

**GENDER REPRESENTATION IN TRADING CARD GAMES: WOMEN AND  
MEN IN “MAGIC THE GATHERING”**

Meggie Rosar Fornazari

*Universidade Federal De Santa Catarina*

Litiane Barbosa Macedo

*Universidade Federal De Santa Catarina*

**ABSTRACT:** Gender representation is an aspect of games that may not be part of the main focus of game designers and developers, but it is something that players enjoy very vocally (Rosewater, 2012). Considering the importance of investigating gender representations in games due to their potential harm of, namely, influencing players towards objectification and violence against women, for instance, this article presents an investigation on how women and men are represented in illustrations of the trading card game *Magic: The Gathering* from a Critical Discourse perspective. Specifically, this study is based on Van Leeuwen (1996)’s representation of social actors framework; it provides several categories to observe how social actors are represented in discourse. The data is comprised of 249 cards from the first expansion self-entitled Theros. Firstly, a quantitative analysis was conducted in order to collect and compare the number of female and male representations in this block of cards; this numeric information allowed a qualitative analysis, observing which elements were more evident in terms of all of Van Leeuwen’s categories. The illustrations were, therefore, analyzed and described through *Exclusion*, *Role Allocation*, and *Identification* categories. The results showed that, although there are some traces of stereotypical gender roles, *Magic* is progressive in representing women: the number of representations between women and

men depicted in the cards is balanced; it was also observed that there are less scantily clad women, and they are more empowered in comparison to other (digital) games.

**KEYWORDS:** Magic the Gathering, Gender Representations, Critical Discourse Analysis.

**RESUMO:** Representação de gênero é um aspecto de jogos que podem não ser parte do foco principal do game designers e desenvolvedores, mas é algo que os jogadores desfrutam vocalmente (Rosewater, 2012). Considerando-se a importância de investigar as representações de gênero em jogos devido ao seu dano potencial de, especificamente, influenciar jogadores à objetivação e violência contra as mulheres, por exemplo, este artigo apresenta uma investigação sobre como as mulheres e os homens são representados em ilustrações do jogo de cartas *Magic: The Gathering* sob uma perspectiva crítica do discurso. Especificamente, este estudo é baseado nas categorias de análise de Van Leeuwen (1996) sobre representação de atores sociais; estas categorias servem para observar como os atores sociais estão representados no discurso. Os dados são compostos de 249 cartas pertencentes à primeira expansão intitulada *Theros*. Primeiramente, uma análise quantitativa foi realizada a fim de coletar e comparar o número de representações femininas e masculinas neste baralho; esta informação numérica permitiu uma análise qualitativa, observando-se quais elementos foram mais evidentes com relação a todas as categorias de Van Leeuwen. As ilustrações foram, portanto, analisadas e descritas através das categorias de *Exclusão*, *Alocação de papel*, e *Identificação*. Os resultados mostraram que, embora existam alguns traços de papéis de gênero estereotipadas, as ilustrações de *Magic* são progressivas na representação de mulheres: o número de representações entre homens e mulheres descritas nas cartas é

equilibrado; observou-se também uma representação de menos mulheres seminuas e mulheres mais empoderadas em comparação com outros jogos (digitais).

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Magic the Gathering, Representações de Gênero, Análise Crítica do Discurso.

*“It was a dark and stormy night...”*  
– Nathan Holt, *Magic the Gathering* documentarist

## INTRODUCTION

Gender representation is an aspect of games that may not be part of the main focus of game designers and developers, especially when observing releases in the last three decades and at a first glance seeing a majority of male protagonists. However, when gender representation occurs in a respectful manner, it is something that players enjoy very vocally (ROSEWATER, 2012). According to the author of Rosewater<sup>1</sup>'s fan mail, “women as depicted in *Magic* are very often strong, powerful and central to the stories. (...) Furthermore, those characters run the gamut of personality and character types.” This article departs from this public acknowledgement of player observation, by attempting to observe the same phenomenon from an academic point of view.

This is an important area of study due to its potential harm of, namely, influencing players towards objectification and violence against women. Media analyst Anita Sarkeesian has been presenting her findings on how the repetition of tropes (that is, devices frequently used in media in order to move a plot forward) can subtly pass the

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Rosewater is the lead designer of *Magic the Gathering* since 1994.

message that women are portrayed in games as Damsels in Distress, Background Decoration, Ms. Male Characters, among others<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, revealing such stereotypes by knowing how to read them critically is a key for a social change, according to Critical Discourse analysts. Studies in this area have shown the importance of deconstructing a variety of texts (written, spoken, visual, and so forth) in order to show elements produced by these texts conveying tendencies to maintain discriminatory ideologies and power inequalities among our society. From a feminist critical discourse perspective, Lazar (2007) thus affirms the importance of critical discourse to Gender Studies:

The aim of feminist critical discourse studies, therefore, is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities. Such an interest is not merely an academic deconstruction of texts and talk for its own sake, but comes from an acknowledgement that the issues dealt with (in view of effecting social change) have material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific communities. (p.142)

This article therefore presents an investigation on how women and men are represented in illustrations of the trading card game *Magic: The Gathering* from a Critical Discourse perspective. Specifically, this study is based on Van Leeuwen (1996)'s representation of social actors framework, which provides categories for analyzing any type of text. Therefore, taking the objective of this study into account, this framework can be a useful tool for unveiling patterns and interpreting them in order to discuss about gender representations present in this game.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

---

<sup>2</sup> Sarkeesian's Youtube channel, *Feminist Frequency*, has been receiving at the same time awards from the industry and cyber-bullying from "true hard-core gamers" who feel threatened by her research. More information on [feministfrequency.com](http://feministfrequency.com)

The issue of gender representation in games has been observed mostly by Communication scholars. Williams *et al.* (2009) analyzed 150 games with large popularity in sales released across one year in 9 different gaming platforms, in which the Adult White Male Lead Character has been over-represented in detriment of women, children, and seniors, similar to findings in television research, with possible implications in representation and identity.

Another study by Ivory (2006) made use of video game reviews in order to find prevalence of the Adult White Male. He also observed how women are not only underrepresented, but also often sexualized in comparison to men. Eastin (2006) used concepts of aggression and presence to analyze how male and female players act when playing against human and automated opponents of either gender.

Hartmann and Klimmt (2006) explored gaming preferences of 317 German female players, who had a tendency to dislike games with little social interaction and with violent and sexual gender stereotyping of female characters, discussing the implications of their findings to video game design. From another perspective, Taylor (2003) explored reasons why women like playing Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) through ethnographic data and interviews. Reasons include social interaction, mastery, status, team participation, and exploration, with considerations on how game design can be affected by such findings.

Within Gender, Ogletree and Drake (2007) performed a study on 206 male and female college students to collect their gaming habits, finding that female character portraits are rated as helpless and sexually provocative, as well as less prone to show strength and aggression, with potential impacts of these opinions in young adult life.

However, these studies focus primarily on digital games, ignoring analog games such as tabletop, Role-Playing, and Trading Card Games (TCG). The latter are of

particular interest due to their unique illustrations, commissioned exclusively for each card under briefing rules dictated by the game designer, developer, and creative teams (CAVOTTA, 2007). Since each illustration refers to what the card does in relation to its rules, as well as to the game plot and storyline, they can be observed in relation to how women and men are portrayed in relation to representation, sexualization, aggression, stereotyping, and helplessness, among other features.

*Magic: The Gathering* (MTG) is a TCG created by Richard Garfield in 1994. Expansions are released every trimester to continue the lore and progress of the game, releasing new cards with new rules, on a background composed of different planes of existence. The expansions released in September and February 2013, and May 2014 unveiled to players and card collectors alike the plane of *Theros*, a fantasy setting inspired by Ancient Greek culture and mythology.

This study is based on Van Leeuwen (1996)'s Representation of Social Actors framework to analyze, describe, and discuss our data. This framework provides several categories to observe how social actors are represented in discourse, with categories based on sociological nomenclature, for example *Exclusion*, *Genericization*, *Specification*, in spite of Van Leeuwen's linguistic orientation. Thus, specific linguistic as well as rhetorical realizations are made available to illustrate each category.

From this perspective, it is possible to assume that meanings are socially and culturally constructed as well as historically situated, rather than an isolated part of language and other semiotic modes of communication. As Van Leeuwen (1996) points out,

categories [...] should, in principle, be seen as pan-semiotic: a given culture (or a given context within a culture) has not only its own, specific array of ways of representing the social world, but also its own specific ways of mapping the different semiotics on to this array, of prescribing, with greater or lesser strictness, what can be realized verbally as well as visually, what only verbally, what only visually, and so on. And these arrangements will

also be subject to historical change, sometimes even violent change, as in iconoclasm (p. 34)

The author also calls attention for the importance of reading visual resources critically in our means of communication, considering their increasing number of multimodal texts,

for, with the increasing use of visual representation in a wide range of contexts, it becomes more and more pressing to be able to ask the same critical questions with regard to both verbal and visual representations, indeed, with regard to representations in all the 'media' that form part of contemporary 'multimedia' texts (p.34)

Therefore, this study had restricted focus on the images of the social actors depicted in cards, which could not fit all the categories proposed by Van Leeuwen (1996). This study thus attempted to discuss mainly *Exclusion*, *Role Allocation*, and *Identification*.

As an important concept in Critical Discourse Analysis, *exclusion* takes its literal meaning of not including actors and their activities in representation, following ideological premises, when, for instance, it is assumed to fulfill the interests and purposes of a target audience (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

*Role Allocation* is related to the agency of social actors. In other words, social actors can be represented as agent or patient towards an action. Van Leeuwen (1996) claims that "representations can endow social actors with either active or passive roles. *Activation* occurs when social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity, *passivation* when they are represented as 'undergoing' the activity or as being 'at the receiving end of it'" (p.44). Regarding *activation*, Van Leeuwen (1996) appropriates Hallidayan transitivity terminology for roles of social actors such as: "Actor in material processes, *Behaver* in behavioral processes, *Senser* in mental processes, *Sayer* in verbal processes, and *Assigner* in relational processes" (p. 44).

Finally, *identification* has three subtypes, two of which used in this study: *classification*, comprising societal categories such as age, gender, origin, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation – being historically and culturally variable. *Physical identification*, in turn, corresponds to physical attributes of represented social actors used in order to identify them in a determined context.

## METHODS

*Theros* was the *Magic* narrative block selected for this paper due to its timing in relation to the study schedule. However, since the narrative block is comprised of a total of 579 cards across 3 expansions, the first expansion self-entitled *Theros* was selected for the study because of its large but limited size (249 cards) and its importance in establishing the world where the story was further developed in the following expansions. All 249 *Theros* card images were gathered on the game official website card image gallery with no cost.

A quantitative analysis was conducted in order to collect and compare the number of female and male representations in *Theros*. Firstly, illustrations were separated as portraying human *versus* fantasy characters. Secondly, human representations were classified as female, male, or unknown gender. In sequence, human characters were identified according to their ethnic appearance: White and Mediterranean/Black.

This numeric information allowed a qualitative analysis, observing which elements were more evident in terms of all of Van Leeuwen's categories. Categories in representation of social actors observed at this level of analysis were *Exclusion*, *Role*



*Allocation*, and *Identification* used to unveil and discuss visual resources chosen to represent characters on the cards.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ignoring 30 cards in which there are no depictions of human or fantasy characters, the remaining 229 cards were visually analyzed by two researchers in relation to what was depicted in illustrations. Table 1 below presents the preliminary data of the complete *Theros* expansion.

**Table 1:** Preliminary data on a first-level analysis (Total = 229 cards).

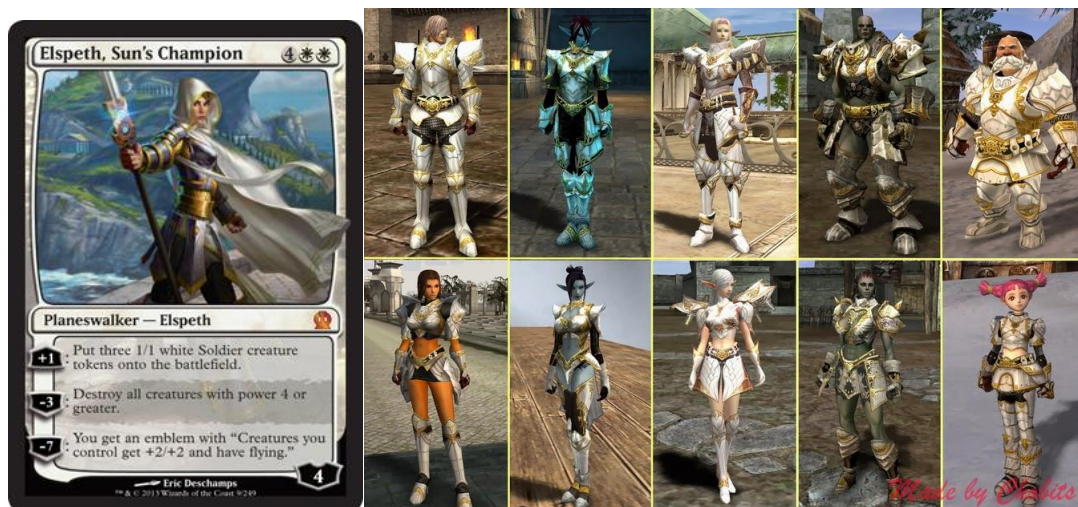
	Humans	Fantasy Creatures
<b>Total</b>	93	123
<b>%</b>	40.6	53.7
<b>Females</b>	41	39
<b>%</b>	44.1	31.7
<b>Males</b>	53	61
<b>%</b>	57.0	49.6
<b>Unknown</b>	3	23
<b>%</b>	3.2	18.7

It is important to make clear at this point that there may be overlap between the numbers in the tables, as not all cards show only one character in their illustrations. From the 229 cards analyzed, 93 (40.6%) depict humans and 123 (53.7%) depict fantasy creatures. This is consistent with the fact that *Magic: The Gathering* is a fantasy TCG with slight inspiration in the real world. *Theros*, only one world amongst the many created throughout 20 years of the game, is inspired by Ancient Greek culture and mythology. Therefore, the prominence of fantasy creatures appearing in the analyzed expansion is consistent with the genre of fantasy games as well as with Greek mythology.

From the 229 cards, considering human and fantasy characters separately, 41 (44.1%) human and 39 (31.7%) fantasy female characters are portrayed, while 53 (57.0%) human and 61 (49.6%) fantasy male characters are portrayed in card

illustrations. It is interesting to note that 3 (3.2%) human and 23 (18.7%) fantasy creatures depicted in cards do not have any visible gender. Most creatures are animals or fantasy creatures with no gender markings, or no visible sex organs (namely horses, snakes, elks, sphinxes, chimeras, skeletons, crabs, birds, krakens, griffins, octopi, unicorns, hydras, dragons, foxes, oxen, sables, pegasi, beasts, horrors, hounds, and archons).

From the characters that could be considered male or female, there is no relative balance; however, *Magic the Gathering* depicts more women in its card illustrations and storyline than many other games. Story-wise, the main character in *Theros* is Elspeth Tirel, whose *Theros* card is shown on Figure 1 below. She is a Planeswalker, possessor of a one-in-a-million magical spark that few main characters in *Magic* have, which allows them to traverse among the various worlds through which the game storyline passes. In *Theros*, Elspeth is chosen by the Sun God to be his Champion against the monstrosities of the land. She is a knight in full-plate armor that is neither sexualized nor masculinized; in other fantasy games, the only options available for female full-plate armor is a form of skirt or bikini (see Figure 1 for a comparison between Elspeth and male- and female-heavy armor in *Lineage*).



**Figure 1:** Elspeth, Sun's Champion and *Lineage* Majestic heavy armor set across races and genders.

Considering only human characters, the following categories of analysis will be Van Leeuwen's categories of *classification* (gender and ethnicity), *activation* (Actor, Behavior, Senser, Sayer, and Assigner), *passivation* (passive positions and characters suffering aggression), and *physical identification* (prominent or sexualized body parts). Table 2 displays data in relation to gender (male *versus* female) and ethnicity (White, Mediterranean/Black, and Unknown).

**Table 2:** Data on classification (gender and ethnicity) of human characters in the cards (from totals of 53 cards depicting male humans and 41 cards depicting female humans).

	White	Mediterranean/Black	Unknown
<b>Females</b>	21	17	3
<b>%</b>	51.2	41.5	7.3
<b>Males</b>	32	13	8
<b>%</b>	60.4	24.5	15.1

The term White has been chosen due to the large spectrum of ethnical appearances available in Theros illustrations, in relation to Mediterranean-looking or Black Theran characters. These terms serve as real-world visualizations of characters, as its fictional world does not provide enough information in relation to a Mediterranean region to be named so. Additionally, the few illustrations with unknown ethnicity have been deemed as such because of evening lighting that hindered their ethnical identification. Women are more balanced than men in relation to ethnicity, as 41.5% women are Mediterranean or black (17 out of 41), while 51.2% (21 out of 41) women are white. However, from 53 cards depicting male humans, 60.4% men (32 out of 53) were white while less than half that percentage, 24.5% (13 out of 53), were Mediterranean or black. Since Theros is a fictional world inspired by a real-world Mediterranean culture, it is expected to have people of various ethnicities, as in real Ancient Greece trade and consequent migration and miscegenation were aspects of their reality.

The three poleis in Theros (Meletis, Akros, and Setessa) are respectively inspired by Athens, Sparta, and the Amazon hideouts in relation to philosophy and some aspects of daily life<sup>3</sup>. Figure 2 presents cards representing citizens of each poleis.



**Figure 2:** Legendary Creatures representing prominent characters in each of the Theran poleis, respectively Meletis, Akros, and Setessa.

Ethnicities are spread through all three poleis; however, they indicate a majority of white people in Meletis, Mediterranean people in Akros, and black people in Setessa that can also be seen in other cards related to the same poleis. Therefore, ethnic representation can be seen through the heroes of Theros, who are not only important fighters, but also oracles (both Daxos and Cymede), generals (both Anax and Anthousa), and political leaders (Anax and Cymede, who share the high seat of Akros as king and queen in equal power). They are not only varied in gender, but also in ethnicity, thus deriving from the aforementioned Adult White Male Lead Character trope, seen often in television and other games (see Figure 3 for an example of the Adult White Male Lead Character in a variety of games).

<sup>3</sup> See The Planeswalker's Guide to Theros (Parts 1, 2, and 3) for extensive descriptions of this world.



**Figure 3:** A wide range of recent video game lead characters, all following the White Male Lead trope.

Considering Van Leeuwen's category of *activation*, Table 3 below presents data in relation to percentages of Actors, Behavers, Sensers, Sayers, and Assigners in both genders of human characters in Theros.

**Table 3:** Data on activation (Actor, Behavior, Senser, Sayer, and Assigner) of human characters in the cards (53 cards depicting men and 41 cards depicting women).

	Actor	Behavior	Senser	Sayer	Assigner
<b>Females</b>	14	5	6	9	2
<b>%</b>	34.1	12.2	14.6	22.0	4.9
<b>Males</b>	16	9	4	5	3
<b>%</b>	30.2	17.0	7.5	9.4	5.7

In Theros illustrations, characters in attacking position were considered *Actors*; *behavers* were positioned to be showing themselves or their attributes, including characters in non-violent passive positions (praying or receiving blessings); characters utilizing magical powers were considered *Sensers*; characters using mental powers were considered *Sayers*, as well as oracles and philosophers; and finally, *Assigners* were considered people portrayed in positions of hierarchical command over others, such as political or military leaders.



Since Magic is a game based on a duel between two or more players whose objective is to lower an opponent's life total from 20 to 0, it is understandable that many characters have been illustrated as Actors. Players will summon creatures and cast spells to damage their opponents, and it is rated PG-13 due to its implied aggression. However, since many creatures aim to attack the opponent, this is implied through aggressive positions without showing a victim. Additionally, since *Theros* is inspired by Ancient Greek culture, a pantheon and prayer for these gods are included as part of Theran culture.

Although Actors, Behavers, and Assigners are fairly balanced among men and women, there are proportionally twice as many women activated in illustrations as Sensers (14.6% women as opposed to 7.5% men) and Sayers (22.0% women versus 9.4% men). Figure 4 displays one card of each category, for women and men, respectively. This indicates an underlying tendency for Magic to allocate roles which are less belligerent to women. This trend accounts for Van Leeuwen's *Role Allocation* category, in which occupations demanding force, such as soldiers, are mostly occupied by men. Most women are depicted using mental or magical powers, as Clerics, Wizards, and Druids. However, warriors are equally divided due to Setessan women.





**Figure 4:** Female and male examples of, respectively, Actors, Behavers, Sensers, and Sayers. For examples of cards depicting Assigners in both genders, see Figure 2.

The aforementioned implicit violence in Magic the Gathering does not imply only violence without victims of aggression depicted in cards. Illustrations presenting humans suffering mental, magical, or physical passivation have been collected on Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Data on passivation and aggression of human characters in the cards (53 cards depicting men and 41 cards depicting women).

	Passive positions	Characters suffering aggression
<b>Females</b>	3	4
<b>%</b>	7.3	9.8
<b>Males</b>	5	16
<b>%</b>	9.4	30.2

It is important to note that although suffering of violence is also considered passive, instances of characters suffering aggression are separated in the analysis from images of characters in non-violent passive positions. These non-violent passive positions (see Figure 5 below) are fairly balanced among men and women. However, an inversion of tropes can be observed in characters suffering aggression, as men suffer aggression in almost 3 times as many illustrations as women, proportionally. Two cards are worth special mentions, as they depict men and women in similar situations; however, although the woman seems to be able to escape and perhaps counter the centaur's attack in *Hunt the Hunter*, the man in *Time to Feed* is already being bitten by the beast, with a certain chance of counterattacking, but not without damage already having been done.



**Figure 5:** Female and male examples of, respectively, passive/defensive positions with no suffering of violence, and women and men suffering violence.

Not only fewer women are depicted suffering violence in Theros, but there are some instances in which they are able to escape or fight back. In other games, women suffer violence in gratuitous forms without possibilities of fighting back or escaping such aggression: in an example from *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* (see Figure 6 below), a woman with her arms tied up behind her back has her throat slit by a male character. In addition, her ample cleavage, half-closed eyes and half-opened mouth also sexualize a woman's death in the hands of a man.



**ASSASSIN'S CREED:  
BROTHERHOOD**



**Figure 6:** An example of a modern video game in which women suffer violence gratuitously, with no chance of fighting back or escaping aggression and murder, and with a certain degree of sexualization.

Sexualization in Theros can also be observed through Van Leeuwen's lens of *physical identification*. Although the analysis focuses on humans, several humanoid fantasy creatures in Theros are showing stomach (Merfolk) or legs (Zombies), as well as being shirtless (Satyrs) or naked (Nymphs). Figure 7 below shows one example of each. However, illustrations are not explicit in relation to nudity, using posing, scenery, and shading in order to hide most characters' crotches and keep the game rating at PG-13. In addition, female fantasy characters have received small amounts of clothing to cover their breasts.



**Figure 7:** Examples of cards depicting sexualized fantasy creatures, showing in prominence one body attribute in relation to others, respectively Merfolk showing stomach, Zombies showing legs, Satyrs being shirtless, and Nymphs being naked.

For humans, three of the four aforementioned body parts are depicted in prominence according to the data available in Table 5 below. Nudity *per se* is relegated

to Nymphs (only female) and Spirits (male and female). It appeared relevant to add numeric data on the total of sexualized characters in Theros on Table 5, due to the stark difference in the body parts emphasized for each gender.

**Table 5:** Data on physical identification of human characters in the cards (53 cards depicting men and 41 cards depicting women).

	Showing stomach	Showing legs	Shirtless	Total
<b>Females</b>	7	8	0	15
<b>%</b>	17.1	19.5	0.0	36.6
<b>Males</b>	0	0	11	11
<b>%</b>	0.0	0.0	20.8	20.8

Numerically, female and male sexualized characters seem balanced at a first glance; however, their proportions in relation to the total of women and men depicted indicates that there are almost twice as many women (36.6%) showing body attributes than men (20.8%). This usual tendency in games can be seen in the armor comparison in Figure 1, with more body attributes shown by females. However, Theros in particular has sexualized more men than most games. This is also consistent with its inspiration in Ancient Greece – a culture that praised a healthy, strong, and fit body for men and women, as well as the culture which created the Olympic Games. Figure 8 below displays examples of each body attribute observed in the cards.



**Figure 8:** Examples of cards depicting sexualized humans, showing in prominence one body part in relation to others: showing stomach, showing legs, and being shirtless.

In this field of analysis, absences are as meaningful as presences. Van Leeuwen's category of *exclusion* accounts for the fact that within the analyzed cards it is impossible

to find a single obese or overweight figure, neither human nor fantasy character. All characters are lean or thin, and most are rather muscular and strong, including women. In particular, characters linked to the poleis of Setessa (which is inspired by the Amazons) have been portrayed as very muscular armed and armored women, which is consistent with Greek mythology (see all Figures above for reference, particularly *Staunch-Hearted Warrior* for muscular women portrayed in Figure 5). There is also only one elderly person depicted, visible in Figure 4 (*Agent of Horizons*).

## CONCLUSION

This article aimed at presenting an investigation of gender representations on the trading card game *Magic: the Gathering*, based on a Critical Discourse perspective. It attempted to reveal whether this game tends to reproduce a gender discourse similar to what is found among other types of games. According to our main findings, we argue that *Magic* seems to be more aware in terms of gender concerns towards representation. Although there are some traces of stereotypical gender roles, *Magic* is progressive in representing more women, less scantily clad women, and more powerful women in comparison to other (digital) games. Moreover, ethnic diversity is presented as a relevant feature of *Magic* characters' representations whenever possible.

Sexualized bodies are also present among representations. The difference of gender markings on their bodies – legs, stomach, and chest – tends to be highlighted as an identification of the characters. Most women possess large breasts, thin waists and wide hips. Men, on the other hand, have wide chests, chiseled arms, and strong legs. Although female bodies are slightly shown in a sexualized position, we could observe

that men are positioned in the same manner as well. This aspect seems to be distinct from the other types of games found in the literature.

Another aspect worth mentioning is violence against women, which is commonly found in contemporary games. Our findings point out that there are fewer representations showing women suffering violence; mostly, women are empowered to fight back. The number of men suffering violence is considerably larger than women, which inverts the usual trope in games.

As suggestion for future studies on this matter, a longitudinal study with previous *Magic* sets could be interesting, in order to observe how the game has progressed in relation to gender representation throughout the years. In addition, another suggestion of relevance for Gender Studies is investigate other gender representations in cards, such as homosexual, agender, and transgender characters. Lastly, a deeper discussion with game designers and developers could derive possible reasoning behind choices for or against representation.

As limitations for this study, we can point out that the inclusion of the other two expansions of the Theros storyline would provide more support for our discussion, and probably more issues in terms of gender roles to be explored.

As researchers interested in Critical Studies, we are aware that there are still much to do regarding gender representations in games, including *Magic: the Gathering*. We attempted to demonstrate what has been advancing so far in terms of these representations; however, there are still a few problematic issues involving gender roles and sexualization which are maintained to some extent in this game, although showing relative progress in relation to other games. We believe that reporting such findings could show that social change is possible and, therefore, it could inspire our society in several levels to keep minimizing social inequalities towards gender representation.

## REFERENCES

- CAVOTTA, M. **How Art Thou? – Savor the Flavor.** 2007. Available on <<  
<http://archive.wizards.com/Magic/magazine/article.aspx?x=mtgcom/daily/mc97>>> Last access on  
 January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.
- EASTIN, M. S. Video Game Violence and the Female Game Player: Self- and Opponent Gender Effects on Presence and Aggressive Thoughts. **Human Communication Research**, v.32, p.351–372, 2006. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2006.00279.x
- HARTMANN, T.; KLIMMT, C. Gender and Computer Games: Exploring Females' Dislikes. **Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication**, v.11, p. 910–931, 2006. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00301.x
- IVORY, J.D. Still a Man's Game: Gender Representation in Online Reviews of Video Games. **Mass Communication & Society**, v. 9(1), p. 103-114, 2006.
- LAZAR, M. M. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis. **Critical Discourse Studies**, v. 4 (2), p.141-164, 2007. doi: 10.1080/17405900701464816
- ROSEWATER, M. **A Letter about Female Representation – Blogatog.** 2012. Available on <<  
<http://markrosewater.tumblr.com/post/21339185967/a-letter-about-female-representation>>> Last access  
 on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2015.
- OGLETREE, S.M.; DRAKE, R. College Students' Video Game Participation and Perceptions: Gender Differences and Implications. **Sex Roles**, v. 56(7-8), p. 537-542. 2007.
- TAYLOR, T.L. Multiple Pleasures. **Women and Online Gaming. Convergence**, v.9 (1), p 21-46, 2003.
- The Magic Creative Team. Planeswalker's Guide to Theros, Part 1, 2013. Available on  
 <<http://archive.wizards.com/Magic/magazine/article.aspx?x=mtg/daily/feature/261c>> Last access on  
 January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.
- The Magic Creative Team. Planeswalker's Guide to Theros, Part 2, 2013. Available on  
 <<http://archive.wizards.com/Magic/magazine/article.aspx?x=mtg/daily/feature/262c>> Last access on  
 January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.
- The Magic Creative Team. Planeswalker's Guide to Theros, Part 3, 2013. Available on  
 <<http://archive.wizards.com/Magic/magazine/article.aspx?x=mtg/daily/feature/263c>> Last access on  
 January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.
- VAN LEEUWEN, T. The Representation of Social Actors. Chapter 3 In: CALDAS-COULTHARD, C.M.; COULTHARD, M (Eds.). **Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis.** London: Routledge, 1996, p. 32-70.
- WILLIAMS, D.; MARTINS, N.; CONSALVO, M.; IVORY, J.D. The virtual census: representations of gender, race and age in video games. **New Media & Society**, v.11, p.815-834, 2009.

Recebido em: 27/04/2016

Aceito em: 21/05/2016