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Freed or Trapped: Gaming Pleasures and Mobility of Gender Identities

The ways that gamers make meaning of, respond to, and take pleasures in gaming lead to insights of how online games might serve as spaces for the enactment of new forms of gender identities. Based on the data collected from virtual ethnography, this study explores issues of gender identities and gaming (dis)pleasures in *World of Warcraft (WoW)*. The analyses show that diverse options seem not to lead to a corresponding mobility or fluidity in terms of how gender can be performed in the game, even with “ladyboy” as an interesting phenomenon in gameplay. The paper argues that gamers’ preferences and orientations toward gendered characters reflect their interplay with gaming rules, dominant narratives and relationships in real life, and also the enactment in the culture of role-playing and image based interfaces. Although some female gamers derive pleasures from male perspective, there are some alternative consumptions of the masculine genre like *WoW*.