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**The Social Relations and Interactions of a First Person Shooter (FPS)  
Gamer**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
**Masters of Applied Psychology (Community)**  
at  
**The University of Waikato**  
by  
**Glen Matthew McQuarters**



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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

2013

## Abstract

Video games have been part of society for over 40 years. During this period, a stereotypical image of a person who plays videogames has formed. Influenced by the stereotypical image (young, loner males, pale, socially inept, overweight, and possibly aggressive or violent), psychological research has focused on the possible negative effects of playing first person shooter video games. Contrary to the stereotype, first person shooter video games can be a medium in which social relationships are formed and maintained. This study aims to explore the social relationships and interactions of players of first person shooter video games in all locations of play, and how these relationships and interactions influenced the game experience, and how players managed these relationships and interactions. This research was done using qualitative interviews with 12 current first person shooter gamers. The study found that between non-persistent game worlds, technological advancements, and the potentially persistent social relationships, a large diversity of social relationships and interactions occur in and emerge from first person shooter video games. These social relationships and interactions play a central role in the enjoyment of playing first person shooter video games. The study found the interactions that are possible, happen in many different forms. The relationships found in the study developed from several different settings with playing together and friends' friend being the most common start of a relationship. As well, the participants' reported a level structure for the relationships that are part of their first person shooter gaming. The study also describes the interactions of players while gaming as being seen as mostly good, with a few antisocial acts committed. These findings are discussed in comparison with literature from other game genres on the social interactions and relationships of players. The seemingly "unsocial" and virtually violent first person shooter game world has been shown to encompass surprisingly rich and diverse social relationships.

*Keywords:* First person shooters, social interactions, social relationships, online interactions, offline interactions

## **Acknowledgements**

First of I would like to thank the participants who without their freely given time and stories. Without them, this research would not have been able to be completed.

I would then like to thank Dr Cate Curtis and Dr Gareth Schott for their supervision, discussion and feedback, thought this process. For giving me the push in the right direction when I was stuck, as well as being able to maintain a sense of humour.

I would also like to thank the Community Psychology Rantology group for providing a means in which to vent frustrations with the process and provide moral support and laughter.

Finally I would like to thank my wife for doing all the stressing for me, my children whose loving smiles and hugs made up for the time I missed playing with them. To friends and family, who put up with me, provided moral support throughout the process, and through their misunderstanding of the research aims and goals helped me understand it better.

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## **List of abbreviations**

FPS: First person shooters

LAN: Local area network

MMO: Massive multiple online

MMORPG: Massive multiple online role playing game

MUD: Multi user dungeon

PC: personal computer

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

For over 40 years, video games have been in one form or another a part of society (Drummond, 2009; Kent, 2001). During this time, the video game industry has grown in popularity and has made advances in the technology used to play and communicate within the game. These improvements in technology alongside the game play and game world settings/themes have led to concerns about the effects that playing videogames may have on the players.

The first of these concerns is that there are more people especially children and teenagers who are playing video games (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). This increase within the child and teenage populations has led to concerns that the act of playing video games is replacing other activities, such as going outside, socialising with friends, family and people in general. The second concern is the perceived role of video games in highly publicized mass murder school and public shootings, where it has been suggested that the shooters have played violent video games before the event (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Cumberbatch, 2004; Gibbs et al., 1999; Kirsh, 2003). However, it needs to be noted that there may not be a link between the shooters playing violent video games and the violent acts carried out, but this is difficult to prove or correlate either way (Cumberbatch, 2004). Many factors may contribute to a person engaging in these actions. These factors may include mental health issues, cultural factors, social inclusion, and the availability of support. The third concern is that prolonged exposure to the violent activities and acts modelled in video games, may increase the players risk of committing antisocial and violent acts (Anderson et al., 2010; Drummond, 2009; Gentile, Lynch, Linder, & Walsh, 2004). Probable negative effects of video games have had a large amount of research conducted which the findings from the research being mixed.

These three concerns have helped create a stereotypical image of a video game player as being a young, loner male, who is pale from spending too much time indoors, socially inept, overweight, and possibly aggressive or violent (M. D. Griffiths, Davies, & Chappell, 2003; Newman, 2005; Shaw, 2010; Williams, Yee, & Caplan, 2008; Xu, Cao, Sellen, Herbrich, & Graepel, 2011; Yee, 2006b). The creation of the stereotypical image is covered in more detail in the first section of the literature review titled stereotypical image.

Contrary to the perceived stereotypical image, developments in the internet and video game technology has made it possible for multiple people to play video games together from a distance (e.g. playing with others online) and in the same physical location (e.g. playing in a LAN or on the same game platform) (Drummond, 2009; Wright, Boria, & Breidenbach, 2002). Thus, video game production companies have placed a greater emphasis on producing games that can be played with multiple players and/ or online. The amount of online/ multiple player video games that are now available have grown to include genres such as sport games, first person shooters (FPS), and massive multiplayer online games (MMOs) (Delocque-Fourcaud, Natkin, & Novak, 2006; Drummond, 2009; Williams et al., 2006b).

In the extant literature on video games, little attention has been given to the social relationships and interactions which occur within and in relation to FPS games. The main focus of the research on FPS games has looked at the potential adverse effects from playing these games. A brief overview of the psychological literature review is provided in the second section of the literature review title Psychological research. The leading video game genre in which the social interactions and relationships of players have been studied is massive multiple online role playing games (MMORPG) (Bekhtina, 2002; Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell, & Moore, 2006; L. Rodrigues & Mustaro, 2007; Siitonen, 2007; Taylor, 2006; Utz, 2000; Williams et al., 2006b; Yee, 2006b). The possible reason for the different research focus of FPS and MMORPG games may be the perceived difference in the game play and

interaction styles of the two genres. An online FPS game is typically high action game play with a short playing time. In contrast, MMORPGs have a long playing time (up to eight hours to complete a challenge in some games), character development, and inbuilt social functions like dedicated chat channels for guilds. The time input of the players and inbuilt game functions makes MMORPG a perceivable easier genre to explore the relationships and social interactions of players than FPS.

Despite the stereotypical image which portrays playing video games as a non-social, solitary activity, the advances in technology have changed the way in which video games are now played. This advancement in technology has created a game play environment across all genres of games that can be highly communicative with many interactions occurring. However, the research on FPS games has not looked at the social relationships and interactions between players; instead it has primarily focused on to the potential adverse effects of FPS games.

## **Background**

Video games entered the public domain in America for the first time in 1971 with the arcade game Computer Space (Kudler, 2007). With New Zealand, considered being an early adopter of videogames in the late 1970s early 1980s (Swalwell, 2005). Since then, the video game industry has grown in popularity. The history of the videogame industry started with an arcade base system, where there was multiple arcade gaming machines in a building or social space, like a diner where the games were played by putting coins in a slot. Popular titles of arcade machines include Space Invaders, Mortal Combat, Saga Rally, Pong and PacMan. The arcade was popular throughout the 70's till the late 80's with the younger generation, where it was seen as a place for them to go with friends and socialise. Arcade gaming was supplanted in popularity in the late 1980's to early 1990s by home based gaming involving consoles and personal computers (PC).

The first home based gaming platform/console called Odyssey by Magnavox's was released in 1972, a year after the first arcade game (Kudler, 2007). Odyssey was a new game platform that allowed gamers to play a videogame in their home by buying a game cartridge and machine without having to go to an arcade. However, the home base gaming console did not increase in popularity until after 1977, when Atari released Atari 2600 (Kudler, 2007). Since the release of the console Odyssey, there is a long history of new consoles being released, which each new console being more advance in graphics, and computing power. These improvements in computing power and graphics can be seen in the ability of today's consoles (PS3 and Xbox360) to show and play games in visual 3D and highly realistic graphic worlds. In contrast, Odyssey had the game called Home Pong that had a moving dot and two controllable panels which returned the dot to the other side and was only two colours.

Alongside the development of home base gaming system/platforms, there was a parallel development of the PC based game. The first PC based game was called Gunfight, and was released in 1975 (Kudler, 2007). However, PC base gaming did not become popular until 1985 when the game Tetris was released, and became even more popular when Wolfenstine3D was released by ID software in 1992 (Kudler, 2007). However, this method of playing video games was limited in its ability to be mass marketed until the PC became more affordable and accessible to the public.

The increase in the popularity of video games can be seen in the income of the industry between 2005 and 2010. In 2005 electronic games boasted an income from sales of US \$ 32.6 billion worldwide, including console sales (with this amount exceeding the income of the movie industry), compared to 2010 were the video game industry achieved a sale income of US \$66 billion (Maragos, 2006; L. Rodrigues & Mustaro, 2007; Takahashi, 2011). With its success, the video game industry has increased the number of genres available to

include; sports, driving, simulation, with the two most recognisable genres being FPS and MMORPG.

The video game genre of FPS is defined as a video game which is centred on a gun and/or projectile weapon-based combat through a first-person perspective. The player experiences the action through the eyes of the protagonist. There are many titles in this genre. FPS games have had the most concerns raised about the negative effect on the audience, especially with regard to antisocial and violent behaviours. These concerns have led to the FPS genre having a large amount of research focusing on the possible behavioural changes of players. The results from this research have been mixed. There has been little research conducted on the social interactions of a FPS player.

The main genre in which social interactions have been studied is MMORPG games. These are defined as videogames which are an advancement of role-playing games (RPG), in which a large number of players interact with one another within a virtual game world. As in all RPGs, players assume the role of a character, which is usually based in a fantasy world. This character is then developed till they are restrained by the game levelling limits. MMORPGs are distinguished from single-player RPGs games in two main ways; the number of active players in the game, and by the game worlds persistent (usually hosted on a server by the game's publisher), as the game world continues to exist while the player is offline.

One game design both FPS and MMORPG genres have in common is the ability to have multiple players playing at the same time. This multiplayer game mode is playable either online or offline, and has facilitated the creation of social groups, which allow the players to finish in game goals and challenges not achievable without this support. These in game social groups are called clans or guilds, which are defined as an organised group of players that regularly play together in particular or various multiplayer games (Adams, 2010; M. Griffiths, Davies, & Chappell, 2004; Utz, 2000). A clans/guild membership can range in

numbers from groups of a few friends/ people to over 1000 people. Within the clans/guilds, there is a wide range of social structures, goals and members (Adams, 2010). The viable lifespan of a clan/guild varies considerably from group to group, ranging from a few weeks or months to over a decade (Utz, 2000). For almost every online game available today, there are numerous clans/ guilds in existence, most notably in FPS, MMO, role-playing, and strategy games. There are also meta-clan/ guilds that span a wide range of different genre of video games.

This interactivity and membership to groups allows for the establishment of virtual communities by the users, which in turn permits the creation of significant personal ties. This phenomenon of social interaction and group formation establishes fields of research for the comprehension of the behaviours present in the virtual and real world communities formed from playing videogames.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since their introduction, the video game industry has grown in popularity (Kudler, 2007). The video game industry encompasses many different genres of games and playing platforms. The playing space has moved from the public sphere (arcades) to the private sphere (home), with personal computers and gaming consoles. Since the video games introduction to a public space, a stereotypical image has formed of person who calls themselves a gamer and/or video game player. This stereotypical image has led to concerns about the possible effects that playing video games could have on players. These concerns have led to research looking at the possible effects that video games have on the audience, to interpret the values of the game for the players, and what attracts them to video games. The two main academic fields, which have conducted research on video games, are Psychology and Media or Game studies.

The psychology research conducted on video games and FPS, have tended to focus on the potential negative behavioural effects of video games by using experimental studies to look at the violent and aggressive behaviours of players (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Bösche, 2009; Ferguson, 2010a; Ferguson & Kilburn, 2010; L. R. Huesmann, 2010; Konijn, Bijvank, & Bushman, 2007; Markey & Markey, 2010). The results from these studies have been mixed with findings that suggest there is a potential increase in violent and antisocial behaviours in participants, and findings that suggest that there is no increase in the risk of these behaviours. The focus of the psychological research, has led to little research conducted on the social interactions of playing video games, from the psychological perspective.

The academic discipline which has covered the social interactions of gamers has been "games studies". In this research, the games that have largely been used to conduct the research are MMORPG. The focus of this research has been on how players develop and sustain relationships across virtual and real worlds, and how existing relationships, such as friends and strangers, are formed and handled in game play (Nardi & Harris, 2006; Pace, Bardzell, & Bardzell, 2010). There has been little research conducted on the social interaction of players who play FPS.

### **Rationale**

FPS games, in which a player shoots their enemies in a virtual battlefield through a first-person perspective, is a leading genre in the world of video games with many titles across various gaming platforms. There are numerous hit titles such as Doom, Quake, Call of Duty, Counter-Strike, and Halo. Most of these games have built in functions that allow for online and/or local area network (LAN) multiplayer experience. This allows for the possibility of millions of players, to play together from across the world over the internet. It also allows for matches in which the players will shoot at each other with "lethal weapons,"

defined as weapons that will kill another player's avatar. This violent game play has led to a media image of video game players as being aggressive and unsocial. Reasons for this media image of a gamer include the portrayal of video gamers in popular media, and the way in which the act of playing video games is carried out. These are discussed in the literature - review in more detail.

In contrast to the media and societal image of aggressive and unsocial player stereotypes, prior research on online FPS games has found there to be rich communications and social interactions between players during game sessions (Wright et al., 2002; Xu et al., 2011). However, this research has not focused beyond these sessions of play, and there are several questions that need to be answered to understand the social interactions of a FPS gamer. The questions include; do FPS players form or promote more permanent social bonds? How do these social relationships influence and how are they influenced by the game experience?

In contrast to FPS games, extensive research has been devoted to the social relationships in some other online game genres, especially MMORPGs. Researchers have studied how players form intimate relationships across virtual and real worlds, and how existing relationships, such as friends and strangers, are manifested in game play (Nardi & Harris, 2006; Pace et al., 2010). In comparison to the well-studied social interactions of MMORPGs (e.g. Second life, Everquest, Guildwars, World of Warcraft (WoW)), where players develop a character of a role or class over a period of time and socialise in a persistent virtual world. The goal of a FPS games is to win the fast-paced, immersive, and fierce battles that will last only a few minutes each. With this goal of FPS games, there seems to be an apparent contradiction between the short time and competitive nature of FPS games, and the existence of and creation of potentially longer-term social bonds. These contradictions within FPS games remain largely unexplored.

Inspired by such work, I have sought to explore the meaning and evolution of social relationships and interactions in the context of FPS games, and how players manage these relationships.

### **Research Questions/Hypotheses**

In this thesis, I will investigate FPS player's social relationships and interactions with regards to their playing of FPS games.

The current study will use the following key questions to obtain information about the social interaction of FPS players: players' reasons for playing FPS, social interactions while playing games, social interactions around FPS, and modes of playing FPS, review and discussion of societal perceptions of FPS which may include; that they are anti-social "loners". This will be investigated by using semi-structured interviews that will be focused around the social interactions of the participants in regards to their playing and a questionnaire to provide basic gaming habits and demographical details.

The study will focus on the participants' FPS game experiences to explore social relationships among players. The use semi-structured interviews will provide the participants a chance to have their voice heard, and explain what they experience and feel about the social interactions of a FPS gamer. The findings not only help to provide insight of a less-understood social sphere, but also lead to discussion of the common and distinct social relationships that are found in different game genres.

### **Summary**

In summary, video games have been part of society for a long time and come in several different formats. The concerns that have risen about people playing video games have led to research focused on the relationship between playing violent video games and aggressive behaviour. Little research has focused on social interactions and relationships of FPS gamers. The main genre of video games, which has been researched for social

interactions, is MMORPG. This is a key area to explore as FPS gamers are engaging in social video game play now more than ever, with the recent advances in technology.

The current study will focus on exploring the FPS gamer's experiences with social relationships and interactions among players. This will be done by using a questionnaire and conducting player interviews to provide the participants a chance to explain what they see as the social interactions of a FPS gamer. The findings of this study will not only provide an understanding of a less-understood social sphere, but also provide the players voice of the common and prominent social relationships which are found in gaming.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This section will look at the literature on video games. It will first describe the creation of a stereotypical image explaining the possible reasons for the image creation and the literature that has looked at this image. The next section will include research that has looked into the social interactions of players in an MMORPG and FPS games. This will consider the social interactions that occur in online games, modes of engagement to game play, and reasons behind playing games. The final section provide a brief overview of the psychological literature on FPS games covering research that has looked into the personal identification with violent video game characters; learning aggressive behaviours through the de sensitization to violence seen in the game world, and the attribution of arousal and habitual processes; comparison of predicted outcomes from laboratory findings to the real world data; personal factors that may place a person at higher risk; and what violence seen in the games means to performance.

### **Stereotypical Image**

There is a stereotypical image of a person who plays FPS games and/or a video game player (as described in the introduction) (M. D. Griffiths et al., 2003; Jansz & Tanis, 2008; Newman, 2005; Shaw, 2010; Williams et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2011; Yee, 2006b). Possible reasons for the creation of this image come from the portrayal of video gamers in popular media, the act of playing video games, the perceived role of violent video games in mass murder public shootings, and the themes or stories of video games. When a video game player is portrayed in popular media, the character portrayal follows the aforementioned stereotype (M. D. Griffiths et al., 2003). Examples of this can be seen in popular media with movies like *Die Hard 4.0* (2007), with the character Frederick 'Warlock' Kaludis who is portrayed as living in his parent's basement playing video games, socially awkward with others in real life, and as a hacker on the internet. In the television

programme, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (season 11 episode 18), an avid gamer was a murder victim, shown as being grossly overweight, naked in a gaming chair, using jars in which to relieve himself because he did not want to take a break from his gaming.

In both popular and academic discourses there is the notion that playing a video game is a solitary activity (Newman, 2005). This perception may be due to the physical nature of the gaming platforms. For most gaming platforms and games there can be a limitation of only one person playing/controlling a game at any time. This is due to the inbuilt limitations of the gaming platform, game, or game set up that they player has (this may mean that there is only one controller or they are playing a single player game) (Newman, 2005). Even though, there may be other people in the room attending to the game being played. The non-avatar controlling people are not classified as playing because they do not directly influence/ control the avatar's movements. This distinction of who is perceived to be actively playing makes playing video games appear to be a solitary activity. Another factor contributing to the stereotype is the location of the game platform. Players of video games may want to play the game on their own and not disturb or be disturbed by other people. For them to be able to do this, the players may move the gaming platform to an area of the house isolated from other people. This playing away from other people may have helped create the stereotypical image of an antisocial player.

The perception of people who have engaged in mass murder public shootings, is they have either played violent video games, or practiced killing on video games before the event. This viewpoint can be seen in an article from Time magazine about Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold's assault on Columbine high in 1999 (Gibbs et al., 1999). The article suggest that Eric and Dylan had practised beforehand on the FPS game DOOM™ (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Gibbs et al., 1999). The assault practice was suggested to have been on a modified version of the game created by Harris, which had unlimited ammo and enemies which did not

shoot back (Gibbs et al., 1999). However, this modified game is similar to the “God Mode” cheat that is common in many games (Haynes, 2006). After Columbine High shooting, there have been several mass murder public shootings where the media have claimed the shooter had played violent videogames before the event. These events include the Virginia Tech shooting, Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting, and the Norwegian mass shooting (Schreier, 2013). These events have linked in the public’s attention the playing of video games with violent actions. However, when talking about the role violent videogames had in public shootings, there is a tendency to overlook the millions of other players, who also play violent games and do not commit these acts (Cumberbatch, 2004).

Another reason for the creation of the violent image is from the United States of America Army’s use of video games to help prepare its troops in the art of combat (U.S. Army Geospatial Center, 1996). The army uses video games in training to teach recruits concepts of mutual fire, team support, protection of the automatic rifleman, proper sequencing of an attack, ammunition discipline and succession of command (U.S. Army Geospatial Center, 1996). However, due to some game titles mimicking real world conflicts (America’s army, Black Hawk Down, Call of Duty) or having conflict themes, there is a perception that the army uses video games to train soldiers to kill. This is not true as mentioned before the army uses these games to train fighting skills, not how to use a weapon to kill (U.S. Army Geospatial Center, 1996). However, the link in the public perception remains as seen in the media reporting on the effects of playing violent video game (Ferguson, 2012).

The a fore mentioned perceptions from of the physical nature of the gaming platforms, playing away from other people may have helped create the loner and social inept stereotypical image. Alongside this, the linking of playing of violent videogames to public

shootings and the United States of America's Army's use of video games has helped promote the stereotypical image of a video game player.

Academia has conducted and continues to do research attempting to determine the validity of the stereotypical gamer image (Bekhtina, 2002; Cole & Griffiths, 2007; Ewoldsen et al., 2012; M. Griffiths et al., 2004; M. D. Griffiths et al., 2003; Kolo & Baur, 2004; Markey & Markey, 2010; Nardi & Harris, 2006; Newman, 2005; Pace et al., 2010; Schuurman, Moor, Marez, & Looy, 2008; Shaw, 2010; Siitonen, 2007; Tang, 2010; Utz, 2000; Velez, Mahood, Ewoldsen, & Moyer-Gusé, 2012; Williams et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2011; Yee, 2006a, 2006b). The research looking in to the stereotypical image has mostly been done with MMORPG. The possible reasons for this are covered in the introduction section. The current study will focus on the social interactions of a FPS but will use the findings from MMORPG research to help understand the findings as this genre has the most information on the social interactions of players.

The results from Cole and Griffiths (2007), Griffiths, Davies and Chappell (2004), Kolo and Baur (2004), Nardi and Harris (2006), Pace, Bardzell, and Bardzell (2010), Rivas (2009) Rodrigues and Mustaro (2008), Siitonen (2007), Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008), Williams et al. (2006) and Yee (2006b) research suggest that the stereotypical image of the video game players is not true. Cole and Griffiths (2007), Griffiths, Davies and Chappell (2004), Kolo and Baur (2004), Nardi and Harris (2006), Pace, Bardzell, and Bardzell (2010), Rivas (2009) Rodrigues and Mustaro (2008), Siitonen (2007), Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008), Williams et al. (2006) and Yee (2006b) studies have found evidence that shows players are older than was previously suggested, and are likely to have more social interactions and skills than the stereotypical image suggests. Yee (2006b) conducted research on the social interactions of MMOROG players' responses to an online survey which focused its recruitment on four popular MMORPG games EverQuest, Dark Age of Camelot, Ultima

Online, and Star Wars Galaxies over three years from 2000-2003. The recruitment advertisement for Yee's (2006b) study was placed in multiple online forums for these games with a link provided to go to the survey. Over that time, there were 30,000 respondents. Yee (2006b) found that the average age for the gamers playing was 26.57 years, with an age span ranging between 11 to 68 years. Yee (2006b) concluded there was a wider range of ages playing MMORPG, than what the stereotypical image suggests.

This conclusion of Yee (2006b) is supported by the work of Williams et al. (2006) which was conducted via an online survey looking into the characteristics of the players of the MMORPG EverQuest 2. Williams et al.'s (2006) survey was announced in the game through the text chat system, with the players being directed to an outside game webpage to conduct the survey. There was no mention of the frequency of this announcement. It is not mentioned if this announcement was seen by all the current players of the game or only a select few playing at the time of the announcement. This is a possible cause for bias in the results due to when the announcement was shown, there may have been a bias in the demographics of the players due to the time of the day and the commitments that the player has outside of the game world like work, schooling, family needs etc. There was no way for the researchers to measure the response rate because the researchers could not record who has seen the notice and decided not to complete the survey. Their results found on average the players were 31.16 years old, with ages ranging from 12 to 65 years old. Another finding of Williams et al.'s (2006) was that there was a gender distribution of players 80.80% male to 19.20% female. This result was similar to the results found by Cole and Griffiths (2007) study. Cole and Griffiths (2007) study was conducted by placing advertisements about the survey on MMORPG game forums with a link to a self-select online survey. However, as with the previously mentioned study there was no way to determine the response rates due to the nature of the recruitment of participants. As well, there is a possibility of bias in the

respondents due to the need for the participant to be an active member of the forums to see the notice. The non-active forum players of the games were not able to respond to the survey and as such may change the results if they did. The results of Cole and Griffiths (2007) showed the playing population's demographic was 70% male, 29% female, and 1% did not state their gender. In this study, the mean age was 23.6 years and the ages ranged between 11 and 63 years. All of the aforementioned research found that the players playing were of either gender and that there was a diverse age range which did not fit into the stereotypical image of a gamer.

The findings of the studies discussed in the previous section describe the stereotypical image of gamers as not a valid description of players in an MMORPG. However, these results have not been confirmed for other genre of video games like FPS. This is now seen as a new area of research, and the beginning of this research can be seen with Xu and colleague's (2011) analysis of the social interaction of online FPS games using Bungie's™ 2007 title Halo 3. Xu and colleagues (2011) looked at the game log data from 14 Halo 3 players, who responded to an advertisement about the study on an unspecified forum, to see who had played with whom. Xu and colleague's (2011) used the game logs to create interaction playmate maps for the participants to help conduct interviews about the playing habits. Xu and colleague's (2011) defined the relationship between the players of the game using the playmate logs and interaction maps as a reference. Xu and colleague's (2011) results showed an age range from 16 to 41 years with the mean age being 26 years. The study had 13 male participants and one female participant. The results of Xu and colleague's (2011) work suggest there is a correlation between the social interactions and demographic makeup of an FPS gamer with the academic findings for MMORPG games. However, the results of Jansz and Tanis (2008) research suggest this may not be the case. In their research on FPS games and gamers, Jansz and Tanis (2008) conducted an exploratory internet survey

to gather information about who plays online FPS games, and why they spend time playing this genre of video games. Jansz and Tanis (2008) results confirmed the stereotypical image of the gamer. Jansz and Tanis (2008) found the players of online FPS games were almost exclusively young men with a mean age of about 18 years, who spend their leisure time playing video games, playing on average 2.6 hours per day. However, Jansz and Tanis (2008) results also found that 80% of their respondents were members of a clan, which casts doubt on the accuracy of the stereotypical image that FPS gamers are socially inept loners. The results Jansz and Tanis (2008) clearly show that online FPS games are not played in isolation but with other people who communicate with each other outside of playing a game to organise playing together due to membership to a clan. Jansz and Tanis (2008) results also showed social interactions online was a strong predictor for the amount of time a gamer spends gaming. This finding goes against the stereotypical image because it suggests that the online FPS gamers like the social interactions they encounter in the game, rather than playing these games to withdraw from social interactions as the image would suggest. The research on social interactions of a MMORPG player is explained in more detail in the social interactions section of the literature review. The use of MMORPG research for the current study is because it is the genre that has the most research on the social interactions of players. However, more research is needed to see if the findings found in MMORPG research are representative of FPS games and video gamers who do not play video games online.

It is also possible for players of video games to form new relationships with other players. This relationship building can be seen with the many games that are played online, through the formation of groups of players who routinely play the game together and organize themselves into “guilds” or “clans” (M. Griffiths et al., 2004; Jansz & Tanis, 2008; Siitonen, 2007; Williams et al., 2006a). Through the formation of these relationships, it may be possible for someone to increase his or her social support network and engage in more

social interactions. The formation and group dynamics of the in game social interactions will be discussed in the social interaction section of the media studies/ other findings section of the literature review.

### **Game Studies research on video games**

The academic field called Game studies has focused its research on video games. The research that has come out from this discipline has covered a wide range of topics and fields. The topics covered in game studies research have included; modes of engagement to game play, the reasons behind playing games, structure and composition of game levels, methods of storytelling, interactions between the gamer and the game platform, and the social interactions of online gamers.

#### **Social Interactions**

The MMORPG game genre has mostly been used to conduct research on the social interaction of gamers (Cole & Griffiths, 2007; Kolo & Baur, 2004; Nardi & Harris, 2006; Pace et al., 2010; Rivas, 2009; L. C. Rodrigues & Mustaro., 2008; Siitonen, 2007; Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008; Williams et al., 2006a; Yee, 2006b). The research on MMORPG games, has studied how players form and keep relationships across their virtual and real worlds, and how existing relationships, such as friends and strangers are created and handled in game play (Cole & Griffiths, 2007; Nardi & Harris, 2006; Pace et al., 2010). This focus on social interaction can be seen in the study done by Cole and Griffiths (2007) who looked into the social interactions of people who play MMORGP. Cole and Griffiths (2007) studied this by posting links to a self-select online survey on 20 MMORPG dedicated forums with 912 people replying. The survey used by Cole and Griffiths (2007) consisted of 5 sections that covered demographic information friendships within the game, discussions with their online friends, the trust between online friends and the different categories gamers could fit into (which were taken from Utz's (2000) types of players and Bekhtina's (2002) four

types of motivations for playing and questions taken from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP on extroversion). No specific MMORPG game was targeted. Cole and Griffiths (2007) survey was open to anyone who played a MMORPG game throughout the world and was active on the forums chosen. The social finding from Cole and Griffiths (2007) survey were divided into three main areas which covered player friendship, attraction to other players, and online versus offline friendships. With player friendships within MMORPGs, Cole and Griffiths (2007) found that approximately three quarters of both males and females said they had made good friends while playing, with male players to have significantly more good friends than female players. There were no reasons stated why this is the case, but one reason may be because the male players may feel more engaged with the game and therefore make more friends due to the number of other male players. Another reason may be that female gamers are playing with people that they know, and do not want to get to know other players, whereas male gamers do. The results also showed that female gamers were significantly more likely to have met up with their online friends in real life than male gamers.

The findings of Cole and Griffiths (2007) survey on the attraction to other players were of the 912 participants almost one third of the sample reported that they had been attracted to another player. With females being significantly more likely than males, to be attracted to other players. When asked if the feeling of attraction was mutual, almost half of participants who reported attraction to another player answered yes. As well, females were more likely than males to be in a romantic relationship with other players. Just over one quarter of the sample played with family and real-life friends, with female gamers being more likely than male gamers to play with offline family and friends. They also found, there was no significant difference between males and female gamers, in relation to the mean number of real-life friends and family they played alongside.

The findings of Cole and Griffiths (2007) survey on the online versus offline friendships were that under half (45.6%) of all gamers surveyed believed that their online friends are comparable to their real-life friends, with 16.8% saying that they were not sure. There were no significant gender differences found. A small minority (4.8%) of gamers believed their online friends were more trustworthy than their real world friends; with the majority (53.3%) believing that their real world friends are more trustworthy. The remainder respondents reporting both online and offline friends to be equally trustworthy (36.7%) or were unsure (5.3%). No gender differences were found in trustworthiness of friends. With personal issues discussed among online MMORPG friend, around two fifths (39.3%) of gamers surveyed reported that they had discussed sensitive issues with their online gaming friends that they would not discuss with their real world friends. Females were significantly more likely than males to discuss sensitive issues.

The method of participant selection in Cole and Griffiths (2007) has the same issues as mentioned for the survey studies cited in the stereotypical image section of the literature review.

Yee (2006b) conducted research on the social interactions of MMOROG players by exploring the responses of players to online surveys. Yee (2006b) focused their recruitment on four popular MMORPG games; EverQuest, Dark Age of Camelot, Ultima Online, and Star Wars Galaxies, over three years from 2000-2003. There were 30,000 respondents to the surveys over that period. Yee (2006b) found that players (39.4% of male respondents and 53.3% of female respondents) felt that their MMORPG friends were comparable or better than their real world friends. Furthermore, Yee (2006a) found that 15.7% of male respondents and 5.1% of female respondents had physically dated someone who they first met in an MMORPG. The results also found, that players would play with someone that they knew from their real world relationships, with 15.8% of male and 59.8% of female

respondents reported played with a romantic partner while 25.5% of male and 39.5% of female respondents played with a family member.

These findings on social interaction within a game are also supported by the work done by Siitonen (2007) who completed a dissertation looking into the social interactions in online multiplayer communities. In this research, Siitonen (2007) completed a yearlong participation in the MMORPG game *Anarchy Online* by being an active member in the game and belonging to two different groups/guilds. Siitonen (2007) then conducted interviews with a wide array of members from the game to explore the player social interactions. The results found by Siitonen (2007) were there are complex, varied social networks and support structures in *Anarchy Online*. Siitonen (2007) found examples of people meeting outside of the game or having relationships that went beyond the game either before or after joining the game.

There has been little research on the social relationship of FPS gamers. Xu and colleagues (2011) conducted research looking into the social interactions that occur in an online FPS game with Bungie's™ 2007 title *Halo 3*. Xu and colleagues (2011) looked at the game log data of 14 *Halo 3* players who responded to an advertisement on a forum. Xu and colleagues (2011) study methods and participants are described in the stereotypical image section of the literature review. Xu and colleagues (2011) found that relationship and game play contain rich communications and social interactions between players during game sessions. The results also suggested that there is a similar comparison between the social interactions of an FPS games with the academic findings in MMORPG games.

The difference in methodologies used between Cole and Griffith (2007), Yee (2006b), and Siitonen (2007) shows that there is a complex and varied social interaction between players in an MMORPG. However due to the methods use with Cole and Griffith (2007), and Yee (2006b) there is no understanding about how and why these relationships form and

how they affect the everyday life of the participants both in the game and real world. With the focus mostly on MMORPG games for social interaction research, there is little or no information available or research conducted in as detailed information for FPS gamer's social interactions to compare if the results found in MMORPG are applicable or the same for FPS.

### **Modes of engagement with game play**

Games studies literature shows that some academic attention has been devoted to the study of gamers' motivations to play. However, it can be argued that most of these studies cannot be generalised to the wider gaming population since they have tended to focus on online gaming populations and not included any offline gaming populations motivation. These studies have tried to understand the attractiveness of MUDs (multi-user dungeons), and more recently, of MMORPGs.

There are many reasons given for why a person chooses to play a video game (Williams et al., 2008; Yee, 2006a). Yee (2006a) conducted an explorative survey and found there to be three main reasons a person play videogames; achievement, social and immersion. This was done by conducting a factor analytic approach to survey answers from 40 participants to create an empirical model of player's motivation. The analysis of results revealed 10 motivation subcomponents that grouped into three overarching components (achievement, social, and immersion). These overarching components are seen as

Immersion: which is included the discovery of an object and knowing things that most other players do not know about, role-playing which is creating a persona with a background story and interacting with other players to create an improvised story about the world, and customisation of an avatar appearance. Social component was seen as comprising; socializing which is an interest in helping and chatting with other players, relationship as the desire to establish long-term meaningful relationships with others in the game and, teamwork which was seen as deriving satisfaction from being part of a group effort and completing

goals. The achievement component was seen as comprising of; advancement which is the desire to gain power, progress rapidly, and accumulate in-game symbols of wealth or status, mechanics as defined as having an interest in analysing the underlying rules and system in order to optimize character performance and competition which is the desire to challenge and compete with others

Xu and colleagues (2011) results are similar to the research conducted by Schuurman et al. (2008). Schuurman et al. (2008) conducted an online survey with 2985 Finnish gamers. The participants in Schuurman et al. (2008) study, were self-selected responses from posted announcements in Finnish blogs and forums about the survey, and with email invites sent out inviting the recipient of the email to forward the email. The results from Schuurman et al. (2008) survey showed four main types of gamers; the overall convinced gamer defined as highly motivated to play video games for several reasons and considered gaming as a part of their identity; the convinced competitive gamer defined as being highly motivated, but for fewer reasons and competing with others and challenging oneself are the main drivers; the escapist gamer defined as being high on escapist motivations like being someone else exploring new worlds and enjoying the freedom a game offers, and the pastime gamer who just like playing video games as a past time activity.

The results from the research on why a person plays a game have generated similar findings. The main difference between the research findings seems to be based on the questions asked and the methods and aims of the analysis of the data collected. This then makes it safe to assume that the reasons for playing video games are compatible between the players of different genre of video games. However the reasons of engagement are based on findings from surveys that do not allow for more in-depth analysis of the participants response, nor do they allow for more explanation on why they play games. As well, these

surveys have not broken down the reason for playing video games by the genre of the game as it may be possible for different genre games to provide different reasons for playing.

### **Psychological research on FPS/gaming**

The extant psychology research on video games and FPS games has mostly focused its area of study towards the possible negative effects of video games on the player's behaviour, in that violent video games may be a factor in increasing the violent or aggressive behaviours of players (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Anderson et al., 2010; Bandura, 2001; Bösche, 2009; Bushman, Rothstein, & Anderson, 2010; Byrd, 2007; Cumberbatch, 1994, 2004; Ferguson, 2010a, 2010b; Ferguson & Kilburn, 2010; Haynes, 2006; L. Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003; L. R. Huesmann, 2010; Juul, 2002. ; Konijn et al., 2007; Markey & Markey, 2010; Olson, 2004; R.Huesmann & Eron, 1986; Staude-Müller, Bliesener, & Luthman, 2008). While this focus of the majority psychological research is different to the aims of the current study. It is important to provide an overview of the psychological research. The main methods used in psychological research were experimental and effects research. The psychological discourse on these effects has considered topics such as identification with violent video game characters (personal character identification) with studies done by Konijn, Bijvank, and Bushman (2007), learning aggressive behaviours with research by Staude-Müller, Bliesener, and Luthman (2008), and the attribution of arousal and habitual processes with studies done by Anderson & Dill (2000), Bösche (2009), Bushman et al. (2010), and Staude-Müller et al. (2008). The afore mentioned research has found that playing video game may have a possible negative effect on the violence and antisocial behaviours of players. As well, there has been psychological research which suggest playing violent videogames have no effect on violence and antisocial behaviours of players. This research can be seen to have been conducted by Bösche (2009), Byrd (2007), Cumberbatch (1994, 2004), and Olson (2004) work with youth crime rates. Markey and Markey (2010)

research looking at the effects of video games with violence, with the personality traits of psychoticism and aggressiveness to see if they would moderate the negative effects of violent video games. Börsche (2009) research on the violence seen in video games in relation to the performance of the person playing the game. The findings of psychological research have been mixed and there is still the question remain about the possible effect of playing violent videogames on players.

### **Summary**

The research on video games has provided findings that query the accuracy of the stereotypical image of a videogame player. Research has shown that a wide range of age groups play MMORPG and populations of MMORPG gamers consist of both genders. The results of the stereotypical research also show that there are a multitude of social interaction that occur which goes against the image.

The Game studies research that has covered modes of engagement to game play have found many different reason why a person engages in playing videogame. Game study research has also disclosed there are several different reasons why people are playing video games. These reasons can be summarised in the following areas of achievement, social and immersion. Research from game studies on the social interactions of online gamers provides a good basis for further research. However, this research has tended to focus on MMORPG over FPS when looking at the social interactions of players. Further research on the social interactions of FPS players is needed, to explore if there are similarities between the genres of games with regards to the social interactions.

The research conducted in the field of psychology has been focused on the effects of gaming and has not shifted its focus into other areas of game research. The results of these studies have not provided a clear answer to the effects of playing videogames on players. This focus of the psychological research means there has been little or no research conducted

on the social aspects of playing video games from a psychological perspective. As well, most of the research conducted has been looking at a single player in a laboratory setting and not in the real world. This lack of data from a psychological viewpoints means there is a gap in the knowledge from psychological research, which this current research hopes to help provide a small part to bridge this gap.

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

This chapter examines the methodological framework and method used for the investigation into the social relationships and interactions of a FPS gamer. The chapter will begin with a brief description of qualitative research and then move to a discussion about the reason why this methodological framework was used. I will then discuss how the current study was conducted covering the; participant recruitment, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and methods used for analysing and theorising participant experiences.

### **Qualitative Research**

This study set out to gather qualitative data from interviews with current FPS gamers in a one off face-to-face interviews. The aim is to gather information about the social interactions that happen in a FPS game, and gain information about the player's views on social interactions while playing games, social interactions around FPS, and modes of playing FPS. The reasons behind the use of this method of data collection are twofold. The first reason for this research is to offset and add to the past experimental methods used in psychological research, and secondly to allow for the gamer's voice and experience to be heard. Creswell (2007) defines the qualitative research method:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a

complex description and interpretation of the problem and it extends the literature or signals a call for action (p. 37)

Simply stated, qualitative investigations provide rich and descriptive accounts and capture the individual experience. The use of qualitative methods leads to comprehensive understandings and insights not available through the use of other data collection methods such as surveys, experiments, and effects research. (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research draws on numerous theoretical viewpoints inclusive of phenomenology, cultural studies, psychology, and media studies. The methodological approach embraces the ontological notion that many and subjective realities occur concurrently. Qualitative investigations are often founded on social constructivism where individual representations provide personal interpretation. The significance and strength of qualitative research is acquiring an understanding of subjective the experience, interpretation, and meaning (Rice & Ezzy, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Rice and Ezzy (1999) stated: “In order to understand people’s behaviour, we must attempt to understand the meanings and interpretations that people give to their behaviour” (p. 2). Therefore, the use of qualitative research permits the participants to establish their own definitions and requires the researcher to understand the world as the participant sees it. The goal is to present quality information pertaining to comprehensive understandings of social realities and highlight patterns of meanings for the individual (Rice & Ezzy, 1999).

Qualitative research comprises three components: data collection, finding meaning within the data, and systematic analysis (Straus & Corbin, 1998). The philosophy that underlies the qualitative approach is inductive reasoning, where the theory develops from the data collected. With interview questions that are asked in a manner that permits the participant to detail their understanding of the phenomena in question, and the interpretation of the data to provide an explanatory and detailed understanding of the interviewee beliefs

and viewpoints (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The true value of qualitative research is the ability to generate theory grounded in the data collected (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### **Justification of Methodology**

For effective research, there is a requirement for a match between the procedures of investigation and the phenomenon in question (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). Qualitative research methodologies are particularly relevant to the exploration of social interactions as the aims are to describe and understand the subjective experience. In exploring individual worldviews and viewpoints, the researcher is able to understand patterns which guide actions and behaviours of the participants (Rice & Ezzy, 1999).

The use of qualitative research methods has numerous features making it particularly relevant for this project. The investigation requires the exploration of participant's personal experiences and their ascribed meanings. There is little known about the social interactions and makeup of the relationships of FPS gamers. Therefore, the use of qualitative research provides the opportunity to obtain rich and in-depth narratives of participants understandings of their social interactions and relationships towards FPS gaming.

### **Limitations and Strengths**

The main limitation of qualitative research is the reduced ability to generalise results to the wider population. This is because of the small number of participants, personal values or biases of the researcher and participants. However, Patton (2002) stated "the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational and analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size" (p. 245). The researcher's ability may impact the quality of the interpretation, along with the validity and reliability of the findings. This leads to the best outcomes being provided when the researcher is open and honest about a personal

interest in the research topic and how their personal values may impact the data collection, analysis and interpretation (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The Qualitative research methods have numerous strengths and advantages. It provides a scientific method and approach to explore complex situations, establishing rich and grounded descriptions, and personal insights, all within individual context. Face validity and credibility are acquired through the provision of individual understanding and experience. As well, the emergent design provides flexibility allowing the researcher to acquire a collection of quality information (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative research permits interpretations to be integrated into larger systems of meaning (Patton, 2002).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Waikato University approved the research procedures for this thesis. Ethical guidelines were based upon the New Zealand Psychological Society Code of Ethics. Points of relevance, where privacy and confidentiality of participants, minimising harm and discomfort, and establishing informed consent. These factors are discussed below.

All participants were provided with pseudonyms, and all distinguishable details were removed from the findings, to protect individual identities. Audio recordings, transcripts of interviews and completed questionnaires were stored in a secure location (locked safe) at the researcher's home address and will be destroyed after seven years from the completion of the thesis. The only people with access to this information were the supervisors and the researcher.

### **Participants**

#### **Recruitment**

A notice advertising for participants who are current FPS gamers (Appendix A) was placed in the hallway of the School of Psychology, in the hallway for the school of computer

science, in an online University of Waikato PSYC102-12B class Moodle page and the University of Waikato School of Psychology PyscCafe webpage page. Another notice was placed up in a local comic book store towards the end of the recruitment phase, but no responses were gained from this notice. As well, people known to the researcher (prior to this study), talked to their friends about the project and these people made contact to become a participant. The participants first made contact through email or cell phone txt-message. The participants were given an information sheet (Appendix B) about the thesis after this first contact through email. The researcher and the participant then agreed on a mutual time and place for the interview to take place through email.

### **Participants**

A total of 12 participants took part in this study. There were 10 males and 2 females of mixed ages and gaming experience. The demographic details of the participants are described in Table 1. Nine of the participants in the study were recruited by responding to a notice advertising the research and three came from word of mouth from people who knew about the study. All participants were current video/computer gamers who played any game/games belonging to the video game genre of FPS. The definition of a current player for this study was set as having played a FPS game in the past month. As well, there were no selection criteria on the level of experience or time frame of playing FPS games. The amount of time participants had spent playing FPS games ranged from one month to over 20 years.

**Table 1.***Demographics of the participants*

Participant	Age Bracket	Gender	Ethnicity
1	16-20	m	NZ European
2	16-20	m	European
3	16-20	f	NZ European
4	16-20	f	NZ European
5	26-30	m	NZ European
6	21-25	m	NZ European, NZ Maori, European
7	21-25	m	NZ European
8	16-20	m	NZ European
9	16-20	m	NZ European
10	31-35	m	NZ European
11	26-30	m	NZ European
12	21-25	m	NZ European

**Methods****Setting and Equipment**

The interview and completion of the questionnaire (Appendix C) took place at a mutually agree upon time, either in a bookable room at the University of Waikato or the participants own home. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 minutes to two hours and were transcribed on a Windows 7 running computer system using Express scribe software.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

Before the start of the interview and after giving written permission, the participants filled out a questionnaire (Appendix C). The data gained gave insight about the players' demographics, gaming platforms used, and basic playing habits. Interviews for the current study were conducted face to face, with the interviews lasting between 25-120 minutes. An interview guide was created to help guide the interview, and was to be used as a prompt for the interviewer (Appendix D). The semi-structured interview schedule was designed to meet

the aims of this thesis. The interview schedule was developed from the findings of previous research on social interactions of video gamers, and with input from supervisors. Semi-structured interviews for data collection were used because it allows the interviewee to describe their social gaming habits in their way while still covering the areas of interest for this study. It also allows for more in-depth probing of answers given by the interviewee.

### **Verification of Transcripts**

The researcher using Express scribe software and Microsoft Word transcribed interviews in verbatim. Anonymity was provided to participants, and all identifying characteristics were removed.

Participants were sent a copy of the transcribed interview through email for the interviewee to verify that the researcher had accurately recorded the information provided. The participants were encouraged to make alterations, include omissions or provide additional information. In addition, the researcher requested that the altered transcripts were returned by email. Nil participants returned an altered copy of the transcript.

### **Data analysis**

The interviews were transcribed to allow for the analysis of the data. This transcript of the data collected was then collated into groups and themes that address the areas of interest for this study. These groupings and themes first came from key themes and ideas cited in the literature from past research and from key ideas that were repeated by the participant and across participants. Some themes and groupings used include; reasons for playing FPS, types of social interactions found in playing FPS, social interactions that have come from FPS, social interactions that occur while playing FPS, social interactions that occur around FPS.

## **Validity**

Consistency was maintained by the continual revision, refinement and clarification of categories and emerging themes. Development of initial categories required an in depth analysis of the relevant literature and with the analysis of transcribed data, allowing the modification of categories. This process continued into higher order coding. Accuracy of themes and theories emerging from the data were emphasised within this practice. The richness of the data collected, along with the skill of the researcher are factors enhancing validity of qualitative analysis. To improve on the validity for the participants of exploring their viewpoints they were sent a copy of their transcript and provided with the opportunity to give feedback. Encouraging participants to edit, correct, or provide additional information within their transcript enhanced accountability and validity of the interview data and reducing the possibility of researcher bias.

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodological process employed within this research project. The aim of the research was to explore the social relationship and interactions of FPS gamer.

A qualitative research methodology was chosen as it is participant focused, interactive and sensitive to subjective opinion. Qualitative research empowers subjective reality and allows participants to construct and explain their own meaning and understandings of a given concept, within a personal framework. The use of face-to-face interviews encouraged a relationship between the participant and the researcher. By using these techniques, it allowed the researcher to discuss the research aims, and disclose his personal interest in FPS game and gaming to the participants. In addition, the participants were able to discuss their experiences and knowledge, with their understandings being explored in-depth with the

researcher. Therefore, qualitative approach was chosen to obtain rich and in-depth information about the FPS cultural normalities.

Participants were recruited from within the University of Waikato and from the relationships of the researcher. With the data collected through one-off face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews. The findings are presented in the following chapter, and a discussion of the findings in relation to literature is presented in the discussion chapter.

## Chapter Four: Findings

The current study explored the social relationships of active FPS gamers. The objective was to examine the nature and focus of social interactions that occurred around FPS games and gaming. A sample group of 12 active FPS players were used to establish and explore the relationships that occur throughout their FPS gaming experience. The findings are reported in this chapter. A discussion chapter will follow this chapter, where a critical analysis of the findings with comparisons and contrasts to previous research is presented.

This chapter is divided into sections that focus on covering the experiences and events that span the whole gaming activity. This was done by exploring the participants' experience from their first introduction to playing videogames, to the choices that they make on which game to play and events and interactions that happen around and in the virtual game and real world.

These sections will cover; the friendship structure found; players who played with the participants including friends, family, strangers and clans/ guilds; in game communication looking at the affordances of the communication technology used, the nature of communication and its meaning to the participants; the locations both physical and virtual where FPS games are played; participants memories of being introduced to playing video games, and the selections process on what game to play. The current study's findings are presented to better understand and represent the social interaction of FPS gamers.

### **The level of friendship.**

The participants reported a level structure of friendship for the people they played with. This friendship structure was based upon the interactions the participants had with the friends/ people they knew. A visual representation of this can be seen in figure 1. At the highest level were the people the participants interacted at a face to face level and shared private and personal information. This face to face interaction did not have to occur

frequently but there had to be some face to face interaction. The participants reported years may go by between the face to face contact, but because they had had face to face interactions in the past it made this relationship in the top level for friendship for the participants. P11 had some trouble in defining this level, as shown in this statement:

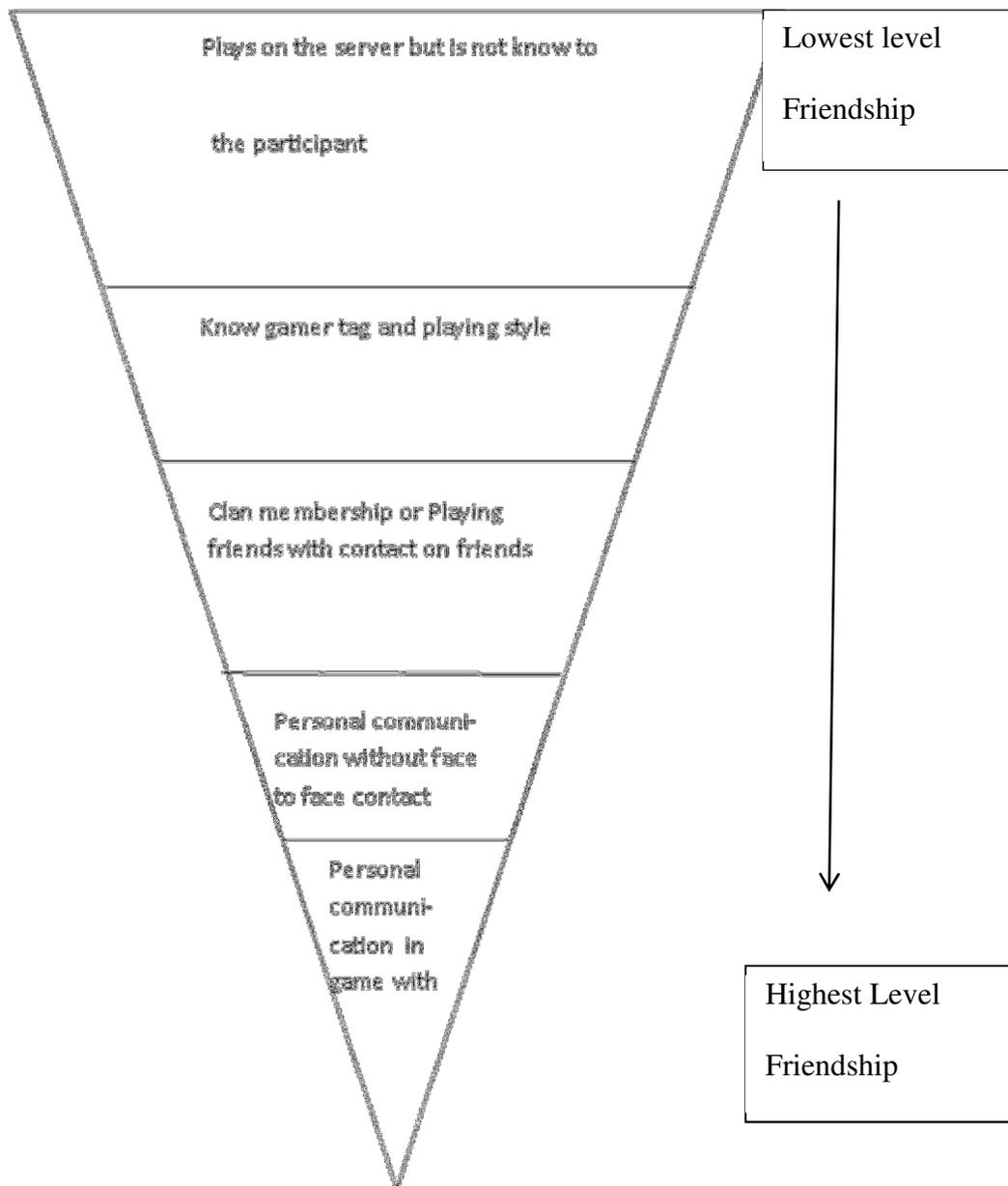
It depends on what you class as a friend to be honest. Some of the people that I converse with and stuff online I technically class them as a friend, even though I haven't actually met them face-to-face. I've talked to them on the phone and stuff like that. I technically class them as a friend. I haven't met them face-to-face. I'm not sure whether that actually is technically a friend as such, not meeting them face-to-face.

This is different for the other participants who did define this level of friendship. For example, P1 said this about their friendships with people they knew from playing FPS games:

Yer, some of them are really close friends now. Some of them have drifted away from counter strike, but we still keep in contact, usually via Facebook and then every now and then if I am in the same city as they are, we will hang out, and they will let me stay at their place, so I don't have to get a motel. Generally we keep a good friendship going even though the thing that brought us together is not a common factor any more.

The next friendship level was defined as people who the participants had constant interactions with but without the face to face contact. The interactions at this level had the same intensity as the first level, and personal and private information was shared, but there was no face to face contact. This level of friendship was mostly reported with people that lived overseas but played on the same servers or lived at the other end of the country (New Zealand). The next level was people who were in clans and guilds the participants were in but only interacted with, on a clan level. This interaction was mostly on the clan only

webpage, in game chat system, or voice chat client. The next level was people who played at the same time as the participants, and the participants got to know them as a player, but no other interaction happened apart from what was needed for the game. These interactions could include text or voice communication, but this was solely focused on and based in the game world. The final level was people who played on the server, but the participants did not know the gamer tag or playing styles.



**Figure 1.** The levels of friendship structure reported by the participants.

## **Deciding on whom to play with.**

### **Enjoying game Time with Close Friends and Family.**

All of the participants reported playing FPS games with close friends or family members. They saw this as a way of spending time together, either face-to-face or online. The laughter, dynamics, and chat related and/or unrelated to the game are part of what made the co-operative or LAN/Multiplayer gaming experience enjoyable for the participants. The enjoyment came from the ability to share the sense of achievement and banter which comes from completing games and challenges, or playing together. As well, some of the enjoyment which was described by the participants, was that they were spending time and interacting with their friends. The fact they were with their friends made the time playing a game more enjoyable for them. This can be seen with the response given by P3 when asked why they played video games: “I like the whole sense of teamwork and working together. ... I don’t play by myself, so I play with my friends, and there is [sic] usually about eight of us at a time.” This shared experience allowed the participants to talk about past games and events with each other and was part of the bonding of the friendship. P2 said this about the LAN experience “Well, at the end of it you can go and have a drink with them or have a chat, discuss how the family is going”.

### **Friends’ friend**

Participants reported when invited to or they hosted a LAN, players are allowed to invite friends and friends of friends. Some participants, especially P11 talked about how this was a good thing, and he had made some new friends. The reason why inviting other players into a LAN situation is preferred, is it allows for new playing style variations to come in and keep the game play fresh. This is because a new player may know different tricks that work

in the game or plays with a different style from the usual players, which means the players do not know how to deal with this. As well, this increases the number of players in the game which allow for different game types that need a large number of players to be played. For example, the game type Capture the flag (which is a game in which two or more teams challenge each other to capture the other team's flag) needs a large number of players so that the teams are able to play both offence (capture the other team's flag) and defence (protect their own team's flag).

The term triadic closure is used to describe the phenomenon where one person builds a new relationship with another person through an acquaintance who is connected to both, i.e. getting to know one's "friend's friend" and have an interest in common (Kossinets & Watts, 2006). Triadic closure was reported by P1, P4, P6, P10, P11 and P12 with regards to both online and offline/LAN play. The existing relationships that were used in the triadic closure included playmates online as well as offline friends/family. Participant P1 said this about playing in an online server.

"After a while of playing there, you develop I suppose a reputation or what have you and if you're good people are more likely to welcome you to their team if they don't know you. Whereas, if you are not good, but you're a good person you tend to get welcomed as well, by the people that know you. The people that don't know you will say why don't you go and uninstall and the rest of it. So for me it became that I would play on servers that I could connect to and get a stable connection to, and then once you after a certain amount of time playing there then you want to play there more because you know that x person is going to be playing and you enjoy playing with x person. It becomes I suppose like your local hang out, where everybody knows your name sort of."

For P1 playing with other players and getting them to know how he plays and P1 getting to know other players on the server allowed him to increase his social grouping on the server. Through P1 playing on the sever, P1 got to know some players who were in a clan and they invited him into that clan. Through this invite, P1 was able to increase his social network in the game, then in the real world through the clan membership. P6 also has a similar experience to P1, but for him the extension of their social group was in an offline setting with family members. They reported it as

“... Because my older brothers are kind of the ones who showed Warcraft to me and they were ... they're like ten years older than me so I always gamed with their group of mates because my group of friends aren't really like them. I don't really have any really strong gaming friends in real life. So, it was usually my brothers' friends.”

In addition to its natural appeal, this mechanism can be seen to be further promoted by the multiplayer game structure of FPS. Given that any multiplayer game depends on a development design that can accommodate on average up to 16 players on one team for most popular games, there is a fair chance a player will have multiple friends play alongside them on the same team. Furthermore, in custom games and a LAN, a player/host can invite game friends who in turn invite players from their own friend network. This provides many opportunities for “friends' friends” to play together and the possible creation of friendships. This triadic closure has not only happened spontaneously, but some players proactively exploit it to build social capital with higher-level players or to get new ways and experiences into their gaming. The players of FPS want new players who play differently, to make their game play fresh.

### **Playing with strangers.**

All the participants stated they had played games with other players that they did not know. The playing with strangers finding is not surprising due to the nature of playing multiplayer FPS games and that online services allow for this.

Some of the participants disclosed they had encountered some issues with regards to the behaviour of players that they did not know. These behaviours include; the use of verbal/text insults towards them and other players in game, spamming the in game voice communication with either music or other nongame related content, and inappropriate behaviours in the game which include things like own team killing or actions with the aim of annoying other players. Most participants reported dealing with these antisocial behaviours were not a real issue for them. The game being played included ways in which the offending players can be excluded from contacting, playing in future with them or allow them to remove the offending behaviour by blocking that person.

P1 and P3 also reported other players in the game would support a person who was being attacked with these behaviours, and make sure that the communication they were receiving was socially acceptable to that server. This would be done by this group of people communicating with the player/players, who are doing these acts, and asking for them to tone it down to a level that is acceptable or stop doing it altogether. If this asking does not work then the group supporting the player will then inform the player/players, that if they did not stop they would either be blocked from in game communication, removed from the game, reported to the moderators, and possibly blocked from playing on the server in the future.

When asked about why they think these behaviours happen in an online FPS game, the participants theorised two reasons why. The first reason was due to the perceived anonymity of the internet and the gaming environment. By this, the participants said because a person playing a game is represented by an avatar and gaming tag in the game world. This

gamer tag is a name the player plays under and can have no meaning or give any insight to the player's identity. The offending players may feel they have free range to do what they like in the game world without any real world consequences. The second reason suggested by participants is some of the verbal behaviour that happens online is from the culture of the players. For some players, in their real world culture it is normal for them to be more forward in their communications towards other people. To behave like this in an online environment may bring them in to conflict with other players from different cultures who do not communicate like this. P12 gives their reason why this may be relevant.

Yeah, I definitely think that the gaming experience does give you an understanding of different cultures but I always think that the cultures in the gaming industry are a different culture again from the actual culture. So for example I played with a number of Chinese gamers during my time through high school and everything else like that and the way that they play and the way they react and the way they deal with situations online compared to when you deal with them in their own natural context are very different. So even within the culture there are sub cultures that you seem to notice through an online world so there are multiple cultures but there's even cultures within the cultures that is even slightly different, if that makes sense.

By this P12 is stating that, through his gaming experience, he learned insights about other cultures, through the way these people have acted and interacted with him. However, the culture that was shown to him was a modified culture compared to what he experience from knowing these players outside of the game world.

Only one participant admitted committing antisocial behaviours in an online game. The reason they gave for this was the perceived anonymity they felt and sometimes that just wanted to do it because it was fun for them. The reason they saw that being on an online game was anonymous was because they are only known in the game as the "gamer tag" they

were using. This perceived lack of connection to the real world can lead the player to have a feeling they are not traceable, and have free-range to do what they like in the game. As well, the reason the participant disclosed the antisocial behaviour as being fun, was they perceived it as them putting people off their game and as a challenge to put off as many people as possible. They took personal pride from being able to this. Another possible reason may be that the participant liked pushing people's buttons, and saw this as a way for them to be able to do it with little personal risk.

### **Making Friends.**

The nature of online/ multiplayer FPS gaming means for players to have enjoyable gaming experiences there is a need for a large number of players to play on a server. The participants stated because of this need they would play on the same server repeatedly if it had a high number of active players. The participants reported playing repeatedly with the same people on a preferred server. With this repetitive play, the participants disclosed they formed friendships with other players they had met in the game world. The main way in which online friendships were formed was through in game behaviours and the ability for the players to play well together. P1 described his online friendships formation criteria as

For instance if I meet someone new and we do play well together and we do well together. Like we more likely to create a bond with them rather than some who plays well but he may be a complete a\*\*\*\*\*e or he don't play well and he's a nice chap I'll be more likely to create a bond with him. I suppose it is just like real life I guess in that if someone is nice your nice back and you develop a friendship from there, whereas if someone is not nice, you're not nice back and you don't develop a relationship.

This formation of a social bond was due to the members of the friendship playing together first and liking the way in which the other people played. Then if, the members of

the friendship continued playing together they then moved the relationship to a more formal setting in the game by communicating in a more personal way. This personal communication may include topics that are not related to the game but are of importance to the members. These topics may cover personal health, work, romantic attachments etc. The members of the friendships may also join or create a clan and communicate outside of the game. Then if, the relationship kept growing, the members if able may meet face to face or in a different setting e.g. on Facebook or Skype.

### **Joining a Clan.**

Of the participants interviewed, only six were current member of a guild or clan of a FPS game. Three participants were past members of either one or more clans for a FPS game. As well, most of the participants (10/12) were members of guilds or clans in an MMORPG. Three participants were members of clans/guilds of both genres of video games (FPS and MMORPG). These participants disclosed there were only a small number of players they knew who were members of clans/guilds in both genres of games. A possible reason is the gaming populations of the gaming genres are different and what attracts someone to one genre of video game is not present in the other. This may be as uncomplicated as a person liking FPS games because they can have a game in 15 minutes. The person does not want to put in the time to play a MMORPG. Another possible reason may be that the people the participants know in one genre of game guild/ clan may be in a different guild/ clan to the participant in the other genre of game, due to the selection process that the clan/guild use for joining. For example, a player may like to join a guild in a MMORPG which helps other players in the game and for a FPS clan they want people who know how to play the game well.

When asked why they would join a clan, the main reason given by the participants was the ability to be able to complete their goals for the game. These goals were made up of

several different reasons which included but were not limited to; playing competitively, learning new ways to play the game, to have someone to play with on a regular basis who they knew what their skill level was, or to help teach other/new players how to play the game. P10 said in choosing a clan, he would look at the one offered him the best chance to get what he wanted out of the game. The most vital consideration for P10 was the ability of a clan he joined to complete the goals he had for the game. As well, P1 said that the clan's he joined would "... play competitively in that we would play against other teams".

With regards to deciding what clan a participant would join, there was several different reasons used in deciding. These included the reputation of the clan, whether the participant knew someone in the clan, and what the clan did in the game. Participant 1 said this about his reasons for joining a clan "Generally it is with people I know in real life or I've known online for an extended period of time, and we know each other and that we can work with each other. We just say hey do you want to join my clan and I am like sure..." This was the same for P4 who said this about the clan that she had joined "It started with a group of real life friends and then it just sort of expanded with people from overseas."

For P11 and P12 the reasons for joining a clan included the ability for them to be able to complete their goals for the game, but they also wanted to be able to help other players learn to play. This reason was more noteworthy for them because they would go out of their way in the game to help others in the game learn to play, and then get them to join the clan/guild that they are members of. This behaviour of helping others learn the game looks to be unselfish but when questioned further on the subject a more personalised reason appeared. Both participants wanted to have good challenging games, so saw this helping of others learn to play, as a way for them to improve the gaming abilities of other players and improve the competition and challenge of their future games.

All of the participants reported that they would stay with a clan until it disbanded. The reasons disclosed by the participants for the closure of clans they were members of was the number of members had dropped to a level that made the clan unusable in the game. This means the clan was not able to get enough people for a game or fulfil the needs of the clan. There are several reasons why this may happen. These include; the number of players in the game decreasing because players have moved to other games, people leaving to join other clans that match their needs, the clan splitting up due to leadership disputes, and the person who was running the clan not being able to do it anymore.

### **Game communication.**

All the participants reported the use of in game communication with other players in an online game. The main reason for this communication was to give advice or report events related to the game. This communication was done in two main ways. The first was using the text based system in the game. The second was using a voice chat client that was either game based or a separate system. The participants found that being able to communicate in the game was a way in which a person could develop a friendship with other players of the game, or enhance friendships they already had. The reason given for this was because the talk was more game focused the participants felt more involved in the game and the choices being made. P3 reported this about their use of voice communication

It enhances it as it is good to know what everyone is thinking and what they are doing, and how they are enjoying it. As it like you know when they are getting annoyed or are doing something else. So it's like do you want to play something else or do something else. It's good to know everyone else thoughts just not your own.

The participants were asked to describe the communications that occur in the different aspects of playing online. Aspects of game play included; waiting for a game to start, playing a game, waiting after being killed to either respawn or for the round to end. The participants

described the use of different types of communication depending on the aspect of the game play. While a person is actively playing the game, the communication is solely focused on the game play with little to nil personal chat. When a player was not active in the game, the participants reported they would talk about personal things with the people they know or engage in a polite conversation with the others player they did not know. The reason given for this difference in game play communication depending on the aspect the play was due to the nature of playing a FPS game. FPS games are fast paced, and a lot of things can happen in a short amount of time. The communication which happens while playing needs to be solely focused on the game play for the players to be able to get the best results e.g. winning the round. This then means the personal communication is left for the time when they are not actively playing.

### **Locations of game play.**

With regards to the locations available for multiplayer game play, the participants reported two primary locations. These locations are either on an online server (Xbox live, steam or a dedicated server for a game title are examples of this) and in an offline setting which covers three main events: the official organised LAN, unofficial LAN, and an impromptu social gathering where a gaming platform is available for use. It is necessary to remember that with the advancement of technology (e.g. online storage of game data, mobile gaming, and the ability to access accounts on different gaming platforms) the physical location where a player plays a video game does not have to be static. This means that a player is able to play the same game from different locations around the world because they are able to log in and play the game if the game is available on the game platform they are using (e.g. through the use of Xbox live, Steam or the Sony PlayStation network). With this in mind, it is essential to remember for the following section when discussing the participant's reasons for choosing an online game, the location that is mentioned is the online

location virtual world of the server and not the physical location of the player. For an offline gaming session, the location talked about will be the physical location of the player.

### **Online.**

The participants reported that when choosing a server to play on, several factors are considered. The first factor is if there are servers available for a game for people to play on from their physical location. If there were no servers available, the participants reported they would not play that game online and for some participants they would not play that game. The reason given for not playing a game which does not have online gaming ability was the participants want a location where they can get a match or game time. However, the participants disclosed they might buy a game they knew did not have this area of game play available for them if they knew that they could play this game in an offline function with friends. With regards to online play, the participants P1, P2, P10, P11, and P12 reported increase in competition from other players is what they like most about online play. This is one reason why they chose a game with online play like Halo 3, Americans Army, and Call of Duty Modern Warfare. The ability for them to have their gaming ability challenged by other players is a factor why they play online. The ability to be consistently challenged for the top spot in the game, and learn new ways of playing is extremely valuable as it keeps the game experience fresh for them, which reduces the level of boredom the participants felt for a game. With the ability to challenge for the top spot, a player may become known in the server or game world and asked to join clans or guilds because of their ability.

The next main factor discussed by the participants was the ping or lag (time taken to communicate with the server) that a server has. The reason this is necessary is because a FPS game is extremely fast paced and intense, usually with a first seen, first to die (meaning that an avatar that is seen by an opponent first is usually the first one to die/be fragged out of the two players) aspect of the multiplayer game. When a player is playing online, they want to

have the lowest ping possible so that they do not lose the game or a fight due to the lag. As well, a key factor is the player's reaction time but this is not significant when looking at the server a player plays on. If a player was to play a game with high lag, the gaming experience they have will not be a pleasant, and they may not play on that server or that game again. As well, the ability for the player to be challenged and challenge for the top spot is compromised and may influence the possible social connections a player may form.

The need for the lowest lag alongside the technological restraints of broadband speeds in New Zealand compared to other countries has forced many of the participants to look for servers that are close to or in New Zealand. This can be seen with P1's reason behind how he chooses where to play online

Generally I am looking for one that I can connect to and get a fast connection to that server, so it has to be geographically close. So Australia, New Zealand, that is as far as I can play before the lag just becomes makes it unplayable."

And P 11 reported this about the choice of server with regards to lag

I normally go with whichever server is closest to New Zealand. The North American ones are normally what I choose; because, normally they don't have an Australian service. It's quite rare. I normally just go with the one that's closest so that I get the least amount of ping.

This technological restraint and need to challenge for the top position placed on the participants has resulted in a possible unique situation reported by some participants, especially P11 who found out through the use of in game communications that they were playing a game against their neighbour. He reported the interaction as:

I was playing online the game Halo Reach and I was talking to some of these guys online about where I live and stuff like that in New Zealand. Most people online they don't actually know where New Zealand is or that it's actually a country. They said,

“Oh they live in New Zealand too”. I said, "Oh, I live in Hamilton." He said, "Oh, I live in Hamilton too." I said, "Oh, that's cool." I said, "Oh, I live in Hillcrest." He said, "Oh wow, I live in Hillcrest too." Then he blurted out his address and it was our next door neighbour.

This means for participants who reported the online meeting of players who live physically close may allow the participants to increase their real world social network. This is due to both players being in a similar location which allows face to face meetings to happen if they so choose. This meeting in the game world and then in the real world was disclosed by P1, P4, P10, P11 and P12 with the disclosure of the creation of friendships from these meetings. Also mentioned by the participants, was the ability for players to meet up at organised events if their living locations were too far apart for every day face to face contact.

The next factor given in choosing a server was if the participant knew anyone on that server. The participants identified they were more likely to play on a server if they knew someone who is already playing on that server. The main reason reported for this was the participants preferred playing alongside their friends. P11 said this about choosing what server that they play on, “Sometimes I'll get introduced into a game because another mate of mine is playing it and has played it before. He'll be on the server, and I'll jump onto that server.” As well, by having someone they know on the server the participants disclosed they could be sure the possible interactions on the server will be positive. This is because they have someone to inform them before playing about what happens on the server and describe what the current players on the server are like (e.g. the ability of players, the interactions that happen, and what the game play is like). This gives the participant some insight before going on what will happen on the server.

When asked about going on to a new server where they do not know anyone, participants reported this was not an issue for them, and they would go on and play the game.

The reason given by participants was the knowledge if they did not like the server they had the ability to go to a different server and keep trying new servers until they found one they liked. Also, the participants mentioned some servers have moderators (their role is to keep the peace, enforces the rules of the server and make sure that they game is played fairly) that play in the game or are contactable through email or an in game message system, so that if they had issues with other players there was a way for them to sort this out and make the gaming experience more pleasurable for them. By pleasurable the participants most likely meant there was an ability for them to remove possible harassing, trolling (players who do things just to get a response from the other player e.g. spam the chat system with nonsense items) and antisocial players from the game. This then means there will only be players who are motivated to play the game left.

The most mentioned online server reported by the participants was the online digital distribution, digital rights management, multiplayer, and communications platform called Steam. All, but one of the participants reported the use of this platform. The main reason given for the use of the Steam programme was the ability for the participants to play multiple different games and communicate with their friends in one convenient location/programme. As well, the sales that are available on this server were also mentioned. P3 reported that they would have Steam running in the background, play games, and chat with friends when they were online. The ability to be able to play a game and communicate with your friends at the same time has allowed gaming interactions that are more social. The participants were able to use the Steam system as a way for them to keep in contact with their friends through the inbuilt friends list (a list of people allowed by the participant to communicate with them) and text chat system while playing video games.

## Offline

Offline gaming is different to online gaming in that the players and game platform are not connected to the internet, and have to either be connected to a LAN or played on a single gaming platform. The possible social interactions in this setting reported by the participants can be divided into three main events: The official LAN which participants usually pay to attend organised events where competitions are played for single or multiple video games. The unofficial LAN, which is where a person invites a group of people around to a location usually their own home and get them to bring multiple gaming platforms to play a video game or games that they all have. The final interaction is where a single gaming platform is used in an ad hoc way during a meeting of friends. This meeting did not have the playing of video game/games as its main purpose. These three means of playing offline will be discussed with the participants social interactions explained.

### Official LANS

Only three of the 12 participants reported having attended an official organised LAN. The main reason given for attending was that their friends were not into playing video games or the people they knew from online was going. The official LAN becomes a way for them to meet in real life. P1 gave the following reasons why he attended an organised LAN as “Generally I go to organised LANs. In that, you pay a cover charge to go to. A lot of my real life friends don’t play games, never have and don’t see the point. So it’s a good way to meet like-minded people.” The “like-minded” person is defined as people who share an interest in playing videogames competitively and enjoy playing. It can be seen as the same as other meetings of people who enjoy a hobby and gather to show and talk about what is new and meet with people. This is like the big convention events in the US like comic-con (gathering of comic book fans) or Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) (gathering of videogame

lovers). This meeting of like-minded people at an organised LAN was also stated by P3 when they talked about an organised LAN that they attended

“Urban LAN and I think maybe people go to it now but that was ... like it started to cost like \$20 for people who weren't students and \$10 for people who were. Anyone could really go, and you would meet a lot of people through it, so it was a bit of social networking through LANs like that. Then your social groups get a lot bigger.”

The main reason reported by P10 and another reason reported by P1 was the ability to play in a competitive setting with other players not available outside of this setting. The participants reported that they would play with other players in other settings but not as competitively as in the organised LAN. Both participants reported they would attend organised LANs with real world friends, online friends or clan members that live in the same country as they did.

When asked about the social interactions that happen at an organised LAN the participants responded that because the people were there to play video games competitively, there was less talking and communication between players while playing compared to unofficial LANs. The participants described the communications that did occur between players as being less intense, in that there was less name calling and trying to put other players off the game, however, banter and catcalls between players still occurred. A possible reason for this is at an official LAN there are a lot of players the participants do not know, with these strangers looking at their playing, it makes the participants and other players less aggressive in the communication. As well, due to the number of different people playing videogames the participants of the official LAN tone down the banter because they do not know the social norms of other players. This strategy allows for the players to engage in banter, without getting in trouble with the organisers and other players. Another reason for this less aggressive communication between teams is that there may be a trophy or financial reward for winning the LAN. This increase in reward for playing well compared to other off

line locations may mean the official LAN participants are more focused on playing the game rather than communicating.

### **Unofficial LANS**

All of the participants in the current study stated they had attended at least one unofficial LAN, with many participants attending multiple unofficial LANs. The main reason given by the participants for attending was social interaction with off line friends. The participant would invite or be invited to attend the unofficial LAN by people that they knew. These events were reported to have occurred in several different locations. The location of friends or their own home was the most common location of play disclosed. P8 reported this about the unofficial LANs they had attended

I haven't done it for a while. I used to do it quite a bit, when I was probably 14, 15. I would go to an Internet cafés and play, what was it? First Person Shooter, Counter-Strike, I think it was. We played main games and then played other main games like, there's Warcraft and stuff like that. Yes, that was a while ago... Sometimes it would just be me, sometimes, usually, there was a group of us that went in. There was always a person that you knew in there that you'd play with

This playing with other people was also reported by P11 with regards to unofficial LANs "Most of the time we'd go over to a mate's house, and we'd boot up some games. We'd play some games for a while, have some drinks and some food." All participants reported that friends of friends were also invited. This invitation of friend's friend is covered in more detail in the deciding on whom to play section of the findings, under the subheading friend's friend.

### **Ad hoc gaming**

Some participants reported ad hoc gaming. This is when two or more friends get together for an event that originally did not involve playing video games like having a pool party or a BBQ, but the playing of videogames occurred. The main way in which ad hoc gaming happened was during a social gathering at someone's house, a gaming platform was turned on and people started playing. The type of interactions that occur are different to unofficial LANs, in the nature in which, multiple people play on one game platform. This is instead of having more than one gaming platform there is usually only one game platform available. This means the people at the event have to take turns and create rules about how this will happen. P3 said this about the difference between the two different gaming interactions “yeah pretty much, it depends on how many people we have and in LANs it is different. Usually most people have their own PC or laptop with them.” Due to this difference in equipment it means that, throughout the game play, the controller is shared, which is unique for this situation. P3 summed this with their disclosure about ad hoc gaming “it’s usually just two controllers and people are handing the controller over ...” Playing in this way means there is a lot of social interactions that occur around the game being played.

The first interaction type is a group of people standing around the game platform watching and waiting for their turn to come. This gathering allows for the non-playing player (not controlling the avatar) to chat with others and give advice to the players who are playing the game. Another social interaction type is the formation of the social rules on how the group is going to take turns. This could be something like the winner keeps playing until they lose with the loser changing or they could have both players changing after a game. The way in which this sharing structure is set up depends on the game being played and the social dynamics of the group playing. A highly competitive group will tend to go with a winner keeps playing and will have an ultimate winner in the end, whereas, a less competitive group

will tend to make sure all the people take turns, and is more likely to talk about who has not played and make sure that all get their turn.

### **Interactions around gaming.**

The participants reported a lot of interactions that occurred around their game play that was related to their gaming. The first interaction that was disclosed was the type of communication that can be heard while playing a multiplayer game. The participants report that while playing with friends, the communication mostly used was banter. When they were playing with their friends, the participants would try to downplay but reward the actions of one of their friends. This communication was regarded as a positive thing by the participants with P1 summing it up the best

In my experiences it has enhanced it in that the people that I am friends with are pushing each other to do well, and when you do well there is instant reward, and whereas, when you don't do well there is as I will view it as more constructive criticism. I mean there are people online whom I think are the vocal minority in the majority of cases who are completely horrible and say some horrible things. None of them are my friends. SO the competitive nature I think makes the... is not a hindrance on the relationship. We do tend to encourage each other and push each other to be better rather than detract from each other when we do poorly.

When asked how non gamers would class this communication, the participants reported that it might look aggressive to non-gamers. In the participants answer about the non-gamers views is the assumption that non-gamers do not know or understand the social rules in force when playing. The participants report that while it looks aggressive there is a group imposed limit to what can be said and how a person can act. This means that the group as a whole will control the level of banter and the way a person will react to the banter. This control of banter and reactions by the group is done by placing social pressure on a person to conform

who is not conforming to the group's social norms. The controlling mechanism used by the group are either a verbal instruction like "hey man, chill", "dude (in a tone that shows that they have done something wrong)". In extreme cases, where the person did not respond to earlier prompting the group removes the person from the setting either temporarily or permanently. The participants also mention that even though the level of banter may be high when playing a game, as soon as the game is finished there is low or no violent behaviour in the unofficial LAN and all people interact together in a non-aggressive way.

The participants reported while unofficial LANing, they would invite non gamers along who were able to do other activities that were not related to gaming. These activities included reading a book, completing assignments or watching a movie. The reason given for this allowance of non-playing people was the people who play video games together have mutual friends who are not gamers, but still want to be part of the social interactions. The participants reported they would allow this person to join in if they wanted and help them play, so they had a positive time. The possible reason for this action is the gaming group could increase its numbers, and seem more social than what is perceived by the non-gaming friend.

Some of the participants reported that they would meet their gaming friends in other social places or engage in activities that were not related to gaming. The main reason for engagement in non-gaming activities given by the participants were the people they gamed with was their main social group. With gaming, forming a part of the events the social group did together. This was seen the most with P1 in that they would go fishing, to the movies, and have dinner with people whom they played FPS games with. As well, some participants reported the gaming platform they used for playing games was a social meeting place for friends they had overseas or around the country. They would either log on to Steam, use a voice client or use the communication systems of a game to keep in touch and interact with

one another. The use of a game communication system allowed the members of the friendship to do more than just talk with each other. This ability to do more than talk helps keep the social bonds of the friendship strong because the members are completing acts in common, which they can talk about later.

### **First Introduction to video games.**

The participants discussed their first memory of video games and playing them. Half of the participants (6/12) reported that they could not remember how they got into playing video games. The other half (6/12) reported that it was either friends or family who facilitated their introduction to playing video games. The disclosure of other people facilitating the participants' introduction to videogames goes against the prescribed stereotypical image of a gamer. This disclosure shows that there is a generational component and social side that is not discussed or explored when researching videogames interactions. It can be seen when P3 reported that it was her friends that got her into playing by stating: "I started about a month ago, through friends asking me if I wanted to join in." The disclosure of P3 shows that, at the start of playing videogames, there is a social aspect that goes against the stereotypical image. However, P9's disclosure about how he got into gaming shows a different picture. P9 said this about their introduction "probably started off about when I was five... I assume it's just because my dad had the computer and he had the games, so I just played them." This response shows that there is an intergenerational component to some people's gaming that goes against the stereotypical image. As well, this disclosure shows that some gamers form romantic relationships that last long enough for children to be born from them. The finding of someone else introducing the participants into gaming is significant. It shows that there is a social interaction component to some player's introduction to video games.

### **Selecting what video game to play.**

The participants reported that when choosing what game to play they would either use personal preference and favouritism to a game title they find enjoyable or play a game that has been recommended to them from another player they like. With the personal preference that participants reported, they used FPS game in a multitude of ways to help them with life's stressors. For participants P4 and P10, FPS games were used as a way for them to remove themselves and have a break from the real world events and stress. P10 reported they like the fact they received instant gratification from playing. For him, the ability to go into a FPS game world and just play a game for a short amount of time was an escape mechanism, allowing him to forget all the outside influences and stressors he had. After this time destressing, he reported that he was able to have better relationships with the other people that he lived with. This ability to reduce his stress levels was due to the nature of a playing FPS games, in that they are quick to start, and there is no waiting for your own avatar to level up to be able to complete the game. Compared to other genres of videogames, like MMORPG, where there is a time factor involved in play where a player needs to level up their avatar to be able to complete the end game challenges. This is different in FPS because the abilities of the avatars are the same for all players at the start of the game no matter how long a player has been playing. As well, the game setup for FPS games allows the player to just go and get started in the game world.

For P2, P11 and P12 FPS games were used as a way for them to interact and contact existing friends from both in and outside the game world. This communication was done with the in game communication systems or using an online dedicated game server like steam or Xbox live which allowed for the keeping of a friends lists. The friends list that the participants had was made up of people they had agreed to have the ability to contact them in this setting. The participants would use these systems to communicate with their friends

while playing the game or not actively playing the game. However, when starting out to play video games the participants who could remember reported the gamers they knew would tell them what game they should play.

### **Summary**

This chapter covered the participant's viewpoints and stories of their social interactions that came from their whole gaming experiences. It covered the participant's first introduction to playing video games with it being through their friends and family. The locations of playing videogame; both physical and virtual that they played FPS games in, covering both online and offline gaming, looking at the reasons why a player chooses a server, what makes them go to an official LAN, who and where they may play with/at for a unofficial LAN, and where does gaming happen when it was not part of the original plan for the social gathering. It also looked at who else they play with covering friends, family, strangers and clans/guilds and the meaning and reasons behind the choices in playing partners and clan/guild selections. The chapter also looked at the in game communication technology that is used with text and voice communication and what is said and to whom. Also covered were the interactions that occur around their playing of FPS games looking into what happens with the interactions while playing a game, the interactions that occur with other in the room that are not playing a game and the social interactions that occur with gamer friends when they are not playing videogames. The chapter also described the level structure of people and friends they game with and suggest some reasons for its formation. These findings show that there is a complex nature to the process of the social interaction of FPS players in regards to their FPS gaming. These findings will be discussed with comparisons to literature in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings from the previous chapter and relate them to the research reviewed in the introductory chapter. This comparison of this study's findings to previous research is done in order to assess the impact and value of the research completed in this study. The discussion chapter is divided into subsections which will focus on several key areas. The first areas are the diverse social relationships found in FPS games. This is looking at the people that FPS players play with and social structures of friendship seen. The chapter will then look at the social interactions that occur in the game world and out of the game world and how the player views these interactions. The image of the stereotypical violent FPS gamer will be discussed with the participants' views compared to the literature. A comparison of the current studies participants' social interactions to the findings from research on MMORPG players social interactions is discussed with a focus on similarities and differences. Then the stereotypical image will be discussed using the participants' viewpoints and experiences, which will be compared to prior research findings. Possible future research, which has come from this study, will be discussed throughout the chapter and summarised in its own sub section.

### **Social interactions**

The current study showed varied social interactions with regards to FPS video games as seen in the game communication and interaction around gaming sections of the findings chapter. The result of varied social interactions is supported by the previous research on MMORPG games by Cole and Griffith (2007), Siitonen (2007), Yee (2006b) and, FPS games with Xu and colleagues (2011). The current study and the previously-mentioned research have found diverse and varied social interactions occurring while gaming. However, these social interactions may be overlooked or go unseen by non-gamers who are unfamiliar with the conventions of online FPS gaming. The reason is social and personal interactions may

not happen in the game world, because the communications between players while playing a FPS games are focused on the game play. As well, the social interactions may happen outside the game world with the use of non-game communication devices like team speak or Skype.

The social interactions of the participants of the current study are similar to the social interactions found by Cole and Griffith (2007), Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007) and, Xu and colleagues (2011) in MMORPG and FPS games, as discussed in the social interactions subsection of the literature review. The participants of the current study divulged they had made friends from their time engaged in FPS gaming. Several participants disclosed meeting up with their online friends from gaming in real life. The participants also stated their online friendships were comparable to their real-life friendships in meeting the needs of the friendship. As well, the participants of the current study would discuss sensitive personal issues with their online gaming friends as they do with their real life friends. This finding is covered in the level of friendship and deciding on whom to play with sections of the findings. This result of friendship creation from playing FPS games is similar to the research finding of Cole and Griffith (2007), Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007) as covered in the social interactions section of the literate review.

The sharing of personal information with gaming friends is similar to the results of Cole and Griffiths (2007), Kolo & Baur (2004), Nardi and Harris (2006), Pace and colleagues (2010), Rodrigues & Mustaro (2008), Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008), and Williams and colleagues (2006), but there are some differences between the results of the current study and that of previous research. The first difference is when playing a FPS game the communication that occurs in the game is focused mostly on the gameplay rather than on personal or general chat while the player's avatar is alive and engaged in play. The communication of personal information often occurs when the players are waiting between

games, when their avatar is dead and, in the transition space of the lobby of the game. This result is different to the findings of Cole and Griffith (2007), Siitonen (2007) and, Yee (2006b) (covered in the social interaction section of the literature review) who found communication of personal information to happen during the gameplay in a MMORPG. The finding of the lack of personal communication in the game world could lead a person to conclude that there is little or no personal communication while playing FPS games. A possible reason for this lack of personal communication during the game is due to the play structure of a FPS game. A FPS game world is fast pace, high action with the need for player to be focused on the game. There is little room or time for them to talk about personal things while playing, and players will leave that communication between players/ friends for the times they are waiting for a game to start or are not actively playing. One possible reason for this difference in the finding of this study compared to Cole and Griffith (2007), Siitonen (2007) and, Yee (2006b) is due to the difference in the genre of games studied. Cole and Griffith (2007), Siitonen (2007) and, Yee (2006b) studied MMORPG which have a long playing time, less need to be focused for the whole playing time on the game due to the time devoted to travelling between game spaces and time taken to recharge weapons. Compared to FPS the nature of a MMORPG game allows for the communications that occur while playing to be independent of the game. In a FPS, game communications that are not related to the game are not possible in the game world due to the demands of FPS games.

The participants of the current study disclosed they had made friends from their time playing FPS games. Friendship formation is covered in the level of friendship and deciding on whom to play with sections of the findings. The current studies finding are comparable to the finding of Cole & Griffiths (2007), Kolo & Baur (2004), Nardi & Harris (2006), Pace and colleagues (2010), Rivas (2009), Rodrigues and Mustaro (2008), Siitonen (2007), Smith, LeBeau and Buckingham (2008) Williams and colleagues (2006), Yee (2006a, b) work on

MMORPG, and Xu and colleagues (2011) work with FPS games. A possible reason for the transformation of gaming partners into friends may be due to the time spent gaming together. This time allows players to get to know each other. The time spent playing together was the reason given by the participants of this current study for the creation of their online friendships and is supported by the work of Carter (2005) Cole and Griffith (2007), and Yee (2006b) as discussed in the social interaction section of the literature review. However, by only using time spent playing together as the sole reason for the creation of the friendship, disregarding other possible reasons, may create a bias with regards to the reasons for the relationships formation. Some of these reasons may include the physical location of players which may allow them to meet in real life, triadic closer of friends and players, shared membership of clans, and competition between players.

Another difference found in the current study from some of the literature reviewed was that the participants of this study viewed people who they had some face to face contact at a higher friendship level, than those who had the same communication interactions but lacked face to face communication. This finding of a structure of friendships was not discussed in the work of Carter (2005), Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007). However, the findings that Cole and Griffith (2007) reported suggested at a possible friendship structure, but Cole and Griffith (2007) did not discuss this. A possible reason for the current studies finding about this friendship structure of its participants was that the current study looked for information on friendship structure while the other mentioned studies looked for other information. Another possible reason was that the method used to collect the data allowed for this information to emerge. Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007) used surveys with the findings from these studies were limited to the questions asked and the answers given. Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007) had no ability to probe for more understanding, which contrasts to the semi-structured interview method employed by the current study. However, Carter

(2005) also used interviews to gather data for their study, and obtained the same results as Yee (2006b). The similarity in the finding from Cater (2005) to Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007) which are different to the friendship structure of the current study may suggest bias in the current studies participants' responses. However, the findings of the current study are similar to the findings of Cole and Griffith (2007). The similarity of the current study's findings to Cole and Griffith (2007) suggest that the friendship structure found is less likely to have come from bias in the responses given but a true reflection of the friendship patterns used. More research is needed to see if the finding of the current study about a friendship structure is seen in other populations of gamer and different genres of games.

A possible reason for the creation of this friendships structure theorised by the current study author is that face to face contact allows the friendship to experience different events together and strengthens the relationship. As well, personal physical contact may happen in the face to face meetings like a handshake or a welcome hug. The physical contact that is possible in faced to face contact may be the cause for this difference in ranking, as the physical contact helps create a stronger friendship bond (Parks & Floyd, 1996; Shulman, Elicker, & Sroufe, 1994). A possible future field of research is understanding reasons for this difference in friendship levels and to explore if the friendship structure is created across different social media and online interactions.

### **Social Relationships**

This study showed that the social relationships developed in and extending from FPS games are more diverse than "friends versus strangers" and only for myself gaming. In respective of the affordances of online servers, which do not aim to be a social media provider, limited "friends lists" are exploited by players in order to fabricate a more social experience. This is somewhat at odds with the global concept of FPS online play. Findings from this research and the literature show a significant diversity of interactions which occur

in FPS gaming that are exemplified in the forms of the player interactions, and the origins of the relationships formed. Moreover, the relationships that occur from FPS games are never static, they are constantly created, strengthened, and removed (Adams, 2010; Carter, 2005; Xu et al., 2011). A process of friendship formation, solidification, and social interaction with other players occurs alongside the experience of gaming, rather than through gaming. This is seen in the finding section titled deciding whom to play with.

The results of the current study showed participants played the majority of their games with a small select number of friends. This is consistent with interaction patterns found in studies that have looked at other online media and in real life (Carter, 2005; Parsons, 1915). For example, the majority of people interact with only four to seven Facebook friends regularly (Adams, 2010; Xu et al., 2011). The reason there is a small number of people that a player plays with regularly is because their gaming goals and playing styles are compatible. This playing structure, seems to be similar to the way in which real world friendship and acquaintances operate (Bisgin, Agarwal, & Xu, 2012; Kadushin, 2012; Mollenhorst, Völker, & Flap, 2012). The similarity of relationship structure between the real world and online could be the transference of the social structure from one area of a person's life to another.

The findings of the current study also showed participants interacted with a diverse range of players. The participants reported playing with people whose level of education, wealth and living locations varied considerably and is similar to the findings of Cole and Griffiths (2007) Siitonen (2007), Yee (2006b), and Xu et al. (2011). This finding is discussed in the playing with strangers section of the findings chapter. This result would suggest the relationships which are possible from online FPS gaming worlds are different to the possible relationships from the real world, because of the potential for the mixing of different social groups. FPS games are played with only a gamer tag being shown, the social status, class, culture, and wealth of a person is removed from the interactions. This possible mixing of

different social groupings may not happen or would not happen if this information were known. The start of the relationship is based on the interactions that happen in the game world. The personal information of players is learnt only after the players both agree to change the interactions and the relationship they have. This finding of a mixing of social groups is similar to the findings of Carter (2005) which found that the relationship formed in the MMORPG Cyberville allowed for the mixing of social classes. As well, the finding is similar to the findings of Cole and Griffiths (2007) which is covered in the social interactions subsection of the literature review. This would suggest there is no set type, or stereotypical person who plays FPS games.

Participants reported interactions with heterogeneous populations. These heterogeneous interactions in online friends group are in line with the findings from Adams (2010) who found Facebook and instant messenger (MSN, Skype, ICQ) users consider their friend list to be made up of two to six different and relatively independent categories. These categories are defined by the role or place from which the person knows the friends from. For example, a list may include people from school, a sports team, met on the internet, and church friends. Consideration of the difference between these categories and the mixing of these could be a basis for new research. For example, one dimension of difference in social grouping was whether the relationships originated from playing the game or from other sources such as work, school, and friend's friend. The connections between the game and other social media usage like Facebook can be built upon to enhance existing and form new relationships. Therefore, such links could provide benefits for players with regards to both in game and real-world relationships.

### **Violent interactions**

The psychological research on the possible negative effects of playing violent video games on aggressive and violent behaviours has been confounded with findings that support

an increase and findings that suggest there is no increase in the risk of violent behaviours. The participants' insider views and experiences from playing FPS games produced a different image of FPS players to the one that psychological studies such as Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al. (2010) have created. Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al. (2010) research suggests there is an increase in the probability of violence and aggressive behaviours. The participants' reports of their interactions with of players in the game worlds are different to the previous mentioned findings and supports the findings of Byrd (2007), Cumberbatch (1994, 2004), Ferguson, (2010a) and Olson (2004) and other psychological studies. Byrd (2007), Cumberbatch (1994, 2004), Ferguson (2010a) and Olson (2004) findings suggest there is no risk of playing violent video games leading to violent or aggressive behaviour. However, the findings from the participants on the violence of players may be a difference in the participants' interpretation of and accepted level of violence compare to the one used by Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al. (2010). As well, Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al. (2010) have used different methods to the current study, and a comparison between studies is not an accurate measure of the true violence risk of FPS gamers. This is reported in the findings of the interactions around gaming and playing with strangers subsections of the findings chapter which discusses the antisocial behaviours of player encounter and controlling mechanism used to stop these behaviours.

The results of the current study showed that the participants themselves said the gameplay actions and conversations that occurred while gaming could be classed as being aggressive and violent in nature when looked at without insight into the culture or group knowledge (Schott, 2009). Due to the words used and the way in which these interactions happen, with words from outside the gaming world being used like "kill him" "die" and "frag or fragging". The use of these words while gaming is related to the actions that are

happening in the game but have developed a different meaning distinct from the meaning for the word outside of the game (Schott, 2009). Therefore, it means even though a player is yelling at an opponent of theirs to die, they do not want the player to die, but their avatar to die. The reason that the word is used is that there are no other word or words that are available for them to use that do not carry these meanings.

Also, the participants talked about how these aggressive and violent communications are confined to the game and stop when the game is over. The participants reported that at the end of play people would talk about how each player performed in the game just played and have drinks, a meal and interact, talking about other things not related to gaming. This gathering after playing video games was not expanded upon in the cited research of Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al. (2010) and the possible effect either negative or positive on the behaviours of the players is a possible future field of research.

The participants of the current study reported that there are social normalities of accepted behaviours within game play, with barriers put in place for the group playing or by the people who run the servers that are designed to keep negative interactions in check. The accepted social normalities are defined as behaviours that will be accepted and behaviours that are not accepted in the group LANing or on the server. This is similar to the findings of Williams et al. (2006). The participants' disclosure of social normalities is reported in the deciding on whom to play with and interaction around gaming subsections of the findings chapter. As well, these interactions between players were seen to be part of the world that they entered while playing the game and a way of showing respect to one another's skill/ luck in the game (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). The respect to one another's skill is seen by the banter which happens between players and with the other people trying to put top players off their game. That is by calling someone "lucky" or saying "you're a mop" (meaning the player will

come in after a fire fight and get what is seen as easy kills) is seen as a compliment because the other players want to be able to play like them or have their luck.

Participants reported players of online FPS games would band together and support one another if a person was being solely targeted for abuse. However, this reporting of protection of other players raises some questions about the participant's views of FPS players being non-aggressive. This finding supports the research findings of Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al (2010). If FPS gamers were non-aggressive as suggested by the participants, then there would be no need for this support of players. The participants reported the attacking of player/s on one player to be an infrequent occurrence in their gaming. This may mean this type of interaction is an outlier of normal but more research is needed to determine the frequency. A possible reason is the players who attack other players may be a small but a salient minority of the gaming population. The participant views when compared to the findings of the psychological research of Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al (2010) that suggests a possible increase risk in violent and aggressive behaviour raises questions about the validity of the psychological findings when compared to the behaviours and insights from FPS gamers. A possible future research area is to look into how these two factors interact and move from the gaming environment to the real world.

The results of the current study also suggested that there is an antisocial element to gaming. This antisocial element supports the findings of the psychological research of Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), Anderson, et al (2010) and others that identified an increased risk of antisocial and violent behaviours. This finding is discussed in the playing with strangers subsection of the findings chapter. This is seen in the reported behaviours from the participants of the current study of attacking one person on a server, spamming the chat with non-gaming talk or just annoying other players. These reported behaviours would

suggest playing FPS games online would increase the risk of a player engaging in antisocial behaviours in the real world due to the reinforcement and the habitual formation of these behaviours as discussed in the psychological section of the literature review (L. R. Huesmann, 2010; Konijn et al., 2007; Staude-Müller et al., 2008). However, the only reporting of these actions was in an online setting and do not prove these actions moved in the real world. More research is needed to see if there are other possible reasons for these antisocial behaviours describe by the participants of the current study. It may be possible the perceived nature of anonymity of online gaming allows a person to be able to do acts they would not normally do because they perceived there is little or no consequence to the actions. The participants of this study only reported these actions in the online gaming environment and not in the other gaming environments, they played in. This finding of perceived anonymity of online games suggest it is the playing space that is allowing these players to behave in an anti-social manner, and not the game or the actions of the avatar. More research is needed to look at the reason behind the perceived anonymity, and if these behaviours transcend out of the online gaming world.

### **Stereotypical image**

The results of this study have shown that the participants' views about videogames players is different the stereotypical image of an FPS gamer. In the current study 12 participants both genders were represented in the study and the participants talked about playing with both genders, a mixed age range of participants, and participants discussed a wide range of different social interactions relating to playing video games. However the participants demographics compared to the main pool of possible participants being drawn from the first year psychology students which in the University of Waikato are more likely to be female than male. The gender bias of the main selection means the gender results need to be carefully used when comparing to other research.

However, the results of the current study support the work done by Cole & Griffiths (2007), Griffiths, Davies & Chappell (2004), Kolo & Baur (2004), Nardi & Harris (2006), Pace, Bardzell, & Bardzell (2010), Rivas (2009) Rodrigues & Mustaro (2008), Siitonen (2007), Smith LeBeau & Buckingham (2008), Williams et al. (2006) and Yee (2006b) work in MMORPGs and Xu and colleagues (2011) study on FPS Gamers as explained in the stereotypical image of the literature review. The similarity in the demographic makeup from the participant's disclosure in the current study and the previously mentioned studies creates a different image to the stereotypical image. In this research and the other studies have shown there is a multitude of people who play video games, and there is no singular description that could be found apart from their behaviour of playing video games.

The similarity in findings of demographic and social interactions of players from the current study with Xu and colleagues (2011) adds more validity to the findings of this study to be a possible representation of the FPS gaming population. Both studies found there is a multitude of social interactions that occur within the FPS environment that at first glance are not visible and these interactions are conducted with a multitude of different people as discussed in the social interaction section of the current chapter and the game communication section of the findings. The common view of FPS games being a singular winner takes all game means that without exploring the social interactions that happen in the game, between games or outside the game environment, may not see them at all because they are not seen to happen in the game world.

However, the results found were different to the work of Jansz and Tanis (2007) which found in FPS online gaming, the stereotypical image was true. There may be several possible reasons for the discrepancies between the findings of these two studies. One possible reason for the difference may be based on the recruitment methods used in the studies and the response biases that can occur for each method. For example to get

participants, Jansz and Tanis (2007) used the internet for recruitment, whereas this study used a notice posted at a university. This difference may have caused some biases in the recruitment of the participants. Jansz and Tanis (2007) used forum posting to get participants, their study was only be visible to the people who went on to this forum, thereby missing a lot of other players who did not visit this forum but may have been available for selection, but Jansz and Tanis (2007) study had a larger population pool to select from. Whereas, the current study missed a larger amount of players by being limited in its population selection pool to the University of Waikato students and their friends (an attempt to get more participants were used, but no respondents came from this attempt).

Another difference in the results may be in the sample size used for each study. The current study had a small sample size of 12 participants, whereas Jansz and Tanis (2008) have a much larger size of 751 participants. The difference in sample size means Jansz and Tanis (2008) were able to cover a wider range of players of FPS games than the current study was able to cover. With Jansz and Tanis (2008) results are more likely to reflex the image of a FPS gamer, but more research is needed to confirm the true image as the results of studies looking into this is mixed. Furthermore, the different aims of the two studies may be the cause of the difference in the results found. The current study focused on the social interactions and Jansz and Tanis (2008) study focused on the appeal of playing. The appeal of playing a game may produce a different responding rate and selection biases compared to the social reason and interactions that a player may have from playing a game.

### **Future research**

Based on the findings from the current study there are several areas of future research available for exploration. These areas include; examining if the results found would translate to a different gaming population outside the one used for this study. The possible populations that could be used could look at if there is a difference in the gaming platform used,

education levels, ethnicity of the population study. This would provide data that support the findings of this study. A second possible future research could examine the importance of the level of friendship structure found in this study to see how this effects on gaming and social relationship with other online media. Future research looking into the results of the friendship level structure to see if there was a cohort bias or a change in the viewpoints of the player with regards to friendship.

Furthermore, future research could look at the use of FPS games a social network device. This would look into the way in which video gaming is used as a social binding agent to create strong and maintain social relationships. Another area of possible future research would be to examine the online and offline gaming environment spaces looking at the antisocial behaviour that occurs in these locations, looking at the reason behind the antisocial behaviours and to see if these behaviours transcend out of the gaming world.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

Compared to online role-playing games (e.g. MUD and MMORPG), the FPS game is a genre that has been involved in the most controversial discussions about its sociability and effects on its audience. From this controversy, the focus of the research on FPS games has been on the possible antisocial effects with little research on social relationships and interactions involved in such games, and how these interactions impact on the playing experience. This study has tried to start addressing that gap by collecting and analysing rich data from qualitative sources which focus on these areas.

Findings from this research and the literature have shown diversity of interactions in FPS gaming. The current studies result of diverse and varied social interactions is supported by previous research by Cole and Griffith (2007), Siitonen (2007), Yee (2006b) and, Xu and colleagues (2011). However, the current study's findings show social interactions may be overlooked or go unseen by non-gamers who are unfamiliar with the conventions of online FPS gaming. With the non-game communication and social interactions happening outside the game world.

The participants of the current study divulged they had made friends from FPS gaming with participants' meeting up with their online friends in real life. The participants' also stated that the online friendships were comparable to their real-life friendships in meeting the needs of the participant. These results are similar to the findings Cole and Griffith (2007), Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007). The findings of the current study show a structure of friendships. This friendship structure has not been discussed in previous research by Carter (2005), Yee (2006b) and Siitonen (2007) but is suggested in the findings that Cole and Griffith (2007).

The results have shown that intentionally or unintentionally, the players of FPS games create and maintain social relationships which increase their enjoyment of play, and allowed them to complete goals that they have had for the game. These social relationships are in respective of the affordances of online servers and FPS game, which do not aim to be a social media provider, but are exploited by players to fabricate a more social experience. This finding of diverse social relationships is at odds with the global concept of FPS online play. Moreover, these relationships that occur in FPS games are never static, with relationships being constantly created, strengthened, and removed (Adams, 2010; Carter, 2005; Xu et al., 2011). The process of friendship formation, solidification, and social interaction occurs alongside the experience of gaming.

The results showed the participants played the majority of their games with a small select number of friends which is consistent with interaction patterns found in other online media and in real life (Carter, 2005; Parsons, 1915). As well, the playing populations of gamer were reported as being heterogeneous which allows for players to create friendship with other players that come from a different cultural, social, and economic background from the players and for these populations to mix. With such links to different cultural, social, and economic background could provide possible benefits for players with regards to both in the game and real-world relationships.

The extant of psychological research on the possible negative effects of playing violent video games on aggressive and violent behaviours has been mixed with findings that support an increase and findings that suggest there is no increase in the risk of violent behaviours. The participants' views and experiences as reported in the findings of the current study produced different image of FPS players to the findings of psychological studies such as Konijn et.al (2007), Huesamann (2010), and Anderson, et al. (2010). The participants' disclosure of players interactions and image supports the findings of Byrd (2007),

Cumberbatch (1994, 2004), Ferguson, (2010a) and Olson (2004). However, deeper analysis of the participants' reported interactions shows there is a subculture of antisocial acts, which may be a result of the environment or the personality of the people playing FPS games. The participants also reported the words used while communicating between players while playing may lead to non-gamers' seeing the interactions as being violent due to the meaning of the words in real life.

From the findings of the current study, it has shown the participants' have a different image of a videogame player compared to the stereotypical image. The image held by the participants' suggests a video game player is non-violent, comes from both genders, mixed education, mixed social class, and highly social beings. This participants viewpoint is supported by the previous research of Cole & Griffiths (2007), Griffiths, Davies & Chappell (2004), Kolo & Baur (2004), Nardi & Harris (2006), Pace, Bardzell, & Bardzell (2010), Rivas (2009) Rodrigues & Mustaro (2008), Siitonen (2007), Smith LeBeau & Buckingham (2008), Williams et al. (2006) and Yee (2006b) work with MMORPGs. However when comparing the findings of the current study to research on FPS games with the work of Xu et al. (2011) and Jansz and Tanis (2007) there are uncertainty about the participants views being true of FPS gamers. The current study's findings support the work of Xu at al. (2011) but are different to the finding of Jansz and Tanis (2007). The difference the current study finding to the previous mentioned studies may be because of aims of the studies.

The seemingly "unsocial" and virtually violent FPS game world has been shown to encompass surprisingly rich and diverse social relationships, which are reported in results and discussion. The participants of this study have shown FPS players reinforce real life relationships, and have created new relationships through playing video games. This finding shows in contrast with the popular stereotypical image there is a varied and constant social interaction for gamers of FPS games.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

# Social Interaction of First Person Shooter (FPS) Gamers Study

## Be a part of a Master's thesis Study

Are you a current player of first person shooter (FPS) video games?

Do you want to share your experiences of social interactions around playing FPS?

Over the age of 16 Years?

If you answered YES to these questions, you are eligible to participate in a social interaction study.

I am Glen McQuarters a current MAppPsyc (Comm) student looking for participants for my master thesis research project. The purpose of this research is to investigate the current community of the First Person Shooter players' social relationships with regard to the FPS environment. This project will have the supervision of Dr Cate Curtis from the School of Psychology and Dr Gareth Schott from the Department of Screen and Media. For the project, you will be required to complete a small questionnaire on your gaming habits and a face to face interview that will last approximately 1 hour.

Participants who are in Psyc102 will receive 1% course credit for participation

The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon place and time.

Please contact Glen McQuarters at [gmm13@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:gmm13@waikato.ac.nz) or 022 121 8528

for more information.

## **Appendix B**

Information sheet for the social interaction of First Person Shooter (FPS) gamers study.

My name is Glen McQuarters. I am a graduate student completing the Master of Applied Psychology (Community) programme in the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. I am conducting research looking into the social relationships and interactions of FPS gamers. This research will form the basis of my Master's thesis, and I would like to invite you to participate.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a small survey on your gaming habits and meet with me for an interview that will be audio recorded about your social interactions and relationships from playing FPS. In particular, we will discuss how FPS games and gaming has impacted on your social life. The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about an hour.

Participation in this study is anonymous. Study material that has personal information will be kept in a secure location and only seen by myself and not published. The results of the study may be published, and the thesis will be held at the University of Waikato thesis library, but in no way will your identity be revealed. Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also withdraw from the study up to two weeks from receipt of your transcript or decide not to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering without any consequences.

If you agree, the interview will be audio recorded so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The recording will only be reviewed by me, who will transcribe and analyse it. You will be asked if you would like a copy of the draft transcript to check that

your words have been represented properly and fairly. If you say yes, then a copy will be emailed to you within two weeks from the interview. You will then have two weeks to return any changes to the transcripts that you want to make. If you have not returned it by then, it will be assumed that you are happy with the content of the transcript. This will be explained before the start of the interview and also in written form when you receive the transcript. The recording and transcripts will then be destroyed after 7 years from handing in the thesis for marking.

You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. Although you probably won't benefit directly from participating in this study, I hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit by hearing about your experiences.

The study has been granted approval by the School of Psychology Ethics committee to proceed and will be supervised by Dr Cate Curtis from the School of Psychology and Dr Gareth Schott from the Department of Screen and Media. If you have any concerns about this project that I cannot answer about the ethical application, you may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext. 6472, e-mail [nstarket@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:nstarket@waikato.ac.nz))

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at:- 0221218528 or [gmm13@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:gmm13@waikato.ac.nz)

Thank you for your consideration.

Glen McQuarters

## Appendix C

# Questionnaire on Gaming Habits

(PLEASE TICK THE BOX THAT IS MOST TRUE FOR YOU)

### What is your gender?

- Male   
 Female

### What age bracket do you belong in?

- 16-20  21-25  26-30  31-35  36-40  41-50  51+

### What ethnicity are you?

- New Zealand European  New Zealand Maori  New Zealand Other  Pacific  
 Islander  Asian  African  European  North American  Latin American   
 Other  ( Please write it)

### What type of Gaming apparatus do you own?

- Computer  Xbox360  Xbox  PS3  PS2  PS  NDS  Wii   
 Other  (Please write it)

### Are you a member of a Guild or Clan?

- Yes   
 No

## Please tell us how often you do the following things while playing video games

**Play First Person Shooters by yourself (Halo 3, Half-life 2, Battlefield 3, etc.)** *\*First Person Shooters are games where the player engages in battle from a first person point of view\**

- Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play First Person Shooters with another person who is in the room with you (Halo 3, Half-life 2, Battlefield 3, etc.)** *\*First Person Shooters are games where the player engages in battle from a first person point of view\**

- Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play First Person Shooters with someone online who is not in the room with you (Halo 3, Half-life 2, Battlefield 3, etc.)** *\*First Person Shooters are games where the player engages in battle from a first person point of view\**

Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play strategy games by yourself (Warcraft 3, Starcraft, Civilization 3, Rome Total War, etc.)**

Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play strategy games with another person who is in the room with you (Warcraft 3, Starcraft, Civilization 3, Rome Total War, etc.)**

Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play strategy games with someone online who is not in the room with you (Warcraft 3, Starcraft, Civilization 3, Rome Total War, etc.)**

Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play Massively Multiplayer Online Games with at least one other player in the room with you (Star Wars Galaxies, World of Warcraft, Everquest II, Planetside, etc.)**

*\*massive multiplayer online games are games where there are worlds created online where players can log on and play with many other players\**

Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

**Play Massively Multiplayer Online Games with none of the other players in the room with you (Star Wars Galaxies, World of Warcraft, Everquest II, Planetside, etc.)**

*\*massive multiplayer online games are games where there are worlds created online where players can log on and play with many other players\**

Never  Once a Year  Once ever half year  Once a month  Once a week  A few times a week  Most days  Everyday

±  
±

This part will be removed from the survey before processing and kept in a secure location.

**Would you like a summary of the results of this study sent to you?**

Yes  No

**Please write the email address you would like the summary to be sent to.**

## Appendix D

Introduction-

Karakia ( if Requested from Participant). Thank them for giving up their time and allowing me to talk and ask questions about their experiences with regards to FPS gaming. I will then go over their rights again and explain the object of the interview/ questionnaire and the goal of the thesis (using the pre given information sheet as a guide). At the completion of the giving of information, I would ask if they have any questions and upon answering, them to their satisfaction will ask for them to complete the written consent form. I will then give them some information about myself covering what I have done at university and some gaming history that I have in order to build a relationship with them. I will also ask them to talk about themselves if they want to, in order to also build a relationship with them. At the completion of this, the participant will be asked to complete the questionnaire about their gaming habit and then the interview will start.

Start the interview.

Can you tell me about your gaming history

So what type of video games do you play?

Do you remember when you first got in to gaming?

What is the main type of video game that you play? Do you have any favourite games?

Why do you play FPS?

What do you like about these games?

Are you a member or where a member of any guilds/or clans? What did you use to decide to join that guild?

Do you play over the internet when gaming e.g. Xbox live? If yes do you play with the same people? Why is that?

When do you play these games? Is it at the same time? Do you arrange your playing time to play with other players?

Do you go to or host LANS? Who do you invite to them? Has the group that you played with changed over time?

Are the people different to the ones that you play with online?

Who do you usually play with?

How do you see your online gamers friends compare to your offline gaming friends

Have you met the people that are in your guild/ clan in real life? Please tell me why you have done that?

How did you break the online friendship with the people who you have met in real life?

Have you made any new friends from playing FPS?

How do you see the social interaction you have regarding to playing FPS?

Do you use gaming as part of your social life?

Do you see video gaming as a social activity? Why is that?

Who do you see the stereotypical gamer as being? Why is that?

Is there a difference between your gaming and non-gaming friends?

Do you have any rules when playing in a LAN or online?

How are the social interactions online?

How do you communicate with other players?

At the end I will thank them again for their time and sharing their knowledge with me.

I will ask if they have any questions and answer these to their satisfaction or inform them who to contact about them. I will also inform them if any other questions should arise that they get in contact with me so that I can answer them. Karakia (If requested from Participant).

## Glossary

**Avatar:** A graphical representation of the user's character.

**Clan:** an organised group of players that regularly play together in particular (or various) multiplayer games, most common name for FPS games but can cross genre.

**Deathmatch:** a widely-used gameplay mode integrated into many shooter and real-time strategy (RTS) video games. Normally the goal of a deathmatch game is to kill (or "frag", from the military term) as many other players as possible until a certain condition or limit is reached, commonly being a frag limit or time limit. Once one of the conditions are met, the match is over and the winner is the player that accumulated the greatest number of frags.

**FPS:** First Person Shooter a video game genre centred on the gun and projectile weapon-based combat through a first-person perspective; that is, the player experiences the action through the eyes of the protagonist.

**Fragging:** A term used for when a player kills another player avatar.

**Friends list:** a collection of screen names in an online game that the player keeps to be able to contact them

**Game platform:** refers to the specific combination of electronic or computer hardware which, in conjunction with software, allows a videogame to operate.

**Guild:** an organised group of players that regularly play together in particular (or various) multiplayer games most common name for MMORPG games but can cross genre.

**LAN:** a computer network that interconnects computers or game platforms in a limited area such as a home, school, computer laboratory, or office building using network media. The defining characteristics of LANs, include their usually higher data-transfer rates, smaller geographic area, and lack of a need for internet communication.

**Mod:** modification added to the game to change the way in which a game is played or parts of the game that was not in when the game was first launched.

**Moderator/s:** A person whose role is to enforce the game's rules and provide general customer service for an online game.

**MMORPG:** Massively multiplayer online role-playing game is a genre of role-playing video games in which an extraordinarily large number of players interact with one another within a virtual game world.

**Multiplayer:** A game that allows players to interact with other individuals, be it in the form of partnership, competition or rivalry, and provide them with a form of social communication.

**Offline:** indicates a state of non-connectivity to the internet.

**Online:** indicates a state of connectivity to the internet.

**Server:** a physical computer or computers dedicated to running one or more services (as a host), to serve the needs of the users on a network.

**Voice client:** A programme that is used to hold conversations with two or more people over the internet.