Gender Differences in Adolescent Avatars: Gender Consistency and Masculinity-Femininity of Nicknames and Characters

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Abstract : Choosing an avatar's gender in a computer game is one of the key elements in the process of creating an online identity. The selection of a male or female avatar can define the entirety of subsequent decisions regarding both appearance and behavior. However, when the most popular games available for the Nintendo console in 1998 were analyzed, it turned out that 41% of computer games did not have female characters. Nowadays, players create their avatars based mainly on binary gender classification, with male and female characters to choose from. The main aim of the poster is to explore gender differences in adolescent avatars. 130 adolescents aged 15-17 participated in the study. They created their avatars and then played a computer game. The creation of the avatar was based on the choice of gender, then physical and mental characteristics. Data on gender consistency (consistency between participant's sex and gender selected for the avatar) and masculinity-femininity of avatar nicknames and appearance will be presented. The masculinity-femininity of avatar nicknames and appearance was assessed by expert raters on a very masculine to very feminine scale. Additionally, data on the relationships of the perceived levels of masculinity-femininity with hostility-friendliness and the intelligence of avatars will be shown. The dimensions of hostility-friendliness and intelligence were also assessed by expert raters on scales ranging from very hostile to very friendly and from very low intelligence to very high intelligence.

Keywords : gender, avatar, adolescence, computer games
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