Modders of Skyrim: Motivations and Modifications

A qualitative study of what motivations and modifications the modders of *Elder Scrolls: Skyrim* exhibit

Författare: Eleonora Hackman & Ulfrik Björkqvist

Handledare: Petri Lankoski
Abstract
This qualitative study is aimed at studying what motivations can be found among those who modify the digital game *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, and what it is that they modify. Within the confines of this study we also connect motivations and modifications. We also introduce related research and the subject of digital game modification. The conclusion we arrive at is that there are varied motivations that can be connected to several modification categories. We also conclude that our conclusion can be tied to the modification forum for *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, called ‘Nexus’, in regards to cultural context.

Keywords
Modding, motivation, what, survey, qualitative study

Sammanfattning

Nyckelord
Modding, motivation, vad, enkät, kvalitativ studie
Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 4
1.1 BACKGROUND .................................................................................................................. 4
1.2 RELATED RESEARCH ........................................................................................................ 5
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ..................................................................................................... 7

2 ESSAY STRUCTURE ............................................................................................................ 9

3 THEORY & METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................... 10
3.1 GROUNDED THEORY ......................................................................................................... 10
3.2 SURVEY CREATION .......................................................................................................... 10
3.3 SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC SELECTION ............................................................................... 10
3.4 THEORY APPLICATION ..................................................................................................... 11

4 RESULTS ............................................................................................................................ 13
4.1 THE CATEGORIES ............................................................................................................... 13
4.2 INTERCONNECTING MOTIVATIONS: ................................................................................ 15
4.3 CONNECTING MOTIVATIONS WITH MODIFICATIONS: ................................................... 18
4.4 LOOKING AT THE RESULTS ............................................................................................. 21

5 DISCUSSION ....................................................................................................................... 23
5.1 RELATED RESEARCH ........................................................................................................ 23
5.2 CONSIDERING OUR METHOD AND PROCESS ............................................................... 23
5.3 DEVIATION ......................................................................................................................... 24

6 CONCLUSIONS ................................................................................................................... 25
6.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED ....................................................................... 25
6.2 OUR THEORY: .................................................................................................................... 25

7 FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS ............................................................................... 27

8 REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................... 27

9 APPENDIX .......................................................................................................................... 29
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Since 1983 (nag.co.za, 2009) there has been a trend in gaming to modify games. When the personal computer (PC) entered people’s homes on a wider scale, opening up for gaming in our homes and everyday lives, so did the practice of modifying them (henceforth known as modding) become more widespread. Previously this was a difficult task that was primarily attempted by those versed in programming and those who had the knowledge required to alter parameters and content. Nowadays, when modding has become a mainstream part of gaming culture (Laukkanen, 2005), almost anyone can produce a game modification (henceforth known as mods) by using an editor specific to that game. Of course there are still those who produce game mods by writing code, but modding has become far more accessible and easy to do.

Creating modifications to games is older than the digital games field of work that we will be studying in this paper. Changing the rules and drawing up new game boards is something that is in our human nature, and surely it has resulted in new games being created from the old variations. This occurs in digital games as well. That kind of modification, where the modder uses an existing game engine and in part also existing code but semi or completely overhauls the game, essentially creating a new game, is called ‘total conversion’ (Laukkanen, 2005).

This is only one kind of modification, but there are other ways to modify your gaming experience by altering the original game. The field of modifying games is a diverse one when it comes to the forms of modifications available. In this study we will focus on the modification type known as ‘mods’, but there are in fact other types of modifications- and for the sake of clarification we will give a short description of them here. ‘Patches’ are released by the game companies to fix issues like problems with code or balancing for instance, and they also release what is known as ‘downloadable content’ (DLC), which usually consists of a parallel, or an extension to an existing, storyline and new quests, sometimes adding new NPCs. ‘Mods’ are created by gamers, and they vary in how much they modify the game, from simply adding a scar, tattoo or hairdo to your
playable character (PC) to tweaking the code to allow added quests and dialogue or altering what items are available on a specific level.

The what and why of modifications to released digital games is not a widely studied subject in the world of game research as of yet. In doing our research and looking for previous studies and materials we found very little about creating modifications that was done as a scientific study. What we found was not always on point with what we wanted to look closer into.

We therefore wish to make a contribution to this particular field of study, especially since it is very interesting from a game design perspective. We hope to gain insights that will aid us in the future; such as what aspects drive people to mod games, and what is it that they mod? These questions, paired with the fact that both of us researching this paper are well versed in playing games from the Elder Scrolls suite, drove us to thinking about the abundance of mods available for the single-player role-playing game, RPG (spike.com, 2011), Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. We have both played Skyrim, but only one of us regularly uses mods, and none of us have tried our hand at modding, yet.

1.2 Related Research
As already mentioned, there is little done in this field of study to begin with. The studies we found that had researched mods and modding had a different outlook than the one we wished to study, and a few of them were outdated. We did find a number of articles related to gaming and mods, but unfortunately those were not supported by adequate research and we felt they were unreliable. Thus, we have opted to leave such sources of information out of this study. Most of what we found that was scientifically viable addressed other issues with modifying games, such as ‘total conversion’ or ‘DLC’s, and only a few actually studying ‘mods’. Most of the mods studies were looking at other aspects of the mods than we will be looking at in this paper, rendering it difficult to draw parallels.
Laukkanen has studied mods, and his research touches on ours (Laukkanen, 2005), as he studies what is modified and how modders use what is available out there to creates said mods.

For example *Modding scenes* (2005) by T. Laukkanen which is a research paper based on case studies on *Half-Life, The Sims* and *Grand Theft Auto III - Vice City* in which the what and how of modding is explored. Although none of these games are the same genre as *Skyrim* we still found a few commonalities. The closest comparison between the games studies by Laukkanen and *Skyrim* is *Grand Theft Auto III - Vice City* which is referred to as an action adventure game (Gamespot, 2007), while *Skyrim* is referred to as an role-playing game (*spike.com, 2011*).

Upon reading Laukkanens introduction and the history of modding, we found this quote:

"Infact, the first ever computer game, Space War, distributed from 1962 onwards as a demo / testing software on a room sized minicomputer, was enthusiastically modified in practically every university campus where the minicomputer itself was installed."

(*Laukkanen, 2005*)

This statement points to what we would refer to as the social context in the community of gamers and modders. Modifications to games have always been an enjoyable pastime throughout history, as an example Laukkanen brings up *Chess*, and he points out that modifications to analogue games have typically been tweaking rules or the playing board (Laukkanen, 2005). Today’s equivalent to such tweaks would be altering code and levels, but todays digital games offer so many more possibilities when it comes to what can be modified. The game manufacturers view mods and modders as assets and their communities as a nursery for new ideas and experimentation, that poses no financial risk (Laukkanen, 2005). In addition modders nowadays receive much support in the form of mod-friendly titles, editors and open source codes, support forums and information resources on the internet but also in house workshops and seminars and sponsored high profile modding contests (Laukkanen, 2005).
In *WADs, Bots and Mods: Multiplayer FPS Games as Co-creative Media* (2003), Sue Morris explores the relationship between the online multiplayer FPS scene’s culture, media and technology as well as argue that multiplayer FPS games have gone from regular games, to co-creative media. One instance of note in this study is an interview with Counter-Strike developer Minh Le (known as “Gooseman”) where Le describes his motivations:

“My initial motivation [for making mods] was probably the same as anyone else involved in the mod scene. I just wanted to customize the game to fit my vision of what a game should be.”
- Minh “Gooseman” Le, from *WADs, Bots and Mods: Multiplayer FPS Games as Co-creative Media* (2003), Sue Morris

Like S. Morris (2003), J.P. Tavares, R. Gil and L. Roque in their study *Player as Author: conjecturing online game modalities and infrastructure* (2005), view video games as co-creative and discuss the implications and role of the player as an author. However, while this is certainly an interesting discussion, it does not touch on player motivations or specify what players modify in video games. The lack of correlation between this study’s purpose and the previous research on the subject of mods, mentioned above, shows that the area of game modifications is vast and largely unexplored. As such, we find the goal of exploring the modding communities motivations and modifications to be motivated and certainly worthwhile.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The goal of this study is to shed some light on why people modify digital games and what they choose to modify by creating a well-founded grounded theory. We wish to study the motivations and modifications created for the game *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, and look at the interconnectivities between the two.

- What motivates modders of the *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* community, and what are they motivated to mod?
- Are there patterns in the interconnectivity between motivations and modifications, as well as motivations and motivations?
2 Essay structure

First we present the field of study, the related research, and pose our research questions. We also give some background as to why this so interesting for us to look into.

Secondly we present the research method and the theories behind the study.

Thirdly we present the results and our interpretations of them and explain our process.

Following the results we reach the discussion, in which we consider wider implications of our results and compare to other research.

After that we arrive at our conclusions and are able to form a grounded theory from our results and our interpretations of them. We summarize and see what answers we have found for our research questions.

Finally there is the appendix, in which all additional information along with charts and collected data.
3 Theory & Methodology

3.1 Grounded Theory
Grounded Theory is not specific to qualitative or quantitative studies, but is first and foremost a method for research. The research method known as Grounded Theory (henceforth known as GT) is a way to make sense of the data collected by extrapolating categories from it and then iterating said categories. From the final iterated categories one then forms a hypothesis, or a grounded theory, if you will. Using this method in our qualitative study allows us to read between the lines when analyzing our collected data and put our findings into social context. The formal steps of GT are: identify your area of interest, collect data, start to code the data, take notes during the process of coding the data, conduct selective coding and theoretical sampling, sort your memos and find the theoretical codes, integrate relevant literature and finally write up your theory ([http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory](http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory)).

3.2 Survey Creation
When creating the survey (appendix D) we opted for 7 open-ended questions where we asked the modders how they started modding and similar questions aimed at highlighting the modders motivations. The questions that were used in the survey were iterated several times until we felt we had questions that were optimal for the study, as they would give us relevant information without the questions themselves affecting the participants answers. After the questions were finalized we used surveymonkey.com (www.surveymonkey.com, 2014) to create the actual web survey the participants would use to answer.

3.3 Survey Demographic Selection
As the modding community include many different games and sub-communities we decided to limit our study to the modding community of the game *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011) of the site ‘Nexus’ ([http://www.nexusmods.com/skyrim/](http://www.nexusmods.com/skyrim/)). This was based on the reason that *Nexus*, and *Skyrim* in particular, have a well known, large, diverse and active community. The game has, at the time of performing this study, over 35000 downloadable mods ([http://www.nexusmods.com/skyrim/](http://www.nexusmods.com/skyrim/), 2014-11-15) at *Nexus*. 
To get in touch with the community we created a forum account and posted a thread where we explained our purpose and asked the community to fill out the survey we had previously created, see appendix A. We allowed the survey to stay open for 7 days before closing it, collecting a total of 11 answers.

3.4 Theory Application

We started by selecting 5 respondents at random for analysis, with no knowledge of the respondents sex or age or extent of modding experience. After this, we began extrapolating categories by using the grounded theory method, while continuously analyzing the participants answers - dividing them into why and what, where why was the participants motivation for modding and what referring to the areas of the game they modified. This was done by looking at one participant at a time, one question at a time, from which we extrapolated categories, or keywords. After having looked at each of the seven questions we re-read and examined the answers given by the participant and read between the lines. If, for example, a participant at one point mentions a type of mod and says that they ‘enjoy designing whole characters’, and in another part of their interview say that they have altered other peoples mods in regards to the PC/NPC’s appearance and narrative, then we would probably draw the conclusion that said participant at the very least likes to modify said components. However the word ‘design’ to us implies that the participant possibly even creates completely new models that are inserted into the game. We are aware that this is our interpretation, but the use of the word ‘design’ and ‘whole characters’ in this case, and in the cultural context of gaming and creating for games, leads us to read between the lines and draw the conclusion that this person probably enjoys creating characters from scratch including modelling, narrative and all.

Of course we are aware that this part of the process is subject to the risks of misinterpretations and such, and thus took a critical standpoint throughout the process, reiterating a number of times before arriving at a satisfactory conclusion. We also left our analysis overnight and looked at it with new perspective the next day, which lead to modifications every time.
When we were satisfied with our first iteration of categories (see Appendix B), we started to discuss them and analyze them in order to iterate them. This was done by matching categories that were closely related. In order to be quick and efficient and to gain an overview, we used post-it notes. Following this step of our process, we went back and looked over our participants answers making sure that our new categories still were true to the gathered information. (For the final iteration see Appendix E). To see which categories were combined and what we define these categories as, see Appendix E.

After this final iteration, we started to look at correlations between the motivations of the participants and what they modded as well as the potential correlations within each category.

This was done by writing each category into a program in which we could draw up boxes and interconnect them drawing lines in between the boxes of text. The category connections ‘tree’ can be found below in Results.
4 Results

4.1 The categories

The first categories we drew from the answers we got from the survey can be found in Appendix B. Here we present our final categories and the connections between motivations and modifications we’ve found. For survey results see Appendix C.

**Final categories:**
Below you will find the final categories explained. To see which of the first categories we combined to form our final categories see Appendix E.

**Motivations:**

**Fixing perceived design flaws**
Fixing pet-peeves, bugs, adding to, and improving on, already existing game content where the modder feels the content lacking.

**Personal advancement**
Using mods to further yourself or achieve personal goals - be it to further a career, improve skills or reach a specific goal.

**Social interaction**
Interacting with the community through discussions, teamwork, assistance and sharing mods.

**Personal gratification**
Modding simply for ones own pleasure, fulfilling personal goals and desires either through achieving perfection, living out one's passion or simply exercising one’s hobby.

**Crafting a vision**
Crafting one’s creative vision, be it as a designer or layman. The vision can be game mechanics, narrative, progression, balance or graphical.
Artistic motivation
Viewing modders as artists and each mod as art which is not to be altered by other modders. The wish to create art and share it with other artists and the community.

Pastime
Modding not as a hobby or for the sheer enjoyment of it, but as a means for passing time.

Construction
A modder with the primary motivation of creating buildings and similar structures utilizing both vision and craftsmanship.

Adding content
Expanding on existing content through crafting and adding levels, places, lore, narrative, equipment, characters and quests.

Crafting an experience
From simply altering a narrative or creating quests to adding new models, equipment, lands, and character, the modder is motivated by creating a compelling experience for the player.

Modifications:
Characters
Working with ingame characters be it animals, monsters, non-player characters or player characters - either by creating new ones or modifying existing ones.

Item Availability
Balancing or changing the availability of items and equipment within the game, either through placement, drop rates, level restrictions or crafting restrictions.
Equipment
Designing, creating and/or modifying player equipment such as armor & clothing.

Graphics
Creating, adding and/or modifying 3D Models, textures and meshes.

Locations
Creating, adding and/or modifying places and locations the player can explore or experience.

Placement
Moving or placing objects, added or pre-existing, to enhance one’s experience and increase immersion.

Improving Immersion
Improving immersion by adding or modifying character narrative, books or quests.

Custom Help
Giving other players custom help either by giving them advice or creating assets for their modifications

4.2 Interconnecting motivations:
There are of course similarities to be found in the various motivations categories derived from our data. By looking closer at these similarities we can find ways that these categories are inter-connected. Because these are motivations we can find that certain motivations are alike, for example Crafting an experience and Adding content, where adding new content alters the experience creating a new one, and in reverse; when one wishes to create an experience one way to do it is to add content. Thus these categories can be said to interconnect.

In the example above it is quite clear how we reasoned when connecting the motivations to each other. There are however instances where it was not as clear
what is interconnectable and what is perhaps not; one such instance is the motivation Pastime. As this motivation is explained in the section above it leaves little room for interconnectivity, since it is not about anything but passing time, it is a motivation devoid of joy, a lust to create or to fix perceived design flaws. This is one of the most problematic motivations we came across, as it was derived from one respondent, participant 6 (see Appendix C and F), who said that:

“Boredom [...]” and having “[...] a lot of extra time”
(Respondent 6)

was a motivation for him/her to create mods. This was of course not the only motivation this respondent spoke of, but from that statement we created the category Pastime. Of course one could argue that time passes as you do things, or that one might find oneself wanting both to pass time and also create for example a piece of armour at the same time; i.e. ‘I want this paldron and I have time to kill right now’, for example. However, those motivations would still be existing side by side, but be very different in their nature. Pastime as a motivation is more about finding an activity that takes up a lot of time, in our opinion. This motivation can be connected to other motivations, but but Pastime has no arrows coming from it, only to it, as other activities can be connected to a will to pass time, but the motivation Pastime generally does not generate other motivations, as it is not a creative motivation but a more passive one.
This flowchart below illustrates how the motivations from the final categories can be seen to interconnect:
As can be seen in the flowchart, there are some motivations that are subject to more interconnections than others. One can also note that some arrows only go one way; for example Artistic motivation is connected to Adding content by an arrow, but the arrow does not connect Adding content to Artistic motivation. That is because it is hard to be an artist and not create something, whereas one can create without the artistic motivation, simply as a Pastime or for Personal advancement. Adding content and Social Interaction now connect to Pastime, but no arrows go back from Pastime.

Looking at the responses we got from our survey there are a number of motivations that can be found in every respondents answers (see Appendix F). Every respondent had between 6 and 8 motivations for their modding, and that is to say out of the final 10 motivations from the iterated categories. This is interesting as it shows indications of similarities between the respondents, and yet upon reading the survey answers they are quite different in how they got into modding, their current motivations and in some cases previous ones. Having 6 to 8 out of 10 motivations present in every respondent is perhaps also indicative of what the flowchart above shows us; that most of these motivations, because they are represented in so many instances throughout the survey, they also connect well.
4.3 Connecting motivations with modifications:

The second part of this process of studying the why and what of modders and their mods was to connect the results of our study; the iterated categories. We did this by writing our categories in a document and drawing up connecting lines in between them. To make it more legible we chose to connect each motivation category to all applicable modification categories, to see what conclusions we could draw from our interpreted data. In this study we will not be looking at the interconnectivities of modification to modification.

In this section we present what motivations connect with what modifications. As can be seen in the tree flowchart images below, there are a number of motivation categories that connect with all modification categories and a number that do not. Several of the motivations connected with more than one modification.
See the explanations for the final iterated categories in Results. Looking at our results we created visual aids to better illustrate the connections between our categories. The ‘tree’ above in which we drew connections between each individual motivation to our modifications is a way to present the results in clear way instead of only by text.

4.4 Looking at the results

The data we collected proved to present us with a number of different motivations and modifications, but yet fairly similar in regards to the motivations respondent to respondent. That is of course in part due to the fact that modifications only come in a number of forms; one can alter or add a set number of variables, and thus there will of course be a certain correlation regarding this. When taking a closer look at the motivations we can see that two motivations are what one might consider to be ‘super categories’, by which we in this case mean that they can be seen as an umbrella under which the other motivations fall. These two super categories are the ones that contain the motivations ‘Modding for self’ and ‘Modding for others’ from the first step in the analysis process; the first extrapolated categories. In the second categories, extrapolated from the first, these two categories are named:

- Personal advancement
- Social interaction

This, of course, is not an entirely unproblematic way of looking at it. Mostly because one needs to consider the number of times this occurs in the answered survey, and in addition consider that the other motivations are just as valid, just as strong. For example, the urge to create something, a masterpiece or an experience, can be just as strong, and the modder might not even be thinking of whom they are creating this for; themselves or others. It might just be the love of creation driving them to create a mod. This is why we are not presenting this as a result, but here, in the Discussion. This is something we would have liked to delve further into, but unfortunately there was not sufficient time.

So why then, do we feel that these two could be singled out as more important? It is mainly because they overlap the others. That can of course be a result of our
questions and how they are phrased, which we are aware of, but nonetheless; creating for oneself or for others is most likely a part of any creation process, be it subconsciously or intentionally. We are of course aware that such intentions can change, and that something that was not intended to be shared at first can all of a sudden feel more private than anticipated, and thus may never be shared at all.

What does our study bring to the field of research of modding, and more specifically the research on motivations and modifications? First of all, it brings more data into the world research. Data which actually also can be used for further research as it is presented here in its entirety. But furthermore it brings insight to the research questions; see Conclusion. Our findings can point to a variation in motivation and modification, and how they are connected.
5 Discussion

5.1 Related research

While we were hard pressed to find research to which we can compare our results and conclusions, we found that we can compare some of the participants answers, and subsequent categories, to S. Morris quote from Minh “Gooseman” Le in WADs, Bots and Mods: Multiplayer FPS Games as Co-creative Media (2003). In this study, Le states that he produces mods for his own enjoyment to produce his own, personal, visions. This is similar to, for example, an answer by participant 6 who states:

“I prefer working alone so I can build my own house mod the way I envision it myself [...]”
- Participant 6, (appendix C and F)

This also lends credit to several of the motivational categories, such as ‘Fixing perceived design flaws’, ‘Personal gratification’, ‘Crafting a vision’, ‘Construction’ and ‘Artistic motivation’.

5.2 Considering our method and process

The research method of grounded theory worked well for the type of study that we wished to conduct. It allowed us to look at our collected data through the lens of social context and to read between the lines when examining said data provided in the survey. Using extrapolations of categories and iterations worked well for us, but of course we are aware that there are other ways of examining the data leading to satisfactory results, such as using a mixed method or a strictly statistical, quantitative research method.

The results from our survey could have been further validated by asking additional questions in a second part of our data collection procedure, however we feel that the time constraints did not allow us to do so.
Using post-its for the second iteration, in which we fused some of our first extrapolated categories, to form the new was in hindsight a good method. It gave us a clear overview and made it easy for us to quickly move the categories around as we reiterated our categories to arrive at a final version of categories. Drawing up charts to gain a clearer perspective also proved valuable.

5.3 Deviation

It is also important to notice that all extrapolated categories, while analyzed and discussed thoroughly and critically, may be affected by our, the authors, cultural bias and external variables. We recognise that the categories are subject to our interpretations and are affected by this bias consisting of socio-economic standard, culture and life experiences.
6 Conclusions

In summary, did we find answers to our questions? We have concluded yes. More specifically, we have in this study arrived at a number of categories, derived from data collected, that we can tie to the ‘Nexus’ community through cultural context. We are aware that, this being a qualitative study allowing us to interpret the data we are subject to our own bias, but still feel that this study sheds a light on this field of study. We have provided an insight into our process of analysis and introduced related research, paired with an introduction to the various forms of modifications available to gamers and modders, and in addition discussed what our study can bring to the field of research.

6.1 The research questions answered

- What motivates modders of the Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim community, and what are they motivated to mod?
- Are there patterns in the interconnectivity between motivations and modifications, as well as motivations and motivations?

Can these questions be answered by our findings? Perhaps not without a doubt, as this is a rather small study consisting of the study of 5 respondents and a survey, but we have been able to reach a grounded theory which does provide answers for said questions. Looking at the data and the cultural context of the ‘Nexus’ community we can say that we do have answers to both those questions, although they may not be finite, we can point at a number of motivations and motivations, also including motivations and modifications, and we have looked at how those categories are connected.

6.2 Our Theory:

The grounded theory that we arrived at were that the motivations of modders are diverse, but that what they modify, do in fact correlate. The motivations primarily range from correcting flaws or shortcomings in the games design to artistic expression and personal advancement or enjoyment. Modders are also motivated by a substantial number of motivations rather than just one or two, and there are interconnectivities between said motivations. By applying a cultural
context to our results we believe that this hypothesis aptly mirrors not only our survey participants, but can - to a certain extent - be applied to the rest of *Skyrim*'s modding community.
7 Future research suggestions

There are numerous questions that would be rewarding to look into when it comes to studying the vast body of work that is digital game modifications. Here are a few suggestions as to what one could delve deeper into in future studies:

Firstly, of course, one could look into more games within the genre of RPG, to look at similarities or dissimilarities. Secondly, other genres would be interesting to study. Or simply to do another study like this one using another method.

We also believe there is a strong possibility to discover various archetypes among others by examining their motivations and how that correlates to what they modify. We feel this can be an interesting research topic as it provides a link between personality types and game modifications.

Yet another interesting question to look deeper into is that of the ‘super categories’; are they valid? One could also take a closer look at the categorical interconnectivities of motivation to motivation or the interconnectivities of modification to modification.

Further, we find it important to ask ourselves: “Can and should we as designers try to avoid making mods necessary, if that is even possible?”, “What are the benefits of allowing and encouraging modding and how does it affect game longevity?” and “How does editor accessibility and complexity affect the modding community of a game?". 
References

Webpages:


http://www.nag.co.za/2009/03/19/a-really-brief-history-of-game-modding/

http://www.nexusmods.com/skyrim/?

www.surveymonkey.com

http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory

Studies:


Games:
8 Appendix A: Forum Post

This appendix contains the forum post we made at Skyrim Nexus (http://www.nexusmods.com/skyrim/) to get participants for our survey.

“Hello, our names are Ellen and Ulfrik (go Stormcloaks!), two third year game design students from Södertörns University in Sweden and we would appreciate your help with our bachelor thesis. In this study we examine and discuss why people create mods. As Skyrim has a large and active mod community, we decided that the best way to collect data is to ask for your help by filling out a survey: https://sv.surveymonkey.com/s/NNGKRTM
This is a study that we find fascinating as game designers, and one that is close to our hearts, as we both play Skyrim and enjoy using mods created by this community.
If you have any questions about the survey or our study, please contact us on the following e-mail address: modthesis.info@gmail.com
Ellen & Ulfrik
Södertörns University”
Appendix B
Below we have listed the first iteration of categories we extrapolated from the survey.

**Motivations:**
Fixing perceived design flaws (Narrative)
Fixing perceived design flaws (Content)
Fixing perceived design flaws (Placement)
Fixing perceived design flaws (Art)
Designer
Modding for self
Modding for others
Perfectionist
Creativity
Constructor
Expanding content
Crafting an experience
Means to an end
Modding as hobby
Modding as untouchable art
Modding as a stepping stone
Modding for closed community
Passion for Modding
Passion for games
Self-improvement
Community
Teamwork
Pastime
Architect

**Modifications:**
Character / NPC Customization
Quests
Levels
NPC
Houses
Lands
Animals
Armor and Clothing
Book
3D models
Item Availability
Placement
Custom Help
Narrative
Meshes
Textures
Appendix C: Survey Results

Contains our survey results and our first iteration of the categories.

Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws (Narrative) (1)
Means to an end (2)
Designer (3)
Modding for self (4)
Modding for others (5)
Perfectionist (6)

Modifications:
Narrative (1)
NPCs (2)
Book (3)

Participant 1:
(1, 3, 5)(1, 2, 3) F1: How did you get into modding?
I've decided that there're certain aspects of Skyrim's writing that bug me. I had a desire to "fix" it, as to have a better game on my HD. Many of them are beyond my capability to fix, some of them are already dealt with in content mods like 3dnpc. However, once I've decided that I want to try my hand at modding and read a couple of tutorials, I've realized that I can "fix" some things, after all. I've created more Nord bigots in Windhelm (one of my pet peeves was Stormcloak xenophobia being all-tell-no-show in vanilla), added Kirkbride's Altmeri Commentary on Talos to the game (my another pet peeve was the Thalmor jerkassery being too generic in base game), and done a couple of more tweaks.
(3, 7)(2) F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
I don't really enjoy the process of the modding, other than writing the characters and seeing them work perfectly and without errors in the game itself.
(1, 3) (1)F3: What drives you to create mods?
I mod to fix my minor pet peeves with the game's writing. See answer to question 1.
(3, 5)(1, 2) F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
I did a personal modification of Inconsequential NPC's, in which I've removed some more obnoxious things the added NPC's say. That's pretty much all.
(2)F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
My mods are too minor to hire a "team" for them.
(4, 5)F6: Who do you create mods for?
Myself and other people who share my pet peeves about the game.
(4, 5)F7: Who do you share your mods with?
With everyone who visits Nexus, pretty much.

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Motivations:

**Designer (1)**  
Fixing perceived design flaws (Content) (2)  
Creativity (3)  
Modding as hobby (4)  
Modding for self (5)  
Modding for closed community (6)  
Fixing perceived design flaws (Art) (7)  
Passion for games (8)

Modifications:

Meshes (1)  
Character/NPC Customization (2)  
Armor and Clothing (3)  
NPC (4)  
Creatures (5)  
Item Availability (6)  
Custom Help (7)

Participant 10:

F1: How did you get into modding?
I got into modding in Morrowind when I found that I could express myself and make stuff I am not good at drawing though I enjoy it, I found myself much more interested in using mesh work to make up for that. The lack of stuff made to my taste helped as well, I play male characters and for the longest time no one made anything for them (in older games). So I had to make it myself if I wanted it at all. I have always been in love with games since I want a child, and being able to be a part of making something for a game is what I used to dream of.

F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
I enjoy making full characters this means making the character themselves skin/meshes/tattoos/scars/ect and then completing them with custom armor/clothing/accessories. Almost every mod I released is either character based or armor/clothing based, though I do enjoy working on animals as well.

F3: What drives you to create mods?
My own game for the most part, everything starts from me wanting to create something for my game. I find something missing or want something different for my own use and then if people seem to be interested in it I make a much more "professional" set up.

F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
Most the time its just tweaks to level lists or making a item available for crafting or buying when its not, most armors are just placed in a chest for example and I dislike that so I place them myself in game other ways. I am known to remake mods for my own character if I think it needs to be done.

F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
I prefer to work alone, it is VERY hard to find a well set up and well directed group. I have only had one good experience on a team and I have been doing this for over 10 years. I also have a hard time sticking to good time scale because
of my A.D.D. which makes it hard to work in groups. I do however offer myself to
other modders who are making companions/followers and want something
custom made for them, as long as I am very interested in the follower.

(5)(2, 3 4)F6: Who do you create mods for?
Myself mostly, I find it less fulfilling to make mods for other people just to get
attention or to please them. This is something I have come to find over time, I
used to take alot of requests but now l am less likely. Also alot of my stuff is
personal for a character I am playing so it would not fit releaseing it to anyone
else, or its not well made enough.

(6)F7: Who do you share your mods with?
People I trust and small password protected communities who enjoy my work,
people have a problem with keeping mods to themselves even if you ask them
too.

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Motivations:
1. Creativity
2. Modding as hobby
3. Expanding content
4. Modding for self
5. Modding for others
6. Community
7. Self-improvement
8. Modding as untouchable art
9. Teamwork
10. Crafting an experience

Modifications:
1. NPC
2. Lands

Participant 3:
(1, 2, 3)(1, 2)F1: How did you get into modding?
Well I first wanted to create my own follower, but as I learned more about the
Creation Kit I wanted to expand Skyrim in more ways by adding new NPCs and
Lands.

(1, 2, 4)(1, 2)F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
I paricularly like to mod the landscape of Skyrim and their inhabitants.

(5, 6, 7)F3: What drives you to create mods?
The people that encourage me and give feedback on my projects as they are the
reason I want to improve and be better at what I do.

(8)F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
Nothing, I have never dabbled with that. Mostly, because if someone made
something I really don't want to modify something they have probably spent lots
of time on without their permission.

(8, 9)F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
I prefer a team, because I enjoy socializing with other people and sharing ideas. Without a team I would have gone nowhere with my mods, and probably wouldn't be as well known on the forums.

(3, 5*, 10) F6: Who do you create mods for?  
The players of Skyrim and my older brother (Who is a very huge fan of the Elder Scrolls). I want to bring them a truly unique experience, that will make them enjoy the game much more.

(3, 5, 6, 9, 10) F7: Who do you share your mods with?  
My brother and my team member who I call Jupiter (He playtests and helps add new things to our projects.)

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Motivations:  
Creativity (1)  
Community (2)  
Designer (3)  
Expanding content (4)  
Passion for Modding (5)  
Crafting an experience (6)  
Fixing perceived design flaws (Art)(7)  
Self-improvement (8)  
Modding as a stepping stone (9)  
Modding for self (10)

Modifications:  
Character customization (1)  
Quests (2)  
Levels (3)  
NPC (4)  
3D models (5)  
Textures (6)

Participant 5:  
(1, 2) F1: How did you get into modding?  
My husband introduced me to the PC version of Skyrim and the Nexus community. After that, looking at all the different types of mods gave me ideas for some of my own.

(1, 3, 4, 6, 7) (1, 2, 3) F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?  
I really love character creation, so when I found RaceMenu and all the gorgeous hairs and textures and such, I started overhauling NPCs. I also want to create quests and levels to create more gameplay.

(1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9) (4, 5) F3: What drives you to create mods?  
I think what really drives me to create mods is the desire to learn game creation and design. I found modding has been a great way to learn scripting, 3D modeling, storyboarding, and other skills used to create games.
F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
The way the characters look. I'm still learning how to create quests and scripts and the like, so character design is pretty much all I can do for now.

F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
Alone for now; although if I get an idea that's big enough or find an author with an awesome one, I wouldn't mind being apart of a team.

F6: Who do you create mods for?
Mostly myself.

F7: Who do you share your mods with?
My husband and, if I think they're good enough, the Nexus community.

Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws (Placement) (1)
Pastime (2)
Constructor (3)
Architect (4)
Modding for self (5)
Modding for others (6)
Community (7)
Modding for closed community (8)

Modifications:
Placement (1)
Houses (2)
Meshes (3)

Participant 6:
F1: How did you get into modding?
I started out small, just wanting to move some objects and plants but as things progressed I dwelved deeper and deeper into modding.

F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
I build house mods, such as "Lakeview_Extended" and "Tel_Nalta II" Though with Tel Nalta I went even further and edited/created new meshes in MAX3DS.

F3: What drives you to create mods?
Boredom, I am semi-handicapped (though I usually never mention this to anyone) and this leaves me a lot of extra time.

F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
Nothing, I just build my own mods.

F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
I prefer working alone so I can build my own house mod the way I envision it myself, however in certain areas I lack experience and if someone offers me assistance then of course I accept that. With Tel Nalta for example there were 3 other modders that helped me, without them that mod would not have been possible.

F6: Who do you create mods for?
I start a mod for myself but once I release it I listen to the public, users bring great ideas to the table and point out bugs.

(6, 7, 8) **F7: Who do you share your mods with?**
The public, but I remain loyal to the Nexus website since I don't like Steam.
Appendix D: Survey questions

F1: How did you get into modding?
F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
F3: What drives you to create mods?
F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
F6: Who do you create mods for?
F7: Who do you share your mods with?
Appendix E: Reiterated categories
These are the final, iterated categories paired with the first categories that were combined to create the new and final ones.

Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws
(Narrative, Content, Placement, Art)

Personal advancement
(Self-improvement, Means to an end, Modding as a stepping stone)

Social interaction
(Community, Teamwork, Modding for others, Modding for closed community)

Personal gratification
(Modding for self, Passion for games, Modding as hobby, Passion for Modding, Perfectionist)

Crafting a vision
(Creativity, Designer)

Artistic motivation
(Modding as untouchable art)

Pastime
(Pastime)

Construction
(Constructor, Architect)

Adding content
(Expanding content)

Crafting an experience
(Crafting an experience)
Modifications:
Characters
(Animals, NPC, PC/NPC Customization)

Item Availability
(Item Availability)

Equipment
(Armor and Clothing)

Graphics
(Textures, 3D Models, Meshes)

Locations
(Houses, Levels, Lands)

Placement
(Placement)

Improving immersion
(Narrative, Books, Quests)

Custom Help
(Custom Help)
Appendix F: Survey Results and final categories

Contains our survey results and our second iteration of the categories.

Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws (1)
Personal advancement (2)
Social interaction (3)
Personal gratification (4)
Crafting a vision (5)
Pastime (7)
Adding content (9)
Crafting an experience (10)

Modifications:
Characters (1)
Improving immersion (7)

Participant 1:
(7)(1, 4, 9, 10) F1: How did you get into modding?
“I've decided that there're certain aspects of Skyrim's writing that bug me. I had a desire to "fix" it, as to have a better game on my HD. Many of them are beyond my capability to fix, some of them are already dealt with in content mods like 3dnpc. However, once I've decided that I want to try my hand at modding and read a couple of tutorials, I've realized that I can "fix" some things, after all. I've created more Nord bigots in Windhelm (one of my pet peeves was Stormcloak xenophobia being all-tell-no-show in vanilla), added Kirkbride's Altmeri Commentary on Talos to the game (my another pet peeve was the Thalmor jerkassery being too generic in base game), and done a couple of more tweaks.”

(1)(4, 5, 7) F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
“I don't really enjoy the process of the modding, other than writing the characters and seeing them work perfectly and without errors in the game itself.”

(7)(1, 4, 9, 10) F3: What drives you to create mods?
“I mod to fix my minor pet peeves with the game's writing. See answer to question 1.”

(1, 7)(1, 4) F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
“I did a personal modification of Inconsequential NPC's, in which I've removed some more obnoxious things the added NPC's say. That's pretty much all.”

(2, 4) F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
“My mods are too minor to hire a "team" for them.”

(3, 4) F6: Who do you create mods for?
“Myself and other people who share my pet peeves about the game.”

(3) F7: Who do you share your mods with?
“With everyone who visits Nexus, pretty much.”

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Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws (1)
Personal advancement (2)
Social interaction (3)
Personal gratification (4)
Crafting a vision (5)
Adding content (9)

Modifications:
Characters (1)
Item availability (2)
Equipment (3)
Graphics (4)
Placement (6)
Custom help (8)

Participant 10:
(4)(2, 4, 5, 9) F1: How did you get into modding?
“I got into modding in Morrowind when I found that I could express myself and make stuff. I am not good at drawing though I enjoy it, I found myself much more interested in using mesh work to make up for that. The lack of stuff made to my taste helped as well, I play male characters and for the longest time no one made anything for them (in older games). So I had to make it myself if I wanted it at all. I have always been in love with games since I want a child, and being able to be a part of making something for a game is what I used to dream of.”
(1, 3, 4)(9)

F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
“I enjoy making full characters this means making the character themselves skin/meshes/tattoos/scars/ect and then completing them with custom armor/clothing/accessories. Almost every mod I released is either character based or armor/clothing based, though I do enjoy working on animals as well.”
(1, 3, 4, 5, 9)

F3: What drives you to create mods?
“My own game for the most part, everything starts from me wanting to create something for my game. I find something missing or want something different for my own use and then if people seem to be interested in it I make a much more "professional" set up.”
(1, 2, 3, 6)(1, 4)

F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
“Most the time its just tweaks to level lists or making a item available for crafting or buying when its not, most armors are just placed in a chest for example and I dislike that so I place them myself in game other ways. I am known to remake mods for my own character if I think it needs to be done.”
(8)(4)

F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
“I prefer to work alone, it is VERY hard to find a well set up and well directed group. I have only had one good experience on a team and I have been doing this for over 10 years. I also have a hard time sticking to good time scale because of my A.D.D. which makes it hard to work in groups. I do however offer myself to other modders who are making companions/followers and want something custom made for them, as long as I am very interested in the follower.”
(1,3,4,8)

F6: Who do you create mods for?
“Myself mostly, I find it less fulfilling to make mods for other people just to get attention or to please them. This is something I have come to find over time, I used to take a lot of requests but now I am less likely. Also a lot of my stuff is personal for a character I am playing so it would not fit releasing it to anyone else, or its not well made enough.”

(3) F7: Who do you share your mods with?
“People I trust and small password protected communities who enjoy my work, people have a problem with keeping mods to themselves even if you ask them too.”

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Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws (1)
Social interaction (3)
Personal gratification (4)
Crafting a vision (5)
Artistic motivation (6)
Adding content (9)
Crafting an experience (10)

Modifications:
Characters (1)
Locations (5)

Participant 3:
(1, 5)(1, 4, 5, 9, 10) F1: How did you get into modding?
“Well I first wanted to create my own follower, but as I learned more about the Creation Kit I wanted to expand Skyrim in more ways by adding new NPCs and Lands.”

(1, 5)(1, 4, 5, 9, 10) F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
“I particularly like to mod the landscape of Skyrim and their inhabitants.”

(3) F3: What drives you to create mods?
“The people that encourage me and give feedback on my projects as they are the reason I want to improve and be better at what I do.”

(6) F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
“Nothing, I have never dabbled with that. Mostly, because if someone made something I really don’t want to modify something they have probably spent lots of time on without their permission.”

(3) F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
“I prefer a team, because I enjoy socializing with other people and sharing ideas. Without a team I would have gone nowhere with my mods, and probably wouldn’t be as well known on the forums.”

(3, 10) F6: Who do you create mods for?
“The players of Skyrim and my older brother (Who is a very huge fan of the Elder Scrolls). I want to bring them a truly unique experience, that will make them enjoy the game much more.”
(3) F7: Who do you share your mods with?
“My brother and my team member who I call Jupiter (He playtests and helps add new things to our projects.”

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**Motivations:**
- Fixing perceived design flaws (1)
- Personal advancement (2)
- Social interaction (3)
- Personal gratification (4)
- Crafting a vision (5)
- Adding content (9)
- Crafting an experience (10)

**Modifications:**
- Characters (1)
- Equipment (3)
- Graphics (4)
- Locations (5)
- Improving immersion (7)

**Participant 5:**

(3, 9) F1: How did you get into modding?
“My husband introduced me to the PC version of Skyrim and the Nexus community. After that, looking at all the different types of mods gave me ideas for some of my own.”

(1, 4, 5, 7)(1, 4, 5, 9, 10) F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
“I really love character creation, so when I found RaceMenu and all the gorgeous hairs and textures and such, I started overhauling NPCs. I also want to create quests and levels to create more gameplay.”

(1, 3, 4, 5)(2, 5) F3: What drives you to create mods?
“I think what really drives me to create mods is the desire to learn game creation and design. I found modding has been a great way to learn scripting, 3D modeling, storyboarding, and other skills used to create games.”

(4, 7)(2, 4) F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
“The way the characters look. I'm still learning how to create quests and scripts and the like, so character design is pretty much all I can do for now.”

(3, 4) F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
“Alone for now; although if I get an idea that's big enough or find an author with an awesome one, I wouldn't mind being apart of a team.”

(4) F6: Who do you create mods for?
“Mostly myself.”

(3) 10 F7: Who do you share your mods with?
“My husband and, if I think they're good enough, the Nexus community.”

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Motivations:
Fixing perceived design flaws (1)
Personal advancement (2)
Social interaction (3)
Personal gratification (4)
Crafting a vision (5)
Pastime (7)
Construction (8)
Adding content (9)

Modifications:
Graphics (4)
Locations (5)
Placement (6)

Participant 6:
(6)(1, 2) F1: How did you get into modding?
“I started out small, just wanting to move some objects and plants but as things progressed I dwelved deeper and deeper into modding.”
(4, 5)(8, 9)F2: What aspects of Skyrim do you enjoy modding?
“I build house mods, such as "Lakeview_Extended" and "Tel_Nalta II" Though with Tel Nalta I went even further and edited/created new meshes in MAX3DS.”
(7)F3: What drives you to create mods?
“Boredom, I am semi-handicapped (though I usually never mention this to anyone) and this leaves me a lot of extra time.”
(4)F4: What have you altered in other peoples mods?
“Nothing, I just build my own mods.”
(5)(3, 4, 5, 8)F5: Please tell us if you prefer working on a team or alone and why:
“I prefer working alone so I can build my own house mod the way I envision it myself, however in certain areas I lack experience and if someone offers me assistance then of course I accept that. With Tel Nalta for example there were 3 other modders that helped me, without them that mod would not have been possible.”
(3, 4) F6: Who do you create mods for?
“I start a mod for myself but once I release it I listen to the public, users bring great ideas to the table and point out bugs.”
(3) F7: Who do you share your mods with?
“The public, but I remain loyal to the Nexus website since I don't like Steam.”