M304: Esports management and marketing
Reflection Paper #3
Zackary Swoboda

Article: Tracing female gamer identity. An empirical study into gender and stereotype threat perceptions

Article summary

This article delved into the gaming community's female gamer population. The study looked at two mechanisms, gender identity and threat perception, to see how it affected female gender identification. Moreover, the authors address women's low identity profiles as female gamers. Social identities and cognitive centralities were defined within the article and discussed in regards of the female gaming experience. This study had a goal of understanding social relationships within the gaming world, understanding how masculine norms can affect a woman's experience gaming, and evaluating how women's psyches work within the mechanisms of gender identity and threat perception.

Why was this study needed?

This study was needed because there is an overwhelming lack of representation of female gamers in the community. Oftentimes, when there are girls interested in gaming, they are shut out by the male gamers by being stereotyped and discriminated against. This study is important to see why women choose to or choose to not identify as gamers. By conducting this study, it opens the air as to how female gamers are treated and how that affects their experience. If this study was not done, there would be a lack of information on women gamers, as there was before since this study separated itself from many others in a variety of ways – like "relative importance of threat perception and gender identity as determinants for gamer identification with an exclusive focus on female playing audiences" (91). It is important to analyze this information to

see how women in gaming have different experiences – often more negative encounters – than their male peers.

What were the two potentially important mechanisms underlying the female gamer identification? Please explain with examples for both mechanisms.

The two potentially important mechanisms underlying the female gamer identification are gender identity and threat perception. Gender identity in this sense is not as simple as just being a woman but rather the "cognitive, evaluative, and affective components" of being a woman. Therefore, an example of this would be the thought processes of a woman, rather than just identifying as a woman, and how this affects likelihood of identifying as a gamer. Threat perception deals with whether a woman feels that a situation could be a threat to her or her wellbeing in the gaming community and if these threats would push her to not be a gamer. Therefore, an example would be if a male gamer was harassing a female gamer, and she decides to not label herself as a gamer.

According to this paper (page 91), why do women have a low identity profile as a gamer?

The paper discusses that identities are dependent on the cultural beginnings and how the culture has progressed. For the gaming world, this identity has often been seen as mostly straight, white, masculine men. The gaming industry should be held accountable for this, too, not just the community today. Many games have cultivated spectators that are mostly men. Males dominate the gaming world, not leaving much room for women to strongly identify as a gamer. This leads women to have a low identity profile as a gamer.

Please describe the concepts of social identities and cognitive centrality.

Social identity is seen to have two different components: cognitive and affective. The cognitive side is based upon knowledge of being a part of a certain group, and the affective is

related to value and emotional significance of being in that group. All three of these together, along with one's self-categorization, affects his/her/their social identity. Cognitive centrality is the idea that someone can recognize and place themselves into a certain category of person and awareness to this belonging to the group. However, one does not need to have strong ties with this group for it to pertain.

Explain why the authors predicted as follows: "H1. Female players' gamer identity is unrelated to the cognitive centrality of being a woman."

The authors predicted their first hypothesis as such because there is a difference from knowing that you're a part of a group, such as being a woman, and acting within the lines that have been drawn for women. Just because a woman identifies as a woman does not mean that she thinks she has to act as most women do; therefore, with this logic, female gamers would not have a strong cognitive centrality for womanhood. Also, women do not have many ways to leave this group of womanhood, other than undergoing procedures and/or identifying as a different gender identity.

Explain why the authors predicted as follows: "H4. Stereotype threat-associated concerns about female players' performance will be negatively associated with gamer identity."

The authors discuss on how in the gaming world, many women have had negative experiences due to stereotype threats. This also can affect how they play if they are causing themselves anxiety over the stereotype threats. The authors said that one way of coping with this is disengagement, where one takes a step back until the crisis is taken care of. However, if these stereotype threats persist, there is a chance that these female gamers may choose to no longer identity as a gamer and leave the community.