Fair Game
– A critical examination of gender representation in League of Legends.

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**Abstract**

In the last decades, video games have become more visible in the media landscape. With the rise of e-sport, development of infrastructure and progress in technology, online games are becoming an important part of mainstream culture.

Previous research has shown that women in video games commonly have supporting roles and are often depicted as passive victims rather than heroes. It has also been found that depictions of female video game characters to a large extent rely on stereotypes and that they are heavily sexualized in their appearance. Male video game characters are predominantly portrayed as physically strong and active heroes and villains.

In a critical content analysis, this thesis examines the representations of masculinity and femininity in one of the most consumed media texts of today, the online computer game League of Legends. Drawing on texts on gender, representation and stereotype theory, I explore how representations of masculinity and femininity in League of Legends sustains or challenges dominant structures.

The analysis of visual and textual representations show that the game to a large extent reproduces dominant codes of gender representation in general, but also that it challenges dominant codes of gender representation in the context of video games. Both male and female characters are described as active heroes with diverse background stories, but the visual representation of bodies is, to a large extent, similar to what is shown in previous research.

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1. Introduction and background

In the last decades the video game industry has grown significantly, and is now having a turnover larger than both the music industry and the film industry in many countries, it is becoming more visible in the media landscape and part of mainstream culture.¹ Traditionally video games and gaming have been seen as child's play or geek culture, but this is no longer valid as the gaming audience has grown along with the industry, and now consists of men and women of different ages and backgrounds. As a result video game producers now face a more varied audience and video games have gained cultural importance in society.

Women have always been marginalized in gaming culture and gaming communities. The field has traditionally been seen as male territory, where men have dominated both the production and consumption of video games. As such video games have been produced by men, with a male audience in mind. When speaking of women and gaming, it is commonly assumed (or misconceived) that, for instance, men and women prefer different kinds of games, that women are not as skilled as men, or that women just don't play video games.² ³ These examples of assumptions suggest how women are marginalized in the gaming culture/community – or at least seen as minorities or others, something I will return to further on. Although, recent statistics from the Entertainment Software Association show that 48% of gamers are female.⁴ Market research firm PC Data Online found in 2005 that women made up 39% of all active gamers in the United States – but still the targeted audience for video games in general remains to be men, and female gamers are typically either invisible or seen as anomalies or “oddballs”.⁵

In this thesis I will analyze representations of masculinity and femininity in one of the currently most popular online video games called League of Legends. The game was released in 2008,

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developed by Riot Games, and has grown steadily ever since. *League of Legends* is a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game, which is a subgenre of the real-time strategy genre. The player controls a selected character and competes in a team-based battle with the goal to destroy the enemy team’s base. Recent numbers from Riot Games show that *League of Legends* is the world’s most played video game by hours played per month and that the game's popularity beats many other popular games and other media (e.g. visitors to Instagram, Facebook page likes). These statistics were published in 2012, and since then the game has grown in more ways than player numbers. *League of Legends* is not only consumed by actively playing the game, but also has a large community of casual gamers that stream their matches online and, of course, people who watch the streams, as well as a well-established e-sport scene where the game is played competitively in organized tournaments with millions of viewers. As such *League of Legends* reaches a vast and diverse audience in different contexts, which makes it an important game to study.

Gender stereotypes are present in a wide range of media texts, from music to film to novels – and video games are no exception. The discussion about male and female stereotypes in video games is one that anyone even remotely interested in video games has surely heard of. What is important is that stereotypes of men and women are constantly reproduced in media texts and that they say something about our society – both in reproduction of already accepted norms and ideologies, in resistance to accepted norms and ideologies, but also in creating new norms and ideologies. As video games have grown in popularity, to the extent that they can be considered as mainstream media, leisure activities in many forms, and even as work (e-sport), makes them an important field to study in relation to representations. Mediated popular culture has been an important research area during the growth of feminist media studies. Madeleine Kleberg argues that the media content can never function as a reflection of reality, but rather a selection, a representation and a construction of reality. She writes that instead of reflecting society, society is created by making it into a phenomenon that we perceive together through the media. Hence it is important to deconstruct the way the media establishes, for instance, the dichotomy of

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woman/man. The texts and images that are used to maintain this dichotomy need to be scrutinized and revealed. Kleberg also draws on the notion that the use of stereotypes can be connected to socialization processes, meaning that representations in the media might function as edifying and creating a model for how we expect things to be – both in negative and positive aspects.

Although gender representations in the media have been studied to a large extent, studies on video games are not that common. Most of the media studies on video games regard technology, effects of playing violent games, identity forming in role playing games etc. Other studies have taken a quantitative approach and measured the number of male and female characters across multiple popular games. For instance, Dmitri Williams et al. analyzed representations of gender, race and age in video game characters – by comparing the results in relation to the actual population in the United States they aimed to determine whether representations were accurate or not. Another type of study that is a recurrent theme are those focusing on a single character – like the numerous studies that have been conducted about the game Tomb Raider, which created quite a stir in the 1990s in having a sexualized female heroine as main character. Like in Lara Croft: Feminist Icon or Cyberbimbo, where Helen W. Kennedy analyzes the Tomb Raider heroine as an object of representation and how the act of playing Tomb Raider affects the relationship between spectator and spectacle.

Consequently there is a gap in research on video games, where qualitative studies on representation of contemporary games are indeed underrepresented. Furthermore, the MOBA genre has been largely untouched by research at all, and a game such as League of Legends – where multiple characters, of different races and sexes, are deemed equally powerful, non customizable by the player (except from buying premade outfits), and interchangeable from one match to another – represent a type of game that should be examined separately.

Considering that League of Legends is one of the most popular games, that its player base is

8 M Kleberg, p. 17.
9 Ibid. p. 18.
already big but also growing I believe that it is relevant and important to examine the gender ideologies and norms that are (re)produced in it, as it is one of the most consumed media texts today. The game has over 70 million active monthly users, 7.5 million concurrent users on a normal day and 27 million active daily players – still only 10 percent of the League of Legends player base are female. As women are marginalized in the gaming culture/community there is a need to critically examine games that are this popular from a gender perspective. As one of the leading games/game developers I believe that League of Legends/Riot Games can affect both audience and other game developers, as they are likely to inspire gamers and other games to further reproduce the form and content that has proven to succeed.

1.1 Statement of purpose

My aim with this thesis is to critically examine how, as a media text, the game League of Legends (re)produces gender ideologies through representations of masculinity and femininity. The main question for this study is: How is masculinity and femininity constructed in League of Legends? In order to answer this I have constructed three research questions. These three questions I believe can provide insight into how game characters are constructed as male or female, and whether they continue to reinforce gender ideologies that exist in the digital gaming culture. Looking at both visual representations, in-game talk, and written background stories will provide a comprehensive image about the characters in the game.

1.2 Research questions

1. How is masculinity and femininity represented visually and textually in League of Legends?
2. What histories and characteristics are given to male and female characters in League of Legends? What archetypes can be found in the material?
3. How are these representations negotiating stereotypes and norms about gender?
4. How are gender differences emphasized?

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2. The current state of the field

In this section I will give an account for the field of video game research that focuses on gender issues. A selection of previous research will be presented in a thematic manner to contextualize my research in this field. As will be discussed, the majority of the research that touches upon these questions is focused around gender performance and identity construction within massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) – which points towards a gap in research about representations of gender in video games where characters are already made and not played in a first person role-playing environment. Other researchers have focused on the representation and lack of playable female characters in platform games, something that also leaves the gap of multiplayer online battle arena games (MOBAs), such as League of Legends, that differ much from the story driven platform games.

2.1 Female exclusion from the video game culture

As will be discussed in this chapter, it is commonly believed that girls do not like to play games that are violent, competitive or strategic in their nature – but that they rather turn to simple mobile games, cooperative games or social games. A counterargument to these beliefs is that women are not invited into the "hardcore" gaming world due to e.g. technological access, gaming experience, and the appearance and involvement of female game characters. Although this has been researched to some extent before, it has been a while and I am interested in seeing what the situation is like in contemporary games. Also, this genre (MOBA) has been somewhat overlooked as previous gender-based games research has mostly focused on role playing games (RPGs), where the player creates his/her own character and story. As mentioned women are marginalized in the gaming culture as a whole. Gaming is still seen as a masculine activity and women participating in this activity are seen as anomalies. Researchers have identified certain factors that reinforce the marginalization of female gamers and I will hereby account for some of them.

Jo Bryce, Jason Rutter and Cath Sullivan examined the gender dynamics of computer gaming, how it is identified as a masculine activity and in what ways women are marginalized from this activity. They argue that “social relationships, ordinary practices, access to technology and
gendering of space” affects female participation in gaming activities beyond the game itself. As such they have identified three essential aspects to consider when studying the female exclusion from the gaming culture; the access to gaming technology, the spaces in which games are played, and the game content. In studying gaming spaces they conclude that video game technologies, such as consoles and computers, are culturally not belonging to women. Gaming usually takes place in the home, and the gaming devices in home environments are often located in a male siblings room – giving female children spatial restrictions to the technology. In cases when the gaming equipment is located in neutral spaces, e.g. living rooms, there are often conflicts about them as they are still seen as symbolically belonging to the male family members. Even if gaming technologies, with their increase in popularity, are becoming more common in households the old patterns of access and control are still in place and continue to restrict female participation.

Jennifer Jenson and Suzanne de Castell discuss the discursive traps that researchers constantly put themselves in, for instance in theorizing over what types of games male and female gamers prefer. Since the 1990s game developers have been trying to reach a female audience by creating games that would appeal to girls. Jenson and Castell write that in discussions about "girl-friendly" game design it is assumed that girls like cooperative games, whereas boys like competitive games. Their point is that these concepts (cooperation and competition) must be theorized, and conclude that surely all video games contain some aspect of competition – though in different ways. Jenson and Castell argue that researchers must consider that the boys in their studies have more experience with games, and hence more experience with competition in games – and that the girls must be at a comparable experience level in order to draw probable conclusions about gender-based differences in game play. Further they write that in their own studies, results were radically different when taking the experience level into account.

In their studies on youths between 12 and 13 years old they found that girls were as eager as

14 Ibid. p. 185.
16 Ibid. p. 195.
boys to spend time with a game and that the gender performativity (e.g. boys bragging about their skill and girls degrading themselves and asking for help) decreased as their skills in the game increased.\(^{18}\) In earlier studies Jenson and Castell had noticed that boys who play video games tend to talk a lot less than girls, but by coupling this with the experience level of the two groups it was later discovered that this had to do with how well they knew the game – hence punching hole in the assumption of cooperation between girls.

These types of studies indicate that there isn't really a way one can say that boys and girls, men and women, like different types of games. As girls and women have always been excluded from digital game culture, they have never gotten the experience needed to enjoy more complex games. Another factor in this is that girls often play "puzzle, online, free games" while their male counterparts play "console games that cost money" – and that girls do not have equal access to these games, a conclusion similar to that of Bryce, Rutter & Sullivan.\(^{19}\) Even though *League of Legends* is a free-to-play online game, only 10% of the player base consists of women. And even though in a populist point of view it is a competitive "boys' game", my starting point is that this is not the case, and that therefore there must be another explanation to why women refrain from playing *League of Legends*. I believe that it is more likely that women have not been invited into this game community, or this genre, and that its representations of masculinity and femininity are a part of the gatekeeping that allow men to participate, but not women.

In *Gender and Sexuality in Online Game Cultures*, Malin Sveningsson investigates how female gamers experience games, gaming activities and gaming cultures. The game she studies is *World of Warcraft*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) – in which the player creates his/her own character and role-plays it in a seemingly endless game world.

Sveningsson argues that alongside the well-documented sexism and harassment of female gamers, there is also some positive discrimination.\(^{20}\) For instance, in her autoethnographical studies as well as interviewee answers, she noted that much help and in-game gifts was given to

female gamers in *World of Warcraft*. Female players were offered help with quests and levelling up their characters even if they did not ask for it. And if they asked for it went without saying that they got immediate help, as opposed to male players. This, the respondents claimed, is due to the rarity of encountering female players – and male players have been pretending to be a female in order to get this "special treatment"\(^{21}\).

Although, the positive discrimination doesn't come for free – in return female players are expected to have certain qualities and positions in the gaming community, that somehow contributes to the guild. Amongst other things, female players are expected to bring a friendly and calming attitude, they are expected to be vulnerable and in need of protection and they are expected to have little experience with technology and gaming, and act as audience for male performances of skill.\(^{22}\)

Sveningsson's findings of the expected female qualities somewhat correlate with Nicholas Taylor, Jen Jenson and Suzanne de Castell's study on female participation in the e-sport community. They investigated women's roles in professional Halo tournaments, and identified three different roles that women could take in this community; Halo hoes, cheerleaders and booth babes. Halo hoes are described by the community as girl gamers that come to tournaments only to flirt with successful male gamers; cheerleaders are mothers that come just to cheer on their sons' team and organize the logistics in going to tournaments; booth babes are models that promote products at exhibits at the events.\(^{23}\) Taylor, Jenson and de Castell argue that all of these roles are maintained in a male technocultural community, and that even if the 'cheerleader mom' functions more like a general manager and the 'Halo hoe' is really a professional female Halo player - they will be seen or accepted by the community as nothing more than 'cheerleaders' or 'Halo hoes'.\(^{24}\)

Regarding the positive discrimination of female gamers that Sveningsson witnessed, I believe it is genre specific as MMORPGs, such as *World of Warcraft*, to a large extent is based on guilds (or teams) that stick together for a long time and progress through the game together, get to know each other etc.

\(^{22}\) Ibid. p. 41-57.
\(^{24}\) Ibid. p. 249.
As such it is more important to make everyone in the guild feel welcome and perform good. In MOBAs, such as *League of Legends*, the individual progress is more important and the competitive nature of it makes helping new players insignificant, since you will probably not meet them again, and there is no way of gifting items that affect the game in any way. This is an important note to make, since the majority of gender and games research focuses on MMORPGs, and I believe that studies on MMORPGs cannot be said to reflect the whole of the gaming community or culture.

### 2.2 Gender representation in video games

Regarding representation of gender in video games there are some recurrent themes in many studies. The most noted characteristics of video games in general are that women are underrepresented and that when they are there, they are stereotypically represented – this is also the most dominant focus in previous research.\(^\text{25}\) Bryce, Rutter & Sullivan write that there is a notable lack of studies that examine representations of masculinity in video games, and that it is just as important as studying representations of femininity.\(^\text{26}\) They also note that this is changing – that the increasing number of strong female characters, the possibility to design the appearance and gender of a game character in many games, and the increase in female gaming clans are evidence of a changing climate in the gaming culture. But still, this must be considered as the context of gaming still being largely identified as a masculine culture.\(^\text{27}\)

Nicole Martins et al. conducted a research project where 1074 adult male video game characters, from the 150 most popular games at the time, were analyzed. The video game characters were measured over chest, waist, hip, head, and height and then compared to the average American male. The aim of this study was to examine whether male characters were realistically portrayed in video games.\(^\text{28}\) The results showed that on every dimension measured the video game characters were significantly larger than the average American male.\(^\text{29}\) Although, the sample did not reflect mainstream media's ideal of the V-shaped (overly muscular) man, but rather a


\(^{26}\) Ibid. p. 200-201.

\(^{27}\) Ibid. p. 200.


\(^{29}\) Ibid. p. 47.
"blockier" body that was simply wider and taller than the real life males – meaning that the proportions of the game character bodies were not overly exaggerated.30 Martins et al. later conducted a similar research project, focusing on female bodies. Here, the sample consisted of 134 adult female video game characters from the 150 most popular games at the time. The female characters were measured in the same way as the men were in the previous study.31 The results of this study showed that female video game characters had larger heads and markedly thinner and smaller bodies than the average American woman. Martins et al. argue that this supports the same ideals of thinness that are dominant in other mainstream media.32 These kinds of studies do not really say anything about representation – as mentioned before, contents of the media cannot be seen as a reflection of society and measuring bodies in order to get an average value that represents all others seems far fetched. Of course video games, as well as any other media, must have the right to produce fantasies or fantasy beings – the question is not whether the content reflects society, but rather how society is represented within it and what negotiations and alternatives that are available for female and male characters. Furthermore, gender is heavily coded in other ways than body shapes (like clothes, facial features, stories, personalities etc.) – something that these kinds of studies completely fail to acknowledge.

Charles Dickerman et al. discuss representations of gender in old and contemporary (2008) video games. They argue that research on video games must be carried out regularly, since the rapid advances in technology create greater resemblances to real environments and characters and that old games leave more to the imagination of the player.33 Their conclusions show that the number of women in video games is scarce, that female characters have minor parts in the games, usually as victims, and that they are portrayed in "highly sexual" ways. Male characters are often defined as either hero or villain, they carry large weapons and are often human or monster.34 Female characters are often princesses or damsels in distress, incapable and helpless, and wearing revealing clothing on disproportionate bodies.35 Dickerman et al. argue that the physical

30 N Martins, D Williams, R A. Ratan & K Harrison, 'Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters', p. 47.
31 Ibid. p. 827.
32 Ibid. p. 831.
34 Ibid. p. 23.
35 Ibid.
representations of gender in the majority of video games fall into the societal norms about beauty.

Berrin Beasley and Tracy Collins Standley looked at how clothing indicates gender role stereotyping in video games. 597 video game characters were coded and it was duly noted, also in this study, that female characters were largely underrepresented. Beasley and Collins Standley argue that since games are designed for repeated play they are experienced multiple times. This means that they constantly reinforce the social messages that they communicate. In reviewing previous research they note that video game research "as recent as 5 years ago is questionable in its application to modern game versions". This statement matches the argument which Dickerman et al. made, suggesting that research on video games should be made at regular intervals in order to be up to date. The female characters in the sample were concluded to be less clothed than the male characters, showing more skin and bringing attention to their bodies in general and breast in specific – something that Beasley and Collins Standley argue carries "strong sexual meaning for the young boys who predominantly play these games".

Many games are said to be unappealing to female gamers, due to themes of war, crime, sport etc., that are generally seen as masculine themes. Bryce, Rutter & Sullivan write that "it is not necessarily digital games which are unappealing to certain females, but the way in which the game aesthetics are designed primarily to cater for male interests". This adds to the discussion that Jenson & de Castell brought up about gaming experience, that the theme of the game is not a factor in determining who likes to play it – but that there are other factors that play in, like game aesthetics and experience.

As video games exist in a wider context of popular culture and mainstream media, to alter or reduce stereotypical representation of femininity in video games alone would not be effective.

37 Ibid. p. 282.
38 Ibid. p. 289.
40 Ibid. p. 199.
This change must be conducted in all popular media, as the stereotypical representations originate in cultural and societal structures. Rutter, Bryce & Sullivan write that “an understanding of gender and digital games must incorporate a recognition of the role of societal gender stereotypes and role expectations” in addition to analyzing the game content.

A common discussion in these types of research projects is how female characters have been portrayed traditionally. Behm-Morawitz and Mastro write that women are vastly underrepresented in video games, that they often have the role of "damsel in distress", that their "female sexuality" is often accentuated. They also note that there are heroic women, although they are commonly not playable and in the end defined by their sexuality.

2.3 Player co-production and the importance of paratexts

Jonathan Gray writes about paratexts in relation to film and television, but I am confident in that the same theory can be applied to video games. Gray writes that "rarely if ever can a film or program serve as the only source of information about the text" and that there are several peripheral texts, or paratexts, that help form a first impression or alter the reading of the actual text. In other words, paratexts are texts that prepare the reader for other texts.

Paratexts influence the first reading of a text, it tells the reader what to expect from it and guides the initial understanding of it. When starting to playing a game, the player already has an impression of it and the characters in it, the reading of the content is influenced by the information we have been given prior to playing the game. This might be in the form of commercials, trailers etc. As the game itself is surrounded by paratexts, in this case in the form of images (splash arts) and background stories, frames are set that makes the player see the game in a certain way. Gray writes that "paratexts play as much of a role as does the film or television program itself in constructing how different audience members will construct this ideal text".

43 E Behm-Morawitz & D Mastro, 'The Effects of the Sexualization of Female Video Game Characters on Gender Stereotyping and Female Self-Concept', Sex Roles, Vol. 61, No. 11, 2009, p. 809.
47 Ibid. p. 11.
By reading the background stories and looking at the splash arts that precede the in-game experience, the audience will know what to expect and how to interpret it.

Gray writes that “each paratext acts like an airlock to acclimatize us to a certain text, and it demands or suggests certain reading strategies”.\footnote{\textit{J Gray}, \textit{Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts}, p. 25.} Hence the background stories and the splash art, that both exist on a web page separate from the game client as well as in the game client, have a function of setting the tone for how players perceive the game as a whole, and what roles the characters have in the game universe. Both the background stories and the splash arts are easily accessible from many platforms, as well as from the game client. Although, in order to read the background stories players must click the champion profile – whereas the splash arts are inevitable due to the fact that the loading screen for each match (last 1-3 minutes) shows the splash arts for all the champions chosen for the current game (they can, of course, also be viewed separately in the champion profiles). The splash arts also correspond with the avatars that are controlled by the players in the actual matches. As such, the visual aspect is more present, and the background stories are available for those with an interest.

Although, paratexts do not only include texts produced by the industry – but also texts produced by the audience or the community surrounding the text in question. Fans are no longer simply an audience for popular texts, Gray argues that fans are actively participating in constructing and circulating textual meaning connected to the text.\footnote{Ibid. p. 145.} Similarly, Aphra Kerr discusses audience co-production of media texts and writes that the traditional approach to production in most media and games textbooks tends to focus on professional media workers and private companies who deliver finished artifacts to their users.\footnote{A Kerr, ‘Player Production and Innovation in Online Games: Time for New Rules?’, in G Crawford, V K. Gosling & B Light (eds.), \textit{Gamers: The Social and Cultural Significance of Online Games}, Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 25.} She continues describing how the development of online multiplayer games and networked PC and console games has made the role of the professional producer shift to service activities and that the role of the player has shifted towards incorporating productive roles – like content generation, testing etc.\footnote{Ibid.} Kerr argues that nowadays the production of online video games does not stop when the game is launched and that the relation between the professional producers and the game players is important for the game's...

\cite{Gray2007}
\cite{Kerr2011a}
\cite{Kerr2011b}
\cite{Kerr2011c}
continued success.\textsuperscript{52}

As for \textit{League of Legends}, player co-production takes the form of beta testing new champions, items and environments as well as balance changes, audial- and visual changes. But more importantly, players take an active part in the production of new items, characters and skins for the game (both mechanics, avatar visual appearance, splash arts and background stories). This mostly happens in the \textit{League of Legends} online forums, where there are sections where players are encouraged to discuss existing content and propose new content. This is a very active community. Many of the characters in the game, as well as many skins, are picked up from the forums – and existing material is often changed due to players' requests.

Gray writes that fan fiction “has been seen as a paratext with which fans can re-purpose characters, whether by adding reflection on issues absent from the show, expanding the generic repertoire of the show [...] or multiple other strategies that reclaim ownership of the text, its characters, and its meanings”\textsuperscript{53}. He continues, arguing that creating paratexts is a power to contribute, augment and personalize a textual world, and that media companies often filter this kind of user produced content – deciding what can be circulated and what can not, what fits the image of the company and what does not\textsuperscript{54}. Regarding \textit{League of Legends} and Riot Games, this kind of filtering is absent – the forum is open for anyone who wants to contribute and many times character, item or skin ideas are picked up by the developers and created professionally for the game. This conforms to the idea that media companies can reinforce their own meanings by picking up certain ideas from the forums, that match their vision and echo their own paratextual meanings\textsuperscript{55}.

To conclude, the paratexts that are present around \textit{League of Legends} all help the players form reading strategies for the material. It sets the tone for how the game is read, who it is for and what to expect from it – and the ideologies of masculinity and femininity are thus preconceived prior, or in parallel to, playing the game. By inviting players to actively participate in the

\textsuperscript{53} J Gray, \textit{Show Sold Separately}, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. p 165.
\textsuperscript{55} J Gray, \textit{Show Sold Separately}, p .165.
production and editing of paratexts, and actually incorporating player-made content – the importance of the paratexts is raised. It shows how the community around *League of Legends* together with the professional producers decide how the game and its paratexts should look, what aspects are important in the production of new characters or how old characters should be changed – and ultimately who it is for.
3. Introducing league of legends

As mentioned, *League of Legends* is a MOBA game. I will not dwell on discussing the game interface or mechanics, but in order to create a greater understanding for the study I will briefly describe how the game is most commonly played and what importance the characters and in-game roles have for the experience of playing.

3.1 The basics of the game

In short *League of Legends* is a team game, where two opposing teams meet on a map where certain objectives must be taken to win the match. Every player picks one champion per match and a typical match lasts approximately 40 minutes. There are currently 3 maps, 123 champions, and 191 items available in the game.

The most commonly played map (both casually and competitively) is called Summoner’s Rift – this map consists of three lanes, each team has a nexus that is protected by three towers and one inhibitor per lane. The main objective is to destroy the enemy team’s base, to do this the team must destroy the towers and inhibitors first. At the same time the team players fight each other and minions. Killing an enemy champion or minion gives the player gold that can be used to buy in-game items that either protect, buff or give the champions more damage.

Of course, the game can be played however the individual player wants to, but in order to ensure victory for one's team players often follow the current meta-game that is played in the
professional scene. The meta-game dictates what types of champions that are supposed to go in what lane, what items each champion should buy in the game, what objectives to take in what order etc. Currently a tank or fighter is played in the top lane, a mage or assassin champion in the middle lane, a support or tank champion and a marksman champion in the bottom lane, and lastly one champion goes in the jungle between the lanes. The champion in the jungle has his/her own objectives that regularly spawn in the jungle and provide gold and buffs. In between spawns he/she goes to the other lanes and helps the champion in that lane to kill their opponent(s).

League of Legends does not suffer from under-representation of women to any remarkable extent, there are in fact many female champions – they are all available to play and function as main character for the player that has selected her. Furthermore, the female champions are equally powerful as the male champions in the respective roles. This is an aspect in which League of Legends differs from many other video games, as the previous research points out a scarce number of female video game characters and the passive way in which they are portrayed. The equality of power is due to the constant balancing of both champions and in-game items, that Riot Games carries out through regular game patches (roughly once a month), because what counts in League of Legends is not which champion a player chooses to play, but rather how well he/she plays it, how good the player is with the game mechanics and what strategies the team as a whole brings into play.

3.2 The character in-game roles

Here follows brief explanations for the character in-game roles. The in-game roles refer to the roles that have been assigned by the developer, Riot Games. These roles are determined by the character's abilities and mechanics, and reflect what responsibilities the character has in a team.

**Assassin:** Assassins are agile champions that focus on killing high damage dealers in the enemy team. They are usually easily killed, to balance their high damage output. Assassin are what might be called 'high risk, high reward' champions, as they promote an aggressive playstyle. Assassins are used in the game if there is no mage in the team, and vice versa. Their goals are to gain as

56 See Fig. 3.1 for reference.
much gold as possible by killing minions and champions.

**Fighter:** The fighters are melee ranged champions, meaning they are in the middle of the fight. A fighter deals damage over a longer period of time, using both damaging abilities and disrupting the enemy. These champions both have damage output and a large amount of health points so that they can survive longer.

**Mage:** Mages cast spells that do large amounts of damage in a short period of time. Mages are seen as magic counterparts to the marksmen, as it is a necessary source of damage for a team (unless the team has an assassin). They often have some amount of crowd control, but mostly spells that damage the enemy. The mages are positioned in the back line of fights, meaning they are supposed to deal damage from a distance since they are easily killed. Their goals are to gain as much gold as possible by killing minions and champions.

**Marksman:** The marksman is the main damage dealer in a team. His/her responsibility is to constantly attack enemy champions and to kill as many minions (non-playable characters that provide gold) as possible by auto-attacking (all champions can shoot projectiles, aside from their abilities). These characters normally have very little defense, and are easily killed if not protected by other team members. The marksman's abilities are usually damage-oriented, although some have some sort of escape ability to be able to get away safely from dangerous situations. These characters are supposed to attack from a distance since they are so easily killed.

**Support:** The support is a protector, these types of characters usually go together with the marksman, to help him/her in various ways. The supports only deal a very small amount of damage, instead their abilities are focused around providing shields, healing, increase defensive or offensive stats for team members, and disrupting the enemy. The support also has the main responsibility in providing vision for the team by putting out *warding totems* – trinkets that show otherwise unseen parts of the map.

**Tank:** The tank is the front line of a team. These characters are often big, have more health points, buy defensive items that provide extra protection, and disrupts the enemy team's damage dealers
in fights. These characters can endure taking a lot of damage and are supposed to rush in to the enemy team and control them. Their abilities are not dealing very much damage, but rather aim at disrupting the enemy.
4. Theoretical framework and approaches

The question of identity is a central question in the study of video games, in this context called virtual identity. The concept of virtual identity basically incorporates the possibility to create an online persona when communicating online, whether it is on a social network or in an online game. It is, as Jacob van Kokswijk puts it, "a perceived view of who you are online" or, as Peter Nagy and Bernadett Koles put it, an opportunity to create an identity "which can be moulded according to [the player's] desires and expectations" without being confined by physical realities and existential limitations.57,58 As players are anonymous online they are given the chance to be flexible with their identity in online spaces and also with their notions of gender. Even though League of Legends is not a game where one single character is created by the user, the game provides already constructed identities and persons available to play – and these in turn provide the player with perceptions of gender.

As discussed earlier, the most common approach to studying gender in online games is to examine the construction of identities in role playing games. Here there are two competing sides theorizing on how gender functions in virtual environments, for which I will give a brief account of. On the one hand it is argued that without the constraints of a physical body there is no binary division between sexes. Gender then becomes something fluid and transcendent, which means that players are encouraged and will experiment with gender outside of the societal boundaries that they are normally used to.59 On the other hand it is argued that due to the fact that the persons behind the screens are physical bodies with actual identities, the ideas they have about gender will be repeated in the virtual environment because they cannot refrain from their preconceived understandings of gender.60 Here the concept of gender might even become more strict than in reality as the players use stereotypical constructions to make sense of the virtual identities.

Although, for the purpose of this thesis I will not rely on theories that connect virtual environments and gender, as *League of Legends* does not give the players the opportunity to create virtual identities to be played out with their own characters. All the characters in the game, and their respective identities, are already constructed beforehand and thus I see it more fitting to use traditional gender theory connected to questions of representation and stereotyping. The area of gender research is large, and I have chosen to highlight the ideas and concepts that are relevant for my thesis – as such, the thoughts about performing a gendered identity online will not be represented here. The section that follows will give accounts for discussions and theories on gender and media images provided by Raewyn Connell and Yvonne Hirdman – two prominent researchers within the field of gender studies. In order to merge gender theory with my material it is also important to discuss theories on stereotypes and representation, for which Stuart Hall will be a central theorist together with Myra McDonald and Kenneth MacKinnon.

To clarify my point of departure, in agreement with the following chapter I believe that modern day Western society is governed by patriarchal structures that affect both society as a whole as well as the individual that is acting within this society. Throughout this thesis I use a binary understanding of gender as either male or female – although, I do have a wider understanding that gender and sex is not necessarily coded in these two blunt categories. I have made this demarcation because it correlates with my theory, method and material and facilitates an analysis for this thesis.

### 4.1 Introduction to the concept of gender

In everyday life we normally take gender for granted. We instantly recognize a person as a man or a woman, girl or boy. We arrange much of our everyday business around the distinction. [...] These arrangements are so common, so familiar, that they can seem part of the order of nature.61

Societies and communities have norms and expectations regarding how its members should act, look and be. Although, the norms are not the same for everyone – there are also norms about how a person that identifies with a specific sex is supposed to act, look and be – these are gender roles

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that arrange our everyday lives without us even thinking about them. The difference between sex and gender has been heavily debated over the years – theorists argue that there is no difference, or that both sex and gender are socially constructed, or that only one of the two is socially constructed. The most common position taken is that sex regards the biological and anatomical attributes that separate women and men, whereas gender regards the psychological and cultural ideas that ascribe women and men different attributes, or expects them to have certain attributes. It is important to make this distinction since many of the perceived differences between women and men are not biological, but socially constructed ideas about what is feminine and masculine. Being a man or a woman is not a fixed state, it is rather constantly under construction. Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”, successfully summarizing that the aspect of gender in one’s identity is acquired over time and under constant negotiation. Raewyn Connell adds to this statement writing that “one is not born masculine, but acquires and enacts masculinity, and so becomes a man”.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation movement emerged – a new awareness about societal inequalities and differences grew, and along with it a new terminology. The word 'gender' was growing in popularity and shifted from being a word describing distinctions of nouns (in grammar) to also refer to distinctions of sex in denoted objects. The most common usage of the term at that time referred to "the cultural difference of women from men, based on the biological division between male and female". The core of the concept of gender rested in dichotomy and difference. Connell disagrees with this idea and argues that a definition based on dichotomy will rule out gender differences among women, and among men – which are also highly important for the understanding of the hierarchy that the gender structures create. The core should instead rest in social relations, which is what construct and sustain the gender order. By seeing it from this perspective differences and power hierarchies among women and among men also become visible. Furthermore Connell writes that gender in no way is static and that there is no 'true gender' – it appears different in different cultures, and also over time.

In short gender must be seen as a social structure, based on bodily differences and social

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64 Ibid. p. 8.
65 Ibid. p. 9.
66 Ibid. p. 10.
relations, that is under constant renegotiation and differs depending on the cultural context. As such, the interpretations of the material that I, as a researcher, make in this thesis will be from a Western cultural perspective in the 21st century. Similarly, the content of the material must also be regarded as belonging to this time and place – as it can in no way represent other times or places.

Connell outlines what she believes are the three most influential ways in which differences between the sexes are approached, these approaches all focus on how the body functions in creating differences, since a person's gender is decided primarily based on her or his physical sex. She calls them *the body as machine, the two realms and the body as canvas*. Approaches of *the body as machine* refers to theorists who claim that the male and female bodies have innate differences that form different behaviors in women and men, for example; men are stronger and faster, women are more proficient with fiddly work, men are aggressive and women are nurturing, men are rational and women are intuitive. By looking at it in this way, it is explained that men get the top positions in the job market because of their high testosterone levels – that grant them an "aggression advantage" in the competition for jobs. From this point of view it is believed that the gender order runs by itself, much like a machine, and it is independent of society, as the differences are innate. The second approach, *the two realms*, proposes that there is a difference between sex and gender, where sex represents the biological fact and gender represents the social fact. This view had its breakthrough in the 1970s and showed that women's subordination could not be justified by biology and created an idea of two realms that separated biological differences from culturally constructed differences. The idea here was that society makes choices regarding what gendered behaviors to promote and sustain, and that by making other choices oppressive gender arrangements could be completely abolished. Reform agendas were made towards this idea in many instances of society, among them to influence images in the media and to revoke social stereotypes in the educational system that would affect children's view of suitable jobs for women and men. The third approach, *the body as canvas*, has a starting point in believing that the body is a canvas that society paints on. It derives from Michel Foucault’s notion that categories of people are interwoven with social disciplines that police their

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68 Ibid. p. 34.
69 Ibid.
bodies – which was turned into theory about gendered bodies as a result of society’s disciplinary practices about the body. In this point of view, gender differences are believed to be governed exclusively by the social realm.

It is clear that the last decades have been filled with different interpretations, beliefs and theories about what gender is and how it functions. The key concept in all three approaches is still the same; women and men follow a general set of expectation that is bound to their sexes.\(^7\)

4.2 The gender hierarchy and hegemonic masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.\(^1\)

As briefly mentioned before, there are not just presupposed differences, and power relations, between men and women – but also among men and among women. In early gender studies the term sex role was used to described the socially constructed differences for men and women. This term recognized that there were fundamental differences to how men and women were expected to look, be and act. Although, it held true that there was only two possible sex roles – male role, and female role – and that there was nothing in between aside from deviance.\(^2\) This has since been argued against by many researchers, among them Raewyn Connell and Yvonne Hirdman. Instead, a theory of a gender order, or gender hierarchy, has emerged. Here it is argued that there is a variety of masculinities and femininities that co-exist and act in a gender order, or gender hierarchy.

In her book *Masculinities*, Connell argues that there are several masculinities that co-exist. The notion of there just being one male role is deserted, although there is one type of masculinity that overrides the other types – the hegemonic masculinity. The term hegemony has its roots in Antonio Gramsci’s analysis on class relations, and refers to the cultural dynamic in which one

\(^7\) R W. Connell, *Gender*, p. 40.
societal group claims and sustains leading positions in social life. In other words, hegemony represents the power over how society and its inhabitants are viewed and valued, a power that the leading class practices, alongside their economic and political dominance. It is an ideology where dominant groups in society have, and keep, power in a way that is not questioned. Applying this term on a type of masculinity, Connell writes that “at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted”. But this hegemony is not fixed or permanent, as it is bound by place and time – it is under constant change, conditions can change and new groups can challenge old structures to create a new hegemony. The hegemonic masculinity can thereby be described as the type of masculinity that is currently ideal, a commonly accepted strategy.

Yvonne Hirdman writes that the gender order is based around two defining "laws"; being a man is not being a woman, and being a man is being the norm. Difference between the sexes is essential to the gender order and this is sustained by labeling men and women with dichotomies, by separating male and female traits, activities, and places as opposites.

Connell writes that the defining premise, around which the gender hierarchy is constructed, is men’s superiority and dominance over women. The hegemonic masculinity sits at the top of the hierarchy – this group creates and sustains the gender hegemony in society and expresses itself, for instance, through the media, in education, in discourse and in ideology. At the bottom of the hierarchy women and homosexual men are situated. Some heterosexual men might be outside of the hegemonic masculinity but are never at the bottom of the hierarchy, nevertheless they are subordinated. The exclusion from the hegemonic masculinity is marked by, among other things, insults like sissy, motherfucker, coward, mama's boy etc. Connell argues that it is femininity which forms the basis for this symbolic degradation. And thus, being feminine is used as a means to describe something that is not as good as being masculine.

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
77 Ibid. p. 71.
79 Ibid. p. 79.
Something that is important to bear in mind is that the standards of the hegemonic masculinity are only met by a few men – the hegemonic masculinity functions more as an ideal image of what a man should be, than a masculinity actually practiced. But even if the majority of men do not live up to these standards, they can benefit from (or take advantage of) the patriarchal dividend, meaning the advantages that men have over the female subordination.\footnote{R.W Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p. 79.}

### 4.3 On representation and stereotypes

Stuart Hall, sociologist and cultural theorist, writes that the essence of culture is about shared meanings. Language is the medium through which we make sense of things, and it is through language that meaning is produced and exchanged. He argues that language is the central process by which meaning is produced.\footnote{S Hall (ed.), \textit{Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices}, Sage Publications, London, 1997, p. 1.} With language we can use different signs (images, written text, sounds, objects etc.) to symbolize things in the 'real world'. It can also reference imaginary things or abstract ideas like, for instance, that the color black stands for evil and the color red stands for love.\footnote{Ibid. p. 28.} Representation occurs both from the sender and the receiver of a message, because a symbol can mean many different things for many different people. The receiver interprets the message in his/her own way, and the sender likely has a preferred reading of the message – none of them are right or wrong. There is no one true meaning, but rather meaning floats. The interpretation also depends on context, as for instance a traffic light that is red does not translate to 'love', but instead is interpreted as 'stop'. Hall writes that signs are arbitrary and that their meanings are fixed by codes, or contexts. A culture is dependent on people's shared meanings and representation is the process through which meaning is communicated and created.

In a constructionist approach to representation through language, meaning is produced by the practice of representation, constructed through signifying practices. Hall suggests that there are two different systems of representation: firstly the concepts in our minds that bare meaning, our mental system of representation, and secondly the language, through which we express the meaning.\footnote{Ibid. p. 17.} The mental system of representation includes all kinds of objects, people and events that are correlated with concepts in our minds. They help us make sense of the world and the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\bibitem{80} R.W Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p. 79.
\bibitem{82} Ibid. p. 28.
\bibitem{83} Ibid. p. 17.
\end{thebibliography}
things in it. We create images and ascribe them certain meaning, and this includes abstract things – like things we haven't seen or things that aren't real but we still have an understanding of, like death, the devil or mermaids.\textsuperscript{84} Even though people do not interpret signs in exactly the same way, Hall writes that as a part of a culture we share a 'conceptual map', meaning that we have a shared system of classification which makes us interpret the world in roughly the same way.\textsuperscript{85} Although, in order to exchange and represent these shared meanings the second system of representation is needed, the shared language, through which we can correlate our concepts and ideas with signs. Hall writes:

The general term we use for words, sounds or images which carry meaning is \textit{signs}. These signs stand for or represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which we carry around in our heads and together they make up the meaning-systems of our culture.\textsuperscript{86}

Even if visual signs and images bear a close resemblance to the objects they refer to (for instance a drawn image of a sheep bears close resemblance to a real sheep), they are still signs that carry certain meaning and need to be interpreted. The meaning we extract from the signs are due to social conventions, they are "fixed socially, fixed in culture" and not in nature.\textsuperscript{87} And the same thing goes for written words as a collection of letters does not naturally mean anything, but rather is given meaning by the concepts that are tied to them.

The term semiotics derives from Ferdinand de Saussures term \textit{semiology} which was developed as a complement to his theories on how language (written words) convey meaning through systems of representation. The essence of the semiotic approach is that "all cultural objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they must make use of signs; and in so far as they do, they must work like language".\textsuperscript{88} Saussure developed two key concepts in studying representation, \textit{signifier} and \textit{signified}, where signifier refers to the physical sign – the actual image or word – and the signified refers to the mental concept of that word or image – the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[84] S Hall, \textit{Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices}, p. 17.
\item[85] Ibid. p. 18.
\item[86] Ibid.
\item[87] Ibid. p. 21ff.
\item[88] Ibid. p. 36.
\end{footnotes}
meanings that are created in the mind of the person that receives the sign.\textsuperscript{89} In the semiotic approach not only words and images are considered as signifiers, objects too can function as signifiers. Hall makes the example of clothes – they have a simple function of protecting the body but also function as signs. An evening gown or tuxedo might signify elegance or wealth, whereas a t-shirt and a pair of trainers might signify casual dress or sport.\textsuperscript{90}

The combination of the signifier and the signified is what Saussure called a sign, but in order to link these signs to a broader cultural context another set of terms are used. Roland Barthes developed the concepts \textit{denotation} and \textit{connotation}. Denotation refers to the descriptive meaning of a sign, for instance recognizing that an image of a tuxedo is a signifier for a tuxedo – and connotation refers to a broader set of themes and meanings, for instance that a tuxedo signifies wealth or elegance. In connotation, the sign is then interpreted in a social ideology of fashion, within the general beliefs of which clothes are perceived as elegant.\textsuperscript{91}

Connected to the area of representation, is the question of stereotypes. Hall writes that "stereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature". This means that stereotypes are ideas constructed about certain people, this could include race and gender differences, and perceived as be natural. Drawing on Richard Dyer's distinction of \textit{types} and \textit{stereotypes} he argues that it is impossible to make sense of the world without the use of types – as members of a culture we constantly refer to objects, people or events to general classifications that fit.\textsuperscript{92} We have, for example, a general understanding of what a table is – regardless of what kind of table it is. What differentiates \textit{types} from \textit{stereotypes} is that in stereotyping everything about a person is reduced to "simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized" characteristics that are exaggerated and simplified.\textsuperscript{93} Stereotyping also involves a strategy of splitting, of enhancing differences and focusing on what is 'normal' and 'abnormal', it functions as fixation of boundaries and excludes everything that does not conform to the norm.\textsuperscript{94} Hence, by focusing on simplified and exaggerated characteristics of a person or a

\textsuperscript{89} S Hall, \textit{Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. p. 37.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. p. 38.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. p. 257.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. 258.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid. p. 258.
group of people, they are reduced to those characteristics. This is essential in the construction and enforcement of norms in society, and the exclusion of those who differ from the norms. This is achieved by stereotyping them in a way that focuses on difference, resulting in certain groups in society being perceived as homogenous and characterized by norm deviations. Hence, just as definitions of gender, stereotypes rely on exaggerating and focusing on what differentiates one from the other, accepting and seeing one type as 'normal' and all others as deviating and 'other'.

Yvonne Hirdman argues that the creation of stereotypes is one of the methods for the subordination of women. She writes that a part of the male privilege is being able to ward away these kind of simplified labels and instead continue being multifaceted. Hirdman argues that the Man is the norm and that Woman is everything that the Man is not.

He is not soft, wet, fleshy, emotional, uncontrollable, weak, passive, amoral, lying, incapable of higher thought, etc. The other way around. Thus He is hard, dry, spirit, intellect, control, strength, activity, capable of moral judgment, is to rely on, with exclusive capability to higher thinking.

Sara L. Crawley et al. write that these kind of classifications are acquired in everyday interactions, they are developed through “the collections of our experiences within our culture”. In other words, they are not scientifically measured or tested, but are mere culturally constructed concepts that we take for granted. Further they argue that as members of a culture we are blinded with the systems of classifications that are already in place and that “once we have developed notions of the typical, we focus our attention on the typical, not the aberration, often even when the aberration is common”. This means that when someone behaves or looks different than expected (due to stereotypical expectations) we do not upset or challenge the system that is in place, but rather dismiss the unfitting appearance or behavior as atypical of that group.

Myra Macdonald writes that the media plays an important part in constructing gender stereotypes by providing a limited number of role models, but that using this as a critical tool is

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95 Y Hirdman, *Genus: Om det Stabilas Föränderliga Former*, p. 47.
96 Ibid. p. 48. (author's translation)
problematic as it suggests that there is a 'true' image of men and women that the media should reflect instead.\textsuperscript{99} It is, rather, useful as a tool to examine myths about femininity and masculinity and focus on how the media produce meaning through these myths instead of examining what they show in relation to reality.\textsuperscript{100}

The concepts of masculinity and femininity are indeed abstract concepts, but nonetheless concepts that we use certain signs to represent and make sense of. I will use Stuart Hall's framework of representation to as a point of departure in analyzing how the different characters in \textit{League of Legends} represented as either male or female. The splash art, the background stories and the in-game talk are all signs of representation though which certain ideas of masculinity and femininity are communicated. By existing in a culture that has shared meanings and understandings of the signs that make up masculinity and femininity, these representations and categorizations are interpreted as natural in the context.

\textbf{4.4 Coding masculinity and femininity}

In representing masculinities and femininities there are certain themes that are recurring and certain dichotomies that are essential in the separation of male from female. Connell writes that "a familiar theme in patriarchal ideology is that men are rational and women are emotional. [...] Hegemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of reason, and thus represent the interests of the whole society".\textsuperscript{101} Hirdman develops this discussion arguing that pregnancy and the ability to give birth, has reinforced the understanding of women as closer to nature, and being more animal-like than men can ever be.\textsuperscript{102} She continues and explains that men's positive values are emphasized even more because women are connected to body, flesh, blood and nature – whereas men are connected to finer attributes such as spirit, soul, thought and culture. Related to the theme of reproduction is that male bodies, in terms of sexual acts and pregnancy, are understood as active and powerful, and female bodies as passive and as containers or vessels. Crawley et al. argues that this leads on to the notion of men as aggressive and women receptive.\textsuperscript{103} Further they discuss the importance of body parts, because

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{100}ibid. p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{101}R W. Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p. 164.
\item \textsuperscript{102}Y Hirdman, \textit{Genus: Om det Stabilas Föränderliga Former}, p. 80.
\item \textsuperscript{103}S L. Crawley, J. Foley & C L. Shehan, \textit{Gendering Bodies}, p. 8f.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
not only the body as a whole bears meaning – separate body parts are also carriers of meaning. Especially genitals are inherently sexual, and thus seen as 'private parts'. But for women, breast are also sexualized and seen as 'private parts', even though men share a similar breast structure – the only difference being the amount of fatty tissue and the capability to produce milk or not.104 A man might have larger breast than a woman, but they are still not seen as sexual 'private parts', and Crawley et al. conclude that “the cultural message of dichotomy between females and males clearly ignores a host of human bodily similarities”105

Connell argues that it is important to study masculinity and femininity as counterparts in order to understand the hierarchy surrounding gender, because without one – the other wouldn't exist. 'Masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'. A culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinity in the sense of modern European/American culture.106

The hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and subordinated masculinities. In the gender hierarchy all female positions are subordinate, thus “there is no femininity that holds among women the position held by the hegemonic masculinity among men”.107 This means that power, aggression and authority (by women over men or other women) are not recognized as feminine traits at all, which is something that derives from the structure to begin with as women do not have the kinds of positions in society that would make them have to dominate other women in the way that the hegemonic masculinity causes men to dominate other men.108 One type of femininity, the emphasized femininity, stands out as an important counterpart to the hegemonic masculinity. This type of femininity is oriented towards conforming to male desires and interests and is the most prevalent type of femininity in the media – organized, financed and supervised by men.109 Crawley et al. discuss the emphasized femininity and argue that it is “accomplished by making one's physical body sexually attractive to men” – for young women by thinness, beauty, grace, virtue and for older women by motherhood and nurturance.110 Connell

105Ibid.
107Ibid. p. 187.
108Ibid.
109Ibid. p. 188.
concludes that “femininity organized as an adaption to men's power, and emphasizing compliance, nurturance and empathy as womanly virtues, is not much of a state to establish hegemony over other kinds of femininity”, meaning that the emphasized femininity can not be used as a tool to dominate other femininities.\textsuperscript{111} A central aspect to this type of femininity is that it is maintained as the prevalent kind in order to prevent other kinds of femininity from gaining cultural articulation. Crawley et al. underline that:

The cultural messages of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity operate as a kind of character (perhaps as caricatures?) or message that defines the extremes of gender and often are produced in the media as the forms we are all intended to pursue.\textsuperscript{112}

Kenneth MacKinnon also argues that the hegemonic masculinity is held as an ideal in the media, mainly in fantasy characters within popular media, and that the media take part in shaping and changing what an ideal image of masculinity is.\textsuperscript{113} Even if the images of this masculinity and femininity are not real, meaning they do not represent \textit{real people} in the \textit{real world}, they function as ideals to follow, regarding how to dress, how to govern one's body, how to cut one's hair, how to act etc. In \textit{Deconstructing the Hero}, Margery Hourihan writes about the tales and myths about heroes. She argues that the hero is traditionally a man and that the myth surrounding their stories is that about male dominance and it prioritizes male activities. Stories about female heroes are not exceptions to these traditions, rather female heroes often are identified by male qualities, such as courage, confidence and aggression. Hourihan concludes that heroism is gendered and that a female hero must act like a male hero in order to succeed.\textsuperscript{114} Stories where a conventional hero is portrayed as a woman does not change the gendered aspect of what it means to be a hero. MacKinnon also touches upon the topic of heroism, arguing that the movie industry has helped a lot in constructing the link between heroism and masculinity. He writes that is has been a key source for images of dominant masculinity and that the stress in popular action and adventure films "on physical size, strength and the ability to use violence effectively suggested that masculine identity was being linked with the use of the body as an instrument of power and

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\begin{enumerate}
\item W. Connell, \textit{Gender & Power}, p. 188.
\item S. Crawley, L. J. Foley & C. L. Shehan, \textit{Gendering bodies}, p. 48.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
control".115 Further, Sherrie Inness argues in her book *Tough Girls* that in action films the tough female characters have visual attributes and a narrative that will represent them primarily as women. Female action heroines are not allowed to only be tough women, their femininity must be emphasized through, for instance, 'beautiful' hair, exposure of the female body or motherhood. Because of the reduction to these kinds of representations, the power and autonomy of a 'tough woman' becomes limited.116 This argument is connected to Hirdman's notion that it is the Male that is the norm, and that the Woman is defined and meaningful only in relation to that norm.117

Another theme in the notions of what is feminine and what is masculine, is the close connection between masculinity, violence and sport. MacKinnon argues that sport functions as a culturally accepted arena for violence, an arena that sustains the hegemonic masculinity by allowing men to show off their physical superiority.118 Crawley et al. describe sports as “not only a place for the demonstration of physical skill; it is a cultural site for constructing meanings about bodies and performing those meanings in gendered ways”.119 They write that bodily differences are heavily emphasized in the arena of sport and that it is often assumed that men are naturally physically superior, and argue that men and women are trained differently in social settings about how to use and train their bodies. This results in different understandings of the self, the body and its abilities – which in turn results in difference in body size and bodily capacity.120 Connell argues that male dominance in sport functions as a means to inscribe power and force to the male body, and that the meanings in the bodily sense of masculinity are essential in sustaining superiority over women.121 Showing male aggression in sport, film and as action hero traits can be seen as a culturally accepted face for male violence. Hourihan argues that violence is traditionally seen as a way of asserting power, showing oneself worthy of admiration and a common approach in stories about heroic men.122 These kinds of representations, men as violent, as physically powerful, do not make the actual men in society violent or physically powerful – but they do function as ideological and psychological ideas about how violence and physical power is connected to

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120Ibid. p. 57f.  
122M Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero*, p. 96ff.
masculinity.\textsuperscript{123}

The body has further importance and Myra Macdonald argues that it is much more important in the formation of feminine identity. She writes:

The body's traditional centrality to feminine identity can be subdivided into a variety of codes of appearance: ideal bodily shape and size; appropriate forms of make-up and cosmetic care of skin and hair; and the adornment of the body though clothes and accessories.\textsuperscript{124}

Hence, the female body itself is not what makes up what it means to be feminine, it is rather the external coding of the body that shapes the understanding of a feminine body. As a contrast, the male body is understood through readings of performance and functionality.\textsuperscript{125} Macdonald points out how the ideal female body type has changed over the decades, but that it roughly remains the same. She argues that the changes in ideal body types are closely connected to the fashion industry and how women are encouraged by fashion companies, glossy magazines and the diet industries to change their body. By treating the female body as a “work zone”, something that must be disciplined and requires hard work, women are encouraged to objectify their bodies.\textsuperscript{126} This is connected to the female sexuality, which is also governed by codes of how the body should be adorned to evoke sexual desire. Representations of women enjoying sexual pleasure often fetishize and commodify the female sexuality by associating it to young, beautiful bodies and “the trappings of a glitzy lifestyle”, and this is governed by norms about, for instance, maintaining a smooth skin and wearing desirable lingerie.\textsuperscript{127} Crawley et al. also discuss female sexuality and conclude that it is based around the premise 'be sexy, not sexual', a paradox that teaches women to "be sexy in every overt, teasing way, but not have sex".\textsuperscript{128} This is often called the 'Madonna/whore syndrome' or the 'virgin/whore dichotomy' and means that women should always be able to attract men sexually, but never follow though because she needs to be “pure” as

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{123} K MacKinnon, \textit{Representing Men}, p. 11.
\bibitem{124} M Macdonald, \textit{Representing Women}, p. 194.
\bibitem{125} Ibid.
\bibitem{126} Ibid. p. 197ff.
\bibitem{127} Ibid. p. 163ff.
\bibitem{128} S L. Crawley, L J. Foley & C L. Shehan, \textit{Gendering bodies}, p. 73.
\end{thebibliography}
well.\textsuperscript{129} Crawley et al. underline this as another way to enhance male and female total differences, as men are performing masculine sexuality in a completely opposite way – for men it is expected to always want to have sex, to actively pursue it and it is seen as an act of performance.\textsuperscript{130}

Codes that govern what constitutes femininity and masculinity are, of course, not consistent. They change with time and appear in different ways in different societies. However, these examples serve as a foundation through which male and female bodies, minds, sexualities, and appearances have been treated in the history of Western cultures. These themes are what many scholars view as essential in constructing masculinity and femininity.

Through his extensive research on stereotypes, David Schneider has complied a list of stereotypically feminine and masculine character traits (see Fig. 4.1.), that will serve as a point of comparison for my analysis. He argues that gender stereotypes are complex and multifaceted, but that they throughout history seem to fall into the same broad categories.\textsuperscript{131} Schneider argues that gender stereotypes are different from other kinds of stereotypes as they tend to be both prescriptive and descriptive, meaning that they describe how men and women \textit{are}, but also how they \textit{should} be.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} S L. Crawley, L J. Foley & C L. Shehan, \textit{Gendering bodies}, p. 72f.
\textsuperscript{130} ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} ibid. p. 443.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Female traits</strong></th>
<th><strong>Male traits</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>Adventuresome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Achievement-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Coarse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudish</td>
<td>Robust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>Self-confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentimental</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>Tough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiny</td>
<td>Unemotional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 4.1 List of female and male stereotypical traits.*

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5. Material and methods

In this section I will provide an understanding for how the study has been conducted and what choices that have been made during the process, regarding the material and method. Firstly I will describe the material and discuss the choices I have made regarding demarcations. Secondly I will describe and discuss the methods used to analyze the material. Stuart Hall writes that “in culture, meaning often depends on larger units of analysis – narratives, statements, groups of images, whole discourses which operate through a variety of texts”, and following this a comprehensive examination of three instances of representation has been made in this thesis by looking at images, speech and written texts.¹³⁴

5.1 Material

This section will describe the material that is the object of this study. I will briefly explain what the material consists of and what considerations and demarcations that have been taken when analyzing it. As the material is under constant reconstruction, or update, there are some significant differences between old and new material – for instance, older champions have more lengthy background stories or old splash arts are made with a different drawing style. I have not made any demarcations in the material based on this, because everything has an equally important part of the whole and it is impossible to know when each story is written or each image is drawn. No new material has been included in this thesis after February 1st, 2015, as the material would otherwise grow and change during the process of this thesis.

5.1.1 The splash arts

The splash arts in League of Legends are images depicting the champions that are available to play. A champion's splash art correlates to the in-game model, or avatar, that is controlled by the player when playing the game. If the player is using a 'skin', both the in-game avatar and the splash art are changed, but I have chosen to only use the standard splash art as the range of available skins exceeds the ability to, within the scope of this thesis, meaningfully analyze all available material.

The splash arts all follow the same structure: they are all the same size, they all show the champion in question and they all show some kind of environment where the champion is situated.

5.1.2 The background stories
The background stories in *League of Legends* all circulate around an ongoing war between the different factions in the game-world. The game itself circulates around the agreement, between all factions, that political wrangling should not be manifested in war – but rather be fought on 'the fields of justice' in 'the league of legends'. This is a battle platform where representatives from every faction fights over their disagreements in a controlled way, instead of causing chaos in the world and hurting innocents. The champions' specific stories describe happenings before and during the war, what led them to fight in the league of legends as well as giving an account for their personal beliefs, traits and goals.

The length and style of the background stories is varying, for example: one is only 55 characters long, while another is 418 characters long. Although every background story has been examined and analyzed, I have chosen not to include the very short ones in the selection of presented champions further on – as I believe that the more lengthy ones will provide a fuller image of representations. The style of the background stories is, as mentioned, also of varying kind – some stories are written as police reports, some as the champion in question's thoughts or diary, and some are narrated from a third person perspective. I have not made any choices based on this, but the framing of the champions is surely affected by the stylistic choices. Although, most of the background stories follow the same narrative structure: being told in a third person perspective, ranging from early childhood up until present day.

5.1.3 The in-game talk
There are two kinds of in-game talk in the game. On the one hand, champions have certain lines, or comments, that they say on a regular basis – these are only audible to the player that controls a specific champion. These lines, or comments, often provide additional depth to the champion's character or emphasize certain themes that are present in its background story. On the other hand there are three different lines, or comments, that the player has to activate. These are labeled as laughs, taunts, and jokes, and are audible to any player whose champion is near the
champion that is talking. The laughs are just laughs. The taunts are comments used to mock other players and usually contain bragging, undermining other champions and comical elements. The jokes usually also have a bragging undertone, and are sometimes classic jests. Many of these activated comments are references to famous quotes from other popular media – such as movies, music or literature – but this is something I will not take into account, as I am not interested in the origins of a comment but rather the meaning of it and what it represents in the context of the champion.

5.2 Method

In order to get an overall grasp of the material a preliminary study was conducted. The purpose of this was to get a broad idea of how game roles, sexes and species are divided among the characters in the game. Further on a more detailed study was conducted, in which all the material was examined in visual and textual aspects. The purpose of this was to find categories, or archetypes, of characters to proceed with in the analysis.

5.2.1 Preliminary study

Firstly, the portraits of all available characters were color printed and cut out in order to physically be arranged in categories and subcategories. The first categorization was based on the predetermined game roles assigned by Riot Games; assassin, fighter, mage, marksman, support, and tank. Following this categorization, subcategories were made based upon what species the characters belong to. The characters in League of Legends come from different territories in the game world, but their appearance can still significantly differ even if they are from the same “province”, and I believe that this is of importance. Therefore I chose to create my own categories focusing on their appearance as species rather than their place of origin. By species I do not refer to any actual living species, but fictional types of creatures as categorization tool. The categories here were named; humanoid, monster, manikin and shapeshifter. I have chosen to categorize the characters by species because I believe it provides a meaningful aspect in studying gender discrepancies that is not covered in the other categorizations. Here I am interested in how the distribution of, for instance, monstrous or cute appearances is divided between male and female characters. These categories were then divided into subcategories of sex, which were determined by reading the characters’ background stories.

For more information about the roles, see chapter 3.2.
Here follows brief explanations for the character species. The character species refer to the categorization of species made by the researcher. These are based on the characters’ appearances in relation to each other.

**Humanoid:** These are characters that have a human-like appearance. They have a human-like body, have somewhat human proportions and walk on two legs. This category includes characters that are not necessarily 'made of flesh', like for instance the character *Orianna* who is a robot replica of a living girl, or *Brand* who is a man on fire.

**Monster:** This category includes characters that have monstrous appearances. These characters are not human in any sense and range from creatures made of rock, to animals, to specters. Some of the characters in this category can be interpreted as humanoids. In cases where ambiguities have arisen the human or non-human proportions of the character has determined the category. An example of this is *Trundle* – an enormous blue troll. Even if he has a human-like body and walks on two legs, the proportions of his facial features are non-human as his mouth stretches from ear to ear, his teeth are long and pointy and his nose is big and red.

**Manikin:** The characters in this category includes both humanoids and animals. What they have in common, and how they differ from the humanoid and monster categories, is that they are 'cute' in some respect. By and large this means that they have tiny bodies and large heads. In many cases they also have a combination of disproportionately large eyes, ears, mouths and/or noses. Oftentimes they are furry and animal-like, but some of the characters in this category are human-like.
**Shapeshifter**: This category includes characters that have the ability to shift between appearances. In all cases this means shifting between a humanoid form and a monster form. An example of this is *Elise*, who shifts between human form and spider form.

### 5.2.2 Finding character archetypes

The next step was to categorize the material into subdivisions for further analysis. I chose to look for archetypes in the material – specific concepts, attitudes, and characteristics that relate certain champions to each other. Josiah Lebowitz and Chris Klug write that "simply put, an archetype is a sort of general character template that can then be customized and personalized to fit into nearly any story" and that in video game terms "an archetype is like a character class".\(^{136}\) For example, the mentor is a commonly used video game character – this is someone who is wise and experienced, someone who teaches and prepares others for things to come.\(^{137}\) The divisions of archetypes function as a framework for comparing the differences in representation of female and male champions – to see how, for instance, female and male mentors are differ from each other. By categorizing the characters in this way it will be revealed if certain archetypes are more common for male champions or female champions, or if certain character traits within the archetypes are restricted to one or the other sex.

By going through each champion's background story in detail I highlighted essential themes for the character's story – where they come from (their childhood, family situation, education etc.), what their purpose or goal in life is, what role they have in their society, what contexts they exist in etc. These themes sometimes differ, as not all the background stories are presented or written in the same way. For instance, some characters have stories from their childhood included in the background story, some have not and some characters are written into family contexts, some are not, some stories are written as police reports or diary entries. Afterwards I went through the collected data again in order to find significant and recurrent themes, and from those I constructed archetype categories that were then filled with the appropriate champions. The


\(^{137}\) Ibid. p. 82.
search for archetypes culminated in 18 different categories. In cases where a character fitted into more than one archetype category I decided to place it in the category of it's most notable theme.

### 5.2.3 Semiotic image analysis

Paired with the analysis of the background stories, I made a semiotic image analysis of the splash arts for each champion. In a semiotic image analysis, the researcher examines the question of how images make meanings. Gillian Rose writes that a semiotic image analysis "offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to a broader system of meaning". Images are constructed from signs, and these signs both represent something in the real world as well as they can be interpreted as something else. For example, an image of an apple can represent the fruit called "apple", but can also be a sign for temptation (in biblical contexts), or for New York City (the big apple). The semiotic approach provides a method for how visual images provide meaning through, and as, signs. The interpretation of the sign depends on previous knowledge, cultural background and in what context the sign appears. As such, the images that are analyzed in this study are interpreted from a Western cultural background, and the context is that of gender ideologies, the game itself and how the different characters are represented compared to each other and their background stories.

To analyze the splash arts I have constructed a model through which I will concentrate on certain aspects of the images that I believe carries meaning about how femininity and masculinity is constructed.

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139 Ibid. p. 74.
1. Representations of bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>To what extent does the character rely on gender stereotypes? How is gender represented through the body?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>What significance does hair have in the images?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body type</td>
<td>Which bodies are fat and which are thin? Are entire bodies shown, or cut off?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks</td>
<td>Do male and female appearances rely on conventional notions of beauty?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Representations of manner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facial expression</th>
<th>Who is happy, sad, angry etc.?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Where/at what are the characters in the images looking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pose</td>
<td>How is the body of the character positioned, what does the pose tell?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Representations of activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>What happens in the pose? Is it active or passive?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position of the viewer</td>
<td>Is the character depicted from a low angle, high angle or at eye level with the viewer? What does this convey?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props</td>
<td>What props does the character have in his/her hands?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Analysis and reporting of results

In this section I will analyze and discuss the material and put it into context with the chosen theoretical framework. Firstly I will discuss the results from the preliminary study, and secondly I will discuss the in-depth analysis of the archetypes that were found in the material. Each archetype category will be presented and discussed separately and illustrated with some examples of champions that are in them.

6.1 Results of the preliminary study

The results of the primary study showed that 62% of the champions in the game are male and that 38% are female. The champions all have a defined sex, male or female, and hence no champions transgress the binary gender system – which for the purpose of this study facilitates the analysis. As mentioned before, I categorized the champions into categories of species – this categorization showed that as many as 60% of the champions are humanoid characters, the second largest category is monsters with 26%. Only 2% of the champions can be considered to be shapeshifters. The sex per-species-ratio showed that, at large, there are roughly the same number of male and female champions in every category of species – with the exception of the monster species, where there are 30 male monsters and only 2 female monsters, and the entirely female species of shapeshifters. See appendix 8.1 for an illustration of these numbers.

As the monster species is dominated by male champions it suggests that women can not be monstrous, this is evident as the shapeshifter category consists of two women that would be labeled as monsters if it wasn't for the fact that they also have a human form. The human form of the shapeshifters emphasize femininity by placing special focus on the female body. These three champions, Elise, Shyvana and Nidalee, both look scary and frightful in their monster form – but in their human form they are sexualized due to revealing clothes and poses that exaggerate the
curves of breasts, waist and hips.\textsuperscript{140} This translates to a notion that female monsters must also be sexy and feminine, whereas male monsters are just monsters. It also reinforces the notion of human femininity as closer to nature, by showing how humanoid women are also animals.\textsuperscript{141} The shapeshifter species can also be seen as a myth about the feminine in itself, as these are indeed humanoid women who have an aspect to them that they do not share with male characters. By having the duality being human and monster at the same time, they become something unknown, something different and can thus represent the feminine defined as different.\textsuperscript{142}

Regarding the in-game roles (assassin, fighter, tank, support, mage, marksman) the division of male and female characters is roughly equal, in most cases. There are always a few more male champions in each category, which is natural since the male champions are greater in number than the female ones. Although, two categories stand out here: fighters and tanks are predominantly male, the ratios being 28 male – 9 female fighters, and 13 male – 3 female tanks.\textsuperscript{143} These are the in-game roles that are in the middle of the fights, they are rough and tough, and able to handle a lot of damage and as there are so few female characters in these roles it suggests that these are male tasks and traits. Female characters are more often seen as dealing damage or supporting the team from a distance. This can also be seen in the support in-game role, where female supports have slim and delicate body types and work at a distance, whereas the male supports are bulky, armored and supposed to be in the middle of the action. The design of the champions often reflect the responsibilities they have in fights. Male characters are more prone to be large, bulky and tough in their appearance if their role is tank, fighter and support. Female characters in tank and fighter roles are few, and as the female supports follow a different pattern (working from a distance) it leaves female champions with more delicate at slim bodies.

\textbf{6.2. In-depth analysis of chosen archetypes}

As stated earlier, 18 archetype categories were found in the examination of the material. Here I will present and discuss the different archetype categories, and provide examples of characters that were placed in the respective categories. Due to the vast material, I will not present all the

\textsuperscript{140} M Macdonald, \textit{Representing Women}, p. 194.
\textsuperscript{141} Y Hirdman, \textit{Genus: Om det Stabilas Föränderliga Former}, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid. p. 48.
\textsuperscript{143} See appendix 8.2 for a full account of the divisions of female and male champions in the different in-game roles.
champions that are a part of this study, as this would be excessively much information. Therefore I have chosen to only present a few champions from each category, to illustrate how they are represented, how they differ from each other or how they are alike.

For each category I will first give an account for the characteristics of the specified archetype and how the division of gender is distributed. The characteristics will be discussed and related to the chosen literature. I will also provide some examples of champions that are in each category by summarizing and discussing the background stories, the splash arts and the in-game talk of each presented champion. All of the splash arts and background stories are available in the game client as well as on the official League of Legends website.\footnote{League of Legends, League of Legends, <http://eune.leagueoflegends.com/>, accessed 3 May 2015.} In chapter 7 I will discuss the results in a broader sense.

### 6.2.1 Adventure Seeker or Action Seeker

The characters in this category are ambitious and driven, these characters want to perfect their skills by exploring the unknown, taking on challenges and learning new things. The action seekers find the thrill in going into action filled environments, be it battles or crime-fighting. The adventure seekers find the thrill in exploring new environments. Many times there is something unattainable to the characters in this category - it might be a nemesis they want to find and beat, a powerful artifact they are looking for etc. There are eight champions in this category, six of them are male and two of them are female. The division of male and female champions in this category is relatively equal, since it matches the overall distribution of male and female champions.

Three of the champions, Corki, Teemo and Tristana love the battlefield. They do not feel at peace if they are not feeling the smell of gunpowder, as such they are constantly seeking new battles to go into. These three champions are all pretty alike; they are all in the manikin species, meaning they are all cute with big heads and tiny bodies. They all have cheerful personalities and have distinguished themselves as great in battle. Fizz, Kog’Maw, Ezreal and Kassadin are of the adventure seeking kind. They are explorers of worlds and hidden places. The things they have found and the people they have helped in their adventures is what has led them to fight in the League. The odd one out in this category is Caitlyn, she is a police officer seeking thrill in catching
criminals. Generally in this category the champions are courageous, they are not thinking about fear of death or being defeated. These champions do not have any ulterior motives with their action/adventure seeking, but only seek the thrills of action and adventure.

For a further illustration of this archetype category, I will focus on two female and two male champions; Tristana, Caitlyn, Ezreal and Corki. These four represent two different takes on the adventure/action seeking archetype. Tristana and Corki represent a funny and cute kind whereas Ezreal and Caitlyn represent a more serious and professional kind.

**Tristana**: Tristana is a girl that enjoys big guns and big explosions and will not back down for any challenge. She is proof that greatness can come from small size as well. It is stated that "she represents the pinnacle of martial proficiency, unwavering courage, and boundless optimism", meaning that she is a brave and happy person, and also very proficient in fighting.\(^{145}\) For Tristana, every new challenge is an opportunity for her to show the world that heroes exist.

*Tristana* has a small body, a big head, big ears and big eyes – thus fitting into the manikin species which are all deemed cute. Her gun is ridiculously large in comparison to her size. Around her explosions are going off, it is obviously a battle situation which is action filled. She is jumping and holding her hand up to her face as if standing to attention like a soldier. She wears cargo pants with a belt and a tank top that exposes her belly – over it she wears a vest that is unbuttoned. Even if she shows some skin it is not in a sexually exposed way, it rather works as a marker for her gender. She has little to no curves and looks rather physically fit. The clothes she is wearing seem appropriate for her tasks. She is not armored at all, but since she has a Marksman (which is dealing damage from a distance) it does not seem necessary. Her face has a big smile and she shows her teeth in joy. Her eyes are shiny/sparkly. Her in-game talk lines are all fighting-themed and convey additional emphasis on

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her love for battle and her bravery. She says things like "I bravely volunteer to charge in recklessly!", "bring on the bad guys!" and "winners don't duck".

Overall, Tristana does not fall into female stereotypes. She is rather boyish in her appearance – both body, face and clothing. She is brave, good at fighting and handling guns, and has a comical/positive attitude. Much about her appearance and characteristics is somewhat childlike, she gives a cute and happy impression.

Corki: Corki can be said to be the male counterpart of Tristana. He, too, falls into the manikin species category, as he is a humanoid with a tiny body, large head, and a big accentuated and comical mustache. Just as Tristana, he is also a Marksman that deals damage from a distance. He is described in his background story as an excellent pilot that loves to shoot things and fight with his battle aircraft. He also has technical expertise as he is able to modify and rebuild his helicopter himself. It is said that he keeps control over any situation and that he is brave. Corki has a lot of comical aspects to his character; for instance, his aircraft is called "Reconnaissance Operations Front-Line Copter", referring to an old internet meme, "ROFL-Copter". Many of his in-game lines are comical lines spoken through ICAO phonetic alphabet like "It’s a Charlie Foxtrot!" or "That just goes to show you you’re nothin' but a Whiskey Delta!". Corki is known throughout Runeterra for his prowess in battle and his great bravery. He is also a showman, hosting aerial acrobatics shows.

In his splash art he is depicted sitting in his helicopter smiling. Around him other aircrafts are crashing down and fighting. Corki is in the middle of the action and smiling. He wears an old school pilot helmet with large old school pilot glasses covering his eyes. His mouth is smiling and he shows all of his teeth. His biggest trait is a big, white, flowing mustache. He looks as if he is enjoying to fly his helicopter, and enjoying the war.
around him. From the airplane smoke is coming out of a spray gun in the front, suggesting he just recently has fired bullets from it. He wears a red scarf that is on fire, but doesn't seem to care about it.

_Corki_ and _Tristana_ are very similarly represented. They are both damage dealers that live only to seek challenges and thrills in battles, and they both see fighting as good fun. Their background stories are focused on depicting them as very brave, highly skilled and positive persons. Likewise, their splash arts depict them in action filled environments where they are smiling and they both have some trait that marks them as male or female (the big mustache and the short tank top). Although, _Tristana_ is depicted as childish in a way that _Corki_ is not.

_Caitlyn_: In _Caitlyn_’s background story it is told that she started chasing criminals at an early age and ended up being the sheriff of her home town, _Piltover_. She had a natural gift for investigation and gained fame throughout the region because she was "single handedly defeating crime" and also because she "developed into a ravishing beauty". She is written into a family context. Both of her parents have assisted her in doing what she wants even though they resisted at first, but _Caitlyn_’s will was too strong. Her father helped by lending her his rifle gun, and her mother by outfitting her with "techmaturgical" devices. _Caitlyn_ is said to be one of the sharpest shots in the city and never backs down from a case or a challenge. As such, she is skilled, brave, and dedicated to get where she wants. She has a nemesis in a bandit whom nobody has ever been able to catch, and this 'impossible task’ is her reason for being in the League.

_Caitlyn_ carries a very large rifle gun. She is depicted standing with one knee up, with the rifle resting upon her thigh – the pose is passive and works with the low angle view and the shortness of her dress to create an "upskirt" picture, drawing attention to what is under the skirt, positioning her as an erotic object. On her thigh

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she wears two leather straps that have no purpose other than drawing attention to the area. The dress is also low cut at the top, which makes her cleavage exposed. The long black hair functions as a signifier for femininity. She has a slim body type that is accentuating curves through dress and pose. In her in-game talk she says things that relate to her profession like "Meet the long gun of the law" and "Let’s investigate", but also things that further puts her in a sexual context like "Sorry boys, I keep the fuzzy cuffs at home" which is somewhat suggestive.

*Caitlyn* is a woman in charge, with power and skill, but it seems a necessity that she is also a "ravishing beauty" and that her career would not be possible otherwise as her looks are a defining feature in her story. Her parents also have a big role in assisting her in getting where she is in present time. Further on, the splash art has a sexual undertone as the pose and dress combined with her body proportions focuses a lot on her bodily curves and femininity, her body being portrayed as an object of desire.

**Ezreal:** *Ezreal* is described as a skilled explorer and a fearless adventurer. He has gone into remote and abandoned places and in one of his excavations he found an enormous magic amulet. The amulet gave him "raw" magic powers that in turn gave him the reputation of a hero. The fame that his reputation brought embarrassed him and he does not like the attention. *Ezreal* is a Marksman, one of the heavy damage dealers in the game, but his background story says nothing about fighting. As his profession is exploring, he might not have had any fighting skills prior to gaining the power from the amulet.

In his splash art he is depicted in what looks like a cave, but *Ezreal* himself takes up most of the image. He is jumping and shooting a magical weapon that looks like a bow, a pose of action. He is fully covered in clothes that resemble the image of an archaeologist – that would be fitting for his job. He does not wear armor, apart from some knee pads and a pair of thin gauntlets. *Ezreal's* body is somewhat shrouded in the light of the magic weapon, but it is evident that he is slim. His face shows that he is young, he has clear blue
eyes and chin markings (that match the color of the magic weapon), short blonde hair and a smiling mouth. He very much looks like a pretty and young boy. His active in-game talk refers to quotes from Indiana Jones movies, which further creates the persona of him as an adventurer and explorer. His passive in-game talk shows that he is skilled and brave with lines like "Sounds dangerous... I'm in!" and "It's all skill!". Overall, Ezreal is a brave and powerful individual. He has gained his powers from a magical amulet that he found in an excavation. He is young and pretty and does not seem to be physically strong.

What differentiates Caitlyn from Ezreal is that in both the background story, splash art, and in-game talk, Caitlyn is defined by sexuality and beauty, whereas Ezreal is defined by action and functionality. In this case Caitlyn is allowed to be an action heroine, but not without also having an accentuated femininity, a common approach in representing a tough woman. Whereas Ezreal is allowed to be the adventurer that he is and be dressed, speak, and described in the background story accordingly, There is no action in Caitlyn’s splash art, she is more or less just “posing for the camera”, whereas Ezreal is mid-air, firing his weapon, in a chaotic environment. This brings up the dichotomy of passive and active, which is here used to embody the two champions as different.

6.2.2 Avenger
The champions in this category are all out for revenge of some kind. Some stories revolve around exacting justice because someone close to the champion has been mistreated and other stories revolve around the champions themselves being wronged. These stories are about getting even or honoring someone who is now dead. These champions often have a plan about how to execute their revenge, and they are dedicated in following their plan. The plans range from manipulating people or organizations, to killing everyone that had anything to do with the mistreatment.

While analyzing the champions in this category, I found that female champions are represented very differently from male champions. Regarding the background stories, female champions are either evil (they have bad intentions and are selfish) or written into family contexts where their main purpose is to avenge their parents’ deaths – whereas the male champions are mostly good (they aim to make the world a better place by destroying evil) or are heroes where their main

150 Y Hirdman, Genus: Om det Stabilas Föränderliga Former, p. 71.
purpose is to avenge an entire society. An example of this is illustrated in these two quotes, from Syndra’s and Lucian’s background stories.

Furious, she summoned her power and dashed the old man against the walls. With her mentor dead, Syndra felt the rush of her unbounded potential for the first time in years. Though she had won her freedom, she refused to return to the society that had tried to steal her gift. Instead, Syndra decided to claim her former prison as a stronghold. Pushing the boundaries of her magic, she tore the structure from its foundations and raised it into the sky. Free to delve further into her art, Syndra now aims to grow powerful enough to destroy the weak, foolish leaders of Ionia - and anyone else who would dare to shackle her greatness.151

Like the twin relic weapons they wielded, Lucian and his wife Senna were carved from the same stone. Together they battled evil in Runeterra for years, bringing light to darkness and purging those taken by corruption. They were beacons of righteousness: Senna’s dedication to their cause never faltered, while Lucian’s kindness and warmth touched the hearts of the many lives they saved.152

This dichotomy between good and evil is something that Yvonne Hirdman brings up, arguing that “he” represents light and “she” represents darkness – this could be translated into good and evil and reinforces the notion of total difference between the sexes which is fundamental in gender studies.153 Even though all the champions in this category are defined by a desire for revenge, their genders are differentiated by demonstrating the difference between light and dark. Regarding the visual representation, the female champions are sexualized or ‘girly’ whereas the male champions have a serious appearance or are depicted as warriors in fighting scenes.

In this archetype category there are nine champions, four female and five male. As such the distribution of male and female champions in this category matches overall gender distribution of champions. Three of the male champions are in the monster species, one female champions in the manikin species, and the rest are humanoids. Therefore, for a further illustration of this archetype, I will present two humanoid champions; Lucian and Miss Fortune, and one of the

153Y Hirdman, Genus: Om Det Stabilas Föränderliga Former, p. 35.
monster champions; Alistar.

**Lucian:** Lucian's background story circulates a lot around his relationship with his wife, Senna. They fought together with relic weapons that would purge the undead. They were a fearless couple, and she was the other half of his heart. When Senna's soul was captured by one of the undead that they fought, Lucian picked up her weapon and since then he fights with both of the relic weapons to honor her memory. His purpose in life is to slay the undead and cleanse their souls, in other words, to save them from darkness. He does this to make the world a better place and as such he fights for the greater good. He never loses hope that his fighting might someday bring Senna peace. Lucian is described as a kind and warm person, but also a fearless man who goes into any battle to fulfill his mission.

Lucian's splash art is action filled, he is in the midst of fighting undead. While the undead look evil, angry and frightening, Lucian looks calm and focused. The surrounding scenery is dark and his relic weapons are glowing with a white light - making a point that he is the good hero, fighting against the dark evil around him. Lucian is fully covered in clothes, he wears no armor but seeing as he fights from a distance and against ghost creatures, he probably doesn't need any armor. The clothes he is wearing seem appropriate for the tasks at hand. Lucian's body type is slim, and judging by his pose he looks lithe and agile. His in-game talk lines all refer to his profession and dedication in cleansing the land from undead. He says things like "I'll sleep when they're dead" and "Purity and peace". A theme that is present throughout Lucian's story, splash art and in-game talk is that he stands for good and light in a world full of evil and darkness.

**Miss Fortune:** Miss Fortune is a bounty hunter, she is well-respected and by some considered a legend. No bounty is too difficult or too dangerous for "her feminine charm and renowned use of her twin pistols". Hence, by using her femininity and charm things have gotten easier for Miss

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Miss Fortune. What started Miss Fortune's career was the death of her mother. She was killed by pirates and Miss Fortune found her dead in their house. She is now driven by an urge to avenge her mother by finding and killing the pirate that killed her. Due to her success as a bounty hunter, she was able to buy her own ship, although it is stated that this "of course" was due to some "flirtatious haggling".\textsuperscript{155} It seems Miss Fortune is able to solve all her problems and be successful in the world by just being flirty and feminine. This champion was pending between the Femme Fatale archetype and this archetype, I chose to go with the Avenger archetype as her story is more focused around vengeance and personal vendetta than anything else.

Miss Fortune is posing with her guns and is not in an active position. As she is depicted from the side, her pose, with a curved back, enhances her curves and focuses on her bum and breast. Her face is giving a flirty expression and her one visible eye is directed towards the viewer. Her tight pants are very low cut and she is only wearing a bustier on her upper body. Her stomach is exposed, showing that she is very slim and has disproportionately large breasts. Miss Fortune's pose and clothing focuses on sexiness and exposing the female body, this can be read as sexualizing her – making her an object of pleasure and seduction.\textsuperscript{156} Also, the gun smoke coming out of her gun, in the shape of a heart, accentuates the flirtatiousness of her character. Her in-game talk is bland, as she says short lines like "Bang!" and "Step to".

**Alistar**: Alistar, bull-like creature, was the mightiest warrior in the Minotaur tribes. He defended his tribe in battles against any foes, until a Noxian army invaded. He was lured away during the siege and when he returned his village was burning and his people were slain. He was filled with rage and slaughtered hundreds of soldiers in the Noxian army. He was captured and chained, thereafter he was used as a gladiator for the entertainment of wealthy leaders in Noxus.

\textsuperscript{156}M Macdonald, Representing Women, p. 194.
Eventually he was saved from the prison and ended up in the League, to exact vengeance upon Noxus, where he has gained much fame. He used the attention that came with the fame to become an advocate for others that have been treated wrongfully. This charitable work has gained him philanthropic awards. As such, Alistar has an inherent contrast of good and evil, avenger and savior, destruction and reconstruction, although the leitmotif of the story is revenge for the greater good.

Alistar's splash art depicts him breaking loose from chains and smashing a stone pillar with his body, a very aggressive and powerful action. His eyes are red, fists are clinched and his mouth is open as if roaring. He appears as throwing himself towards the viewer, he looks strong and unrelenting. His body is large and very muscular and used to communicate aggression and physical strength, and is thus a signifier for male superiority through the body. He wears handcuffs (from which he breaks the chains) and some sort of clothing that covers his bottoms, other than that he is 'naked', although since he is an animal/monster with no human traits it does not seem weird. The image has an aggressive and action-filled tone and focuses on Alistar's physical strength and massive body. His in-game talk lines are illustrating Alistar's urge to take action, and the anger that resides in him, with lines like "Now I'm angry!" and "Nothing can hold me back!".

### 6.2.3 Destroyer of Worlds

This archetype category includes champions that are plotting to take over the world or kill everyone in it. There are no explicit reasons for these plans in either case, the characters are all doing this for their own pleasure. Due to their plans to become masters of the world they are all working alone and are content with that. All of them are using 'dark magic' or forbidden and ancient techniques to meet their goals – and as such they are connected to death, destruction and pain, and are considered evil. They thrive on doing evil deeds and are sometimes crazy.

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It is a creature of olden times, perhaps even a casualty of the Rune Wars. It is known in ancient texts as the Burning Vengeance. It is a creature of pure fiery hate that exists for no other reason than to lay waste the world of men and yordles.\textsuperscript{158}

There are seven champions in this archetype category, all of them are male. This suggests that truly evil characters with a desire to rule the world are male in this game universe. Five of the champions belong to the monster species, one is a manikin and one is a humanoid. It seems it is a monstrous trait to want to devastate the world for one’s own pleasure. There are very few female monsters and they are excluded from this kind of desire. The champions in the monster species category all have massive bodies and grotesque appearances, and they very much conform to the notion of how masculine bodies are connected to physical ability and strength.\textsuperscript{159} The lack of women in this category also informs the user about what men are, that women are not – women are not strong or smart enough to conquer or dominate the world and they do not have monstrous bodies. As the champions in this category are so much alike I will give an account for only one of them, the monster \textit{Cho’Gath}, to further illustrate the composition of this archetype category.

\textbf{Cho’Gath}: Cho’Gath’s background story is focused around using adjectives that describe evilness in different ways. He is described as a terrible, horrific, ancient creature from the Void (a dark place where only horrible creatures reside). He is also said to be a creature of malice and violence that is driven only by hate. The only purpose of his existence is to cause destruction to the human world. It is stated that he feeds in his victims and that this makes him grow bigger and bigger. He fights in the League because of a trapping spell, but as he is very intelligent it is believed that he stays only because he is entertained by the fighting and will break free when he has grown weary of it. Even though \textit{Cho’Gath} is clearly a monster, a non-human creature, it is underlined that he is rational and intelligent. And as he is such an unstoppable force, that eats humans and dominates worlds, he is a the top of the food chain. It puts \textit{Cho’Gath} in the position of being strong both mentally and physically and these two characteristics, being strong in action and in thought,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{158}League of Legends, \textit{Brand}, \textless \url{http://gameinfo.eune.leagueoflegends.com/en/game-info/champions/brand/} \textgreater, accessed 12 May 2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{159}K MacKinnon, \textit{Representing Men}, p. 11.
\end{itemize}
Hirdman argues are two fundamental aspects to male stereotyping.\textsuperscript{160}

In his splash art Cho'Gath is depicted screaming and wreaking havoc on a battlefield. Compared to the humans he is chasing in the image, he is immensely taller and bigger, a large nightmarish monster. His mouth, wide open, shows a vast number of long and spiky teeth. His eyes are slim and glowing, providing a notion of malice. Due to the size of him, the low angle view and his appearance, the focus in this image lies in depicting Cho'Gath as powerful and terrifying. His in-game talk relates to his eating of humans and wreaking havoc in the world with lines like "Who will be eaten first?", "You... are a scourge upon the world!" and "Nom nom nom nom nom nom nom nom!".

\textbf{6.2.4 Femme Fatale}

The champions in this archetype category are all female. The reason for this is that there are no male versions (Casanovas) of this type of character. These champions are defined almost exclusively by sexiness and seduction. They use sex-appeal and charm to manipulate and confuse their enemy and to get what they want. For the Femme Fatale, femininity and sensuality are their strongest weapons. Many other female champions use their femininity in this way, but the ones in this category are defined solely by it. Their bodies and appearances are crucial in the background stories as well as in the splash arts, and there is a great lack of any other information about their backgrounds or personalities – or even purposes with their conquests. The champions in this archetype category are indisputably the essence of the \textit{emphasized femininity} as all their traits have the purpose to evoke desire and they use their body and femininity to be sexually attractive to men.\textsuperscript{161}

The youngest daughter of one of Noxus' most influential families, she was once a beautiful and cunning temptress capable of manipulating the hardest

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{160} Y Hirdman, \textit{Genus: Om det Stabilas F"{o}r"{a}nderliga Former}, p. 51. \\
\textsuperscript{161} S L. Crawley, L J. Foley & C L. Shehan, \textit{Gendering bodies}, p. 47.
\end{flushleft}
One could argue that the Femme Fatale category implies that these characters have control over and are not afraid to use their sexuality – and that it functions as a sort of declaration of power and sexual liberation. But seeing as the splash arts are reduced to sexualized (‘undressed’ bodies, provocative posing) images of the female body I argue that this is not the case. There are four female champions in this archetype category. Three of them are humanoid; *Ahri*, *Evelynn*, and *Cassiopeia*, and one of them is a shapeshifter; *Elise*. Because there are only four champions in this category I will provide a closer look on only one of them, *Ahri*, for a deeper understanding of this archetype.

**Ahri:** *Ahri’s* background story tells the tale of a fox that wanted to become human. This wish was granted by a wounded soldier to whom she "reached out to in a way she couldn't understand".163 It is described that the wounded soldier’s life essence was poured into *Ahri*, even though it is not explicit it is suggestive of a sexual scene. This experience is described as overwhelming and intoxicating and also changes *Ahri* into the human she desired to be, although not completely. Her body is described as long and lithe. Her power is her beauty by which she attracts unsuspecting men. She consumes men’s lives when they are under the spell of her seductive charms. She fights in the League due to a promise made by "the Institute of War" that she will attain full humanity if she stayed there.

*Ahri* has a human body, with furry fox ears and nine fox tails. Even though she is part human and part fox, she mostly resembles a human and the fox parts function more like decoration and make her somewhat exotic. She wears a tight, and very short, red dress which barely covers her bum. She shows a lot of skin with bare shoulders, bare legs, and cleavage. These are all aspects that

emphasize her femininity, using the body and its shapes to evoke desire. The nine fox tails fill up the rest of the image and make her look like she is swept in cotton or soft fur: Her nails and lips are painted red and she has whiskers painted on her cheeks – signs of feminine adornment. Ahri’s in-game talk lines also follow the pattern of reinforcing her sexiness and seductiveness with lines like "Indulge me!", "I know what they desire", and "Should I make your pulse rise? Or...STOP! (giggles)". Ahri is to a large extent defined by her feminine beauty and body, which is the essence of the emphasized femininity. She has no other powers or abilities, but rely solely on being sensual and sexual.

6.2.5 Ferocious Hunter

The characters in this archetype category have animal-like hunting behavior. They hunt for conquest, they hunt for survival and they hunt for becoming 'the alpha'. This category has two divisions to it; female hunters that hunt for food and survival, and male hunters that simply do it because they like the thrill of it and the glory that comes with winning.

The male champions in this category have a constant quest to find an opponent worthy of their skill. Many of them have a nemesis, another creature which they cannot beat and they spend their entire time searching for it, preparing to fight it, and wait for the best opportunity to strike.

The hunt was on. If such powerful beings existed in the world, he would find them, and stack their heads high. The monster, however, was a kill he wanted to savor. On his den’s largest wall, he reserves a space for the beast’s head, a trophy he swears will one day be the centerpiece of his collection.

The female champions in this category do not have the same deliberative and goal-driven theme, rather they are animals that need to hunt and kill in order to survive – furthermore they do not choose their prey, they eat whatever comes to them.

As the years passed, the animal population steadily died off. Food became increasingly scarce, and Zyra could only stand by helplessly as the last of her kin withered away. She thought she would perish alone, until the appearance of an

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164 S. L. Crawley, L. J. Foley & C. L. Shehan, Gendering bodies, p. 47.
unwary sorceress presented her with an opportunity for salvation.\textsuperscript{166} All of the characters in this category have immense strength and power since they have often defeated every creature they have met. They are all very exotic looking, with appearances that resemble alien/unknown or endangered species. Out of the six champions in this category, four are male and two is female. For a closer view of this category i will present one champion of each gender; Rek'Sai and Rengar.

Rek'Sai: Rek'Sai is the largest and fiercest of her species. She is described as a merciless predator that sneaks up on her prey and devours it. She lives in the desert and has an insatiable hunger. Merchants, caravans and traders avoid going into the areas where they know she waits, but those who are unwary will most likely walk into their deaths. If Rek'Sai sees you, she will kill you. Rek'Sai is the only one in the Ferocious Hunter category that kills to eat, to survive. Still, it is due to animal instinct.

Rek'Sai is depicted in her splash art as a monstrous insect-like creature. Only her face and one of her arms is visible in the image, the rest of the image is made up of the large hole in the ground that she is coming up from. She seems to have no eyes and her mouth consists of two large white tusks and four giant teeth that stand out from her otherwise very dark appearance (dark blue and dark purple). Her in-game talk consists of different kinds of growling and roaring – which further reinforces the notion that she is a monster or a beast.

Rengar: Rengar is a cat-like creature. He is described as an orphan of some sort, since he never knew his real parents and was raised and taught by a human hunter. As an adult he settled down in a territory he claimed for himself, but he grew restless and started seeking thrills in killing the most dangerous creatures in the land. It is stated that he collects and mounts the heads of his

prey on a wall as trophies. His hunting takes time, he studies his prey and learns its patterns - but there is one creature he has never managed to defeat, which is another champion in this archetype category; Kha’Zix.

In the splash art Rengar is depicted with a dangerous and aggressive undertone. On his hand, over his knuckles, he wears a contraption with large metal claws. It is a fighting scene and Rengar is in the middle of a jump and slashes his metal claws towards the viewer. His facial expression is angry and his mouth is wide open, as if roaring, and showing the teeth in an aggressive way. Rengar wears full armor, the armor on his shoulder has large spikes on it, and as Rengar is a close combat fighter champion this seems fit. The fact that he uses weapons and wears clothes on his body is also suggestive of humanity. It is stated in the background story that he lost an eye in battle with his nemesis, this missing eye is covered with a patch in the splash art. The color of his fur and mane is white, which makes him resemble something exotic because of the rarity of white lions. In his in-game talk he says things like "I seek only the strongest!", "Strike when ready" and "You've earned a good death. I've earned the kill". They are all lines that go well together with his persona of being a ferocious hunter that can't be beaten.

The other male champions in this archetype category follow the same pattern as Rengar's background story and splash art, and the other female champion follows Rek'Sai's. What differentiates the female champions in this group is that she does not hunt or kill for pleasure, a desire of becoming the best or to collect trophies – they do it because they are hungry. Rek'Sai is not the deliberative creature that the other hunters are, but since her appearance and in-game talk are more primal than the others' I would argue that they are all equally ferocious and predatory. The other female hunter, Zyra, on the other hand, has a more sexualized appearance. She has a humanoid body dressed in only thin leaves that expose every aspect of her body – her appearance is not conforming to the ferocious or predatory themes. Though, her in-game talk makes up for this, as all the lines refer to hunting and being superior to her prey; "No place is safe
while I’m free”, ”The harvest is upon us” and ”Choke the life from them”. However, the dichotomy between male and female champions is very strong in this archetype category, it is clear that the female champions are closely connected to nature and to instinct, whereas the male champions are connected to displays of power and to cognition as they outsmart their prey. Hirdman writes that intelligence, brain and ingenuity are important aspects in all understandings of masculinity and that these are traits that separate man from animal, and man from woman.\(^{167}\) In this case the male ferocious hunters are made more human, less animal and the female ferocious hunters are reduced to animal instinct.

### 6.2.6 Following a Dream

The characters in this category are quite few. It consists of two male champions and one female champion, as such the division of gender in this category matches the overall gender division. What characterizes them is, basically, that they are following a dream – something they set their sight on at a crucial point in their life and went with. All of their stories circulate around going out into the world and pursuing their dreams, leaving civilization behind. These are very purposeful characters, they know what they want and they go out to get it any way they can.

> With their tempers doused in suds, the two tribes, formerly on the brink of war, bonded over a common love of Gragas’ brew. Although strife was averted and Gragas hailed a hero, he still had not achieved his dream of drunken blissfulness. So once more, he set off to wander the tundra in search of ingredients for Runeterra’s perfect pint.\(^{168}\)

The two champions that I will use to illustrate this archetype are Quinn and Twisted Fate, one female and the other male.

**Quinn:** Quinn is described as an elite ranger. She has a companion, a bird named Valor, and together they undertake the most dangerous missions with "swift reconnaissance and lethal strikes".\(^{169}\) Their bond is special and unbreakable. Quinn’s youth is described, where she and her

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brother were daydreamers – they dreamed of becoming knights and fighting triumphant battles in faraway places. However, when they went in a real adventure her brother died and Quinn was overcome with grief and left her dreams behind. When she found a wounded bird, Valor, that she nursed back to health they formed this special bond. They found strength in each other and Quinn began pursuing the abandoned dreams again. In a critical mission they proved their deadly skills, and earned admiration and respect from the entire nation. Before this mission she was seen as a common-girl who did not know what she was doing. Quinn was/is a dreamer, although she did in the end pursue her dreams when she found another companion to fill the hole in her heart. This suggests that Quinn is not strong enough on her own, she needs a companion in her adventures.

In the splash art Quinn is depicted crouching on a cliff. Valor is sitting on one of her arms, spreading his wings in a protective manner over her shoulders. Quinn’s body is fully armored, on her arms and legs she wears tight clothes so it is evident that she is slim underneath the armor. Quinn is one of the few female champions that does not have flowing long hair, she wears a helmet and her hair is barely visible – either in a short haircut or tucked in. Her face does not have any makeup it seems, her appearance is overall depicting her in way that seems reasonable for her tasks. There are no particular stereotypical feminine aspects to either her body, face or clothing. The image portrays her as well fit for the job she is supposed to do – she wears armor, agile clothes, no hair in the way etc.

In Quinn’s in-game talk it is evident that she is very dependent on Valor. Lines like "I'll follow your lead, Valor!", "A bird’s eye view is the best advantage" and "Strike from the sky" suggest that Valor is a valuable resource for Quinn, and that without him she wouldn’t be as successful. It is also evident in the splash art and in the background story, that Quinn is greatly dependent on her companion – as a protector and as a battle partner.

Twisted Fate: Twisted Fate was born to poor gypsy parents, but managed to gamble his way to prosperity as a card shark. Authorities came looking for him many times, but he always managed
to slip away – suggesting he is witty and sneaky. Even though he managed to take himself out of poverty, he was never able to win what he truly desired – the ability to control magic. He managed to pursue this dream by volunteering for an experiment that had a possibility to grant his wish, but also a possibility to kill him or do nothing at all to him. This suggests that *Twisted Fate* is prone to take risks and will stop at nothing to get what he wants. *Twisted Fate* had a mission and completed it, since then he doesn’t seem to have any goal in life, but feels complete. He is somehow depending on luck and cheating his way through and could be described as a somewhat unpredictable and unreliable person. Twisted Fate is a man that has made his own fortune, he has started at the bottom of society and worked himself upwards. He is independent and controls his own future.

*Twisted Fate* is depicted in a dark alleyway, leaning towards a wall. The card he holds in his hand is glistening with purple light, suggesting it is magic. His body is slim and entirely covered in clothing. His clothes resemble the style of a wild west gunslinger or poker player/card shark from the past, a very masculine theme – which is also confirmed in his in-game talk where he says things like "Let’s raise the stakes", "Pick a card" and "Only a fool plays the hand he’s dealt". As the hat is tilted downwards, a sense of mystery is imbued because the viewer cannot see his face. *Twisted Fate’s* appearance and looks are not focused upon in the image rather it is the playing card and the hand that holds it (as well as the array of cards flowing around him) that are highlighted. Overall, the splash art tells the same story that the background story does.

In order to follow her dream, *Quinn* needs a companion – someone that will have her back, someone who she can trust and create a bond with. *Quinn*, as a woman, is deemed vulnerable and emotional – when her brother dies she falls into depression and her life stops. *Twisted Fate* on the other hand, pursues his dream and dives into dangers without thinking about the consequences – this makes him braver, independent and reckless. The dichotomy of dependence and independence, Schneider argues, is one of the most common stereotypical approaches to
masculinity and femininity.\textsuperscript{170} The same goes for the third champion in this category, \textit{Gargas}, who is an obese man that loves to drink alcohol. Due to his massive body he is unable to get drunk, and is on a constant quest to fulfill his lifelong dream of finding a recipe that will finally get him drunk. \textit{Gargas} too is brave and independent as he walks around to different societies in \textit{Runterra} searching for ingredients and jumping into fights. The male champions in this category make their own future and control their own destiny, whereas the female champion is controlled by emotion and external factors. Here again, the dichotomy of nature and reason comes to play.\textsuperscript{171}

\textbf{6.2.7 Gloryseeker, Driven by self-fulfillment}

The champions in this archetype category seek glory in different forms. Some want to be respected, some want to clear their name from false accusations, and some just want to be famous and adored. Often the way to glory is through proving one's strength, power and fighting skills. No matter how long the road to glory is, the glory seekers find that it is worth it. What is most important in these characters' lives is to earn adoration and respect from their societies. The thought of not having the glory they seek is the worst possible scenario. What is communicated in this archetype category is that glory, fame and admiration is earned if you are a good fighter – all the champions in this category have earned, or plan to earn, their glory by going to battle and kill other people. Another characteristic that follows the theme is that these characters are very self centered. Their own well-being and success is more important than anything else. What matters is not, for instance, saving your population by fighting well in a war – but rather the appreciation and fame that comes afterwards. As such, their motivations are neither good nor evil, because they generally do not care. The division of gender is not very balanced, the majority of these champions are male (5 male and 1 female) and due to this the search for glory and proving one's strength to the masses can largely be seen as a characteristic reserved for men. For an illustration of the characters in this category I will further present one of them, \textit{Draven}, who serves as a good example that in a clear way embodies this category. The only differences from the other champions are that they all seek glory and admiration from different places – the places they live in – and that some champions have the aspect of clearing their names and restoring glory they've had earlier, rather than seeking it from the beginning. As discussed earlier, attention is usually granted to men and women by different means; men by proving their

\textsuperscript{170}D J. Schneider, \textit{The Psychology of Stereotyping}, p. 443, 162.
\textsuperscript{171}Y Hirdman, \textit{Genus: Om det Stabilas Förrändrliga Former}, p. 48.
skill and power, and women by emphasizing their femininity.\(^{172}\) In this case the female champion, \textit{Fiora}, does not conform to the traditional way of seeking attention (and getting it) as a woman. She is described as a master fencer with a devotion to perfecting her skills, hence her body is an active object of performance and functionality much like a male body would be. \textit{Fiora} serves as a female character that challenges the prevalent gender stereotypes and does not conform to the dichotomy.\(^{173}\)

Having surpassed her peers at home, Fiora now seeks greater foes. She will settle for nothing less than the world's acknowledgement of her mastery. As the youngest child of House Laurent, a family known for its long line of elite duelists, Fiora considered herself destined for greatness.\(^{174}\)

\textbf{Draven:} Draven started out in the Noxian military, but his flair for the dramatic was not really appreciated in the context of war. He desired recognition, acclaim and glory, and searched for a way to "share 'Draven' with the world".\(^{175}\) He started working as criminal executioner and began turning the executions into shows, using them as his own personal stage. He gave the prisoners a chance to run for their lives, only to always manage to kill them anyway. More and more people came to see the executions as Draven made them into spectacles of entertainment. The glory he got from performing the executions was not enough – his ambitions outgrew his ego and he wanted to be put in display for a larger crowd, and this is why he joined the League. Draven has a desire to dominate others. This is clear from his profession, he is a man that dominates others by violence and exerting the power he has in society – and when this is not enough he wants to show off his strength and ability to fight to the rest of the world. As such, he very much conforms to the norms of the hegemonic masculinity.\(^{176}\)

\textit{Draven’s} splash art depicts him just having thrown an axe into another man's neck, killing him. He is throwing one axe and holding another in the other hand. The thrown axe lies in the foreground.

\(^{172}\)R W. Connell, Gender & Power, p. 187f.  
\(^{176}\)R.W Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p. 77.
Action is taken in the image and \textit{Draven} is portrayed as superior – something that is enhanced by the low perspective that makes the viewer look up to him. The act is also an act of dominance. With the weapon and the dead man in the foreground, the image has an intimidating undertone. \textit{Draven’s} face is grinning with a sense of enjoyment, and it is evident that \textit{Draven} is someone who is dominating others. The clothing pieces are hard to make out due to the darkness in the image, but it is evident that he is fully clothed. Overall, \textit{Draven} is wearing decorated clothing, although the decorations (such as rivets) have an offensive purpose or (fur) have a functionality to them. Light is shining on \textit{Draven’s} face and one of his arms. This accentuates his facial expression as well as his massive upper arms that make him look very strong and muscular. His body is used to communicate action and strength. His in-game talk enhance his egocentricity and self confidence with lines like "This is where Draven shines", "Perfection? I got that" and "Draven does it all... with style!".

\textbf{6.2.8 Leader}

The characters in this archetype category are all leaders of some kind. Either they are leaders of a tribe, a society, or a military group. Regardless of what kind of leader they are, there are some characteristics that link them together. They are clearly the ones running things (either from the field or from their home base), they are very smart (often good at manipulation and tactics), they have clear goals for the group they are leading and they are very brave. They are accepted as leaders either because they are the most, skilled, loved, feared or respected in their group. There are seven champions in this category; four male and three female. The leader type is most commonly associated with masculinity, this is due to the fact that men are the ones that hold power in society and the ones that hold the top positions in the gender hierarchy.\textsuperscript{177} As authority is the strongest signifier for leadership, men would naturally be the ones leading societies and have the characteristics that are associated with them. Although, seeing as there is a nearly equal number of male and female leader characters it is interesting to see if, and how, they are differentiated. Firstly, the male champions are leaders mainly because it serves their own

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{177}R.W Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p. 77.
\end{footnote}
personal interests. Two of them, Azir and Trundle, are even self-proclaimed leaders, meaning that they were not elected by their people – they have taken their power by force. The other two male champions, Swain and Jarvan IV, are military leaders – something that is also recognized as a masculine realm due to its strong connections to violence and power. The female leader champions have different motivations with their leadership. Two of them, Ashe and Sejuani, have aspirations to unite the scattered tribes of their home, they are advocates for peace and serve as negotiating diplomats rather than powerful and forceful persons. The third female champion, Lissandra, is what would be called an 'evil woman', or a witch, because she manipulates the people she leads and fools them into thinking she is someone else. The evil woman is here characterized by vindictiveness and manipulation, a common portrayal of women who do not conform to the traditional female stereotypes of nurturance and compliance. To illustrate this archetype category further, I will present Trundle and Ashe.

**Trundle:** Trundle is described as a devious, hulking and mischievous creature. It is stated that he can beat anything into submission and bend anyone's will. He is very territorial and chases down anyone that enters his territory, laughing when they bleed. The story that is told is that of how he beat the troll chieftain of his warband, establishing the role of 'troll king' and appointing it to himself. He first tried to challenge the chieftain in battle, but failed. He then made up a story about ancient trolls that carried weapons as symbols of the right to rule. Everyone believed him and he set out to find such a weapon. Without fear he ventured out alone to the territory of the dreaded Ice Witch. He outsmarted her magic traps and out-muscled any guards he came across. Finally he found a weapon, a magic ice club, which he took. The Witch herself approached him to kill him, but instead he made a clever deal, promising her a troll army instead. Back at the troll camp, the fellow trolls bowed to him for the conquest and accepted him as troll king after killing the chieftain. All in all, Trundle does whatever he has to in order to get power, even selling out his tribe. He sacrifices his fellow leader and his fellow trolls. He wants to be the leader, he wants to have the power, and gets it by being strong and smart at the same time. He saw himself as the rightful leader, and made it happen by his own means. His in-game talk promotes violence and aggression, with lines like "I'm gonna crush your dreams... They're in your skull, right?" and "If

178 Ibid. p. 213.
you want me to hit you less, die sooner!”, two traits that are fundamental in defining ideal masculinity. As Connell argues, inscribing force and power to the male body is essential in sustaining superiority over women and other men, and male aggression is used as a signifier for power and force. Trundle embodies these two traits in a broader sense as well, as in his story he takes the position of troll king by force and power, both mental and physical.

This is reinforced again in his splash art. Trundle looks monstrous, primal and brutal due to the fact that he is not wearing any clothes apart from a cloth that covers his bottoms, his gruesome facial features (large nose, large mouth, few but very spiky teeth, small eyes, wild and big beard and hair), and very muscular body. Since he is a monster creature, a troll, the lack of clothing in the cold landscape does not seem significant. Beside him a sword and a shield are sticking up from the snow, suggesting that someone lies dead underneath. This person also serves as a pointer towards great Trundle’s size – since the shield and sword are probably the remains of a human warrior. His body is positioned as if he is hunting something, he is crouching and holding up his weapon. He is positioned from a sideways perspective, turning his back against the viewer – this highlights his hairy back, his muscular arms and torso. Trundle’s body is indeed inscribed with meanings of strength and power, because of the emphasis on his size and musculature.

Ashe: Ashe’s background story describes her childhood and depicts her as a dreamer. As a child, she dreamed of uniting the tribes of the Freljord – and as an adult she still has the same goal. She wants to restore the Freljord to the greatness it had in times passed. She has been a leader for her tribe since the age of fifteen. As she decided to seek unification of the Freljord instead of exacting revenge on other tribes, some warriors of her tribe questioned her as a leader. They plotted to kill her, but "a great hawk" warned her and she got away safely. The hawk led her to the grave of her childhood hero, where she found an enchanted bow. The bow "awakens" a power within Ashe and

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180 R W. Connell, Gender & Power, p. 85.
181 K MacKinnon, Representing Men, p. 37.
she ends the insurrection by firing a volley of arrows towards the warriors chasing her. Returning to her tribe, they all recognized the legendary weapon and since then Ashe and her tribe further strives to unite the nation. This story is obviously about a different kind of leader than Trundle. Ashe is compassionate, she does not want to participate in war but instead strives for peace and unification. Because of this she is questioned as a leader, suggesting that leaders would normally want to fight and lead their nations into war. Further, Ashe has not become the leader of her tribe because she has demonstrated her strength or leadership qualities, or because she has been elected – she is the leader because it was her birthright.

Ashe’s splash art shows her drawing her ice bow with an ice arrow, the pose has some action to it but the peacefulness of the image makes it look passive anyway. Her dressing, a short skirt and a halterneck top, do not seem fitting for the cold climate she lives in, nor does it seem fit for the tasks at hand. The body takes the focus in the image and the clothing paired with the graceful pose emphasize Ashe’s femininity and her body. Ashe’s facial expression is neutral and her eyes looks distant. She has long blonde hair that is flowing over her shoulder, a signifier for femininity. Ashe falls into the emphasized femininity because she here functions mostly as an object to look at, she is passive and her body is exposed, and she is adorned in a way that reinforces norms about female beauty such as long and cared for hair, red lips, youthful and exposing clothing. Her in-game talk lines are referring to her body, even if they are in a comical sense they still focus on her body with lines such as "How do you like the curves? I was talking about the bow" and "Keep staring... just don't look behind you". Other lines refer to her quest of uniting her nation.

6.2.9 Loyal Servant

These characters are characterized by their loyalty. They are unselfish and willing to always support the one they are serving, often involving protection. There are only three characters in this category, all of them are male. Two of them are loyal servants to someone that has saved

182 M Macdonald, Representing Women, p. 194.
them in the past – they now serve that person as a way to repay their debt. The third one was constructed by its master, who then died – and he continues to perform his master’s work to honor the memory of him. Their stories are all about gratefulness towards someone they love and submission to their causes. They have no aspirations of their own. Connell writes about father figures, and how fathers and other men can serve as sources of inspiration for younger men and make them want to follow in their footsteps in developing their masculinity. This is a theme that would be applicable here, as all of these three champions are loyal to, and serve, older men that have taken care of them in some way. This is especially clear in the character Galio, who was constructed by a man that later died – which resulted in Galio continuing his “father’s” legacy by proceeding to fight for what he believed in. Even if their stories positions them as servants they are described as warriors and depicted as aggressive and powerful men. For an illustration, Xin Zhao will be presented further.

**Xin Zhao:** Xin Zhao is the right hand of the king in Demacia. His past is a mystery, still he is trusted as the steward of the “Lightshield Dynasty”, and he intends on keeping his past a mystery. The reader is told about Xin Zhao’s past. He came from Noxus, where in past times there was a spectacle called “the Fleshing” – where gladiators fought prisoners of war. The gladiators who won fights had their number of opponents increased until they failed and died. Xin Zhao, however, managed to fight 300 prisoners. King Jarvan II of Demacia heard rumors about this and infiltrated the arena to offer Xin freedom and a chance to strike back at his offenders. On the way out from Noxus, Xin took a poisoned dart meant for Jarvan, somewhat sacrificing himself and proving his loyalty for the man who rescued him from the Fleshing. This action earned him the place as right hand of the king and he continues to serve under Jarvan II’s son, after the king died, to honor the legacy of him. This makes Xin Zhao something of a protector and loyal servant to the family who rescued him. Xin Zhao is not at the top of the masculinity hierarchy, he rather submits to ‘greater’ men, whom he looks up to. Although, his character traits (being physically strong, skilled in combat)and position in society (directly under the king) suggest he is not at the bottom either. He is still a considerably ‘masculine’ man as much focus lies in portraying him as a fearless warrior, who is physically strong and can take on any number of opponents and win.

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185 Ibid. p. 37.
In his splash art he is depicted in a battlefield, jumping forward, pointing his weapon towards the viewer – a very active position. The low angle view positions Xin Zhao above the viewer, providing a sense of power and superiority. The weapon is highlighted and very close to the viewer, providing a sense of threat and aggression. His facial expression is screaming, his mouth wide open, his brows frowning – making him look fearless and intimidating as he jumps right into the fight. His capability as a warrior is what is focused upon. Xin Zhao wears samurai-like clothes and armor, clothing that further positions him as a warrior. His clothes seem fit for the tasks at hand and rather functional. The image further embodies the notion of male aggression, violence and superiority.

6.2.10 Outcast or Orphan
This is a fairly large archetype category, consisting of 14 champions in total. The individual stories vary and consist of different themes, but the overall denominator is that they are all alone in some way, they do not have a community or someplace to belong. Some of the champions here have chosen to be alone, while others are 'destined' to be alone and are constantly searching for belonging. There are nine male and five female champions in this category, so the division of gender conforms to the overall division. There are basically two subdivisions in this category; the ones that are sad, weak and lonely, and the ones that find strength and power in loneliness. There are essential differences in the way that loneliness is used as a theme.

The champions that are sad and weak in their loneliness have background stories that discuss their lack of friends or family (or both). Many times their stories start out with them being orphaned and growing up alone or in foster care. These champions are envious of others that have what they do not. Others in this category are the only, or last, one of their kind. Champions in this division are good and mean no harm to anyone, all they want is a family, friends or a community in which they can belong. Many of them feel deeply misunderstood, are depressed, and feel that they are judged by their appearance or background and that if only people got to
know them they would see that they are nice, skilled, and equally worthy.

The champions that are powerful and strong in their loneliness have chosen to be alone themselves, there are no issues of abandonment or disappointment that precedes the decision. They are not out to make friends or become popular, rather they have turned their back on everything to go their own way, usually an unconventional way that others do not agree with. They have aspirations to become something greater and need to be alone to do it. They often betray the people and societies they once were a part of.

When dividing the champions in this archetype category into the two divisions the distribution of gender is no longer equal; in the sad and weak division there are four female and four male champions, whereas in the powerful and strong division there are five male and one female champion. It is evident that female champions in this category are more likely to be sad and weak, and that the champions that use their loneliness to gain strength and power are predominantly male. Again, the dichotomy of women as emotional and dependent, and men as independent and rational, is reinforced.186 Another theme that this relates to is that of power, since the motivation of the sad and weak is to have a community or a family, whereas the motivation of the powerful and strong is to have power and control. This dichotomy is also one of the most recognized in the gender hierarchy.187 To illustrate this further, I will present two champions; Zed and Sona.

**Zed:** Zed started out as an orphan who was taken in by a great ninja master to be trained. He and the master’s son, Shen, were the top students. Zed and Shen fought many times, but the fights always ended in a draw. Zed wanted to prove himself to the master; he was jealous and frustrated, and went searching for an advantage in an abandoned part of the temple. He found a box which he understood was filled with dark powers and that he should not open it – but did it anyway and learned a forbidden technique. Already here it is evident that Zed is a person that ignores the rules and goes his own way. He then challenged Shen and won the fight, although the master understood what was going on and banished Zed from the temple. Some years later he decided to go back to the box in the temple in order to perfect his abilities, and exact revenge on the temple ninjas and the master who had shunned him. The master and many of the students were killed.

186Y Hirdman, *Genus: Om det Stabilas Föränderliga Former*, p. 47.
and Zed is now the master of the temple since he took control over it. His purpose in life is to train others in the shadow techniques and kill any ninja that will not embrace these powers. There are many simultaneous themes going on in Zed’s story, the most prevalent one being that he is over and over abandoned, shunned, and acting outside of societal norms. Even though he is always constituted as an outcast, he manages to stay strong, challenge the institution and win. He takes on his revenge and copes with his loneliness by being skilled, strong and determined, by this he appears as if in control of his own destiny.

In his splash art, Zed is depicted sitting on a pillar in the foreground, the temple in the background. The pose is passive. He is fully covered in armor and clothes. His armor covers everything but his legs. His facial expression and appearance is not visible due to the helmet/mask. Even though his entire body is covered as well, it is evident that he has a slim body type, not very muscular. Zed not showing his face, paired with the darkness in the image and his apparel, provides a feeling of intimidation and that Zed is powerful and evil. This is also enhanced by the low angle view from which the viewer sees Zed. The in-game talk further reinforces the notion of Zed as skilled and powerful with lines like "The merest shade of me... is enough to defeat you!" and "Embrace the shadow... or die in darkness!". Other lines refer to his determination in embracing the shadow techniques and killing those who defy him.

The female champion in this division, Diana, serves as an example of a female that is constructed outside of the norm of how female characters are portrayed. She comes from the sun-worshiping city of Rakkor, but is more fascinated with the moon. She is considered a heretic by her community, but manages to go her own way, leading a crusade against the Solari, and leaves her society behind. She is also depicted in a way that reflects her personality and focuses on it rather than her body or appearance.

**Sona:** As a baby, Sona was found outside an orphanage, left with her was a magical instrument. It was later discovered that Sona was unable to speak or make any sounds, and because of this she
hopelessly saw prospective adopters pass her by for years. *Sona* was sad and lonely as a child, always being the one who never got adopted and her story revolves around her depression about this. She was an orphan until her late teens, when a wealthy woman finally adopted her. The woman knew something about the instrument and taught *Sona* to play music on it, touching everyone who heard it. *Sona* finally learned how to manipulate people's emotions by playing her instrument. She also discovered that she could use the vibrations from the instrument to slice objects from a distance, to do harm. She does not seem to have any purpose in life, other than using her gift in the League, because there is no other place for it.

In the splash art *Sona* is depicted in a very feminine way. She has long flowing hair, arranged in an updo. Her dress looks like an elegant evening gown – footlong and flowing. Her face looks peaceful, her hands are delicate and she is playing her instrument with care. Blue is a color that recurs in her hair, her dress and her instrument – this is the color of the sky, which might connote divinity and serenity. Her pose and the way that her hair and dress are moving reinforces this notion. It is evident that *Sona* is delicate and has a slim body type. By the strapless design of the dress, her breasts are focused upon in the image. The fabric of the dress is stretching over the breast area as well, and it is further highlighted with a lighter coloring. As *Sona* is mute, she does not have that many in-game talk lines. Although, the player who is controlling *Sona* can hear some passive in-game talk that no one else can hear, which all refer to music terminology such as "Allegrissimo" or "Brioso! Brioso!".

One of the male champions in this division, *Amumu*, functions as an important counterpart to the norm about how male characters are portrayed in the game. His background story is not very long, but the few sentences that exist describe him exclusively as tiny, sad, confused and alone.

He rose from an ancient Shuriman tomb bound in corpse wrappings with no knowledge of his past, consumed with an uncontrollable sadness.  

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His splash art communicates the same things - he is a mummy, depicted crying and constructing an imaginary friend with his bandages. The in-game talk also suggests a longing for companionship, friendship and a desire to not be alone anymore as it weighs him down. Hence, he represents a male character who is controlled by emotion and seeks only to find belonging. These are features that are considered to be feminine, both in the context of the game and in the patriarchal ideology.\textsuperscript{189}

6.2.11 Outlaw or Criminal

This archetype category includes characters that are criminals, rebels or rule breakers. They are characterized by acting outside of the law, and constantly fleeing the authorities that hunt them. There are five champions in this category, three female and two male, and all of them have different motivations and outcomes. Three of them are traditional criminals who, for different, reasons commit crimes and are chased by the authorities. One of them is a reformed criminal, who is now working for the police. The fifth one has betrayed her society with forbidden magic and is plotting to kill their leader. What they have in common, though, is that they are evasive and elusive, they do not obey laws or rules and feel fulfilled and thrilled in doing so. The three female champions are \textit{Jinx} who is a criminal driven only by the thrill and fun of breaking the law, \textit{Morgana} who does not believe in the traditions of her society and aspires to kill their leader, and \textit{Vi} who was a notorious criminal that later switched sides and started working for the police. The two male champions are \textit{Graves} who is a conman and a gunslinger, and \textit{Twitch} who is a mad bio terrorist with unknown intentions. There is not much difference between the background stories, all of the champions in this category work alone as criminals or outlaws, they have motivations that serve themselves and do not have any higher aspirations than just fulfilling their own needs. Although, the visual representations differ quite a bit, where the male characters are depicted as active, aggressive and powerful and the female characters are depicted as passive and brings focus to their femininity through their bodies. This is why I will focus on the splash arts in this archetype category – illustrating them with the examples of \textit{Graves} and \textit{Jinx}.

\textbf{Graves}: Graves is depicted firing his shotgun in an action filled image, the gun is very large and

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\textsuperscript{189} R. W. Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p. 164.
should be quite heavy, Graves is holding it with two hands. His face is grinning and his eyebrows are frowning, he gives a facial expression that translates to thrill and assertiveness. His torso is bulky and his upper arms and thighs are very wide, which makes his figure look large and muscular. He is fully dressed, covering every inch of his body, and he wears armor on his thighs and hands. The image is viewed from a low angle view, which provides a notion of greatness and power. Paired with the size of his body, Graves looks even bigger from this perspective. Overall, Graves' seems to have an appropriate and functional dressing for the tasks he performs. His pose and his stance also reflect how he is functional in fight. Graves' facial hair, big mustache and beard, function as carriers of meaning for his masculinity. His overall appearance provides a serious impression.

**Jinx:** Jinx is depicted holding her gun on her shoulder, as smoke is coming out of the barrel she has probably fired it recently. The gun has the appearance of a shark, making it look silly and childish. As the gun is big and made of metal, it should be quite heavy. It seems improbable that Jinx would be able to carry it like she does in her pose since her body looks weak. Jinx's facial expression is rather numb. Her eyes are big and look empty, her mouth is open, but she is not smiling or screaming. If something, she looks astonished. Because her clothing consists of a pair of very short shorts, one fishnet stay-up and what looks like a bikini top – her body is the focus of the image as it is very exposed. Her body type is super slim and she has no muscles at all. She wears two ammunition belts, one at the hip and one under the breasts – these have some function for her character but also serve as objects to draw attention, as Beasley et al. noted as a recurring theme in depicting female bodies. Even though Jinx's body does not have the traditional emphasis on curves (hips, waist and breasts), because

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190 Beasley & T Collins Standley, ‘Shirts vs. Skins: Clothing as an Indicator of Gender Role Stereotyping in Video Games’, p. 289.
she is so skinny, the clothing and the pose she is in are instruments to sexualize her body and objectify it. The colors used in *Jinx's* clothing and hair together with her astonished facial expression and 'Shark-gun' provides a notion of her as immature and childish – not to be taken too seriously.

The constitution of these two images is similar: the characters are depicted in similar situations and environments, but they are focusing on different things and embodying two dichotomies. *Jinx's* splash art is focusing on her body as an object because of how lightly dressed she is and how passive her pose is. Otherwise it depicts her as childish and immature. *Graves*’ splash art is focusing on his actions and his body as strong and powerful judging by his pose and the size of him, he is otherwise depicted as serious and in command. *Jinx's* body is shown in the full, whereas *Graves*’ body is cropped – this brings *Graves* closer to the viewer and enhances the focus of *Jinx's* body as important. There is a strong dichotomy here, which reinforces the female body as an object to look at and the male body as represented in terms of functionality.\(^{191}\)

**6.2.12 Privileged Families**

The champions in this category all have had a cushioned upbringing by being born into privileged families. This means that they have had help in their training and the best resources at hand (such as prestigious academies, economic capital and political influence). This category consists of five champions, all of them are female. They all come from families with a lot of economic capital and good positions in society. These champions all have different motivations and aspirations, but none of it would have been possible had it not been for their families' power in society or economic capital. They have used whatever resources their families have to get what, and to where, they wanted.

> Born to the prestigious Crownguards, the paragon family of Demacian service, Luxanna was destined for greatness. She grew up as the family's only daughter, and she immediately took to the advanced education and lavish parties required of families as high profile as the Crownguards.\(^ {192}\)

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Because of this, family plays an important role in these women's background stories. Though, none of them have a family of their own (husband, wife or kids) – but they are strongly connected to their own fathers and mothers and identified as daughters. This makes them dependent, even if their aspirations and motivations lead them to take their own power and control – it is still done with the help of their parents and their privilege. This all suggests that the woman with ambitions and aspirations to something greater comes from a privileged family, she is dependent on her family's connections and economic capital to succeed. As there are no male characters in this archetype category, it would seem like male champions with similar motivations and aspirations would make do anyway, it would suggest that men are independent. This all conforms to the theory of the gender hierarchy, where male members of a society have a natural place at the top of society (and women are subordinate), they have the ability to do what they want and reach their goals without external assistance – and that women can do this only by coming from a higher class and using the resources their families have. All the characters in this archetype category are successful in some way, although in their splash arts their bodies are focused upon rather than their actions. The depicted bodies are enhancing feminine traits, focusing on the curves of the female body and how it is adorned. To illustrate this archetype category further I will provide an example by presenting Vayne and Katarina.

**Vayne:** Vayne comes from a privileged family, from the heart of social elite. It is described that she was naive in her youth, believing that the world was nice and safe. This belief was changed when a witch tortured her family and murdered them. Vayne survived because she hid and fled. She was not courageous as she did not try to save her family but instead left to save her own skin. This incident sparked a hatred within her, a hatred that would follow her forever. She managed to live on her father's money, meaning that she continued living off her privileged family rather than making it for herself. She trained as soon as she was accepted as a student, and as a fully grown woman she became a "grim warrior". She devoted herself to protect Demacia from dark magic, and used her family's contacts to form an organization of 'Night Hunters' – a group that hunts down those using black magic. Vayne is first and foremost described by her family's fortune and privilege – both economic and social – and it is evident that without it she would not have been able to be who she is today. Vayne's story reinforces the notion of dependence as a feminine trait,

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as discussed by Schneider. After the death of her family she continued to live off of her father's money, she used the family connections to get herself training and form an organization where she was the one in charge.

The splash art depicts Vayne in an active pose – jumping and shooting an arrow from her crossbow. The crossbow is remarkably small. Even though her attire is providing a lot of details that make her look tough and functional, like arrows carried in a belt, kneecaps, gauntlets, hair pulled back and held together etc. it is also focused on showing off her body and emphasizing her femininity. The dressing consists of a tight leather bodysuit which fits snugly around every part of her body. The pose she has twists her body to enhance its shapes, emphasizing the curves of the waist, bum and breasts. She is also wearing stiletto heel boots, something that only functions as a marker of femininity as it seems highly inappropriate in battle. Vayne's face is anonymous due to the red glasses she is wearing, although it is evident that she wears red lipstick, another marker of femininity.

**Katarina:** Katarina comes from a politically influential family, her father being a Noxian general. As such, she has had endless possibilities in choosing her path, and chose to follow "the path of the blade". It is stated that she was trained by the finest assassins in Noxus, to master the art of blade fighting. This made her one of the best assassins in Noxus. Her first assignment was to kill a Demacian officer, a fairly easy task – but Katarina went for a harder kill, a Demacian general. This had consequences, and the Demacian officer she was originally supposed to kill, ambushed Noxian soldiers the next day. Katarina decided to complete her task and kill the officer to correct her mistake, the fight was rough and hard – but as Katarina had such high skill she managed to kill the officer. The fight left a scar over her eye which serves as a reminder that she can never let passion interfere with duty. What can be collected from this story is that Katarina, due to her privileged family, got the best training she could get to become an assassin for the Noxian government. She is highly skilled, fast and stealthy. Although, she is passionate and this gets her

into trouble, makes her unable to carry out her tasks and makes her do her job poorly. Passionate translates to letting herself be guided by intense emotions – something that is traditionally associated to female weakness.\textsuperscript{195} She 'learns the lesson' that she instead must follow orders and not let her emotions get in the way.

The splash art shows Katarina in an active pose, leaping in the middle of a fight. The image is full of speed and action. The hand and the knife in the foreground take up a lot of focus, providing a notion of threat and power in the image – this is enhanced by the semi low angle view which positions Katarina slightly above the viewer. Her body is also in focus because of the exposure the pose/angle creates. She is wearing tight clothes, which is probably necessary for the tasks at hand, Katarina needs to be agile and flexible. Although, wearing only a bra on the upper body seems dangerous when fighting with knives and it only serves to expose her breasts and waist area. This makes her body an object of pleasure. Katarina's face is made up with lipstick and eye make-up and her hair is long and shiny – reinforcing the notion of beauty adornment and care. The in-game talk is not referring to anything in particular, but is made up of short lines like "I can't wait" and "Intriguing". To conclude, Katarina is described and depicted in terms of action and skill, but her femininity is emphasized, and her body objectified, due to her emotional weakness and bodily exposure, just as discussed by Inness.\textsuperscript{196}

\textbf{6.2.13 Protector or Savior}

The characters in this archetype category are dedicated to protecting something. Some are taking action to protect a territory from dying, some are protecting the people of a society, and some have done a great deed that has saved a society from something awful. Most of them have a constant quest to protect people in need and help them in dire situations or heal their wounds. This is one of the largest categories, consisting of 13 champions, eight female and five male. This suggests that protection is more of a female characteristic – a theme discussed widely in gender

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{KatarinaSplashArt.png}
\caption{Katarina in action pose}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{195}M Macdonald, \textit{Representing Women}, p. 63ff.  
\textsuperscript{196}S A. Inness, \textit{Tough Girls}, p. 178.
and representation research, because women are often defined by their role as mothers: nurturing and caring for their families and functioning as moral support. As such, caring and nurturing is widely seen as female characteristics, something that is inherently and naturally female.\textsuperscript{197} As stated, there are five male champions in this category, and all of them are depicted as physically strong, large and in almost all cases armored. As a contrast the female champions in the category are predominantly thin and delicate. This also connects to the fact that the all the male champions are in the "tank" or "fighter" in-game roles, meaning that they are in the middle of the fight and get close up to their enemies in the game, whereas the female champions are dealing damage or supporting the team from a distance. For a further illustration I will present Janna, Braum and Leona, three champions that illustrate different takes on the protector/savior archetype.

\textit{Janna:} Janna grew up as an orphan living on the streets. She used magic to protect herself from dangers and discovered she had an affinity for air magic. She started studying it and mastered it very quickly, in doing so her appearance changed as well.

Such a rapid ascension also changed her physical appearance, giving her an otherworldly look.\textsuperscript{198}

This means that Janna became beautiful by mastering the art of air magic. She is by and large defined in the background story by her beauty and appearance. Her story ends with the sentence "do not be captivated by Janna's beauty". The strong focus on beauty and femininity, in both background story and splash art, functions as a way to reduce Janna to the bodily construction of a woman existing for the pleasure of onlookers, making her embody the notion of a woman conforming to the masculine definitions of female beauty.\textsuperscript{199} She fights in the League to right the injustices in the world and it is stated that she has many fans and always is the center of attention. Janna can be seen as a prime example of emphasized femininity. Her background story revolves around how beautiful she is, her otherworldly looks, and both the splash art and the in-

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{197}M Macdonald, \textit{Representing Women}, p. 132f. \\
\textsuperscript{199}M Macdonald, \textit{Representing Women}, p. 163ff.
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game talk continues to emphasize her femininity in various ways.

In the splash art Janna has a passive pose, and nothing else is going on in the image, making her body the focal point of the image. The body is lean and very slim, the S-shape of her pose enhances her curves and places focus on breasts and bum as these are pushed out. The lighting in the image further places focus on Janna's body. Because Janna is not wearing any clothes apart from panties and a bra, most of her body is exposed – making her an object of pleasure. Her face is expressionless which is enhanced by her empty eyes that look away. The in-game talk further emphasizes her as an erotic object, one of her lines, "Yes, it's true. For only $2.95 a minute, I will leave you breathless", is highly suggestive of prostitution. Other lines make it seem like she is commanded by someone or something else as she says "By your command" and "As you wish", the intention of these lines might be that the player is 'controlling' her.

Braum: Braum's background story is written as if it is a bedtime story told by a grandmother to a child. The grandmother says her grandmother used to tell stories about Braum as well. This suggests that Braum is a great legend in his country, someone that everybody knows, has heard of, and speaks about – someone that has stories told about him. Braum is retold by the grandmother as a kind and beloved farmer who had sheep and goats. She tells the story of how he got his shield; a young boy got locked in a cursed cave, behind a door that even the strongest warriors couldn't open. Braum approached with a laugh and a smile to help. But even Braum, "the strongest man ever", couldn't open the vault. Braum is ascribed patience as he thinks of a solution for days, and finally decides to punch his way through the whole mountain with his fists. The villages look to him as a hero and a savior. As the mountain crumbles and starts to cave in, Braum thinks quickly and holds the door up to protect the villagers. This background story explains that the male protector is strong, kind and quick-witted. These characteristics are not found with the

female protectors, but is present with all the male ones, creating a dichotomy of women as mild and men as robust, which is recognized as a recurring stereotypical approach.\textsuperscript{201} To protect by being strong is an exclusively male trait in these stories – the female protectors are primarily identified as kind and benevolent. Another difference is that \textit{Braum} is made a legend, someone that is famous and respected in a way that the female counterparts are not.

In the splash art \textit{Braum} is depicted in a snowy landscape, holding his giant shield. The low angle view together with the massive size of his body makes him look authoritative and powerful. Even though he lives in this snowy landscape, he does not wear warm clothes – instead he wears a pair of pants, an enormous belt and buckle, and a shoulder plate. His upper body is mostly bare, showing off his muscular torso and arms. This entails two meanings: firstly that he is physically strong and is defined by it, secondly it is a sexualization of the male body as he shows so much bare skin and the appearance of his body is what is seen as an ideal masculine body (being strong and physically fit).\textsuperscript{202} The bare upper body serves no purpose in what he is doing. \textit{Braum} is reaching down to the viewer with his hand, a gesture that further enforces the notion of him as more powerful and strong, helping those beneath him, although the pose is rather passive. The big mustache functions as a sign of masculinity. \textit{Braum}'s in-game talk function to further position him as a kind and beloved person, he says encouraging things like "You can always trust Braum", "Good times, good friends... what could be better?" and "Keep your spirits high".

\textbf{Leona:} \textit{Leona} is part of a special group in a city called \textit{Rakkor}, they live at the top of \textit{Mount Targon} and answer to a "higher calling". This group is called the \textit{Solari}, and they do not care for war, but instead devote their lives to worshiping the sun. \textit{Leona}'s parents are traditional Rakkorans, bred for the heat of the battle and living only to fight. \textit{Leona} was perceived as a problem child by both her parents and her society. She had the capability to fight, but did not have the expected

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enthusiasm for killing. She believed in defense and protection rather than aggression and killing. Leona was sentenced to death because she refused to fight in a ritual for teens – when the killing blow was to hit her, a burst of sunlight came down and hit the executioners unconscious. The Solari then claimed her – chosen of the Sun – and she was given a golden armor, sword and shield. They helped her focus her abilities until she was ready to leave for the League. The Solari named Leona "the Radiant Dawn" and saw her as a physical avatar for the sun itself. This story emphasizes how Leona, as a woman born into a warring community, refuses to fight because she believes in protection instead – making her different from others and excluding her from the realm of war and fighting, which is traditionally seen as a male territory. Although, she is not excluded because she is a woman, but because she chooses to. She is also seen as the embodiment of the sun, which could translate to her being closer to nature than others. And as the sun is connoting warmth and is seen as a source of life, this symbolism can translate to what is seen as feminine traits of motherhood. Leona embodies a strong woman who works to protect her society, she has been chosen for her dedication and strong connection to the sun. It is stated that she has the capability to fight, but she refuses to – this means that she does not bend her will, she will go the way she believes in even if it kills her in the process and she earns the respect of her people in the end. Leona is an exception form the norm that League of Legends communicates about female characters, as such I feel it is important to include her here as an example of how a strong female character can maintain her femininity without it being being sexualized in terms of posing, revealing clothing and body composition.

In the splash art, Leona is completely surrounded by the sky, the symbolism of her as an embodiment of the sun is reproduced in the visual representation. The pose is passive, but due to the low angle view she looks powerful. On her head she wears some kind of crown with the Solari mark (a symbol resembling a sun). This symbol is also present on the shield, on the armor and on the sword – referring to her belonging to the

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Solari. To emphasize her femininity the armor is constructed as a long skirt, and on her upper body she wears breast-shaped plates that somewhat emphasizes her femininity. Cropped out of the image is her feet, which in the in-game model is wearing high heeled boots, another marker of femininity. Because her armor is not covering her entire body, it is evident that she has a slim body type. The in-game talk is also emphasizing Leona’s femininity with lines like "I think I broke a nail, good thing it wasn't mine", connoting a preoccupation with feminine adornment, and also reinforcing her characteristic as a protector with lines like "I will protect you!". To a large extent, Leona's personality and background story are reflected, and focused upon, in the splash art.

6.2.14 Sacred Duty or Chosen One

In this archetype category, the champions are important in their societies because they have been chosen, either by the members of the society or by a higher power, to take responsibility for something or protect something. In most cases this means that they have special abilities or have been awarded special weapons and training – either way they are exceptional at what they do. Some of the champions in this category could have been placed in the protector/savior category, but they are different in the way that they have not chosen themselves to protect something – the people in their society have chosen them because they have proven themselves worthy and skilled enough. They do not see their duties as helping and caring in the same way as the champions in the protector/savior category, rather they see it as a great honor and a serious matter. There are eight champions in this category, six male and two female – suggesting that this kind of responsibility over a society is predominantly a male task, that men are chosen to be in charge of important tasks and to a large extent have special importance as chosen ones. This conforms to Macdonald’s notion that men generally represent the interests of a whole society.\(^\text{205}\)

It also puts male characters in a favorable status in their societies, being respected and trusted with these special tasks, conforming to the hierarchical gender order.\(^\text{206}\)

The male champions in the category are depicted in clothing and armor that somehow show what their tasks are, for instance the well armored warrior Volibear, the gravedigger Yorick with his shovel or Udyr with special connections to animals and nature is dressed in a bear-head hood. As a contrast, Nami a female champion on a special mission to find a moonstone is depicted posing

\(^{205}\) Macdonald, *Representing Women*, p. 15.
in the sea thrusting her semi-bare chest forward, and *Akali* a female ninja (while depicted in battle) shows off her body with revealing clothes. These representations and this emphasis on femininity limits the power and autonomy available for the female characters and reduces them to objects of pleasure.\(^{207}\)

I will illustrate the champions in this category by presenting *Akali* and *Shen* – two champions that both work for the same organization, chosen to be part of an order that works for the preservation of balance their society. They have, more or less, the same job (being ninjas) and perform the same tasks. Their background stories start in the same way, describing the *Kinoku* order, the organization they work for. Both of them, it is told, have trained their entire lives to become the chosen ones to work for the order. Also, both of them are described by their skill and how they are free from emotion. Due to their dedication to the order’s cause they do things that are morally questionable, knowing that it is for the greater good. In *Shen*’s background story it is stated that “as the Eye of Twilight, Shen must make decisions that would buckle the wills of ordinary men, removing all emotion from the equation”.\(^{208}\) In *Akali*’s background story it is said that “she has had to do much in this role which others might find morally questionable, but to her it is in service of her mother’s inviolable doctrine”, which would translate to in broad terms the same thing as removing emotion from the equation.\(^{209}\) Thus, they are very alike each other in characteristics – they even share some in-game talk lines – but there are some differences in how they are portrayed visually.

**Akali**: *Akali*’s splash art depicts her in battle, in an active position slicing an enemy. She has a mask on her face, which covers her nose, mouth and forehead – her eyes are left visible. She wears armor/protection on scattered places (shoulders, wrists, shins), leaving important parts of the body unprotected. The dress she wears only covers her

breast, stomach and bum – leaving her legs, arms and back bare. Showing a lot of skin places a
focus on Akali’s body. The strap going down between her legs brings focus to that area and the
notion of what is and isn’t visible. She is also adorned with long black hair that is flowing around
her and eyes wearing make-up. These are both signs of femininity emphasized.210

Shen: Shen’s splash art is significantly darker than
Akali’s, he almost blends in to the shadows with
his dark clothes and mask – enhancing the notion
of him being a ninja. He wears armor on important
parts of the body, such as the torso, but also on
shoulders, wrists and legs. His entire face is
covered by his helmet/mask, his eyes are seen
glowing from within. He is depicted channeling one of his abilities, to teleport to another
champion, and is dissolving from the elbows – this probably explains the signs he is making with
his hands. He looks as if in control, almost meditating. The angle from which he is depicted is low
so that the sense of power is stronger, the angle functions as to make him authoritative. Akali is
depicted from a semi-low angle, but in her case it functions to draw attention to her legs rather
than providing a sense of authority or power.

6.2.15 Sadist

The characters in this archetype category have no logical motivations for being evil and making
other people suffer. They take joy and pride in harming and hurting others. There is no further
motive in their evil actions, meaning they do not strive for a goal – they just do it because they
enjoy it, and they lack the empathy to feel bad about it.

Once a jailer who mercilessly brutalized all under his charge, Thresh was hanged
from his own chains by the prisoners he had tortured. With his vicious essence
unbound, the Chain Warden roams Runeterra in search of prey. He derives twisted
joy from slowly breaking the minds of his most defiant victims, before trapping their
souls within the sickly green light of his lantern.211

May 2015.
What is most characteristic of this category is not only that they like to harm others, but that they commit acts that dominate others, and makes them superior others. Like Thresh, in the above quote, who tortures his victims and traps their souls in his lantern – only for the joy of taking their lives and owning their souls. There are five champions in this category, all of them are male – suggesting that these are all male traits and that this is something that women are not. I believe that the characteristics of the Sadist champions is closely related to the hegemonic masculinity and the desire to be superior to both other men and women. These champions sustain their superiority by being able to dominate others without caring about anything else, or anyone else, than themselves and their own pleasure. For a further illustration of this category I will present Vladimir.

Vladimir: Vladimir’s background story starts out with a tale from his childhood about how he killed two boys the same age as himself, enjoying himself watching their blood leave their bodies. That day he realized he could never suppress his desire to kill and that he now was guilty of murder. He could not return home, instead he started to wander another direction. He started following a trail of blood and dead bodies, which led to a temple where an old monk lived. The monk taught him the art of hemomancy (how to manipulate and control blood) and Vladimir studied it with great interest, practicing on innocent travelers. In his final test, Vladimir absorbed the monk’s blood, fusing it with his own, which also caused all the monk’s, and his predecessors’, magical powers to flow into Vladimir. He turned to the League, to show off the supremacy of his craft and to sate his lust for blood. It is evident that Vladimir consequently take other people’s lives for his own pleasure and superiority, he kills innocents and he kills his teacher in order to take his powers and become the master himself – which are all acts of dominance, reinforcing him as a superior man. He has a position through which he decides who gets to live and who gets to die for no other reason than his own pleasure.

Vladimir wears classy clothes – pants, shirt and a long coat with large sleeves and large lapel and collar. He looks dressed as if dressed for a social event, a sophisticated look. His facial expression

212 R W. Connell, Gender & Power, p. 87.
213 R W. Connell, Gender & Power, p. 87.
communicates pleasure, he is enjoying himself as he handles the sphere of blood that is hovering between his hands. His body is slim and he looks tall and powerful due to the perspective from which the viewer is looking. A focal point in the image, except for the sphere of blood, are the large metal claws that are attached to Vladimir's hands. They are lit up and provide a sense that he uses them as weapons. Even though he is using blood magic, his power is illustrated through the claws as weapons as well. The color red is used throughout the image (in his clothes, the shading of his face, his eyes, the sphere etc.), connoting blood and Vladimir's lust for it. Even though Vladimir would be considered evil or a 'monster' due to his actions and lack of motivation for killing people, he is portrayed as sophisticated and elegant. He very much resembles the traditional view of a vampire, although it is never stated that he drinks blood or eats his victims. Other champions in this archetype category, though, are depicted in monstrous ways – as ghosts or strange, otherworldly, creatures. Vladimir's in-game talk consists of comical references to blood like "Go ahead, be negative. You'll be just my type" and "The clot thickens".

6.2.16 Super smart or Scientist

This archetype category consists of characters that are incredibly smart, many of them are scientists, but some of them are just smart or carry a lot of knowledge without it being connected to a profession. They constantly strive for more knowledge, either by studying, by doing field research, or laboratory testing. The ones that are scientists have many times constructed impressing technological devices, brewed powerful potions and poisons or mastered ancient knowledge or ways of magic. For instance:

Early in life, Viktor discovered his passion for science and invention, particularly in the field of mechanical automation. He attended Zaun's prestigious College of Techmaturgy and led the team that constructed Blitzcrank – a scientific breakthrough that he expected to vault him to the top of his profession.214

Singed descended from a long line of Zaun’s revered chemists. Even in his youth, his talent for concocting potions far outstripped that of his peers, and he quickly distinguished himself from his less extraordinary chemist compatriots.\textsuperscript{215}

All of the characters in this archetype category are male, which makes the realm of science and knowledge a male realm in the game. This is a prime example of how female characters are separated from the discourse of thought and cognition, since every champion which is primarily defined with these attributes is male. Masculinity has a close connection to prowess in technology and research.\textsuperscript{216} A line can also be drawn to the dichotomy of nature and reason discussed earlier – where men are generally recognized as closer to thought and soul, and women closer to nature and instinct.\textsuperscript{217} As female characters are excluded from this category, it must be assumed that the traits that define it are traits that female characters do not have. Further, the characters in the category range from manikins, to humanoids to monsters, which is interesting because the otherwise childish manikins and animal-like monsters are also illustrated as cognitive and intelligent – making all species viable as super smart or scientist, as long as they are male. For a further illustration of this archetype category, I will present Heimerdinger and Vel’Koz.

**Heimerdinger:** Heimerdinger’s background story is written as if it is taken from his personal journal. It describes the process and progress of his research. It is stated that he is an inventor and a professor of some sort, building some kind of machine that needs frequent testing and fine tuning. He thinks about everything in the world, even child’s play, in a scientific way. From the journal notes it is evident that he is building a machine to improve a ball game played by children in the yard outside. His contraption proves itself useful in another way when it is used by one of the children to scare off an intruding giant. Heimerdinger is celebrated as a hero for saving the city.

Heimerdinger’s splash art shows him tinkering with an invention. He fills up most of the image, leaving very little room for anything else. Because of the small body and large head he looks like a

\textsuperscript{216}R W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{217}Y Hirdman, *Genus: Om det Stabilas Föränderliga Former*, p. 63.
cute caricature of an inventor. His appearance is animal-like, being furry and having an animal-like nose. Heimerdinger's hair is big and stands straight up, mimicking the image of a nutty professor (cf. classic image of Albert Einstein with crazy hair). The big goggles with an attached magnifying glass serve as indicators of intelligence, as Schneider writes "the wearing of glasses leads to perceptions of mental competence and intelligence". Rockets, lasers and lightning is flowing and flying around the contraption, and are reflected in his eye glasses. Heimerdinger looks concentrated even though his facial expression is not readable. The clothes he wears, a lab coat and gloves, seem appropriate for his activity and his persona as an inventor/scientist. The image by and large focuses on Heimerdinger's activity and reflect his background story. His in-game talk also reflect the fact that he is an inventor/scientist with jokes that refer to science, like "Why do chemists call helium, curium, and barium 'the medical elements'? Because, if you can't 'helium' or 'curium', you 'barium'! Hm hm!" and "Why do people say 'you can't trust atoms'? Because they 'make up everything'! Hehe!".

**Vel’Koz:** Vel’Koz is a creature from the Void whose sole purpose is learning and gathering knowledge. He entered Valoran to learn about its inhabitants. He gathers information by scanning the landscape with a big eye – sometimes destroying the targets by accident. During one field trip he learned to see the past, future and present all at once. The text is rather short, but as it is written to resemble Vel’Koz's thoughts it is evident that he is smart, analytical and hungry for knowledge. He ended up in the League because of his obsession to obtain knowledge no matter the cost.

The splash art shows that Vel'Koz's body is made up of a big eye surrounded by smaller eyes, and a set of tentacles. He looks like an alien creature. The many eyes function as symbols for Vel'Koz as all-seeing. The big eye in the center of his body is the focal point in the image, this is his 'weapon' and the body part which collects knowledge, which makes it apparent that his
personality is reflected in the image. This makes *Vel’Koz* appear as the essence of knowledge, cognition and thought – which are attributes deeply connected to masculinity.\(^{219}\) The fact that *Vel’Koz* looks like a worm monster, but still is inscribed with these traits functions as a distinction toward monstrous female characters – *Vel’Koz* can be both monster and super smart, whereas female monsters are controlled by instinct and do not have traits of thought and cognition. The in-game talk further positions *Vel’Koz* as hungry for knowledge and an analytical character in lines like "There is much to learn about this world" and "Bones are surprisingly inflexible".

**6.2.17 Tough Warrior**

In this archetype category the champions are defined by how tough they are and how good they are at fighting with their bare hands. These are all champions that like close combat and do not hesitate to go into wars, fights and the like. Physical strength and brawn is what is important for these characters, as told by the background stories, it is what determines how good, successful and respected they are. Their bodies, and what they do with them, are in the center of focus in the splash arts, which are depicting muscular and big bodies that are in the midst of fighting and carrying large weapons. This archetype category largely embodies the notion of the male body as inscribed with power and force, and as a superior alternative to the female body.\(^{220}\) As there are nine champions in this category and only one of them is female, this category pretty much embodies the essence of male violence and superiority through physical strength and aggression. The female champion in this category, *Riven*, falls into the trap that many female action heroines do – she is presented as a woman with masculine characteristics and qualities. Instead of just being a strong and tough female warrior, as she is described in the background story – her femininity is emphasized in the splash art. This conforms to the argument that the man is the norm through which the woman is defined, meaning that the woman has to be differentiated and her femininity emphasized in order to exist in contrast to the man.\(^{221}\) The bodies are essential in

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\(^{221}\) M. Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero*, p. 68f.
this category as the male bodies are used as symbols of physical strength and aggression, whereas the female body is used to differentiate and accentuate femininity. To illustrate this further I will present said champion, *Riven*, and a male counterpart, *Olaf.*

**Riven:** *Riven* always had committed faith in striving to greatness, with the ideal that greatness comes from strength. She showed early potential as a soldier and forced herself to master the weight of a sword larger than herself at a young age. She is a warrior – ruthless and efficient (this means she does not make a show of it, and does not see it as an art, she merely kills her victims in a quick and effective way). She is fearless and does not dread death or care about morals or ethics. It is stated that she is a poster child for the *Noxian* spirit, meaning her country is proud of her and how she incorporates all that they stand for. In the war, after an unsuccessful battle, she disappeared and was thought to be dead. Instead, she started a new life, she shattered her sword as a symbolic severing ties with the past. Her quest now is to seek atonement and a way to save the pure *Noxian* vision – where strength is all that matters. All in all she is a ruthless warrior, she wields an extremely large sword which suggests she is physically strong, and is described as a killing machine.

*Riven* is depicted jumping forward towards the viewer, from a low angle perspective which makes her feel powerful and dangerous. The sword is stuck to the ground in the foreground, making it a focal point and a marker for aggression. As stated in the background story, the sword is bigger than *Riven* herself – and even though it must be heavy as she trained a lot to be able to carry it, *Riven* does not look physically strong as her body is very slim. She wears armor on her shoulders, which seems necessary for the tasks at hand – although large parts of her body remain unprotected by either clothes or armor. Her legs are shiny and sleek and bare, visible from under the miniskirt, and she wears sandals on her feet. These are two aspects that serve to showcase *Riven’s* body, as her body would benefit more from being clothed or armored. As such, she is depicted in terms of emphasizing that she is a female, reflecting Inness’ notion about female action heroines and how tough female characters must be.
differentiated from the norm of the male action hero.\textsuperscript{222} Her hair is white, short and a bit spiky – a somewhat boyish hairstyle – by resembling a 'male' hairstyle the hair is used as a marker of toughness. Her body is used to show she is indeed a woman by the exposure of her legs, the clothing and feminine makeup. The in-game talk focuses on Riven’s quest to bring back the Noxian vision of strength as the only viable trait with lines like "Violence to end violence" and "There is no other way" – but there is also some references to trivial 'female' activities such as enjoying shopping, "This is why I spend so much time sheath shopping".

**Olaf:** Olaf’s purpose in life is to die a warrior’s death. When his death was predicted in a ritual he was told he would live a long life and have a quiet passing – something seen as the worst fate a warrior of his tribe could get. Olaf was a warrior "with no shortage of glories and no hesitation to share them", meaning he was a renowned warrior who liked to brag about his glory.\textsuperscript{223} Infuriated by the prediction and desperate to prove it false, he set out to fight the most fearsome creatures in the Freljord, creatures that no one had ever been able to slay. Although he hoped to die the honorable death in fight, he instead managed to kill all the monsters. This story tells of how a warrior’s death, to die fighting fearsome enemies, is the only way to die in an honorable way, and how it is important for a man to do this. Olaf can not die peacefully since this would make him 'less of a man'. This all points towards the strong male body and violence as representations of masculinity, and peacefulness as a sign of weakness.\textsuperscript{224}

Olaf is depicted as if in battle, the action of the image is evident. He holds two axes, one of them is highlighted in the foreground. The low angle view makes Olaf look authoritative and powerful. The pose gives the impression of Olaf charging towards the viewer with his weapons drawn, providing a sense of aggression. His body is used to embody these attributes as well, by letting his muscular thighs and upper arms be bare and

\textsuperscript{224}K MacKinnon, *Representing Men*, p. 11.
visible. His facial expression is angry, as he is depicted screaming with a fully open mouth. The stylistics of this image (the ship in the background, Olaf’s helmet and the leather and fur used in his clothing) reference a Viking theme, which further functions as a symbol for the aggressive and physically strong man. Further, the wild hair and beard function as signifiers for masculinity and works as an opposite to the expectations that female characters usually have about beauty care.\(^{225}\)

I would not argue that the display of his body is sexualized. This is because the pose and the extremity of his muscles are providing a sense of intimidation and aggression than anything else.

### 6.2.18 Uncategorized

This category only has three champions in it, *Rammus*, *Sivir* and *Skarner*. The reason why they are not placed in another category is because of the lack of information. Their background stories are very short, ranging from 2 to 4 short sentences. The information given for *Rammus* and *Skarner* is that their pasts are mysterious, and seeing as their splash arts do not entail very much I chose to not categorize them at all. The information given for *Sivir* appears as unfinished or under construction and it is not fruitful to put her in a category.

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7. Discussion and conclusion

This chapter will provide a broader discussion of the conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the study. I will bring up certain themes that are meaningful in relation to the questions asked in this thesis. I will also investigate the conclusions in relation to the previous research that has been conducted within this field. Lastly I will discuss the relevance of this thesis and suggest future research within the field.

The purpose of this thesis was to critically examine how League of Legends (re)produced gender ideologies through representations of masculinity and femininity. The questions asked to examine this regarded visual and textual representations of masculinity and femininity. I wondered what histories and characteristics were given to male and female characters and aimed to categorize these into different archetypes. I also asked how representations found negotiated ideologies and norms about gender and how gender differences were emphasized. This has been done by going deep into the material and getting close to textual and visual representations. Even though League of Legends is one of the most consumed media texts today, no systematic mapping of the material had been done prior to this thesis, and these are the first findings that take both visual and textual representations into consideration to point out gender ideologies in League of Legends.

The results showed that representations of femininity and masculinity in League of Legends to a large extent confirms what we already know about representation of gender in general, but that there are some aspects that differ from the prevailing norm. For instance, there are cases where the dynamic of the feminine/masculine dichotomy is skewed – and male characters are emotional or sexualized or female characters are defined by skill and status in society. The results of the thesis also show differences in relation to previous research on gender representation in video games, which up until now have found that women are underrepresented and often victimized.
7.1 Representations of body and appearance

Some prevalent themes about representation of body and appearance can be drawn from the analysis of the material. Firstly, male bodies are only described in the background stories with regard to what they can do, how they function, and physical strength is the most emphasized characteristic. Women's bodies are commented in almost all the background stories, in terms of how they look. It seems important to note what a female character looks like and what others think of her appearance – oftentimes this means describing her feminine beauty, and that the body is lean and lithe. This creates a dichotomy about male and female bodies, where male bodies are active and female bodies are passive, which can also be found in the splash arts where female characters are predominantly depicted in passive poses and male characters depicted performing activities. The active/passive dichotomy is discussed both in gender and representation research. For instance, Macdonald writes that the female body connotes femininity through "ideal bodily shape and size; appropriate forms of make-up and cosmetic care of skin and hair; and the adornment of the body through clothes and accessories", and that as a contrast "male bodies connote masculinity through associations of bodily functioning and performance and of powerful and energetic activity".226 Crawley et al. write that “men's bodies are understood as active and women's bodies as passive. This dichotomy is an interesting reduction of all bodily difference and capability into two greatly oversimplified groups”.227 By gendering bodies in this way, League of Legends reproduces this notion and continues to oversimplify stereotypes of men as active and women as passive.

Further, female bodies all follow the same pattern in appearance and posing with a lot of focus on showing the curves of breast, waist and bottoms (often all of these body parts are visible in one and the same pose). Poses, clothing and perspectives work together to provide focus to these body parts to emphasize femininity and oftentimes function to objectify or sexualize the body. Male bodies have another way of being portrayed and defined as masculine. They have a variety of ways to be depicted and they more often relate to the character's background story and what type of body would be ideal for the tasks at hand. Although, the prevalent body for male characters is a physically strong, signified with large muscles, and a large body that is presented

in contrast to other bodies in the images. As a contrast, female characters that are described in the background stories as physically trained and strong, are still depicted with slim bodies with no visible musculature. Showing men as physically superior, with forceful and powerful bodies, MacKinnon argues, is a way of sustaining the hegemonic masculinity.\textsuperscript{228} Connell writes that male bodies shown as physically strong and able, inscribes power and force to the male body, and that the depictions of these kinds of bodies functions as a means to sustain superiority over women, since their bodies are shown and represented in different ways.\textsuperscript{229}

Martins et al. showed in their study that female video game characters had larger heads and markedly thinner and smaller bodies than the average American woman.\textsuperscript{230} They argued that this supports the same ideals of thinness that are dominant in other mainstream media. As a contrast they noted in an earlier study that male video game characters had larger and bulkier bodies than the average American man.\textsuperscript{231} Although I cannot comment on how bodies in \textit{League of Legends} reflect bodies in reality, my study shows that the slim female bodies and the large and bulky male bodies are prevailing here as well.

When discussing still images, Macdonald argues that there are some central signifiers that are used to distance the viewer from the woman depicted. These include a dreamlike context, a coy pose, an averted gaze, and a "wax-like absence of facial expression".\textsuperscript{232} These signifiers, she writes, "denies individuality, refuses access to the woman's view of herself, and enables the looker to admire the woman as an aesthetic or erotic object".\textsuperscript{233} For a woman to signify symbolically, her personality must be hidden – commonly a woman's personality and situation is hidden in still images across media and cultural forms. As a contrast, she argues, men's personality is evident from signifiers of activity.\textsuperscript{234} Female clothing in \textit{League of Legends} circulates around drawing attention to certain body parts, such as breasts and hips, in a sexually suggestive way by showing a lot of skin, placing accessories and details on certain areas to draw attention to

\textsuperscript{228}K MacKinnon, \textit{Representing Men}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{229}R W. Connell, \textit{Gender \& Power}, p. 85ff.
\textsuperscript{230}N Martins, D C. Williams, K Harrison & R A. Ratan, 'A Content Analysis of Female Body Imagery in Video Games', p. 831.
\textsuperscript{231}N Martin, D Williams, R A. Ratan & K Harrison, 'Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters', p. 47.
\textsuperscript{232}M Macdonald, \textit{Representing Women}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{233}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{234}Ibid.
them etc. This corresponds to the results found by Beasley et al. in their study on how clothing indicates gender, where female video game characters were found to show more skin and wear clothes that drew attention to their bodies in general and breasts in specific.\textsuperscript{235} Male clothing has more functionality to it, if a character fights in a war he is wearing armor and is covered by clothes, if he works in a laboratory he wears a lab coat – whereas the female counterparts wear revealing dresses or short skirts that often do not relate to their personalities or background stories, have long hair that blows in the wind, high heels etc. that would not be appropriate or functional when fighting or doing experiments. This not only leads to the notion that the splash arts of female characters are used to expose and sexualize the female body, but also means that male characters show more personality in the images since they to a larger extent perform, and are dressed for, the tasks that are described in the background story. This means that Macdonald’s notion about women in still images is reproduced in this material.

Female characters have their femininity emphasized by revealing clothing or clothing that fits snugly around their breast, waist and hips, and by signifiers of femininity such as long and shiny hair, make-up or high heeled shoes. This conforms to Inness' notion of how heroism, according to the norm, is a male role – and that female heroes are differentiated, and separated from the norms of heroism, by emphasizing their femininity.\textsuperscript{236} The 'toughest' female characters have short hair to appear tougher, more masculine – but this is counterweighted by the use of make-up and revealing clothes. Male hairstyles are varied, although facial hair is used as a signifier for masculinity in many characters, where the toughest male characters have wild and big beards. Hair and make-up, evidently, are used as signifiers for either masculinity or femininity. It reinforces the notion of how women need to take part in the beauty discourse related to the emphasized femininity discussed by, among others, Crawley et al. and simultaneously creates a dichotomy saying that the toughest men do not care for adorning their bodies, but should have an unpolished appearance.\textsuperscript{237}

\textsuperscript{235} Beasley & T Collins Standley, 'Shirts vs. Skins: Clothing as an Indicator of Gender Role Stereotyping in Video Games', p. 289.
\textsuperscript{236} A. Inness, \textit{Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture}, p. 178
7.2 Representations of gender in archetypes

Many of the archetype categories have a division of male and female characters that roughly resembles the overall division of gender. Certain archetypes stand out as predominantly male or female, but there are also gender differences within the 'equal' categories, making certain character traits represented as either masculine or feminine and producing certain dichotomies.

The warrior type characters present in the “Tough Warrior” archetype function as embodiments of physical strength and male aggression, the one female character in this category has her femininity emphasized in the splash art to be differentiated from the male characters. This is discussed as a common approach to 'action girls' in popular culture, they cannot only be tough and strong but must also have sex-appeal and be 'feminine'. Male aggression and violence is a prevalent theme in many of the other archetype categories as well, Alistar in the “Avenger” category, Cho’Gath in the “Destroyer of Worlds” category, Trundle in the “Leader” category, to name a few. By and large the main characteristic for male characters in all archetype categories is the demonstration of aggression and violence, and ability to fight – which conforms to Hourihan's notion that violence is commonly used by male hero characters to assert power and proving themselves worthy of admiration. Connell writes that the display of male violence and aggression are a part of the system of male domination over women, and that it has traditionally been an essential part of the masculine identity. According to this argument, the male characters in the game can be seen as superior to the female characters, due to their aggressiveness and violence. The belief that the men are 'naturally' more aggressive and violent, Connell writes, is a strategic part of modern gender ideology which situates men as inherently superior to women. This is reinforced in the textual and visual aspects of the game since violence and aggression are ways for male characters to reach their goals.

Another distinguishable dichotomy is that of the feminine as connected to nature and instinct and the male as connected to thought and cognition. This is most prevalent in that the “Super smart or Scientist” category, which is an exclusively male category, where characters are defined by their

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238 This is also showed in characters not presented in the analysis, such as Vi and Kayle.
240 M Hourihan, Deconstructing the Hero, p. 96ff.
241 R W. Connell, Masculinities, p. 45ff.
intelligence and proficiency in science and research. But it is also distinguishable in other
categories, such as Rek’Sai as a contrast to the male characters in the “Ferocious Hunter” category,
Katarina in the “Privileged Family” category or the entire “Outcast or Orphan” category – where
female characters are controlled by their emotions, driven by their instinct and represented as
closer to nature than their male counterparts. As mentioned earlier Connell emphasizes this
dichotomy as a defining theme in patriarchal ideology. She argues that it is a leading idea in sex-
role theory and a widespread idea in popular culture, and that "science and technology, seen by
the dominant ideology as the motors of progress, are culturally defined as a masculine realm.
Hegemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of
reason". As such, the notion of men as representing the interests of a whole society, by being
distinguished as 'men of reason', is reproduced in the texts of the game. Female characters that
are controlled by their emotions, or defined as closer to instinct and nature, have less success in
reaching their goals – they remain stuck in unwanted positions, they perform their tasks poorly
and some risk dying because of their lack of cognition and reason. Evidently, these characters
have a subordinate position in relation to the male characters.

A third dichotomy derived from the material is that of dependence and independence, listed as
one of the recurring stereotypical approaches in constructing dichotomies of femininity and
masculinity. Schneider argues that dependency functions as an opposite to power, meaning that
the independence shown by male characters serve as indicators of power, which also relates to
their quests towards obtaining power. Female characters that want to reach a goal or obtain
power, can often only do so with the help of others as shown in, for instance, the “Privileged
Families” category which is an exclusively female category which clearly shows how their
families’ economic and social capital helps them to get where they want. It is also shown in, for
instance, the "Following a Dream" archetype, where Quinn (the female champion) requires a
companion to follow her dreams and Twisted Fate and Gragas (the male champions) do it on their
own. This is also shown in the “Outcast or Orphan” category, where female champions that are
lonely seek for family, community and belonging, whereas the male champions are alone because
they seek to be powerful and can only reach their goals alone. Female characters are generally

242 R W. Connell, Masculinities, p. 164.
244 Ibid. p. 162.
written into family contexts to a greater extent, and male characters have an individualistic appearance, in which their individual interests and motivations are in focus.

Lastly, many female characters use their sexuality and charm as weapons or tools to reach a goal. In many background stories it is described how feminine charm, beauty and sex-appeal are tools used to manipulate or deceive men, to gain advantages in society and defeat enemies. This is most clearly demonstrated in the “Femme Fatale” archetype, but recurs in many other archetypes as complementary definitions of female characters, for instance Miss Fortune in the “Avenger” archetype or Janna in the “Protector or Savior” archetype. These female characters are to a large extent stripped of any skill. Their femininity is not described as being connected to certain skills, rather their bodies and their beauty is what counts. As a contrast, when male characters use their masculinity to succeed, the masculinity in itself is connected to skill and the male body as capable and inherently skillful. Reducing female characters to sexiness and beauty, largely conforms to the notion of the emphasized femininity as a contrast to the hegemonic masculinity – it places female characters as subordinate and less capable than male characters.\(^{245}\)

### 7.3 Challenging the norms

Although much of the content of the material conforms to traditional ways of constructing and representing femininity and masculinity, there are some aspects that makes an effort to challenge these dominant codes.

Behm-Morawitz et al. found in their studies that women are vastly underrepresented in video games, and that when there is a female video game character she mostly has the role of damsel in distress. They also found that the heroic women that existed were often not playable characters.\(^ {246}\) Similarly, Dickerman et al.’s conclusions showed that the number of women in video games were scarce and that female character had minor parts in the stories. They were usually victims whereas male characters were defined as heroes and villains.\(^ {247}\) These kinds of statements are common in video game research, but do not apply in this thesis. This study rather

\(^{245}\) R W. Connell, *Gender and Power*, p. 188.
\(^{246}\) E Behm-Morawitz & D Mastro, 'The Effects of the Sexualization of Female Video Game Characters on Gender Stereotyping and Female Self-Concept, p. 808.
\(^{247}\) C Dickerman, J Christensen & S B. Kerl-McClain, 'Big Breasts and Bad Guys: Depictions of Gender and Race in Video Games', p. 23.
shows that there are indeed a great number of playable female characters, that are all labeled as "champions" (i.e. heroes). The background stories provide a variety of roles for both male and female characters. Compared to the male characters in the game, the female ones are less independent and depicted as less active – but in comparison to previous research on gender representation in video games, the female characters indeed show signs of independence and activity.

Further, I want to highlight some characters that differ from the gender norm in the context of the game, and some characters that differ from the general perceptions of femininity and masculinity. Firstly, there are a number of female characters that challenge the norms of how femininity is represented, both in terms of dominant codes derived from stereotypes and patriarchal ideology, but also in the context of the game itself. For example, *Leona, Diana* and *Fiora* are three female champions that are described in terms of skill, determination and following their own beliefs. They are not controlled by emotion or defined by emphasized femininity – they all have their own convictions and stand up to their societies to prove them wrong, and gain power and authority in doing so. Hourihan argues that a female hero must act like a man and be identified by male qualities in order to be successful – these examples ignores these norms about heroism and construct feminine heroes that do not sacrifice femininity for heroism. Their splash arts reflect their personalities in a reasonable manner, focusing on their tasks and characteristics rather than enhancing their femininity. Another example of this would be *Syndra*, whose background story portrays her as a strong and independent woman who due to her determination and beliefs, defies her society to follow her own path. By this she gains power and authority. Although, her splash art focuses on her body by pose, angle and revealing clothes. Here her femininity is emphasized anyway, and she is viewed as an erotic object. This is the case with many of the female characters – their background stories many times portray capable, independent or smart women, but fails to reflect these qualities in the visual representations by reducing them to female bodies made for visual pleasure.

Another aspect that challenges dominant gender ideologies is the case of *Rek'Sai* who is a female monster that is by no means reduced to being a female body. She has a genderless appearance

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248 M Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero*, p. 68.
and an in-game talk that consists of growls and roars – hence it would be impossible to decide what gender this character had if the background story was not read. This points towards an effort to allow female monster characters to be as terrifying and monstrous as male monster characters – without creating a dichotomy of what differentiates the male monster from the female. There are also instances where masculinity is negotiated. For instance in the character Braum who is described in the background story according to dominant ideologies of what is masculine – although in the splash art he is depicted as an erotic object, showing off his muscular body in a sexually suggestive way, rather than only focusing on the functionality or strength of it. The undressed parts of his body serve only to showcase masculine sexiness and does not have any reasonable explanation. Another example of male characters that challenge the dominant norms is Amumu, who is defined in terms of sentimentality and emotion, which are largely seen as female traits.249 The emotional man is a theme that is recurring in other male champions as well, such as Lucian, Blitzcrank and Galio, that are all making choices based on emotions and to some extent are controlled by emotions.

A final example of how gender ideologies are challenged appears in the manikin species, as illustrated by Corki and Tristana in the “Adventure Seeker or Action Seeker” archetype. The champions in the manikin species are all described and depicted in terms of skill and personality regardless of gender. Gendered meanings are hard to make out in these champions as they share many characteristics, such as optimism, skill, love for what they do and a sense of humor. Many of the champions in the manikin species come from the same city, Bandle City, as described by the background stories, and are named Yordles. Although, some of the champions that ended up in the manikin species come from other cities or worlds. What ties them together, though, is that they are all depicted as cute creatures, their background stories focus on describing their skill and personalities and their splash arts focus on depicting them accordingly – reflecting their interests and personalities, and omitting signs of strength, sex, violence and beauty. Although, these characters are perceived as childish due to their constant happiness, their humorous personalities and cute appearances, and maybe they cannot be compared to the ‘grown up’ characters. I would still argue that the manikin species functions as a way to challenge dominant codes of masculinity and femininity, since they are a group of characters that have their own way

249Y Hirdman, Genus: Om det Stabila Föränderliga Former, p. 48.
of being represented.

7.4 Concluding words

This study would have benefited from taking the visual culture of the fantasy genre into account. *League of Legends*, of course, exists in a visual culture that has its own conventions and norms and it would have been fruitful to discuss the game and its visual representations of masculinity and femininity in relation to a larger visual culture. Although, my search for relevant research in this field turned out to be unsuccessful as this has not been done. My study might function as a basis from which further research in the field can be made, and eventually collected into a wider approach to the visual culture of the fantasy genre. This thesis functions as a contribution to mapping out conventions in this genre – but also as a contribution to the field of video game studies. As the MOBA-genre of video games is growing and new MOBA games are entering the market, previous research in the field is not applicable as it does not cover the active roles of female video game characters. The notion of the female character as a 'princess' or a 'damsel in distress' is not valid in these new video game environments, as all characters regardless of background stories of distress, failure or dependence eventually culminate in active characters who succeeded in the end.

Further, I would like to make a remark regarding the exclusion of women from the gaming culture. As Bryce, Rutter & Sullivan discussed, the activity of playing video games is gendered in the way that video games are culturally seen as a male domain. Similarly, Taylor, Jenson and de Castell found that the roles of women in the professional scene are as booth babes, cheerleaders and flirtatious girl gamers, and Sveningsson found that female World of Warcraft players were expected to have certain 'feminine' qualities in their guilds. These were all posed as examples of how female exclusion takes form in the culture of digital gaming, and I believe that through the representations found in this study it is should be taken into consideration that the gendering of bodies and activities in the experience of a video game might contribute to the exclusion of a female audience, as the stories and splash arts to a large extent portray female characters as passive and sexualized in relation to male characters, which are portrayed as skilled.

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251 N Taylor, J Jenson & S de Castell, 'Cheerleaders/Booth Babes/Halo hoes: Pro-Gaming, Gender and Jobs for the Boys'.
252 J Sundén & M Sveningsson, Gender and Sexuality in Online Digital Games: Passionate Play.
and active. The attention brought to the female body in general and breasts in specific, Beasly & Collins Standley argued, carries strong sexual meaning for a male audience — and as the sample in this study does bring this kind of attention to the female body it can be argued that it is meant for a male audience and possibly excluding a female audience. Of course, these are only speculations that would require further research, about how game aesthetics affect choices of what games to play, to be claimed.

253 Beasley & T Collins Standley, ‘Shirts vs. Skins: Clothing as an Indicator of Gender Role Stereotyping in Video Games’.
7. Bibliography

7.1 Published sources


Behm-Morawitz, E & D Mastro, 'The Effects of the Sexualization of Female Video Game Characters on Gender Stereotyping and Female Self-Concept', Sex Roles, Vol. 61, No. 11, 2009.


Jenson, J & S de Castell, 'Theorizing Gender and Digital Gameplay: Oversights, Accidents and


### 7.2 Unpublished sources


8. Appendix

In order to not cloud the text with graphs of the data collected from the primary study, here are the results illustrated in graphs for a clearer view.

8.1 Preliminary study, graphs

The following graphs are illustrations of the results from the preliminary study.

All Champions: Gender

- 62% Male
- 38% Female

All Champions: Species

- 60% Humanoid
- 26% Manikin
- 11% Monster
- 2% Shapeshifter
All Champions: Gender Per Species

- Humanoid: Male (40), Female (35)
- Manikin: Male (10), Female (5)
- Monster: Male (30)
- Shapeshifter: Male (5), Female (1)
8.2 Preliminary study graphs: In-game Roles

- **Marksman**: Male and female
- **Tanks**: Male and female
- **Fighters**: Male and female
- **Assassins**: Male and female
- **Supports**: Male and female
- **Mages**: Male and female