

## **Confirmation of final assignment to a Bachelor degree in Business**

Title of thesis:

**Men who love women:  
Behavior of men towards women in virtual reality  
Case of Eve Online**

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The final assignment has been evaluated according to the regulations and demands  
of Bifröst University and has received the final grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Bifröst University 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2010

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School stamp

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Dean of the Faculty

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to research how the genders behave towards each other in virtual reality. The research is conducted within the game of Eve Online. This research is important because of the fast growing use of virtual reality as a form of communication in business. The research builds up on observation, behavioral experiments and interviews along with journal articles, reports from other studies on various subjects related, books and electronic sources.

The conclusions showed that there is evidence of gender discrimination in the game. Females are favored over males by the players and used as marketing tools by the corporations. Females are subjected to both harassment and sexual harassment by male players. Evidence shows that how players communicate in the game does have effect on how females are treated. The use of voice chat does increase the likely hood of both harassment and sexual harassment.

## **Key words**

Communications between genders, discrimination, special treatment because of gender, females as marketing tools, harassment, sexual harassment, Eve Online, virtual reality, real world, in game communications.

## Prologue and special thanks

This thesis is a final assignment for a Bachelor degree in business from Bifröst University faculty of business. The assessment of this thesis is 12 ECTS credits. The work was performed during autumn 2010 until the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2010.

The subject of this thesis is how men behave towards women in virtual reality. Theoretical perspective of discrimination, favoritism, marketing tools, harassment and sexual harassment is covered. Research was conducted with experiments in Eve Online and player interviews.

The author would like to give special thanks to her instructor Einar Svansson, assistant professor at Bifröst University, for his great support during the process of this thesis. The author would also like to give special thanks to her fiancé Matthew Alexander Barley for his constant support and motivation during the authors work on this thesis. The author would like to thank her family for their support. The author would also like to give thanks to Ingunn Oddsdóttir, Baldvin Þorsteinsson, Chris Starbuck, Mark Miller and Derrick Johnson.

I the undersigned, have done this thesis on my own and fully accordingly to the regulations and demands of Bifröst University regarding work of final assignments in undergraduate studies.

Bifröst University, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Author of thesis

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**Instructor: Einar Svansson**

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## 1. Introduction

The author's interest in Eve Online came about because of how the company CCP has been developing in recent years, the company has grown rapidly and is now the biggest exporter of computer software and one of the biggest knowledge based company in Iceland. After hearing about the game the author decided to sign up for a trial account and soon after that, ideas for the research project began to develop. In the first week of playing the author experienced that the players behavior towards females did not appear to be the same as towards males and that females were in a small minority in the game.

There are examples of strong communications forming in Eve Online. The game is played as a long term game which makes communications a big part of the players gaming experience. CCP provides the players with several ways to communicate in the game, for example chat room channels, voice chat and eve mail. In spite of the numerous ways CCP offers the players use a number programs and social network sites to communicate outside of the game, for example Teamspeak, Ventrillo, Msn, Facebook and Irc. There are examples of people who have played the game for years together that keep communications outside the game regardless of if they are active players or not (Clark, 2006).

One of the things many players in Eve Online look forward to is the yearly gathering called Fanfest where players from all over the world gather and socialize along with the option of attending numerous conferences on Eve Online ([fanfest.eveonline.com](http://fanfest.eveonline.com), n.d.).

Because players sometimes spend a large amount of time in the game the communications between partners can become quite personal. The borders between virtual reality and real life can sometimes become unclear if the communications are to close.

With that in mind the author decided to accrue knowledge of the basic rules of Eve Online and see how playing the game as a woman would develop. The authors decided to research if males acted differently towards female players and ask the question if there was discrimination and sexual harassment in the game.



### 1.1. Research question and objectives

The goal of the research is to find out if the behavior of the sexes is the same in virtual reality as it is in real life. Virtual reality is a growing form of communication on a global scale, and thus it is important to understand if there are behavioral changes when people leave the real world and enter virtual reality.

Virtual reality is a big revolution in the business world and opens up all sorts of opportunities for businesses regarding communications between countries, marketing and networking.

The objective of this research was to observe how males and females behave towards each other in a virtual environment. Due to the massive growth in use of virtual environment in all sorts of purposes both business and other, it is important to know the behavioral patterns that are formed when individuals step outside the real world and into a virtual reality.

The research question that the author intends on answering is the following:

*“How do males behave towards females in virtual reality games?”*

And be able to answer the research question the author will use the following guiding questions in an attempt to bring into light how the behavior is in virtual games. In this case the research is done in the game of Eve Online. The guiding questions are the following:

- Is there gender discrimination in the game Eve Online?
- Do females in the game Eve Online get special treatment over males?
- Are female players being used as marketing tools in Eve Online corporations?
- Does the way the player communicates in the game have any impact on how he is treated?
- Are female players in Eve Online more likely to be harassed by other players because of gender?
- Are females in the game Eve Online sexually harassed?

## 1.2. Research Methods

To conduct this research in an efficient way the author chose to use the five-step research process described by Philip Kotler, as shown below.

<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>5.</b>
<b>Defining the problem and research objective</b>	<b>Develop the research plan</b>	<b>Collect the information</b>	<b>Analyze the information</b>	<b>Interpreting and present the findings</b>

Figure 1 - Five-step research process 1. Reference: Kotler & Keller, 2009

The author began by defining the topic and determining the research question. Then the author proceeded to determine which factors to use to help answer that question.

In this research the author used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected with observation, experiments and interviews in the game Eve Online. Because of the nature of this research primary data was necessary to come to a conclusion. Primary data is data collected by the author. The secondary data was gathered from the internet, journal articles and books. Secondary data is data that has been collected by someone other than the user; in this case the authors of this report (Sekaran, 2000).

When all appropriate data had been gathered, the author started working on analyzing that data in a critical manner with the objective of having the conclusion as distinct as possible. In the research conclusion chapter the author will summarize the research, make clear the authors conclusion and answer the research question (Sekaran, 2000).

The author started off a trial account and played from the beginning observing players and tactics for around four months. During this time the author joined a corporation in which the author was well known and formed in game friendships which resulted in the author learning essentials skills for playing Eve. The author observed how male to male interactions were different in comparison to male to female interactions. The next stage of the research was a behavioral experiment which required the author to put players into situations where the author would be able to clearly see the differences in how males react to females in a male orientated environment the second stage of the experiment also lasted around four months and took place in another corporation.

### **1.3. Access and connections**

The author has developed several good connections with players while playing the game. The author got in contact with a close group of Icelandic players on the second day which lead to joining their corporation, where connections and in game friendships were formed. The author also has formed good connections and in game friendships within the second corporation joined in the game. There for the author has easy access to players with experience and vast knowledge of the game who are happy and willing to help the author with the research in any way possible. Although only a handful of players have any knowledge of what the author is researching, the players of both corporations have been willing to be interviewed and have gotten the author in contact with players outside the corporation when needed.

### **1.4. The importance of the research**

The author has not found any comparable research done on Eve Online and feels it is both interesting and important to observe the interactions between males and females in the game. Eve Online is different from other mass multiplayer online games because the game has over a 95% male dominated player base so the estimated female participants are less than 5% of the games players (Drain, 2010). This gives an opportunity to view how males reach towards females in a male dominating platform and, thus could give valuable information on behavior in that environment.

The research could have marketing value for the games developers. The reach could give valuable insight to what could be done to make the game more appealing to female players who are in a small minority. It could also help with ongoing research on the game and the communities within it. The research could shed a light on the question if females who are in a small minority are discriminated against or struggle with sexual harassment in this game or a work environment comparable to it.

### **1.5. Overview of the thesis**

In the first chapter covers the research methods used in the thesis to answer the research question. The goal and importance of the research is along with the author's access and connections to participants that are subjects in the research. In the second chapter the theoretical background of the main topics that are research in the thesis. In the third chapter the author explains the experiments that were conducted for the research. The fourth chapter contains the interviews that the author conducted for the research. In the fifth chapter the author goes over the conclusions from the research. The sixth chapter contains the author's recommendations to CCP Games, female players, male players and the author's final words.

The thesis has four appendixes the first one explaining the basics of Eve Online. The second is an email about player's absence and inactivity. The third about how corporation officers should lead by example regarding behavior towards females in the game. The fourth appendix contains an email with response regarding harassment towards the author from a player in another corporation.

## 2. Theoretical background

In this part the author will present the context and basic theoretical background for the study. The chapter will also look at how the categories are defined that the main emphasis is on and outline some of the research that has been done previously on the main concepts that the research is focusing on.

### 2.1. Discrimination

A definition of discrimination is the following:

*“Discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of an individual based solely on their membership in a certain group or category. Discrimination is the actual behavior towards an individual or group i.e. unfair treatment of a person or group based on gender or class”* (wordnetweb.princeton.edu, n.d.a.).

Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination is when it is done with intention by an individual targeting for example because of age, race or gender. Indirect discrimination when people are disadvantaged for example because of age, race or gender by a group. Discrimination can in some cases be lawful if for example the employee is too old to train to be justifiable. But human resource policies have no tolerance if discrimination is done without just cause for example because of gender (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007).

Discrimination has been researched in MMO games (mass multiplayer online games), in those researchers it has come out that female players are often discriminated against. If a female player reviles the real life gender they have to face the possibility of being viewed as incompetent and are often constantly propositioned (Yee, 2008). Women are often treated with vulgarity and there are those who wonder why they disclose their gender. They can be objectified and are subjects of unwanted attention (ctrlclick.com, 2009).

The gaming industry has started to take discrimination seriously and are instituting policies regarding the subject. In the game World Of WarCraft these policies are already in use. The policies that are already in use have several categories and if broken the user can be banned from the game. In edition they have a mature language filter built into their chat engine (us.blizzard.com, n.d.). However the author could not find any policies regarding discrimination from CCP Games.

## 2.2. Favoritism

A definition of favoritism is the following:

*“An inclination to favor some person or group”* (wordnetweb.princeton.edu, n.d.b.).

A study was conducted with an online survey to see if females are treated better online. There were 119 participants who swapped gender to see the effects. In that study it was concluded that female characters are favored in online games. Women in games do get helped in various ways, both with knowledge and financial factors (Hussain & Griffiths, 2008).

A study conducted on bias effect in a given social group showed that females are perceived more powerful than males in their given group regardless of actual power. It seemed the female group, despite being of lower social standing were perceived as stronger than the male group based on the underlying fear of the males being viewed as biased even though the male group was stronger (Batalha, Akrami, & Ekehammar, 2007).

## 2.3. Marketing tools

A definition of a marketing tool is the following:

*“The commercial processes involved in promoting and selling and distributing a product or service”* (wordnetweb.princeton.edu, n.d.c.).

Females have for a long time been used for marketing purposes, a study that was conducted on sex roles in advertising showed that females were shown as sex objects while men were shown as figures of authorities (Ware & Stuck, 1985).

An advertisement on the internet targeted at fisherman had females posing in waders. It asked men if when they were thinking of fishing what they thought of and one of the examples given was “Bait”. The calendar has females who are wearing little more than the wades and it is suggested as “Great gifts for any sportsman! “This calendar is a good example of how females are used as marketing tools (womeninwaders.com, n.d.).

The author could not find any research done on females being used as marketing tools in virtual reality.

## **2.4. Harassment**

A definition of harassment is the following:

*“Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him or her” (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007)*

Harassment can also be called bullying it is difficult to deal with in a work environment because it is hard to prove and the person who is subjected to bullying can be reluctant to raise the issue because of repercussion. Companies should have a firm policy that deal with harassment in the workplace. A counselor should be available for the subject of the bullying to confide in. according to Armstrong, the bully should not be punished straight away but rather shown the error of their ways to stop the harassment (Armstrong, 2009)

A reach conducted on interrelation between the geographical and social aspects of virtual worlds, Active worlds that is an internet based system that allows users to interact through the use of avatar it was revealed that there was ongoing harassment. The verbal abuse between avatars was such that an online police department was installed to help keep the peace in the virtual community (Schroeder, Huxor, & Smith, 2001).

In a report from the Attorney general in the USA it is stated that online harassment is a growing concern. Cyber stalking as it is called in the report is compared to stalking in real life. They share some similarities but according to the report the internet provides stalkers with new ways to harass their victims. The victims of harassment online are women and most stalkers are men. In the report this form of harassment is taken seriously and ways to amend the law to cover this type of harassment had already begun at that time (justice.gov, 1999).

## 2.5. Sexual harassment

A definition of sexual harassment is the following:

“Harassment (typically of a woman) in a workplace, or other professional or social situation, involving the making of unwanted sexual advances or obscene remarks”  
(oxforddictionaries.com, n.d.a.).

Sexual harassment is taken seriously in human resources. For employee welfare it is necessary to have policy statements to minimize the risk of an employee being harassed. Companies should provide counseling and subjects to sexual harassment should be able to talk to a counselor preferably of the same sex. The three biggest problems of dealing with sexual harassment in companies are to prove that it occurred, prejudice against the complainant and it could be part of the company's culture. All complaints should be on a confidential level and not on record until it has been officially proved. Equal opportunity should be applied to both the alleged harasser and the subject to the harassment. It should be clearly stated that harassment of any nature is to be regarded as gross misconduct and if proved the individual liable for instant dismissal (Armstrong, 2009).

In an article about Second Life written in 2007 the developer of second life talks about sexual harassment in virtual worlds, he says that included in that kind of harassing behavior is:

*"Continuous instant messaging and other unwanted contact, sexual harassment, verbal abuse"* (Bugeja, 2007).



In his opinion the virtual harassment is similar to real life harassment (Bugeja, 2007).

It is looked at with concern that sexual harassment online is growing. Now sexual harassment can occur in the workplace without physical contact. It is recommended that employers amend their harassment programs to be able to deal with sexual harassment online. With new sexual harassment laws if an employee views the workplace as hostile and goes forth with a sexual harassment claim the employer is accountable. This is a growing problem which must be taken into account by management and addressed to keep the work environment harassment free and avoid serious sexual harassment lawsuits (King, 2010).

### **3. Experiments in Eve Online**

Eve online is a massive multiplayer online game. The game is designed to develop according to how the players in it react and play. The players are given certain tools when they enter the game, and then the so called sandbox effect rules how the player succeeds (CCPGAMES, 2009).

Eve Online is a virtual world with its own currency; Inter Stellar Credits (ISK) and an economy that builds on supply and demand (Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, 2010). The main difference between Eve Online and other massive multiplayer online games is that all the players are connected to one server instead while other games have a set amount of players per server (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.g.). For further explanations of the main concepts and what they stand for see appendix 1.

#### **3.1. Experiments conducted by the author**

The author did a number of behavioral experiments in the game to see how her actions would be reacted to. The author observed other players, formed in game friendships with players and put players in certain situations to see how they would react towards female players compared to male players. In the following part the author's observations and experiments are described.

#### **3.2. How in-game friendship can go wrong**

The author formed an in game friendship with a player who was a mission partner and was not a member of the author's corporation. The player in question is not a casual player, he plays the game daily, and the player will from now on be called APosseAdEsse.

The author and APosseAdEsse formed a close in game friendship after flying in mission's together for some time. At first all communications went through fleet chat in the game. As soon as the author and APosseAdEsse where becoming good friends the communications moved over to voice chat.

The author who is not a serious game player and is quite social in real life where as APosseAdEsse is rather anti social in real life and takes the game seriously. The author not knowing how APosseAdEsse feelings where developing regarding the friendship, and did not make the boundaries of the friendship or her feelings on it clear. The author was surprised when APosseAdEsse was starting to get possessive and jealous over the author signed into the game to play with other members.

The author who had just seen APosseAdEsse as a fun mission friend that she had fun flying with and could laugh with had quickly developed an obsession and did not listen to the author when she explained that they were just friends.

APosseAdEsse who had the authors email started sending emotional letters where it was apparent that he had no understanding of the author's requests to back off. The first letter was half in Latin and came out of the blue and took the author by complete surprise.

The first email was the following:

*"Ave Anna.*

*sic erit; haeserunt tenues in corde sagittae, et possessa ferus pectora versat Amor. Cedimus, an subitum luctando accendimus ignem? cedamus! leve fit, quod bene fertur, onus.*

*Thus it will be; slender arrows are lodged in my heart, and Love vexes the chest that it has seized Shall I surrender or stir up the sudden flame by fighting it? I will surrender - a burden becomes light when it is carried willingly." (APosseAdEsse, 13 May 2010)*

The letters kept on coming even though the author tried to tell APosseAdEsse that she did not feel the same way but he would not listen and kept on turning reality into what he wanted.

*"I will wait for you for as long as it takes. We will meet when you are ready. When you have cast off your fear and decide to trust me. Don't be afraid, I won't run away." (APosseAdEsse, 2 June 2010)*

*"I can see clearly now. I want you and I'm willing to do whatever it takes. I can feel in my bones how close I am to losing you and I know it's not your fault. I know it's my fault and I know why. I've been blind and stupid. I want to set things straight and I want to tell you the truth even if the truth means losing you forever." (APosseAdEsse, 14 June 2010)*

APosseAdEsse called the author his girlfriend, and would not let go when the author told him that the feelings were not returned. After several attempts from the author to let APosseAdEsse know that she did not want to continue any contact, the author decided to block communications on msn and in eve. He did not let go and kept on using the email to get messages through. Following are some examples of messages the author got on her email.

*“Please don’t be angry at me for this email, it’s not intended as an accusation. Just an insight into what lead up to yesterday and caused my emotional turmoil. It’s tragic it should end at all, let alone end like this. I wish it could have been different. I wish you the very best of luck for the future for you and your family. I hope you find a guy that is right for you”* (APosseAdEsse, 22 June 2010).

*“I changed because you inadvertently triggered my defenses and then I snowballed. None of it was your fault at all and I’m still trying to figure out how and why I fell apart. I don’t expect you to forgive me but even so I would like to say how sorry I am to have hurt you. You are a great person and really didn’t deserve any of it. I wish you the very best of luck in life and love and thank you whole heartedly for taking the time to be my friend. I am so sorry”* (APosseAdEsse, 30 June 2010).

*“I miss you”* (APosseAdEsse, 5 July 2010).

*“Any chance you can unblock me from msn? :P”* (APosseAdEsse, 5 July 2010).

*“I see you removed me from your msn contacts. You said you wanted to just be friends, here I am trying to be your friend. When you wanted love I gave you all my love. That was too much for you as well. Be careful what you wish for. Remember, I never ran you pushed me away. I won’t try to contact you anymore, however I haven’t blocked you. If one day you need a friend you know where I am”* (APosseAdEsse, 8 July 2010).

*“I would appreciate it if you can remember that I am generous and kind in my nature, if this email makes you angry then you read it wrong, please read it again with an open mind. There is no judgment or malice or animosity here, just an attempt to offer an olive branch”* (APosseAdEsse, 17 July 2010).

*“I still miss you :(“* (APosseAdEsse, 3 August 2010).

It took APosseAdEsse around two months to stop sending emails to the author even though he got no replies, It even went so far that the author got a letter from APosseAdEsse in the mail.

The harassment was overwhelming and starting having a detrimental effect in real life, the author did not want to open up the email not knowing if there was an emotional letter there from a male that the author did not think was in touch with reality.

The last message received said:

*“Basically... I hope u die... cunt :)”* (APosseAdEsse, 16 August 2010).

After that APosseAdEsse broke into three computers after having placed key loggers on them without the author’s knowledge and infected them with a total of twenty four viruses, eight on each system all identical.

With this example it is clear that females have to be careful when talking to players in game and have clear boundaries that they do not allow the in game friends to cross. This was not an experiment on the authors part rather an experience of harassment that the author was a subject to and shows how in game friendships can go wrong if they get to close and personal.

### 3.3. The authors experience of the game playing without behavioral experiments

The author entered the game as a new player and without thought chose a female name for the Eve character. Straight away it was apparent that the game was complicated and a lot of thought was needed to be put into playing it. The author was struggling to understand how to advance within the game and there for signed into an Icelandic chat room. Because the author was new to the game and asked questions considered to be stupid by the players on the channel the author felt patronized by the more experienced players. The author was asked straight away of her gender, without thought the author confirmed being of female gender.

A player opened up a private conversation with the author, and offered the author to join a corporation with a few players who where friends in game and offered help in a friendlier environment, the author accepted the offer and joined the corporation. If the author did not joined that group of players the author would not have lasted the week in the game. From the beginning it was apparent that the author was being treated different from the other male players, the players in the corporation were more willing to help the author than other new players that were just as lost in the game.

The author flew with experienced players that took turns in explaining and given the author the insight to be able to go alone in the game. As soon as the author had some understanding of how the game works it was time to go on solo missions to earn interstellar credits, which is necessary to buy skills and modules needed to go forward into the game? The author wanted to play the game independently and from that point on the author shied away from any further assistance even though the players were willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to help the author concerning all aspects of the game. The author used the program called EveMon ([evemon.battleclinic.com](http://evemon.battleclinic.com), n.d.), to help plan how to train the character, mission reports ([eve-survival.org](http://eve-survival.org), n.d.), to survive the missions without backup and used the search engine Google to learn how to fit modules and modify ships correctly for different purposes of the game, i.e. missions, pvp ( player versus player), salvaging, and mining.

After being a part of that group for around four months, the author had observed how male players reacted differently towards female players. The author had acquired enough experience in the game to move on to the next level of the research and start behavioral experiments regarding the subject.

### **3.4. The authors experience with behavioral experiments**

To carry out the experiment successfully the author changed to a new corporation where the author did not have any player connections. Immediately it became apparent that due to a female being in the new corporation there was a level of excitement that is not normal when new male recruits are signed up.

The author used the first month to observe how members of the corporation behaved towards each other compared to the author, again blatantly there was a difference in behavior. Realizing that there was a huge difference in attitude the author then commenced systematically experimenting with players in the corporation to see how the author actions would be tolerated and reacted to.

### **3.5. Breaking the corporations rules**

The corporation that the author applied to has straight rules and when the author was accepted into the corporation the author did not fulfill all the required skills. The author soon noticed that even though the corporation has all these strict rules they did not seem to apply for the author.

In the beginning the author was told that to fly in this corporation it was mandatory to be able to fly a black ops ship and the training for that should commence straight away, the training the author would have needed to be able to fly that kind of a ship was 19 days. The author has to this day not started that training, which was done on purpose to see if the author would be reprimanded for not compiling with that order.

In the corporation it is mandatory for pilots to show their presence in the corporations territory in null sec. the corporation demands that its pilots defend its 0,0 pos and make their presence known to enemies in low and null sec, the author has not participated in any defense of the corporations territory in null sec. the only times the author has gone over to low and null sec is when the author felt like doing some pvp either in a pvp fleet or on his own.

The corporation has mandatory fleet operations that the pilots have to sign up for, the author has never signed up for any of those operations or shown up to participate in any of those fleets.

Every corporation member has to pay a monthly fee to the corporation and cannot stay inactive for longer than two weeks without an explanation. If a member does not pay or does not sign in for two weeks they are automatically discharged from the corporation. The author has never played the monthly fee. The author also decided to not sign in for over two months to keep her character completely inactive. When the author signed in again the character was still member of the corporation. See Appendix 2

To the author it seems that the rules that are enforced on the male players do not apply to a female player.

With his experiment the author wanted to know how far a female could bend and break the rules which the corporation has been built up on without it having negative consequences or being reprimanded.

### **3.6. Recruiting players that do not fulfill the required skills**

Because the rules regarding recruitment at the second corporation the author joined are strict and certain skills, conditions and experience is needed to enter the corporation, the author decided to see if it would make a difference if the members that wanted to join where the authors in game friends.

So the author asked some in game friends to send an application to join. Both members that did fulfill the conditions and members that did not where asked to join the corporation. When a normal recruitment is done, there is an eve mail sent out to the corporation's members saying that a member has asked to join it, the members of the corporation are asked to join the public channel and talk to that member and approve or disapprove him. The applying member will then need two to three members to vouch for the applying member into the corporation and partly take responsibility for that member for a period of time. The applying member usually does spend several days on the public channel gaining the corporation members trust and approval.

In the cases where the author asked for members to be approved, they were immediately allowed in regardless of their skills or other corporation member's approval, only the author vouched for those members which was enough for those members to be allowed in. The author got three members in that way, one that did not have nearly enough skill points to join up, one that had been a member of a big pirate corporation with a bad reputation in the game and one member that was valid as an applicant.



To take it a step further the author decided to make a trial account with a female name. The player behind the character was supposedly a real life female. The author wanted to see if the corporation would go as far as accepting a character that was one day old. The character that was played by a male whom the author trusted was accepted to the corporation straight off and welcomed and was a member of the corporation. The author received a copy of a confidential email that was sent out to all commanding officers in the corporation with rules on how to treat the two female players in the corporation. In the mail it was stated along with other things that if there was any member that showed inappropriate behavior the officers where to reprimand that player. The new female was a member of the corporation until the author decided that the experiment had been successful. See appendix 3

With this experiment the author wanted to see if members would be allowed into the corporation without all the usual corporation improvement and evaluation. So the author got in applicants that ranged from a complete beginner that would not benefit the corporation in any way to a hugely experimented player with a questionable background that could have been detrimental to the corporation.

### **3.7. Unreasonable help requests**

It is always a tragic thing to players in the game when they lose their ships in situations that are considered unnecessary such as a mistake made in a mission which can trigger an attack that a player cannot handle. Often the ships that are used in missions are expensive to the players and hard to recoup. Sometimes the player can go in to the mission again, collect some of the ships items and minimize the loss that way. However if the missions trigger ships have been shot it is hard to do alone.

When the opportunity presents itself the author decided to let her ship get blown up in a mission, knowing that another player at the corporation was blown up minutes before in a similar ship. The ship that was blown up was a navy edition battle ship with modifications that are both more powerful and considered a luxury in the game, thus a faction fitted navy ship is worth around ten regularly fitted compatible ships.

The author did this during a time that the corporation had a low sec fleet operation running so the corporations pilots where mostly located far away and otherwise occupied.

After blowing up the ship the author requested assistance going in to salvage the expensive modules from the wreck, knowing that the male pilot that had been blown up in an equally expensive ship minutes before did not get assistance to salvage his wreck.

The authors call for help did get a response from the corporation's members, and the second in command pulled his squad out of the running fleet operation. That squad was located a long way from the author and had to fly for approximately forty minutes to get to the site where the ships wreck was located. The squad helped the author salvage the remaining items from the wreck and then returned again to the ongoing battle from which they were pulled out from.

With this experiment it was evident to the author that being female granted preferential treatment from the corporation, males players would not have received this level of assistance. If a male player would lose his ship in a similar situation a squad would not be deployed to help when the entire corporation was involved in fleet combat which relies on numbers for survival, this move would normally be considered a foolish and rash action that goes against that basic tactics of fleet survival.

### **3.8. Let's keep her safe**

A good opportunity presented itself to the author to see the reactions of her corporation mates when she jumped out of a mission and to a moon close by to repair the ship she was flying. While stopping there a small ship flew into range of the author's ship and locked on and targeted the ship.

The author who was flying a battleship was in no danger and could have done several things on her own in the situation. The author could have chosen to fly into the aggressing ship to try to get it to shoot, warped off and docked at the nearest station or just waited to see what the other pilots intentions where.

The author was located in high sec where the concord protects pilots and was in no danger what so ever. Instead of protecting herself the author wrote in the corporation chat that she was being targeted in space and was told to do nothing and wait there. Seconds later the authors ship was surrounded by battle ships that threw out cargo containers with the message written on " fly away birdy" to scare the aggressing ship away which it immediately did facing the fleet of battleships surrounding the author.

Seeing that the author was never in any danger it was fun to see how the males in the corporation rushed to the rescue even though no rescue was needed.

While flying a mission in high sec the author was harassed by a single player flying a small ship. The aggressing player constantly flew into the authors ship in an attempt to get the author aggressive and then proceeded with looting the already killed mission pirates, giving the author a kill right. Because the size of the ship trying to pull aggression it was clear that this was done with a hidden purpose.

The author asked for help. A fellow corporation member flew into the surrounding systems to look around if there was a fleet waiting to jump in to help the author's aggressor, and found one. In the next system was a fleet of 13 members of a corporation called the Goones, were waiting to jump in if the author had taken the bait.

The authors CEO sent an email to the Goons naming the pilot who had been harassing the author and when he talked about the incident he put in cap letters "SHE" when referring to the author. The Goons had not long before asked for the corporation's assistance, that assistance was denied due to the incident. See appendix 4

With this experiment the author observed the reactions of male players within the corporation when the author was harassed while flying alone in space and how far they were willing to go to protect the author even when there was no danger.

### **3.9. How much unreasonable financial help will they give**

The corporation has members that do mining and manufacturing, this is done with the purpose of making pvp ships for the active pvp players in the corporation to help them minimize their loss and keep them pvping. The ships that the corporations manufacture are battle cruisers which are the ships commonly used in pvp battles.

The author who does not do any pvp for the corporations benefit decided to ask for two ships after an eve mail was sent out regarding the subject. To make it more interesting the author asked for one battle cruiser and one battleship. Battleships are not given to players from the corporation due to high cost of manufacturing and the fact that they are rarely used in corporation fleets. Still both ships were manufactured and given to the author without any problems. The author did have to pay 32 million ISK for a rare mineral needed for the manufacturing of the battleship. The two ships are worth around 300 million ISK.

The author has no knowledge of any other player receiving a battleship from the corporations manufacturing.

After blowing up a Navy edition battleship on purpose, the author decided to send out an eve mail and see the financial help the corporation's member would give to replace it. Two hours after the mail was sent out the author had raised enough money to buy and fit an identical ship.

The ship was worth 1,2 billion with the modules, around 200 million ISK had been saved from the blown up wreck. So it did not take long to gather funds for the loss that had occurred. The author got donations from 20 million up to 200 million per donation and the corporation itself also donated to the author which is a gray area donation considering that the corporation's funds are a mutual asset and is to be used for the corporations benefit not to benefit a single player.

Although a seasoned player would receive financial help from his fellow players if needed, it is not common that a new player receives financial help to the extent that the author got in these cases.

With this experiment the author wanted to see how far it was possible to take the financial help from both members of the corporation and the corporation itself.

### **3.10. Getting away with playing dumb concerning technical factors**

When a player joins corporations there are all kind of forums and bulletin boards that a player has to sign up for. The player also has to sign up for access to all the voice programs used by both the corporation and the alliance the corporation is in. in addition the player has to find and download those programs on the internet.

The author decided to see if she could get away with "playing dumb" to get the corporations officers to do all the work needed to get the author the programs needed for voice conversations and to make the accesses and sign up for all that the author was required to do.

The author has never signed in to any forums to sign up for access to any voice programs, the second in command of the corporation has set up all the passwords and applied for all the accesses the author needed to be able to connect to those programs. The second in command also found all the programs the author needed to download and sent the author direct links to them so that the only thing needed was to open the link and download.

The author did not need to do much to get out of doing that work herself only to say that she was not good with technology and from that point the commanding officer was happy to help with completing all the work needed.

The author has never signed in to the bulletin boards where all the information is posted that members are required to know and be updated on.

With this experiment the author wanted to find out how far the corporation executive would go in letting her get away with using her gender to get out of doing things that she could make them do for her due to lack of technical understanding.

## 4. Player interviews

The author interviewed five players to get more insight perspectives to help answer the research question. The interviews consisted of one female player, one male player pretending to be a female and three male players.

### 4.1. Interview with a female player

Púkastelpa has been playing the game since September 2007. She began playing the game with her ex boyfriend who at that time had been playing the game for some years with his friends. One of the reasons she wanted to participate was because she could not understand the conversations going on about the game in her home and wanted to make an effort to be involved. After breaking up with her boyfriend and taking a break from the game she decided to start again and joined the SEMi Coalition which is a corporation of Icelandic players and formed strong connections with the players in that group.

#### 4.1.1. Is there gender discrimination in the game Eve Online?

Púkastelpa feels that there is gender discrimination in most areas of the internet.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“I think that a big part of the discrimination is because girls are in minority. If I sign in to eve where girls are between 5% and 10% and say hey I’m a girl then the reaction is o my god, really” (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).*

Púkastelpa does not think that she is taken as an equal. The question of whether the other players are talking to her because she is a girl or if it is because they like her personality comes to her mind quite often.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“On the Iceland channel I am frequently asked if I am really a girl and if I answer yes then I get comments like shouldn’t you be in the kitchen making me a sandwich” (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).*

When Púkastelpa joins public channels on eve today she does not let on that she is a female, but if asked she does not deny it.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“I am asked often if I get everything for free because I am a girl and that is an annoying thing that the boys think, because some of them sign in themselves pretending to be girls to get free stuff. That does not mean that real girls do that”*  
(Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa says that it is difficult to proof her value in the game because of the behavior of male players who sign in under face pretence of being female and use gender to get ahead in the game.

#### **4.1.2. Do females in the game Eve Online get special treatment over males?**

Púkastelpa says that males interact completely different with girls. She often receives gifts in the form of ships, modules and money. She also gets to buy things at better prices than other players.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“Yes I clearly get special treatment then the guys, for example it was my birthday yesterday and I got a ship and 10 million ISK for a birthday present, I don’t know of the guys getting birthday presents in the game unless I’m the one giving them, I’ve never known them to give each other anything on birthdays”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa feels that it is easy for a female to get help in the game. The girls do not have to make the same effort to know the games fundamentals as the males.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“I always get help if I need it, if I can’t be bothered to find something out I just ask the guys and they will find out the answer for me. Even though I am considered to be a seasoned player I do not fit modules on my ships, I simply do not know how. I never had to learn to do that because the guys always take care of that for me when I get a new ship, so why bother when I know that they will happily find a good fitting for my ship. When I began playing I did not really have to give the game mechanics any thought because it was all done for me so I never bothered learning being self-sufficient in that way”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

It is a fact that the players in the game can become really close. Púkastelpa is well trusted within the circle of the Icelandic players. Players that have been playing together often confide in each other about real life and at times spent a lot of time together online.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“The other players confide in me a lot, both with problems in the game and from real life, you can say that I am considered in the same way as a confidant in a workplace, and I think that is nice and I do enjoy it, to me that is a privilege”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa feels that it is the female’s choice whether she accepts all the help that is available to female player’s whether it is in the form of information or financial help. But in her opinion the difference in communication, trust, willingness and effort in how the players interact cannot be compared between how male players act towards one another and how they interact with a female player.

#### **4.1.3. Are female players being used as marketing tools in Eve Online corporations?**

In Púkastelpa’s view she is considered to be more diplomatic in the game and often gets the task of resolving problems between players, due to the other player’s opinion that a female will be less likely to encounter hostility.



Púkastelpa commented:

*“The corporation that I am currently the CEO of was invited the other day to join an alliance, I was asked to become a diplomat within that alliance, i do not think the corporation would have been invited into that alliance if it did not have a girl in it. I think that it was considered to look cool to have a girl within the alliance”*  
(Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa says that the male players in her corporation do make it visible that there is a female member and that corporation's do that all the time. She thinks girls are used like bait for recruiting new members to corporations that it is more likely that new members want to apply for a corporation that has a female member.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“When new members come in to our corporation public channel the guys always find away to let it be known that I am a real life girl, I'm not sure if they do it as a joke or if they do it to lure the new members to join us, but I think the same goes for corporations as for the alliances, that it is considered really cool in the game to have a real life girl around and they seem to emphasize it”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

All the chat channels in EVE have administrators, they control the channels. Their job is to see to it that no one is harassed on the channel and the rules that the channel calls for are followed. It came to as a surprise to Púkastelpa when one day she was without being asked or without her knowledge made administrator on the biggest Icelandic chat channels.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“I was not even asked, one day I signed in and I had been made admin on the channel and had the power to kick players of the channel or even ban them”*  
(Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Her views of females being used as bait to recruit more players or the fact that it seems to be emphasized by the corporations that have female members is due to how few females play the game and there for are considered assets to corporations and alliances.

#### 4.1.4. What effect does joining voice-chat have?

Púkastelpa feels that when the communications are moved from the written conversation channels to voice channels everything changes towards females. If a female never joins a voice channel no one really knows which gender the character is. Without joining that sort of communication a player does never have to admit to being any gender and no one can say for sure.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“Yes wow it completely changes things. As soon as I join voice the guys have a confirmation that I am a girl, the first time I logged in on voice the guys were constantly asking me to say something like they had never heard a girl talk before. I am told all the time, your voice is so sexy”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

In her opinion when players use voice channels as a form of communication while playing the game, makes the players closer. The communication between players become more personal and it is more difficult to distinguish between the game and reality.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“It kind of feels like you are in the same room when you play on voice, it makes it easier to be personal and players change how they talk, especially if it is a one on one conversation”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa feels that using voice can lead to flirting and that there is a lot of sexual innuendo that commence. In her opinion this can lead up to misunderstandings of what nature the interests between the players are.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“I have been a subject of sexual harassment and I think it is unlikely that the player who sexually harassed me would have gone as far if we had not been using voice to communicate” (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).*

It is her opinion that females playing the game have to be careful when using voice that players do not misunderstand the communications because players could misunderstand it if a female is open and friendly and think that her interest is of a different kind, especially if the players fly frequently together and become to close and the communications to personal.

#### **4.1.5. Are female players in Eve Online more likely to be harassed by other players because of gender?**

Púkastelpa thinks that because female players in the game are in a vast minority they are more likely to be harassed than the male players. The attention can be uncomfortable and the male players change how they behave as soon as they are aware of a female in the group. There is always a reaction to a female in the group and she feels that this could be one of the reasons that females have a certain difficulty in proving themselves in the game.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“I think this is one of the main reasons girls are not taken seriously in the game. as soon as the guys figure out that I’m a girl, a form of chaos is created and the guys all want to prove them self’s and get my attention” (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).*

#### **4.1.6. Are females in the game Eve Online sexually harassed?**

Púkastelpa says that she is shown a lot of attention in the game. To her it seems that the male players think that because she is a female gamer they must have a lot in common with her.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“It has come to a point where it is difficult to have friends within the game. In the end they all seem to have a crush on me. The reason could be because I am a friendly person that I am sending the wrong signals or something like that, but today I am always thinking of what I say so it will not be misinterpreted”*  
(Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa has been a subject to sexual harassment from a player in the game. It has changed how she plays and communicates with other players. The sexual harassment from the player in question is still ongoing although all communications with the player were severed four months ago.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“It was horrible! It went so far that I carefully considered calling the police. It is awful when someone you consider to be a close friend that you are playing the game with and having fun doing it develops an obsession and wants something more than you can give him”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

She says that there are certain things that a female gamer just has to accept that is in her opinion sexual harassment as well.

Púkastelpa commented:

*“When I’m on my way to meet someone in a mission and say I’m coming, I get stupid replies like “I bet you are”, I really dislike comments like that”* (Púkastelpa, 26 Nov 2010).

Púkastelpa says that a female player has to watch out in a way that a male player does not have to. There are many players in the game that are not used to talking with girls on the kind of personal level which communications have a tendency of reaching between players that spend a lot of time playing the game together and she feels that females have to have clear boundaries to prevent players from misunderstanding their friendship (Oddsdóttir, 2010).

## **4.2 Interview with a male player that pretended to be a female in the game**

Amanda was a female character created by a male player at the authors request to see if he noticed a difference in behavior and reactions in game based on gender. The male player behind Amanda was a well seasoned Eve player who has been playing the game for a number of years.

### **4.2.1. Is there gender discrimination in the game Eve Online?**

Amanda felt that there is without doubt discrimination in the game. It was surprising how easily the character was accepted into the corporation without any formalities what so ever.

Amanda commented:

*“I believe that being accepted into a corporation purely based on being a girl character was bullshit and angered me because if I applied as myself it would not have happened like that, no corporation with standards would accept a one day old character with nothing to offer so I just thought bollocks to it all” (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).*

Amanda did not notice any other form of discrimination due to the short time spent as a member of the corporation.

### **4.2.2. Do females in the game Eve Online get special treatment over males?**

Amanda was offered all the help needed to get started. A number of the corporation's members offered to be mentors in the game so that he could become successful as a player.

Amanda commented:

*“I am a serious game player and I felt like I was being treated like a kid. They all wanted to take me under their wing which I kind of understood being a newbie, but I felt like there was no way I could prove myself to anyone because I was being pampered straight away”* (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).

Amanda was offered to be escorted everywhere, helped to make money and complete missions. Amanda felt there was no way to refuse the help offered.

Amanda commented:

*“Basically everything I said was ignored and that pissed me off”* (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).

In addition a private channel on the corporation voice program was offered to Amanda by the corporation CEO where only females could enter due to the fact that the corporation now had two females so that they could have privacy on voice programs.

Amanda commented:

*“I thought that was unbelievable, just because I was posing as a girl I had a chance to have a private voice channel! I kind of was speechless, why would girls need a private channel? There are do not disturb private channels that all corporation members can go on if they want to talk in private so i thought that was over the top”* (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).

In general, Amanda felt the other members of the corporation were behaving completely different towards him, than a regular new recruit. They were overly enthusiastic in talking and welcoming the new female member into the corporation.

#### **4.2.3. Are female players being used as marketing tools in Eve Online corporations?**

Due to the sort stop in the corporation Amanda did not have a strong opinion on this question although he had some assumptions on the matter.

Amanda commented:

*“I felt like an animal in a cage, so I think that girls are used as bait to get members to apply for a corporation that is known to have girls in it” (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).*

#### **4.2.4. What effect does joining voice-chat have?**

Amanda was as said before posing as a girl so there was not the opportunity to have a voice chat within the corporation.

Amanda commented:

*“I did feel the pressure to sign in on the voice chat, I used the excuse that I did not have a headset so it was not able to, but they did go on and on about me coming in on voice. From their reaction I assume that it is difficult being a girl on voice chats. I mean I could not keep up with the private convo windows that were popping up on the corp channel so wow they probably suffocate a girl on voice” (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).*

#### **4.2.5. Are female players in Eve Online more likely to be harassed by other players because of gender?**

The attention Amanda got was overwhelming on the corporation chat channel. Everyone wanted to talk to the new female and offer themselves up as mentors and protectors.

Amanda commented:

*“I think that it must be annoying to be a girl and constantly be a subject to the attention that I got from the guys in there. I could barely think because everyone wanted to get a word in and let me know that they were around. It was an overflow of testosterone” (Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).*

Amanda felt that as soon as the fact that an Eve character is in fact a real life girl there would be harassment from other male players. He thought that females will have to be strong, cold and puss back to play in the games environment and he felt it was due to females being rare in the game.

#### **4.2.6. Are females in the game Eve Online sexually harassed?**

Amanda did not think sexual harassment was a problem in the game. For the short period of time he spent in the corporation flirting did occur. His view on the matter was that it could develop into sexual harassment if the female player flirted too much back and did not stop the flirting if it went over the line.

Amanda commented:

*“Sure there can be sexual harassment but the girl has to be open to it, it’s not like you are in the same room so if flirting goes over the line it is easy to say piss off”*  
(Amanda, 25 Nov 2010).

Because this is not a real life situation and the players involved are in different locations the he felt sexual harassment would be easy to shut down. He did though feel that the male players were eager to engage in flirting and there were a lot of sexual innuendo that Amanda was subjected to in the short period that the character was played. Amanda did say that he had fun with it and did allow it to happen, but could have stopped it at any given time (Barley, 2010).

### **4.3. Interviews with male players**

In this is a summarization of interviews with three players from the authors corporation where interviewed. Imperator Ceasar, the CEO of the corporation, Vanhanian the second in command in the corporation and Menotpirate who is a logistic officer in the corporation. All of the players have extensive experience in the game.

#### **4.3.1. Is there gender discrimination in the game Eve Online?**

The players did not think that there is any gender discrimination in the game.

The first player commented:

*“Not so much discrimination, quite the opposite because they get special treatment.”* (Menotpirate, 14 Nov 2010).



They did all agree on that it was more important that the pilot has good skills and the right attitude, although two of them commented especially on if there was a need for females to prove themselves in a different way than men.

The second player commented:

*“ I think actions speak louder than words when it comes to that, just like there are good players and bad players among the male population so do the skills of the female population. Though I will agree there is a general sentiment that a girl gamer needs to prove herself”* (Imperator Ceasar, 14 Nov 2010).

The third player commented:

*“I don't think girls have to prove themselves more in the game. There is a girl fleet commander in our alliance. Personally I don't believe she is a real she, I think she is a man posing as a girl by synthesizing the voice, if not she has a really bad microphone, he he he”* (Vanhanian, 14 Nov 2010).

#### **4.3.2. Do females in the game Eve Online get special treatment over males?**

The players all agreed that females get special treatment over males in the game. They also agreed the most likely reason was that there are not many active female players and that male players do act differently around them.

First player commented:

*“Women are rare - you're like a gem and if you get smacked around, our members will make a circle around you and snarl!”* (Imperator Ceasar, 14 Nov 2010).

Second player commented:

*“I think people are generally nicer to you because you are unique but as far as promotions or command stuff we've tried to remain as fair and balanced as possible”* (Vanhanian, 14 Nov 2010).

Third player commented:

*“Because while men are generally pigs they're also stupid, he he, I've tested it out myself I pretended to be a female and people generally would help me”*  
(Menotpirate, 14 Nov 2010).

#### **4.3.3. Are female players being used as marketing tools in Eve Online corporations?**

The players did not see eye to eye on this matter. Two of the players did though see females as beneficial to the corporation in many ways while the third one did not think it had any impact what so ever what gender a player is.

The first player commented:

*“Having a girl changes a corp in a good way, it lighten things up and changes the tone a bit and well, there could be a time when diplomacy might be better handled by you rather than me having a girl seems to change how the guys in Eve view the corp too and your wiley girl ways could help with getting intel”* (Imperator Ceasar, 14 Nov 2010).

The second player commented:

*“It is always fun to introduce the corps own girl, like when you flew with the small ratting fleet I had fun introducing you as a girl and that you where not just a girl but Icelandic so that made you even more exotic. Girls are rare in the game so you are like a fishhook to get more players into the corporation.”* (Menotpirate, 14 Nov 2010).

The third player commented:

*“Anyway I don't think gender plays a role in how a pilot benefits the corp it has more to do with your skills and attitude as far as gender is concerned yes, I'm more concerned with your temperament and willingness to work with the team.”*  
(Vanhanian, 14 Nov 2010).

#### 4.3.4. What effect does joining voice-chat have?

The players did not have the same opinion on what effect it had for females to use the voice programs. Two of the players shared the opinion that it would increase the likeliness of harassment or sexual harassment while the third player did not think it would change anything for a female to use voice programs.

The first player commented:

*It will open up opportunities for immature players to harass girls, and it has effect in fleet because a girl voice in a large fleet tends to create a little bit of chaos. Those guys all want to be noticed by the girl and there for act like complete idiots”* (Imperator Ceasar, 14 Nov 2010).

The second player commented:

*“Aside from hearing a nice voice over comms, I'm not sure, video games sort of make us all the same but still I mean you wouldn't even know a player is a girl unless she tells you but on voice you cannot hide if you are.”* (Vanhanian, 14 Nov 2010).

The third player commented:

*A girl should keep it on the low down in a big fleet, sometimes it will just open up chances for guys to simply start hitting on you or there could be some insulting language or links in fleet chat and that can cause a problem”* (Menotpirate, 14 Nov 2010).

#### 4.3.5. Are female players in Eve Online more likely to be harassed by other players because of gender?

The players all agreed that females are more likely to be harassed than males in the game. In their view females need to be careful who they fly with and that they are better off surrounded by male players who would protect them.

The first player commented:

*“Don't fly alone otherwise its "wild wild west" out there.”* (Imperator Ceasar, 14 Nov 2010).

The second player commented:

*“Men are pigs, he he, I know that is a generality but it's more or less true and people tend to act badly when they think no one is looking”* (Vanhanian, 14 Nov 2010).

The third player commented:

*“There are three types of players, one that will put you up on a pedestal and make a big thing about you being a girl, the second type are anti social geeky type who has never been in close proximity to a girl and doesn't know what to do with them, who think that every girl player could be a future girlfriend to them, the third type is a player like me who just sees you as one of the gang and has fun playing with you, so girls do have to watch out who they are flying with.”* (Menotpirate, 14 Nov 2010).

#### **4.3.6. Are females in the game Eve Online sexually harassed?**

All of the players agreed that females could be subjects to sexual harassment in the game.

The first player commented:

*“There are guys in the game that have no grasp on reality and those guys have a dream and hope they can spark up a virtual relationship somehow”* (Imperator Ceasar, 14 Nov 2010).

The second player commented:

*“I think women can be targeted, usually you get young guys running after you, they may never say it - but it's a hormone driven thing from what I've seen and they act like there are no rules in cyber space for some reason”* (Vanhanian, 14 Nov 2010).

The third player commented:

*“A girl can defiantly be sexually harassed in the game, you know it's filled with anti social guys who don't know what girls are in real life”* (Menotpirate, 14 Nov 2010).

They did all agree that females in the game had to be careful not to let players to close to them and fly with partners that they had gotten to know and trusted. (Johnson, Mark, & Starbuck, 2010).

## 5. Conclusions

The research done in this project was trying to find out how the sexes interact in virtual reality. The author chose to use the game Eve Online to look for the answer and set out with the following research question:

*“How do males behave towards females in virtual reality games?”*

The research conclusions are the following:

### 5.1. Positive and negative discrimination

There is clearly gender discrimination in the game Eve Online. Females are not taken as seriously as males and have to prove themselves more as skilled players. The discrimination is though mostly not intended towards females in a bad way, but the constant help offers made to females do make them feel and look weak in the game. The fact that male players make female characters intended exploit other male players can also be a factor in making it difficult for females to prove their value as players.

### 5.2. Gender favoritism

Females in the game are favored by all the males around them, they get all the help they ask for whether it is justifiable or not. If a female enters the game and does not want to be independent in the game she never has to, the lengths male players are willing to go to keep a female player happy are overwhelming. The rules of conduct in the game do not seem to apply to females in the game and their behavior in corporations and they get away with bending and breaking the rules as they please. The male players view the female players in a different way because how few female players are active in the game. Thus the male players do want to keep the few females around happy and playing the game.

### 5.3. Females as marketing tools

It is apparent in the game that females are used in marketing purposes both in corporations and alliances. It seems to be viewed as a prestigious to have a female in a corporation or an alliance. Females are used to bring more players in to corporations, they are asked to resolve diplomatic problems, advertise companies and alliances they are also viewed as useful to get privileged information on other corporations and there for used as spies.

#### **5.4. The Female voice matters**

The use of voice chat does completely change how females are treated in the game. For one as soon as a female signs in on voice the male players have a confirmation that it is a real life female. If the female is in a large group the overflow of testosterone can be suffocating because they all do want to talk and make them self's know. It also makes all communications more personal and it is necessary for females to set clear boundaries to other players. It seems that the male players do have more tenancies to develop feelings towards the female players when using voice chat and it opens up the danger of harassment.

#### **5.5. Harassment towards females**

Because females are in a small minority they are more likely to be harassed in the game. The male players do not seem to know how to behave around female players and even the gentle men could be considered harassing, with constant offers of help or money. There can be a lot of insulting language towards females and also it is tiring for a player to be constantly the center of attention instead of being able to play as just one of the team.

#### **5.6. Sexual harassment in the game**

Females will most likely be sexually harassed in the game, but because the communications are not happening physically in the same room it is up to the girl to stop the sexual harassment as soon as it starts. Females need to be clear in setting the players around them boundaries. If the harassment is not stopped straight away it could lead to a problem and the nature of the environment in the game is male orientated and there for a female is likely to encounter some form of sexual harassment. It is easy to stop communications in the game, it has an option to block players, so that they cannot see you and if a problem occurs that the female cannot handle herself a petition can be sent to CCP with conversation logs and it will be handled there as in a real life situation with consequences to the player who is doing the harassment.

## **6. Assumptions and recommendations**

The research has provided some information that can possibly be valuable for the interactive virtual game community. From the conclusions the author has some recommendations for both the games developer and players.

### **6.1. Recommendations to CCP**

It is recommended that CCP Games takes the harassment that female players encounter in the game seriously and set up policies to prevent that players can be harassed. This can be done for example with online administrators that the players can contact if they are being harassed, and if the harassment is ongoing to take the necessary measures to stop it by banning the player who is doing the harassment from the game.

### **6.2. Recommendations to female players**

The author would recommend to female players to keep their gender unknown to avoid the attention a female player gets. If the player wishes to make his gender known, to select a character name that has no sexual in nature such as Amanda69 or Naughty girl.

It is important for female players to be careful what information they give out about their personal life to other players, and to set clear boundaries regarding behavior towards them. If the behavior starts to be too personal or starts to turn into flirting, to stop the behavior straight away to avoid sending out mixed signals that could be misunderstood.

### **6.3. Recommendations to male players**

The author would recommend to male players to be aware of other male players posing as females. Male players should keep in mind that although females need help to start in the game as any other player, they have the same ability to learn the game and should be pushed to become independent in the game.

Male players can without realizing make female players uneasy with unnecessary gifts and offers of help. So the author recommends that male players help females when asked but not as an act to show chivalry when the female has not asked to be helped.

It is recommended that male players do not use sexual innuendo or flirt unless the female player has shown that she is looking for that kind of an in game relationship.



#### **6.4. Final words**

The author has learned from this study that virtual reality is becoming a breeding ground for discrimination and harassment towards females. It is more difficult to police such behavior in virtual reality and not all MMO games have policies on such behavior as opposed to policies that exist for employees in the workplace in real life. Discrimination is not taken seriously all in online gaming and seen as a normal everyday routine for male players to subject female players to ridicule and sexual banter.

Further researches on how to get more female players involved in playing Eve Online would be interesting, what does CCP need to do to make the game more appealing to females. It could also be interesting to research what would happen if the ratio between male and female players were more even and if that would change how male players act towards female players.

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## Appendixes

The following documents are explanations on the basics of Eve Online and emails from the authors corporation.

### Appendix 1: Eve Online basics

#### High sec

High sec is the part of the Eve world that has a security status between 1 and 0,5, with in that area there are computer controlled law enforcement called the concord and the rules. If a player decides to shoot another player the concord will show up and blow the attacking parties up immediately. Players do not have the power to blow up the concord, however if enough players form a fleet they can accomplish to blow up a concord ship but they can however not win that fight because endless concords will show up until the aggressive parties have been eliminated. A player can attack another player in high sec given certain conditions. If a player drops cargo containers and another player empties or shoots at it that gives the player a kill right, also if a player shoots at another players drones in space it gives the drones owner a kill right and a fight can begin. Players within the same corporation can however shoot each other without any interference or consequences in high sec. (eve-online-game.com, n.d.).

#### Low sec

Low sec is the part of the Eve world where there are no concords guarding the players. It has a security status between 0,4 and 0,1. If a player attacks another player in low sec it will lower his security standings and there is a cool down period of 30 seconds before he can dock at a space station or jump through a gate. But no concord will show up to protect the player attacked, but if it happens at a gate, the gate guns will shoot at the aggressive player. (eve-online-game.com, n.d.)

#### Null sec

Null sec is the part of space with no laws at all. It has the security status of 0,0 and in that space there is nothing protecting players except the ones protecting each other, there are no concord's or gate guns to provide assistance. Players attacking other players will not get aggression cool down and can proceed as they want after igniting in a fight. In this part of space most of the fleet battles and player versus player battles go on. Here players have to protect their space from enemy invasions and form fleets to invade and claim new territories to claim as their own. (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.a.).

## **Player standings**

Player's standings are decided from the player's behavior in the game. If a player commits crimes in high or low sec, his security status will be affected. Initiating a fight and killing another player in low sec will for example lower the player's security status. If a player goes below a certain security status a bounty can be put on his head and players that go below -5 will be a fair kill in high sec sectors. To fix the security status a player has to hunt down enemy forces for an empire he wants to enter and reach the necessary security status to be able to fly with in that sector again. (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.b.).

## **Missions**

Missions are considered by many as an essential part of the game, especially in the beginning of the game when the player first starts of a new character. Missions can be an easy and fun way to introduce the player to the basics of EVE combat and money making. The players can use the missions to learn how to protect themselves against the four different races of the game who do not use the same kind of ammunitions and there for will not make the same kind of damage to the player's ship, in the same way the player will see a difference in how quickly he can damage a certain race with his ammunition.

When mission running the player has to constantly keep in mind the risks, if a player underestimates the missions pirates he can lose his ship quickly. This is why going through the mission guides available is a good way to learn about the dangers that can await in missions where the player can read up on who he will be up against and how many. However because there are a set number of missions that are randomly given to players, the players will in the end know the missions and what tactics to use in each one. The missions have experience levels from one to five. One being a mission a new player can handle up to five which is a mission that players have to solve in fleets because of its difficulty level. (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.c.).

## **Salvaging**

Salvaging is a good way for new players to make money in Eve, to be able to salvage the player has to train a salvaging skill, which makes him able to fit on to his ship tractor and salvaging beams. The player can then form a fleet with a mission runner and go into the missions behind him, empty the cargo holds of the wrecks and lock on to them and get

valuable plates by salvaging them. A new player that does not have the skills to run the higher level missions will earn money a lot faster by salvaging. (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.d.).

## **Corporations**

The Eve community is combined with numerous corporations. If a player wants to play the game safe he can join an Eve controlled corporation for his race. That will allow the player to run missions in high sec while enjoying the company of his corporation mates. There are corporations that emphasize on factional warfare, null sec pirating, Player versus player, anti pirate, mining, and the list goes on. Before joining a corporation the player will have to make a decision on the aim he has in the game.

Most players join corporations, the game is a social game and is mostly designed for players to co-operate with other players to succeed. Corporations with emphasis on for example player versus player will be running battle fleets and participate in both big and small battles.

Corporations provide the players with for example security, companionship, a chance for a career within the company and knowledge of more experienced players. If a player decides to join a corporation in the game, it is similar to applying for a job. The player has to go through a trial period on in an open corporation chat room where all or certain members will evaluate if the player is a good candidate for the corporation in question, then if it is decided that the player is a good match he will have to send an API key that allows the highest ranking members of the corporation to view the players skill points and training. If the player fulfills the requirements he will be allowed in to be tested further. The requirements differ between corporations in connection to what the corporation emphasis on. (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.e.).

## **Alliances**

When a number of corporations work together towards a goal in the game it is called an alliance. The purpose of an alliance is for corporations with the same goals to work together against enemy alliances. The alliances hold certain parts of the low and null sec in the game and defend their territories and try to conquer new territories. (wiki.eveonline.com, n.d.f.).

## **Player versus player**

Player versus player or pvp as it is called by players is a large part of the game. This part is all about tactics and teamwork. Today the pvp usually happens in fleet battles. The fleets are composed of pilots with different purposes for the fleet.

There are players called tacklers who have no shooting power but they fly small fast ships, lock on to the target and prevent the target to move with modules. Then there are the pilots with the powerful guns set up to jump to the tackler and take out the target. Reppers are pilots who have modules to repair their fleet members if they have taken on damage in battle.

There are specialized schools within Eve who teach the tactics of pvp and corporations often have games who build on pvp in the purpose of training newer member's skills to become efficient pvp pilots.

Pvp has nine important rules:

- Fly what you can afford to lose.
- Stay together during war.
- Follow orders especially when they are wrong.
- Don't panic.
- You are going to die.
- Don't give your enemy the fight they want.
- Never underestimate the enemy
- Knowing is only half the Battle
- Don't engage a battle you cannot win.

These are the rules that all pvp players keep in mind and the first thing that is taught regarding pvp. (Jarrod0987, n.d.).



## Appendix 2: Email: Absences & Inactivity

Absences & Inactivity

From: Imperator Ceasar

Sent: 2010.10.17 21:53

To: 104th Ranger Mobile Combat Regiment,

Just as a reminder, 6 weeks is about the maximum we can keep inactive pilots on the roster - if you're going to be away for more than 1 week, especially if your anticipated time away is longer, send an email to 104TH PILOT SCHEDULE NOTICES mailing list and let us know what is happening and when you expect to return.

Also, if you're going to be away for an extended amount of time, please pay your fees for 3 months (or longer if need be) in advance so we can keep you on the roster.

Otherwise, I will have to remove inactive pilots from the roster at or before the 6 week deadline.

WHEN YOU RETURN TO GAME, simply re-apply and we'll get you back into the 104TH ASAP so you aren't in a pickle where assets and getting attacked are concerned if you're out here in Pure Blind.

Thanks for your understanding.

Ceasar

### Appendix 3: Email: Leading By Example & the Women of The 104TH

From: Emperor Ceasar

Sent: 2010.07.08 22:22

To: Dawn74,

for your information

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RE: Leading By Example & The Women Of The 104TH

From: Emperor Ceasar

Sent: 2010.07.08 22:19

To: Alexi Lukin, antsrkool, Atraerus, Bria Veril, Ichbinuber, jojojojo, KULAK DUMFASH, menotpirate, Naemr, Natrayle Kale, Noximus, Takeo Takagi, Vanhanian,

Firstly, this email and its contents ARE NOT FOR GENERAL consumption by the 104th or RC - this is a confidential communique.

Secondly, I am not pointing to any one person here - this is pre-emptive / preventative in nature email.

I'm asking each of you to watch for any member (including yourselves) that post sexualized comments or boundary crossing comments, and end those comments immediately (in a private convo) so that our two women remain comfortable and do not feel pressured by the crush of testosterone in the 104TH and Eve in general.

Being warm and helpful is one thing, but sexualized comments and/or loaded comments filled with innuendo that can be "taken two ways" is not acceptable guys. Be sensitive, be aware and remain professional yet warm and friendly too.

We have an obligation to protect and honor our 104th women, so let's not blow it with over-the-top comments and behavior.

Thanks!

Cesar

## Appendix 4: Email: Response to the Goons and reply's the Goons

From: Emperor Ceasar

To: Darius JOHNSON, Pafoss, Psilocin, Slim Mat,

Slim & Psi -

One of my members apparently was harassed for more than an hour a night or two ago, along with a dozen or so others in empire while **SHE** was missioning. Pafoss did everything he could to get her to engage, but as I had made it clear that we could be running joint ops with SOLODRAK alliance she was unwilling to let the harassment breed recklessness in her response.

I was prepared to commit 30+ covert/black ops pilots to the anti-IT alliance cause to help SOLODRAK & NC, but I cannot in good conscience allow my pilots to fly with such provocative pilots as evidenced by Pafoss's actions. My gut tells me that your pilots are as likely to shoot my pilots for the fun of it, as they are to shoot IT exclusively or allow IT to shoot my own pilots and sit by and watch... again, for the fun of it.

I'm sorry, but at this time I cannot accomodate your invitation due to the above cited unreliabilty of some or many of your pilots.

Regards,

Ceasar

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## **Goons Response**

From: Darius JOHNSON

To: Emperor Ceasar, Pafoss, Psilocin, Slim Mat,

**your gay**

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From: Kieselguhr Kid

To: Emperor Ceasar,

**Dear sir or madam,**

**Don't worry, that girl is a guy anyway.**

**Sincerely,**

**1337th Mobile Infantry [1337th]**

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## GOONS LAST RESPONSE TO CEASAR

From: KULAK DUMFASH

To: 104th Ranger Mobile Combat Regiment,

After considering the goons last responses I would have to self-destruct all my ships and then shoot myself repeatedly in the head before I would ever fly with any of those type of people. They need to go to the top of or list, or at least close to it. Semper Fi. o7