CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

AND ITS UTILIZATION FOR CONVERGENT MEDIA FORMATS

Gotland University
Spring 2012

Subject: Master thesis, one year

Author: Vira Haglund

Institution: Game design & Graphics

Supervisor: Adam Mayes
ABSTRACT

The thesis caters to the demands of the creative industries for products and contents which can be utilized for convergent media usage and cross-marketing strategies. In this regard character design serves as an important element of entertainment franchises since it is a means to produce media content with high recognition value. However, numerous character adaptations in different media formats illustrate that characters who are successful in one medium are not necessarily as successful in another media format. The thesis takes a closer look at characters in the context of media convergence and discusses the main principles of character creation and development. By favoring a heuristic approach which analyzes the aesthetic phenomena of arts and entertainment by the means of theoretical research which is supported by practical examples, the thesis concludes that character development is based on three dimensions which have to be combined in order to create characters which can be utilized for different media formats. In this context the work discusses character creation in writing, visuals and interactive media by focusing on ways which secure the successful transfer of characters into different media formats without a loss of character depth and quality.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Once again I wish to thank Marie Beschorner for her tireless efforts and devotion to support me. This thesis would never have been possible without you. I also wish to thank Mitch Phillips (from Sony Entertainment Europe) for providing me with new perspectives to view the characters from during the development phase and for sharing his knowledge and expertise. Last but not least, I wish to thank Troels Linde and Adam Mayes for seeing me through the year and making me realize capabilities and strengths I did not know I possessed.
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND | Stories need strong, intriguing, interesting and sophisticated characters: villains who plot evil schemes and rise repulsion, fear and anger within the minds of the audience, mysterious strangers who suddenly appear and make us wonder who they are and which story they have to tell, heroes in whom we can believe and who carry all our hopes for a happy ending. Most important of all is of course the protagonist or main character. He allows us to join him on his journey and gives us insight into his universe. We might learn to know a lot about him or feel that there is even more to him which lies somewhere hidden in the pages of the book we are reading or within the plot of the movie we are watching. We want to get to know him better, we might feel empathy for him since we may recognize parts of ourselves in him or we simply find him fascinating because he represents something we don't know but wish to know or something which symbolizes our desires, hopes and wishes. He might grant us to see the world through his eyes or at least to be his constant companion. The protagonist and all the other characters structure the story and make it proceed through their actions and interactions but their main function is to create a bond with the audience by evoking their emotions and interest.

BACKGROUND PROBLEM | Character design is an important element of each story and of most products of the creative industries as a whole. Regardless the medium through which it is conveyed – be it film, television, video games, animations, books or comics – character development has to fulfill high standards in order to convince the audience. Certain principles of character design also can be applied to convergent media utilization and cater to the demand of the market for products which are compatible with a broad range of media. In this regard character creation can lead to successful entertainment franchises which match the preferences of different types of consumers and cater to the growth of new marketing structures (JOHNSON 2009). However, there has to be an awareness of the differences regarding certain media formats and the dangers of a too discretionary use of media contents which are spread from one medium to another. Especially characters who are taken from non-visual to visual or from linear media to non-linear and interactive formats might cause disappointment amongst their fan community since they might lose appeal to the audience due to a sloppily executed adaptation which doesn't match the special demands of the new medium to which the content was transferred. The numerous unsuccessful video game adaptations of famous movies serve as good examples for such a failure of cross-media utilizations (ELKINGTON 2009). But also film adaptations of books run the risk of misinterpreting the character by providing him with visuals and qualities which are not mirrored in the book.

PURPOSE AND INNOVATION | The purpose of this thesis is to exemplify how character design for creative entertainment works and to reflect on the requirements of visual media regarding the subject. In this context the thesis aspires to raise awareness of major principles and difficulties of successful character development which can be
utilized for almost every demand of the creative industries. Theoretical approaches that can be applied to a broad range of media contexts and formats will be discussed whilst keeping an eye on the difficulties which might derive from convergent media utilizations and cross-media content. The thesis caters to concrete requirements of the creative industries and therefore avoids a purely theoretical approach. Instead, it favors a combination of theory and practice.

Its innovative contribution to the arts and entertainment sector lies in the attempt to combine detailed character development, which presents a complex character in written form, with the means to transfer it into the language of visual design. Most books on character creation focus either on the writing of a character or on the visualization of a character but there is rarely a book which goes into depth with both aspects. Guides for visual character design tend to oversimplify the written part whilst books on character creation in general leave it open to the reader how he will manage to express all the characteristics with the means of visual language. It appears as if it is expected to be common knowledge. It is my belief that character design can be much richer and more profound when both levels are composed and coordinated carefully with one another. In this regard the thesis tries to fill the gap between written and visual character development by providing the theory with practical suggestions for a fusion of both dimensions. In addition it exemplifies the transfer from writing to visuals with two character designs for an animated series.

Furthermore the thesis will be concerned with a third dimension of character development which is a special requirement of interactive media to the subject. In this regard the character creation will be supplemented with interactive qualities which provide the foundation of a successful transfer of the character from linear into non-linear media formats like video games.

**Limitations** | Since a comprehensive discussion which includes all kinds of media would go far beyond the scope of this research project, the thesis will mainly focus on character creation for animation and video games and discuss the difficulties of character design for visual media in general. However, it will make use of methods which are applicable to other formats as well.

**Method and Scientific Approach** | The chosen method favors a heuristic approach which utilizes access to various types of resources. Aesthetic phenomena in the arts are not easily measurable and the question whether or not a design successfully matches the aesthetic and functional requirements of the audience and the medium through which it is conveyed cannot be answered in simple terms. Therefore the thesis focuses on design theory rather than on empirical facts or case studies and critically reflects and questions theoretical approaches towards the topic. The research also refers – at least to a certain extent – to experience-based knowledge and common sense but is founded on well-accepted theory which will validate and support the contemplations on the subject. The thesis is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. The latter will serve as a means to exemplify the theory by merging it with its practical realization. The theoretical framework refers to renown literature which – on the other hand – will serve as a means to substantiate the practical approach towards the subject.
STRUCTURE | The focus of this work will be the design of two characters for a web-based animated series with the title *My Life of StarCraft*, which will be introduced in the first chapter along with the specific requirements to its characters. The character creation is an important element of the thesis since it will support the theoretical approach by conveying it into a practical form which can be discussed in detail and used as a means to get aware of problems which couldn't be foreseen whilst discussing the theoretical approach. The second chapter (which follows the introduction to the series which is provided by the first chapter) serves as the foundation for the practical part of the thesis: It compiles, combines and introduces approved methods for the creation process which are recommended especially for character design in novels, films and television and reflect upon the difficulties to convey a character, whose design exists in written form, through visual media. The construction and creation of the characteristic traits, habits, flaws, back-stories and qualities of characters will be the main focus of this chapter which will serve as the fundament for chapter three. The latter will put the theory into practice by developing two protagonists for the animated series, following the principles which are described in chapter two. The fourth chapter will complement the creation process by adding a visual component to it and explain the importance of the visuals as well as their potentials as a means to express the characteristics of the protagonist. On the basis of sketches, designs and drafts which were developed for the protagonists of the series this chapter discusses various elements of visual character design: Form, color, shape and line art as well as body language (posture, gesture), facial expression or clothing are some aspects which will be granted a closer inspection. Furthermore the fourth chapter will analyze to what extent the visuals match the characterization of the main characters defined in chapter three. The fifth chapter takes the media convergence aspect a step further and examines the potentials of the developed characters to be applied to video games. In this regard, it will describe to what extent the creation of game characters can rely on standard principles for character design in visual media and point out what distinguishes game characters from protagonists created for linear media. The conclusion summarizes and reflects upon the most important results of the thesis and points out which aspects offer possibilities for further research or should be scrutinized more carefully in additional studies.

REMARK ABOUT GENDER REFERENCES | When a character or person is indirectly referred to the generic masculine form is used without the intent to discriminate and only to simplify the text.
1 THE PROJECT: A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE STORY AND THE INTENDED CHARACTER LAYOUT

The main focus of this thesis is to create and define a set of characters for a web-based animated series with the title *My Life of StarCraft*. As a result, the characters and their personalities should be clearly defined through their visual styles, their traits as well as through their relevance to the story and their relationship towards each other. The series will revolve around a couple of friends who want to make it in the world of eSports. The viewer will accompany the characters through their hardships, setbacks and accomplishments as they are trying to make it to the top. *My Life of StarCraft* will mainly focus on the realization of dreams and the overcoming of personal obstacles. It can therefore be considered to be a character driven drama series, however, it will also feature humor to soften the seriousness. Despite the problems the characters have to face, the series is supposed to provide a positive sensation and spark the fighting spirit and motivation of the viewer. In this sense it might be perceived as a kind of ‘feel good series’ with dark undertones.

*My Life of StarCraft* will live on its main characters since it is all about them. The story is also not about reaching a goal but mainly about getting on the way which will lead to it. The series will proceed in a relatively slow pace whilst the main focus lies on the protagonists rather than on actions or environment. This will give the viewer time to get in touch with the characters and their emotional perspectives on things. The audience will hereby be part of the protagonist's highest highs and lowest lows, encounter different moods and get into the dynamics which characterize the series.

The episodes will cater to people who have an interest in the competitive aspects of video games. At the same time *My Life of StarCraft* will try to serve as a representative for eSports in order to reach people who do not have that much knowledge about the scene and spark their curiosity. Although the main target group of the series are gamers, it caters to the interests of other people as well since it deals with the general difficulty of overcoming one's personal issues in order to realize one's dreams.

The series will feature protagonists who – at a first glance – are characterized by a set of shortcomings and flaws rather than by special abilities or exceptional qualities. On the surface they seem quite ordinary in a way that the audience will be able to connect with them since it is easy to recognize oneself in them. None of the characters will have remarkably outstanding attributes which distinguish them from the masses. But they will surprise the audience with their strengths which are not that obvious – if one is willing to get involved with the characters and get to know them better the viewer will learn to love them and to realize what hidden powers, traits and abilities make them stand out in their own ways. They appear as a bunch of unlikely heroes with the odds against them which have to face hard times in order to be able to take control over their lives and to realize their dreams. IGLESIAS (2005, p. 51) sees a big potential in this type of character design since these protagonists make us feel compassion for them and their constant struggle. They also evoke admiration “for their determination to triumph over obstacles” and “suspense for the implausibility that they’ll succeed, the odds being so stacked up against them.”
At least one of the characters will also be defined by a predominance of negative traits. Due to his inadequate and often very rough behavior against others the character is likely to be categorized as a misfit or a type of ‘anti-hero’, whom Christopher Vogler (2007, p. 34) describes as an outsider from society's point of view, "but with whom the audience is basically in sympathy" since they can identify with him in one way or another as most people eventually encountered a situation in which they felt excluded from or repulsed by their environment. In this regard Orson Scott Card (2010, p. 98) notices that the ‘anti-hero’ is more likely a hero in disguise: "The character is given several major negative traits early in the story, and the traits remain prominent throughout, so that the readers don't notice that the writer is using three dozen other techniques to create sympathy for the 'unsympathetic' hero". The negative aspects of the protagonist should also make his positive features more distinct and notable and provide him with the challenge to vanquish his shadows and to develop as the series proceeds.

All characters aspire to make it as StarCraft pro gamers and therefore operate in a field which is not generally accepted by society since most people believe that playing video games by no means can be an appropriate way of earning money – not to speak of being an expedient contribution to society. Driven by their desire to get into the pro-gaming league the protagonists therefore have to endure the struggle between individual fulfillment and social rejection, whilst each of them also has to fight doubts, fears and uncertainties of his own.

As mentioned above, the series does not exclusively strike a sour note: My Life of StarCraft is also characterized by subtle humor which should evolve from the idiosyncrasies, quirks, traits, behaviors and habits of the protagonists and their interaction with one another. Therefore it is important to create characters which supplement each other in a way that they either support or contrast each other's characteristics to make the dialogues and interactions interesting and diverse.
The creation of the characters is a very essential part of each project. Regardless of the medium – film, animation, comic, book or video game – the stories will need strong and intriguing characters in order to get through to the audience and give them "a window into the story" (Vogler 2007, p. 30). The most exciting and moving story won't work if the characters are shallow and dull. Therefore the character creation should be done very thoroughly and the project schedule should provide a generous timeframe for this phase. Each character has to be carefully modeled and researched.

A good character design demands three major requirements which should always be kept in mind whilst working on the character: The overarching goal is to lay the foundation for an emotional connection of the audience and the character. This means that the viewer needs to feel something for the protagonists, he has to care for them in some way or the other and therefore be interested in their story – willing to go all the way with them. "Each person hearing a tale or watching a play or movie is invited, in the early stages of the story, to identify with the Hero, to merge with him and see the world of the story through his eyes" (Vogler 2007, p. 30). This doesn't necessarily mean that the people have to like a character – they could also hate him, find him funny, annoying, pitiable, admirable or scary – to name just a few examples –, as long as they feel that there is something about him that makes it worth to pay him their attention. In short: the character has to be intriguing and make the audience want to see, read or learn more about him or her. This leads to the third important principle of character development: In order to achieve an emotional bond between character and audience it is crucial to equip the character with traits, a personal background, motives, believes and values which are convincing and believable. His actions and choices have to be comprehensible against the background of his personality and biography. The creation of an authentic character can be time-consuming, especially if he or she has a profession, a personal background, a disease or other characteristics which require extensive research since the writer has just a limited knowledge about these aspects. At the same time this doesn't mean that the creation of a 'common guy' is an easy thing to do either: it might be very difficult exactly because the character is so normal. The writer has to find some aspects which make him nonetheless interesting and enable him to stick out in his way.

The following subchapters will serve as the foundation for the character design of My Life of StarCraft. They will summarize the basic steps which need to be followed in order to develop a character and point out the importance of each step for the given project. Each chapter will discuss certain aspects which are essential for the development process whilst all chapters share a common ground by searching for means to create believable, intriguing and emotionally appealing characters.¹

¹ There are dozens of well-written books which provide loads of information about character design and development. The creation of a character can be approached in several ways and every writer recommends different methods which may lead to the desired results. During my research for this project the most valuable resource was Orson Scott Card’s (2010) publication Characters & Viewpoint. Along with a hand full of other books on the topic of character and story development
As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis this work will mainly discuss character creation for animated media formats, namely animated film and video game. This chapter, however, won't discuss particular requirements for video game characters but focus solely on the development of characters for visual and linear media. Although the most principles of the character development can also be applied to video game characters (and to protagonists of other media formats like books or television), the character design for interactive media requires additional features which will be discussed in chapter five. The latter therefore complements the theoretical approach towards the subject discussed in this chapter.

2.1 RESEARCHING THE CHARACTER

The research is the very first step of the character creation process. Linda Seger (1990, p. 2) points out, that "most writing is a personal exploration into new territory, it demands some research to make sure that the character and context make sense and ring true". You should know what you are writing about and get as much information as necessary about a certain context which is required for the character design in order to get authentic characters. For the creation of a series based on characters who want to make it into the professional StarCraft League a specific research about the scene is useful and expedient since it can be defined as the fundamental context that surrounds the characters and therefore is essential for understanding them. Although I have some experiences of my own with the game and follow the professional tournaments, it will be necessary to do additional research about different pro-gamers who might work as role models for my characters. In this regard it might be important to ask oneself the following questions:

What do I need to know about the context of my characters (and about the StarCraft Scene in particular)? How does the everyday life of a pro-gamer look like, which routines is he following each day? Do I need a certain vocabulary (slang or jargon) for realistic dialogues? Do I have a realistic idea about the problems and concerns which a gamer on his way to the top is likely to encounter?

The StarCraft scene might not be the only context of the characters. Culture, religion, historical period, location and occupation (amongst others) can also be seen as examples for influential contexts which you might need to research in order to understand a character and his motives, believes, attitudes and behavior. If I would decide that one character will need to take a job to secure the financial coverage of his living expenses, I therefore would probably need to research this occupation as well to understand how it affects that character's life. If a certain character grew up in a city or a community which shaped him quite much it might be useful to do a bit of a research about these aspects as well. Basically every context which has a strong impact on the character should be covered by some research if the writer doesn't know it from his own experience. Much of the research won't appear in the series but provide the writer

which proved to be most helpful [Iglesias (2005); Vogler (2007); Seger (1990) and Mackee (1999)] it will serve as the foundation for my own approach to the character creation process in which I will use a combination of the techniques suggested by the different authors.
with the necessary information which are needed to create authentic and profound characters. Although a research is recommended and may even be essential for a project, Orson Scott Card (2010, p. 35) also points out that "believability in fiction doesn't come from facts". Facts may help to create convincing characters and stories but in the end the believability comes from "the readers' sense of what is plausible" and therefore from the creator's skill of making it appear plausible. Facts will provide the foundation for this but the writer still has to put a lot of imagination into the creation process in order to interweave intriguing characters with convincing backgrounds and environments, and develop them in a way that their motivations and behaviors always seem believable and likely.

2.2 EMOTIONAL BONDING: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHARACTERS WE CARE ABOUT

Characters are the heart and soul of the story. Therefore it is essential to evoke empathy, sympathy or interest for/in the protagonist right from the start and enable the audience to connect with him or her. As in real life, first impressions are not to be underestimated: "Characters, like people, make good or bad first impressions. When characters first show up in a story, we start to like them – or dislike them – right away" (Card 1990, p. 98). By introducing a character to the audience the creator should therefore try to give an intriguing first impression of the 'hero', which doesn't mean that the audience necessarily has to like him. Most people would agree that Eric Cartman in South Park (TV-series by Matt Stone and Trey Parker, 1997 -present) for example is not a likeable character and that the first impression you will get from him doesn't make you feel that you have to follow his stories out of sympathy. Nonetheless this most unsympathetic hero has a huge fan base and people wouldn't want him to change at any price. There is something about him which sparks curiosity, an interest and fascination and this is the very thing every creator should strive for: making the character appealing and fun to watch, even if he is the antithesis of good behavior and taste. It might even be that it is exactly the exaggeration of bad attributes which make him interesting since the audience is curious about how other characters will react to such obscure monstrosity of bad behavior or if he will change to the better. They also might like to know if he is hiding positive traits or they are simply eager to see that someone will teach him a lesson. There are always means to make even the most annoying character interesting and appealing, however, the creator needs to put much more effort into the development and find ways which make up for all the flaws and rough edges of the character. Jessica Page Morrell (2008) dedicated a whole book to the subject of the unlikeable character and one particular chapter to the question how he works best as a protagonist, introducing the reader to the advantages of an unsympathetic hero in comparison to more common main characters. Other genres, the majority of films about artists for example – Love is the Devil (John Maybury, 1998), Amadeus (Milos Forman, 1984) or Control (Anton Corbijn, 2007) to name just a few –, also feature types of problematic protagonists who are troubled (and troublesome) and highly destructive to their environment, causing disappointment and pain to the people who are close to them by ignoring conventions and rules or due to
their negative traits as egocentric, insensitive or selfish behavior. Nonetheless the audience is fascinated by their personalities and wants to follow their story. Since one of the characters in My Life of StarCraft should be defined by a predominance of negative traits the mentioned aspects are important for my project because it is essential to figure out how to make the audience connect with him nonetheless. Heroes like him "are not likeable, so to form the crucial bond with them, the reader must understand them and admire something about them – their intelligence, their motives, their lack of options, or even a rare positive value." (IGLESIAS 2005, p. 51)

But also the other characters have to be modeled very carefully, they might even turn out to be more challenging because they appear as quite common guys and there is always a risk to it since they might seem too ordinary and therefore just boring. In general it is helpful to keep in mind that stereotypes or stereotypical behavior should be avoided in both cases since characters who act like clichés are boring due to their predictability. Unless the creator uses them for the purpose of playing with them and with the expectations which are connected to them, stereotypes won't be of any help. On the contrary: the audience will most likely think that they know the character already and feel no interest in getting to know him better (CARD 1990, p. 11). It is individuality which makes the viewer curious, excited and eager to learn more about the protagonist, therefore uniqueness is the key to the audience's emotions. Karl IGLESIAS (2005, p. 62) describes three elements through which the audience may connect with the character. He names recognition, fascination and mystery as key principles for the creation of emotional impact. These principles are plausible and easy to apply and will therefore serve as an orientation for the character development of My Life of StarCraft.

Recognition

This principle is based on the ability of the audience to recognize parts of themselves in the character which make them able to understand him better and to feel empathy for him. In this respect CARD (1990, pp. 98-9) remarks that "we tend to feel most comfortable with [...] people who belong to the communities that are important to us, and people who are like us [...]. We recognize them, even though we've never seen them before". My Life of StarCraft will make use of this advantage since its main target group are gamers and it is about gaming as well as the people who dedicate their energies and efforts to the dream of getting themselves into the professional StarCraft League. In this regard the audience shares a passion or a hobby with the characters, they are familiar with the terminology, the visuals and the culture of the scene and also able to understand the protagonists' dreams, desires and problems to a certain degree (of course most viewers will play the game more casually and without serious ambitions but nonetheless they will be more sensitive for the dreams and goals of the protagonists as other people).

Community and culture are not the only means to evoke recognition. Needs and goals, dreams and desires in general represent an even stronger method to involve the audience. "When the story is about the character's plan – a quest or caper story – or when the story is about the character's need [...] then this tool makes the character
almost irresistibly sympathetic. [...] Once we're caught up in a character's plans and dreams, we're on her side almost without limit" (CARD 1990, p. 106). The effect will even be stronger if the needs and desires are shared by the audience. They will be eager to follow their heroes, hoping for them to prevail against all odds and to succeed in the end. In this way they can taste a bit of the triumph themselves. The elaboration of profound goals, needs and motives is an essential step within the character development (chapter 2.4 will discuss this aspect in detail) and can help a lot to keep the audience interested in the character. This is important to keep in mind since a few similarities regarding attributes, interests and community alone can be of some assistance in making the audience feel comfortable with a character but they don't qualify to sustain the audience's interest in him for a long time. Recognition is an effective tool to get the audience on the character's side but if the writer uses it too lavishly, it will lose all its power: we don't want to follow a character who is just a copy of some random guy or who is too close to ourselves. We are not interested in 1:1 reproductions of reality, otherwise we wouldn't see the need to follow a fictional story. CARD (1990, p. 128) stresses the importance to "search for what is 'larger than life'" in a character and to reveal these aspects "however subtle and well-disguised [they] may be amid realistic and common details." He also points out that we are interested in stories "to get experiences we've never known firsthand or to gain a clearer understanding of experiences we have had" (CARD 1990, pp. 122). We seek for someone to whom we can relate but who is also a bit out of the ordinary, who has means and abilities which we don't have, someone we can look up to or who can teach us something, someone who does certain things different than we in a way that he can surprise us – in short: someone who takes us on a journey we can't take on our own but who might show us how to do it.

**Fascination**

Although a certain target group might feel comfortable with the protagonists in *My Life of StarCraft* in a way that they can recognize themselves in them, the series and its characters might be difficult to understand for someone who has no knowledge about video games and their cultures. This person might feel uncomfortable with a community which is strange to him, using a language and customs he is not used to and focusing on goals which are a bit alien to him. Although this risk cannot be ignored, there lies also a chance in it: Strangeness and difference can function as means to evoke fascination and curiosity. If the 'strange' subject is introduced in an appealing way to the viewer's unaccustomed mind, it might spark a strong interest and the desire to get more knowledge about the community and the characters. If the writer puts enough effort into finding ways to connect the viewer with the characters despite their differences, for example by elaborating their motives and goals, emphasizing the protagonist's unique attitudes and intriguing ways of approaching and solving problems, he will be able to establish the bond which is needed to make the audience willing to follow the character. In this regard difference and unconventionality are the keys for fascination and curiosity.
Mystery

Fascination and curiosity are also important elements of the third principle which, however, mostly relies on anticipation and tension. This principle works best when the character’s personality and abilities, his secrets, fears and hidden traits are unveiled piece by piece. The audience is introduced to a character who is intriguing since they feel that there is more to him as it seems, that we are not yet aware of all his potentials and abilities, that there might lie a secret hidden in his past or that he will surprise us in some other way. One example for this type of protagonist who relies on the principle of mystery to a strong degree is Batman (comic character by Bob Kane, 1939) but also characters like Al Swearengen (Deadwood; TV-series by David Milch, 2004-06) use it to create anticipation and tension. In the beginning Swearengen acts more like a typical villain but there are some traits about him which make him sympathetic and indicate that he might not be the one we think he is. As the series proceeds the character gets more and more depth and surprises us by showing sides of his personality which were hidden before. Al Swearengen’s character also plays with the expectations and anticipations of the audience by balancing his actions and reactions between predictability and unexpected behavior. He doesn't get boring because there is always more to him. Anticipation and tension also emanate from knowing the character’s traits and attitudes and wondering how he would behave in a certain situation or react if he meets another character.

I can imagine that this principle would work quite well with Max, the character in My Life of StarCraft who is intended to be a bit difficult since his positive traits and attributes are not that obvious. If the audience nonetheless senses that there is more to him they might be curious and eager to learn more about his personality which will be revealed episode by episode.

A character doesn't exclusively need to rely on just on principle. On the contrary: a well-composed combination of two or even all three principles might result in the creation of stunning characters which offer many possibilities for the audience to connect with them.

In general it should also be kept in mind that apart from the chosen character principle(s) the protagonist will get even more appealing and intriguing if he – instead of always trying to stay on the safe side – is willing to take some risks to realize his dreams or plans. A character who has the guts to fight for his goals will not only win more sympathies but will also increase the tension and make the audience fear for him and his triumph.

2.3 DEFINING THE CHARACTER: CREATING A UNIQUE PERSONALITY

Dwight V. Swain (1990, p. 21) pointed out that characters "are like tapestries; [...] each is woven of many threads. But some threads are more vivid and visible than others, like strands of red through a gray fabric". This comparison emphasizes the importance of diversity and complexity as well as the significance of obvious and more subtle qualities as parts of good character design. The latter requires a well defined
composition of consistent traits and attitudes as well as a couple of surprising, unique or paradoxical attributes which cater to a good balance between predictable and dynamic character behavior. Vogler (2007, p. 31) emphasizes that some qualities and traits should be in conflict with each other: A "character torn by warring allegiances to love and duty" for example "is inherently interesting to an audience." At the same time a protagonist who has "a unique combination of contradictory impulses, such as trust and suspicion or hope and despair, seems more realistic and human than one who displays only one character trait."

Along with the invention of some patterns and habits, tastes and preferences the personal traits of the protagonist will help to make him appear lifelike and unique at the same time. The elaboration of the aspects mentioned above is also of importance for supporting the ability of the audience to get emotionally connected with the character.

The following glossary will provide an overview over the different elements on which a character can be build on and point out which of these elements might provide means to strengthen the audience's empathy for or interest in the character. Furthermore it will reflect on how these qualities can be communicated through visuals: A majority of the described features are quite abstract and might become most clear if the audience is granted an insight into the character's thoughts. Visual media can only make a limited use of monologues and dialogues which might express what is going on inside the protagonist's head. Therefore it has to find other means to express the numerous facets of the character's personality.

**ATTITUDE** | is one of the most effective means to reveal character. "It's important to know what your characters would do when pushed to their limits, when their lives are in jeopardy, when their jobs are on the line, or even when they're locked out of their houses with only a towel on" (Iglesias 2005, p. 60). It is attitude what distinguishes them in one and the same situation from one another because depending on their attitude they will react different to conflicts, problems, successes and triumphs. In the context of My Life of StarCraft for example it will be important to define which attitudes the protagonists show when they attend a tournament, how they will react to victory and defeat, to provocation and criticism or to praise and recognition. The audience's sympathy or empathy can be influenced by the right choices of attitudes. Characters will most likely lose sympathy if they cheat whilst aiming for their goal, if they constantly whine and complain or blame somebody else for their own mistakes – to name just a few examples. On the other hand the sympathy for a character might increase if he approaches problems with a good sense of humor, if he isn't likely to give up or if he is even willing to help others whilst he is facing some troubles of his own.

**VISUALIZING ATTITUDE** | The best and most obvious way to express attitude in visual media is through action. We see how a protagonist acts and reacts in certain situations and get a feeling for common attitudes which distinguish him from other characters. But attitude can also get supported through visual design: shapes, forms, lines, values and colors might serve as effective means to communicate certain mind-sets or attitudes of
a character. The use of soft lights and shadows can stress a kind, respectful and warm attitude whilst harsh light and shadows can contribute to a more intense experience of negative attitudes. Angular, sharp and spiky shapes can designate that the protagonist most likely tends to rub others up the wrong way; a strident red might symbolize anger or the tendency to get aggressive whilst orange can be associated with creative, energetic and sociable behavior. Admittedly, the way colors and shapes are perceived by different people can differ quite much since the perception relies to a greater extent on subjectivity. In this context STONE (2006, p. 34) points out that “all color meanings are relative; these interpretations are influenced by a variety of factors, including age, gender, personal experience, mood, ethnic identity, history, and tradition.” Nonetheless color psychology and theory have proven that there exists a cultural consensus about particular colors (traffic signs for example are based on these conventions) and that certain colors can have a calming, premonitory or stimulating effect on people (a fact which is utilized for the interior design of public institutions like hospitals for example, which chose calming, positive and lively colors to counteract associations with illness and disease). The same goes for shapes, which are also perceived in corresponding ways whilst the factors above nonetheless have a great influence on the associations which are connected to particular shapes and forms.

**Character Arcs** | It is important to strive for character designs which are open to transformation and conflict. Although the idea of providing a character with the ability to stand firm, believing in who he is and refusing to change bears some potential, the possibility of change and conflict might offer more tension and complexity to a story. Change has the element of surprise on its side and therefore appears to be more interesting than consistency. IGLESIAS (2005, p. 54) points out that the “struggles to change can add power, significance, and an uplifting emotional experience to your script”. As in real life people grow with their experiences and in this regard the audience may appreciate to see their heroes growing as well, developing their personalities by strengthening some attributes whilst leaving some of their habits and traits behind. This development is called the character arc within the story and marks the steps a character has to go in order to relief himself from aspects of his personality which are standing in his way.

**Visualizing Change** | Visual design can contribute to a change in character to a greater extent and support the transformation process considerably. There are countless

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2 SANDBERG (2009) gives a clear and well-arranged introduction to the seven principles of art and how they can be utilized for communicating ideas about and attitudes of a certain character in visual entertainment. For a more in depth depiction of form and shape in general WONG (1993) will provide plenty of information.

3 Many books about color and design provide a chapter which goes into color psychology and helps the reader to get an idea about likely perceptions of certain colors and their cultural meanings. In this regard STONE (2006, p. 24-63) is most helpful by offering good samplings of color meanings and associations and serves as an orientation for the color design used for the characters in *My Life of StarCraft*. Another useful source is BLEICHER (2012) who surveys color in all its facets and sets it into a broad range of cultural contexts.
means to visually indicate that a character is undergoing a change. In this regard especially the use of color proves to be a very effective and powerful element to illustrate the different states a character passes within his development. A very good example for this is the movie 'Pleasantville' (GARY ROSS, 1998) in which characters who repress their emotions and lack self-awareness are pictured in black and white. The more the story proceeds the more they start to realize and accept their true desires and feelings until they finally start to live out their fantasies. As soon as this happens they change from black and white to color. Sometimes a more partial use of color indicates that a person is already realizing that change is needed (this is for example expressed through red lips which suddenly stick out from an otherwise grey face). The visual design of 'Pleasantville' is just one example of color utilization amongst many others: the use of complimentary color might proof effective to visualize extreme changes based on opposing qualities: from good to evil, from sad to happy, from dependent to independent and so on. Desaturated and pale colors might become vivid and strong to show that some qualities of the character, which were fragile and undefined in the beginning, got more distinct or that an insecure character gained self confidence.

Shape, line and form can also be exploited in order to stress the personal development. The facial features of a protagonist might get more defined the more self-awareness he acquires, the line art might get more forceful the more strength the character develops, chiseled shapes might lose some edges when the hero allows himself to show his vulnerability.

It goes without saying that visual design also includes the definition of the whole look of a character. In this sense change can also be expressed through different features like new clothes or accessories, a change of physical appearance (size, girth, posture, figure etc.) or through facial expression and gestures.

**Character vs. Characterization** | It might be worth paying some attention to Robert MACKEE’s (1999) understanding of true character. MCKEE (1999, p. 100-2) distinguishes between character and characterization by defining character as "all aspects of humanity we could know by taking notes on someone day in and day out". In this regard most qualities and traits described in this chapter are aspects of characterization because if we would take some time to scrutinize someone very carefully for a certain period of time we would be able to observe most behaviors, attitudes, habits and traits. True character, however, is – according to McKee – only "revealed in the choices a human being makes under pressure – the greater the pressure, the deeper the revelation, the truer the choice to the character's essential nature" (MCKEE 1999, p. 101). He argues that people may behave different from how we think they would if they are facing the extreme. They show true colors when the stakes are high: "If a character chooses to tell the truth in a situation where telling a lie would gain him nothing, the choice is trivial, the moment expresses nothing. But if the same character insists on telling the truth when a lie would save his life, then we sense that honesty is at the core of his nature" (MCKEE 1999, p. 101). Although the writer doesn't necessarily need to care about McKee's distinction the latter may come in handy from time to time since it offers a lot of possibilities to story and character
development: When the audience gets familiar with a character they will soon start to make certain assumptions about him and his behavior and get a feeling for his actions and attitudes – if this character then suddenly has to face the extreme he might surprise the viewer by acting in an unexpected manner. Maybe he will rise above himself by doing something no one ever thought possible of him or he might disappoint the audience by acting like a craven. The revelation of the 'true character' of a protagonist could also serve to put him into a conflict with himself. Maybe the character thought that he would act brave in certain situations because he felt confident about his courage but experience told him better and he had to discover that he was wrong. In this regard McKee's distinction presents the writer with interesting choices and options.

**VISUALIZING TRUE CHARACTER** | If the creator of the character decides to distinguish between characterization and character he might literally show the character in his 'true colors' to stress that we now see the unadorned self of the protagonist which is revealed within an extreme situation. In this regard all the visual strategies mentioned above can serve to stress the differences between a character's usual behavior and his way to act when he is under pressure.

**FLAWS** | add complexity, tension and appeal to plot and character. Flaws are an essential part in the character creation process because perfect people don't exist in real life and a perfect fictional character would not only seem highly implausible and artificial but also very boring. In the worst case the audience would even feel annoyed with him being the incarnation of perfection. The audience will appreciate some flaws and might even like the character more just because of his imperfection. Flaws will help to increase the tension because the audience will fear that due to them a character might fail to reach his goals. As a consequence the triumphs will taste even sweeter if they were realized despite the hero's blemishes. Furthermore this element provides means of adding complexity and challenges to the character development: The protagonist might be aware of certain flaws which are constantly standing in his way whilst he is reaching for his goals and he might feel the need of getting rid of them. This gives the character "somewhere to go", as Vogler (2007, p. 33) points out by describing the "so-called 'character arc' in which a character develops from condition A to condition Z through a series of steps." In this regard flaws are the starting point from which a character can develop. Flaws don't necessarily need to be defined as negative traits or behaviors of the protagonist. A flaw can also be the lack of a crucial element of the character's personality such as the ability to trust other people or to recognize his own successes without the constant feeling of being inadequate.

**VISUALIZING FLAWS** | First of all it has to be pointed out that flaws are not limited to an imperfection of character – they also define the imperfection of appearance. In this regard visual flaws can range from a pimpled face, to greasy hair, from crooked teeth to a hunchback or from bitten lips to shabby clothing. Visual design can also try to support negative traits of a character by making use of color, shape, line and values. As mentioned above, color psychology for example
associates certain emotions and traits with particular colors. According to Stone (2006, p. 26-30) negative qualities like depression, coldness and apathy can be symbolized through blue; jealousy, cowardice and deceit through yellow; envy and greed through green; madness and cruelty through purple; evil and negativity through black – to name but a few. If we strive through the media landscape we will easily find several examples which match these associations: Slytherin, the sinister House at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the 'Harry Potter' movies (Chris Columbus, Alfonso Cuaron, Mike Newell, David Yates, 2001-11) for example has the color of emerald green; Sheogorath, the Daedric Prince of Madness in the RPG 'Oblivion' (Bethesda Game Studios, 2006) is wearing a purple coat, the same goes for Joker, the mad antagonist of Batman. – The use of color doesn’t necessarily need to stress the negative side of a character as obvious as in the examples above. It can also serve as a means to break the pattern and set a course to symbolize that there are some aspects which flaw him but which are nonetheless a part of him and make him a complex unique being.

HABITS AND PATTERNS | make the character more realistic and individual. If we get to know someone better we soon will start to notice that certain habits are typical for him. This can be small daily rituals and routines (like a fixed time he goes to bed or the fact that he is eating an apple each day) or even some spleens (like feeling the need to wash his hands after touching a public door knob or chewing on his lips when he feels stressed). The individual habits and patterns of a character will help to give the audience the sensation of familiarity because they can predict what he will usually do in recurring situations. Card (1990, p. 15) points out, that these elements can also serve another cause: they open up story possibilities: "a change in patterns might show an important change in the character’s life; another character might take advantage of her habits; curiosity about or annoyance at a habit might lead to an interesting relationship between characters."
Although habits and patterns are not of uttermost importance for the character development they can help to make characters more lifelike and might even be of use for the plot.

VISUALIZING HABITS AND PATTERNS | Habits and patterns can be visualized most effectively through action. But there are also possibilities to make them part of the visual character design: A character who chews on his fingernails or bites his lips will wear signs of this habit even when he is pictured in situations where he doesn’t do it. A character might love to write with a quill instead of using a pen and this habit will leave his fingers smudged with dark ink. A heavy smoker might have yellow fingertips. If a character usually stays up very long he might show dark circles around his eyes. A character who always eats chips during his lunch break might have some traitorous crumbs on his shirt. If the character usually goes to play tennis after work he can carry his racket and a sports bag with him. The visualization of habits and patterns can be fun and help to make the character look more interesting and unique.
TRAITs | define a big deal of a character’s personality. They are mirrored in his behaviors and attitudes and the way he is interacting with others. Traits would cross someone’s mind first if the person would have to describe the character of a protagonist. The latter could be friendly, helpful, aggressive, clever, intelligent, arrogant, self-centered, generous, ambitious, sadistic, violent, independent, unconventional, lethargic, lazy, rational, emotional, envious, witty, funny or rude amongst many other things. A set of traits may be the first thing a writer defines about his character because it will help him to get a first idea about his personality, the way he should behave and what distinguishes him from the other characters in the story. As mentioned above it should be kept in mind that there have to be positive as well as negative traits because otherwise the character will most likely feel very artificial. Someone who is rotten to the core without even the smallest sign of humanity in him may appear as non-credible as someone who is good and virtuous through and through. A combination of both positive and negative traits will add complexity and credibility to the character and offer interesting opportunities for conflicts within himself in a way that the character has to fight against certain aspects of his personality in order to succeed.

VISUALIZING TRAITs | The principles of visualizing traits differ from the visualization of flaws only to the extent that they include negative as well as positive traits. In this regard shape, color, form, line and value can be utilized for the expression of the whole spectrum of characteristics.

TALENTs AND ABILITYs | are not essential for the character development but nonetheless useful. A character who, in all respects, is just an ordinary guy runs the risk of being perceived as a bit boring. One or two particular talents or notable abilities can help to make him more special and interesting but most of all they can serve the cause of making things more plausible: In reference to My Life of StarCraft for example it would make perfect sense to equip one character with the talent of being very good in playing chess or in strategic thinking and multitasking since all these abilities would cater to what it takes to become good at StarCraft. Not everybody can make it to the top because it requires not only discipline and constant practice but also certain skills which are hard to get if you lack certain talents or abilities.

VISUALIZING TALENTs AND ABILITYs | Talents and abilities can be somewhat tricky to communicate only through the means of visual design. It is not an easy task to show that someone is an exceptionally good swimmer, dancer or chess player or that he speaks 10 languages fluently and is able to memorize all the entries of a phonebook.

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4 In regard of adding a set of traits to a character Howard LAUTHER (2004) might turn out as a helpful source since his publication gives an overview over hundreds of different traits. All of them are discussed in connection with character or plot possibilities which could emerge from them. LAUTHER also describes how a protagonist with certain traits might be perceived by other characters who are also part of the story. The publication also provides suggestions for a character’s motives and needs, fears, believes, habits and abilities along with some ideas concerning topics like ‘self-assessment’ or ‘occupation’.
since the ability usually only gets visible through action. Visual character design might make use of stereotypical features which indicate that the character has a certain ability. The stereotype of the widely read bookworm for example provides the character with large and thick glasses (Velma Dinkley in the animated series Scooby-Doo (KriStoffer Hay and Line Rongved for Hanna-Barbera-Productions, 1969-76) is a good example for this). A character who is skilled in the use of computers and software can be pictured in the stereotypical fashion of the nerd by providing him with fiction and fantasy merchandise (like t-shirts or caps of an MMO game for example) and an awkward physical appearance. A good athlete might wear a sweat suit or a sweat band all the time.

Stereotypical designs might serve the cause when the abilities which are supported through the stereotype are the most important aspect of the character or his only purpose. Otherwise they should be avoided since they carry the risk to dominate the design and to displace other qualities. The result is a one-dimensional and flat character. Carolyn Miller (2004, p. 104) points out that the audience indeed will be able "to quickly recognize the thick-necked bully, the eccentric scientist and the gossipy next door neighbor. But they will just as quickly yawn, because stereotypes make your work seem predictable and bland."

TASTES, PREFERENCES AND INTERESTS | are also not very essential for the development of a character because what somebody likes does not define who he is. You actually don't learn that much about someone when he tells you the title of his favorite book or movie or which food he likes the most. You might feel that there is some kind of connection between you and this person if you share some tastes or interests but you could still come to the conclusion that despite all these similarities you think that the person is annoying.

Nonetheless preferences and tastes make the character more lifelike and appealing since everybody has interests and likings and your characters therefore should have some, too. Furthermore, as Card (1990, p. 17) points out, the interests in certain activities can help you with the story: "A character's love for skiing gives you an excuse to get her into the mountains in winter", a character's interest in astronomy can explain why he is able to define the direction at night without a compass at hand. In this regard these elements can help to make the story and a character's behavior more plausible.

VISUALIZING TASTES, PREFERENCES AND INTERESTS | Tastes, preferences and interests can easily be visualized by supplying the character with certain items and objects (props): an iPod for example indicates an interest for music, a t-shirt of 'Star Wars' makes him a science fiction fan, a baseball cap might show the icon of his favorite sports team, professional journals which are lying around in his room give a hint of his interest in astronomy, an electric-guitar which is standing in the corner might tell the audience that he plays in a band. All these small details provide the character with a sense of background and distinguish him from other characters.
Values | provide the characters with different points of view and beliefs and may also serve as underlying principles for their motives and attitudes. Values may also determine the behavior of the character in a certain situation or even have an effect on their habits and patterns. In general, the definition of values is therefore a good point to start defining a character because this aspect is connected to many of the other elements which are listed in this glossary.

Visualizing Values | The easiest way to express values is through dialogues and monologues. However, there is the possibility to make them an element of visual storytelling: If a character refuses to take a well-paid job for example and the next scene shows him playing with his children the audience might realize that he values family more than money. If he is shown in a bar, flirting heavily with a girl but then leaves unexpectedly and the next scene shows him hugging his wife at home, the audience might understand that he values love more than adventure. In this regard values are a part of most visual storytelling, although they are usually not a part of visual character design. It is a very difficult task to express a value through a character's appearance but at the same time not a necessary one. If the values are reflected by the visual storytelling there is usually no need to put any effort into making them part of the visual design as well.

After defining a set of characteristic signifiers and behaviors for each protagonist the writer has to describe in detail how to show these attributes within the series. The most profound character design is of no use if the writer isn't able to reveal its facets whilst telling the story. Therefore it is helpful to write down a list of all the important aspects of a character's personality and then trying to find methods of how to communicate them to the audience. The suggestions mentioned above can help with this process and provide a link between visuals and writing.

2.4 Deepening the Character: Background, Goals, Motives and Needs

The Creation of a Background | The creation of a background for each character can fulfill two major purposes: the first is to provide the character with a past which is directly affecting the story or which provides explanations which are necessary for logical and plausible storytelling. If the story for example is about a clerk who is working in an office from 9 to 5 each day, it would seem odd if he would suddenly hold a lecture at a university unless some kind of background information would explain that he has a PhD in economy and is giving a guest lecture once in a while. In this regard some background information will be necessary to introduce the audience to certain circumstances or to make a given situation plausible or even push the story into a certain direction.

The background will also cater to certain behaviors of a character which will be more understandable against his back-story. This brings us to the second purpose of background: In this regard the back-story includes all the information which won't be
necessarily conveyed to the audience but might be crucial for the writer to understand and create a profound character with credible motives and emotions. Although it is not compulsive to provide each protagonist with a detailed background most writers recommend to put some thought into it since the back-story offers the possibility to ask and answer 'Why and What questions' about a character by describing certain attitudes and traits and then going back to try to figure out what happened in the past that might influence decisions, actions and behaviors in the present (Seger 1990, p. 50). "People are what they have done and what has been done to them" (Card 1990, p. 8) – therefore every piece of past experience has a small or larger part in shaping a character and making him become the person he or she is in the present. Some events and memories will accompany a person a whole life whilst others remain in the past as parts of the person's past personalities.

If the audience learns details about a character’s past they also might be able to see him in a different light since the revelation of the past within a story "constantly revises the meaning of the present" (Card 1990, p. 140). If the audience of My Life of StarCraft learns for example that one of the protagonists, who doesn't seem very social, keeps a distance to other people and has problems to trust others, had a very difficult childhood and never felt accepted by the people who surrounded him, they might feel empathy for him and get a better understanding for his problematic behavior.

**How to Communicate the Background?** | There are several ways of letting the audience know about past experiences and the back-story of a character. The most suitable method which matches the intended style of My Life of StarCraft is the use of the implied past / implied background. By making use of this technique the writer will be able to unveil certain details of the background without being in need of interrupting the main story for retrospective views on the hero's past (Card 1990, p. 149). Instead the latter can be implied into the ongoing story, being expressed mainly through character behavior, the expectations of a character or through the network which surrounds him. In the first case the character's habits or patterns of life, his knowledge, his way to express himself or his attitude towards certain things will enable the audience to make assumptions about his background and past experiences. A certain slang, rhetorical style or dialect for instance may indicate the regional, social or educational background of a character; the fact that he is always making sure that he locked the door and that the alarm is on may hint at some past experience with burglars or intruders; a character who is able to take a taxi instead of a bus to get to work each day probably doesn't need to worry about his finances very much. – There are many possibilities to indirectly express some background information of a character through this method. However, the audience can't be sure if their assumptions about a hero's back-story are correct until they find some other proofs for them or get them confirmed in a more direct way.

In the second case the expectations of a character serve the same cause: they are indicators for things that a hero experienced in the past and which shaped his present attitude towards certain things. A remark like: "I will make a fool of myself if I apply for this job and need to go to an interview because we all know that this happened before" is a very clear statement which informs the audience that the character went through a similar situation before. Expressed in a slightly different way – "I know that I will make a fool of myself if I apply for this job and need to go to an interview" – the statement won't
serve as a direct reference to the past but might tell the audience about the character's insecurity or a lack of self-esteem, which may also have its roots in the past.

Another way of implying the background of a character is through his networks: "Anyone who has been alive for any length of time has also made many connections with other people. Unless a character has been torn from his or her normal milieu, those connections are going to show up." (CARD 1990, p. 152) In this respect the protagonist could encounter an old acquaintance for example who is representing a former aspect of the protagonist's life and who is taking parts of the hero's past into the present. He could be no stranger to a drug dealer around the corner or to the waiter in the most exclusive restaurant in the city. He could casually talk in fluent Spanish to a Hispanic asking for directions. In this way the writer will be able to unfold many details and hints about a character's background whilst the main story proceeds. In addition he can also use this technique to show that the character changed and that he was trying to distance himself as much as possible from his past (in this case old friends could mention that he changed quite much and that he seems very different from the person he once has been).

**Motives, Goals and Needs** | Beside the background the elaboration of motives is crucial to good character development and can be seen as a powerful element to enable the audience to connect with the character. CARD (1990, p. 7) points out that "motive is what gives moral value to a character's acts. What a character does, no matter how awful or how good, is never morally absolute." In this regard motives don't describe what a character does but "what he means to do". You judge characters different if you learn to know their motives and a certain behavior of a protagonist which found your disapproval in the beginning might suddenly meet your approval after you discovered the motivation which was causing that behavior.

In *My Life of StarCraft* for instance the protagonists will reach a point where they get into big financial problems and are likely to be kicked out of the flat they share with each other. All but one of them will talk quite much about the issue and express ideas of how to solve it whilst the other character, called Max, seems not to care at all and doesn't contribute to the discussions. He is staying in his room instead, playing StarCraft all day long. The other characters (and the audience as well) will feel that he is ignorant and careless, leaving the others alone with a problem and a big responsibility, regardless of the consequences they would have to face. But as the story proceeds the audience will learn that he attended tournaments to win some money for the group and that he was practicing for the events all the time. He was approaching the problem in his own way, focusing on the solution without feeling that he has to join the discussions and make more fuss about it. He keeps himself to himself since he has difficulties to communicate things and to express his thoughts and emotions. Therefore he acts in a manner which is likely to upset others because they don't see the motives behind his actions. But by learning about the thoughts which underlie his behavior the audience will see the character in a different light and eventually appreciate his actions in the end.

In regard of the development of the protagonist's desires and motives Robert McKee (1999, p. 376) recommends the following approach: First of all the writer has to ask several questions in order to get to the core of a character: *What does he want? Now?*
Soon? Overall? Is he aware of it or is it an subconscious desire? After these questions are answered, the creator also needs to figure out the underlying motives for the expressed desires: Why does the character want what he wants? McKee points out that not every single aspect of a character’s desires and behaviors should be nailed down to definitive explanations. Instead, the writer should think it through “to a solid understanding of motive, but at the same time [he should] leave some mystery around the whys, a touch of the irrational perhaps, room for the audience to use its own life experience to enhance [the] character in its imagination” (McKee 1999, p. 376).

In general, the character design of My Life of StarCraft will have to explain the motives for each character’s desire to get into the professional StarCraft league since this goal is constitutive for the whole series. The hunger for fame, belonging, recognition and acceptance, self-respect or self-fulfillment – to name just a few – would serve as possible motives which could be the driving force for a character. By equipping each of the protagonists with individual motives (which shouldn’t be restricted to just the goal to become professional gamers) the audience will learn a lot about them and see that they are approaching their objectives from different angles and with different intensities, depending on the strength and the will which emanates from their motives.

In this respect it may also become clear that sometimes what we want is not the thing we need. Some characters will learn that they are seeking for something which won’t fulfill them, that they won’t receive satisfaction from the trail they are following and that even in their greatest victories they won’t be rewarded with the emotions they hoped and wished for. Plan and purpose, hunger and dreams, needs and desires will provide the creator with the possibility of complex character development. Profound, diverse and even contradictory driving factors and needs will help to avoid predictable and obvious stereotypes but support the creation of intriguing protagonists with depth and emotional appeal.

**How to communicate Motives, Goals and Needs?** | Motives, goals and needs are part of the storytelling and can be conveyed through dialogues, monologues, actions and the behavior of the character, and through the story itself. The example above about Max’s motives for his behavior, which seemed unsocial at the first glance but which were actually motivated by social responsibility and the will to help to solve the problem, shows how a story can slowly reveal the motivations which are underlying a certain behavior.

**2.5 Character Relationships: Enabling the Character to Interact with Others**

Character Relationships define how certain characters act in the presence or company of different people and how they can be distinguished from each other. This element is essential for the character interaction and shouldn’t be underestimated. It is a key element within the character creation process since it guaranties that the characters not only function as single individuals but also in the whole universe of the story. Most people act different amongst different groups or different people, therefore the writer has to define the protagonist’s behavior whilst he is interacting for example with his friends or enemies, his wife or girlfriend, his parents, his boss, his colleagues or
classmates or the sales clerk in the shop around the corner. He has to decide which attitudes and aspects of his personality the character will show to a person and which he will hide.

Character relationships can provide the story with strong dynamics and create various atmospheres, depending on the characters who are interacting with one another. They also offer countless opportunities for creating conflicts through characters with different attitudes or standpoints. In this regard IGLESIAS (2005, p. 57) remarks, that character relationships are also an effective means to contrast characters: "When something is contrasted you see it better. You get it." By letting two opposed characters interact with one another it is much easier to reveal their standpoints and characteristics. This scenario gets even more intense when the audience cares about both conflicting characters. CARD (1990, p. 97) explains that in this case the emotional involvement is much higher than in a situation in which a 'good' character is in conflict with a 'bad' character. It makes the interaction more complex and profound by refusing to color the characters in a black-and-white-manner.
3 THE CREATION OF TWO CHARACTERS FOR MY LIFE
OF STARCRAFT: MAX AND JACOB

My general approach towards the creation of the characters was a research on the subject of pro-gaming, followed by the invention of a background for both protagonists, Max and Jacob each. I decided to put quite much effort into the background part because I felt that it will get much easier to create believable characters and motives from this starting point. I had a general idea about the characters, their most significant traits and qualities which I wrote down as notes and which would serve as the foundation for the back-story. The latter made the intended character design more visible and helped me with the final steps: the definition of the characteristics, motives and needs of my characters in detail. In this context I also emphasized how the intended character design would cater to the ability of the audience to connect with the protagonists.

I decided to do a very detailed character development in order to create profound and complex characters. I'm aware that not every project is in need of such an advanced character elaboration and that even my own project will scarcely include all the aspects I defined within this chapter although it relies heavily on the characters. SEGGER (1990, p. 2) points out that "the depth of a character has been compared to an iceberg. The audience or the reader only sees the tip of the writer's work – perhaps only 10 percent of everything the writer knows about the character." Nonetheless the other 90 percent of the development might prove essential since without them the visible aspects of the character design probably won't be as convincing and intriguing as if the writer would have defined only the most necessary characteristics of his protagonists.

Modeled on my approach this chapter is divided into three subchapters: Chapter 3.1 will describe my research about the pro-gaming scene and point out which facts, problems and characteristics might prove essential for a believable character design. Chapter 3.2 and 3.3 are dedicated to the two protagonists. Within each chapter I will start with a very brief description of the character which reflects the first idea I had of him, followed by a background which is based on this short introduction. The second part of the chapter will go into depths with the protagonists, elaborating the significant aspects and qualities of their personalities and providing them with profound motives and needs. These passages will also describe means to make the characters appealing to the audience and elaborate aspects of the protagonists which might enable the viewer to connect with him. This chapter will not discuss the visual design since the latter is the subject of chapter four.

3.1 THE RESEARCH: PRO-GAMING – WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

All the characters are in some regard based upon existing professional gamers or show casters within the StarCraft 2 eSports scene. The fictional characters are meant to relate to their non-fictional counterparts by their personalities, traits and/or visual attributes. However the characters should not be obvious copies of the people they wish to reflect but rather a frame of reference.

First of all my research included a study of the professional gaming scene of StarCraft in general. This was necessary to set up a framework for the protagonists which provides
some facts and possible goals which will be useful for creating believable character agendas. In this respect I focused on the landmarks gamers have to reach in order to make it to the top. The characters in *My Life of StarCraft* wish to move to South Korea to participate in the GSL (Global StarCraft League). They will follow a trail which is likely to be taken by real gamers who want to achieve this goal: The first step they make is forming a clan and start practicing with one another to get ready, first for amateur and later for professional tournaments. They aim to make a name for themselves by winning tournaments. This can be supported by getting oneself known on the web by streaming game sessions since it draws additional attention to the clan or gamer. Both activities might spark an interest of potential sponsors. A patronage of the latter can be defined as an important landmark since it provides the gamers with the freedom to focus exclusively on practicing without the need of having another job and worrying about financial issues. The clan will first focus on winning local tournaments in order to gain access into the national league. From there they intend to fight their way into the international and Global StarCraft League.

Beside knowing these formal requirements for playing in the pro-gaming league the creation of a convincing character demands the awareness of all the problems gamers will likely have to face whilst they are trying to reach this goal. A valuable resource for getting this information are blogs and websites of pro-gamers and gamers who want to make it to the top.\(^5\) Whilst researching the characters for the series I asked myself what moods and feelings an aspiring pro-gamer might experience, what problems and struggles he would encounter, what successes would mean the most to him, what fears and doubts he might have. As a result my characters will have three major concerns: money, practice and justification. None of them is rich and all of them have to face the fact that money is a constant issue. It is very difficult to reach a point from where you can start to think about earning money with pro-gaming and even if you make it quite far there is no guaranty that you will actually earn enough to make a living. The second concern is the necessity to practice as much as possible to get good enough for the professional tournaments. A gamer who wants to be in the professional league has to invest loads of time and effort into the improvement of his skills and needs to practice every day for several hours. Most gamers who take their goal to get to the top serious, state that they practice up to 12 hours each day. This makes it especially difficult to have a job beside the training to secure the financial coverage of the living expenses. The third big concern is the lack of support from the gamers’ environment since most people consider playing a game a ‘childish’ activity and not a legitimate profession. You have to have a strong conviction in order to motivate yourself despite all the negative criticism and disbelief you might face. Most of all you have to believe in your own abilities to really make it to the top.

Another aspect which is important for convincing characters is their slang or jargon. The StarCraft scene – much like every other gaming scene – has its own culture and terminology. There are loads of terms and expressions which you would need to know in order to understand what gamers are talking about. You will likely feel like an outsider if you have no knowledge about the vocabulary the scene is using. Phrases like "It looks like

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\(^5\) Most useful for example is the website of the professional gamer Sean 'Day9' Plott (http://day9.tv/) who shares his experiences and knowledge with the community.
Naniwa is going to cheese" are common and a swirl of words like 'speedlots', 'rine rush' and 'crackling' will make someone who is new to the scene feel quite lost. In this sense it is important to be able to provide the characters with dialogues and references which make their way of talking believable, especially for the community which plays StarCraft on a regular base and is familiar with its terminology.\(^6\)

3.2 MAX

**First ideas about Max** | Max is a boy in his late teens, freshly graduated from high school. When the series starts he reached a point where he has to decide what to do next with his life. I picture him as someone who seems to be quite indifferent to his surroundings, introverted and quite unsociable. A loner. I have a character in mind who, at a first glance, wouldn't really make a good impression because he shows quite many attributes which are not that positive. But there should be a whiff of mystery about him, something appealing which the audience can't nail down. This character should be much more than he seems. I picture him as generous and caring but with the inability to show these traits directly to others. It will take some time until the audience learns to understand how he expresses these qualities in his own way. They will also realize that there lies a deep vulnerability in him, caused by a troubled past which is connected to disappointment and pain.

**Background: Max**

Max grew up with his mom and dad in a small picturesque town. His mom was a stay-at-home mother who spent most of her time cleaning and taking care of Max. Max's dad worked as a mechanic for a big factory which was situated outside the town. Their lives were somewhat pleasant and enjoyable though working night shifts as a mechanic took a toll on his dad. One day Max's mother fell ill and was later diagnosed with an aggressive type of cancer. Despite the treatment her health kept on to deteriorate until she eventually died. Max was at the age of five when it happened. His father had a hard time dealing with the loss of his wife and took refuge in drinking. Since he had always been quite absent as a father, he now felt the pressure of responsibility resting solely on his shoulders − it was a weight which was too heavy for him to bear. He couldn't bring himself to stop drinking and after a couple of years it eventually got so much out of hand that he lost his job at the factory. It didn't take long until he had to sell the house and move to another town in which he could take his chances. Life wasn't easy for Max. His dad was drunk most of the time and whenever he was in that state he became aggressive. Max usually got caught in the whirlwind of his dad's anger, who always made him feel unwanted and worthless. On rare occasions his father promised him to change to the better but Max had to learn very fast that these were empty promises, washed away with the next bottle of whisky.

\(^6\) Useful websites for the research which provide an overview about the StarCraft terminologies are [www.chatslang.com/terms/starcraft](http://www.chatslang.com/terms/starcraft) and [http://starcraft.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_StarCraft_terminology](http://starcraft.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_StarCraft_terminology).
Max couldn't get rid of the feeling that his dad blamed him for the death of his mother and that – if it wouldn't have been for him – she would still be alive.

Over time Max started to see a pattern in his dad's behavior and learned when it was best to keep a distance. He got used to a solitary life, spending a lot of time outside. He dreamt of finding a friend with whom he could escape from the confinement of his everyday life.

After being settled in their new home Max had to start attending school again. Being the new kid at school rendered him feeling alienated. He kept to himself and avoided the other kids. They thought he was something of an oddball and didn't want to have anything to do with him. Eventually some kids started to tease and bully him. After the first week at school he felt that he never wanted to return but staying at home with his dad wasn't an alternative. He felt that his classmates could never do him as much harm as his dad ever could. Therefore he decided that school was, however unpleasant the first week might have been, the lesser of two evils. He got a thick skin; although he avoided the confrontation with others he was able to scar them off by getting more and more used to a hostile attitude.

One day when he was attending a computer class he encountered a boy from another class who was also sitting in the room, playing a game by himself. He hadn't talked to the boy before, mainly knew him by sight but had noticed that he also seemed to be introverted and quite. There was something peculiar about the game he was playing and that sparked his interest. With a little knot in his stomach he walked up to the kid and asked what game he was playing. The kid replied cheerfully that it was a strategy game called *StarCraft* and when the boy noticed that Max was curious to learn more he enthusiastically started to tell him everything – from the different races the game featured to the various units and their abilities.

The teacher eventually heard the kid's endless monolog of how great the game was and made them focus on their assignments instead. After the lesson the boy came up to Max, introducing himself as Simon and asked if Max was interested to see more of the game at his place. Max was eager to play the game and accompanied Simon home. They quickly became good friends and established a common interest for the game. Max more or less became a kind of adopted son to Simon's parents since from that point on he followed Simon home almost every day. Whenever Simon's parents approached the topic of his parents Max remained silent. They quickly realized that there was a world of pain and disappointment revolving around his family and felt that the least they could do was to try to take good care of him.

During his teenage years Max developed a certain type of social phobia (Social Anxiety Disorder, SAD), which started mildly but grew bigger and bigger each year. During his late teens he also began to suffer from malevolent perfectionism. Disappointed, abandoned and hurt by the people who were closest to him at a very young age (his mother died and disappeared from his life, his father took his aggressions out on him and showed him no love) he wasn't able to let anyone get close to him again. Since he never stopped feeling guilty for the death of his mother he always felt a weight lying heavily on his shoulders. He had the feeling that he was a nobody without any value and without any talents and abilities. He more and more felt uncomfortable and distressed when there were people around him and was afraid that he would be embarrassed or humiliated by his own behavior. He therefore became a shell, no one was able to look inside of him, instead he showed the outside world a cold, somewhat emotionless surface which felt strange and inhospitable to others. Apart from Simon he never learned to trust anyone and he also never felt accepted by other for who he was.  

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7 When I decided to let Max suffer from a psychological disorder I realized that I had to do a bit of a research about it. In this regard I started phase one of the creation process again and collected
StarCraft has a very special significance to Max. In the beginning it served as a form of escapism from the world he perceived as hostile. Playing the game with his only friend gave him the rare sensation of security and acceptance. The more he played the better he got and with his progress he also got more and more attention and recognition of other gamers. His name was rising within the online ranks and that gave him a good feeling since it was the first time in his life he felt that he was good at something and that people valued his abilities. Along with this sensation he started to develop an obsession with the game. He played more constantly, secluded himself even more from his environment, focusing only on the game and the successes he achieved whilst playing it.

Defining the Character

**Traits**

**Seems careless (external trait) but cares quite much (internal trait):** Other people think that he doesn't care because he doesn't know how to show it. He seems to be indifferent and insensitive to others but in fact he cares quite much about people who are close to him. One has to get to know him better in order to understand his way of showing that he is not indifferent. It is one of his strong but hidden qualities.

**Gets easily agitated:** If something doesn't work like intended he gets easily annoyed and angry. He also tends to get aggressive against things (he might smash his keyboard, kick against furniture, etc.).

**Calculating:** Max is the contrary of being impulsive, he doesn't like change and spontaneity and feels most comfortable if he is able to calculate and plan the outcome of certain situations.

**Fiercely competitive:** This trait only shows in the context of StarCraft, otherwise he doesn't care if someone is better at something.

**Perfectionist:** He spends hours on practicing StarCraft, pushing himself further and further, never being satisfied because he always thinks that he could do it even better. It's a self-defeating, malevolent perfectionism, which is caused by Max's disability to value himself without the foundation of other people's approval. Since he feels that StarCraft is the only thing he is good at he puts all his efforts into mastering the game to a perfect, quite unrealistic level by becoming the best at it. For him it's like all or nothing.

**Humorless:** He has no sense of humor and lacks social competence. He doesn't understand irony or sarcasm. Therefore Max usually takes offense when someone is making a sarcastic or ironic remark about him or anything he likes. He also can't take criticism.

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necessary and helpful information about SAD and other social phobias as well as about malevolent perfectionism. The results of the research are integrated into the character description and won't be listed in a separate chapter.

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8 Since the traits include the positive as well as the negative aspects of the character’s personality the FLAWS of the protagonist won't be listed separately but are integrated into this section.
**Envious:** He envies people who already achieved a goal which he desires to reach.

**Seems to be composed and cool (external trait) but is very emotional inside (internal trait):** He puts on a mask to shield himself from harm and disappointment. The face he shows to the outside world seems harsh and inhospitable.

**Blunt and unsociable:** He doesn't make a secret of disliking someone's presence or attitude. He doesn't try to be nice or to please others.

**Distrustful:** Due to his problematic past he has a problem letting people get close to him. His mother died when he was a little kid, she disappeared from his life, leaving him alone with a father who was incapable of showing him that he cared about him. Instead he gave him promises which he couldn't keep. This left deep marks on Max. His past taught him to distrust people and to hold them at a distance in order to avoid another loss or disappointment.

**Generous and helpful:** Max can be generous and helpful, although these qualities have to be added to his more hidden traits. He likes to give people something but he doesn't want them to know that it came from him. He isn't after other people's gratitude but enjoys the feeling to be able to help someone. Somehow he might hope to remedy himself by helping others. He doesn't value money very much and if he sees that someone is in need he doesn't hesitate to help him out. He is never making a fuss about what he did for someone, he probably won't mention it ever again.

**Observant:** He has an eye for details, recognizes changes and is aware of his environment. He notices when people act different or unusual. He has a feeling for moods although he doesn't know how to react to them.

**Pessimistic:** Max never feels that things are easy or that they will turn out just fine. For him life is a struggle since he feels that all odds will probably be against him and that he always has to fight in order to make it.

**Attitude |**

- When someone makes him a compliment he usually shrugs it off and looks a bit embarrassed. He also seems uncomfortable when too much attention is directed at him.
- When there is a problem he seems to stay calm and isn't panicking, he seems quiet and contemplating although he feels nervous inside.
- He gets a bit grumpy when he has to play against Protoss (a StarCraft race) because he generally feels that this race is annoying.
- He complains when someone is cheesing (using a very simple and cheap strategy in order to win).
- He reacts angry to provocation and defeat. This can result in damaged things like keyboards, mugs or other objects within his reach.
- When he meets someone he doesn't like he doesn't care to hide his feelings.

**Habits and patterns |**

- When he gets nervous he is screwing a Dr Pepper cap on and off.
- He usually starts to swear when something is going wrong.
- He is sloppy when it comes to cleaning his room, it usually doesn't look much cleaner than before.
- He gets easily annoyed with other people's quirks and can't stand them (for example if someone is chewing loudly, or biting his lips).
- He always finds something to complain about.

**Talents and Abilities |**
- Strategic thinking
- Multitasking

**Tastes and Interests |**
- StarCraft
  - He is Zerg Player (StarCraft Race) and has a strong aversion against Protoss.
  - He likes Dr. Pepper soft drinks.

**Values |** Max has a strong opinion about cheating. Fairness has a high value to him. He would never cheat and would never approve of a friend who would cheat in order to realize his goals.

**Connecting with the Character**

Since Max is a character with many rough edges it is important to think about means to connect the audience with him despite his flaws. I already mentioned that the principle of mystery might be a key to evoke interest and fascination. If Max's personality will be revealed step-by-step by giving the audience small glimpses of the hidden traits of his personality which will deepen the character gradually, the viewer will get surprised and curious to learn more.

When the series starts, the first impression of Max will be that he is quite unsociable and a personality which needs getting used to. In the beginning the main focus will also be directed more to the other characters. In this regard the audience won't need to bother too much about Max and see him more as a contrast to the other characters and as a means to rough up the interaction through his attitude and behavior. But the more the story proceeds the more notice will be attracted to Max. The audience will become aware that he is quite observant and attentive to notice how people are feeling and that he reacts quite considerate if he realizes that a friend is feeling low but in his way which is not always easy to understand for people who don't know him that well. In the beginning the hints of his positive side will be very subtle in a way that they might make the viewers start to wonder if they underestimated or misjudged Max and if there is more to him. Eventually they will gain more knowledge which, in some aspects, will even stay locked from the other characters. The audience will learn for example that despite his indifferent appearance he cares quite much about his friends and that he – more than once – helped the group to get rid of a problem. Whilst the other characters will think that the problem somehow took care of itself, the viewer will realize that in fact it was Max who solved it but never uttered a word. The audience will be allowed to glimpse behind Max's surface to discover that he didn't decide to act like an asshole but that it is his way of trying to keep people at bay. He developed a defense mechanism through which he always acts somewhat aggressive and
emotionally detached. He does this to protect himself from falling into harm’s way and doesn’t realize that his behavior only worsens the situation and his relationships with others. The audience will get to a better understanding of his behavior by being able to arrange all the small pieces which will be revealed to complete the puzzle to his personality. As a result they will see that there is a good but sad and dejected core to his unlikeable facade. This will shift the viewer’s feelings from rejection to fascination along with acceptance, compassion and a better understanding for why he is acting like he does.

**Goals, Motives and Needs**

**GOALS |** To win a major StarCraft 2 tournament and become a professional StarCraft 2 gamer.  
To find a sponsor.  
To move to South Korea and compete in the GSL.  
To become one of (if not the best) Zerg player(s) in the world (main goal).

**MOTIVES |** Recognition  
Fame  
Acceptance

**NEEDS |**

*Conscious career needs:*  
- Time: to practice and to gain experience.  
- Financial stability: A steady income to finance the practice sessions.  
- Success: Win enough tournaments in order to gain a sponsor which can finance a move to South Korea *(correlates with goals).*

*Conscious psychological needs: *(correlate with motives)*  
- To vanquish his fears: Max believes that his fears and personal issues will disappear if he manages to become a successful and famous StarCraft 2 professional gamer.  
- Recognition: To become recognized for being good at something.

*Unconscious psychological needs:*  
- Self-Acceptance: Max does not realize that in order to overcome his fears and issues he needs to accept himself for who he is.  
- Self- Recognition: He never sees his own accomplishments as something of value. Therefore he has to learn to recognize his successes *himself* and not to look to others for recognition. Otherwise he will always strive for getting better whilst feeling inadequate.  
- Ability to trust: He needs to overcome his trust issues and his fear that other people will disappoint him, hurt him or suddenly disappear from his life. This is also essential for being able to get rid of his aggressive attitude to keep people at a distance.  
- Acceptance: He needs to feel accepted in order to become able to accept himself *(correlates with motives).*

Max is obsessed with just one goal: His greatest ambition is to become one of, if not the best Zerg player(s) in the professional Global StarCraft League. When it comes to the realization of this desire, he is extremely ambitious and driven. This stands in
harsh contrast to everything else he is approaching in his life. Apart from StarCraft there is nothing which sparks a desire in him, nothing which is strong enough to evoke his enthusiasm or zest for action. If a task does not lie within his scope of interest he isn't even willing to lift a finger to see it through. But reaching the top of the GSL is something he actually wants – so badly that he would stop at nothing in order to reach this goal.

There is a reason for Max's focus on just this one desire. His background shows that throughout his life he always felt alone, unaccepted, unwanted and guilty. He never learned to value himself or to discover any strengths which lay hidden inside of him. His social phobia made him avoiding other people and getting afraid of situations where he had to be around others. With StarCraft Max for the first time got the sensation of acceptance and belonging. He found his only friend through the game and with him a place where he could feel secure and sheltered from the outside world, from his dad, from the other kids. And there was more to it: StarCraft turned out to be something he was actually good at. It was the first thing which earned him the compliments and acceptance of others. In order to understand Max one has to understand his severe problems with himself and the simple fact that he never learned to seek for encouragement and approval somewhere else, never experienced success and acknowledgement in another context. Throughout his life he has always craved for acceptance and the game represents the only means for him to prove his worth. It's the desire for recognition which is driving him. He believes that by realizing his dreams and hearts desires he will manage to vanquish his fears and be able to feel satisfied with himself and his accomplishments. Only through the fame and by the acceptance of others would he be able to prove his true worth.

All of Max's other goals simply serve the cause to fulfill his main desire. In order to get big as a professional gamer he feels that it is necessary to move to South Korea where StarCraft, eSports and its players are celebrated as pop culture icons. There he would be able to compete in the Global StarCraft League where only the best of the best may participate. He doesn't feel that there is anything holding him back from moving into a foreign country. Since he feels empty and doesn't have a sensation of belonging to where he comes from he feels indifferent about moving. South Korea is as good as any place. However, he knows that in order to move there he needs a sponsor which would finance the move as well as his living expenses. To gain a patronage of a sponsor is a task itself: Max has to prove himself worthy of the benefits by winning one or several major tournaments. These tournaments don't mean much to Max. Winning one of them doesn't really satisfy him. They fulfill only the purpose of getting closer to his main goal.

Max knows that the realization of his desire will require rigorous and hard practice, up to 12 hours a day. His attitude towards practice isn't that easy to understand. One couldn't really say that he actually enjoys playing. He is more obsessed with it, he wants to master the game to a perfect level. Even when he wins he doesn't feel satisfied because he always discovers some flaws and sloppily executed strategies whilst he is reflecting on his game. He is pushing himself harder in order to get better and better without realizing that his desire for perfection comes at a cost: Max forgot how it felt to play, the only thing he knows is how to compete. The cozy shelter the game once offered him became more and more a fortress he had to defend. He sees
StarCraft as a competition but never as the thing it once had been: a game. Max does not know how to do something casually and just for the fun of it – he wants to become the best at whatever he takes upon himself. He approaches his task with the utmost dedication and strong commitment. If the result would not match his standards to the fullest he would feel dissatisfied and the need to rework whatever it might be until it reaches its desired status.

Since practice is needed to gain enough experience to compete and win prestigious tournaments Max soon has to realize that a steady and secure income is necessary to finance his living expenses in order to enable him to focus solely on practicing. The need of financial security is something he isn't aware of in the beginning since he doesn't really care about money. Actually he is quite indifferent towards it, he never needed much and always managed to make it somehow. But at a certain point he gets aware that the uncertainty of how to pay the next rent stresses him quite much and makes it hard to concentrate on his practice. He starts to understand that he can't ignore external needs like this and has to find ways to secure his income.

There is more he has to learn: Max had always looked for acceptance in others but always had difficulties to make himself understood. By taking refuge into gaming he is isolating himself into a nutshell, avoiding social interaction. He feels too insecure about himself but doesn't know how to solve the problem. Instead of confronting himself with the outside world and trying to overcome his fears and his mistrust against others he believes that his success as a pro gamer will bring a cure. He believes that the recognition he would get for being exceptionally good at something would satisfy him by receiving cheer and celebration from others and that with this triumph his contempt for himself will vanish. However he is not aware that his perfectionist nature will hinder him from being able to cherish his own moments of triumph and will prevent him from realizing his accomplishments. It will also stand in his way when he wants to establish healthy relationships to other people. Feeling inadequate by ignoring his progresses and achievements due to their imperfection he would never stop perceiving other people's remarks as criticism and would always feel that other's don't approve of him. Only by coming to terms with his inner demons and accepting himself for who he is will he be able to see himself and his achievements with eyes unclouded by malcontent. Other people's approval won't be able to compensate his lack of self-recognition and self-acceptance. The only means to cure himself is to come to terms with himself.

3.3 JACOB

Jacob is also in his late teens and recently graduated from high school. I picture him as indecisive about what to do with his life and as a kind of yes-man or conformist. Although he feels somewhat discontent and unsatisfied by pretending to be what society wants him to be, he prefers to go with the flow instead of standing up for his own ideals. He has no great ambitions and finds it hard to motivate himself for something. His biggest challenge will be to get in touch with himself, to get his own standpoints and opinions and to find a goal he wants to reach on his own account. I intend to make Jacob go through changes within the series. His personality and also his visuals will transform and he will grow into a more confident self.
Background: Jacob

Jacob grew up as the only child in the family, his parents where both careerists and had little time for their son. His father worked for a big computer company and was away on business trips quite often. Whenever he came home he usually was pretty tired and tried to relax as much as possible. Nonetheless he took the time to play with his son. Jacob's mother worked as a secretary for an up and coming politician. She was a dutiful woman and frequently worked overtime to support her employer's cause. More than often she took her work home, burning the midnight oil as she was working her way through piles of documents and letters. She was a loving mother but at times a bit distant due to her heavy workload. She felt guilty for not being able to be at home with Jacob as much as she would have liked. Whenever she got the chance she tried to make it up to him by taking him out for a trip or buying him a nice new toy. Even though his parents did their best to even out the time so that Jacob didn't need to be away from them too much, most days he had to take pot luck with their house maid who basically acted as his surrogate mother from the age of 2-7. He could barely remember the weeks when his parents were able to spend more than just a couple of hours playing with him. The only time this happened was during their vacation at their summer cottage by the sea. His parents usually didn't have the time for taking more than a couple of days off, therefore this vacation meant a lot to Jacob.

When he started school Jacob instantly felt that it was nothing for him. He liked to have other kids around to play with but he did not like having to conform himself to a system and being forced to learn things he wasn't interested in. He only did what was necessary to match the minimum requirements and did not care about getting high grades. His parents tried to encourage him to put more effort into his studies and explained that they would never had gone as far as they did in life if it would not have been for what they had learned at school. Jacob didn't want to disappoint them but he had no real ambitions and no clue about what he wanted to achieve with his life. Whenever someone asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he replied that he did not know. All he loved doing was to hang out with his friends and to play video games. During his childhood, when his mother and father were absent most of the time, he considered his video games to be his closest friends. This was something he found very difficult to confess to others.

As he grew into his teens he found himself to be in the spotlight as one of the more popular kids at school. For as long as he could remember he wanted to be in the center of attention, therefore he enjoyed this new sensation which he didn't want to lose at any price. At the same time the girls started to notice him and his interest for them was also growing. However, he noticed that most girls weren't into video games and he was afraid that he would lose his popularity amongst them if they would be bored with his greatest passion. Therefore he kept it a secret from any girl he went out with. During this period he also discovered StarCraft, a game which had a big impact on him and to which he dedicated a massive amount of his spare time. On occasion he even found it hard to balance his social life and his newfound interest. It wasn't uncommon for him to stay up the whole night, playing until the early morning hours.

As the years went by and Jacob got into his late teens he had started to lose nearly every interest in flirting with girls. When his high school exams were just around the corner he found himself standing at a dead end. He never really had a plan in life and basically had just followed one pretty girl to the next − whatever or wherever that meant. But now, when he had to make his own decisions, he was clueless. Everyone else seemed to have their futures and careers laid out before them − except him. He started to realize that his popularity during his teens would have little or no importance for him later in life.
One day Jacob went out with a couple of his female friends on a shopping spree. There he met a girl named Tiffany. The two instantly fell for one another. When the day was drawing to a close they exchanged phone numbers. Not long thereafter they started dating. It quickly grew into a serious relationship. Jacob and Tiffany were somewhat of an odd pair. Whilst Jacob had no future plans or real ambitions to establish a career for himself, Tiffany strove to become a famous and highly successful lawyer like her father. Tiffany's father was an influential and well respected man with many connections in various fields. Their career ambitions weren't the only thing which did not match – they neither had any particular interests in common. The thing Jacob loved the most was the thing Tiffany loathed above all else: video games. In her world view video games represented and even were the catalyst for everything what was wrong with society. To her it advocated sexism, violence, addiction and escapism. Jacob tried to make her see things different but she refused to change her mind on the matter.

Despite all their differences they still were drawn to each other. Even though they seemed to get along, there was no question about who was in charge of the relationship. Tiffany was without a doubt the most dominant and authoritarian of the two. Jacob who had always been too nice for his own good followed her wherever she went and did whatever she asked. However, she wasn't all bad. She was also caring, but in her way. She tried to encourage Jacob to find out what he wanted in life and at the same time put some effort into talking him into pursuing a respectable career. After a long time of nagging she finally managed to get him to apply for college. With a little help of her father, Jacob got accepted at the same college as Tiffany and started his economy studies. Secretly Jacob hated the idea right from the start but since he did not have any other clues about what to do he simply ran with it. He also wasn't used to deal with a kind of personality as Tiffany's and often felt subdued. Whenever he tried to approach whatever matter which had some relevance for or importance to him he succumbed to fear and preferred to say nothing.

After they had graduated Tiffany purposed to move in with Jacob and he agreed. He felt, however, that it would be hard since he could not openly play games at home anymore in fear of Tiffany's opinion on him and his interest. He played from time to time but only casually. Whenever Tiffany was away from home he instantly took the liberty to play a game or two of StarCraft. As they started college together Jacob began to realize how little influence he actually had on his own life. He found himself struggling to keep up to phase in school and for the first time he felt that he did not want to socialize with the others in school. Whenever he would encounter Tiffany in the hallways or on the college school grounds he acted as if he was very enthusiastic and enjoyed his time there.

One day on a long break in between courses he felt like taking a stroll on the town. As he walked he started thinking about his current situation and what he wanted to accomplish in life. Without a clear destination in mind he passed street after street until he suddenly stopped as a familiar sound hit his ears. He found himself standing outside a small internet cafe. Inside the cafe he heard how people were clapping and cheering. Through the store window Jacob saw a banner with the words "eSc@pe's StarCraft Tournament". Mesmerized he walked in and watched the ongoing game. As the match drew to a close he realized that he had missed his class. But instead of feeling that all too familiar twist in his stomach, he didn't feel a thing at all. He had found something which meant more to him than studying economics. He spent the rest of the day playing StarCraft at the internet cafe. Whenever he got the chance he went to eSc@pe and played. For the first time in a very long time he felt that he could be himself. However he was always afraid that Tiffany would find out somehow.
Jacob started to get quite close friends at eSc@pe and began to spend more time at the store after school. He told Tiffany that he had to stay in school after classes to study because he had a big assignment to write. But eventually Tiffany started to get suspicious of him. She tried to convince herself that she was just imagining things and that everything was fine. But after a month when she started to see less and less of Jacob, now she began to wonder if he was having an affair. One day when Jacob said that he would be coming home very late, Tiffany decided to confide to a friend of hers about her situation. She asked if she could follow Jacob and see what he was up to. Her friend followed him from school all the way to eSc@pe and saw how he sat down at a computer and started to socialize with some people she didn't know. After 20 minutes she gave up stalking him and went home, on her way home she called Tiffany and told her about what she had seen. Tiffany didn't know what to make of it at first. She didn't know whether he was going there to play or to study so she felt that she had to ask one of Jacob's classmates in order to find out what he was really up to. When she had manage to reach one of his classmates the person had told her that she had barely seen Jacob lately and she did not know about any "big assignment". Tiffany then drew her own conclusion that Jacob was going there to play. To her it was almost worse that he was playing rather than having an affair. She felt really angry about the fact that he was throwing away his life on something as stupid as playing games. When Jacob finally came home late that evening she confronted him. She demanded to know where he had been and an explanation for his absence both in school and at home. She also told him that she knew that he was skipping classes and spending his time at eSc@pe. Instead of an explanation she met a long silence. Her face started to turn red with rage. She accused him of throwing his life away and also for making her and her dad look bad. Since it was partly thanks to her dad's letter of recommendation that he got accepted to the university in the first place, she felt that Jacob was obligated to do a good job. Jacob felt how his frustration had reached its peak and how the anger was boiling up inside. Suddenly he exploded in a rage and told her exactly how he felt about school, her and her "daddy issues". When Jacob told Tiffany that he had been at a release party for a game called StarCraft 2 Tiffany put up her hands in the air and said that she wanted him to move out. Earlier that evening during the release party a friend of Jacob came up with the idea of founding a so called "pro-house". All of them should move in together and aim to become professional StarCraft pro-gamers. His response to this suggestion was that he couldn't. But after the fight Jacob took up his phone and sent a text message to one of his friends, "About the pro-house thing you mentioned earlier. I'm in."

**Defining the Character**

**TRAITS** | Undetermined and indecisive: Jacob doesn't really know where he stands. He has difficulties to find out what he wants. He goes with the flow whilst avoiding to make his own decisions.

He is wearing a mask: in order to please others he adapts himself to his surroundings, rarely showing how he really feels about something. He shows others the things they want to see.

Social: He likes to be around people and finds it easy to socialize. He doesn't have problems meeting new people.
Funny and ironic: Has a good sense of humor.

Inattentive and unobservant: He doesn't really notice what is going on around him. He has a superficial view on his environment and is inattentive to how people really feel. He also doesn't really listen when someone is talking to him.

ATTITUDE | - He gets happy when someone is giving him a compliment or when he wins a game. At the same time he seems to be surprised about it like it happened by coincidence.
- He doesn't care when he loses a game or when someone is trying to provoke him.
- When he is in the company of others he is always trying to please everybody. He is never really himself but acting different depending on the people who are around him. Sometimes his friends will be surprised about how different he is if he is talking to his girlfriend, some authorities or other people.
- When he has an argument with someone he is most likely to give in. He isn't secure enough about himself and his opinions and has difficulties to defend his standpoints.

HABITS AND PATTERNS | - He usually is quite absent-minded, especially when he is trying to do two things at the same time: People are used to talking to him for several minutes just to find out that he barely drew any attention on what they were saying.
- It is common for him that he is leaving his stuff lying around and that he is usually doing a very bad job when he has to clean up.

TALENTS AND ABILITIES | Jacob has very good social skills and a strong charisma which is appealing to others.

TASTES AND INTERESTS | - Girls
- StarCraft
- He is a Terran player (a StarCraft race)
- Electro Music
- From time to time he likes to go to parties.

VALUES | Social rules and conventions mean something to him.

CHARACTER ARC / TRANSFORMATION | The character design for Jacob intends to make him change quite much during the series. Whilst Max will develop in a very subtle way without too obvious changes, Jacob will grow into a new and more confident self as the series proceeds. This particularly affects his characteristic traits and his attitude to a certain extent. He will realize that he has to show his true colors, that he has to accept himself for who he is and needs to stop hiding behind a mask which doesn't suit him and makes him feel uncomfortable. He will learn that it is impossible to please everybody and that it is more important to feel satisfied with oneself in the first place. In this regard he will realize that it is not a bad thing to have own opinions about something (even if these are not shared by the majority of people) but a sign of true character.
Connecting with the Character

It is very likely that many viewers can refer to Jacob and will be able to recognize parts of themselves in him since a lot of people share the experience of having some troubles realizing what they want to do after they graduated from school. It can be a real struggle to find out where one belongs and what to do with one's life. Jacob represents this struggle and offers possibilities to connect with him in this way. The audience might feel curious about how things will turn out for him and where the story will get him.

A second way to get the audience on Jacob's side is by setting him into conflict with his girlfriend Tiffany. Tiffany will be really dominant and bossy and the audience will most likely feel annoyed with her because she is so decisive about other people and has little understanding for Jacob. She doesn't respect his personality and tries to change him in a way which pleases her. She is insensitive to Jacobs needs and ignores or even restrains every aspect about him which doesn't match her ideal. Jacob will finally get the feeling that it is enough and due to Tiffany's unpopularity the audience will be on his side, hoping that he will be able to gain independence, finding his own place in life.

Goals, Motives and Needs

**GOALS** | He aspires to live on his passion, doing something with StarCraft. He wants to get an occupation.

**MOTIVES** | - His motives for the goal to do something with StarCraft are somewhat vague, he doesn't really know why he wants it. He somehow thinks that it is the only thing he likes to do and cares enough about. He can't think about an alternative.
- Independence
- Purpose

**NEEDS** | *Conscious career needs:*
- Financial security

*Unconscious career needs:*
- Clarity and motivation: He is aware that he needs to put a lot of time and effort into getting somewhere in the gaming scene but he finds it difficult to motivate himself because his motives aren't strong enough and he doesn't really have a clear goal to strive to.

*Conscious psychological needs:*
- He needs to find his place in life. But he has to learn to take his own initiative. So far he wasn't actively seeking for his purpose. He is rather waiting for an epiphany, for a sign or something to happen to him which would show him the way instead of actively striving towards an answer.
- He wants to fill the void his parents left by being absent and is searching for closeness (partner/girlfriend).
- He feels the need to overcome the fear of being ashamed of his greatest passion (video games) and that people would reject him if they knew of it – but he doesn't really know how to get rid of these feelings.
**Unconscious psychological needs:**

- He needs to get to know himself in order to learn to understand his needs and to be able to discover his ambitions, dreams and desires.
- He needs to be in tune with himself in order to establish a healthy relationship in which he isn't dependent on his partner.
- He needs to learn to accept himself for who he is. He needs to value, admit and communicate his interests and personality as something he doesn't need to be ashamed of.

Jacob never really knew what he wanted to achieve in his life and never was actively seeking for a goal on his own account. Instead he was somehow hoping that it would suddenly appear: that special something which would spark his interest, the opportunity which would bring him on his way. But it never came and never happened. During his teenage years he basically let his interest in girls lead him wherever it might have taken him. As he went to college he found himself studying something which did not lie within his scope of interest. For the first time he began to feel displeased and eventually realized that all the things which once mattered did no longer have the same appeal. But there was one interest of his which had always remained consistent: his passion for games.

By chance he met and befriended a couple of people who had the same interest. They wanted to become professional StarCraft gamers and once again Jacob found himself jumping on someone else's train. However, this time it seemed to be something he actually wanted. Nonetheless this goal represents more a means of finding an occupation which he could endure rather than serving the pursuit of becoming a professional gamer. Jacob thinks that he wants to strive towards this goal but he is quite indifferent to success and defeat, he isn't really able to picture himself as a pro-gamer but goes with it nonetheless due to his lack of alternatives. Soon it gets clear that Jacob's goals are not real goals. They are more an attempt to give his life some purpose, but still: they just represent things he only wants halfheartedly.

Jacob's biggest motivation is the fact that he is finally able to focus on something which correlates with his interests and gives him a purpose. He does not know however what he is hoping to get out of playing StarCraft but for the time being he feels that it fills the void. Another motivation is the prospect of being able to stand on his own feet, gaining financial security. One great desire of his is to be able to declare his own independence and to establish a personal career for himself. He somehow tries to ignore the bitter truth that his choice of becoming a professional gamer is a stony way which doesn't lead to financial wealth that easily.

Jacob is aware of the necessity to put a lot of time and effort into training and practice in order to become good enough to compete in major tournaments. It's hard, however, since he does not have the motivation to practice as much as his friends. Although his motives might lack strength he tries to motivate himself by looking at how focused and ambitious his friends strive to reach their goals. He wishes that he could be as passionate but something seems to make it impossible: He feels that playing a game is not a real and legitimate profession and that no one who is in his right mind would approve of him trying to become a professional gamer. These feelings are mainly caused by the opinions and prejudices of others rather than being products of his own beliefs.
The source of this internal struggle originates from his fear of being rejected by people for who he is.
To overcome his doubts and to be able to live his life the way he wants it Jacob needs to get in touch with himself and learn to stand up for his ambitions, desires, interest and needs. Only then would he be able to establish healthy relationships which wouldn’t be dependent on the acceptance of others.
Most often physical appearance is the first thing people use in order to form their opinions about others. In this regard "people cannot seem to help reacting to the surface of another person, in predictable and surprisingly enduring ways, even in the face of contradictionary information emerging from ongoing interaction." (ISBISTER 2006, p. 5). We tend to treat people differently, depending on how we perceive them. We might judge them due to how they look and form assumptions about their personal background, their character, their social milieu or their community. Their body language (posture and gesture), facial expression, clothing, hair-style, make-up or items they usually carry with them can give us hints about who they are, what they like and which lifestyle they prefer. The body of a person for example can indicate that someone is doing loads of sports and training, eats too much, doesn't care about his appearance, is insecure about himself or spends much time in the bathroom. Physical flaws might also affect the attitude of a person by making him more insecure, whilst physical attractiveness might lead to more self-confidence or even arrogance. Since physical appearance has obvious powers to influence how people think about themselves and others and usually can be seen as the basis for the first impression we get about someone we meet for the first time, the visualization of a character is a crucial aspect of character development. Since my Life of StarCraft is created for visual media the character design has to go one step further than the design of a protagonist for a book and give Max and Jacob a distinct visual appearance, a unique look which is in tune with the characterization developed in chapter three. Visual character development is based on certain principles which help with the creation of first drafts and model sheets for a character and lead to more detailed concept art and well-defined character designs in the end. Since it would go beyond the scope of this thesis I won't go into the whole range of the theory of principles of art and design for visual media but instead refer to SANDBERG (2009), BANCROFT (2006) and SU (2011) who give good introductions to the topic whilst approaching it from different angles by covering the dimensions of art and design (like form, shape, color, value, line art etc.), as well as lectures on the creation of model sheets and mood sketches amongst others. The four sub-chapters which follow this introduction document my approach to visual character design and reflect on its results by discussing to what extent the latter managed to implement the characteristics of the protagonists defined in chapter three. Chapter 4.1 will introduce the intended visual style of the series in general and its characters in particular. Chapter 4.2 and 4.3 will mark certain steps within the development of Max and Jacob and analyze them with focus on their ability of communicating important aspects of the character's personality. Chapter 4.4 will present both characters in a character line-up and discuss their visual designs and functionality in comparison to each other.
4.1 THE STYLE OF THE SERIES AND ITS CHARACTERS

The series *My Life of StarCraft* will be defined through a graphical style which is relatively efficient to produce (in a way that it doesn't take too much time due to too much detail) but which can be distinguished through an appealing, somewhat arty look which adds aesthetic appeal to the design. My first reference was *South Park* since it is based on unadorned shapes and plain colors without being in need of complex color gradients but relying on a rather simplistic use of values. I was seeking for a bit more complexity though, especially in regard to the characters. A too simplistic design would make the transfer of a big variety of emotions more difficult and might lead to a restriction of facial expressions. A minimalistic design would also complicate the individualization of each character – most kids and adults in South Park for example have standard shapes, expressions and proportions and can only be distinguished through their hair styles and clothing. Although this might work quite well for the series *My Life of StarCraft* should offer more possibilities for character development which helps to make each protagonist more unique.

Anime serves as a second reference for the intended style. It provides the characters with exaggerated physical features, most notably with large eyes and big hair. Eyes and eyebrows are effective means to communicate emotions and therefore the anime reference helps to supply the characters with expressive facial features. In this regard hair can also be used to stress certain moods of the character: spiky hair for example could symbolize aggression, tousled hair can stand for chaos whilst curly hair might indicate playfulness.

Fig. 1: Mood board for the style of *My Life of StarCraft*.
Figure 1 shows a mood board which is based on these first ideas but tries to specify the style. The visual decisions deriving from it add the desired complexity to the look and correspond with the general feeling and style of the series itself. As mentioned in chapter one, My Life of StarCraft can be labeled as a kind of 'feel-good-series' which is characterized through humorous moments as well as through dark and serious undertones. The latter will provide a quite heavy atmosphere from time to time, which is loosened up by subtle humor. The visuals should reflect both sides − the light and entertaining as well as the somber and serious one. In this regard the cartoonish style was given a chiseled, angular look with very few soft shapes in order to irritate the cheerful and cute manner which is associated with most cartoons. This also helps to provide the characters with attitude: we have to deal with somewhat difficult protagonists with rough edges. The shapes are in an uproar rather than symbolizing inner harmony. The style should also invoke references to graffiti and street art by adding rough textures to the plain surfaces which make the design look like played out on a wall and supply it with a more gritty and dirty look. Too saturated colors should be avoided but nonetheless the characters have to stick out from the background.

In order to keep the style relatively simple and therefore easy to execute the line art should be reduced to a minimum, only supporting facial features or poses and gestures which give complexity and uniqueness to the characters.

There are many more stylistic choices regarding the general look of the series but in the context of this thesis just a few can be mentioned since the emphasis lies on character design and not on the visual style of the series itself. The information above therefore should introduce the major visual decisions which affect the character design and point out to what extent the style can be exploited to the benefits of the characters.

4.2 THE VISUAL DESIGN OF MAX

Shapes, Forms (Dimension) and Line Art | The first drafts for Max in Figure 2 (see next page) compile various states of the visualization process − from very plain and unadorned styles to more detailed ones. I approached the design by starting with a general idea about Max which is reflected in drafts 1-3. I wanted to get a picture about certain features, mainly about his style and his general appearance. The sketches helped me to define the way he dresses (pants, cap, jacket) and how I pictured his hair but they didn't manage to express any aspects of his personality which I defined in chapter three. The drafts had to be discarded since they looked either too childish, too cute or too boring. Sandberg (2009, p. 44) points out that character designs of this type cater more to the preferences of kids by being round, soft and cute. In this regard these versions of Max neither matched the intended target group nor added the desired attitude to the character, since they didn't articulate any tension or commotion and didn't support any of his characteristic attributes.

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9 This is just a selection which shows designs which were leading to the final result, either by exemplifying things which didn't work (and therefore were leading to more successful solutions which eliminated the flaws of the previous designs) or aspects which worked well and were implied into the final design.
The next attempts, marked as number 8-9, focused on a more angular and reduced design, trying to concentrate only on the most necessary features in order to keep the character as simple as possible (and therefore easy to execute). In this regard, draft number 9 consists only of shapes and surfaces, ignoring any kind of line art and dimension. I realized quite fast that these designs didn't offer enough possibilities to imply the broad range of characteristic attitudes and emotions and that they simply felt too boring. They somewhat reminded of old video game heroes like Link in *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* (NINTENDO EAD 2002) which appeared as a quite nice reference but proved disadvantageous for an animated series which relies heavily on the character's ability to express complex emotions. The audience would have to put too much imagination into the character in order to deepen his emotional dimension.

Draft 5 serves as a means to represent my next approaches which turned out to be too close to real proportions and lacked physical exaggeration. But the bad posture (the bended back) worked quite well with the character and was taken into account in the following drafts. The designs 6-7 show my attempts to improve the protagonist's hair and to utilize his shape to express his attitude and character trough the visuals. The most promising designs (4 and 10) combined most of the positive aspects of the other drafts and focused on a more distinct exaggeration of some physical features, like head, eyes, hair and eyebrows.

*Figure 3* (see next page) shows the final draft of Max. He is designed in a four-head-body ratio which makes his head disproportionate and cater to the Anime reference, especially by emphasizing his hair and eyes. His hair is sharp and spiky which stands for his difficult attitude. The viewer gets the impression that you can cut yourself if you get too close. At the same time the exaggerated features are able to neutralize the negative impression: if Max looks sad or insecure his big eyes help to raise sympathy or empathy for him by making him look cute and a bit childlike. His hair is softening and more roundish and therefore supports the cute appearance (see *figure 4*).
He has a Dr. Pepper bottle in his hand, a prop which serves as a means to express nervousness through the visuals (whenever Max is insecure or nervous he screws the cap of the bottle on and off). Figure 4 exemplifies different moods which are typical for Max and visualize how the emotions are expressed through his posture, body features (hair), facial expression (especially through his eyes and eyebrows) and gesture.
The colors for Max are black, grey, white and red. STONE (2006, p. 30-1) describes these colors in terms which label them as widely associated with meanings that cater to the characterization of Max and support his attitudes and characteristic traits:

**Black** reflects solitude, negativity, heaviness and mystery (it also evokes other associations but I will concentrate only on qualities which are relevant for the character design of Max). Since Max's background and behavior picture him as a kind of loner who has difficulties to socialize with others and who has to deal with psychological problems and a pessimistic attitude towards life, the color black reflects many characteristics of his personality. As described in chapter two, one means to evoke the audience’s emotional interest in characters like Max is to rely on the principle of mystery and to indicate that there is more to him than it seems. In this regard the color black additionally supports the mystery aspect and visualizes the unknown dimension of him.

**Grey** stands for modesty and uncertainty. It "seldom evokes strong emotions". In this regard the color grey supports Max discomfort to be exposed to other peoples gratitude towards him. He needs recognition and feedback but doesn't like it if people make a fuss about him. The uncertainty of whether or not his ambitions will bring him the desired cure for his problems is also supported through grey. In addition it reflects Max difficulties to develop enthusiasm or strong emotions for anything apart from StarCraft.

**White** represents perfection and isolation and therefore stresses Max desire to become the best Zerg-player within the professional league as well as his seclusion from other people.

**Red** symbolizes passion, energy, aggression, anger and battle and seems to be the perfect color for Max. Although he lacks enthusiasm for other things in life he can be characterized through one great passion which activates all his energies and provides him with a strong driving force. He also gets easily agitated and feels a deep anger inside. He sees life as one big struggle, as a battle he has to fight and which he probably won’t win but at the same time he loves to fight for his dream – to get to the top of the Global StarCraft League. In this respect he is highly competitive and knows that he might be able to win at least this battle.

Whilst designing Max, I tried to avoid to relate him to common stereotypes since the latter label the character strongly. ISBISTER (2006, p. 12) points out that "once a stereotype has been 'primed' in a person's mind, he or she tends to look for and mostly see the qualities in a person that support that stereotype, overlooking qualities that do not fit." Whilst stereotypes can serve as important elements in interactive media like video games by helping the player to identify friend and foe and to predict how other characters might react or how to behave in social encounters, the use of stereotypes in animation or linear media bears the risk to make the character appear boring since the audience feels they already know that type of guy. If anything, the visual design should only hint at certain stereotypical elements which are integrated into the otherwise unique character design. In this regard smaller stereotypical features might help to give the audience a feeling of familiarity to the otherwise alien character or to provide the viewer with some clues about his personality, the community he belongs to, his interests or his social background.
4.3 THE VISUAL DESIGN OF JACOB

SHAPES, FORMS (DIMENSION) AND LINE ART | Since it is important to provide the audience with a coherent look of the characters which guarantees that they don't look like they are taken from different series, the style of Jacob had to follow the basic design I defined whilst creating Max. This was leading to some difficulties, mainly to the problem that some features appeared to be too harsh for Jacob who's character differs quite much from Max. His hair serves as a good example: As pictured in Figure 5 (which shows two variations of Jacob, one pictures him at the beginning of the series and the other one represents Jacob as he will be further to the end), I tried to soften the hair-style and provide it with more roundish features but nonetheless one can't help feeling that you still might sting yourself. Somehow the hair evokes associations of a circular saw or a hedgehog. One characteristic of Jacob is, however, that he is very social, cheerful and open to other people. The look therefore doesn't support these traits since the shapes seem to serve a rather premonitory purpose.

The balance between a coherent style and individual features, which support a character's personality, might be difficult to achieve. When the style is dominated by an angular and sharp look, the creator has to find other means to provide characters who can be distinguished through 'softer' qualities with visuals which support these aspects. In the case of Jacob it might help to try out different postures and facial expressions which communicate more sociability and openness.
Figure 6 illustrates the attempt to try out different moods and postures and to do some slight changes to the hair in order to arrange it a bit more loosely and make it less spiky. In this regard the second draft from the left appears to lead to the desired result: it is less pointy and sharp and adds a more roundish than spiky look to the character's head. It still might be in need of some improvement but it points into the right direction.
The positive moods also help to give Jacob a softer and more cheerful appearance. In regard to the characterization provided by chapter three further mood sketches should also picture him in postures which stress his insecure and indecisive nature in the beginning of the series.
The drafts indicate that the problem mentioned above might get solved if I concentrate more on the described elements (posture and the optimizing of shape) and try out additional variations which support this development. Due to a limited time frame it is not possible, however, to present more alterations of Jacob within this thesis which might show an improved character design. In this regard the visuals of Jacob presented above are more a means to communicate difficulties and flaws whilst pointing out the steps which are necessary in order to solve the problems.

TRANSFORMATION | The design of Jacob differs from the design of Max insofar as it has to visualize the transformation of the character. As described in chapter three, Jacob will change during the series. Not only will he overcome some major personal issues on a psychological level, his progress will also be reflected in the way he develops visually. Jacob will be struggling with the question whether or not being a professional gamer is a legitimate profession to pursue. Playing games is one of his greatest passions but since he wants to fit in he is afraid of not being accepted by 'normal people'. So the question whether the pursuit of becoming a professional gamer is legitimate or not is founded on the fear and belief that others will reject him if they knew what he is trying to accomplish. Against this background Jacob will also try to suit other people by fitting in visually. He is
afraid to express his true self and doesn't wear the type of clothes he would like to wear. Instead, he tries to keep up to what he thinks is expected of him. He is wearing a social mask which covers his behavior as well as his visual appearance. 

In this regard the aim of the design is to create one version of Max which stands for his insecure self and one version which reflects his growth of character. The first version presents a plain and quite boring Jacob which lacks personality. He doesn't have any attributes or props which make his appearance special or unique. If you picture this Jacob amongst the other three main characters he will match the type of ‘the common guy’. There is nothing particular about him and the audience will most likely concentrate on other character's who seem to be more intriguing before they notice that there is something going on with Jacob which makes him more interesting. The draft of this version of Jacob presented in Figure 5 illustrates a first idea about how he could look. 

The change of his behavior and opinions will be supported through his individual choices of clothing and styling. The transformation will start in a subtle manner and will be initiated by Jacob starting to grow a goatee, which will get more distinct whilst the series proceeds. He will also start to wear nerd/game related clothes, first only when he is amongst his friends but later he will do it more frequently amongst others as well. This can be a great means to portray his growing confidence in his new found life style and to play with him being torn between two worlds and two desires by using the way he styles and dresses as a reflection of his insecure nature. When he meets his parents or girlfriend in the first half of the series he always wears one set of common clothes and when he meets his friends he allows himself to be the nerd. His transformation has some comical potential as well since it can cater to remarks like that his change into his nerd outfit is like when Clark Kent transforms into Superman. 

The addition of props might also support his growing self-confidence by providing him with even more unique features which express his interests and communicate the latter to other people. 

The character of Jacob relies heavily on visuals which make him more fun to watch and help to express the somewhat abstract developments of his personality. In comparison to books visual media has less means to tell what is going on inside a character’s head – monologues or dialogues can serve the cause but if they are used too frequently they might irritate the audience with their demands for more visual approaches towards the character’s feelings and emotions. In Jacob’s case the visuals make his behavior more clear and vivid and can be used as symbols for conveying the message. 

**COLOR** | The color design of Jacob supports the ideas which stand behind his development: progression and change. I picture him wearing green in the beginning which should indicate growth and inexperience (STONE 2006, p. 28) and therefore hint at the potential of change. The color he will wear in the end is the complementary color to the shade of green which I used in the beginning and should symbolize that he managed to overcome his biggest issues by accepting his true self which he was repressing and hiding from other people. His true colors are the contrary of what he pretended to be. The color design is supported by orange which communicates his sociability which now unfolds its full potential since he interacts with others by presenting them the true Jacob. In this respect he lays the foundation for honest relationships which are based on acceptance.
4.4 CHARACTER LINE-UP: MAX AND JACOB

If you put them into a character line-up Max and Jacob present a visually coherent overall impression. They were both modeled in the same style and rely on the same design principles. At the same time both can clearly be distinguished from one another – differing in size, posture, expression, clothing, color and personal style – and communicate individual personalities. However, especially Jacob shows potential for further improvement since he doesn’t utilize the possibilities visual character design offers to communicate his character to the fullest, yet.

All in all there will be four main characters as well as Jacob’s girlfriend who will appear from time to time in several episodes. Character line-ups get most interesting if a variety of different characters can be juxtaposed. Since Max and Jacob don’t act as counterparts or represent contrasting ideals the line-up can only help to make sure that they work with each other and offer interesting visuals which will help that they can clearly be distinguished from one another. If Jacob would be a kind of counterpart to Max the line-up might get even more interesting and important by stressing the characters’ opposition on a visual level. Shapes, forms and colors can be played off against each other – soft against hard, angular against round, dark against light, red versus green and so on.
As already indicated in the introduction to this thesis the principles of character development can be easily applied to different types of media. In this regard a well thought-off character design offers many possibilities to a broad application spectrum: it can serve as the foundation for characters in films, series, animations, books, comics or games amongst others. In some cases only minor changes are required to make the character design work in another context, others are in need of a more detailed revision. The constant flow of content across multiple platforms in the age of new media is in demand of versatile media elements which allow an uncomplicated cooperation between different media industries. Especially film and television companies are linked to and invested in game development to an increasing extent and bank heavily on the interchange of media concepts for visual and interactive media: In this regard the cross-marketing of brands and media products can be seen as common practice. Whenever a blockbuster is released it is usually followed by a game adaption of the movie. The Dark Knight (CHRISTOPHER NOLAN 2008), the Lord of the Rings trilogy (PETER JACKSON 2001-03) or the Harry Potter movies (CHRIS COLUMBUS, ALFONSO CUARÓN, MIKE NEWELL, DAVID YATES 2001-11) are just a few examples for films which all were accompanied by video games as well as by a broad variety of cross-media rip-offs and merchandise which cater to almost every customer preferences and requirements. JOHNSON (2009, p. 14) labels these media products which work on an expansive range of media as entertainment franchises – "a perennially extensible network of content in service of several wide-reaching culture industries." The convergence of media comprises another aspect as well – technology convergence: ELKINGTON (2009, p. 213) states that the "technologies used for computer generated imagery (CGI) in film are more and more often the same technologies used to develop video games, to the point that artists and technicians are able to move between the two industries with increasing fluidity". The boundaries between film and

10 The character design for My Life of StarCraft for example could easily serve as the foundation for characters of a novel. Many facets of the characters which won't be presented to the audience of the series but which helped to create believable and profound protagonists with plausible motives and behaviors might also be integrated into the novel since this medium is able to give insight into a character’s thoughts and mind much better than it would be possible in the series. The difference between these two mediums therefore derives from the means which can be used to communicate a characters qualities and background, the character creation in itself is not affected by them.

11 In this regard it is easy to forget the fact that all these movies were film adaptations of most successful comics or books in the first place and that therefore 'film' isn't the original medium from which the rip-offs emerged. The movie adaptation nonetheless helped to appeal to a much larger audience and reached out for target groups who didn't consume the original product. In this way the use of multiple platforms established new markets and marketing structures to sell the product to consumers with different preferences and demands. Fans of Batman for example might not even have read the classical comic books but they might collect all the movies or television material (like the 1960s series starring Adam West and Burt Ward or Tim Burton's adaptations from the late 80s and early 90s or Batman: The Animated Series from the 1990s) and possess various merchandise of these media adaptations.
video game development seem to melt away and end in a fusion of both industries. But it is exactly this assumption which is leading to one of the biggest misapprehensions concerning the film industries and their investments in game development: The belief that due to their similarities the transfer of a film concept into a game is an easy process. ELKINGTON (2009) points out that most video game adaptations of movies lack the approval of both critics and players and seem to be doomed to failure right from the start. This appears paradoxical at a first glance since the licensed product had already proven itself in shape of its film version on the market and therefore seems to reduce the risks of the game companies which can make use of the hype revolving around the cinematic adaptation. But nonetheless the audience more often than not reacts with disapproval and feels that the game failed to meet their expectations. Why is that? Since the cooperation between film and video game industries can be regarded as an important aspect of contemporary cross-media marketing this chapter will try to answer this question to a certain degree by using the character design and development for the series *My Life of StarCraft* as a means to raise awareness of the differences between the two mediums and to show how the character has to be changed in order to make him work in a video game adaption. It therefore supplements the subject 'character development' by adding another dimension to it which is necessary for successful character designs in interactive media. In this regard the thesis can only concentrate on the most important aspects and won't be able to cover the whole adaptation process but it nonetheless helps to understand why the transfer from a visual to an interactive medium is not an easy one to achieve and that media convergence is not necessarily leading to successful entertainment franchises.

5.1 INTERACTIVE MEDIA: PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CHARACTER DESIGNS FOR GAMES

One of the main problems concerning character design for games is that it is simply a quite disregarded aspect within the whole creation process. Authors like ROLLINGS AND ADAMS (2003) or IBISISTER (2006) point out that a majority of creators obviously assume that taking cinematic heroes and heroines as role models for the creation of game characters will simply do the job to supply the game hero with personality. But that is a misconception. Lara Croft (*The Tomb Raider* series, CORE DESIGN AND CRYSTAL DYNAMICS, 1996–2013) in this sense is not more than a bad rip-off of Indiana Jones (*STEVEN SPIELBERG*, 1981-92) which lacks all the depth of the movie hero (ROLLINGS & ADAMS 2003, p. 131). Dr. Henry Walton 'Indiana' Jones has small quirks, flaws and imperfections mingled with some cynicism and quite a bit luck on his side which helps him more than once to save his skin. All these traits and qualities make him appear more real and sympathetic. Lara Croft on the other hand feels quite shallow in comparison since she lacks facets which add complexity to her character. She is a very skilled and brave adventuress, she is rich, good looking and intelligent – in short: a kind of superheroine which stands out from the crowd in every sense. But apart from that she doesn't have much else to offer which makes her personality unique and profound.
It is difficult to recognize oneself in her because she is too perfect. But do game characters necessarily have to be provided with unique and intriguing personalities? Does the lack of depth in character make the *Tomb Raider* Series bad games character-wise? - It does not since the creators realized that they couldn't restrict themselves to the use of "passive, linear-media design principles" which might work for films but not for games (ISBISTER 2006, p. XX). The use of these principles

"can produce well-wrought dialogue, emotionally evocative cut scenes, or startlingly lifelike motion in a character, but it does not address the core of the experience—the player's active and unfolding engagement with the game world and the characters within it. A character in a game should reveal itself in relation to the player and his or her actions and motivations. The player's character is that person's physical, social, and emotional suit within the game." (ISBISTER 2006, p. XX)

The creators of *Tomb Raider* found other means to make up for Croft's shortcomings concerning her depth of character. The sensory experience the player has whilst playing her, for example, is something which helps a lot to connect the gamer in a joyful way with the character since the so-called 'visceral' or sensory feedback is also a principle of the character design for games. The game successfully makes use of this and other principles which distinguish the character design of interactive media from the character development for visual media. ISBISTER (2006, p. 204), who recommends an all in all more psychological approach to character development in games, names four principles or dimensions of a gamer's psychological experience of player-characters which can be used as guidelines for successful character design in interactive media:

**The Visceral Feedback |** comprises how the player experiences his character in a sensory way, mainly through the interaction with his avatar by the use of an interface (controller, keyboard, mouse) to navigate and control the character. "Facets of visceral feedback include what sorts of physical powers the character has, how it feels to control them and to move through the world, and the general effects that actions have on the senses (usually limited to sight and sound, sometimes touch)" (ISBISTER 2006, p. 205). The potential of this dimension lies in its ability to provide the player with powers and skills which he lacks (or which are not that developed) in his real life but which can be experienced through the interaction with the player-character. Basically every good fighting game is highly dependent on appealing visceral feedbacks. Avatars like Lara Croft, Batman (in *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS FERAL INTERACTIVE 2009), Faith (*Mirror's Edge*, DICE 2008) or Desmond Miles (the *Assassin's Creed* series, UBISOFT MONTREAL, GAMELOFT AND GRIPTONITE GAMES 2007-11) also offer rich visceral feedbacks which make it fun to control the character and to observe how the controls are executed by him or her. Sneaking, jumping, running and all sorts of

12 The upcoming game *Tomb Raider* (CRYSTAL DYNAMICS, announced for 2013) might be able to fill these gaps since it adds more background and vulnerability to the character, who appears much more open to make people recognize themselves in the young Lara Croft.
physical actions and abilities can be brought to a whole new level of experience through the interaction with the player-character.

**Cognitive Immersion** | guarantees an intuitive experience whilst controlling the character. It describes the player's ability to think within the means which the character is offering him to solve puzzles or to take actions within the game world. "The player must map herself or himself cognitively onto the player character. Player-characters that we inhabit intuitively feel this way in part because the player is able to synchronize his or her problem-solving strategies with the capabilities of the character" (Isbister 2006, p. 205). Cognitive immersion in this sense is granted when the player is instinctively approaching a problem in a way that works with the given game-play mechanics and therefore also with the abilities the player-character provides. If the player is trying to climb, for example, or to pick up and move an item since he feels that these actions are necessary to get further but none of them can be executed with the character, the player will start to feel dissatisfied because his cognitive strategies don't match the game-play-mechanics and character abilities.

**Social Affordance** | The player-character can be described as the link between player and game world through which the latter is able to interact with the digital environment. Therefore it is crucial that the character appears as a unique being which is embedded into its surroundings and into a social context in which it can interact with NPCs (or other characters (and players) in a MMO). Creators should put some thought into the social world which surrounds the character and decide carefully about the social capabilities and characteristics which "model the social role and emotions the player should be inhabiting in a game". (Isbister 2006, p. 206). This social dimension shows whenever the player-character is in dialogue or interaction with another character or NPC or through the way he behaves and acts in cut-scenes. In this context the player should get a relatively coherent impression about the player-character by understanding his social role and personality. If the character develops and changes his attitude or behavior these changes have to appear motivated and plausible and therefore comprehensible.

Especially in role playing games (RPGs) the social dimension is of great importance. The player needs to feel that he can perform social interactions in a way that suits his character and that NPCs react adequately to his personality. The ability to socialize with other characters will help to create immersion and give the player the feeling of familiarity.

**Fantasy Affordances** | This dimension serves as a means to enable the player to explore and process his real-life hopes, desires, fears and issues in a playful way by using the player-character and the game world as a medium. "Psychologists in the psychoanalytic tradition [...] touted the importance of stories and other fantasy vehicles in helping both children and adults come to terms with concerns, explore emotionally laden or thorny problems, or to create a foundation for making an important identity shift" (Isbister 2006, p. 206). A player-character to whom the player can relate to because the hero has to vanquish fears and issues which are shared by many people (some examples could be: coming of age problems, fears of the past or the future,
uncertainty, arachnophobia or self-doubts amongst others) can be used as a role model which mirrors these issues on the one hand but which on the other hand is powerful enough to vanquish them. At the same time the game provides a fantasy environment which grants the player the experience of adventures he would probably never experience in his real life and offers him the opportunity to try out different identities – ranging from assassins and snipers to soldiers and warriors, from mages, witch hunters and vampire slayers to princesses and adventurous plumbers. This principle also defines the expectations and hopes of the player which he had when he decided to play the game. He is appealed to it in a certain way and seeks for a particular fantasy experience. The player of a first person shooter might love the feeling to be empowered or the competitive challenge these games provide. The player of a RPG might love to create individual characters which feel like a second skin to him and which can be provided with powers which are fun to control and to experience. They also might embody everything the player doesn't have or represent in his real life but which he desires to possess or to be. The fantasy dimension has to be in tune with all the other dimensions. In this regard the player will be disappointed if he finds out that many fantasy desires for playing the game cannot be satisfied by the game-play-mechanics. He might realize for example that the character isn't able to interact with NPCs in the desired way or that he is really boring to play since his abilities don't match the expectations. He might also feel displeased by a shallow character design which lacks any depth and background and offers no motivation to get fond of the player-character or to take an interest in his story and development.

5.2 ART-SOURCED AND STORY-SOURCED CHARACTER DESIGN

Not every game requires the extensive use of each of the dimensions mentioned above. "The core game play of some games can lead to irrelevance or minimal value of a particular layer" (ISBISTER 2006, p. 212). In this regard it is helpful to refer to ROLLINGS & ADAMS (2003, p. 122-44) who distinguish between art-sourced and story-sourced character design and to combine this approach with ISBISTER'S dimensions. 

**ART-DRIVEN CHARACTER DESIGN** | is mainly used for simpler types of games in which the story isn't very important but which emphasize on smooth game-play, cognitive immersion and visceral feedback. Games which are based on art-sourced development take the visual appearance of the character as a starting point whilst they ignore the background development either completely or add necessary information after the visuals of the character are done. Most classic games – like Super Mario Bros. (NINTENDO CREATIVE DEPARTMENT 1985) or Pac-Man (ATARI INC. 1982) – worked with art-sourced designs since the technologies were restricted in these times and the character had to be rather simple and functional in order to make the game and it's visuals work. But also contemporary games still rely heavily on art-driven character designs. Most Jump n' Run characters for example are developed in this way. Art-sourced character designs more likely qualify for convergent media usage and can be easily adapted to other media (like toys, film, television, comic, t-shirt prints and so
on) and therefore have a special appeal to the media industries which are in favor of contents which are open to cross-marketing utilization.

The appearance of the character is essential for an art-sourced approach. It "makes the most immediate impact on the player, and you can convey a lot of things" about the character through his visual design (ADAMS & ROLLINGS 2007, p. 163). Since the player won't be provided with a rich back-story or a broad range of characteristics and traits of his avatar, his looks are an important means to enable the gamer to connect or to identify with him. Physical attractiveness, sex-appeal or cartoonlike qualities like cuteness or a goofy, cool or tough appearance – as well as the exaggeration of these visual attributes – are common ways to make the character appealing to the player. Body, voice, clothing, posture, symbolic objects and props, weapons, gesture and facial expression are all significant elements which have to be carefully designed in order to gain the desired effect and to express a clearly defined personality or the role the character has within the game universe. The visual character design documented in chapter four presents characters which would also work in a video game – depending on the genre some features would have to be changed or added but in general the artistic approach toward the creation of a game character is quite similar to the visualization of a character for an animated series. Both types of media rely on the same principles of art which are useful for character creation by utilizing shape, form, color, value and line art to develop characters who’s visuals reflect certain attitudes as well as characteristic qualities of the hero. However, in the context of art-sourced character designs for games the principles of design will more likely support certain talents and abilities of the avatar rather than putting much effort into stressing his attitudes, interests and traits since these elements are not as important as they are in story-driven designs or linear-media. Furthermore, the art-driven approach is less concerned to avoid stereotypes since the latter might express important qualities which support the game-play more directly and therefore provide orientation and guidance. In this regard this aspect is connected to the most notable difference between the visual character design of linear and non-linear media: the demand for visuals that support the interactive dimension of the game. In this regard the eyes of the character for example may indicate where to go next. Design choices about the size of facial features or the avatar’s body therefore should take this utilization of the physical appearance into account and make sure that it suits the demands of interactive gameplay. As mentioned above the dimensions of the visceral feedback and the cognitive immersion also have to be in tune with the design in order to establish an even deeper bond between player and player-character. Even the most attractive or cutest avatar with the most distinct features which help the player to orientate won’t be convincing if he’s not fun to watch and control or if the controls don’t feel intuitively and logical.

Characters who are defined by art-sourced design choices can quite often be seen as a kind of 'tool' or 'puppet' which the player can use to navigate through the game space. ADAMS & ROLLINGS (2007, p. 156) distinguish between nonspecific, partially-specific and fully specific avatars in a way that the first two types describe characters who are quite undefined and leave much space for the player’s own imaginations. Gordon Freeman (Half-Life, VALVE 1998) is a perfect example for an absolutely nonspecific character: you don’t see him or hear him talking, you don’t learn anything about his personality or opinions and he is only doing the things you want him to do. Therefore he appears to
be one entity with the player. Lara Croft in comparison offers some bits and pieces of a background, has a visual appearance and some kind of personality (although the latter isn't very defined and quite shallow). Therefore she is a good example for a partially-specific character which can be seen as a representative of the player. Both character designs have the advantage that they leave blank spaces for the player to fill with his own imaginations. In this regard a player might find it easy to identify with these kinds of avatars although there is a chance that he might feel annoyed or disappointed by their lack of psychological depth or background.

**Story-driven Character Design |** According to Adams & Rollings (2007, p. 165-173) the story-sourced character development is emphasizing on back-story and personality which make characters of this type highly specific. Kate Walker (*Syberia*, Microids 2002) and George Stobbart (*Broken Sword*, Revolution Software 1996) serve as good examples for such characters: Both have unique personalities, quirks and habits as well as characteristic traits and the player has absolutely no means to influence their attitude and development. He is more a companion on their way who tells them what to do and where to go but not how to react to people and situations they encounter. The indirect controls which are typical for point-and-click-adventures stress the distinction between player and avatar even more because the player can only click on a specific spot within the game world to navigate the avatar but he isn't able to navigate him directly. Adams & Rollings (2007, p. 156) point out that indirect controls make the avatar "distinctly someone else", with a mind of his own.

In comparison to these characters avatars like James Sunderland (*Silent Hill 2*, Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo 2001) or Zoë Castillo (*Dreamfall: The Longest Journey*, Funcom 2006) appear less specific since the player can control both of them directly and can influence their behavior to a certain degree. Nonetheless, both characters are also examples for a story-sourced character design which presents each avatar with an individual background, characteristic traits, problems and struggles which make them much more specific than Lara Croft for example. The player can follow their story either by taking an interest in the personality and development of the characters (similar to the experience we have when we watch a movie in which we are aware that the protagonist is someone else with a life of his own, only that we now experience it in an interactive way) or we might be able to recognize ourselves in them by being able to relate to their problems, struggles, hopes and desires. The latter case would make us feel a bit more like watching parts of ourselves within the character, hoping that he will succeed which will feel like a little triumph for ourselves as well.

The decision for a very specific character design can be a risky one since the creator doesn't know if players will be able to identify with the avatar or appreciate his qualities. Every player has different preferences and defining the personality of the avatar to a greater extent leaves less space for people's own projections. Kate Walker for example might appear as a somewhat annoying character in the beginning of the first *Siberia* game. This is intended by the creators since Kate should develop during her adventures and turn more and more into an adventuress who leaves her old self behind. It is a nice experience to see how she changes but in the beginning some players might wonder why they have to cope with this impatient woman and her superficial phone talks to her boyfriend to whom she obviously doesn't have the best relationship.
The story-sourced character design requires a well defined background and is founded on the decisions about “the character’s role, personality, and behavior rather than his appearance” (Adams & Rollings 2007, p. 166). In this regard the character development for My Life of StarCraft as it is documented in chapter three, could serve for a game project which focuses much on story and character personality. Quite many principles of character design which are described in chapter two can also be transferred to the development of an avatar for a story-driven game (whilst an art-sources game in comparison is only in need of very basic information which shouldn't go into depth; instead the art-sourced approach focuses more on the visual character development). But it is most essential to remember that the design can't stop there and that there is still a very big difference between a well-designed character for an animation series and a character for a game. Players decide to play video games for a reason which distinguishes the medium from books and movies: the game offers interactivity and enables the player to take an active part within the story it provides. A gamer isn't interested in all the facets of a character if there is nothing else which secures the bond between him and his avatar. Whilst he might take a strong interest in Max's and Jacob's background and loves to see them struggling with their individual problems and overcoming their issues in the series he might find a game, which is focusing too much on just these aspects, dull and boring.

5.3 KEEP THE FOUR PRINCIPLES IN MIND AND EVERYTHING WILL BE POSSIBLE!

So, how can the transfer from story-driven characters which are taken from linear media into an interactive format be done? First of all the creator of a game that is based on My Life of StarCraft has to ask himself what genre would suit the topic and characters best. If the series would be ongoing for quite some time the audience would know the characters quite well, they would also know that it is a kind of feel-good-series with dark undertones which is strongly emphasizing on its characters and their development. What kind of game would someone expect if he knows all these things? How would he react if he finds out that it is a typical jump n' run or platform adventure which usually ignores most of the background and character development you can find in the series? – Would he necessarily have to be disappointed or are there means to make the game appealing although it has a very different focus if compared to the series?

Games which are adaptations of movies quite often dissatisfy their audience. The reasons can often be narrowed down to a bad mapping of the four dimensions which were discussed above. It could be that a gamer who buys a game based on a comic or movie about a superhero for example is looking forward to play this character in the game in order to feel that he can control the superpowers of the hero himself. If the avatar is well-design he will feel like a second skin and the gamer will experience a new, interactive layer of entertainment the movie or comic can't provide him with. On the other hand a sloppy design might lead to disappointment because the player might feel that the hero can't do all the cool stuff he did in the movie or that he is very difficult and complicated to control. In this regard the visceral feedback is out of alignment with the fantasy affordances (Isbister 2006, p. 217). The player hoped to feel empowered or to
be provided with extraordinary abilities which turn out to be a quite bad copy of the powers the hero has in other media or which simply are too difficult to handle. A player of an RPG might have hoped to be able to customize the appearance of his character in order to create a unique avatar who incorporates his ideals or expresses his desires and preferences. The character has to match "a social persona the player wants to try out and [should offer] ways to customize appearance that are fun and interesting" (Isbister 2006, p. 218). This player might feel disappointed if the game doesn't offer a custom character creation option or that the created character indeed looks very satisfying but that the creators didn't put any effort into enabling the player to act through the character in a way which suits the image he has of his avatar. In this case the fantasy dimension would be out of alignment with the social dimension.

It doesn't necessarily need to be the fantasy dimension which is in conflict with another dimension: The player might approve with the abilities his avatar offers him and feel that the game basically matches his expectations in this regard but instead feels that the game-play is very illogical. The actions he is trying to perform won't work most of the time and the solutions to solve some puzzles are implausible and no one in his right mind would think about them in the first place. In this case the lack of cognitive immersion is the reason for the player's disapproval.

These examples should demonstrate that the character design has to be carefully composed by taking all the different layers into account which are essential for successful interactive experiences. If a creator keeps the dimensions in mind it is possible to adapt contents from another medium to basically every game genre. In this context even the adaption of the My Life of StarCraft series to the platform or jump n' run genre is not an impossible task. One might think of Braid (Number None, Inc. 2008) which can be described as a combination of platform and puzzle game and which most successfully managed to integrate a profound background layer into the game-play. This happens in a very remarkable way: The player does not only learn something about the hero in between the different levels by reading a poetic story which grants a glimpse into the character's past and his feelings, the background is also the foundation for the game-play itself. By discovering the hero's secret in the end of the game the player will see all the actions he made within the game and also his avatar in a different light. In this regard the example additionally reflects another important principle of game design:

"The growth and progression of the hero is an important part of the story – as important, if not more so, than the plot itself. The common character growth cycle that is tied with the Hero's Journey advises how to manage the growth of the hero character. The hero starts with a limited awareness of himself and his situation. As the story unfolds, the hero's awareness increases" (Rollings & Adams 2003, p. 135).

Character development adds complexity to the story and makes the game experience more intense. In this way Braid combines a well-working visceral and cognitive

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13 The growth of a character doesn't necessarily need to be restricted to story-sourced aspects like his personality and self-knowledge. Leveling up, skill improvement as well as the achievement of new abilities are all means to add complexity to the character and to indicate that he developed to a certain extent.
dimension with a back-story which gives depth to the character and makes the playing of this platform game a rather poetical experience.

A creative mind will find means to create a game which reflects important aspects of the original product and shape them in a specific way to make them compatible with the new medium. By referring to the four dimensions which are essential for good character design he won't lose the focus on the interactive requirements of games and therefore has to create contents which do not limit themselves to the linear structures of the original medium but transform them into elements of an interactive experience from which they can derive.
6 CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

The utilization of characters for convergent media usage can be seen as common practice of contemporary media industries and was leading to the question about the risks and difficulties a transfer of contents from one media format to another might entail. The thesis therefore introduced the main principles of character creation and aimed to fill the gap between character development in writing and visuals as well as for linear and interactive media by providing means to successfully transfer characters into different media formats without a loss of character depth and quality. The approach was exemplified by the execution of two character designs for an animated series which served as attempts to put some aspects of the theory to the test. The results of the theoretical and practical examination can be summarized as follows:

Principles of character creation in writing

The thesis compiled and discussed approved methods for the creation process of characters in order to lay a foundation for the development of detailed characters in writing. The results of this examination can be summarized as followed:

1 | A comprehensive research about certain contexts which should define the character might be helpful and sometimes even inevitable in cases where the creator doesn't have enough information to make these contexts plausible and believable. If the writer wants to create a realistic character who is part of the ancient Mayan culture for example, he has to be aware of certain facts about the community and is in need of special knowledge.

2 | Good character design relies heavily on the creation of an emotional bond between audience and character. The audience either has to feel empathy or sympathy for the character or find him so intriguing, interesting or fun to watch that they follow his adventures nonetheless, even if they don't have much sympathy for him. The latter example especially holds true for anti-heroes or unlikable characters. Emotional bonds can be founded on recognition (the audience can relate to the character and recognizes parts of themselves in his personality), fascination (the character is fun to watch and uses uncommon attitudes and approaches in order to reach his goals, the audience is curious to learn more) or mystery (there is more to the character than it seems at the first glance, the character has a secret and the audience wants to get his hidden traits revealed).

3 | Characters can be defined through their attitude, flaws, habits and patterns, characteristic traits, talents and abilities, tastes, interests and values. In this regard stereotypes should be avoided or irritated by providing a potential character cliché with attributes and qualities which go against its stereotypical grain. A character shouldn't be too predictable although predictability is – at least to a certain degree – a good way to create the feeling of familiarity towards the character. Each character gains complexity if he is characterized by some opposing traits, beliefs and values which evoke an inner struggle within himself and make him more interesting for the audience. Characters will get more credible and intriguing if they grow within the story. The creator therefore
should aim at the development of character arcs which define the potentials of a protagonist to change.

4 | Background, goals, motives and needs help to add depth to the character. Although a back-story is not absolutely necessary it helps to get a feeling for where the hero comes from, why he behaves in a certain way and how he got the person he is in the present. Motives, goals and needs help to explain attitudes and behaviors and provide the character with an inner driving force which makes him more lifelike and believable.

Suggestions for character visualization

The theoretical description of character creation in writing was also complimented by the question of how a character's qualities can be expressed through visual design. Visual media has limited means to express the thoughts and emotions of a character through language: It can only make limited use of dialogues and monologues which might express what is going on inside a character's head without running the risk that the audience will get annoyed with the heavy use of language whilst ignoring other potentials of visual media. Visual storytelling and visual design choices therefore can help a great deal to convey all the dimensions of a character's personality. In this regard the creator of a character should reflect on the question how he can assure that the visual medium conveys all the important facets of a protagonist and how to avoid that a majority of his characteristics remain unrevealed.

1 | Shapes, forms, lines, values and colors are effective elements of visual character design which can communicate and support certain mind-sets, traits, flaws, or attitudes. The use of these elements is the most important tool of visual character design. It can lead to very complex results and offer countless possibilities to reflect various qualities of different characters or to play different designs off against each other (for example through the complementary use of color and form – red vs. green; light vs. dark; angular vs. round, etc.). Especially the visualization of the character arc of a protagonist can exploit the different elements of design to its benefits and indicate an undergoing change of the hero with the means of visual design.

2 | Color theory and psychology can cater to interesting design choices since there exists a cultural consensus about different color meanings which can be utilized for design choices and which provides the creator with an idea about how his design might be perceived by other people. Especially traits and flaws can be supported through colors because certain colors are associated with particular characteristics.

3 | Visual design is a great means to support and indicate habits and patterns of a character by supplying him with unique and interesting little details which hint at his routines and manners. This also helps to provide the character with more individuality since the visual details distinguish him from others whilst they indicate that he follows his own routines and likes to do certain things in his own way.

4 | The attempt to make talents and abilities a part of the visual character design is the most risky method of expressing a character's qualities since it easily leads to the creation of stereotypes or to one-dimensional visualizations.

5 | Props can effectively illustrate a character's interests, tastes and likings and provide him with more uniqueness.
Not every facet of a character’s personality needs to be communicated through visual character design. Certain aspects – like values for example – can be communicated much more effective through visual storytelling. The development of two characters for the animated series *My Life of StarCraft* added a practical dimension to the theoretical approach and exemplified the theory by putting it into practice. In this regard the visualization of the characters helped to raise awareness for possible problems which might occur whilst transferring written characters into visuals and offered suggestions for how these problems can get solved. In general, it can be summarized that the style of a product (a series, game, etc.) restricts the design of the characters to a certain extent since it has to match the overall impression. This might make it difficult to find a visual expression for all characters which, at the same time, provides means to support the unique qualities of each character alone. The well-composed use of all principles of art and design and the above-mentioned features will nonetheless offer solutions to this problem since even a defined style leaves space for elements which can neutralize or emphasize already existing features and looks and therefore influence the visual attitude of the character in a way that suits his personality.

*The requirements of Interactive Media*

Most of the discussed main principles of character design and development in visuals and writing can be applied to game characters. Depending on the type of required character who can either be based on an *art-sourced* or on a *story-sourced* design, the creators can lay an emphasis on visuals or provide the character with a more complex background and characterization. However, video game creators have to take one more dimension of character creation into account in order to make the character work: the interactive dimension of characters for games.

1 | The visceral feedback comprises how the player experiences his character in a sensory way, usually through sight, sound and sometimes touch. It describes a smooth and fluent interaction of player and avatar through the controls and the joyful experience which is connected to it by observing how the character executes the intended actions. Characters which make good use of this dimension are fun to control exactly because they are fun to watch. Their movements are aesthetic, fluent, dynamic or forceful and translate the controls transferred through the interface into an appealing visual language.

2 | Cognitive immersion guarantees an intuitive experience whilst controlling the character. It is provided when a player is instinctively approaching a problem in a way that works with the given game-play mechanics and therefore also with the abilities the player-character provides. In this sense the controls should be plausible and logical and evoke the feeling that the available features are sufficient in order to interact with the game-world in the desired way.

3 | Social affordance guides the player through and links him to the social universe of the game world into which his avatar is embedded. The player-character should have a clear social role and emotions to which the player can connect or relate and offer adequate means to interact with his environment in a way that supports his role and these feelings.
Fantasy affordances describe the means to enable the player to explore and process his real-life hopes, desires, fears and issues in a playful way by using the player-character and the game world as a medium. It grants the player access to realities and adventures he can't experience in his real life and allows him to try out different roles and personalities.
Successful game characters rely heavily on these principles and creators always have to take them into account since general character design and development alone won't make a character work as a game character. However it is not necessary to integrate all principles into the design. Depending on the genre and the chosen type of character (art-driven or story driven) one or two of the dimensions might be emphasized.

Suggestions for further research

Character design and development can be approached from different perspectives. In this regard especially the holistic view upon the subject – including character creation in writing, through visuals and for interactive media – seems to be underrepresented since most publications focus mainly on one aspect whilst discussing the others only on the surface or not at all. However, the industry's demands for contents which can be easily exchanged from one media format to another stress that a more comprehensive discussion of character design in the context of convergent media utilization is necessary and useful. It can help to define standards which assure that entertainment franchises provide constant quality, regardless of the medium through which they are conveyed. The analysis and examination of successful and unsuccessful character designs in convergent media might indicate major problems and potentials and might offer interesting evidence for further research.
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FIG. 1: HAGLUND, V. (2012) Mood board for the style of 'My Life of StarCraft'.