grand theft equality

A GENDER EQUALITY RESEARCH PROJECT INTO SEXISM AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GAMING.

NAME	BOB
Gender	Male
Level	113
Description	L.A. Police Department outfit without a hat; aviator glasses; blond hair
Car Type	Blue Lamborghini

NAME	JENNIFER
Gender	Female
Level	2
Description	Red tank top; grey skirt; brown hair
Car Type	White and blue Chevrolet

I am a year 11 student. Our Head of Personal and Social Education challenged us to carry out a piece of research on an issue of our choice that we thought was important to young people in contemporary society. We would then write up our project as an individual project for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

In order to learn about how to properly carry out research, our teacher modelled it, using the subject of Gender-Equality and Gender-Based Violence. During one of our lessons, we learnt about GamerGate (see next page). I thought that this was really interesting and, as a regular gamer, and a boy, I wanted to better understand how female gamers are treated.

It wasn't complicated to do; I created two characters on Grand Theft Auto (GTA) 5 and then played for an hour as each avatar. I decided to find out how players who present as women are treated, in comparison to players who present as men. The other players would not have had any clue that I was a boy presenting as a different gender.

I created two different avatars: for the first hour of my research I was Bob, and I recorded how many invitations, messages and friend requests I received. I then played again as Jennifer.

As Bob, I didn't receive anything. I got no attention! Within the first five minutes as Jennifer, I was sent a text saying 'Hi'. I was then followed by a white Jaguar [car], honking its horn and following me down alleyways. A lot of the other game characters at the time were men, although you can't tell what gender the player really is, and Jennifer definitely attracted more attention. I really got to experience how vulnerable women can be, even when playing for just one hour!

I had to carry out secondary research, as well as this practical primary research that I found out for myself. There is a lot of research that has been carried out by people at universities, as well as newspaper and online magazine articles about gaming and gender. It is also interesting to read people's comments on gaming forums.

DIY AVATAR

Design an avatar who infiltrates video games where sexism, sexual harassment or other discriminations are present.

1. Choose a video game which you think reinforces gender stereotypes, or other inequalities and discriminations (e.g. racism, homophobia, ableism, poverty etc.)

2. Design an avatar or avatar tribe whose mission it is to address these issues.
   What would they be called?
   Would they have a motto?
   Where would they live?
   Would they have special powers?

3. See if you can bring your avatar/s to life (e.g. through animation, film, dance, drama, e-zine)

Before you begin adapting this activity for the children and young people in your setting, read the section on **Safety and Support**.

#Gamergate was the hashtag used to refer to the controversy around an anonymous harassment twitter campaign that targeted several women in the video game industry.

Anita Sarkeesian, director of **Feminist Frequency,** was attacked online for launching a **YouTube series on sexism and the sexual objectification of women in video games**.

STAYING SAFE WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING GAMES ONLINE

Childline has lots of tips on **how to keep your online gaming safe and fun:**

- **Games are meant to be fun**
- **Block players who harass you**
- **Not everyone will be friendly**
- **Keep your personal information safe**
- **What to do if you're feeling threatened**

What's the difference between equity and equality?

Project Ada is a website that covers all sorts of interesting news features, facts and interviews about girls, women and gender equality in technology. Why Ada? because nineteenth-century mathematician Ada Lovelace, was one of the world's first computer programmers. **@ProjectAda_**

Feminist Frequency is a not-for-profit educational organization that analyses modern media's relationship to societal issues such as gender, race, and sexuality. Their site includes videos to encourage viewers to critically engage with mass media.

www.shescoding.org is a project with **resources and links** to organisations for anyone who wants to learn to code or help bridge the gender gap in the field of computer science.