetitive tune. In both cases, a specific music is important for both recognition and quality.

MildlyToxic also finds sound to be important on a tactical level:

> Sounds are very important for acquiring information. Especially in team games, you should be able to hear your teammates clearly. There is a dilemma in *Counter Strike* regarding this issue. You need to hear footsteps and guns alongside with your teammates. That is why sometimes you need to ask your friends to be quiet. So when I am listening footsteps at a corner, if my teammates start speaking randomly, I get mad. So conversations should be very brief. Like "come here", "I saw the bomb", "help me"; you should be able to access information without disruption. Also music should not be too loud. I turn it down when I play *Counter Strike* for sure.

According to him, in game sounds are highly important. In fact, at one point, he calls sounds as “information” to be utilized. He explains three types of sounds within the game. First one is the game music, which he usually turns down. Second one is the conversation between teammates. The last one is sounds that convey information. Although this “information” is created through enemy players in *Counter Strike* he explains tracking those kinds of sounds within different games as well.

> Usually bosses say something related with the ability. For example when the boss says something like “you will burn”, it throws something with a flame. It is useful to get familiar with that it says because in the chaotic environment of a combat, you can get ready for what is about to come. After a while you get yourself familiar with it. For example, the boss hits in every 30 seconds. When you hear its ticking voice in the background, it becomes easier to watch out for. If we gained experience on an event or a boss, then I can turn down the voice of my teammates and sounds in order to listen to some music.

Here, *MildlyToxic* uses the rhythm and the content of the sounds as another source of information in *World of Warcraft*. Here, he also provides the degree of importance for each audio content. While the most important ones are friends and information providers, music is secondary and it can be enjoyed when the content is not new and challenging.

As a result, the audio content has two aspects according to the interviews. First one is familiarity and recognition. When a game has a distinct music, hearing it out of its regular context brings back memories and sometimes the desire to play it again. Second is the type of sounds. There are sounds of other players and game music in addition to a informative sounds. In terms of performance, informative and teammates’ sounds are the most important.

In addition to sounds, visual aspects of a game were highlighted as an environment enhancer. Most of the gamers claimed that a good and immersive game does not have to provide a high graphic performance. On the other hand not everyone thinks that way: "Everyone likes graphics. A game draws you in more when it has more life-like and lively graphics" says *Arveldis*. It is also important to remember genre choices. A brief reminder, *Arveldis* prefers non-performance-requiring games with storylines and immersing environments. In contrast, *MildlyToxic* puts performance higher than visual quality in his list as a FPS player

As a result, while sounds can have many purposes in a game such as warning, information and environmental association, visual aspects are not that valued by most users. Instead, the storyline and the narratives of the games are highlighted in terms of their immersiveness.

In next section, I present my autoethnographic analysis regarding game visuals and sounds

4.3.5.1. Immersion through Game Visuals, Sounds and Storyline

The moment I started playing the game, the environment pulled me in. In order to visualize the environment, I present screenshots from a variety of locations in *Diablo III*. In addition to locations, its audio elements are contained of playable and non-playable characters' sounds and environmental music. So, the soundscape of the game has a mixture of, voices of a variety of in-game creatures, conversations in between characters and tense music changing from location to location.

Although I was not feeling fully in control, the audiovisual aspects of the game still created an immersion. As a gamer, I usually do not prefer games that have a tense environment. The unpredictability of environment is the very source of this unwanted tension. *Diablo III*'s sounds, visual elements and storyline are built on such tension. On

top of this, my lack of skill intensified my anxiety. As a result, although I was not immersed skill wise, embodiment of the tool (see section 2.3.2), I was in fact immersed into the environment which can be an example of embodiment of the character in an emphatic way (see section 2.3.1).

In my diary, it is possible to see a few attempts of diminishing my level of immersion through hooking up to the reality we are in, so that I can feel the relief of being in my room and not in *Diablo III*'s virtual environment. For example, my statement "I turned the volume down" is an attempt of calibrating in between two realities, so that I would not get overwhelmed by the virtual one. Although I do not want to turn the game off, I still want to remind myself that I am at my room and try to invite the feeling of comfort and security coming from my location in real life into the gaming experience I am having. As a result, I try to dim down the audiovisual game elements that create intensity.

According to my diary, my way of dealing with anxiety evolved as my experience in game increased. I split the process into three different phases. At the first level of engagement with the game, my preference was to mute the volume completely and having the full awareness of the physical environment I was in. Second phase comes a bit later, in the second session, after I had more insight on the mechanics of game, using speakers and having coexistence in both environments in terms of soundscape. The third phase begins, when I have more fluency, through having my earphones on and living the full acoustic experience of being in such a virtual environment. These highlight the reason why game knowhow and level of anxiety are inversely proportional. Lastly, all these strategies are bounded with what I was allowed to do while playing.

However, I had a feeling that the darker environments within the game, like dungeons, were more difficult to pass and in fact, I was struggling to survive and stay calm at these kinds of environments the most. I was more anxious about in-game creatures in my first

encounters, but then I started to make comparisons, such as finding similarities between zombies in this game and a game I feel successful at; *Left for Dead II*. This familiarity calmed me down about my encounters with such creatures. This situation can be interpreted as past visual experiences formed the ground of my understanding.

I always preferred a game with good storyline. This is the main reason behind my ability of watching games, without playing, and without getting bored. I did not realize how important the storyline is to me before starting to analyze my diary though. As I recorded, after the very first play, I ended up asking questions regarding characters and their stories. In fact, I bothered people so much that my friend sent me a link to a video on *Youtube* which explained it all. After watching the video and understanding almost the full purpose of the characters, their appearance became much more exciting to me. Their voices and visual interpretations were things that I was looking forward too.

As I mentioned above, after my first play session, I got highly interested in the events and characters of *Diablo III*. I spent three times more time on the blogs, learning further about the game, items, characters and their relations within the overall storyline of *Diablo* series. This situation also has implications over metaculture (see section 2.2.2.3) of *Diablo* series and how the story lives outside of gameplay.

4.4. Summary

To sum up, in this chapter I presented a combination of analyses that are outcomes my autoethnographic data in addition to interviews and participant observation sessions that I held.

Initially, I highlighted the issue of communication through non-gaming and gaming social media. I added that gamers use a combination of this media to stay in touch with the gaming culture. Moreover, I presented subgroups. As a part of subgroups, I tackled in real life friends in terms of playing together, internet café culture and gaming's

implications on such friendships. Then, I gave emphasis on in-game friendships and their value in terms of socializing. Lastly, I displayed guilds and teams as inner groups and argued their different impacts on gaming environment and gamer.

In addition, I highlighted the issue of gamer. First, I mentioned gaming identity through in-game profiles, avatars and characters and in-game behavior. Second, I argued competition in two sections. In one section I described value of tools in terms of performance. During the other section, I discussed investment, mostly time, in relation to competition.

Lastly, as a part of the gamer, I presented the body. I approached it through gaming's impact on posture, needs and awareness, skills and training, hardware and software. In addition to these I argued audiovisual elements and held an overall discussion regarding immersion and body.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I present the conclusions of this research. First, I begin with a brief overview of the study. Afterwards, I discuss my main findings as results of analysis and review of existing literature. I finalize the chapter by discussing the limitations of the study and presenting my recommendations for further research.

5.1. Overview of the Research

The aim of this thesis is to research the meanings and significance of gamers' interactions in and around gameplay, including those with gaming hardware, software and as a subcultural community. In order to achieve that aim, I explored interactions of six gamers in addition to myself.

In *Chapter 2*, I explored game related literature. I presented gaming through reviewing literature within the disciplines of history, game design, psychology, anthropology, industrial design and cultural studies. This exploration helped pointing out the multidisciplinary structure of game culture and its elements, which contributes to this research. These elements include subculture, design, body, identity and avatars. Moreover, drawing attention to related studies formed a holistic perspective for upcoming chapters.

In *Chapter 3*, I explained my research methodology. I explained autoethnographic study and how it served as a research approach. In addition, I elucidated participant observation and interviews in depth.

In *Chapter 4*, I analyzed interaction practices of gamers. I approached ethnographic study and interviews together throughout the analysis. Initially, I highlighted my findings on non-gaming and gaming social media and how gamers use a combination of this media to stay in touch with the gaming culture. Second argued that there are subgroups in the gaming community. According to my findings, they include real life friends, gaming friends and teams and guilds. Afterwards, I gave emphasis on in-game profiles, avatars and characters and in-game behavior as parts of gaming identity. In addition, I depicted the importance of competition through value of tools and time. I approached body through gaming's impact on posture, needs and awareness, skills and training, hardware and software. Lastly, I argued audiovisual elements and held an overall discussion regarding immersion and body.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I present the conclusions. This thesis has five main conclusions, which will be discussed in detail in the following section.

5.2. Prominent Conclusions

In this section, I present five main conclusions of this research in separate sections. First, I argue that gamer is a compact concept formed of its three elements; In Real Life Identity, Virtual Identity and Body. Second, I present the issue of metaculture, how gaming culture is not limited with in-game moments. Third, I revisit the concept of being a true gamer and how it is perceived. Fourth, I explain embodiment and how it should not be limited with only considering one of the worlds it might take place in; virtual or real. I demonstrated the relationship between these four conclusions as chart. (see Figure 17) Lastly, I explain the implications of my conclusions and findings on design practice.

Multiple Identities

One of the main goals of this research is to understand the interaction methods of gamers. Throughout this research, I observed that being a gamer has multiple layers of identity, which serve at different stages of interaction. I present these layers in three sections below, "real life identity", "virtual identity" and "body". As an outcome of this research, each of these layers can be taken as different media that gamer experiences a part of the overall culture. While gamer is a wholesome concept, it is formed of these elements that serve as media of her existence within the gaming community. Each element exists with, and due to the other elements.

Real Life Identity can be interpreted in a parallel way with its conventional meaning. It is the off-screen existence of the gamer. It includes personal traits, lifestyle and general behavior. As an example to real life identity, my findings regarding competition can be given. In my analysis I argued that each gamer can have varying competitiveness level that comes from their personality. Unique personal qualities and drives constitute this identity.

Virtual Identity is the reflected part of the actual identity throughout gaming. There might be multiple gaming identities reflecting different segments. In that sense it is parallel with Kirkpatrick's "fragmented self" (see section 2.3.1). Gaming identity or identities are representatives of the actual identity, however, is not fully comprises it. They enlighten and emphasize smaller sections of real life identity. As it is with the example of "Minicik" (see section 4.3.1) different sides of the identity might appear separately as one gaming identity. One can be a cute gnome at one side and a strong warrior on other. This does not mean that he is either the gnome or the warrior by themselves, but all of them. Moreover, gaming identity is not only limited with the variety of avatars a gamer has or plays with. It also appears within the metaculture (see section 2.2.2.3) outside of the in-game moments such as gaming social media or game

related chats among friends. Due to gaming culture's communication network, there is a segment of real life identity, a virtual identity presented in each interaction. These interactions and virtual identities related to them might vary such as different characters in different games. In that sense, gaming identity is highly segmented. However, it would be very hard to track one's real life identity through virtual identities due to their strewn existence within the community, outside and inside in-game moments. *Body* is approached as the carrier of skills and the key element of embodiment. It is the bridge between real life identity and virtual identity. Through embodiment, it helps gaming become a fluent practice as it is with Ingold's saw. (see section 2.3.2) In the saw example, instead of tool the overall action is an embodiment, still tool is the center of it .Unlike the saw, not only the tool, but the avatar is a part of the embodiment. Due to duality of realities in which this embodiment takes place, body is approached with both its sensual and physical aspects in the scope of this conclusion. Each of these identities are in constant interaction with one another and cannot be easily separated.

Metaculture

As I argue in previous section, gamer is not one thing, but a complement of many things. Gaming subculture is no different. It is not only formed of in-game moments. There are multiple elements that sustain this culture outside of gaming environment. These elements are named as "metaculture".(see section 2.2.2.3) Although in-game moments are valuable, the elements of the metaculture feeds the Virtual Identity. Elements that are outside of gaming moments are experienced through Real Life Identity. In a sense, what is perceived through Real Life Identity contributes to the Virtual Identity. An obvious example to that can be *Theralion*'s moment of checking an element of the metaculture and adopting it to use in the gaming moment. (see section 4.1.1) Moreover, the issue of studying (see section 4.3.2.2) the game outside of it, is another example where gamers read forums, watch other players in order to enhance their performances.

My conclusion is that there is a gaming metaculture and it is interacted through real life identity. However, it is manipulated to contribute to the virtual identity and that is the reason why metaculture is a big part of the gaming subculture. In-game and out-game moments have a mutual relationship. The gamer constantly converts what she perceived through her virtual identities and real life identity into one another. This creates the never ending flow of information through which the culture is sustained. A small example to that would be a cycle where gamer studies the game, plays it, and shares his insight.

True and Non-True Gamers, Training and Immersion

As I also highlight through the literature, there is an ongoing discussion on who is counted as a "true gamer" within the community. (see section 2.2.1) To summarize, true gamers are players who are considered as hardcore gamers that are worthy enough to be called as gamers. I associate this discussion with two findings from my analysis; meritocracy and training. First, the meritocracy within the guilds (see section 2.2.2.4) is not unique for guilds only, but it is an overall understanding within the community. In that sense, although games that do not require skills are also computer games, due to this meritocratic structure, they are not well respected. In addition, some games come with their own value. Their value is measured through their genre and requirement of skills. Players interacting successfully with games that require practice are considered as "true gamers" according to my findings. The first thing that is expected by the community is to play games with a certain skill requirement. The second thing is to play these games successfully, in a sense, being able to use required skills to interact. That is why, *Theralion* is accused of being a "filthy casual". He has weaker skills compared to rest of his group, although they all play the same game. (see section 4.3.2.2)

This last point brings me to my second finding. Since skillful interaction is valued, training has a great role in becoming a "true gamer". Training includes improving know-how, knowledge and bodily gestures. In that sense, it is necessary for *Real Life Identity*,

Virtual Identity and *Body* to have a fluent relationship. A well trained body means a better functioning bridge between the two identities of the gamer. It creates a seamless transition of know-how and knowledge that is acquired via both past experiences of gaming and interactions within the metaculture such as participating in internet forums, watching game videos, socializing with gamer friends etc. In a way, a well-trained body creates the ultimate immersion through the embodiment.

Embodiment

One of the aims of this research is to observe the relevance between game-related literature and real life practices. As a key point of this research, embodiment has been argued in the literature chapter. It is argued in two different contexts. First is the embodiment of tools, that is, using them as an extension of body. (see section 2.3.2) Second is embodiment of in-game avatars, that is, occupying their bodies. (see section 2.3.1)

Using a tool as it is an extension of the body can be argued about game interaction peripherals. As it is also depicted in literature and analysis chapters, having an overall control over tools require time and practice. However, when the control is acquired, it leaves its spot for an unconscious utilization, through which the gamer uses the actual tool without thinking. In that sense, moving an avatar without thinking about pressing certain keys on the keyboard might be considered as embodiment. On the other hand, there is the issue of the virtual body that is controlled through peripherals. Again, related literature and my analysis show that this secondary body, avatar, is often referred as "I". (see section 2.3.1) Associating characters with the actual self is also addressed as embodiment. In this case, it is considered as a secondary body that gamers borrow to experience virtual reality.

Gaming has a unique position in terms of existing in multiple realities. That is why embodiment in gaming should be argued through a more holistic approach. Embodiment

serves the gamer as a bridge to exist in the virtual environment of the game while controlling that existence from the real world. In fact, embodiment of tools an avatar should not be argued separately due to their implications over each other. Approaching it from such limited perspective would weaken its importance. This embodiment includes both physical and virtual bodies of gamers. There is a process behind an in-game character's movement. It starts from the actual body, goes on with the tool and meets with the character and the virtual environment. In that sense, the whole process of an in-game movement should be considered as "embodiment" and virtual presence of the gamer is acquired through this process. Lastly, embodiment has the main role in creation of gamer due to its rendering of body as the bridge in between two identities.

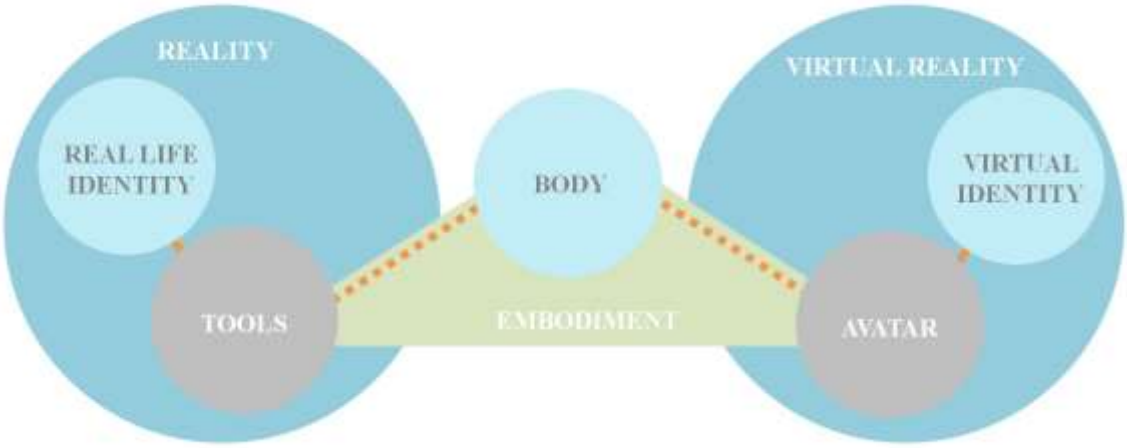

Figure 14: Conclusion Flow Chart

Implications on Design

As I discussed throughout this research, all elements of gaming is a part of its culture. From this point forth, every design decision regarding gaming would have cultural value. The gamer should be tackled considering this structure, especially in design fields.

The gamer cannot be reduced to one of these identities, which is highly related with design practices. For instance, if a peripheral designer considers the *Body* alone, her design would be deficient due to lack of consideration of its relationship with other identities. It would be flawed because of not considering the body as a bridge and isolating it, reducing it to ergonomics. It is the same for an interface designer to consider *Gaming Identity* without including the remaining two concepts. It would turn out to be a design that is not coherent with the physical tools that are operated.

Especially when it comes to the issue of game controls, designer must have an interactive design process involving gamers and the overall culture. That is because her design has a cultural value that is interacted by the entire gaming meshwork through identities and bodies of gamers. Throughout the interviews, some of the games are highlighted as "experience shapers". (see section 4.3.4.4) They are considered to be the pioneering games within their field, so that they created certain conventions and standards regarding game controls. Although their suggestions were well respected, gamers developed alternative ways regarding interaction. *WarKeys* (see section 4.3.4.4) is an example of such intervention. It is an unofficial software that provided an alternative key binding for *Dota*'s older version. Although it was created by players, it is used so much that the sequel of the game, *Dota II* was released with a similar key binding. In a sense, *WarKeys* produced an "experience shaper" that was fabricated by designers and gamers together. This commonly fabricated game mechanism is especially important due to its cultural value. As it is highlighted in the interview section, this group effort became a convention, a cultural value that cannot be easily challenged in contemporary design practices. In a sense, gamers became the critics and sustainers of the convention they co-created with the designers.

The reason why I revisit these events is to underline this case's implications over contemporary game design practices. Due to the large community that lies behind each

element of gaming, design steps must be executed with respect to traditions and conventions of game culture.

In addition to that, community's structure supports fluid roles, so a designer is never in a secluded position. There are always gamers that are critics, designers and users; existing and functioning simultaneously with the designer. In that sense, a game interaction designer must adopt each of these roles in order to create a design that supports meaningful gestures with a cultural provision.

Lastly, final and most important design consideration of this research is on heuristics. As I highlight during the literature review (see section 2.1.2.6), heuristics are an important tool for game design, however, it is limited with immediate experiences. What I highlight throughout this research is the fact that gaming is a cultural practice. As a consequence of that, game design guidelines should be designed with a certain consideration. My suggestion is to save gaming guidelines from being strict qualitative data. In that sense, three main questions must be asked before each heuristic design approach and answers of these questions should be included in design guidelines.

1. Is the game allowing interaction with genre-specific tools?
2. What kind of a community this game would support and create?
3. What kind of real life consequences this game would have for that community and its members?

Through these questions, the achievement would be an understanding towards users' the interaction with specific tools, achieving a community that would keep circulating the knowledge and provide source for design improvements and measurement of immersiveness.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The scope of this study was to explore gamers' interactions and experiences within the context of this research. In the process of research, there were some limitations.

First, according to my personal experiences as a female gamer, I know that there are not many female gamers in Turkey. On the other hand, there should be more researches focused on this issue, since my insight as a single person, is far from being academically valuable.

Moreover, gaming culture is a global culture. However, due to logistic restrictions, this research is limited with Turkey, Ankara. As a result, my findings do not cover the entire subject area. I conducted my research with a group that is impacted by the same regional culture. Internet cafes are an example to that. In addition, Turkey does not take place in the process of gaming community's development. In that sense, Turkey does not contribute to improvements of gaming culture other than smaller communities Turkish gamers involve in. For Further research, I recommend studying a variety of nationalities and cultures in order to understand how they experienced gaming subculture separately, in their own national and international levels. This would provide more insight on such a global community.

Another limitation is that, the second stage of my research is done with few participants. This limitation has three reasons.

First one is limitations of time that gamers had in addition to my own.

Second reason is, due to interview's structure that requires intimate sharing, not every potential participant agreed to take place in this research. (see section 3.5)

Lastly, as an insider (see section 3.1.1) I could not interview every suitable gamer in order to remain my distance as a researcher.

Due to these reasons, this research conducted with a limited number of gamers. However, through a short list of participants, I had a chance to hold very long, in depth interviews. As a further recommendation, this research can be supported by less in depth studies on a larger crowd. Data including more variety, more games, different groups and sets of relationships can be obtained through such research. In addition to this recommendation, I studied observed interactions of myself, a gamer, in order to study development process of gaming skills. I held an autoethnographic research. However, studying different gamers in a similarly structured condition for long periods would disclose a variety of interaction processes. Analyses on different gamers' processes of gaining gaming skills and habits can supply a very rich data for designers of computer peripherals and interaction designers.

Gaming is connected with a variety of principles. It is not possible to investigate them in detail through one study. Gaming requires to be studied from perspectives of each discipline, separately. In that sense, in this research, I could not argue gaming enough from the viewpoints each principle. Each of them required to be studied through individual researches.

In this research, I argued that gaming provides an alternative reality in relation to real life. In a further research, game environment's potential influence on social learnings and their implications on real life social interactions can be investigated. In addition to that, ethnographic work can be extended to virtual lives which would provide an additional set of social interactions.

Lastly, for a further research, game peripherals and their relationship with game genres can be investigated further.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Bilgilendirme ve Gönüllü Katılım Formu

Sayın katılımcı,

Bu belge, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Mimarlık Fakültesi, Endüstri Ürünleri Tasarımı Bölümü'nde, yüksek lisans programı çerçevesinde yürütülen "Çok Oyunculu Çevrimiçi Bilgisayar Oyunu Oyuncularının Mouse ve Klavye Kullanarak Oyun ile Etkileşimleri" başlıklı araştırmada gönüllü olarak yer almanız durumunda sizi bilgilendirmek ve onayınızı almak için hazırlanmış bir formdur.

Bu projenin ana amacı, oyuncuların etkileşim yöntemlerini araştırarak farklı kullanıcı profillerini gözlemlemektir. Bunun için gerekli olan bilgiyi çevrimiçi oyun oynama alışkanlığı olan kişilerle yapacağımız yüzyüze görüşmelerle ve bu kişilerin belirlenen bir süre boyunca oynayacağı oyunu gözlemleyerek elde etmeyi umuyoruz. Bu görüşmelerde katılımcılardan beklediğimiz, oyun alışkanlıklarına dair beceri, bilgi ve değerlendirmelerini bizimle paylaşmalarıdır.

Yapacağımız görüşmelerin ve gözlemlerin uzunluğu sizin ayırabildiğiniz zamana göre ayarlanacak, ancak tahmini olarak gözlem ve görüşme süreçleri toplamda iki buçuk saatten daha uzun sürmeyecektir. Görüşmelerin zamanı birlikte belirlenecektir. Görüşme, katılımcının kendi bilgisayarının bulunduğu yerde gerçekleşecektir. Görüşmeler sırasında, araştırma için kayıt tutma ve analizinin daha sağlıklı yapılabilmesi amacıyla ses ve gerekli görüldüğü durumlarda görüntü kaydı yapılacaktır. Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul etmekle, ses ve görüntü kaydı alınmasını kabul etmiş bulunuyorsunuz. Bununla birlikte, görüşme sırasında gerekli gördüğünüz herhangi bir durumda mülakatı durdurulabilir, araştırmanın herhangi bir yerinde ya da sonrasında söylediklerinizin ve yaptıklarınızın tamamının ya da bir kısmının kayıt dışı kalmasını,

CONSENT FORM (Continued)

silinmesini isteyebilir, süreç sonrasında bizimle iletişime geçerek bilgi talep edebilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılım gönüllük esasına dayanmaktadır ve sizlerden bu katılım karşılığında hiçbir bedel istenmeyecektir. Yapılan tüm ses ve/veya görüntü kayıtları yalnızca araştırmacılar tarafından analiz amaçlı olarak dinlecek ve/veya izlenecek, üçüncü bir kişi ve kurumla paylaşılmayacak ve yalnızca bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılacaktır. Sağladığınız bilgi anonimleştirildikten sonra kullanılacaktır.

Araştırmaya katılımınız bir risk taşımamaktadır. İstediğiniz takdirde araştırmanın sonraki aşamalarına ve sizden aldığımız bilgilerin nasıl kullanılacağına dair detaylı bilgi alabilirsiniz. Araştırmaya katılmaya karar verdiğiniz takdirde bu belgeyi imzalayarak bir kopyasını saklamanızı rica edeceğim. Ancak, izin belgesini imzalamak sizin için bağlayıcı olmayıp, istediğiniz zaman araştırmada yer alma konusundaki kararınızı değiştirebilirsiniz. Böyle bir durum olduğunda ya da araştırma süresince herhangi bir konuda sorunuz ve/veya şikayetiniz olursa çekinmeden benimle iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Zaman ayırdığınız için teşekkürler.

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CONSENT FORM (Continued)

Katılımcının okuması ve imzalaması gereken bölüm: Bu formu imzalayarak, yapılan "Çok Oyunculu Çevrimiçi Bilgisayar Oyunu Oyuncularının Mouse ve Klavye Kullanarak Oyun ile Etkileşimleri" başlıklı araştırma konusunda size verilen bilgiyi anladığınızı ve araştırma yapılmasını onayladığınızı belirtmiş oluyorsunuz. Formu imzalamış olmanız yasal haklarınızdan vazgeçtiğiniz anlamına gelmemektedir; ayrıca araştırmacının, ilgili kişi ve kurumların yasal ve mesleki sorumlulukları sürmektedir. İstediğiniz zaman mülakatın durdurulmasını talep edebilirsiniz. Mülakatın başlangıcında veya herhangi bir aşamasında açıklama yapılmasını veya bilgi verilmesini isteyebilirsiniz.

Mülakat sırasında ses kaydı yapılmasına, verdiğim bilgilerin bu proje kapsamında hazırlanan yayınlarda kullanılmasına izin veriyorum.

Evet: ___ Hayır: ___

Mülakat sırasında görüntü kaydı yapılmasına, görüntülerin bu proje kapsamında hazırlanan yayınlarda kullanılmasına izin veriyorum.

Evet: ___ Hayır: ___

Katılımcının adı soyadı İmza
Tarih

Bu formun bir kopyası katılımcıya verilecek, imzalı kopyası araştırmacıda kalacaktır.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Gaming Past and Habits

- Since when are you playing computer games?
- How did you start?
- What was the first game you have ever played?
- What kind of games you played after that? Did you have a shift in the games you like and interested?
- Have you ever played games outside the computer?
- Why do you like playing computer games?
- How are you with computer games now?
- How much time do you spend time in gaming? Which times of day?
- Are you currently working? If school, which grade
- Could you compare your gaming habits according to different time periods with different levels of business?
- Which games do you play? Why?
- Which games are outermost ?Why?

Gaming Environment

- Could you describe the environment where you play computer games?
- What are the tools you use while playing, such as computer, mouse keyboard etc..?
- Since when you are using these tools?
- What criteria leaded you into making these choices?
- If you have any, could you compare your current equipment with old ones?
- If you had limitless funding, how these tools and environment would be?

On Computer Games in General

- Which games you are good at?
- Do you have a MOBA you can give and example as?
- How do you decide whether you like a game or not? What are the affecting factors?
- Do you play multiple games at the same time or, one game at a time? Could you explain your habits and time periods you reserve for each game?
- What would you expect from a game in terms of,
    - Visuals Content

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Continued)

  - Music and Sounds
  - Software
  - Controls

- What a good game would have in terms of these elements?
- When you start a new game, how much you interfere with key bindings and controls? Why?
- When you start a new game, how your adaptation process would be like? (For example other gamers, if multiplayer, characters, what you can do in the game)

On Computer Games Interviewee is Good at

- When do you think that someone else or you are good at a game?
- Could you tell me your memories and stories about the game with the reason why you are good at it (and why you like it assuming that you do)
- When you first started
- How did you decided to pick this game?
- Do you remember how your process of getting used to controls was?
- Do you think that you are getting better at the game, developing yourself? (In what terms)
- Do you have anyone that you play and argue about the game with? Could you tell me about them?
- Do you have any memories that are important, funny, nice, sad etc.. about the game?

About the Gaming Community

- Are you up the date about gaming world?
- How do you keep up with news?
- Do you have any friends that you only play games with?
- How many people, how close you are?
- Where and how did you meet?
- How did you start playing games together?
- Do you see each other in real life?
- Are there any games you would prefer playing only with your friends?
- Why do you prefer to do so (either yes/no)?
- How is your relationship with other gamers during and outside the game?
- What is spoken about performance in between gamers?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Continued)

- What investing in your game character means to you?
- When do you think that you are represented well by your character?
- How much time and money you spend on your character's looks? How important that is for you?
- When your characters profile is being viewed what points are important for you?

APPENDIX C

GAMING JARGON

70 Burn Crusader – Instead of saying level, using level degree as an adjective in front of the class type or addressing the item used

Ağzına Vurmak – Direct translation would be "to hit on mouth", which means beating and in game conditions it is winning with a steam roller.

Alt F4 Yapmak – In PC, when you hit Alt and F4 keys simultaneously, any screen goes off without asking. In that case it means leaving the game immediately.

Binge Gaming – Gaming nonstop for an unconventional period

Bootcamp – Training with a gaming related purpose

Bundle – a great deal for items or games in terms of economic conditions

Filthy Casual – This is an insult for a casual player who just plays for fun and does not have a lot of knowledge of or training on the game.

Ganklemek – In order to kill a user in game, surprising him with more than two people and attacking him

Hello, ASL? – An introductory phrase to ask age, sex and location, which tends to be understood as a "hitting move" since these are the least necessary information at the beginning of a game.

In house game – unlike "pub", it is an online game specific for a group

Item Kasmak – Working hard on items, which means trying to acquire items in a certain game, putting them in priority in some cases

Kesmek – Cutting, killing

Noob – An unexperienced gamer. It can be used as an insult for telling people that they do not know how to play properly.

Outskillemek – Outskilling, beating someone with better skills or someone playing better than one usually does

GAMING JARGON (Continued)

Oyunu Çevirmek – Turning the game around; winning a game when situation was not very bright (not specific for one person or a group like it is with 'carrying')

Peak off – Best moment in a game that can be a move an event or a fight in between

PES atmak – The phrase "*atmak*" means "playing" if it is used after a game, as in "*iki el* Dota *atmak*', which means playing *Dota* for two rounds.

Pub – "Public game", a game everyone is invited at, not for a specific group

Rage Queen – Female gamers who have a habit of raging: This can be used for male gamers as well in order to insult them by calling them a woman and pointing out unnecessary rage at the same time.

Rage Quit – Similar to "Alt F4", "rage quit" means getting angry, raged, and quitting game in the middle.

Şablon Atmak – Direct translation would be "throwing a template", which means creating a template, a game style to play and play accordingly through memory and internalized reflexes. This can be used for a hero or a game tactic as an example.

Scrim Atmak – Challenging a group or person

Skill Atmak – "Throwing" a skill, which means using an in game skill during game

Snowballamak – Snowballing, having a form of synergy and winning through continuous events

Spray and Pray – A First Player Shooter game joke; shooting continuously without aiming and hoping it would cause damage.

Taşımak, Boostlamak or Carrylemek – Carrying, which means helping to win a game although there was almost no chance of winning.

Top Etmek and Ağzına Vurmak – Playing overwhelmingly better than the opponent team

Toxic – A group, a person or a game to stay away from

GAMING JARGON (Continued)

Train Atmak – Asking another group of people to play a game with the purpose of training or training with them directly

Versatility – Having capacity of playing a variety of heroes in terms of skills and class as a gamer

Vipe Yemek – Getting damage through an attack

Win Gelmesi – Arrival of Win, which means winning

APPENDIX D

MENTIONED GAMES

Table 5: Mentioned Games

GAME	MENTIONED FOR	GENRE	ONLINE
DOTA I - II	PC	MOBA	✓
DIABLO SERIES	PC	MMORPG	✓
WORLD OF WARCRAFT	PC	MMORPG	✓
COUNTER STRIKE	PC	FPS	✓
HEROES OF THE STORM	PC	MOBA	✓
OVERWATCH	PC	FPS	✓
TOMB RAIDER	PC	ADVENTURE	×
LEFT FOR DEAD II	PC	FPS	✓
LAST OF US	PLAYSTATION	FPS	×
BLOODBORNE	PLAYSTATION	ADVENTURE-RPG	×

APPENDIX E

IN GAME PROFILES

Figure 15: *World of Warcraft* Character Profile I, (*MildlyToxic*, 2017)

Figure 16: *World of Warcraft* Character Profile II, (*MildlyToxic*, 2017)

IN GAME PROFILES (Continued)

Figure 17: *Dota II* Player Profile (*MildlyToxic*, 2017)