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CHANGING THE GAME: CAREER NAVIGATION OF WOMEN IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY IN SWEDEN

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Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze how women navigate their career in the gaming industry and how gender influences the career navigation.

Theory: The theoretical framework is composed by career navigation as a central concept; the career management model based on the work of Greenhaus et al. and tokenism based on the work of Kanter-Moss.

Method: The method that was used is a qualitative research build on 10 semi-structured interviews. The data collected was coded and was analyzed in accordance to the theoretical framework.

Result: The findings demonstrated that women navigate their careers by utilizing specific strategies and in accordance to their external environment. The contextualization of career navigation led to the discovery of negotiation; navigating out and The Gamer as additional navigation strategies. Finally, gender has been identified to influence the navigation process through the three perceptual tendencies of tokenism. The data outlined that women actively and consciously work to trade-off and channel the perceptual tendencies into assets.

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Table of content

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Purpose and research questions	7
1.2. Disposition	8
2. Background: Sweden and the Swedish Gaming Industry	8
2.1. The Swedish gaming industry – demographics and statistics	9
3. Literature Review	10
3.1. Gender and the Gaming Industry	11
3.2. Barriers for women’s career in male dominated industries.....	11
3.3. Women’s career navigation and strategies.....	13
4. Theoretical framework	14
4.1. Career Management Model	15
4.1.1. Explaining the Career Management Model	16
4.1.2. Goals and Strategies.....	17
4.1.3. Rationale behind choosing the Career Management Model.....	19
4.2. Tokenism.....	19
4.2.1. Visibility	20
4.2.2. Contrast.....	21
4.2.3. Assimilation	22
4.2.4. Rationale behind choosing Tokenism.....	22
4.3. Career Navigation as a process	23
4.4. Alternative approaches.....	25
5. Methodology.....	26
5.1. Rationale behind chosen methodology	26
5.2. Participant selection	27
5.3. Interview Process	29
5.4. Interview Guide.....	29
5.5. Data Interpretation.....	30
5.6. Limitations	31
5.7. Ethical Concerns	32
6. Empirical findings & Analysis	33
6.1. Career Trajectories	33
6.2. Navigating the industry	33

6.3.	Navigating towards permanent employment.....	35
6.3.1.	The influence of gender on navigation	37
6.4.	Navigating towards first promotion	39
6.4.1.	The influence of gender	43
6.5.	Navigating to and in senior position	48
6.5.1.	The influence of gender	52
7.	Discussion and Conclusion.....	56
7.1.	Limitations	58
7.2.	Suggestions for further research.....	58
7.3.	Recommendations	59
7.4.	Conclusion.....	59
8.	Bibliography	60
9.	Appendix	68
9.1.	Figures and tables.....	68
9.1.1.	Background: Sweden & the Swedish Gaming Industry	68
9.1.2.	Interviewees profiles	69
9.1.3.	Visual Representation of Career Trajectory	69
9.2.	Interview Guide.....	71
9.2.1.	Interview Guide (Game Developers)	71
9.2.2.	Interview Guide (HR Manager)	73

1. Introduction

Career is a concept that is used in a variety of spheres, for different purposes, from different perspectives and being based on different assumptions. In fact, the meaning of ‘career’ is so dependent on the context that there is no agreed upon definition, but rather a set of constructs, which may share some similarities (Baruch, Szuch & Gunz 2015; Baruch 2004). Relying on Collin (2006, p.60), career is defined as ‘*individual work histories, sequences of and patterns in occupations and work positions, and upward progress in an occupation or in life generally*’. Thus, career by its very nature is a movement of an object through time and space. It predisposes the exitance of a process, of change and flux to the status quo. Further on, the definition of career implies that the process of career is built upon actions and activities that would lead to the upward progression. These actions and activities compose the concept of *navigation*. According to Vigh (2009), *career navigation* is related to the acts of agency, mobility, survival and coping strategies within a given unstable environment. Thus, ultimately in simple terms navigation is someone one *does* to reach specific outcome(s). Thus, if navigation is something one *does*, one can assume that there are variables which influence the *why* and *how* of the process (Sjöholm & Wellington 2015). This study argues that gender is a variable of influence.

The complex relationship between gender and career has been researched extensively in the past (Agapiou 2002; Cook & Glass 2014). Previous literature has outlined the negative relationship between gender and career, especially regarding women working in skewed (male-dominated) industries. This negative relationship is manifested through mechanisms of isolation and marginalization which are often linked to existing negative stereotypes of women and insufficient organizational structures (Sang, Dailty & Ison 2007; Hatmaker 2013; Gorman & Kmec 2009; Cha 2013). Hicks (2012) refers to this as the *invisible aspects* of the male-dominated industry’s culture, who despite supporting diversity, continues to ostracize women. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the negative relationship between gender and career, more and more women are joining skewed industries and climbing up the proverbial professional ladder. Societal and market pressure on companies has convinced many on the importance to pioneer and develop gender equality and diversity policy. The so-called STEM industries have been the subject of many heated debates in relation to gender equality and opportunities for women (Bergman 2008; Hatmaker 2013). Consequently, the last couple of years have witness the revival of literature identifying barriers for entrance and development for minority groups

(especially women) in the different sectors (Budig 2002; Sang, Dailty & Ison 2007; Heflick & Goldenberg 2009). Nevertheless, little research has been conducted on how women in the male-dominated industries experience their careers and limited insights have been put forward on how women (or minority groups) cope and survive the dynamics of external environment (Cook & Glass 2014; Derks et al. 2011; Powell et al. 2009). This study would aim to fill this literature gap and provide a holistic empirical understanding on how women navigate their careers.

Arguably no other industry in recent years has been subject such intense criticism and societal pressure for diversity as the gaming industry. The year 2013 marked the beginning of #GamerGate controversy and escalation of the longstanding discussion on gender and diversity in the industry. Initially starting as built upon opposition towards corrupt journalism, the #GamerGate movement transformed into a harassment campaign against advocates of progressivism and anti-sexism in the gaming industry (Kafai, Richard & Tynes 2016). The pivotal point came in August 2014 following the involvement of mainstream media and the realisation of the deliberate targeting and harassment of female activists within the industry (Wingfield 2014). While the #GamerGate controversy was never fully resolved, the public outcry forced many of the bigger studios to introduce or re-evaluate their diversity policies.

Within research, the gaming industry is a notorious example for a male-dominated industry with strongly rooted masculine norms and ideas (Dymek 2012). The industry is portrayed as a typically male domain not only in relation to the predominantly male workforce, but also due to their product. For example, majority of the high-budget games are based upon stereotypically male interests i.e. first-person shooting games and sporting games (Thornham 2011). Additionally, the dominating male stereotypes of the gamer along with the intricacies of the gaming culture are often cited hinders to gender diversity (Dymek 2012; Proctor-Thomson 2013). Nevertheless, the last decade has seen a rise in interest and involvement from women towards video games (Ibid). The so-called casual games, made for smartphones, have effectively transformed the game industry by making games more accessible and fun for the public (Juul 2012). They have also become the biggest pool for casual female gamers, especially for women over the age of 35. Despite variations in the data (due to differences in demographic variables), the number of women actively playing video games has steadily been rising for the past couple of the years (Ibid). Similar increase has been noted in women's enrolment in game related education as well as in professional capacities in the game industry. These events have been positioned, simultaneously, as part and consequence of what Henry

Jenkins and Justine Cassell refer to as “waves of feminism and games” (2008, p.6). While research focus has been directed to identifying and examining barriers for inclusion in the industry, little has been researched on how the women in the industry navigate their careers.

The characteristics of the gaming industry as male-dominated, yet experiencing external pressure to diversify outlines it as an interesting case study for career navigation of women. Further on, the focus on a specific industry would provide the possibility to contextualize and understand how women experience their careers. The study will aim to shift away from the pattern of identifying and examining barrier to inclusion for women, and focus on understanding how women in the industry navigate their careers. The study aims to fill the gap in research concerning empirical evidence of career navigation and specific strategies of women in the gaming industry.

Additionally, previous literature has explored the link between gender and exclusion, and how women perceive the influence of their gender on their career (Mclean & Kalin 1994; Misa 2010; Corell & Simard 2016). This study would seek to further contribute to this line of literature and identify how gender influences career navigation from the perspective of the women. Finally, the study is further contextualized within the framework of the gaming industry in Sweden. The author argues that Sweden as the country with the first feminist government would provide an interesting additional layer of contextualization. Within the case of Sweden, the gaming industry faces not only societal & economic pressure to diversify, but also needs to comply with national legislations on gender equality and equal opportunity.

1.1.Purpose and research questions

The aim of the study is to gain a holistic picture of the career trajectories of women and to examine and analyse how women navigate their careers. More specifically, the study will seek to provide a concrete empirical understanding of career navigation by identifying specific navigation strategies used by women in the gaming industry. Additionally, the author argues that gender as a variable influences the career navigation process. Thus, to understand how women navigate their careers, it is imperative to identify what role and how gender plays in career navigation practices according to the women.

The study will contribute to the field of Human Resource Management by contextualising career navigation and assist in the development of knowledge about the influence gender has on career navigation practices. A potential outcome of this study is a further discussion on the

developmental trajectories of women's careers and potential mechanisms to enable career development. These aims and ambitions are channelled in the following research questions:

How do women navigate their career in the gaming industry in Sweden?

How do women experience that gender have influenced their career navigation?

1.2. Disposition

Firstly, the study will provide background information about the gaming industry in Sweden, outlining the developments in the last 5 years and data relating to gender diversity in the industry. This will be followed by a presentation of previous research on gender in the gaming industry and women in male-dominated industries. Thirdly, the theoretical framework as built upon Greenhaus et al. (2009) career management and Kanter's tokenism (1977) will be introduced. Following, career navigation will be presented and rationalized as the main concept of the study. Further on, the research methodology will be illustrated along with explanations of the chosen methods, participant selection, interview process & guide, data analysis and limitations. The fifth section consists of the empirical findings and analysis. Finally, the findings will be summarised in the last chapter and the limitations, and practical implications of the study will be discussed. This final section of the study will also provide suggestions for future research.

2. Background: Sweden and the Swedish Gaming Industry

Sweden has the first feminist government in the world. This government is a manifestation of the long-standing dedication to include the gender equality perspective into policy-making, both nationally and internationally (Government Offices of Sweden 2015). Within the current societal and political narrative in Sweden, gender equality is an integral part of democracy, social justice and economic development (Ibid). The dedication to gender equality in Sweden is not confined to the public sector. Faced with growing societal and economical pressure for gender equality, many companies in the private sector have dedicated their resources to develop equal opportunity initiatives (Styrhe et al. 2016).

For the gaming industry in Sweden, the trigger start came with the #GamerGate controversy of 2013. Initially build upon the mission to oppose corrupt journalism, the GamerGate movement transformed into a harassment campaign against advocates of progressivism and anti-sexism in the gaming industry (Kafai, Richard & Tynes 2016). The pivotal point came in August 2014 following the involvement of mainstream media and the realisation of the deliberate targeting

and harassment of female activist within the industry (Wingfield 2014). While the GamerGate controversy was never fully resolved, the public outcry forced many of the bigger studios to introduce or re-evaluate their diversity policies.

What sets apart the gaming industry in Sweden from other major game development hubs is the outspoken and quick support for diversity. Following the #GamerGate controversy majority of the studios united in a public statement in support of diversity, both in games and game development. Individually, majority of the big studios set out to create specific diversity plans to increase the levels of inclusion and decrease challenges for development (Svenska Dagbladet 2014). These diversity plans are not publicly disclosed and therefore cannot be included as empirical evidence. However, statements from the Swedish Game Developer Index, along with insights provided by the interviewed in this study HR representatives, outline the diversity initiative as strictly focused on gender (Swedish Game Developer Index 2015). It is this authors opinion that the recent brief inclusion of ethnicity in the annual Game Developer rapport (Swedish Game Developer Index 2016) indicates a potential shift towards how diversity is approached within industry. However, this is only speculation and within the framework of this study, diversity is defined as gender diversity.

2.1. The Swedish gaming industry – demographics and statistics

Though first established in the 1950s, the gaming industry did not pick up in full speed until the late 1980s and early 1990s (Sandqvist 2012). This was followed by rapid growth which ultimately resulted in the current large development community. Annually the industry generates millions in profit, however this success story has been questioned due to small number of publishing companies, the consequences of intellectual property issues and increased control by the foreign publishers over the development process (Sandqvist 2012). In fact, the majority of the top five companies regarding revenue and employees are subsidiaries of foreign-based companies (Swedish Game Developer index 2015-2016). Table 2a (*see Appendix*) outlines the top five companies according to revenue and employees in 2015.

The years 2010-2012 marked the boom of game development in Sweden, both company-wise and education-wise. Firstly, education-wise the period up to 2013 is referred to as the proliferation era. It was marked by the rapid establishment of programmes and courses due growing interest by students and the industry. The rapid growth was achieved on the back of quality assurance and long-term programme proliferation and ultimately the lack of quality in the education led to decrease in programmes (Berg Marklund 2016). Despite the decrease, the

data indicates that there was no major impact in the amount of applicants and students (refer to Table 2b. Game education statistics 2010-2016 in *Appendix*).

In terms of gender diversity, the statistics outline an increase in the number of female students, who enrol in education related to game development - 13% in 2010 to 18.8% in 2016 (see Table 2b in *Appendix*). Berg Marklund (2016) further illustrates that the number of female students fluctuates depending on the target game disciplines of the programme. For example, programming accounts for 44% of the overall offered programmes, however has the least number of female students – 9,2% for the period 2011-2015. Disciplines such as Graphics, Design and Audio are preferred by female students with respectively 32,8%, 28,0% and 15,5% of the enrolled students being female (Ibid).

The second consequence of the boom period of 2010-2012 was the steady increase of the number of companies, revenue and employees involved in the sector. The number of companies has doubled in the past five years from 106 companies in 2010 to 236 companies in 2015 (see Table 2c. *Business growth in the Swedish Gaming Industry, Appendix*). This growth is further seen in the exponential increase in profit and revenue in the period 2010-2015, along with the tripling of employees in the sector (Ibid). The statistics on gender distribution of the workforce in the gaming industry support the notion of the gaming industry as a male dominated field. Over 82% of the workforce are male and 18% women as of 2015 (Ibid). Table 2c. further outline a continuous increase in female employees within the last five years. Comparison between Table 2b and 2c reveals that the gender distribution of the industry follows the gender distribution of the educational sector: in both cases women compose around 18% of the whole. The difference of 0.8% between women studying and working, clearly demonstrates that majority of the women choose to continue their career trajectories within the industry. This further emphasizes that campaigns aiming in increasing diversity should work long-term in targeting young women during their elementary or high school years.

3. Literature Review

The literature review will draw upon three distinctive topics in previous research. First previous research on the gaming industry would be outlined. Following the focus will be shifted towards the broader field of women's careers in male-dominated industries. The literature review will aim to provide in-depth understanding of the barriers for development women face in male-dominated industries along will commonly researched navigation strategies.

3.1. Gender and the Gaming Industry

As mentioned previously, the gaming industry and the research around it has often been positioned in terms of waves of feminism and games. In an analysis of the literature on gaming, Richard (2013) identified three somewhat parallel waves. The initial waves saw the rise of research related to gender stereotypes in gaming as well as identification of potential strategies to introduce more women in the industry (Richard 2013). Majority of the research was dedicated to identifying gender disparity in interest, both regarding professional occupation and game playing (Margolis & Fisher 2003; Misa 2010).

During the second wave, the interest shifted towards the experience of women who play gaming and criticizing the stereotypical ideas behind women's preference i.e. women "naturally" preferring games, which deal with collaboration (Kafai, Richard & Tynes 2016). Finally, the third wave, which is considered to be the current wave, has changed focus towards queer game studies and intersectional perspective. Such research utilizes a framework which is more nuanced towards concepts such as gender (and its relation to sex), ethnicity, race and questions the assumptions made about these variables and masculinity/femininity (Gray 2012; Styrhe et al. 2016). The current study is positioned within the framework of the second wave, as the study approaches gender from a binary perspective – female and male. As demonstrated the research around the gaming industry is often directed towards women who participate in gaming, rather than women who are part of the gaming industry. Studies on women's careers in the industry are often directed towards identifying barriers of inclusion, rather than focusing on career as a progress and examining strategies of coping, adapting and/or surviving (Kafai et al. 2016; Burgess et al. 2011). For example, there is an adept literature discussing the gamer culture and its role of perpetuating sexism, discrimination, masculine dominance and racism (Dymek 2012; Kafai et al. 2016). Another argument put forward by Styrhe et al. (2016) maintains that the understanding of innovation as inherently masculine transforms the gaming industry into a male domain and hinders gender diversity.

3.2. Barriers for women's career in male dominated industries

The rationale behind career choice and career management decisions of women have been the subject of great interest ever since the post-World War II period. The idea of gender (as well as race, ethnicity) as reason for exclusion can be traced back to Hughes's "outsider" (1945) and Simmel's "stranger" (1950) – concepts referring to an individual who possess the needed professional qualifications, however lacks characteristics expected for a person in that position

(Datta & Bhardwaj 2015). These ideas were further researched by Laws (1975) in relation to women in academia and ultimately gain prominence with Kanter's work on the numerically few (referred to as tokens) and their professional experience in the sales force (1977).

Kanter's formalization of the concept of Tokenism marked the beginning of an academic focus towards topics such as sexism, gendered beliefs and responsibilities, and various forms of discrimination and mechanisms of isolation, all of which are still main topics of interest and research (Dobbin & Kelly 2007). Recent studies have outlined that minority groups (i.e. women, ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ groups) are in many cases ostracized and excluded as potential co-worker in some industries by the virtue of their deviance from the traditional white male image (Cook & Glass 2014; Agapiou 2002). Taylor (2010) further develops that not only are industries gendered, but so are occupations. Some occupations are perceived as more appropriate for men rather than women and vice versa. Therefore, workers in atypical occupations are perceived as anomalies and as violating established behavioral norms. Individuals, and especially women, who choose to not adhere to the gendered beliefs are ultimately socially penalized and isolated. Heilman et al. (2004) further illustrates that women who are successful in a male-dominated occupation are likely to generate negative social backlash (also see Kanter 1977). This social backlash is rooted in stereotypes of gender roles and is linked to negative evaluation, diminished support and bias towards the women (Roth 2006). Interestingly, a study by Taylor (2010) discovered that both women and men are likely to demonstrate negative attitude and higher criticism towards women who are successful in an atypical occupation. Simultaneously, Pierce (1995) contests that women are in fact aware of their violation of norms and recognize there is a high probability that it will result in differential treatment towards them.

Showcasing more specifically on the influence of lack of support towards the minority women, previous literature has demonstrated that lack of support is linked to higher levels of turn-over in minority groups (Bowen, Cattell & Distiller 2008; Du Plessis & Barkhuizen 2012) feelings of alienation and inadequacy (Bergman 2008) as well as increased health issues (Sang, Dailly & Ison 2007). Roth (2006) in a research of women in the financial sector has further portrayed lack of support leading to fewer buddy-like relations and less access to intra-firm network. In this case, Ross (2006) outlines the importance of mentorship for women as a tool to ensure equal opportunity in retention and development, not only hiring (Ibid). Similar conclusions were drawn by Taylor (2010) while outlining the lack of workplace support, information and consistency experienced by the women in occupational minority (token) status.

Literature dedicated to examining the mechanisms behind barriers for career development for women have uncovered the existence of gendered career opportunities. While women who are successful in atypical positions can generate social hostility (Heilman et al. 2004; Roth 2006), previous literature has demonstrated that women are often promoted to less attractive positions with higher amount of administrative tasks and less possibility for upward development (McLean & Kalin 1994; Taylor 2010). Additionally, the image of the women as incompetent is a commonly portrayed barrier for career development in male dominated industries (Young, Shin & Bang 2013). Women face additional doubts about their competence in because the day-to-day activities they need to execute are coded as male (Taylor 2010). In other words, the activities are seen as something men would do and therefore women are not fully competent by the virtue of their gender. Bergman (2008) further demonstrates that women in leadership roles in male-dominated industries who upheld the stereotypical femininity were perceived as less competent. Also, women with male-traits in leadership were more successful, but generated a lower peer approval (Helflick & Goldenberg 2009). Similar findings were uncovered by Roth (2006) concerning women's careers in general, where to be successful women should convey an image of balanced aggressive expertise and femininity.

Further on, there are three additional factors, which are most widely associated with the numerically few in the workplace: visibility, assimilation and contrast (Kanter 1977). These three factors, also referred to as perceptual tendencies, are key elements of Tokenism as a theory and will be discussed in-depth later in the study (*see chapter 4. Theoretical Framework*).

3.3. Women's career navigation and strategies

Following the vast amount of literature focusing on barriers and challenges for women in the male-dominated industry, Raghuram (2008) outlined the need to approach the influence of gender on career trajectories in a different way. The last decades has witnessed a rise in interest to identify and analyze mechanisms of attuning, coping and surviving of women.

On broader terms, Wahl (1992) outlined four strategies used by minority groups to cope with specific challenges: 1) a gender-neutral strategy, which is linked to the lack of awareness of a problem; a relative strategy, which related to the filling the pipe rationale – the problem will go away as soon as the number of the minority increases; 3) contextual strategy – the problem is due to established structural norms, which serve as barriers; 4) positive strategy – being a minority is an asset.

A more detailed look into responses to discrimination and hostile work environment outlined the queen bee behavior as common strategy. Research in the phenomenon has outlined three ways in which women do this: 1) self-representation, which relies on inherently masculine qualities such as ambition, competitiveness; 2) establishing psychical and psychological distance from other women; 3) enabling and legitimizing the existing gender hierarchy and the status quo (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers & de Groot 2011). Nevertheless, recent research by Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers & Raghoe (2015), outlined queen bee as strategic response to perceived threat and a form of a general self-distancing response, which is common in marginalized groups. An exploration of gender performance in the work experience of women engineers demonstrated similar coping strategies in the forms of acting like one of the boys; accepting gender discrimination; and adopting an anti-woman approach (Powell et al. 2009; Hatmaker 2013).

Further on, gaining education has been outlined as key coping and survival strategy with direct links to the successful career navigation. Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013) demonstrated a link between education about bias and a feeling of empowerment for women, ultimately resulting in bolder career moves and active countering of discrimination mechanisms. The existence of role models has further been brought up as significant to women's careers.

Finally, negotiation is another strategy which is commonly discussed in a negative link to women. Findings have outlined that men are more likely to negotiate than women if the possibility has not been explicitly mentioned (Leibbrandt & List 2014). Similar findings were reached by Small et al. (2007), whose quantitative study demonstrated that women are nine times less likely to ask for higher salary. Another potential explanation for the lower levels of negotiation in women could be in women's lower sense of entitlement for compensation in comparison to men (Roth 2006).

4. Theoretical framework

To gain a holistic and detailed insight into the career navigation process and the influence of gender, a suitable theoretical framework is needed. The framework should recognise the decision-making power of the individual, provide space for gender as a variable and acknowledge the influence and challenges of the industry. Despite growing interest, no balanced theoretical framework has been put forward to help understand the different patterns of career and career navigation (Baruch, Szuch & Gunz 2015). Therefore, to provide suitable framework, a theoretical toolbox was assembled based on two elements:

First, the career management model by Greenhaus et al. (2009), which would represent the individual decisions and rationale, and help gain empirical understanding of used navigation strategies. Secondly, tokenism and the three perceptual tendencies would assist in identifying and understanding the challenges women face in the gaming industry (Kanter 1977). The combination of these two elements will provide the needed tool to identify patterns and strategies of navigation, and highlight *if* and *how* gender influences the career navigation process.

The sub-chapters below have been structured to provide a holistic understanding of the theoretical framework, the major elements it contains and their strengths and weaknesses. The first sub-chapter provides an in-depth look into the Career management model and the associated strategies. This is followed by highlighting Tokenism and the three perceptual tendencies. Once the two theories have been discussed, career navigation will be defined and rationalized as the main concept of the thesis. Lastly, alternative approaches to answering the research questions will be discussed.

4.1. Career Management Model

Career management, according to Greenhaus et al., is a problem-solving, decision-making process, which enables the individual to make informed and appropriate decisions about their work life (2009). Their cyclical representation of career management (*see Figure 1 below*) is built upon the notion of continuous gathering of information, which leads to greater sense of awareness of the individual about themselves and the surrounding environment (Ibid). On the one hand, this positions the success of the career management as a shared responsibility between the individual and the organisation, and outlines the importance of the continuous exchange of information between the two. On the other hand, the model points out pro-activity and the importance of thinking as imperative for the effective implementation of career management. Thus, the individual is a decision maker, progress definer and main responsible for their own career path and goals.

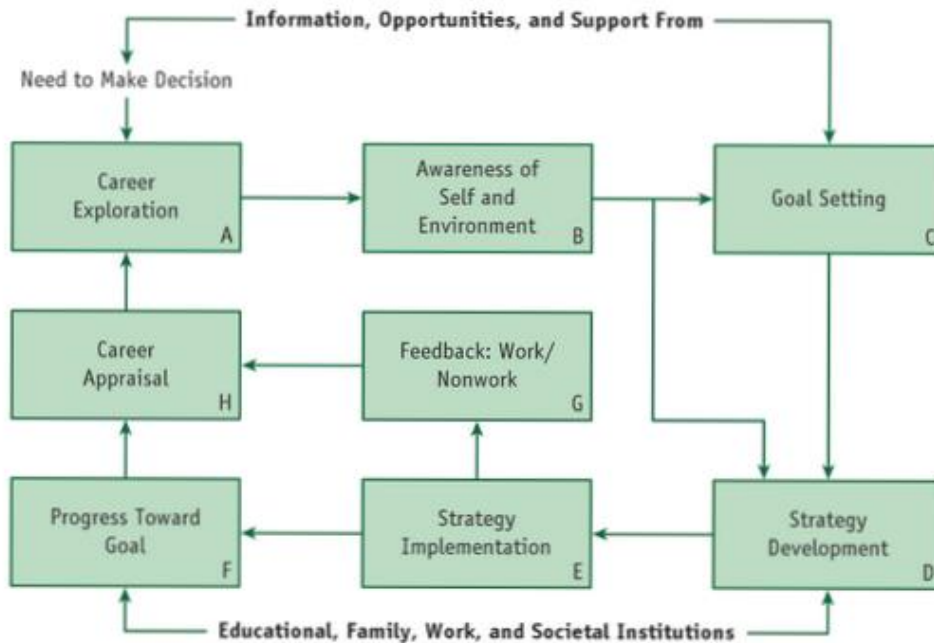


Figure 1: Cyclical representation of career management

Source: Greenhaus et al. (2009, p.46)

4.1.1. Explaining the Career Management Model

The career management model was created both as a reflection of research, but also as normative guidelines for those taking the first step (or even seeking new direction) in their careers. As such the manifestation of the different steps would vary depending on the career level of the individual i.e. recent graduate, entry level/ senior level employee (Greenhaus et al. 2009).

The first step of the career management process is ‘Career Exploration’ (Box A). This step is symbolical with a period of evaluation of personal talents and preferences before deciding on a career path. Career exploration is a period of information gathering of the possibilities for development (both personal and organizational). Examples of this step would revolve around gaining knowledge about talent development, organizational structure and mechanisms, alternative jobs, promotion requirements and patterns, as well as salary and work flexibility (Greenhaus et al. 2009).

The second step is ‘Awareness of self and environment’ (Box B). This phase is central to the career development as the individuals gain a deeper understanding of themselves as

professionals as well as the characteristics of their surrounding environment. This step is related to the recognition and development of personal beliefs, interests and values, and their relative importance to the workplace. The gathering of accurate information during this phase is directly linked to the third step: the establishment of realistic goals by the individual (Box C). To create a clear and achievable strategy goals are created in consideration of the current jobs and the individual's perception of the internal and external job environment (Greenhaus et al. 2009).

The establishment of realistic and achievable goals (from the individual's perspective) facilitates the development and implementation of the strategy (Box D & E respectively). Continuing on, according to Greenhaus et al. (2009), instrumenting and applying a suitable and realistic strategy in line with the goals would ultimately lead to the next step in career management: positive progress towards the goal (Box F). Moreover, constructive feedback, as well as the lack of such, during the process of strategy implementation could ultimately influence the process. Whilst, feedback is often seen as coming from the outside following an achieved goal, it must be recognised that the very act of strategy implementation may provoke feedback and provide useful information for the individual (Greenhaus et al. 2009). These dynamics are represented by the positioning of Feedback (Box G) as an alternative development to Strategy Implementation (Box E).

Finally, the last step in the career management is that of career appraisal. As the arrows indicate, career appraisal (Box H) can be a natural consequence of both progress and feedback. Career appraisal is seen by Greenhaus et al. (2009) as a process of re-evaluation and recognition of the made career plans as a result of new information (Ibid). The career appraisal serves to test the appropriateness of the career strategy and goals (operational and conceptual). Thus, it could lead to the strengthening of the existing goals *or* the reassessment and creation of new, more realistic goals. In all cases, career appraisal facilitates the creation of further planning and marks the end of one and the beginning of the new career management cycle.

4.1.2. Goals and Strategies

As portrayed, the Career Management model is very much built upon the idea that individuals are making rational ideas for the purpose of progressing upward in their chosen field (and in life) (Greenhaus et al. 2009). This progress involves the establishment and implementation of career strategies to enable the achievement of specific career goals. Career strategies refer to a

sequence of activities designed to assist the individual to attain specific career goal(s) (Greenhaus et al. 2009, p.54). Greenhaus et al. (2009) have further identified seven variation of career strategies:

- i. Developing new skills (both for current as well as future positions);
- ii. Developing new opportunities at work (both within and outside the company);
- iii. Attaining a mentor
- iv. Build image and reputation
- v. Attaining competence in the job;
- vi. Putting in extended hours;
- vii. Engaging in the organisational politics.

As advised by Seibert et al. (2001) *proactive behavior* will be considered as an additional strategy defined as ‘*taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones*’ (Crant 2000, p.436). It must be highlighted that this definition of proactive behavior conveys the desire to challenge the status quo in the absence of specific action plan.

In line with Greenhaus et al. (2009) the study maintains that the nature of the implemented strategies is influenced and vary depending on the situation and career goals. *Goals* are defined here as the objects of aim of the individual's action, whilst *career goals* are desired career related outcomes that an individual aim to attain (Greenhaus 2009, p.53,113). Inspired by Sideridis & Kaplan (2011), the study argues that goals jump-start action and affect behavior in different ways. In their research, Sideridis & Kaplan (2011) suggest that goals provide focus, spur effort in the individual as well as genuinely contribute to a higher level of persistence.

Additionally, career goals can be categorized as conceptual and operational goals. Conceptual goals are a summarized vision of the desired outcome without taking in consideration the current job (Greenhaus et al. 2009). The conceptual goal essentially reflects the personal beliefs and desires of the individual: type of work, working hours, office work or work from home, etc. These aspects are addressed during the positioning of the conceptual goal. However, to achieve the conceptual goal, more realistic and obtainable goals must be achieved – these goals are referred to as operational goals. The operational goals are created in consideration of the current job and the individual’s perception of the internal and external job environment (Ibid). For example, a conceptual goal could be based on belief in equal opportunity and desire to reach decision making power status to create initiatives that target such belief. This would be

then translated into operational goals i.e. participating in seminars, gaining further understanding of the company, etc.

4.1.3. Rationale behind choosing the Career Management Model

First, it must be recognized that the Career Management model was created as guidelines for those taking their first steps in a new field, or even those who are looking for answers about which career to choose. The model is normative in nature, meaning it addresses an ideal type scenario of career management. It exemplifies how individuals *should* manage their careers to successfully reach their goals regardless of the context. The organisation, along with the specific social structures, dominant cultures and environmental characteristics are external players in the system (Baruch 2004). Additionally, the model provides little platform to examine career management from a gender perspective. It was due to these weaknesses that Greenhaus et al. emphasis on the role of the model as “just guidelines” and outline the importance of the individual’s gut feeling when managing their career (Greenhaus et al. 2009, p.59).

Nevertheless, despite its normative nature, the Greenhaus et al.’s model provides useful tools to examine and analyze how women navigate their careers. The strong emphasis on the role of goals as jump-starting actions and the eight strategies would be instrumental in uncovering concrete empirical examples of career navigation and potentially new strategies. Further on, despite the organization and structures being perceived as external players, the model recognises the central role of the individual’s awareness of themselves and their environment in developing goals and strategies. Thus, the model allows for contextualization and examination of the influences of the context on the career. In the case of this study, women’s careers navigation would be contextualized in the gaming industry. Finally, while the model does little to account for the influence of gender on career, the introduction of Kanter’s tokenism (1977) as a complimentary theoretical framework would overcome this challenge.

4.2.Tokenism

Kanter in her pioneering work ‘Men and Women of the Corporation’ determined that ‘*the life of women in the corporation was influenced by the proportions in which they find themselves*’ (1977, p.207). In other terms, the size of the different groups is directly linked to the nature of social and professional experiences in work, and those experiences may change as the size of the group changes. Kanter (1977) identified four different distinctive groups based on different

proportional representations. Homogeneous groups (meaning no deviances in terms of sex, race, ethnicity) are referred to as *uniform groups* and have a typological ratio of 100:0. The so-called *skewed* groups have ratio of 85:15, meaning 85% or more are members of the majority (i.e. men) and 15% (or less) are members of the minority (i.e. women). The numerically bigger group is referred to as dominants as their higher numbers provide sufficient means to dominate the group and the culture (Kanter 1977). The minority group, in the case of this study - women, are referred to as *tokens*. Tokens are often portrayed as symbolic representatives of an entire group rather than individuals. Further on, their small numbers do not provide a sufficient base to establish a culture to contest the dominant's culture. The groups *tilted* and *balanced* provide a scenario in which ration between the dominant and minority group is slowly decreasing, 65:35 and 60:40 to 50:50 respectively. In these cases, the minority group can form alliances and sub-cultures to successfully contest the established norms and culture. It is important to outline that according to Kanter only within the numerical rarity ration of 85:15 does the dynamics between tokens and dominants exist. Within the frames of the *tilted* and *balanced* groups, tokens turn into minority group and dominants into majority group.

According to Kanter's work, in the absence of external pressure and action for change, tokenism is a "self-perpetuating cycle", which reinforces the low number of women and their position as tokens (Kanter 1977, p.210,241). Further on, as a direct result of the numerical rarity of the token and the way it is perceived, three perceptual tendencies can be observed: visibility, contrast and assimilation.

4.2.1. *Visibility*

Visibility as a perceptual tendency is built upon the notion that tokens are subject of greater attention as awareness when looked at individually in comparison to dominants. According to Kanter's theory increased visibility results in performance pressure for the tokens as a result of the following mechanisms: First, increased levels of awareness, minimize the privacy and anonymity of the token (1997). In her study, Kanter showcases instances in which women were thrust out in the limelight to represent their companies in ways that in some cases violated their sense of dignity and pride (Ibid). Another source of pressure can be identified in the representative nature of the token status: tokens are used as symbols of a category and their actions as indicative of the category as a whole. Thus, if a woman fails at a given project, her failure will be attributed to her gender and spread out rapidly due to the high levels of visibility.

Thirdly, according to Kanter, tokens face an additional performance pressure to not make the dominant look bad, including outperforming them or aiming to climb to quick. In the cases, where the token did not follow the unwritten rules of the dominant, she faced a retaliation (1977). The examples above serve to outline fear of visibility is a form of response to performance pressure (Ibid).

In the light of numerous different sources of pressure, the tokens could decide to implement three different strategies. First, they could strive to find the balance between performing good and not generating resentment in the peers (Kanter 1977). They could also aim to limit visibility by minimizing all attributes differentiating them from the dominant i.e. giving up their femininity. Finally, they could also utilize the heightened visibility and showcase their “difference”. Kanter warns about the improbability of success trading-off on visibility due to the need and difficulties of securing continuous peer approval. Interestingly, Kanter linked the latter two strategies to the strengthening of the *skewed* group (1977). The passivity and uncertain future of the tokens makes it unlikely for the organisation to implement action to decrease the numerical disproportion (Kanter 1977). Strategy number one, seems to lead to positive result in older women, which have previous experience in being a token and to high turnover in younger women, which are entering the industry (Ibid).

4.2.2. *Contrast*

Contrast signifies a process through which dominants become more aware of the differences and similarities between them and the tokens. This takes place within the framework of the dominant group without the active participation of the tokens. Contrast is triggered as a result of the perceived threat of the tokens i.e. tokens are a challenge to the established dominant framework; tokens provoke heightened awareness and self-consciousness, which is uncomfortable for the dominant (Kanter 1977). In order to tackle the threat, the dominant establishes boundaries and isolation mechanisms for the tokens. One such example is the showcasing of the dominant culture and using the tokens to “*underline* rather than *undermine* majority culture” (Kanter 1977, p. 223). In this case, the token becomes the reason as well as the audience for themes, which further alienate her from the group. Another such example is using questions and apologies to demonstrate difference, and imply that the dominants will not participate in a natural way, unless the token agrees to the existing norms.

Third strategy to contrast the tokens is the “informal isolation” – a process where the tokens are not provided the full information or invited to all the meetings (Kanter 1977). It could also be portrayed as the lack of criticism, which diminishes the possibilities for career progression (Ibid). Finally, in order to be accepted the tokens could be subjected to different loyalty tests to show their allegiance lies with the dominant. Much like with the mechanisms of visibility, through contrast, tokens can be equalized to and treated as a symbol of their group, but also simultaneously be the exception to it (Ibid). In order to minimize the contrast, tokens can implement different strategies i.e. becoming one of the guys. Nevertheless, due to the threats mentioned above the token cannot be seen as individual, but only within the scope of a limited role as provided by the dominant.

4.2.3. *Assimilation*

Assimilation refers to the process in which the dominant reconstructs the characteristics associated with the tokens in order to position them within the framework of a shared stereotype. This provides the tokens with an identity within the whole, however it also poses limitations to their possibility for development and awards (Kanter 1977).

This results in a process called *status leveling*, which involves correcting the initial perception of the token’s role and establishing appropriate role relations. This is due to the perception of what is considered a usual and unusual jobs for a token. For example, a woman might be treated as a secretary or a date initially, despite being in a high position, purely because she is in an unusual job. In fact, especially in terms of women as tokens, Kanter’s outlined specific roles as created by the dominant: *mother, seductress, pet, iron maiden*. The process of embracing the provided roles is referred to as role encapsulation and indicates the further assimilation of the token within the dominant group. This is a double-edged sword for the tokens as the acceptance of the provided role confirms the validity of the dominants’ claims and potentially leads to the self-perpetuation of the tokenism.

4.2.4. *Rationale behind choosing Tokenism*

As it was demonstrated in the previous sub-chapter, it is only within the scope of the *skewed* group (85:15 ratio) that tokens can experience the three perceptual tendencies. From this rationale stems the greatest criticism of tokenism as a theory: it puts unprecedented emphasis on numerical proportions. Further criticism outlines the failure of Kanter to recognise the influence of gender on the token’s status (Yoder 1991). In fact, empirical research has outlined

that the social context, rather than the numerical proportions, is a more powerful trigger of the mechanisms of tokenism (McDonald et al. 2004). Sekaquaptewa & Thompson set out to highlight the moderating effect of social contexts by examining the experiences of men entering a predominantly female profession or organisation (2002). The results pointed out that men do *not* experience negatively the token status as they enter the field in their socially dominant status (Ibid; Budig 2002; Cognard-Black 2004). On the other hand, women are subject of negative tokenism as a by-product of their double deviance: members of the minority group and of the lower social status (Ryan et al 2012; Laws 1975). Some authors go as far as referring to social inferiority as an explanation, rather than scarcity, as the main reason behind the negative tokenism (Zimmer 1988).

This author has acknowledged the criticism and weaknesses of tokenism as a theory. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned the purpose of this study is to examine and analyze how women navigate their careers as well as understand how gender influences the process. As portrayed in *Chapter 2. Background: Swedish Gaming Industry*, women compose only 18% of the overall workforce in the gaming industry in Sweden. Individually none of the interviewed women represent more than 15% of the workforce in their respective companies. This fact positions the experiences of the women as compatible with the numerical requirement of tokenism. Thus, within the framework of the study and in line with Kanter's theory the women are part of the skewed group and are considered tokens. Additionally, the three perceptual tendencies of tokenism provide sufficient point of reference to examine the influence of gender on the career navigation process. Moreover, tokenism recognized the actions and reactions of the dominant and the token in relation to mechanisms of isolation and exclusion. This compliments the career management model and its perception of the organization and structure as external to the individual decision process. These characteristics outlined tokenism as a suitable complimentary theoretical framework to Greenhaus et al.'s model to provide insight into the influence of gender on the career navigation process of women in the gaming industry.

4.3. Career Navigation as a process

To start by stating the obvious: the term 'navigation' means 'to sail'. The word originates from the Latin word *navigare*, which means 'to sail over and go by the sea' and thus indicates a motion within motion. As an academic tool 'navigation' is not rooted within career/occupation theories, but rather within anthropology, and is used to describe the 'act of moving' in times of

volatility and opacity (Vigh 2009). What makes navigation as a concept especially suitable to represent and investigate women's careers is its recognition of the mechanisms of acting, adjusting and attuning one's strategy in relation to how one experiences and imagines the future (Ibid). In other words, navigation is related to acts of agency, mobility and different survival and coping strategies within a given dynamic environment. Second major strength of navigation as a concept is its ability to provide a third dimension of movement, which would normally be outside the scope of the study (Vigh 2009). Through navigation, the research can examine the movement of the environment (gaming industry), the movement of the individual (women) and the relationship between the two agents. In simpler terms, *career navigation* as a concept inspired by navigation as an anthropological concept, encompasses the vision of career as a process conducted through informed decisions and strategies to reach specific career goals. Transforming navigation from the anthropological to the occupational toolkit, enables examination of actions of disentanglement, coping, plotting and overcoming by the individual (Vigh 2009).

Furthermore, due to its nature career navigation further enables the combination between tokenism and career management, and essentially overcomes the biggest challenges in the two theories. First, career navigation as a concept almost predisposes the existence of turmoil, which promotes the understanding of the complex challenges and strategies women face in their work life. Secondly, utilizing career navigation as a concept further instruments the examination of the entirety of the career trajectories. Due to its very nature as a by-product of movement and motion, navigation is related to both the immediate actions as well as the future imagined actions (Vigh 2009). Thus, this gives the study the lens to examine the history of the career as plotted trajectories and their relations to the past change along with the future imagined career actions. In simpler terms, career navigation allows for the importance of awareness and continuous information, while simultaneously overcoming the major weakness of the career management model: the lack of gender perspective and the lack of recognition towards the dynamic nature of careers.

Finally, the challenge of measuring career navigation success must be addressed. According to Baruch (2004), there are two distinctive measurement units of career success: objective and subjective. An objective approach towards career success would translate into greater importance on i.e. salary, promotion, ranking, etc. Objective measurement units are by their nature objective – numerical and easily identifiable. On the other hand, individuals who

measure their career success subjectively would place greater importance on i.e. personal life, learning, work/life balance, job satisfaction, etc. (Ibid). The study will differentiate the interviewed women demonstrate objective or subjective attitudes towards career success. *If*, and perhaps more importantly *how*, women's perception of career success influences career navigation is unclear. Nevertheless, the possibility of potential relationship between the two is interesting to outline and keep in mind within the course of the analysis.

4.4. Alternative approaches

The multi-disciplinary interest in the career scholarship and contributed to the richness of the field and the establishment of numerous concepts related to the study of career (Baruch et al. 2015; Arnold & Cohen 2008). In fact, the last decade has seen a rise in the terms, models and theories used to enable the development of career studies to the point that some authors have raised concerns over their "fad" nature (meaning that they are not usable in the long term) (Arthur & Cohen 2008; Inkson et al 2012). This claim was later denounced by Baruch et al (2015), who further outlined the most widely used career concepts – protean career, boundaryless career and employability. In the process of creating the above-described theoretical framework these concepts were considered as potential alternative approaches, but ultimately deem unsuitable for the purpose of the study.

Firstly, protean career is a model driven by the individual based on their own personal pre-defined goals, encompassing the whole life space and driven by psychological success (rather than objective measures) (Baruch 2004; Eby, Butts & Lockwood 2003). Boundaryless career is also an individual-driven model, however it also puts emphasis on development of transferable skills, flexibility, adaptability and networking mostly related to physical mobility (Inkson 2006; Sullivan & Arthur 2006; Mallon & Walton 2005). One of the main characteristic which deemed boundaryless and protean career as unsuitable tools to carry out the purpose of the study, is the fact that they distinguish between the individual and the organisation, and position the individual as the main responsible (Greenhaus et al. 2009). This is especially true in the case of protean career as it essentially puts the entire burden of responsibility for the career management on the individual (Baruch 2004). Nevertheless, within the framework of this study career and career navigation are influenced by the organization and the external environment. In fact, it is imperative to recognise and include the idea of 'navigating' your career through a dynamic environment. Whilst, the individual is recognised as a force of change

within the study, implementing a framework which is individual driven, would inhibit the research.

Finally, the concept of employability was considered as an alternative. Employability is often linked to boundaryless career and it basically relates to the fact that employees will be able to find good employment in the case of change and the organisation no longer has a lifelong obligation to the employees (Baruch 2004; Mallon & Walton 2005). This implies a strong level of investment by the organisation in the training of the employees as well as a certain degree of adaptability and dedication to learning from the employees. Nevertheless, despite recognising the shared responsibility of the organisation, it overlooks the specific challenges minority groups could face within their career trajectories. Thus, employability is incompatible with the research questions and aim of the study.

In conclusion, due to the factors as presented throughout this chapter, career navigation as a framework consisted Greenhaus et al.'s career management and Kanter's tokenism is the best suited framework to answer the research questions. Greenhaus et al.'s model and strategies (2009) will assist in identifying and examining navigation patterns and strategies women utilize in the gaming industry. Additionally, the three perceptual tendencies of associated with tokenism would provide a coherent point of reference to help uncover and analyze how gender influences the process of career navigation.

5. Methodology

5.1. Rationale behind chosen methodology

As career navigation as a process cannot be examined from the status quo, the findings on which the analysis will be build must be rich with personal experiences and thoughts. Keeping this in mind, the qualitative research design was outlined as especially suitable due to the following reasons: First, qualitative design stresses on the importance of description and context. To paraphrase Bryman, qualitative design emphasizes on the importance of contextualising the area of interest by providing considerable descriptive details of social behaviour and values (Bryman 2012, p.401). In other words, qualitative design maintains that actions need to be understood within the context in which they are taking place. In the case of this study it means that women's career navigation must be understood within the context of the gaming industry in Sweden.

Second, the qualitative research puts emphasis of processes and recognises change and flux as integral elements (Bryman 2012). As the qualitative design is interested in how events and patterns develop over time it would provide an appropriate methodological framework to examine navigation as a movement (Vigh 2009). It must be recognized that the sense of process in qualitative research is often linked to ethnographic methods, more specifically participant observation (Bryman 2012). As advised by Bryman, the study will inject the sense of process by asking the participants to reflect on their career trajectories (Ibid).

5.2.Participant selection

Ten female professionals from the game industry in Sweden were interviewed in the pursuit of valid and concrete answers to the posed research questions. The participants were approached via LinkedIn and Facebook. Also, some participants were ‘headhunted’ during a conference for game developers in Sweden.

Due to the focus of this study on gender and navigation, participants were selected based on being women and having varying degrees of experience in the gaming industry. The sample for the interviewees was chosen via a purposive sampling strategy, meaning the interviewees were specifically targeted due to their gender and experience in the industry. Purposive sampling strategy builds upon the notion that specific participants can contribute to the deeper understanding of a phenomenon due to their unique perspectives and experiences, and are therefore vital to the holistic understandings (Mason 2002).

Initially, interviews with Human Resources managers from two different studios were conducted with the purpose of gaining information about the career paths and opportunities for female developers in the industry. The Human Resource managers were interviewed previously to the game developers and their insights shaped the participant categories and selection criteria.

The selection criteria included the following characteristics: game developers, who are women and have been part of the gaming industry for a minimum of 2 (or 5) years (depending on position). Regarding gender, the study refers to the binary view (man & woman). The selection criteria about tenure is necessary to enable reflection of past behaviour and actions. This will assist in understanding the movement of career navigation and inject a sense of change and flux (Bryman 2012). The adopted theoretical framework made it imperative to include in the sample women from different hierarchical levels and with different careers lengths.

First, women in junior positions were approached for their insights about their initial career navigation steps in the industry. A limitation was posed on the working experience – only women, who have worked minimum 2 years in the same company were approached for an interview. This limitation was posed following advice from the interviewed Human Resource managers regarding standard promotion patterns in junior positions – junior developers are normally up for promotion after 2 or 3 years depending on performance (Interviewees Hanna & Hilda). By targeting junior developers in their second (or third) year of work, the study would have the possibility to gain current information on career navigation patterns and strategies. Also, as the promotions predominantly take place during the spring (Interviewees Hanna & Hilda), follow-ups on the success of the career navigation could be conducted without being affected by the time limitations of the study. Second, women in managerial positions were approached for an interview. The limitation on tenure was minimum of 5 years of work experience in the industry. No specific limitation was posed on tenure in the same company. These women are important part of the sample as they could provide more longitudinal insights on career navigation, and its strategies.

Table 4a below serves to provide a simple overview of the profiles of the interviewed women. To guarantee higher level of anonymity, the name of each participant has been changed to reflect their position and help the reader identify them easier throughout the text. All junior interviewees were given a name starting with the letter “J”, the senior level participant with the “S” and the Human Resource staff with the “H”. These names were chosen to reflect the common girl names in Sweden for 2016 as illustrated by the Central Bureau for statistics (Statistics Sweden 2017).

Name	Age	Position	Experience
Julia	23	Junior Developer (exit)	3 years
Juni	23	Junior Developer (promoted)	3 years
Jasmine	22	Junior Developer (promoted)	2,5 years
Joline	24	Junior Developer (promoted)	3 years
Saga	38	Senior Manager	13 years
Stella	39	Head of XXX	10 years
Signe	42	Senior Director	10 years
Sara	45	Senior Director	19 years
Hanna	31	HR Manager	7 years

Hilda	28	HR Manager	5 years
Table 4a. Interviewee profiles. <i>Created by the author.</i>			

The author strived to create a diverse and highly representative sample by approaching women of different types of studios and parts of Sweden. Ethnicity was recognised as a potential influential variable, however all the women who agreed to participate in the study were Caucasian and therefore ethnicity would not account for any variations in the findings. Additionally, educational level was not included in the selection criteria as advised by the interviewed HR managers. They reported of existing mechanisms to demonstrate competence regardless of obtained diploma (Interviewees Hilda & Hanna).

5.3. Interview Process

Throughout the interview process, a semi-structured interview design was utilized, relying on the open-ended questions and giving the interviewee the chance to guide the conversation. As majority of the interviewees were concerned about the confidential nature of the projects they currently work on, they were given the chance to suggest time and place that was most comfortable for them. Most of the interviews were conducted in cafes as per request of the interviewees, which provided them with higher sense of security and anonymity. Majority of the interviews were conducted face to face with a single interviewee at a time and took an average hour to hour and a half.

Due to the various location of the women along with their busy schedules, two of the senior women were interviewed via phone or Skype. These interviews followed the pattern mentioned above. One limitation regarding the interview method was the rather low quality of the recordings at some points, which led to some words being incomprehensible. Another limitation of the phone interview was the lack of possibility to read the body language of the interviewee. Nevertheless, as body language is not a subject of interest in none of the interviews, the nature of the telephone interview would not impact the credibility of the information. Finally, all interviews were conducted in English. The first interviews took place during December 2016, but majority of the interviews were conducted during February and March 2017. A quick follow-up was conducted in May 2017 with the junior developers to inquire about their promotion status.

5.4. Interview Guide

During the creation of the interview guide the focus was directed towards structuring a sequence of questions not only broad in spectrum, but also diverse in focus. This enabled the easier categorization and understanding of the collected information. The beginning of the interviews gave the participant the opportunity to speak freely about themselves and their career. Once an overview was provided of their career paths thus far, more specific questions were posed in regard to specific strategies utilized to navigate their career goals. The participants were lastly asked to identify their future career goals and potential strategies for their accomplishment. In line with Bryman (2012), the interviewees were encouraged to reflect at different situations and actions throughout their careers. As recommended by Gillham (2001), majority of the questions were complementary in nature and were only posed if the interviewee herself had not brought up the topic. This approach enabled the researcher to exercise control, whilst empowering the interviewees to guide the conversation at their own pace.

An additional interview guide was created for the participants working with human resource management to help gain understanding of the career paths and diversity from the industry's perspective. The interview-guide started with general questions about the participants and their career. Later on, the questions targeted the topics of diversity, career paths and opportunities for women, and focused on obtaining both qualitative and quantitative information about career navigation. As Human Resource practices differ between companies, the participants were encouraged to guide the conversation and the questions were once again supplementary in character (Gillham 2001).

5.5. Data Interpretation

In order to guarantee the preservation of information, all interviews were taped, transcribed and later coded. The use of a coding system allowed the author to establish a framework to better structure and understand the findings (Demunck & Sobo 1998). Building upon the research question and the interview guide, specific key points (themes) and subthemes were identified and used to structure the findings into categories. As recommended by Hammersley (2013) this ultimately resulted in a compressed highly edited text which was further conceptualized in accordance with the theoretical framework.

The interviewed women were categorized into two distinct groups based on experience (junior and senior developers) in order to provide points of comparison. Due to the highly individualistic nature of career trajectories as well as career goals and strategies, specific

objective benchmarks have been positioned to provide a common point of the different storylines. Objective benchmarks, also referred to as objectively measured indicators (Baruch 2004), deal with units such as ranking, salary level, tenure, etc.

Keeping in mind Collin's definition of career (Collin 2006) as an upward progress, the actions of both groups of women are perceived as directed towards specific objectively measured goal – promotion. In the case of the junior employees two benchmarked points were identified to examine the navigation towards upward progress – achieving permanent employment and first promotion. For the senior developers, the benchmarked point was promotion to senior (and higher) position.

Objectively measure indicators have been criticized and advised against by Baruch (2004), who strongly recommended subjective units as the more appropriate measuring tools. It is this author's belief that the highly individualistic nature of subjective career success will distort the findings without providing enough points of comparison. the posed objective career benchmarks provide a common point for the storylines and would ultimately assist in gaining deeper understanding in the career navigation.

5.6.Limitations

One limitation can be found in the limited sample in the study. The author relied predominantly on LinkedIn to identify potential interviewees. In regard to game developers, the only women excluded from the sample were those in internship positions or with less than 2 years of work experience in the industry. Altogether 27 women were approached via LinkedIn for interviews. Unfortunately, only 12 women responded to the original email and from them only 5 agreed to an interview. Busy schedules and/or discontinued communication are main reasons for the small sample. Additionally, three women were recruited via Facebook groups for women in gaming.

In terms of Human Resource Managers, the study targeted participants who work with Diversity and development. Tailored emails were send to 14 studios around Sweden explaining the aim of the study and requesting contact information of the HR responsible. Only three of the emails received a positive response and ultimately interviews were conducted with HR managers from two of the studios. An interview was scheduled with the Diversity manager from the third studio, however was cancelled by request of the participant due to personal issues. Altogether 10 women have been interviewed in the course of this study due to time

limitations, difficulties finding participants and ultimately the researcher's own decision to focus on in-depth quality interviews, rather than quantity.

Second limitation is the binary approach to gender and sex within the research. Letherby (2003) advises against research based on 'binary oppositions' viewing it as a mechanism to promote female over male supremacy (Letherby in Bryman 2012). Nevertheless, this study has not taken into account members of the LGBTQ+ community, which identify as female, due to the lack of time as well as the potential lack of sensitivity in approaching members of the community. Moreover, as mentioned previously there is a lack of diversity in the sample in terms of ethnicity, race and even in some regards age. Due to the limited time and small target pool, the researcher made a strategic decision to not pursue continuous diversifying the sample.

5.7. Ethical Concerns

The women who participated in the study were all informed about the topic and purpose of the project, when they were first approached and repeated previous to the interview. Clear explanation was given about the methodology of the study and how the information will be utilized. The interviewees were further given the contact information of the thesis supervisor of the author, if they wanted to confirm the status of the author as a student and the purpose of the study. No participants were pressured to take part in the study. The women interviewed had the right to withdraw from the study at any time as well as skip any questions they wanted during the interview.

The author strived to maintain a neutral and respectful position towards the participants beliefs, opinions and concerns. Due to the concern of the interviewees about disclosing concrete quantitative information (i.e. size of teams), the women were given the alternative to position the respective number in a category i.e. 1 -5; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20, etc.

Finally, two of the women in senior positions were interviewed via phone and Skype, respectively. These interviews were conducted in the presence of a third-party from the company's side. The third-party joined to guarantee no questions were being asked, which contrasted with the purpose of the interview as it was put forward by the researcher. This was explained to be the policy of the companies and the third party's participation in the interviews were limited to providing complementary information. Nevertheless, as the study researches the personal experience of women, one limitation in this case could be that the interviewees changed their answers in front of their colleagues. It is especially relevant in light that in both

cases the third participant was a man. The author tried to minimize the possible influence of the third-party observer by aiming to establish a safe atmosphere and giving the window of opportunity for the women to guide the discussion out of areas they found uncomfortable.

6. Empirical findings & Analysis

6.1. Career Trajectories

Individual figures have been created to help better understand the career paths of the interviewed women and emphasize on the complexity of their career trajectories. The models were created using the benchmark of ranking as it best exemplified the career trajectory of the women. These models further aim to provide the reader with an overview of the differences and similarities in the career paths (*see Figure 5a-5h in Appendix*).

From figures, the following conclusions can be made: First, all the women have taken their first steps in the industry in temporary capacity i.e. internship, temporary contract, part-time student work, thesis work. Second, the findings demonstrate that majority of the women were promoted following 3 years in the industry. These findings support the previously outlined promotion/ranking as a suitable benchmark of career navigation success. The two conclusions are true for all the interviewed women apart from the senior developers Signe and Sara. Signe and Sara had objectively successful careers previous to joining the gaming industry and entered the industry in relatively high positions. Thus, they do not share the similarities exemplified above.

A detailed look in the career trajectories of the senior developers, further outlined a shared similarity: leaving the company. All the women, who are currently in senior positions have changed companies at least once throughout their career trajectory. An exceptional case is Signe, whose ranking changed with change in company and was marked by (*exit) (*see Figure 5g. Career Trajectory of Signe in Appendix*). This finding could indicate a potential link between leaving one's position and career navigation, and will be explored more in-depth later on in the analysis.

6.2. Navigating the industry

As it was outlined previously in the theoretical framework section, career navigation gives us the possibility to examine three dimensions of movement: that of the individual; the organization; and between the individual and the organization. Thus previous to examining career trajectories of the interviewed women, it is interesting to see in what direction are the organizations (and the industry) moving. This will help identify potential points of friction and hindrances between the two.

The human resource representatives were asked to talk a bit about diversity and the decisions made by their respective companies. Perhaps the most conclusive statement came from Hilda who described the process like this:

I believe what has happened in the past 5 or so years after Gamergate, and what we have been trying to signal as well, is the overwhelming desire to have more diversity. And more women in specific. (Company Name) as well as probably other studios have worked with initiatives to attract more women. We created our first diversity plan 3 years ago aiming to have 20% more women by 2018.
-Hilda

Hilda further mentioned her pessimism about achieving the 20% women goal, however outlined that the number of women has increased both on entry and senior level positions. Hilda also mentioned that due to the currently limited talent pool, the company is focusing on long-term initiatives to motivate girls in high-schools to consider a career in gaming. Hanna, whose work is focused on diversity and inclusiveness projects, also mentioned the push for diversity and inclusiveness, which is gaining force in the gaming industry. She further addressed the stereotypes of the industry and outlined the external environment as additional barriers for diversity.

The issue is not the industry not wanting more diversity. We do want it. There is a lot to be earned by including women. Of course, there is still the idea of the nerdy guy behind the computer, but that is slowly dying off. But it is a real issue when the attack comes from the consumer and that is something that is harder to control. - Hanna.

The stories shared by the women echo previous findings, especially in regard to gamers' attitudes towards women. These statements further demonstrate movement towards and acceptance of gender diversity within the gaming industry. Due to the short time frame since the start of the initiatives, one cannot make conclusions about the success and actual degree of implementation of the diversity agenda. Further on, despite lack of empirical evidence by the HR representatives, one cannot disregard the possible resistance by the employees. Nevertheless, this is indicative of external as well as internal pressure for the gaming studios to include more women and help them develop within the company. Reflecting back on the theoretical framework, from a career navigation perspective the push for diversity could imply a higher level of support (and success) for the women in the industry: essentially sailing through a calm(-er) sea (Vigh 2009). Also from the perspective of tokenism, Kanter (1997) contests that tokenism is a self-perpetuating cycle in the absence of external pressure. The findings above demonstrate that external (and internal) pressure exists within the industry and companies. Therefore, following Kanter's logic the effects of tokenism and the perceptual tendencies should be unwinding or at least diminishing.

6.3. Navigating towards permanent employment

As outlined previously, majority of the interviewees shared similarities about first steps in the industry. All the junior developers, started their careers in the industry with an internship followed by a temporary contract and later a permanent contract. The only exception was Jasmine, who was offered a permanent contract following her internship. The practice of temporary contracts was identified as a common tool used to determine whether the candidate is a good fit for the team, but also to provide the company with the extra time to make sure their product will be successful enough to justify a hire (interview with Hilda). Further on, Stella and Saga, who are currently in senior positions, also started in the industry through a field-work and part-time (respectively). Having defined career and career navigation as processes aiming for upward progression, here the study has positioned the first benchmark to obtaining permanent employment.

The findings revealed shared common strategies related to obtaining competence and developing new skills (Greenhaus et al. 2009). While evidence was expected about seeking peer support and validation especially in the form of mentors, only one of the women sought out a mentor to assist in the learning process.

One of the first things I did is to figure out who was the best programmer. And then I just stalked them until they agreed to help me learn (laughter) - Juni

The study argues in line with previous literature that the pursuing a potential mentor is a form of proactivity aiming to ensure assess and support in the organization, and overcome the potential barriers associated with gender (Roth 2006; Kanter 1977). Additionally, Juni's mentor was in fact a senior male developer in the company. Inspired by Correll & Ridgeway (2003), it could be argued that the male gender of the mentor provides additional credibility for the mentored woman due to the beliefs that men are more influential and competent. Simultaneously, it must be recognized that the negative connotations attached to the process of "stalking" could be an indication of the perceived lack of support and difficulties in securing a mentor. This could provide explanation as to why none of the other interviewed women obtained or tried to obtain a mentor. In fact, the rest of the interviewed women seemed to have transformed the strategies of obtaining competence and developing new skills by implementing objective measurement units. For example, Joline shared her drive to always be in the top 3 in any competition throughout her education and in her current workplace. Another example came from Jasmin, who also sought to demonstrate her competence and increase her knowledge through new channels:

I have been to everything, extra courses, training, seminars. Anything related to gaming. I was there and listening. I think that is one of the main reasons that set me apart from everyone else. I wanted to learn and showed it. – Jasmin

Inspired by Roth (2006) the study argues that in the presence of clearly outlined measurements for success, women would not be subjected to evaluation and development bias. Arguably, attendance and graduation from additional activities (course/classes) are tangible, objective symbols of obtained knowledge and competence. They are in a way undisputable as their graduation would be a result of knowledge rather than influenced by external factors. This argument is supported by the Jasmin's career trajectory – Jasmin was the one women from the interviewed group who promoted directly to a permanent position following her internship.

In continuation, Jasmin's quote not only outlined seeking and creating new opportunities (to learn) as a navigation strategy, it also signals proactive behaviour as an actively used strategy (Seibert et al. 2001; Greenhaus et al. 2009). It is useful here to remind the reader that the study is examining the upward progress in the career trajectories of the interviewed women.

Nevertheless, it does not assume that the women are necessarily pursuing promotion. Thus, Juni's and Jasmin's actions could not be examined as part of a concrete plan aiming at promotion, but rather as part of a broader conceptual goal to learn.

Finally, an unexpected finding was uncovered in the stories of Saga and Stella when reflecting back at their first steps in the industry.

When I was a student and worked in there and I went and said I want to stay in the company, give me a full-time contract. So, I got one. – Saga

In line with Saga, Stella further mentioned that she pointed out her knowledge and familiarity with the company and staff, when asking for permanent contracts. These quotes could be interpreted as a more direct approach to the seeking and creating new opportunities strategy (Greenhaus et al. 2009). What is particularly interesting in these cases is that while containing a strong element of proactivity, these actions were obviously indicative of an existing plan. Therefore, they cannot be classified as proactive behaviour. Nevertheless, the implemented by Stella and Saga strategies could be interpreted a variation of negotiation as a strategy. This is in strong contrast with established literature on the negative relationship between negotiation and women (Small et al. 2007; Leibbrandt & List 2014.). Considering the lower positions of the interviewed women at the time, the study argues that women in higher position of power would demonstrated a higher willingness to negotiate.

An analysis of the findings demonstrates that proactive behaviour, obtaining new skills and demonstrating competence as objectively measurable were successful strategies when navigating towards the conceptual goal (being a game developer) and the operational goal (getting a permanent contract). On the other hand, navigation strategies related to attaining a mentor and obtaining competence and knowledge within the provided framework did not instrument any additional advantage for the women. These findings support Rot (2006) that in the presence of concrete measures of success women do not object of evaluation or development bias.

6.3.1. The influence of gender on navigation

The findings uncovered that the women experience and recognize differential treatment towards them as a result of their gender. First, the women reported feelings of increased attention, need to prove competence and pressure to perform – all common by-products

associated with visibility as a perceptual tendency of tokenism (Kanter 1977). Julia, who was offered her internship during the actual interview for the position shared the following story:

When I got my internship, I heard that some guy from my class went behind my back and said I only got it because I am a girl. – Julia

Saga and Stella also shared similar stories in which their competence and knowledge was undermined and their success explained by others with reference to their token status as women. This phenomenon can be explained with reference to findings on distrust in the capabilities and competence of women. Young Shin & Bang (2013) demonstrated that the portrayal of women in stereotypically feminine image has resulted in perceptions of incompetence and unsuitability for leadership position (see also Heflick & Goldenberg 2009). The implications of these stories are also consistent with previous research which outlines the negative social backlash women experience when success in male dominated fields (Heilman et al. 2004). In line with Taylor (2010), the study contests that the experienced backlash is due to general distrust in women's competence, but is heightened in circumstances of success for the token.

In accordance to Roth (2006), the interviewed women demonstrated a level of awareness of differential treatment related to their token status. As portrayed previously, the stories outlined that the level of awareness has led to the (sub-) conscious transformation of how the women measured success. As demonstrated, women whose success was attributed to their gender sought to disprove it by measuring it objectively, thus providing undisputable proof of their competence i.e. being in the top 3 in competitions. Interestingly, women who measure their career subjectively also explicitly mentioned to have never experienced any special or discriminatory treatment from their male colleagues. These findings signal a potential link between levels of experienced tokenism (i.e. increased attention; need to disprove incompetence, etc.) and using objective measures (or objectively measuring) for career success.

Yet another by-product of the increased visibility of the women which was uncovered during the interviews was the change in perception about gender and employability. In line with previous research, the women highlighted their awareness of their atypical career choice and the consequential token status as acquired during their studies.

We were 11 girls out of 50 students. They made sure we knew it will be no problem for us to get a job. - Saga

This notion of increased employability due to gender was present in all the interviewed women. In fact, even Juni and Jasmine who have not experienced tokenism, acknowledge their gender as an asset in terms of employability. Contrary to discussions on the male gamer image and gendered positions in the industry, rather than being a hinder, being a female is perceived as an asset when looking for a new position (Dymek 2012; Styrhe et al 2016). Therefore, the study argues that the notion of gender as an asset would influence the career navigation of women in later stages of their career trajectories.

6.4. Navigating towards first promotion

Permanent employment signals the beginning of ‘sailing’ (Vigh 2009) through less unsettling environment – in terms of the absence of the additional stress factor of being employed on temporary basis. This increased level of job security would potentially lead to appraisal of career goals along with gaining new awareness and establishing new goals and strategy. Once again, the operational goal has been benchmarked to obtaining a promotion towards a higher position. Unfortunately, Saga and Stella had no clear recollections of their navigation strategies. According to the women, their promotions were natural progressions based on increased responsibility and rooted learning new skills, general proactivity and extended hours. These strategies not only mirror strategies put forward by Greenhaus et al. (2009), but also further signal proactive behaviour as a commonly used strategy (Seibert et al. 2001). Due to the lack further information was provided on the topic, their cases will not be included in this sub-section of the analysis.

Inspired by Sjöholm & Wellington (2015), the study recognizes that the women may have a harder time recognizing and reflecting on the influence of gender in the present than identifying them in the past (also Eagly & Carli 2007). As the interviewed women were currently in the progress of navigating upward, the provided insights may be (un)consciously bias.

First, in line with the previous findings, obtaining competence and developing new knowledge (Greenhaus et al. 2009) maintain the main strategies for the women in junior position. This was expected due to the junior positions, as well as due to the dynamic and project based work in the gaming industry, which requires numerous different skill sets. The data further indicated a

continuation of the objective and subjective perception of career success, which influences the implemented navigation strategies.

The objective measurement of career success was demonstrated by Julia and Joline, who placed great importance on getting a promotion. At the point of the interview, both women had been working for 2 years and got exceptional results on their yearly evaluations, which resulted in increased expectation for a promotion. Both women shared that they have approached their managers about the promotion:

I was like 'okay what do I need to do to get a promotion, to make it to next level'. And my boss said 'well you are not really performing on a level of an intermediate yet'. But I said I have a lot more responsibility than even my colleagues have and he even admitted that it was true and yet, my other colleagues that happen to all be male got a promotion. - Julia

Joline, who also had her initial request for promotion declined, described a similar sense of disappointment over the lack of promotion as well as confusion about the lack success of the achieved operational goals.

I have been expecting a promotion for a while now. I got good annual reviews and I have been acting like an unofficial lead for a couple of months, when ours was on sick-leave. But it hasn't happened yet. Yeah, I don't know. I want a bigger role, but I guess I am missing something. - Joline.

Inspired by Roth (2006), the study argued earlier that general proactivity and the existence of tangible proofs of competence were proven useful to achieve permanent employment in absence of concrete measurements of success. Here performance on specific level and acting as lead are arguably subjective measurement units, and therefore difficult to evaluate. Thus, Joline and Juni's stories support this argument by providing evidence of development and evaluation bias for women in the absence of clearly defined organizational measurements of success.

The paragraphs above also signal a strong state of isolation and uncertainty for both women – they want to develop and are searching for ways to reach their goal, but are faced with contradicting messages. On one hand, their performance evaluations are exceptional and they

are acted as leads, on the other hand, they are still not considered for promotion and no constructive feedback is provided to help navigate through the circumstances. Similar scenarios have been seen in previous research on how systematic lack of feedback tied to outcomes, both about praise and developmental feedback, limits the possibility of women to reach higher ranks (Corell & Simard 2016). Moreover, linking back to the research done by Bergman (2008) and Mayo (2016), the study provides supporting evidence that the low self-confidence and feelings of alienation, as demonstrated by Joline, are a common by-product of lack of feedback and support.

To navigate through their insecure environment and the lack of support, the women highlighted the following different strategies. For example, both women focused on strategies relating to developing new opportunities at work by setting up their own responsibilities (Greenhaus et al. 2009).

I was just pestering them for more all the time. Like more responsibility, more trainings. – Joline

The negative connotations surrounding the process of ensuring support and feedback (through pestering), mirror earlier findings about difficulties obtaining a mentor (Juni's case). These strongly imply the existence *invisible aspects* of the organization in the form of insufficient organizational support structures for women (Hicks 2012).

Additionally, the findings revealed the increasing importance of *building up image and reputation* (Greenhaus et al. 2009), not only in the company, but in the industry. This was done through *representing their category* (women) and studio at gaming conferences (Ibid).

I still felt like I was driven by a need to show that we exist in the game industry. That there are woman and that is it fine to be a woman and join the industry. And just try to bring it more to light, because there are a lot of people that do not think that there are as many women as there are. - Julia.

A similar strategy was adopted by Joline, who also used her token status to develop new opportunities by representing the studio and provide role model for other women.

We would have like showcasing for the games. So, I would always kind of butt in and raise my hand to participate and be on that team. I mean it is important to represent women and the studio as well. – Joline.

These quotes contrast previous literature on tokenistic representation by members of the group (Kanter 1977). In the case of this study, the process of representing a category was a strategy initiated and fully embraced by the women. Recognizing promoting gender diversity and category representation as belief-based strategies, their presence indicates a switch towards more conceptually bound goals. Evidence suggests that this switch has further influenced engaging in organizational policies as a strategy for career navigation (Greenhaus et al. 2009).

(...) the equal opportunity initiative was my idea from the beginning. I mean I felt it was kind of obvious in a way. From the first year in (Company's Name) I was really pushing for it, cause I felt there is so much we can do here. -Julia.

To simplify, both Joline and Julia started working towards diversity initiatives after securing permanent positions in their respective studios and utilized them as strategies regarding both operational and conceptual goals. As result of these findings, the study argues for the existence of a positive relationship between implementing strategies directed to the conceptual goals and the establishment of a more stable work environment (i.e. through permanent contract).

The second approach towards career success was uncovered in the cases of Juni and Jasmine, who measured their career navigation success subjectively. The cases of Juni and Jasmine are interesting due to their high levels of fulfilment and sense of appreciation.

As career navigation gives the possibility to examine the future imagined career trajectories (Vigh 2009), Juni and Jasmine were asked to share their career aspiration, future goals and potential strategies. Further on, both women were very specific in the fact that they have not position promotion as a specific operational goal and placed greater importance on developing new skills and obtaining competence.

I am quite happy where I am right now. I would say it is a bit too early to say, but I think it would be cool to be a lead one day. But that is still kind of far in the future (...) and I do not like planning it too much. - Juni

Juni further shared that she has been offered the possibility to lead, but she felt no need for the role due to the small size of her team – there is only one other person in her team. Examining Juni's strategy, it is essentially a strategy of no strategy, or more accurately expressed “stay, wait and learn” strategy. Similar phenomenon was uncovered in Jasmine's story:

The thing is I got where I am so quickly. Much more quickly than I thought, so I haven't really caught up yet, so I am still like oh this is nice, I want to continue with this, but I do not have a specific plan what I want to do. I want to continue with this because I like my role and that is what I want to do. -Jasmine.

These findings fall in line with previous research on the conscious decision to not navigate one's career in presence of satisfactory external environment (Vigh 2006; Taylor 2010). In token positions, the token may decide to comply with the provided by the dominant and adopt a passive strategy to ensure future assess to supper and information (Heilman et al 2004; Kanter 1977). Additionally, it must be highlighted that these findings directly contrast the evidence collected from the cases of Julia and Joline who adopted more concrete strategies.

Finally, it should be outlined that a follow up in May with the four junior developers demonstrated that all but Julia had been promoted to an intermediate position. Following a year of unfulfilling feedback of her operational goal (promotion) along with stagnating process on her conceptual goal (equal opportunity group), Julia took the decision to exit the company and the industry altogether. Julia's decision to leave mirrors previous research on the correlation between lack of support, feeling of alienation and increased levels of turn over (Bowen, Carrell & Distiller 2008; Bergman 2008).

6.4.1. The influence of gender

The uncovered findings thus far indicated a relationship between the utilized career navigation strategies and the influence of gender. More specifically, the study argues for 1) a link between minimal perceived influence of gender and subjective measurement of career success; and 2) a link between perceived negative influence of gender and objective measurement of career success. Perceived influence of gender refers to how the women themselves experience and understand the influence of their gender. This will be referred also as perceived tokenism and examined through the prism the three perceptual tendencies of tokenism.

The cases of Juni and Jasmine serve as basis for the argument about a link between minimal influence of gender and subjective measurement of career success. As it was demonstrated previously, both women have implemented the conscious decision to not navigate (or passively navigate) their careers and stressed the importance of learning. Simultaneously, they outlined high levels of job satisfaction and were quick to highlight the good working environment.

I am happy here. I just got some more responsibility. - Juni

I recognise I am lucky. I have heard nightmare stories from other women, but everyone here is really nice. Of course, there are some strange questions every once in a while, but everything is done with good intentions. - Jasmine

The quotes above demonstrate the sense of job satisfaction as well as an awareness that this may not be the case for other women in the industry. Pierce (1995) contests that women in atypical positions expect to be treated differently as they violate traditional gender stereotypes. Therefore, it could be speculated that the decision to passively navigate is explained by absence of negative treatment – the tokens choose not to draw attention and ensure future assess and support. Looking from the prism of tokenism and the three perceptual tendencies, all this implies a strong sense of awareness for visibility and contrast as perceptual tendencies.

We are amazeballs, they trust is to do better. - Juni

Juni's quote demonstrates positive approach to work, it also signals the potential existence of performance pressure on the junior developers. Nevertheless, a further examination of the discourse did not reveal any negative by-products of the visibility or contrast. Similarly, no evidence was found to support existing mechanisms of pressure to represent a category or status leveling. In fact, arguably the only influential variables uncovered in the relation to the perceptual tendencies of tokenism were assimilation and being an audience to the dominant.

We will be talking about a new programme and all of a sudden they will start asking me about what gifts they should buy their wives. Like no, I do not know what women like. -Jasmine

Juni also outlined that when approached with such questions, she would quickly answer and then change the topic to i.e. how to customize a female character in a game. The women further mentioned cases in which their colleagues overused the male pronouns went referring to potential players, characters or even coworkers. While these linguistic signals are common examples linked to contrast as a perceptual tendency (Kanter 1977), the women did not demonstrate any strong feelings on the subject and only briefly mentioned them in the interviews.

Thus, while the findings demonstrate an interplay of the perceptual tendencies, the levels of perceived tokenism and negative influence of gender is very low. In simpler terms, the women are aware of the existence of tokenism, however feel little, if any, impact from their token

status. An explanation of the lower levels of perceived tokenism (referring to lower levels of negative influence of gender) could be found in the numerical proportions of the teams: the women worked in small teams where the ratio did not correspond to the 85:15 of the skewed group (Kanter 1977). Inspired by Acker (2006), the study argues that due to the social and structural divergence of the female gender when 15 % or less in their working team, women will demonstrate higher levels of perceived tokenism.

The second examined group consists of Julia and Joline, both of who have demonstrated an objective approach towards career navigation success – meaning they actively pursue promotion through different strategies. As mentioned earlier, the study argues that there is a link between objective measurement of career success and perceived tokenism. It should further be mentioned that Julia and Joline are parts of bigger teams, where they are the only women and also less than 15% of the workforce.

Reflecting on Julia and Joline’s stories, the career navigation of both women consisted of strategies relating to showcasing knowledge and competence, developing new opportunities, representing their category, involvement in organizational politics, along with proactive behaviour. Despite these strategies both women were denied their initial request for promotion. During the course of the interviews, the following factors of influence on navigation arose: First, both women described a feeling of isolation and lack of support by their colleagues and peers. In line with Roth (2006) the women outlined exciting mechanisms of exclusion which limit their access to social network and buddy like relations with co-workers.

I remember once there was supposed to be a gamer night to test the new game.

They just kept referring to as “boys’ night”. How am I supposed to feel invited to boys’ night? -Joline

The “boys’ night” is not only an example of exclusion mechanism, but also signals a process in which the women were essentially an audience for the dominant culture (Kanter 1977). The gendering of an event through linguistic signals serves to (sub-)consciously demonstrate to the women that they are in violation of socially established norms (Roth 2006). Inspired by Kanter (1997), the study maintains that the dominant group used linguistic signals to *underline* rather than *undermine* the culture.

Yet another aspect lifted by both women was the feeling of pressure to perform and suffering from burnout. These aspects are commonly associated with heightened levels of visibility of the tokens in comparison to members of the dominant (Kanter 1977; Taylor 2010).

I went to talk with my boss about my burnout. He mansplained me what burnout is. - Julia

Joline, who also has been dealing with burnout, mentioned how the need to be on top is a self-imposed pressure which started during her education and is difficult to overcome. This is in line with the previously presented findings of the period of education as pivotal in gaining awareness of the token status. The stories were further complimented by discussions on the challenges of proving competence.

I do feel have I been I guy, I would not spend half as much time explaining my decisions as I do now. - Joline

Julia, further supported this narrative by outlining cases in which her male colleagues would give her compliments rooted in sexist stereotypes i.e. “*for a girl you are pretty good*”. Here, it is interesting to reflect to the earlier findings relating to gender and incompetence (Young Shin & Bang 2013; Heflick & Goldenberg 2009). Earlier, success was seen as a consequence of gender (“*only got it because I am a girl*” – Julia). However now success is achieved *despite* the gender. These findings support research on the complex position of token-women as simultaneously deviant and unique: good for a girl, but still a girl (Kanter 1977; Lawson 2011). An interesting variable, which was brought up throughout the discussion was that of the title “junior developer”. According to the women, their gender in combination with their title leads people to question their competence to a higher extent. This echo previous research by Acker (2006), on the possible existence of double (or triple) disadvantages for minority groups at the workplace.

The cases of Julia and Joline demonstrate a strong presence of by-products of the perceptual tendencies of tokenism, thus providing support for the validity of Kanter’s numerical proportions (1977). They also highlight a great awareness of the influence of tokenism as well as conscious steps to transform these influences into assets. For example, both women decided to use their visibility to represent their category and the studio, recognising the need of role models in the industry, but also the possibility to make their mark in the company. Further on, despite being faced with mechanisms of isolation and unclear feedback following the denial of

their request for promotion, both women acted proactively and created their own responsibilities and projects. From the perspective of the Greenhaus et al.'s model (2009) it could be understood that following the lack of feedback (and progress towards goal), Julia and Joline reached a point of career appraisal where the women decided that the posed goal of promotion is realistic and continued to work towards the goal. This led to establishment of new navigation strategies to help reach the desired outcome.

Considering the information above, the findings support the study's arguments about a relationship between perceived levels of tokenism and approaches to career success. The absence of or smaller perceived effects of tokenism were linked to passive goals, strategies and subjective measurement of career success. Simultaneously, higher experienced negative influence of gender was linked to more concrete goals, active strategies and objective measures of career success. It must be highlighted that the findings support the existence of a link, but do *not* determine directionality. The study does not claim that higher perceived tokenism would lead to objective perception of career or vice versa, but only that a relationship occurs.

Additionally, directing focus to the established measure benchmark of gaining promotion, the findings reveal that waiting and learning is more beneficial and likely to lead to promotion. Both women who implemented such strategy were ultimately promoted, while women who instrumented active strategies were initially denied, isolated and one of them left the industry altogether. These findings to the literature on social backlash towards women when in violation of social norms (Roth 2006; Heilman et al. 2004). According to Kanter (1977) trading-off on the perceptual tendencies (especially visibility) generates hostility and leads to isolation for the women (also Taylor 2010). Women who do not trade-off and have a lower profile are generally better liked and supported (Ibid). The lack of feedback and occupational rewards could be a direct consequence of evaluation bias towards women (Taylor 2010; Bergman 2008).

Finally, little evidence was found in relation to role encapsulation and the familial (Kanter 1977). Nevertheless, the findings outlined the role of the gamer as a potential important role to assimilate. None of the junior developers found in necessary to be a gamer to be working in the field, however all women mentioned to have started playing games after joining the industry. Therefore, the study argues for the existence of *the gamer* as a potentially a dominant role in the industry which takes precedent in the process of role encapsulation.

6.5. Navigating to and in senior position

As demonstrated in the career trajectories of the senior developers (*see Appendix*), the career paths of the four women can be divided in two categories: 1) women whose careers have developed in the gaming industry (Saga & Stella); and 2) women who were new to the industry (Signe & Sara). This will be kept under consideration in relation to potential influence of tenure in the industry on career navigation strategies.

First, the career navigation of Stella and Saga are examined to gain longitudinal insight of potential patterns and reoccurring strategies. The examination revealed not only a continuation of the two strategies of *obtaining competence* and *developing new skills*, but also established *proactive behaviour*, *developing new opportunities at work* and *involvement in organisational politics* as commonly shared navigation strategies (Greenhaus et al. 2009; Seibert et al. 2001). The strategies were manifested differently in women: Stella chose to get involved in organizational politics by establishing training and development sessions for new employees. Saga took on the role of mentor to the trainees in the company and focused her efforts towards developing the programme. While the women described their eventual promotion to senior position as a natural progression based on growing responsibilities and competence, ultimately both women decided to leave their respective companies.

But after a while, I just realized that was it. There was no way up. This was the maximum for me. -Stella

This perceived limited chances for upward development and mobility, along with an unsaid job dissatisfaction was also mentioned by Saga.

After ten years I could do my job with my foot. I reached the point where either I had to leave or stay for life. - Saga

These findings strongly signal the presence of a fear of being *stuck* (Kanter 1977) in relation to women in senior position. It further implies a lack of equal opportunity for retention and the existence of barriers for upward development for the interviewed women (Taylor 2010; Roth 2006). These findings are in accordance to previous literature on the topic of career barriers because of deviance from the norm i.e. gender (Pichler et al. 2008; Gorman & Kmec 2009; Ng & Sears 2017). All these factors ultimately lead to the emergence of a navigation strategy to cope with the lack of possibility for development – *navigating out* (exiting) the company.

The empirical findings further attest that the strategy to navigate out does not apply only for women who were previously part of the gaming industry. As evident in the visual representation of the career trajectories (*see Appendix*), all four interviewed senior developers decided to leave their jobs at a certain point of time. The interviews revealed that the women decided to leave due to lack of opportunities and/or challenges. However rather than symbolising incapability to fulfil an operational goal, the findings demonstrate that the decision to *navigate out* is a continuation – a conscious, necessary step towards the posed goal, initiated by the women. Looking at it from the perspective of the Greenhaus et al.’s model (2009) *navigating out* is a consequence of the career appraisal step: the current environment did not provide the needed resources to achieve the goal and the individual recognised the need for new strategy – to find a new company. Navigating out is thus a strategy towards achieving a goal and symbolises a conscious, information-driven decision by the women.

Further on, in relation to navigation out, two distinct patterns were identified. First, some women chose to accept positions with lower rank, however with higher perceived opportunities for development. Then after joining the team, the women utilised their previous knowledge and experience to act proactively and develop opportunities at work.

The team I started with were 4 guys. I had to organized all the work. I told my boss, and I was just like a mom for them for like 2 months, and then I think it was just natural for them that they would give me that after two months ‘cause I was kind of doing it. I just stood out of the rest of the guys in my team that my boss did not see them as managers. – Saga

Sara’s promotion though having taken a longer time, was also according to the interviewee due to strategies related to attaining competence, developing new skills and proactive behavior (Greenhaus et al. 2009). Saga and Sara’s stories further outline strategies which aim to take ownership of their performance and seek recognition for their knowledge and work. This goes in line with Leslie et al.’s research on breaching mechanisms of contrast, by the dominant, by seeking to overcome negative categorization and demonstrating the positive traits linked to management and leadership (Leslie et al. 2008). Further on, these strategies could be linked to (un)conscious strategy to build up one’s image and reputation within the framework of the new environment.

The second identified pattern was to navigate up i.e. securing the same or a higher rank position within the (new) company. The data revealed *negotiation* as a common strategy to be utilised

by the women not only to reach specific operational and conceptual goals, but also to navigate through their daily professional life. Signe's career trajectory is an ideal example as it shows progressive growth in positions of responsibility despite new companies and rapid change. Further on, Signe was headhunted for her last three positions and only joined following a long negotiation process between her and the respective companies.

I had to leave. The negotiation continued for 6 months and there was a lot of back and forth, so I kind of felt like I can't just tell them no now after all the effort they put in this. – Signe

Another interesting case is that of Stella, who after waiting for a long time for her promotion used the lack of possibility for negotiation as the ultimate push - promotion or leaving.

And I just got tired of waiting. So, I implied that I would leave if I don't get the position. I wasn't really going to do it, but yeah. I was promoted the next month. - Stella

The presence of negotiation as a commonly utilized strategy in contrast with previous research which portrays women as unlikely to negotiate (Leibbrandt & List 2014). While the above circumstances related to more objective negotiation (contract, pay, promotion, etc.), the notion of negotiation was also mentioned by the other interviewees, however within different dimensions. In the case of Sara, this took the form of negotiating towards more administrative work. For others negotiating was linked to the everyday interactions with people from the mother company and trying to balance the relations there (i.e. Saga). All this serves to outline, negotiation is a key strategy of the career navigation of women and supports the study's earlier claim of a link between perceived power and negotiation – women in more senior positions are more willing to negotiate than their junior counterparts.

Additional strategy revealed by the data was establishment and build-up of *image and reputation* (Greenhaus et al. 2009). Contrary to the junior developer, the senior developers demonstrated greater emphasis on the role of their image and reputation in positioning them as the right person for the job.

And I made a name for myself as professional and innovative. I think that carried and helped me get the job, and all other as well. – Sara

Signe, who has built up her image based on being “an overachiever”, also outlined the importance of word of mouth and networking as strategies, which helped her along her career trajectory. In these cases, the image and reputation was rooted in soft skills (i.e. innovative,

overachiever) rather than technical competence. This deviation could be accounted to the lack of experience of the two women in the gaming industry. A comparison with Stella & Saga, who are experienced in the industry, further strengthens this argument, as both women indicated that they were building an image and reputation directed towards specific goals.

*I worked really hard to prove to everyone I was the right person for the job-
Stella (referring to her first promotion to a senior position)*

Organised and *competent* (technology-wise) were key terms and their strategies demonstrated a greater sense of direction. The switch towards more technology-competent image could be understood in reference to Britton (2000) and the notion of male-coded tasks (see also Taylor 2010). As the activities women executed were stereotypically gender typed as male, the women aimed to create an image that contradicts stereotypes of female incompetence.

Additionally, the findings revealed that being a gamer takes precedence over all other variations of image & reputation as well as roles. Similar conclusions were reached about the process of role encapsulation and the familial (Kanter 1977), where being a gamer once again took precedent. While most of the women mentioned that it is not necessary to be a gamer to be part of the gaming industry, all the women told stories of using gaming abilities to gain respect from their colleagues. This was to a degree present also in the interviews with junior developers, however it did not seem to be implemented as a conscious strategy.

What I did is to become the best gamer in the studio and win our monthly competitions. Even (name of CEO) said “no one has shot me in the head as much as Signe” – Signe

Signe's strategy was implemented following her joining the new company in the position of Senior Director. It exemplifies a social strategy to navigate the work environment by mastering a new skill, which everyone else already shares and establishing herself as the best. These findings contrast with previous research which deems the image of the gamer inaccessible to women – the nerdy, almost always white, male (Dymek 2012; Styrhe et al 2016). However, adopting the identity of the gamer, along with proving competence in it, seems to be a successful strategy for the women, especially for those who are new to the industry. These findings support the study's earlier argument the dominant role which need to encapsulated is that of the gamer, while other roles are secondary in nature. This ultimately signals an existence of role hierarchy within the gaming industry.

Thus, *the gamer* could be and is used as a social navigation strategy to gain respect and solid ground with fellow employees, and ultimately enable the achievement of different operational and conceptual goals. Finally, though *the gamer* could be examined as part of the *building up image and reputation* strategy (Greenhaus et al. 2009), the study maintains that the presence of this strategy is due to the contextualization of the study and should be seen as a stand-alone strategy.

6.5.1. *The influence of gender*

The findings thus far strongly imply that the interviewed women were aware and recognized the influence of gender on their career trajectories. Interestingly, the women in senior positions demonstrated a conscious, sometimes passive, reactions to the perceptual tendencies of tokenism. For example, the pressure to perform and prove oneself as competent had a lesser impact on the navigation strategies of the senior developers. This could be accounted to the development of image and reputation as dispersing the effects of visibility. Another explanation can be found in the research on education and empowerment: the increase in awareness of the existing negative mechanisms diminishes their effects on the women (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb 2013).

Nevertheless, perhaps the biggest difference between the junior and the senior developers lies within the willingness of the senior developers to trade-off on their token status. As identified previously, gender is perceived as an asset in employability. While this perceived advantage had a smaller impact on the junior level, on the senior level it highly influences the career navigation strategies.

There are money to be made from including women and companies know it.

Plus, it looks good in the diversity books – Sara

As long as you are competent being a woman is a great asset. - Stella

This phenomenon indicated a persistence of the positive strategy (Wahl 1992) in the developers – gender is continuously seen as an asset in terms of mobility and employability. The willingness to utilise the token status also serves as an explanation of the existence of *navigating out* as a common strategy: The women are aware of their own competence and

value, and recognise their employability especially as result of their gender in an industry, which is pressured to diversify.

Similar results were uncovered about category representation by the senior developers - women actively traded off on visibility by channelling it towards a perceived important goal – including representing women in the industry and serving as role models for others. This shift towards conceptual goals could be accounted to a higher perceived power by the women. In other words, the women are in a resource filled environment, which enables them to act upon values which are in line with their personal values and beliefs.

The influence of gender was uncovered in the form of mechanisms of status levelling and role encapsulation as linked to perceptual tendency of assimilation. First, status levelling was navigated through a passive strategy in which the women did not actively correct misconceptions.

They always talk with the guy on my team as if he is the boss. And then he goes like 'no, she is the boss'. That happens and we have a laugh and we move on. - Sara

Stella, who also experienced misconceptions about her role, spoke of her understanding of status levelling as a product of stereotypes and notions of traditional roles.

I mean I guess it comes from their own bias. The leader is always a guy. At one point, you just have to make peace with it. I mean they do find out in the end. - Stella

In accordance to Kanter (1997), the relative navigation success through the gender barriers could be linked to the previous experience of the women as tokens. Thus, the obtained knowledge about potential (re-)actions of the dominant towards the tokens, allows the women to choose their strategy and pick their battles. Though no evidence was found of potential long-term consequences of this passive strategy, it is important to mention that the interviewed women thought of status-levelling as unimportant, and in some cases even amusing.

It is funny to see them being reminded of their own sexist stereotypes. – Sara

Despite the passive strategy used by women, the findings do imply a perceived power shift towards the women: they take advantage of the potential embarrassment of the dominant. This

finding supports previously uncovered evidence about awareness and trading-off on visibility (and contrast) to achieve specific goals. Further on, the interviewees reported additional variables of influence associated with gender as possible explanations of their token status. For some, their relatively young age signaled a deviation from the norm to the dominant group. Signe found an explanation for misconceptions and isolation mechanisms in her decision to not have children. This goes in line with Acker (2006), who pointed out the possible existence of double (or triple) disadvantages for minority groups at the workplace.

In continuation, dynamics related to role encapsulation as a perceptual tendency of tokenism were brought up by the women (Kanter 1977). First, women in senior positions seem to be less likely to be approached with mechanisms relating to the familial. While the junior developers demonstrated techniques aimed at positioning their gender as additional source of competence, the women in senior positions showed less tolerance and in some cases complete disregard towards such mechanisms.

I think some people think I am a bitch, because I don't go around babysitting the teams. -Signe

Saga also shared her distaste towards acting as the “mom” in the beginning of her new job even though the role enabled her to showcase her organisation skills and competence, which led to her promotion. This active distancing from the familial role could be understood as a coping mechanism utilised by the women (Derks, Van Larr, Ellemers & Raghoe 2015). The stories by Saga and Signe demonstrate a conscious decision to limit or not express female-traits in leadership. These findings support Bergman (2008), who proves that women who express male-traits in leadership are more successful, however have lower peer approval. Additionally, the negative perception of being “a bitch” strongly support previous literature on negative backlash towards successful women in skewed organizations (Ridgeway & Correll 2004; Roth 2006).

Furthermore, in line with previous literature, the study expected the career trajectory of women in senior position to demonstrate a shift towards more administrative-type work (McLean & Kalin 1994; Taylor 2010). Unexpectedly, the interviews provided no support for the existence of gendered work promotions and the higher number of administrative tasks was accounted to the higher responsibility of the position. Further on, Sara and Stella outlined the role of personal choice and mobility.

I am really passionate about diversity and as (Title of job), I got the opportunity to do that. -Sara

Thus, the shift towards increased administrative tasks in this case was an operational goal itself, which served as a step to enable Sara to work towards other more conceptual-nature goal (i.e. creating diversity trainings). Something similar can be found in the story of Stella, who decided to embrace the more administrative work and outsource the technical aspects of her job due to the birth of her second child.

Finally, considering the token status of the women, evidence was expected for existing mechanisms of isolation, loyalty tests and being an audience for the dominant culture. While comments like “you are good for a girl” have occurred rarely, the findings uncovered that mechanisms of isolation were utilized by both the dominant and the tokens. This was done especially in regard to career development opportunities.

I know exactly why I wasn't promoted, she hated women! – Signe

These actions signal the presence of loyalty tests in which the token have taken on the role of supporting the dominant by limiting the number of other tokens who may enter the environment. Thus, the woman in Signe's story has become the “gate-keeper”, protecting the dominant culture and her status as token (Kanter 1977; Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers & de Groot 2011). All the interviewed women mentioned being on the receiving end of such treatment at least once in their careers or knowing someone else who had experienced it. Interestingly, majority of the women also demonstrated a level of hesitancy about recruitment of women and their competency.

It is something we discuss a lot – how to recruit women, because there is a right and wrong way. Like we can't hire them if they are incompetent. – Saga

This concern over recruiting competent women was present in both junior and senior developers. However, the findings indicate that it has a stronger influence over the coping strategies implemented by the senior staff. Following Wahl (1992), the women's actions could be positioned within the framework of the contextual strategy. The women indeed recognise there are structural problems which hinders development of women in the industry. Nevertheless, the women also have adopted a middle ground of recognising the problem, while acting as a protector of the dominant. These findings point out to the complexity of the

strategies implemented by women. On one hand, they adopted a positivist strategy in relation to employability and navigating out – meaning they perceive their token status in a positive light. On the other hand, even though they recognized the challenges of recruitment and career development of women, no evidence was found for active support of “relative strategy” – meaning no evidence for actions to enable the filling up of the employment pipe (Wahl 1992).

Finally, the drawing another link with previous literature, the phenomenon above could be understood from the perspective of the Queen Bee discourse. The evidence presented throughout the last two sub-chapters, imply that women actively aim to distance themselves from other tokens through establishing image & reputation and passively supporting some of the existing barriers for diversity. This, in line with the examples of influence of tokenism, supports Derks et al.’s findings of queen bee as a strategic distancing as a common response to tokenism (2015).

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The women interviewed navigated their career in accordance with the career management model as portrayed by Greenhaus et al. (2009). Evidence illustrate the existence of processes of gathering awareness, positioning goals, developing and implementing strategy. The dynamics implied by the model regarding feedback and progress were also evident in the cases of isolation and lack of process exemplified by the interviewed women. Finally, career appraisal and the re-assessment of goals was evident in all the narratives provides.

More specifically, the findings outlined that the interviewed women used a plethora of strategies to navigate through different stages in their careers. *Obtaining competence* and *developing new skills* were outlined as continuous strategies regardless of the stage in the career trajectory. On the other hand, strategies such as *image and reputation building* and *proactive behaviour* grew in importance parallelly with rank (Greenhaus et al. 2009; Seibert et al. 2001). The former was used as a key strategy in enhancing possibilities for external and/or internal mobility by senior developers. Additionally, the study put forward evidence for the existence of a positive relationship between implementing belief-based strategies directed to the conceptual goals, the establishment of a stable work environment and heightened levels of perceived power.

The study contributes to the development of the navigation strategy framework by distinguishing three new strategies. First, navigating out was highlighted as a common strategy used by the women. Rather than signalling an unachieved goal, navigating out illustrates a conscious decision to move towards an environment with more perceived opportunities. Secondly, *negotiation* was demonstrated as both a strategy to achieve objective success (get a better job), but also subjective success (better working relations). This finding contradicts the established academic standpoint and the stance on women as not likely to negotiate (Leibbrandt & List 2012; Small et al 2007). The study argues the increased use of *negotiation* along with the common practice of *navigating out* are results of increased confidence in relation to gender and employability. Inspired by Wahl (1992), the study maintains that women's recognition of their gender as an asset has enabled the adoption of positivist approach and the execution of bolder career choices. This is especially prominent in the cases of senior developers. Further on, considering that the senior developers negotiated to a higher extend, the findings hint to a possible link between levels of perceived power and willingness to negotiate.

Additionally, the study positions *the gamer* as a distinct stand-alone navigation strategy utilized specifically within the context of the gaming industry. While the image of the gamer is often depicted as the main barrier to gender diversity in the industry (Styrhe et al. 2016; Dymek 2012), the findings demonstrated that encapsulating the role of the gamer was beneficial to the women and was actively used to navigate through specific career barriers. Keeping in mind previous literature, the findings imply the existence of role hierarchy in the gaming industry: women may not fit the image of the traditional gamer, yet the importance of being a gamer overshadows all other roles in the process of assimilation.

Seeking to understand how gender influences the navigation process according to the interviewed women, the study heavily relied on the three perceptual tendencies of Kanter's tokenism and previous research on minorities in skewed industries. Regardless of the position in the career trajectory, the interviewees reported a high sense of awareness of being a token. The evidence obtained in this study provide support existing evaluation and development bias towards women in the absence of clearly defined measures of success (Roth 2006). Additionally, contrary to previous literature (Kanter 1977), the findings demonstrated that the women trade-off on the token status, especially in relation to visibility. The evidence further illustrated varying reaction to the trade-off as junior women were more likely to experience increase in isolation and lack of feedback. While the senior developers also experienced

negative backlash, their higher level of navigation success could be accounted to their previous experience as tokens (Kanter 1977; Taylor 2010).

Furthermore, while examining career pattern in junior developers, the absence of or smaller perceived effects of tokenism were linked to passive goals, strategies and subjective measurement of career success. Simultaneously, higher experienced negative influence of gender was linked to more concrete goals, higher number of active strategies and objective measures of career success. Therefore, the study argues for a link between perceived levels of tokenism and different approaches to career success.

Finally, the study demonstrated that women not only choose specific active strategies, but also in some cases consciously decided to react passively towards dynamics initiated by the dominant i.e. status levelling. In light of this data, the study supports Derks et al.'s findings on strategic distancing as a common response to tokenism (2015). The study also argues for the importance of education and its link to empowerment as all the interviewed women, who demonstrated high level of awareness also utilized active strategies to navigate and reach their goals (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb 2013).

7.1. Limitations

Two main limitations have been identified about the study: the sample size and the focus on the gaming industry in Sweden. The author recognises that these two variables diminish the possibility to generalise the data. Nevertheless, it is the hope of the author that the study will be a starting point for further research career navigation, gender and the gaming industry.

7.2. Suggestions for further research

The author would welcome a long-term project following women in the gaming industry for a longer period, and potentially provide further insights into career navigation. The study would benefit from diversifying the research methods as participant observation would provide an interesting perspective on the day-to-day dynamics of women's careers and strategies. Further on, conducting the study from a quantitative research design would further compliment or deny the findings portrayed above.

As mentioned, one of the weaknesses of the study is its strict focus on the Swedish gaming industry and the author would welcome putting to a test the findings in an international study. Additionally, future research could benefit from considering variables such as "ethnicity" and

approach the subject of career navigation from an intersectional perspective. Finally, an interesting possibility for future research of career navigation of the gaming industry can be seen examining the experiences of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

7.3. Recommendations

These recommendations are directed towards the gaming companies in Sweden. Firstly, this study would like to recommend to all companies in the industry to continuously implement education trainings in their recruitment practices when targeting young women. Providing young women with a clear understanding of the conscious and strategic navigation choices women take to achieve their career goals is one way to make the gaming industry more attractive and accessible. Secondly, the study advises for the creation of well-informed policies and strategies to tackle diversity as well as the establishment of a clear communication channel with all the employees. Thirdly, the Human Resource Management teams should be further educated in how to ensure not only quantitative diversity, but also a coherent diverse work culture. Lastly, the study calls for the enhanced active participation of the gaming companies in the diversity discussions on a national and international level.

7.4. Conclusion

The study was successful in providing holistic, empirically-based understanding on how women navigate their careers and how gender influences the career navigation according to the women. In conclusion, a simple answer to the posed research questions can be found in the following statement: Women in the gaming industry navigate their careers by implementing the following strategies: developing new skills, developing new opportunities at work, attaining a mentor (rare), build image and reputation, attaining competence; putting in extended hours; engaging in the organisational politics; negotiation; navigating out; and The Gamer. Additionally, examination of the career navigation process through the prism of tokenism highlighted the continuous existence of barriers of inclusion and development in accordance to the three perceptual tendencies. Nevertheless, evidence further suggested a high level of awareness towards the token status and a willingness to trade-off, and transform the perceptual tendencies into assets.

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9. Appendix

9.1. Figures and tables

9.1.1. Background: Sweden & the Swedish Gaming Industry

LARGEST COMPANIES	Revenue EUR M	LARGEST COMPANIES	Employees
1. Mojang	437* **	1. EA DICE	560**
2. King	333**	2. King	559
3. EA DICE	94	3. Ubisoft Massive	319**
4. Paradox Interactive	62	4. G5 Entertainment	262
5. G5 Entertainment	39	5. Avalanche Studios	239

*Based on an 18-month period

**Foreign-owned companies.

Table 2a. Largest companies for 2015. Reference: Swedish Game Developer Index 2016.

Game education in the 2010s						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No. of Programmes	29	35	41	36	35	34
1 st hand applicants	2126	2501	2771	3099	3123	3042
Enrolled students	961	1304	1379	1393	1433	1505
Female students	125	155	210	249	226	280
	(13.0%)	(11.9%)	(15.3%)	(18.0%)	(15.9%)	(18.8%)

Table 2b. Game education statistics 2010-2016.

Reference: Berg Marklund (2016) Swedish Game education: 2001-2016

KEY	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
FIGURES						
No. companies	106 (+5%)	117 (+10%)	145 (+24%)	170 (+17%)	214 (+25%)	236 (+11%)
Revenue EUR M	121 (+22%)	237 (+96%)	380 (+60%)	670 (+76)	905 (+35%)	1280 (+41%)
Profit EUR M	1.5. (-59%)	13 (+747%)	35 (+164%)	254 (+635%)	344 (+355)	485 (+41%)
Employees	1203	1512	1967	2534	3117	3709
Men	1082 (90%)	1300 (86%)	1674 (85%)	2128 (84%)	2601 (83%)	3060 (82%)
Women	121 (10%)	212 (14%)	293 (15%)	405 (16%)	516 (17%)	651 (18%)

Table 2c. Business growth in the Swedish Gaming industry (2010-2015)

Reference: Swedish Game Developer Index 2016.

9.1.2. Interviewees profiles

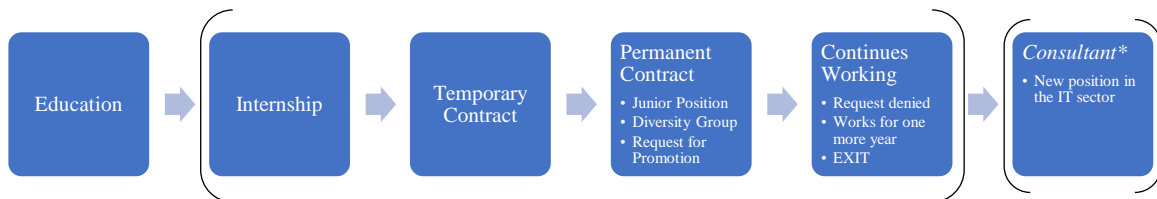
Name	Age	Position	Experience
Julia	23	Junior Developer (exit)	3 years
Juni	23	Junior Developer (promoted)	3 years
Jasmine	22	Junior Developer (promoted)	2,5 years
Joline	24	Junior Developer (promoted)	3 years
Saga	38	Senior Manager	13 years
Stella	39	Head of XXX	10 years
Signe	42	Senior Director	10 years
Sara	45	Senior Director	19 years
Hanna	31	HR Manager	7 years
Hilda	28	HR Manager	5 years

Table 4a. Interviewee profiles. Created by the author.

9.1.3. Visual Representation of Career Trajectory

The brackets () indicate employment within a specific company.

Figure 5a. Career Trajectory of Julia



*Employed in a company not working in the gaming industry.

Figure 5b. Career Trajectory of Juni

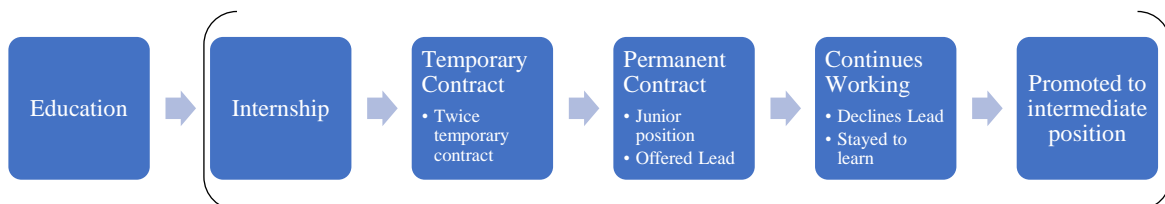


Figure 5c. Career Trajectory of Jasmine



Figure 5d. Career Trajectory of Joline

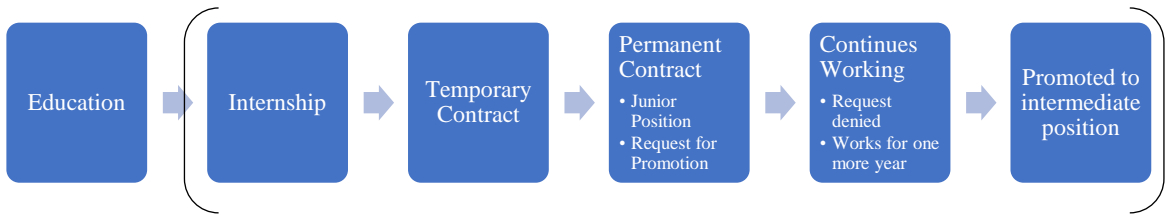


Figure 5e. Career Trajectory of Saga

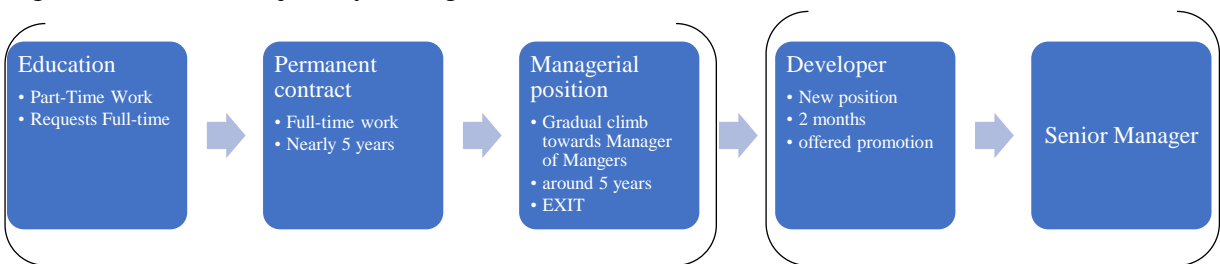


Figure 5f. Career Trajectory of Stella

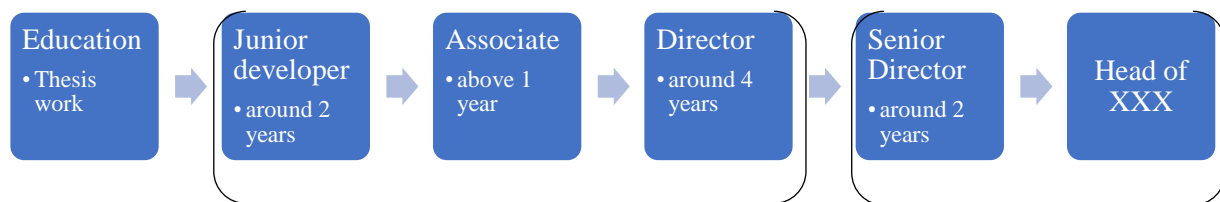
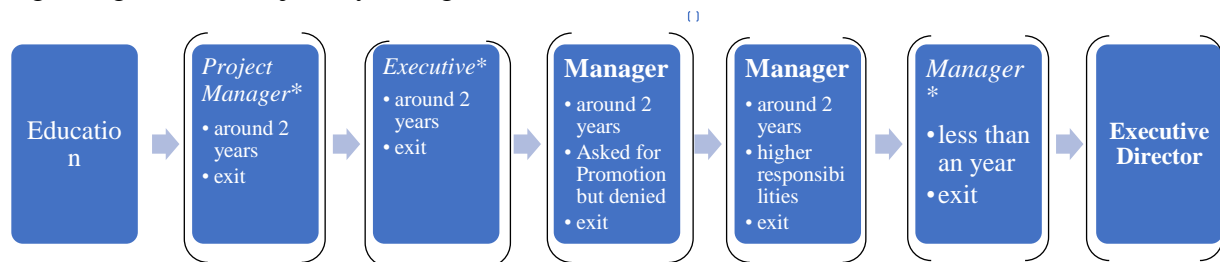
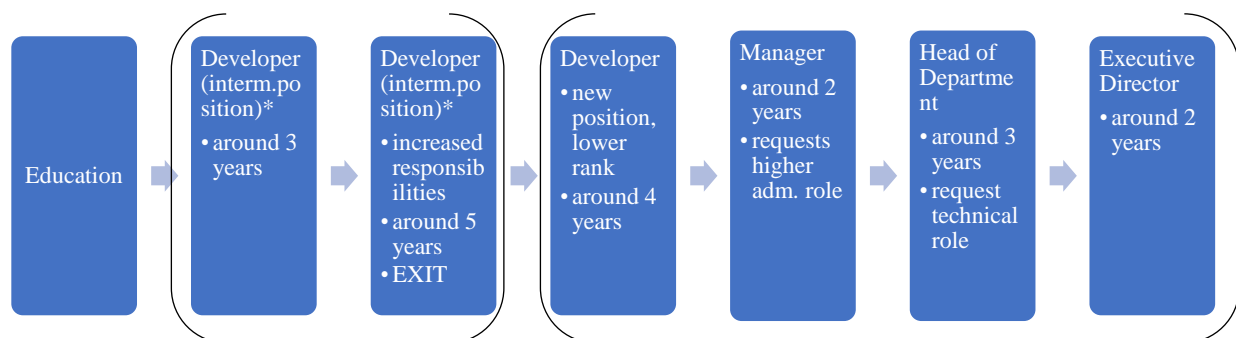


Figure 5g. Career Trajectory of Signe



*Employment in company not part of the gaming industry.

Figure 5h. Career Trajectory of Sara



**Employment in company not part of the gaming industry.*

9.2. Interview Guide

9.2.1. Interview Guide (Game Developers)

Personal background:

1. Tell me about yourself (academic background; work background – current position)
2. How did you get involved in this sector? Was it always a passion?
3. Have you felt opposition to join in the sector? From your family, friends, co-workers?

Career path:

1. Tell me about your current position how did you progress? How has your career journey looked up until now?
2. What was your career ambition when you first started working?
3. Have you achieved your career goal? How did you achieve it?
4. Have you applied for promotion or higher position?
 - a. Why did you decide to apply?
 - b. Were you successful? If no, why?
 - c. What did you feel set you apart from the other candidates?
5. What do you think were the most difficult and easiest aspects during your journey to your current position?
6. Do you think you have had a successful career so far? If so, why?
 - a. What do you attribute to your success, or lack of success?
 - b. What do think hindered you?
 - c. What do you think helped you or made your career journey easier?

If a manager: Tell me about how you became a manager? Specific challenges, steps, motivations.

The role of gender

7. From your personal experience, have you felt a distinction between you and your male colleagues in the task and responsibilities given? What about trainings?
 - a. Do you feel like you have the opportunity to take up a leading role as easy as your male colleagues?
 - b. When becoming a leader have your job changed from more technical to administrative?
8. Do you feel satisfied/happy with your current work situation?
 - a. Do you feel appreciated with the work team?
9. Do you perceive your gender as an asset/setback or it doesn't matter?
 - a. Can you give any examples or either cases?
 - b. How do you think other people perceive it?
10. Many women in male-dominated sectors have been victims of discriminations and sexism; varying from unappropriated proposals, graver situations or even just mansplaning. Have you even been in those type of situations?

Future career:

11. What do you have for future career goals?^[1]_[SEP]
12. What do you think is required to have a successful career in your organization?^[1]_[SEP]
 - a. Do you feel that your co-workers are required to take the same steps?
 - b. What do you think will potentially hinder you in reaching your future career goals?
 - c. What do you think is going to help you to reach your future career goals?
13. Is there something you would like to add or you felt I have not asked you?

Final questions:

14. Do you have to be a gamer?
15. How does the gaming industry differ from other industries you have worked in?
16. Is there something you would like to add or you felt I have not asked you?

9.2.2. Interview Guide (HR Manager)

1. Tell me about yourself (academic background; work background – current position)
2. How did you get involved in this sector? Was it always a passion?
3. Have you felt opposition to join in the sector? From your family, friends, co-workers?

Company information

4. Can you tell me a bit about the company? Have there been any major changes i.e. merges, acquisitions, etc.?
5. What is diversity for you and what is diversity for the company?
6. How does the company work with diversity?
 - a. Are there any specific plans? How long have they been in place?
 - b. Can you share some specific statistics?
7. What are the main challenges about diversity that your company faces?

Careers

8. Can you please run me through a hypothetical scenario:
I am a student in education related to gaming? How can I take my first step into the company?
 - a. How does the career path look for those who just joined?
 - b. What are the possibilities for promotions?
 - c. What qualities do you look for when deciding to promote?
9. How does this process look for women applying or seeking to get promoted to a senior position?
10. How many women do you have in leading positions?
11. Are there any specific challenges that have come up?

Gaming industry stereotypes:

12. Do you have to be a gamer?
13. What are the levels of turnover in your company?
14. Is there something you would like to add or you felt I have not asked you?