

**A CROSS-SECTIONAL,
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW TO
DESCRIBE THE FEELINGS OF
YOUNG MEN AND CHARACTER
IDENTIFICATION WHEN
PLAYING *CALL OF DUTY:
MODERN WARFARE (2019)*
CAMPAIGN Modern Warfare
(2019) campaign**

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	DECLARATION	i
II.	ABSTRACT	ii
1.	TITLE	3
2.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.1.	Contextualisation	3
2.2.	Relevance	4
2.3.	Problem Statement	4
2.4.	Purpose Statement	4
2.5.	Research Questions	5
2.6.	Research Objectives	5
3.	LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	6
3.1.	Theoretical Foundation	6
3.2.	Literature Review	7
3.3.	Conceptualisation	12
4.	METHODOLOGY	12
4.1.	Research Paradigm	12
4.2.	Paradigm Positions	13
4.3.	Research Design	14
4.4.	Population	16
4.5.	Sampling	17
4.6.	Data Collection Method	19
4.7.	Data Analysis Method	20
4.8.	Trustworthiness	23
5.	PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	25
6.	CONCLUSION	27
6.1.	Ethical Considerations	33
6.2.	Limitations	34
6.3.	Heuristic Value	34

REFERENCES

Appendix a: Safe Assign Originality
 Appendix b: Updated Report Table
 Appendix c: Honours Checklist
 Appendix d: Question Sheet
 Appendix e: Explanatory Form
 Appendix f: Consent Form
 Appendix g: Consent Form for Audio Recording
 Appendix h: Ethical Clearance

I. DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Signature: _____Cindy Bothma____

II. ABSTRACT

The study aimed to describe the feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* as well as describe how the participants identified with their in-game character. The theoretical framework was Gerrig (1993) Transportation Theory which aided the study by providing central components that was used to gather an understanding as to why the participants experienced certain feelings and how they identified with their in-game character. The data collection method included the use of a structured interview in order to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions within the same format. The data was analyzed thematically in order to develop the necessary themes based on the similarities found within the participants responses. The findings were presented in two themes, "Feelings" and "Character Identification". The findings included both negative and positive feelings associated with the game and that majority of the participants did not experience character identification. The study will contribute towards the Communication field, specifically in studies relating to the gaming community as well as the society field based on a qualitative decription.

1. TITLE

A cross-sectional, qualitative interview to describe the feelings of young men and character identification when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign

2. INTRODUCTION

Within the first section of the research report, the following was discussed: the background of the study, the relevance, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, and research objectives. The second section involved the discussion of the Transportation Theory as the theoretical framework of the study as well as a review of previous literature concerning the topic. The section ended off with a conceptualization of the key concepts found within the study. The third section discussed the following: research paradigm, research design, population and sampling. The data collection methods and data analysis methods were also discussed along with the trustworthiness of the study. The fourth section discussed the presentation of findings as well as the interpretation thereof. In the fifth section, the research questions, objectives and problem was addressed and discussed along with the ethical considerations, limitations, and heuristic value.

2.1. Contextualisation

Communication researchers over the past few years have witnessed an increase in interest in video games and the consequences thereof (Dowsett & Jackson, 2019). However, this research study addresses the problem of the lack of South African based research studies with regards to *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*. The significance of the study involves the use of Transportation Theory in guiding the researcher to understand how the participants developed the feelings and due to the link the theory has with character identification (Buchanan, 2013).

2.2. Relevance

The relevance of the study includes the relevance thereof in the Communication Field as well as society. It is relevant to the Communication field as it aimed to contribute to an understanding of what feelings were experienced whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign. Moreover, it contributes to the Communication field with

regards to gaming community within South Africa and the design of video games. The study will also give individuals the ability to understand the description in a qualitative manner due to the use of quantitative methods being dominant in previous studies (see Greitemeyer, 2019; Dowsett & Jackson, 2019; Quick, Atkinson & Lin, 2012). This will contribute to the increase of knowledge based on qualitative research surrounding communication theories and studies.

2.3. Problem statement

Within the South African video game market in 2019, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* was the 8th best seller of the year (My Broadband, 2019). The issue however is that there is lack of studies concerned with the feelings young men experience when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign, especially based on South African men and especially based on men aged between 21-25. There is also a lack of South African studies based on individuals identifying with the in-game character, especially placing focus on one specific video game; *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*.

2.4. Purpose statement

The purpose of the study was to describe the feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign as well as to describe how the men identify with the in-game character. The study followed a qualitative approach as the aim included to gain an in-depth understanding based on the experience and interpretation of the young men. The research was conducted through a structured interview and the overall findings were established through the development of relevant themes through thematic analysis. The presentation of the findings included the use of tables and narratives to justify and present the responses accordingly.

2.5. Research questions

1. What feelings are experienced when young men play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign?
2. How did the young men identify with the in-game character in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*?"

2.6. Research Objectives

1. To describe the feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019) campaign.
2. To describe how the men identify with the in-game character in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019).

3. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

3.1. Theoretical Foundation

Gerrig's Transportation Theory

The Transportation Theory was developed by Richard Gerrig in 1993 and was extended upon and modernized in 2000 by Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock. The Transportation Theory is concerned with the immersion of individuals within narrative content as well as the consequences of the transportation experience (Buchanan, 2013). Gerrig (1993) defined the term “transportation” as a transporting effect or immersion into a narrative which changes the reader based on the experience (Gerrig, 1993). Recently, interest has been shown by many researchers due to the beliefs and attitudes of individuals being influenced by the narrative.

Gerrig (1993) explained the process of transportation in the form of an analogy: the performance of certain actions results in the “traveler” (individual) being transported by some means of transportation. The analogy thus explains that an individual distances themselves from their reality, resulting in some elements being inaccessible, and when the individual returns to their reality they are somewhat changed by the journey (Gerrig, 1993). Further research conducted by Green and Brock (2000) lead to the identification of three relevant components of transportation: attention, emotional involvement, and mental imagery (Green & Brock, 2000).

The Transportation Theory was suitable for the study as it aids in the description of character identification related to *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019) campaign. The

theory also aids in achieving the understanding behind the feelings experienced by the men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign. This is due to three components being used as a basis to understand why the feelings were experienced by the players. The transportation explained by Green and Brock (2000) and Buchanan (2013) allows the participants to actively participate in the action (campaign) of a narrative (*Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*) and allows them to feel as if they possess control or are a part of it.

The metatheoretical position of theories aids in providing explanations or descriptions concerning a phenomenon within a specific field of study (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The metatheoretical position of Transportation Theory explains narrative transportation within the field of Communication. The measurement regarding the theory is usually within the positivistic approach due to the involvement of likert scales and the transportation scale (van Laer, de Ruyter, Visconti & Wetzels, 2014). The study however is of interpretivistic nature due to the study involving in-depth description of character identification and the feelings associated with *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign. Due to the study being interpretivistic, it can contribute to a different perspective of a theory that already exists within the Communication field.

Furthermore, the theory will provide the researcher with evidence that will aid in describing the possible changes in emotions and feelings when the young men are playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*. The transportation theory has been used in various credible studies and has proved to be effective in describing and understanding people's realities whilst remaining subjective (Buchanan, 2013).

3.2. Literature Review

Video games have become increasingly popular in the last decade or so. This is due to the changes in game design, making the games more realistic and interesting (Gast, 2017). This research aims to identify similar findings based on previous studies concerning video games and the feelings associated therewith. Thus, the literature review is thematic as it being conducted for the purpose of identifying common themes within literature (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The literature review will be based on the following three themes: enjoyment (feelings), frustration (feelings), and character identification.

3.2.1. Enjoyment

Research conducted by John Quick, Robert Atkinson and Lijia Lin on “*The Gameplay Enjoyment Model*” in 2012 involved the development of the Gameplay Enjoyment Model (GEM). GEM was developed as an empirical framework within in which progress can be made in understanding the enjoyment of video games. The model was developed based on the findings of 326 survey responses that were completed on surveymonkey.com. The findings included six specific types of enjoyment was developed by Quick, Atkinson and Lin, namely; challenge, companionship, competition, exploration, fantasy, and fidelity (Quick, Atkinson & Lin, 2012).

Further research was found that identified three mechanisms of enjoyment, namely; breaks in self-efficacy, suspense and solution, and simulated experiences of life (Wirth, Ryffel, von Pope & Karnowski, 2017).

The mechanism of self-efficacy belongs at the lowest level of the model. With regards to enjoyment, this level is based on “input-output-loops” (Wirth et al, 2017). The output in the current research study will refer to the war-setting that is presented on the screen, the input however will refer to how the player reacts. Moreover, the input involves the player developing a new input due to the presentation of a new situation (Wirth et al, 2017). With regards to the current study the output will refer to the opening scene of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019). The opening scene involves a suicide bomber and the player is responsible for killing the enemy to ensure safety on his teammates. The input refers to the level of enjoyment of that moment. However, if the game fails to run fluently and the player experiences a “lag”, the enjoyment of the player (input) will be delayed due to the

technical problems. Moreover, the player will possibly fail the mission due to the game “lagging”, which in return will also decrease the level of enjoyment due to the player having to redo the mission.

The second mechanism is suspense and solution. In order to understand the following mechanism, it is essential for the researcher to ensure an understanding of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*. The video game is comprised with a storyline containing different “episodes” portraying different killing missions. The suspense and solution mechanism refers to these episodes/missions (Wirth et al, 2017). *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* provides the player with a narrative that involves various tasks and challenges, mostly based in a war-setting and involving a number of killings of the enemies. These challenges and tasks puts pressure on the player to perform and complete them successfully. If the player fails to complete the mission/challenge, the outcome thereof will be negative. In this section one can identify the research done by Wirth et al (2017) and Quick et al (2012). With regards to Quick et al. findings, the following types of enjoyment, based on the GEM model, will be evident: challenge, competition and exploration. The findings of the research studies are evident in the current study due to the various aspects syncing and working together.

The third and final mechanism identified is simulated experiences of life. The third level of Wirth et al (2017) model, is seen as more complex and involves more comprehensive narrative structures. These narrative structures involve several gaming sessions and may extend over a period of time (Wirth et al, 2017). With regards to the current research study, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*, the players have one goal: to kill the enemies. According to Business Insider, the game was created in order to portray real war situations and missions (Business Insider, 2019). The players will in return take on the role to accomplish the given mission (to kill the suicide bomber), which is completely different from their own reality and real-life experience. With regards to the GEM model, this mechanism relates to both fantasy and companionship (Quick et al, 2012). Fantasy can be accomplished by the player being immersed into the war-setting world. Companionship can be achieved by the player taking on the responsibilities of the character.

The combination of both models deem relevant to the research study as it explains all aspects involved in achieving enjoyment through gameplay. The reviewed literature

allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding surrounding the concept of enjoyment. The models can also be used whilst analysing the data as a guideline.

3.2.2. Frustration

Frustration in the players are influenced by the impact of the experience the players experience when playing certain video games. The context plays a vital role in the player's experience, the game may not always be fun but the experience might not be considered as unpleasant; it all depends on how the player perceives the context of the game. A study conducted by Dowsett and Jackson in 2019 stated that it is essential that frustration in games need to be a balancing act and it needs to be managed properly (Dowsett & Jackson, 2019). If the frustration is too much it might lead to an increase in anger, thus potentially having a negative on the player's feelings.

If the player fails to deal with the frustration/ frustrating experience, Adam Nylund and Oskar Landfors (2015) identified three different ways in which the player will respond: condemning the outer world, embarrassment, or shame (Nylund & Landfors, 2015). By condemning the outer world, the player can possibly feel anger when playing the game, thus leading to a negative experience of the game. Condemning the outer world can also have a positive influence on the player. This however only occurs when the player condemns himself rather than the game (Nylund & Landfors, 2015). This can in return create a positive response regarding frustration due to the player taking accountability for failing the mission, for example. Furthermore, the positive response of frustration can also cause the player to become more motivated to achieve the goal or complete the mission successfully (Dowsett & Jackson, 2019). It was essential for the researcher to acknowledge that frustration can have a positive and negative response, thus both sides of the debate will be considered.

Another aspect of frustration was established by Groves and Anderson in 2017 which stated that there is a clear distinction between at-game frustration compared to in-game frustration. At-game frustration is when the player blames the input devices. Furthermore, at-game frustration is when the frustration is based on the knowledge on how to successfully complete the mission (Groves & Anderson, 2017). With regards to the research study, according to the researcher's understanding, at-game frustration occurs when the player fails to understand the various functions of the console or device used

whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019). Another example will include the frustration of not being able to complete the mission (killing the suicide bomber) in order to progress to the next challenge. In-game frustration involves gaming elements such as interaction consistency and the importance thereof (Groves & Anderson, 2017). Furthermore, this relates to elements such as what the player can or cannot do interaction wise. Frustration will thus occur if the interaction consistency is not up to standard (Nyland & Landfors, 2015). With regards to the research study, the in-game frustration can be caused when the game “lags” or buffers, causing the player to lose momentum and possibly fail the mission.

3.2.3. Character Identification

There has been various studies conducted to investigate narrative-driven video games, such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019). A study conducted by Alexander Gast at Sodertorn University in 2017 found that the bond between a player and their character has the potential to enhance the gameplay experience. Alexander's study involved 350 individuals and the data was collected through an online survey. The findings stated that character identification has been established in the form of visual attributes changes (Gast, 2017). Alistair Raymond, Bryce Soutter, and Michael Hitchens conducted a study in 2015 at the Macquarie University in Sydney also surrounding the topic of character identification. The professors' study consisted of 306 participants that completed an online questionnaire. The findings stated that the openness to experience was related to character identification and that there was a positive relationship between transportation and character identification (Raymond, Soutter & Hitchens, 2015).

According to Thabet (2015), a temporary self-concept shift is likely to occur in a user when participating in narrative-driven video games. This is due to the modern video games presenting rich information regarding the character or role the user is responsible of controlling or occupying (Thabet, 2015). An example of this statement will include a narrative involving first-person shooters and visual details. Furthermore, the visual details are used to illustrate the setting of war hero fighting against the enemy troops. The transportation theory relates to character identification due to players perceiving the game world through the eyes of their character. This leads to players being transported into the narrative, in this case, *Call of Duty*.

According to Gast (2017) ,a strong link is established between the player and the character due to the interactive control of the game (Gast, 2017). Due to the statements made by Thabet (2015) and Gast (2017), it was concluded that the identification with players and the game characters is likely to occur. It was stated by Raymond, Soutter and Hitchens, 2015 that the player's self-concept towards the characteristics of the character would be induced by the gaming experience if the outlined understanding of identification was applied to video games players. An example will involve the player gaining the characteristics of the soldier they are portraying in Call of Duty and including the properties of the soldier into their momentary self-perception. However, a consequence of this is that the players will in return perceive themselves as their character. This will lead them to perceiving themselves as, for example, more courageous, cautious, stressed, etc., compared to how they would perceive themselves under normal circumstances without having to play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*. A study conducted by Raymond, Soutter and Hitchens, 2015 stated that alterations of the player's self-perception can happen through identification due to the link between the player and the character that the video game interactivity facilitates. Moreover, it was established that through automatic responses to the situation in the video game, the process of identification may occur (Raymond, Soutter & Hitchens, 2015).

The researcher gained important insight regarding the feelings of enjoyment, frustration and transportation. The researcher can use the previous studies as guidelines when interpreting the data. It was found that there is a link to character identification, thus also aiding the researcher in implementing the data. The literature review allowed the researcher to establish the good, the neutral and the bad to ensure that all sides of the debate was considered. With regards to character identification it is evident that there is a link between game play and identification.

3.3. Conceptualisation

3.3.1. Enjoyment

Quick et al. (2012) defined enjoyment as being associated with fun, interest, the feelings of competence, control, and satisfaction of psychological needs (Quick et al, 2012).

Enjoyment, more specifically, Game Enjoyment is described as the positive affective state

caused by the game, and experienced during the game (Martelli, 2017). The concept of enjoyment in the study refers to the feelings associated with enjoyment whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign.

3.3.2. Frustration

Nylund & Landfors (2015) defined frustration as a somewhat state relating to feelings of anger. Frustration occurs when individuals feel like they do not have control over the situation they are in, thus not having the ability to change or achieve something (Nylund & Landfors, 2015). Within the study, frustration is exactly what was described previously. The concept of frustration will be associated with the negative feelings associated whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign.

3.3.3. Character Identification

Gast (2017) defined identification as a process that involves a perception towards a character by adopting the goals of the character, and consists of an increasing loss of self-awareness and its temporary replacement with cognitive and emotional connections with the character (Gast, 2017). The concept is relevant within the study as it is one of the objectives in the study. The interpretation of the concept was based on the responses of the participants surrounding certain attributes relating them to the in-game character of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Paradigm

Interpretivism involves researchers to interpret elements of the study, thus integrating human interest into the study. According to the interpretivistic paradigm, the access to reality is only through the form of social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). Moreover, within this approach the individuals are responsible for creating their own truth and reality. The study is situated within the interpretivism paradigm due to the participants responses being based on their subjective experience and truth when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*

(2019) campaign. Furthermore, the aim of the study is to gain an understanding based on the shared meanings of the participants regarding character identification and their feelings.

4.2. Paradigm Positions

The chosen research paradigm of interpretivism is compiled with five positions, namely; epistemology, ontology, metatheoretical, methodological, and axiology (du-Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). In order to justify the reasoning of researching within interpretivism, the five positions are addressed as central features.

4.2.1. Epistemological Position

Epistemology is defined as the theory of knowledge and refers to how knowledge is gathered and from which sources (du Plooy-Cillier et al, 2014). With regards to the interpretivistic paradigm, the creation of knowledge is subjective and based on the individual's experiences. The epistemological position of the study involves the response of the participants concerning their interpretation and experience as being based on their own common sense.

4.2.2. Ontological Position

Ontology is the study of reality and according to the interpretivistic paradigm, reality is a social construction that is dependent on the meanings that individuals create based on their own experiences and interactions (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The ontological position of this study is evident in the different responses of the participants due to their sense of reality being based on different personal experiences when playing *Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2019*.

4.2.3. Metatheoretical Position

The metatheoretical position in the interpretivistic approach involves detailed descriptions as well as direct quotes from participants. This is due to the aim of the position being to reveal meaning and values the individuals participating in the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al,

2014). Metatheoretical position within the study follows the Transportation Theory as it relates to character identification and emotional involvement which relates to the feelings experienced by the young men.

3.2.4 Methodological Position

The methodological position of interpretivism depend on qualitative research due to the aim involving the gathering of an in-depth understanding of multiple realities. The researchers study reality subjectively by using methods that will aim at gaining an understanding (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The methodological position in this study involves the use of a structured interview comprised of open – ended questions thus allowing the participant to respond best on their own experiences and interpretations whilst playing *Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2019*.

3.2.5 Axiological Position

The axiological position of interpretivism refers to the complex understanding of unique realities this involves conducting research based on the interpretations of the researcher and the participant (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The axiological position in the study only referred to the interpretation of the participant as the aim was to understand the feelings experienced while playing *Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2019*.

4.3. Research Approach

The qualitative approach to research involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data with the goal of understanding concepts, opinions, or experiences. The purpose of the qualitative approach and the reason as to why it is used is to gather in-depth insights regarding a problem or in order to generate new ideas for research (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). The study is considered qualitative due to the purpose involving the description of the possibility of the young men identifying with their in-game character as well as the description of the feelings associated when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign.

The study is a descriptive study due to the aim of the research being to describe character identification and the feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign. Thus, the purpose of the study is to describe the characteristics of a phenomena (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).]

4.3.1. Timeframe

The timeframe for the study is cross-sectional due to the requirements stipulating that the research has to be completed within one year. Through the use of a structured interview the data was collected at a single point in time and it was done once off (du-Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The purpose of the study was to describe character identification and feelings experienced when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign, thus is only required a once off collection of data.

4.3.2. Deductive Reasoning

The study is applicable to deductive reasoning due to it taking a general assumption from a theory and applying it to a specific situation (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The study used the assumption from Transportation Theory by using the three components of transportation (attention, emotional involvement, and mental imagery) to apply to character identification and feelings when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign.

4.3.3. Design

The study integrated the qualitative interactive design due to the use of the structured interview which required the researcher to conduct the interview with the participants face-to-face through Skype and Zoom. The study used applied research due to aim of the study being to solve the research problem concerning the lack of South African based studies (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

4.4. Population

4.4.1. Nature of population

The population of a research study refers to a complete set of elements which can either be people or artefacts that possess common characteristics established by the researcher and defined by the sampling criteria (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The nature of the population researched was people due to the aim being to describe the possibility of character identification and feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign.

4.4.2. Target population and accessible population

The target population refers to the entire group of people to which the researcher wishes to generalize the findings to (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). Thus, the target population for the study was all young men, aged between 21-25, who play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign/storyline within South Africa.

The accessible population refers to the portion of the population to which the researcher has reasonable access to. Moreover, the accessible population may include a subset of the target population and may be limited to certain aspects (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The accessible audience for the study was all young men, aged between 21-25, who play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign/storyline that is a part of the Durban North Neighbors Facebook group.

4.4.3. Unique characteristics of population

The characteristics for the study included the following: South African men, residing in Durban North, of different race aged between 21-25 and classified as frequent *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* players with access to the internet. The participants were South African due to the lack of South African based studies surrounding the topic. This is due to past studies surrounding the topic predominantly being based in USA and Australia (see Groves & Anderson, 2017; Buchanan, 2013; Raymond, Souter & Hitchens, 2015). For these reasons, the researcher wanted to contribute findings about character identification and the feelings the young men experience when playing *Call of Duty*:

Modern Warfare (2019) from a South African perspective. Men aged between 21-25 were chosen due to the lack of studies concerning that age group. The video game, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* was specifically chosen due to the lack of studies placing focus on a specific game (see Dowsett & Jackson, 2019; Gast, 2017; Fergunson, 2018). For this reason, the researcher decided to place focus on one specific game and the feelings associated therewith. It was important for the individuals to have internet access due to the interviews being conducted via Skype/Zoom. The reason thereof is Covid19 and the lockdown regulations.

4.5. Sampling

4.5.1. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis refers to the major entity that is being analyzed in the research study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The unit of analysis is the South African men, residing in Durban North, that play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign that responded to questions asked in the structured interview.

4.5.2. Sampling method

Probability sampling is a technique that involves the researcher choosing samples from a larger population and using a method that is based on the theory of probability (Turner, 2020). For a sample to qualify as a probability sample, each individual in the population must be given an equal chance of being selected for a study. Simple random sampling is defined as a sampling technique where every member of the population has an equal chance and likelihood of being selected in the sample (McCombes, 2019). This is used by assigning each member of the population to an identifier and those selected to be within the sample are picked at random through the use of an automated software program (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The automated software program that was used in the study is called "Research Randomizer" and was used due to prior recommendations.

The reasoning behind the choice to use probability sampling is due to the researcher avoiding bias by choosing participants based of random selection. Moreover, due to the accessible population involving all men who met the required characteristics of the study being a large group, probability sampling allowed the researcher to narrow it down via

random selection. The reasoning behind choosing the simple random sampling technique was to ensure that the participants were chosen randomly and not according to the preference of the researcher. Thus, it minimized the involvement of the researcher and the selection of the sample being based on the researcher's own personal judgement.

To adhere to the probability sampling and the random sampling technique, a post was created on a Facebook group, *Durban North Neighbors*, explaining the purpose, required characteristics and what the study was for. A personal email address was added to the post for professional communication purposes. The post was posted on Sunday 29th of August and was then removed Friday the 4th of September in the afternoon. The researcher received 36 responses, all willing to participate and all meeting the criteria. The following steps were followed to extract a simple random sample of 5 participants: a list was made containing all 36 individual names; a sequential number was assigned to each individual ranging from 1-36, thus referring to the sampling frame; the "Research Randomizer" program was used to determine the five participants. The "Research Randomizer" required the researcher to select the number range (1-36) and to select the amount needed (5). Once the options have been selected, the following unique numbers were selected: 24, 20, 1, 18 and 8. The researcher went back to the list of names and matched the names with the chosen numbers.

Through the use of the probability technique, simple random sampling, the desired sample was developed and achieved. It was found to be less time-consuming than selecting the sample personally and it being based on personal opinion. The only concern for using the sampling method was that it is in need of a complete list of all members of the population, thus suggesting a whole list of men, aged 21-25, residing in Durban North, playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign/storyline. The researcher reduced the concern by posting on a Facebook group, *Durban North Neighbors*, and allowing the individuals to offer their time to participate in the study. By doing this the researcher shortened the list of potential participants and narrowed it down to 36 which was easier to control.

4.5.3. Sample Size

The sample size included 5 young men in total. The sample size was decided upon the researcher due to concerns such as time constraints and the possibility of not all young men meeting the population characteristics.

4.6. Data Collection Method

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the participants responded to a structured interview. A structured interview is when each participant gets asked the same set of questions in the exact same order (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). Moreover, this method of interviewing makes use of pre-established questions with limited response categories (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

The ten questions that were included in the question sheet combined direct, indirect and open-ended questions. Question one can be identified as a direct question due to the researcher asking the participant how many hours they play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* a week in order to confirm his suitability in the study. Question three is identified as an indirect question due to the researcher asking the participant to describe the campaign/storyline of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* in three words, thus the participant was allowed to express their personal experience and opinions thereof. Question four is an open-ended question due the participant having the ability to express their own feelings that they experienced whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*, thus having the freedom to answer solely based on their own experience.

The question sheet was developed prior to the interview due to it following the structured interview process. The first initial execution plan of the interview was to be done face to face with the five participants, however due to Covid19 and the National Lockdown, it was decided to conduct the interview online. Due to the urgency and seriousness of the lockdown rules and regulations, it was deemed impossible to set up in-person meetings with the potential participants. In order to remain safe and committed to the rules and regulations, the researcher made the decision to conduct the structured interviews by using online communication platforms such as Skype and Zoom.

The researcher pre-tested the accuracy of both Skype and Zoom to ensure that the communication platforms were of standard. The pre-test process involved one participant that was an acquaintance of the researcher. The pre-test involved testing the reliability of

Skype and the process of the structured interview. It was found that the interview lasted fifteen minutes and the collection tool was found to be effective via Skype. The pre-test process was conducted to ensure that the data can be efficiently collected via Skype. This allowed the researcher to gain confidence and become familiar with the structured interview process, questions and online communication platforms.

Once the pre-test was conducted successfully, the researcher used a social media platform in order to gather potential participants. A post was made on a *Facebook group, Durban North Neighbours*. The researcher provided her email address in order to establish formal contact with the potential participants. A total of 36 individuals offered to participate in the study due to them sharing the characteristics that were presented. Through the use of "Research Randomizer" the sample was chosen.

Whilst the interviews were conducted, the researcher experienced one issue involving the participant's internet being very weak. The issue was resolved by rescheduling the interview to another time. The rest of the interviews were conducted successfully and all of the necessary data was collected efficiently. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher then moved on to the data analysis method.

4.7. Data Analysis Method

The chosen data analysis method for the study was a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves the researcher closely examining the data in order to identify common themes or ideas that are repeatedly presented in the collected data (Caulfield, 2019). Due to the data collection tool including a structured interview conducted via Skype and Zoom, the thematic analysis was the best option due to involving interview transcripts. In order for the researcher to implement the six steps of thematic analysis, data was collected from five participants and analyzed.

The thematic analysis is comprised of six steps developed by Braun and Clarke (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The six steps are the following:

Step one: Familiarization

The first step involves the researcher getting familiar with the collected data, thus requiring a thorough overview of all the data before analyzing the individual items (Caulfield, 2019). As mentioned before, the researcher used a mobile device in order to record the participant's responses throughout the structured interview process via Skype/Zoom. Once all five interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the audio by typing out the responses of the participants.

Step two: Coding

Coding involves the process of assigning codes to the data. A code is defined as a brief description of what was said during the interview and is used to organize data into meaningful groups (Caulfield, 2019). As an example of how the researcher approached this step, a snippet of the interview with a participant will be added:

Interview extract	Codes
"First off, it is thrilling because of the action inside the game and everything you get to experience. It is heart-breaking with regards to the actual characters of the game and how they all get killed. It's action packed just because with the overall experience that you get from the game."	• Feelings associated with the game • Acknowledgement of action • Experience • Considers in-game characters

In the above mentioned extract, different phrases and words were highlighted in different colours due to corresponding to different codes. Each code that was developed described an idea or feeling that was expressed by the participant in the text. The example above was used to indicate how the coding process was achieved and executed.

Step three: Generating themes

This step involves identifying patterns among the codes and from there creating themes. Themes are broader than codes and involves combining several codes into one theme

(Caulfield, 2019). As an example of how the researcher approached this step will include other codes that were found in the data.

Codes:	Theme:
• Feelings associated with game • Different emotions • Personal experiences	Feelings

Codes:	Theme:
• Considers in-game characters • Team-orientated activities (in game) • Bonds between characters • Supportive	Character identification

Whilst generating the themes, the researcher went back and forth in order to form respective themes based on the data. This was done by writing the themes on sticky notes that were moved around in order to help the researcher visualize the relationship between the codes and themes. There were codes that ended up becoming themes, such as “feelings” due to the data including a variety of feelings that could be explained.

Step four: Reviewing themes

This step involves the researcher ensuring that the identified themes are useful and an accurate representation of the data. This involves the process of returning to the data set and comparing the themes with it (Caulfield, 2019). The researcher implemented this step by looking over the transcripts again to see if any was missed or not included. Moreover, the researcher revisited the themes to ensure that they accurately represent the data and the purpose of the study. An example will refer to the theme “feelings”, the codes that fall under the chosen theme will align with the purpose of the study due to it being focused on describing the feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign/storyline.

Step five: Defining and naming themes

Defining the themes involves figuring out how each themes helped the researcher understand the data and formulating exactly what is meant by each theme. Naming the themes involves identifying a name that is easily understandable for each theme (Caulfield, 2019). The themes that were developed based on the findings are: time spent playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*; reasons for playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*; feelings and character identification. The themes were named based on the questions and the responses of the participants.

Step 6: Writing up

This step involves the writing up of the analysis of the data (Caulfield, 2019). This step will be discussed in the *Findings* section as it involves the overall description and interpretation of the findings.

The thematic analysis allowed the researcher to be flexible whilst interpreting the collected data and it allowed for categories to evolve from the data. Moreover, it helped the researcher to interpret the themes due to it being backed up by data (Nowell, Norris & White, 2017). The limitation thereof, however, includes the level of difficulty for the researcher to decide which aspects of the data is considered of importance and should be focused on (Nowell, Norris & White, 2017). The researcher attempted to reduce the limitation by focusing on the data that is relevant to the study’s aim and objectives.

4.8. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study refers to the responses of the participants being unique to their own individual experiences. This was established by discussing the four concepts of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

4.8.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to an accurate interpretation of the data received by the participants of the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The researcher ensured credibility in the study by using a well-established research method, a structured interview, where the data was collected and recorded on a mobile device. Moreover, through the use of thematic analysis, the data was placed into codes and themes found within the participants responses. The recording of the structured interview also ensured credibility of the findings due to the ability to refer back to the participants initial responses.

4.8.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The researcher created a question sheet consisting of ten questions which has the ability to be used in another study with evident similarities concerning feelings and character identification associated with FPS video games such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*.

4.8.3. Dependability

Dependability refers to the quality of integration between the data collection method, data analysis and the theory generated from the data (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The data from the study was collected through structured interviews and was analysed using the six steps of thematic analysis. The responses of the participants were thematically coded to represent each participant's description and interpretation about identifying with an in-game character as well as the feelings that were experienced when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign

4.8.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings could be confirmed or corroborated by others (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). In order to achieve confirmability, the researcher will increase the level on confirmability by keeping detailed notes surrounding the decisions and analysis as it progresses. Furthermore, the findings will be presented in a detailed manner and described in a way for other individuals to understand. This will aid in finding similar conclusions if others come across the research study.

5. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The findings illustrated below represent three of the questions found within the questions sheet relating to the purpose of the study. The purpose of the tables is to present the manner in which the findings were analysed and grouped in order to develop the themes.

Table 1: How does playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* tend to make you feel?

Questionnaire Question (Refer to Appendix A)	Participant Response	Codes	Theme
How does playing <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)</i>	1: “Stress-relieving activity because you take stress out in the game”	• Positive feelings • Negative feelings	• Feelings • Attraction

tend to make you feel?	2: “Some days amazing, it is relieving to play action games” 3: “Pumped and gets the adrenaline racing because of the action-packed experience” 4. “A combination of excitement and frustration as you have to lose some to win some” 5. “Definitely brings out the competitive side in me but also a sense of enjoyment because of the missions involving looking after your team”	• Action associated	
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The
five

participants had different experiences and feelings towards the game, thus making it interesting to analyze. However, it is evident that each participant mentioned a positive feeling and the mentioning of negative feelings were low as only three participants associated the game with a negative feeling. The word “action” is mentioned and was identified as a possible theme, “attraction”, due to the participants feeling drawn to the game to experience action.

Table 2: How do you feel when you fail a mission?

Questionnaire Question (Refer to Appendix A)	Participant Response	Codes	Theme
How do you feel when you fail a mission?	1: "Disappointed, irritated because in reality there is no re-starting so it has to be taken seriously" 2: "Terrible, heart-broken, sad" 3: "Really bummed because you have to restart" 4: "Frustrated as you have to go back and redo everything before you can carry on" 5: "Well, it makes me a bit frustrated, but it is not the end of the world"	Negative feelings	Feelings

All five participants stated feelings regarded as negative feelings when failing a mission in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*. The theme "feelings" was created due to the responses being based on their personal feelings when failing a mission. The feeling of frustration was used by two participants and the feeling of irritation was also used by one participant. The two feelings mentioned share a similarity in that both involves aspects of anger in way.

Table 3: Provide examples of how you identified with your in-game character.

Questionnaire Questions (Refer to Appendix A)	Participant Responses	Codes	Themes
Provide examples of how you identified with your in-game character.	1: "I'd like to believe that I would be brave enough to fight for what matter in life with regards to saving others" 2: "Very forward, very team-based and very caring" 3: "I don't necessarily identify with my character because we are opposites; I'm more laid back and chilled but I do thrive to be like the character in the sense of being brave" 4: "Strength, sympathy and will do anything for my friends"	• Proof of character identification • Proof against character identification	Character identification

	5: "Just the leadership part but also don't really identify as I have never been in a similar situation in real-life"		
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The responses of character identification provided mixed reactions due to two participants relating to the in-game character and three participants not finding any similarities between them and their in-game character. The theme, character identification, was developed due to the study placing focus on how character identification was established whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*.

Through the use of the format above, the researcher established the three dominant themes: Feelings and Character Identification. The themes that were developed aided in answering the research questions as well as the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the themes addressed the research problem as well which is discussed in the next section.

1.1. Feelings

This theme was developed due to the question sheet referring to four questions relating to the feelings the young men experienced whilst playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign. The following questions were asked with the purpose of gathering subjective data in order to achieve the purpose of the study: Question four, "How does playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* tend to make you feel?"; Question six, "How do you feel when you fail a mission/challenge?"

The responses in Question 4 (*Table 1*) shows that the participants had mixed feelings about the game. Some of the responses were positive feelings (Participant 1,2,3,4,5,) and some of the responses were negative feelings (Participant 1,4 and 5). The positive feelings included "excitement", "enjoyment", and "amazing" which linked with a study conducted by Quick, Atkinson and Lin (2012). The link is that both findings state that the level of enjoyment and excitement is achieved based on the player's own interpretation of the narrative and accomplishments in the game.

The negative feelings as stated by Participant 4 and 5, “frustration” and “competitive” linked with studies conducted by Groves and Anderson (2017) and Dowsett and Jackson (2019) stating in their findings that frustration and the competitive nature links with the achievement of the player. This can become problematic if the player bases their satisfaction solely on winning (Groves & Anderson, 2017 and Dowsett & Jackson, 2019). However, when considering the group as a whole, the majority of the responses were associated with positive feelings due to a positive experience with *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019).

The responses of Question 4 also links to the Transportation Theory due to participant number 1 and 2 stating that the game is used as a stress reliever, thus suggesting that they “transport” themselves into *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019) to experience a sense of action and to escape their own reality for a period of time.

Question 6 was based on a regular occurrence in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019) where the player fails a mission and has to restart. As shown in the table above, the feelings associated with failing a mission was identified as “negative feelings”. The information provided also aids in answering research question one as it involves what feelings are experienced when failing a mission in during the campaign.

The responses in Question 6 (*Table 2*) links with Transportation Theory as the feelings that were stated corresponding with the narrative, being *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019) campaign. Thus, the participants experienced negative feelings based on the reflection of what happened in the story (Buchanan, 2013). The feelings of “frustration” and “disappointment” linked to a study conducted by Groves and Anderson (2017) stating in their findings that frustration occurred when the player is unable to complete a challenge presented in the game (Groves & Anderson, 2017). However, a study conducted by Nylund and Landfors (2015) found that players feel embarrassed and ashamed when failing a mission (Nylund & Landfors, 2015). The findings found within the current study thus differs from those of Nylund and Landfors as zero participants stated feelings of embarrassment or shame.

1.2. Character Identification

Question 9 (*Table 3*) of the question sheet was specifically aimed at establishing whether the participants experienced a form of identifying with their in-game character. The question was, “Provide examples of how you identified with your in-game character.”. The question was straight forward and to the point due to the link of the question being involving the purpose and objectives of the study.

Based on the findings presented in the table, it was found that only two participants (participant 2 and 4) positively identified with characteristics shown by the in-game character. The other three participants stated that there was little to no similarities and that they only wished to possess traits from the in-game character. The findings thus contradicts the study of Gast (2017) as the character identification related responses involved personality traits whereas Gast’s study suggested that character identification occurs in the form of visual changes (Gast, 2017). However, the results were similar to those of Raymond, Soutter and Hitchens (2015) as the openness to experience character identification is based on the individual themselves (Raymond, Soutter & Hitchens, 2015).

The findings also linked with the Transportation Theory as it states that narratives, such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* can influence the individual’s attitudes and intentions in order to reflect the story (Buchanan, 2013). This was evident in participant 1 and 2, however, the theory did not successfully apply to the other three participants as they possess their own characteristics and traits.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Research Questions and Objectives Addressed

The first research question of the study was, “Q1: *What feelings are experienced when young men play Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019) campaign?*” and the objective was, “*To describe the feelings of young men when playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019) campaign*”. It was found that throughout the interviews the feelings that were experienced was based on the player’s own perception of the game as well as their experience. The results also suggested that although there were similar associations, the expression of the feelings thereof was different. It was found that there are both positive and negative

feelings associated with *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* and that majority of the participants shared the same set of feelings or experiences. The first research question and objective was accomplished due to the findings including a variety of relevant and similar feelings that was categorized and interpreted as a group. This was done due to the similarities in responses and perceptions of the participants. Based on the results of previous studies, the feelings identified in the findings section was similar to studies such as Greitemeyer (2019) and Maxwell and Tefertiller (2019), thus the implication is that the same findings were achieved.

The second research question of the study was, “Q2: *How did the young men identify with the in-game character in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)?*” and the objective was, “*To describe character identification in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*”. It was found throughout the interviews that each participant had a different experience with their in-game character. The results found that participants would consider the characteristics of the in-game character as a role model whereas other participants stated that they did not relate to the characteristics of the in-game character on any level. The findings answered research question two by proving that character identification was not likely based on the responses from the participants. Thus, the occurrence thereof contradicted the findings of Gast (2017) that stated that character identification is highly likely in video games (Gast, 2017). Moreover, the findings achieved research objective two by establishing that the possibility of character identification in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* occurring being lower and not highly possible. The implication arises due to the Gast (2017) involving a wide range of different video game within his study whereas the current study is focused on solely one video game, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*.

6.2. Research Problem Addressed and Implications

The problem of the study was that no previous studies concerning the topic was based in a South African context. The previous studies were predominantly based in USA and Australia (see Groves & Anderson, 2017; Buchanan, 2013; Raymond, Souter & Hitchens, 2015). Moreover, there is very little to no research conducted based on South African men aged between 21-25 that play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*.

The research problem was addressed due to the analysis of the findings providing more information and research from a South African perspective. The research problem was solved with regards to the study being based on South African men aged 21-25 as well as

the identification of feelings associated with *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* being established. The identification of the feelings found was established through the creation of the question sheet by including questions that were specifically aimed on feelings based on events and elements found within *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*. Moreover, the likeliness of character identification occurring was also addressed and found to be not likely.

6.3. Ethical Considerations

In order for the all ethical considerations to be considered, the researcher included ethical issues relating to both the participant and the researcher.

6.3.1. Participants

All of the participants were informed that their responses will be used to solve the research objectives and problem. Each participant signed a form of consent provided by The Independent Institute of Education (see explanatory information form and consent form found in Annexure *) which ensured the protection of their identity throughout the research and to ensure that all participants were aware of which study they are participating in. The questions found within the question sheet was conducted in a manner that allowed the participant to express their opinions and views freely and questions that could lead to embarrassment were completely avoided. No incentives or rewards were given to the participants for information and they were allowed to exclude themselves from the study at any time.

6.3.2. Researcher

The researcher did not falsify or deliberately change any of the data that was collected according to her own personal opinions or views. Through the use of recording the interviews, the findings will be reinforced and solely based on the participant's unique responses from the interview. The researcher avoided bias by typing out the transcripts from the recording in the interview process and by analyzing the data thematically. Bias was avoided by not leading the participants to a desired response during the interview process. This was done through the use of the structured interview which involved the same set of questions asked to each participant as well as no interference from the

researcher. The information gathered from the participants will not be used again and will be destroyed in order to protect the participant's identity.

6.4. Limitations

Limitations are defined as constraints or limits in the research study that the researcher has no control over (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). One of the limitations of the study included time constraints; due to the one year requirement the research was put under pressure to meet the completion requirements. The limitation was overcome by planning and organizing the interviews with the participants in advance to ensure that there will be enough time to meet all of the requirements.

The second limitation of the study involved the implementation of the National Lockdown due to Covid-19. The researcher had to change the interview process from being in-person to face-to-face by using online communication platforms (Skype and Zoom). Thus, the limitation involved limited access to participants and having to change the original plans concerning the collection of data. The limitation was overcome by effective communication between the researcher and the participants via emails and by conducting a pre-test to ensure that the interviews will be conducted effectively.

The third limitation was outdated sources with regards to the Transportation Theory. The options of sources provided were limited and outdated. Moreover, it was found difficult to find current sources regarding the theory. The limitation was overcome by referring to the seminal sources of Transportation Theory to gather the necessary information (see Gerrig, 1993 and Green & Brock, 2000).

6.5. Heuristic Value

6.5.1. Recommendations for Field

The study contributed within the field of communication by contributing an understanding to the description of the feelings of young men and character identification when playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* campaign, which has not been fully studied recently and not within the South African context. For future studies, it is recommended to consider the use of a mixed method approach to interpret the findings in a more detailed way. This way, the findings can be based on facts and interpretation. It is also recommended that

more studies such as this one, be conducted within South Africa and based on South African citizens. This way, the studies will be unique to South Africa due to the diversity within the country. The study aims to add to the existing body of knowledge by placing the focus on young men aged between 21-25 and based in South Africa. The general contribution the study aims to achieve is the relevance to the field of society.

6.5.2. *Recommendations for Practice*

The findings of this study can contribute towards the nature of gaming and even game design. Moreover, the study can be used to contribute to the analysis of audiences when developing a new game.

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Appendix a: SafeAssign Screenshot of Originality

The screenshot displays the SafeAssign plagiarism check interface. The browser address bar shows the URL: myvc.falcons.ac.za/webapps/mdb-sa-689f5880ccc4141/originalityReport?attemptid=597cb4cd-1c48-4b38-86e9-201a174ed2c&course_id=80827_1&includeDeleted=true&fo...

The SafeAssign logo is visible at the top left. The main content area shows a document titled "Safe Assign Plagiarism Practice" by Cindy Bothma, dated Wed, Oct 26 2020, 11:50 PM. The document has a word count of 13,355 and an attachment ID of 3621133007. The match percentage is 81%.

The document structure is as follows:

- TABLE OF CONTENTS
- DECLARATION i
- ABSTRACT ii
- TITLE 3
- INTRODUCTION 3
 - Contextualisation 3
 - Relevance 4
- Problem Statement 4
- Purpose Statement 4
- Research Questions 5
- Research Objectives 5
- LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 6
 - Theoretical Foundation 6
 - Literature Review 7

The bottom of the interface shows a file explorer with the following files:

- Cindy Bothma Pl...pdf
- Cindy Bothma Pl...pdf
- Consent Forma...docx

A "Show all" button is located at the bottom right.

Appendix b: Research Report Summary Table

Research purpose or aim	Primary Research Question/s	Research Rationale and Relevance	Seminal Authors / Source s	Literature Review	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References (central sources only)
The purpose of the study was to describe the feelings of young men when playing <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019) campaign as well as to describe how the men identify with the in-game character. The study followed a qualitative approach as the aim included to gain an in-depth understanding based on the experience and interpretation of the young men. The research was conducted through a structured interview and the overall findings were established through the development of relevant themes through thematic analysis. The presentation of the findings included the use of tables and narratives to justify and present the responses accordingly.	What feelings are experienced when young men play <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019) campaign? How did the young men identify with the in-game character in <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019)?	This study is relevant to the Communication field due to it involving media and how media messages are portrayed by the different audiences. Due to the research study involving young men aged between 21-25 the relevance in the study will be in society	Green and Brock (2000)	Theme 1: Enjoyment Theme 2: Frustration Theme 3: Theme 4: Character identification	Paradigm Interpretivism. This paradigm is suited for this study due to it involving the researcher gaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomena. Furthermore, interpretivism's main aim is to understand human behavior. Epistemology Scientific knowledge is seen as the only valid form of knowledge. Knowledge is based on the participant's interpretation of facts. Furthermore, the study will not be generalized. Ontology The social world is what people perceive it to be. The participants will not view their reality in the same way but will rather base it off of their own perceptions and experiences.	Qualitative or Quantitative? Qualitative	Method and tool/instrument Structured interview conducted on Skype/Zoom.	Researcher: The researcher will avoid bias by putting all personal feelings and opinions aside and by focusing solely on the collected data. Information will not be misused. The collected data will be destroyed after. Respondents or participants: The participants will be kept confidential. Participants have a choice to participate.	Feelings of enjoyment, frustration and transportation. Character identification occurring.	Green, M.C., Brock, C.B. 2000. The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> 79(5): 701-721. [Online]. Available at: http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/the_role_of_transportation_in_the_persuasiveness_of_public_narratives.pdf [Accessed 10 August 2020]. Quick, J.M., Atkinson, R., Lin, L. 2012. The gameplay enjoyment model. <i>International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations</i> , 4(4): 64-80. [Online]. Available at: https://asu.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/the-gameplay-enjoyment-model [Accessed 10 August 2020]. Nyland, A., Landfors, O. 2015. Frustration and its effects on immersion in games. [Online]. Available at: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2/821653/FULLTEXT01.pdf [Accessed 12 August 2020]. Buchanan, W. 2013. The Phenomenological Experience Of Narrative Transportation. <i>Electronic Theses and Dissertations</i> , 2004-2019. [Online]. Available at: https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3514&context=etd [Accessed 12 August 2020].
Research Problem Within the South African video game market in 2019, <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> was the 8 th best seller of the year (My Broadband, 2019). The issue however is that there is lack of studies concerned with the feelings young men experience when playing <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019) campaign, especially based on South African men and especially based on men aged between 21-25. There is also a lack of South African studies based on individuals identifying with the in-game character, especially placing focus on one specific video game; <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019).	Hypotheses or Objectives describe the feelings of young men when playing <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019) campaign. To describe how the men identify with the in-game character in <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019).	Key Concepts 1. <i>Enjoyment</i> 2. <i>Frustration</i> 3. <i>Character Identification</i>	Key Theory/ies Transportation Theory		Axiology The research will be shaped by both the researcher's values as well as the participant's values. The research will also be based on the researcher and the participant's interpretations surrounding the title.	Sampling Probability Sampling method Random sampling Size 5 participants	Data Analysis Method(s) Unit of Analysis The young men that play <i>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare</i> (2019) that will respond to the questions asked during the interview. Data Analysis Method(s) Thematic Analysis	Limitations Time constraints Limited access to participants Outdated Sources	Anticipated Contribution Communication Field Society Field	

Appendix c: Honours Ethics Checklist



HONOURS ETHICS CHECKLIST

Student name: Cindy Bothma

Title of the research: A cross-sectional, qualitative interview to describe the feelings of young men when enrolling (all in Duty Modern Warfare 2019) killing and character identification

	Yes	No	Comment: supervisor
I am not using human subjects, i.e. I use visual artefacts or visual observation etc.		☒	
I intend to use human subjects			
- I understand that I will not conduct research with human subjects under the age of 18 and other vulnerable groups. - I understand I can only proceed once I receive an ethical clearance letter, and my supervisor has approved my interview or focus group questions, questionnaire or coding categories etc.			
Interviews/Focus groups An example of the written consent form I intend to use is attached.	☒		
I will record the interview/focus groups and the sample of the letter where I ask for permission to do so is attached.	☒		
I plan to use an interview or focus group schedule . The example of my research instrument is attached.	☒		
I plan to use a questionnaire . The example of my research instrument is attached.		☒	
I plan to use a gate-keepers letter . The example of my letter is attached.		☒	
I plan to do research on an IIE site /with IIE students/staff/artefacts and I filled in the application for permission to do so. The application is attached. I understand I can only proceed once I receive IIE Approval for this.		☒	

Signed: _____

Appendix d: Interview Questionnaire

This interview will be conducted by Cindy Bothma, a researcher with the intention to describe the feelings of young men when enacting Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019) killings and character identification. Below are ten (10) questions that are used as a guideline by the interviewer during the interviews with the young men.

1. How many hours (estimate) do you play *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* a week?

2. What keeps you interested in the storyline/narrative of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)*?

3. If you could describe the storyline/narrative of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* in three (3) words, what would they be?

4. Do you feel drawn to video games that are comprised of action and violence? If so, why?

5. What part of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019)* storyline/narrative is considered to be your favourite? (Killing the enemies, graphics, shooting, etc.) Please explain.

6. What feeling do you experience when you fail a mission/challenge?

7. Do you feel like you are being transported into the game when playing? Please explain.

8. What draws you to your in-game character? (Courage, brave etc.)

9. Do you identify some of your personality traits in your in-game character or visa-versa? If so, please provide examples.

10. How much would you say you enjoyed playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019)?

Thank you for completing the interview with complete honesty. The researcher assures that the information will remain confidential.

Appendix e: Explanatory Information Sheet



EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET

Explanatory Information Sheet

To whom it may concern,

My name is **CINDY BOTHMA** and I am a student at **Varisty College Westville**.

I am currently conducting research under the supervision of **Marchant Van Der Schyff** about the feelings of young men when playing *Call of Duty:Modern Warfare (2019)* storyline and character identification.

I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the relevant feelings describe when playing *Call of Duty:Modern Warfare (2019)* and the possibility of character identification occurring.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because (insert reason). If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to (explain exactly what participation will involve).

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your (insert what you are examining). If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- x Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- x If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- x Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my **Honours in Communications**. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

CINDY BOTHMA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

MARCHANT VAN DER SCHYFF

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix f: Consent Forms



CONSENT FORM

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Cindy Bothma about the feelings of young men when playing <i>Call of Duty:Modern Warfare (2019)</i> storyline and character identification. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: - x I agree to be interviewed for this research. - x My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. - x My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. - x I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. - x I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

Appendix g: Audio Recordings



CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Cindy Bothma to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the feelings of young men when playing <i>Call of Duty:Modern Warfare (2019)</i> storyline and character identification. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: - x My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. - x The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. - x Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

Appendix h: Ethical Clearance



27 August 2020

Student name: Cindy Bothma

Student number: 16001410

Campus: The IIE's Varsity College, Westville Campus



Re: Approval of The IIE Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication Proposal and Ethical Clearance



HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

There are some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. You will need to **address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor before you may proceed. Please note** your data collection may only proceed once you address the following issues:

1. Title to be adapted for clarity.
2. Paradigm to be refined.
3. Amend Explanatory Information Sheet, Consent Form and Consent for Audio Recording.
4. Adjust data collection instrument as recommended. *Your supervisor needs to sign off your final data collection tool.* Please resubmit.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

ADvTECH HOUSE

Inanda Greens
54 Wierda Rd West
Wierda Valley 2196
P.O. Box 2369
Randburg 2125



Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch*, MD Aitken*, FJ Coughlan* (*Non-executive)

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