

Gender Roles in Multiplayer Gaming: *Call of Duty Ghosts*

Andrew Siebenaler, Tina Lee (Advisor), University of Wisconsin-Stout

Abstract:

This research project examines how gamers perceive gender via an online voice chat (Xbox Live: Xbox 360-Call Of Duty: Ghosts): how they present their views on gender in ways they might not otherwise express in person; how gender has a role in the video game community; and how the aforementioned might help to reinforce gender stereotypes within said video game community. Findings show that the multiplayer aspect of Call of Duty: Ghosts presents and reinforces stereotypical views of gender. Despite the prevalence of stereotypical gender views, female sexuality is downplayed, creating a potential for more equal gender views to arise.

Introduction:

- Call of Duty Series (CoD)
 - Became big in 2007
 - Five game releases since then (Annually)
 - First Person Shooter
 - Virtual 3D military setting
 - Call of Duty: Ghosts is most recent
 - Gender & Race avatar customization options introduced for first time
- Multiplayer Gaming
 - Main aspect of the CoD series
 - Over 100 million players
 - Roughly 100,000 online at anytime



Previous Research:

- Gender (Rudman & Glick, 2001)
 - Prescriptive (Stereotype)
 - Descriptive (Role)
- Overly hostile towards women (Norris, 2004)
- Stereotyped Depictions of Women:
 - Overly sexual
 - (Brugess, Stermer & Burgess 2007)
- Hypernegative Effect-“when coupled with time restrictions and no expectation of future interaction,... ill regard and hostile message construction by sources (Walther and Parks, 2002: 541)”.

References:

- Burgess, M. C. R., Stermer, S. P., & Burgess, S. R. (2007). Sex, lies, and video games: The portrayal of male and female characters on video game covers. *Sex Roles*, 57(5-6), 419-433. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9250-0
- Rudman, L. A., & Glick, P. (2001). Prescriptive gender stereotypes and backlash toward agentic women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 743-762.
- Norris KO (2004) Gender stereotypes, aggression, and computer games: an online survey of women. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior* 7(6): 714-727
- Walther JB and Parks MR (2002) Cues filtered out, cues filtered in: computer-mediated communication and relationships. In: Knapp ML and Daly JA (eds) *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 529-563.

Analysis:

Player-Player Interactions

- Camping
 - Negative quality
 - Feminine
 - No skill required
 - “camping in a corner like a little b**ch”
 - “sitting on your vagina”
 - “get off your p**sy”
- Running & Gunning
 - Positive quality
 - Masculine
 - Skill required
 - “cause I run around, you have no skill”,
 - “run around and let’s see how good you do”
 - “you’re not good, you just sit in a corner and hide”,
 - “why don’t you get out the corner and run around like a man”

Developer-Player Interactions

- Negative Aspects
 - In-game challenge and reward for a sexually abusive act
 - In-game strip club
 - Special avatars are only males
 - Specialty gear is only available to males
 - In-game patches still portray women in a sexual manner
- Positive Aspects
 - Female avatars’ stature equal males
 - Female avatars are NOT over-sexualized