Player Perspectives: What It Means to Be a Gamer

Aditya Deshbandhu

Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India

Abstract

The term gamer has been applied in various, often simplistic ways to anyone who plays video games as a preferred leisure activity. Being heavily value-laden both socially and culturally, the term has spawned fiery debates on a variety of issues ranging from perpetuation of stereotypes to gender inequality. This paper seeks to understand the gamer tag by charting and critically analysing the gaming journeys of three video game players in an everyday context.

The paper uses an ethnographic approach, based on in-depth interviews with and observation of the gaming activity of three individuals over a year. Drawing from Nick Couldry's Media as Practice approach the gaming practices of the players were examined in relation to how they themselves reflect upon their experience and its various components, and the ways in which they construct and express their gamer/gaming identity. The emergent themes from the analysis have been used to build a tentative framework that could enable a more holistic understanding of the gamer within the gaming world and more generally in popular culture.

Keywords

gamer; video games; everyday gaming; gaming culture; gaming experience; ethnography;

Introduction

Central to the world of gaming is the gamer, and while considerable attention has been paid to the structure and role of games, to the relationship of games with the real world, and the social/psychology of gaming, there has been relatively less focus on the figure of the gamer. To understand what it means to be a gamer, scholars such as Shaw and Taylor have reshaped de Beauvoir's iconic phrase: "one is not born a gamer, one becomes one" (Shaw, 2013; Taylor, 2009; cf. Beauvoir 1989 [1949]). On a superficial level this simply means that one chooses to be a gamer and can be identified as one by engaging with video games. However, the tag 'gamer' in popular culture implies much more about an individual than a neutral label applied to someone who plays video games. The most popular stereotype of gamers and gaming activity is aptly described by Williams as "isolated, pale-skinned teenage boys [who] sit hunched forward on a sofa in some dark basement space, obsessively mashing buttons" (Williams, 2005 p. 2).

Gaming scholarship and mainstream culture have debunked the popular stereotype of the gamer as a white, male, teenager (Williams et al., 2008). Kowert et al. (2012) state that gamers are often viewed as incompetent and undesirable and have found that the stereotype of gamers often centres around four main themes: (un)popularity, (un)attractiveness, (non)dominance, and social (in)competence (Kowert et. al, 2012) --stereotypes that have been reinforced in popular television shows such as The Big Bang Theory (Lorre et al. 2007-present; Bednarek, 2012), South Park (Parker, Stone 1997-present) and Chuck (Schwartz, Fedak 2007-12). This paper seeks to unpack the term from the perspective of self-identified gamers, drawing upon their insights and experiences of engaging with video games over time. It builds on their definitions and understanding of their gaming experience to arrive at a broader understanding of what it means to be a gamer from the perspectives of players. Specifically, it draws on gamers in the Indian context—again, a geography that is under-represented in games studies

To begin with, if we were to focus on the term *gamer*, the video game industry constructs it as one who needs to engage with video games on a 'hardcore' level and wants to play the latest and greatest at all times in order to remain worthy of the label (Kerr, 2006). 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. Scholars like Consalvo feel that due to this binary the gaming pursuits of casual players have not been given adequate attention (Consalvo, 2009).

Jesper Juul understands the casual player as someone who prefers positive and pleasant fictions, plays a few video games, is willing to

commit small amounts of time and resources toward playing video games, and dislikes difficult games (Juul, 2010 p. 29). On the other hand, he views the hardcore gamer as someone seeking emotionally negative fictions, playing a large number of video games, investing large amounts of time and resources toward playing video games, and enjoying difficult games (Juul, 2010 p. 29). Juul's definitions concur with the understanding of the video game industry and popular culture that there are many players of video games but only a select few of them can be called 'gamers'.

Method

This paper draws from a larger ethnographic project that studies gaming experience in a hermeneutical context of everydayness. Borrowing from Nick Couldry's Media as Practice approach this paper and the larger study seek to understand what players do to/with video games on a daily basis as a practice (Couldry, 2004). The larger study, which is in progress, uses snowball sampling to chart the gaming journeys of thirteen players over a year (February 2015 - March 2016). Interviews, participant observation and co-playing sessions (where the researcher played with and against the respondent) were used to understand gaming experiences (Boellstorff, 2012 p. 65). Each respondent was interviewed and observed at play seven times in the course of the year.

An interview guide with a broad set of questions was used in the first two sessions to gain a basic understanding of the participants' gaming practices. Context-specific questions were then developed for each respondent after the second session to enable an *emic* understanding of their composite ludic journeys. The data from the interviews and co-playing sessions was transcribed and then thematically analysed.

The specific questions used to elicit the data presented in this paper were:

Considering the term *gamer*, what are your opinions about the term?
   a. What do you think are the qualities/attributes one must have in order to be called a gamer?
   b. Would you call yourself a *gamer?*
   c. Is there a gamer you look up to, someone you would consider an *ideal* gamer? Describe your concept of an ideal gamer.
   d. What do you think makes him/her ideal?
   e. Would you like to emulate your ideal?

There have been attempts by scholars to categorise gamers by style and purpose of play (Bartle, 1996; Yee, 2005) but by and large these have resulted in imposed or deductive typologies. In this paper, I attempt to derive an emic perspective of gamer identity, based on how the respondents describe themselves and their activity. Data from the larger pool of respondents (13) suggests that the (self) shaping of identity is an individualised process that is fuelled by the dynamics of the in-game

and off-game lives that each player leads. The three cases used here are illustrative of this process and can be considered to be *ideal-types* (Weber, 1949) as the varied context and experiences provide us with a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. They have been selected based on their distinctiveness while also allowing us to understand the process of (self) identity creation on a more general level.

The first respondent, Bhargav, plays single player games and is someone whom Juul would classify as a 'hardcore' gamer, (Juul, 2010 p. 29) the second, Radhika, is a console and mobile player who plays only a few selected games and whose gaming experiences would be labelled casual and the third, Ishaan, is a professional video game reviewer who has access to the latest and greatest and would also fit Juul's label of the *hardcore gamer*. The next section looks at the profiles of the three respondents and outlines their gaming lives and experiences in order to establish the context and the circumstances that helped shape their journeys of play.[1]

Player Profiles

The identification codes used below, such as 'Bhargav – the Explorer', are titles that respondents have given themselves while reflecting upon the playing styles and preferences they most identify with.

1. Bhargav – the Explorer

Bhargav (21) began playing on a Sega *Genesis* console when he was in kindergarten, graduating from games such as *Mario, Contra* and *Wolfenstein* to DOS based games such as *Prince, Dave* and *DesertStrike* on the PC. He spends about three hours a day on his time PlayStation 4 playing *FIFA, Assassins Creed, FarCry* and *Batman*. Bhargav spends hours exploring game-worlds in search of adventure:

> Collecting newer perks and enhancing my characters' abilities, is something I really look forward to in the games I play. I spend hours at a time experimenting with the various skills and combinations available to find the right balance to clear a particular level. To sustain these levels of engagement I always look for games with good stories as often the story drives you to be a better player. (Bhargav)

2. Radhika – the Slasher

Radhika (25) began her journey with video games by playing *Super Mario 64* on the *Nintendo 64* and soon moved up to the Nintendo Gameboy. She is a console veteran and has been playing on her Xbox 360 for close to a decade. She also spends a considerable amount of

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[1] The respondents have waived their right to remain anonymous. However, the author has only identified them by first names and has refrained from providing any other identity markers.

time playing games on her Android phone and tablet. Radhika plays a number of games at the same time across platforms and devices and the ease with which she picks up right from where she left off is key to understanding her videogame pursuits.

One of her favourite games is Mortal Kombat for its simple game format and extremely high re-play value. On her handheld device(s), Radhika makes it a point to play a new game every month and has a keen interest in the niche genre of *Diner* games she also rigorously plays Just Dance and Zumba using the Kinect functionality to stay physically fit.

> I like to really dive into the games I play and don't spend much time delving into the story and other fine print. I crave action in the games I play and firmly believe that the best way to learn a game is to die/fail a few times. Experience is the best teacher; how hard can a game be? (Radhika)

3. Ishaan — the Reviewer

Ishaan (25) is a professional video game reviewer who contributes to one of south India's largest circulated English news dailies and runs a gaming website. He spends a lot of time talking and thinking about games and the video game industry both professionally and as a player. Having begun his gaming life with games like Math Blaster and Reader Rabbit, Ishaan today is a cross platform player who plays a plethora of games on a daily basis. Games are an important aspect of both his work and leisure. He views gaming as his most important activity and has a penchant for first person shooters (FPS) and role playing games (RPGs). While he accepts that he is a gamer first, he is conscientious about retaining his objectivity as a reviewer.

> "My work is *playing* and it feels great when you are paid to do something you really love. Gaming is a habit and a routine of sorts, my entire day is structured around the games I am playing for work and then the games I want to play. Livestreaming the games, I play (on Twitch and YouTube Gaming) is also an important part of the daily schedule." (Ishaan)

The three proposed gamer categories (Explorer, Slasher and Reviewer) are further elucidated below, in the discussion section.

Gaming in the Everyday

This paper seeks to situate the activity of playing video games in the context of the everyday, drawing largely from of the work of Bourdieu, Wittgenstein and Schatzki. Nick Couldry (2004), speaking of Media as Practice, understands everyday rituals, habits and activities as practices that are situated in socio-cultural contexts (Bourdieu, 1977; Wittgenstein, 1978; Schatzki, 1996; Couldry, 2004). Couldry builds on the work of Wittgenstein and Schatzki to look at how an act becomes a

practice with *regularity of action* and suggests the use of his practice approach to analyse specific regularities of action in relation to media of various kinds (Couldry, 2004). In an everyday context, these specific repetitive acts, when performed over time, acquire new contextual meanings and cease to remain merely acts of habit but become *practices*.

It is in this everyday frame that this study charts the gaming practices of three individuals and capture their individual gaming journeys. The everyday frame provides us with insights not only into the complex process of meaning making and their distinct ludic journeys but also enables us to comprehend their gaming self-identities in relation to their off-line selves.

Bhargav had few friends as a child, and credits his parents for his entry into gaming by buying him the Sega 64 console. "My parents felt that games would keep me engaged and prevent me from feeling lonely," he points out. He finds playing games every day is therapeutic, helping him beat bouts of stress and depression. His gaming experiences have also helped him make new friends and find like-minded people. He feels that having friends playing the same game is essential for the game to remain both interesting and engaging. Bhargav feels that video games as a medium impart morals and are good teachers:

> Video Games, Nathan Drake (the protagonist of Naughty Dog's *Uncharted* series) in particular; have taught me to trust and count on my friends. A quality that I have been able to imbibe in my non-game life as well. (Bhargav)

On hand-held devices Radhika spent numerous hours on runners (games where characters run endlessly, faster and faster) like *Temple Run* (playing with Scarlet Fox) and *Subway Surfer*. She now has discarded these and has instead developed a keen interest in games that that simulate the experience of managing a diner, even though she confesses to having no interest in culinary activities in her non-gaming life. Radhika carefully searches for diner games that offer more than a mere time based challenge,

> I look for games that need me to master more complex recipes, add equipment to my kitchen and allow me to find new ways to cut down on time by experimenting and streamlining the cooking process. There are very few games like that and definitely not ones that are free to play. (Radhika)

Radhika views gaming as a key part of her daily schedule as she uses her Xbox to not only beat stress with a round of *Mortal Kombat* but also by engaging with *Just Dance* and *Zumba*. Her gaming/fitness sessions are about an hour long and physically intense.

As a video game reviewer Ishaan calls his gaming activity a habit and a routine and his favourite gaming franchise is Bioware's Mass Effect, a series that combines shooting with role playing in a futuristic cross-galaxy setup. He began his first career in the gaming industry at a gaming café in Delhi where he encouraged other players to play for longer sessions. His life as a reviewer began when a representative from the newspaper spotted him in a *Captain America* outfit at the Delhi Comic-Con.

A resident of the national capital region, Ishaan had spent both time and resources to have in place a gaming set up, with two sets of power backups to compensate for the frequent power outages.[2] He however found the limited Internet bandwidth inhibiting and was forced to relocate in order to be able to livestream content.

> I had really low-speed internet and it was hindering [the website's] growth as we couldn't livestream/webcast most of the times, and then one day I was covering Bangalore Comic-Con and I decided to relocate to Bangalore permanently.

Since the shift to Bangalore, a lot has changed as Ishaan streams up to four times a week. With livestreams Ishaan's gaming activity, has gained a newer *social* dimension (Taylor, 2012). Livestreaming sessions require him not only to play well but also to keep his viewers engaged with live commentary and answers to their comments/questions.

Playing games both for work and leisure implies that Ishaan plays video games for most of the day and must constantly negotiate with what activities constitute *work* and what can be deemed as *play*. He finds the two are often inseparable but acknowledges that work becomes difficult when he has to review games that do not meet his standards of play. "It's really difficult to play something that you don't want to at a time when you could be spending the same time playing something exciting," he adds. For leisure Ishaan often plays *Counterstrike: GO* (CS: GO) as he finds its multiplayer dimension both *fun* and *annoying* owing to its unpredictable nature. When he's not gaming, he often cycles around with a mounted phone in his Bangalore neighbourhood, playing *Niantic's* augmented-reality massively multiplayer online location-based game *Ingress*.

For each of the players, gaming is an important aspect of their daily lives; it is in fact more than a habit or a conscious ritual—it is a practice that gives to and draws from the structure of their everyday. While for one gaming plays a role in building community, for the second it offers a means of physical exercise and release and for the third it traverses the fine line between work and home. The fact however remains that the

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[2]India has intermittent power cuts, especially in the summer.

gaming itself has been integrated into their lives in a way that renders them *ordinary*.

Decoding the Gamer Tag

The nerd, the anti-social geek, the escapist, the techno-addict, the mindless clicker or the role-playing schemer… the many stereotypes that exist about gamers range from partial truths to complete misrepresentations. But what shows up in the mirror when a gamer looks into it? How do those who intensively engage with digital/video games and the gaming world understand themselves in an everyday context? This section seeks to answer these questions by critically examining the opinions, meanings, construction, and understanding of the three aforementioned video game players with regards to the term gamer.

Who is a Gamer?

Bhargav feels that there are two kinds of gamers namely, *gamers* and *pro-gamers* (Taylor, 2012 p. 88). He believes that pro-gamers are people who play video games for a living and take part in e-sport competitions.

He understands gamers as players who finish the games they choose to play.

> It's obvious that a game is like a story. If one begins the journey, then it needs to be finished. If one wants to be known as a gamer, then s/he must finish the games they choose. I understand that not all games are worthy of being finished, but aren't gamers supposed to know what they want and buy the games they badly want to play?

> Aren't players supposed to put in effort and time researching the games they want to play, then shouldn't they finish the games they love and justify the money spent? It's not exactly difficult, is it? (Bhargav)

Radhika however views a gamer as someone who is adept at switching across platforms and video game genres, and at the same time willing) to spend hours refining their skills. She feels that the key for someone worthy to be called a gamer is versatility.

> Somebody who plays the same game over and over again can't be called a gamer as they need to adapt to new game worlds, their rules and systems are extremely important for the gaming experience. (Radhika)

Ishaan believes in the existence of a player-gamer duality amongst video game players and feels gamers are different from players in their willingness to toil and put in the requisite number of hours to not merely

master a game's world and its rules but to internalize them on a deeper level so that they can be manipulated to one's advantage.

> The ability to make the right choice at the precise moment every single time is what makes a gamer, because a game world is always in flux as in an industry which has been overly enthusiastic in embracing updates and downloadable content the worlds, rules and regulations in games are no longer constant. Thus, playing styles and strategies always need to be updated and constantly re-worked. (Ishaan)

Labelling identity: gamer or player?

Bhargav identifies as a gamer and feels that the number of games he plays and their variety in terms of play-styles and genres qualifies him for the tag. He feels that he is "addicted" to video games, but is very quick to point out that he does not see himself as a pro-gamer.

Radhika on the other hand feels that the tag gamer is too heavy for her and calls herself a player instead. She feels that there is socio-cultural pressure from fellow gamers to play a certain kind of games and there is a constant need to play the latest titles in order to be worthy of the gamer tag.

> At times, I feel that I have to put on a facade when people ask me what games I play. I reel off the names of a few fancy current tiles like the current *Call of Duty/ Need for Speed* because I feel I am judged when I say games like *Mortal Kombat* or *Just Dance*. Somehow, I feel the games I play are not *gamerworthy* but I am fine with that. We do play for fun and I have the most fun playing *Mortal Kombat* or in virtual kitchens and in the long run that's what matters. (Radhika)

Ishaan, too, associates with the gamer tag very strongly and feels one can't be a video game reviewer if they are not a gamer first. However, he feels that what makes him a gamer is the fact that he is a better player than most. He has been playing video games for a very long time and the cumulative gaming experiences from various games give him a reservoir of skills, approaches and strategies to draw from whenever he approaches a new game.

Negotiation with the Ideal Gamer

Bhargav's mental image of an ideal gamer is that of a cross-platform male player who is open to playing all genres of games and always looking forward to new gaming experiences.

Radhika visualizes her ideal gamer as a male player whose primary gaming device is a custom-made PC as she feels that a gamer must be one not only aware of the games they want to play but also aware of the hardware required to enable an ideal gaming experience. She concludes

by saying, "He needs to be able to build the computer he imagines in order to play the best he can."

Ishaan's ideal gamer is his friend who goes by the gamer tag Brutality in the world of *League of Legends* (LOL). Brutality is a top ranked *pro-player* (Taylor, 2012 p. 88) who has spent about five hours a day, playing LOL every day for the last five years.

It is important to note that neither Ishaan nor Radhika are interested in becoming the ideal gamers they visualise. Ishaan is satisfied being better than average at the games he plays as he is willing to sacrifice being the best at one game in order to play a newer game. Moving to Radhika, she is happy playing on a console as long as she can stay fit using games like *Just Dance* and always has *Mortal Kombat* to play. Bhargav on the other hand looks at his construction of the ideal gamer as a benchmark he has to achieve someday and hopes he will remain an explorer in the search for newer games always.

Discussion

The three gamer tags mentioned above: *Explorer, Slasher* and *Reviewer* need to be defined as exclusive categories drawing from but distinctive to the ones suggested by Bartle and Yee. *Explorer* as a category is used by Bartle (1996) in his understanding of players from MUDs and Bhargav's interpretation of being an Explorer is similar to Bartle's when it comes to exploring a game's boundaries. However, Bhargav views exploration as an essential activity to not only acclimatise with the underlying mechanisms of the game world but also as a *coming-of-age* journey for his character/Avatar as it leads to both unravelling the story and acquiring newer perks by levelling up, an act that is the primary objective of Bartle's *Achiever* category. It is also important to note that in games which are not *MMORPG*s or *MUD*s specific areas of the game world cannot be accessed if one's character hasn't been adequately "levelled up." There is a blurring of the boundaries between Bartle's two categories as exploration has become vitally important in order to unearth newer perks, abilities, and is at times key to levelling up quicker. Thus, in-game explorers often become achievers in the process and vice-versa.

The category Slasher on the other hand is easier to define, and though on the surface it seems similar to the *Killer* category proposed by Bartle it is important to note that Slashers dive head-on into in-game situations and learn depending on the outcomes of their actions. Unlike killers they are seeking no joy by killing other's characters but rely more in the ability to "wing it" and succeed when it matters. A slasher is not too bothered by the context of the game or the story or the underlying mechanics but is more concerned about overcoming the challenge and finding the most optimum/efficient way to do so. A slashing playstyle can be often successfully employed by players in game genres like FPS, Action RPGs and Hack and Slash.

Lastly, the reviewer category is one which extends beyond a player's self-experiences as a reviewer is an opinion-leader and his/her experiences help shape the decisions of the larger gaming community. A reviewer's approach to video games cannot be the same as that of a player as he/she is constantly measuring and comparing their newer game experiences to the games they have played earlier. This need to judge games can be detrimental at times to their gaming styles as they do not have control over the kinds of games they get to play. A reviewer must be good at playing in a variety of styles and must be quick to adapt and learn and thereby doesn't share any similarities with the four categories that Bartle proposes, since for the reviewer time is always a constraint.

Analysis of the data beyond the gamer tags reveals that all three players have unique ideas about what it means to be a gamer. Their opinions on the subject are derived from their everyday gaming experiences, which have also played a key role in shaping their perspectives of and about gaming. Bhargav devotes his time to single player games and is always in search of newer games with exciting narratives. Thus, his vision of the ideal gamer is of someone who plays as many games as possible across-platforms. He strongly believes that he can emulate that ideal and thus looks at it as a benchmark that he must reach and hopefully surpass in his gaming journey.

Ishaan on the other hand, owing to his role as a videogame reviewer, not only has free access to the latest and greatest of games but on many levels personifies the standard that Bhargav described. However, the nature of his work ensures that Ishaan is always running short of time, something Bhargav has in abundance. Ishaan hardly has the time to finish even two to three flagship games in a year whereas Bhargav finishes about six-seven games in the same time. It is ironic that Ishaan is at a level that Bhargav hopes to reach someday, but Ishaan doesn't have the time to truly appreciate what is available to him. At the same time Ishaan concedes that it is impossible in his line of work to achieve the ideal he envisions. His need to play as many games as possible in as little time as possible is a daunting task as reviews and streams lose value if they aren't current, he is in an unending race with deadlines.

Radhika's refusal to identify herself as a gamer is problematic on several levels. Her belief that a gamer needs to play the latest games coupled with her feeling that the games she plays are not *gamerworthy* suggests that Consalvo (2009) was right, the gaming community believes in both the hardcore/casual binary and the video game industry's stereotype of the hardcore gamer. Radhika's choice of games though diverse and varied significantly break the *Pink Games* (Taylor, 2009, pp. 99-102) barrier but her responses resonate with Shaw's observations that interviewees feel their acts of gaming are trivialized and stigmatized (Shaw, 2012, p. 5). Furthermore, Radhika's construction of the ideal gamer as a PC player, considering PC is the one platform she doesn't

play on, indicates that she finds her gaming experiences to be inadequate.

The concept of *gamerworthiness* could offer us newer possibilities and points of entry into the players' psyche; and holds the potential to be a useful tool to enable a holistic charting of ludic journeys. It needs to be further explored, examined and defined—something that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, all the three respondents view their ideal gamer as being male. Though studies indicate that the stereotype of gamers being pre-dominantly male isn't true (Schott *et al.*, 2000; Williams *et al.*, 2008; Williams *et al.* 2009a; Williams *et al.*, 2009b; Kowert *et al.*, 2012; Taylor 2009) other studies have revealed that the virtual worlds of video games also have their own pre-defined gender roles that players and their avatars are expected to conform with (Lehdonvirta et al., 2012, Lehdonvirta *et al.*, 2014). Results of such studies are yet to permeate the mainstream and the video game economy at large.

Conclusion

There have been numerous stereotypes and typologies that have attempted to both define and classify players of video games, but the term *gamer* is analytically as undefinable as the term game (Wittgenstein, 1953; Aarseth & Calleja, 2009). In accordance with the findings of Aarseth and Calleja, it is counterproductive to arrive at a single encompassing definition for the term gamer. This paper has used ludic journeys and narratives of 3 video game players in a context of *everyday* to arrive at an understanding of the term. The three respondents have diverse gaming experiences but the emerging insights suggest that they all define themselves in relation to the games they play, their patterns of play and the way in which they define themselves in relation to the larger world of gaming.

However, one needs to acknowledge that individual responses to the questions asked were specific, contextual and personal. Their ludic journeys are merely not limited to their in-game existences but need to be understood by unravelling the mangled web of contexts, choices and their offline lives. Game Studies' researchers must strive to identify the common threads across ludic lives in order to have a clearer picture of what it means to be gamer.

Finally, it may be necessary for the gaming world to accommodate a variety of playing styles and devices into the ambit of hardcore gaming, while at the same time acknowledging that even those who use consoles (once thought the preserve of serious gamers) could be casual gamers too. What determines the level of seriousness is not the nature and genre of the game but the amount of time a player puts into it, the level of engagement and attachment that s/he feels and most importantly the

value that a player attributes to it. There is a need to accept that if video games are post-modern media (Lister, 2003) and the hallmark of being post-modern is *fluidity* then we cannot have rigid and binary understandings of terms such as gamer and gaming culture. The need to embrace and imbibe contextual knowledge for a more holistic understanding is now more than ever.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix
Interview Guide

1. What do the terms *video games* and *play* mean in your life?

   a. How important are these two terms in the life you currently lead?

   b. When did you start playing video games? Since when have you recognized they become a big part of your lives?

   c. Would it be alright for me to say, playing video games is a *habit* of yours?

2. Could you tell me a bit about the first games you played and how you felt when you played them?

   a. Was there a specific genre or play style you associate to those early games?

   b. Could you recall for me a few incidents from these early experiences with video games?

   c. Have you gone back since then and played any of those early games, since then?

3. What is it that you like most about the video games you play?

   a. What makes you like a particular video game, give me a few instances from games you really liked?

   b. Is there a specific kind of game you prefer?

    c. Would you consider yourself a specialized gamer who plays only a specific genre and kind of games or would you consider yourself a player who plays any fun game irrespective of the genre or style?

    d. Any video game franchise you're a fan of? In other words, a series of games in which you feel it is mandatory to play every title in the series?

4. Would you agree to term that no two players can play a game in the same way?

    a. So extending from that idea what kind of a player do you think you are one that plays games to understand the story and plot of the game or one who plays games for the fun of it?

    b. How important do you think it is for a game to have a great story for you to have fun while playing it? Tell me from your personal experiences.

    c. How important do you think it is to have a great user experience while playing a game?

    d. Would it be possible for you to have fun playing a game without having a story or logical purpose to your actions in those games?

5. When you play a game in which you control a particular character, have you ever felt a time where you and the character you control are one and the same?

    a. If you feel that has happened at times, could you give me a particular instance?

    b. Can you describe to me the experience when that barrier of separation between you and the character vanishes?

    c. Would it be alright for me to presume that you really like such games?

    d. How do you then go about designing your avatar in game keeping all these feelings in mind?

6. Tell me a bit about what games you are playing currently and on what devices do you play them?

    a. Is there a specific sort of affinity you have developed with a game and a device you're playing on?

    b. How do you maintain the devices you play games on, have you customized them, upgraded them, improved them with enhancements, so on and so forth?

7. Now moving on to the games you play, can you tell me in detail the entire process about how you decide what particular game you will play?

    a. So, where do you get the information for the games you play?

    b. Does feedback of friends and fellow gamers influence your selection process in anyway?

    c. With YouTube and dedicated video game sites and gamer forums in existence today is there anything you regularly follow for your video game information?

8. Speaking of friends do you have a network of friends who are gamers with whom you share video games, game experiences, game strategies, information and other such details?

    a. How important do you think it is to have a group of friends who are fellow gamers?

    b. Does it alter your gaming experiences in anyway?

9. If we are to consider the term *gamer*, what are your opinions about the term?

    f. What do you think are the qualities/attributes one must have in order to be called a gamer?

    g. Would you call yourself a *gamer?*

    h. Is there a gamer you look up to, someone you would consider an ideal gamer? Describe your concept of an ideal gamer.

    i. What do you think makes him/her ideal?

    j. At some stage, would you like to emulate your ideal?

10. Finally, looking at video games as a practice,

    a. Have you ever thought about the role that rules play in video games, how important do you think it is to get a hang of the rules in a particular video game?

    b. So looking back at rules again do you think rules are limitations in games or they are challenges for you in specific scenarios

    c. Have you ever felt a time where you used the rules and limitations of a game to your advantage?