# Communicating Across the Gap: Consoles and Community

UNT ANTH 4110/5110: Design Anthropology
April 28, 2021

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Table of Contents

A special thank you to Katerin Flores and Erin Turner who not only conducted field research but also designed the slides and report.

BLIZZARD
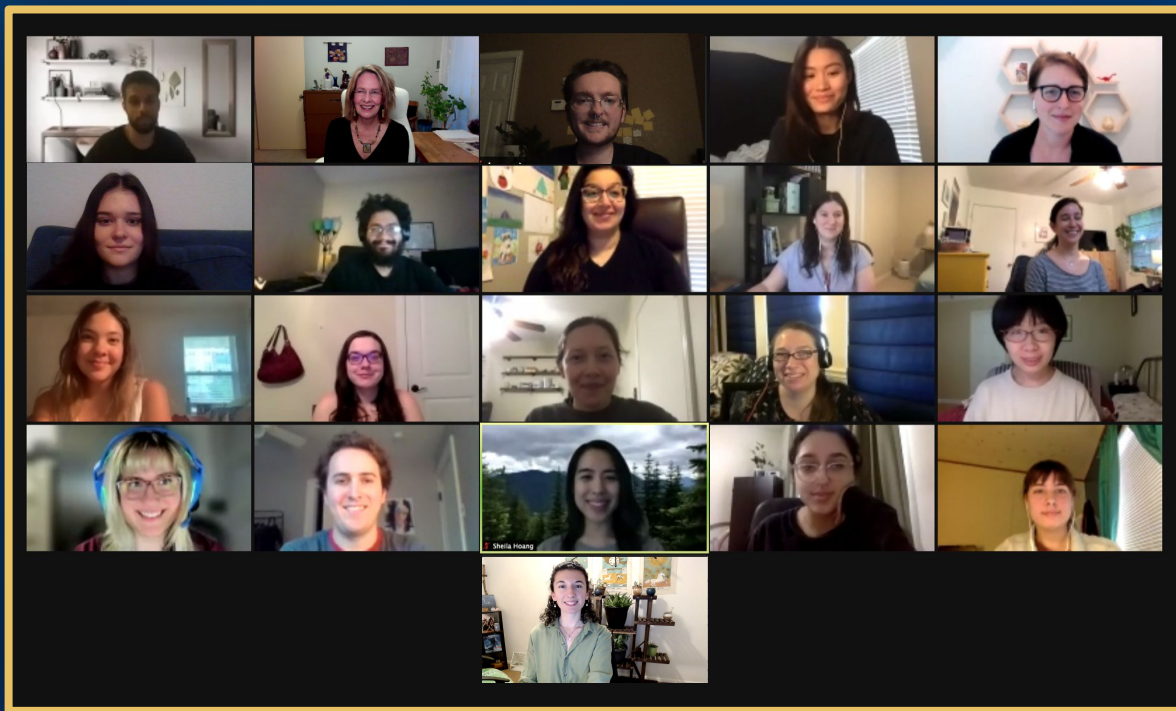ENTERTAINMENT

# 1
# THE PROJECT

Christina Wasson

# Our Question

Do console gamers utilize devices outside of their console to communicate with friends/teams while playing together, and if so, what can we learn about these communication practices?

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# 10 Study Participants

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Students in Class

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Data Collection

- Over 18 hours of recordings
- 641 pages of annotated transcripts

**PRE-GAMING INTERVIEW**

**GAMING OBSERVATION**

**POST-GAMING INTERVIEW**
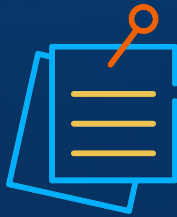
BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Analysis Process

Fieldwork Presentations → Class Discussion + Brainstorming → Miro Board → Identified Report Chapters → Coding in Dedoose → Prepared Report + Slide Deck
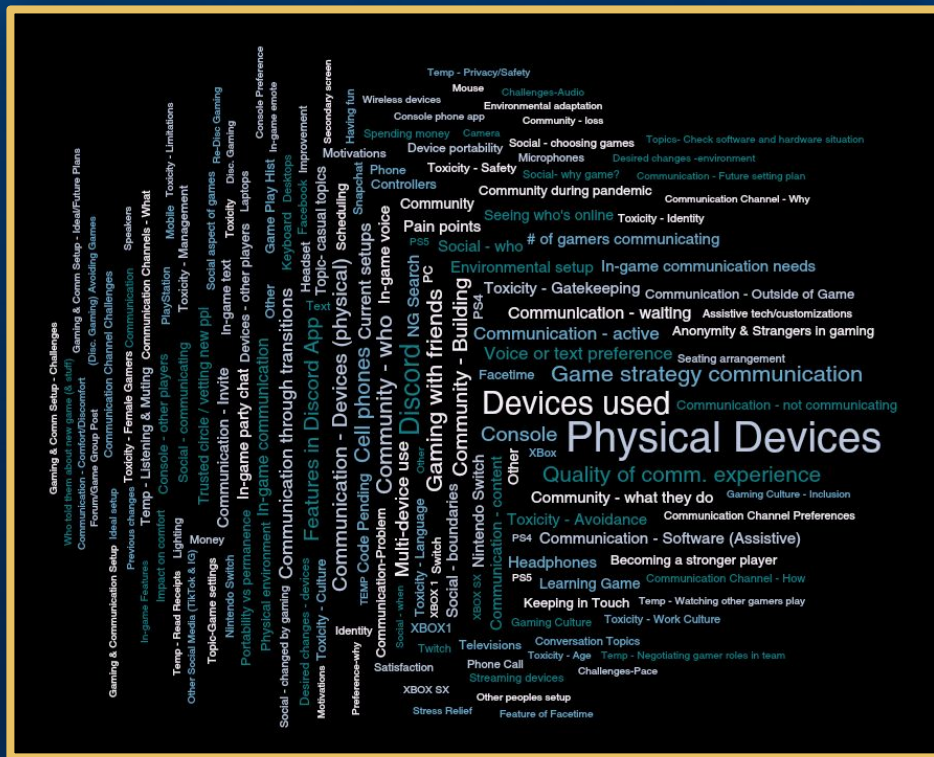
BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Analysis : *Miro*
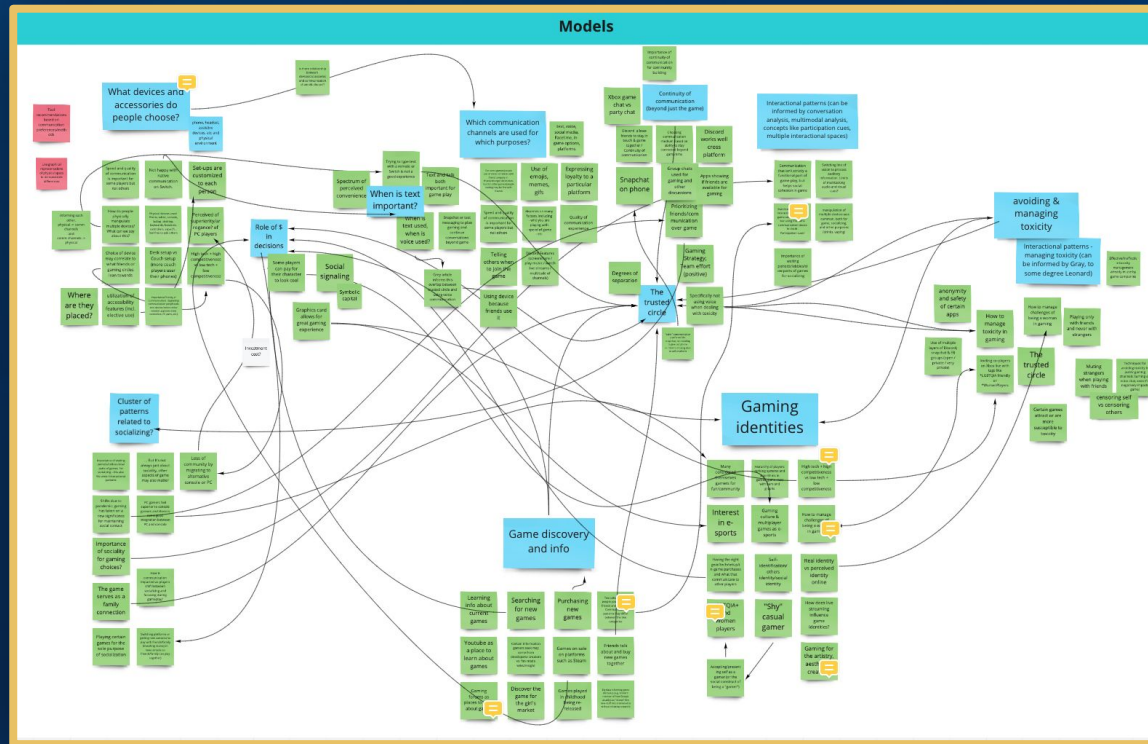
# Analysis : *Dedoose*

- 166 codes in Dedoose (shown in word cloud)

- Codes applied 2662 times

# Questions?

# 2

# THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY ON COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Abril Caraballo-Marin, Sally Darling, Kelsey Faherty, Jessica Keller, Jingwen Wang

# Community is Central to Gaming

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Friend Communities & Close Relationships

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT
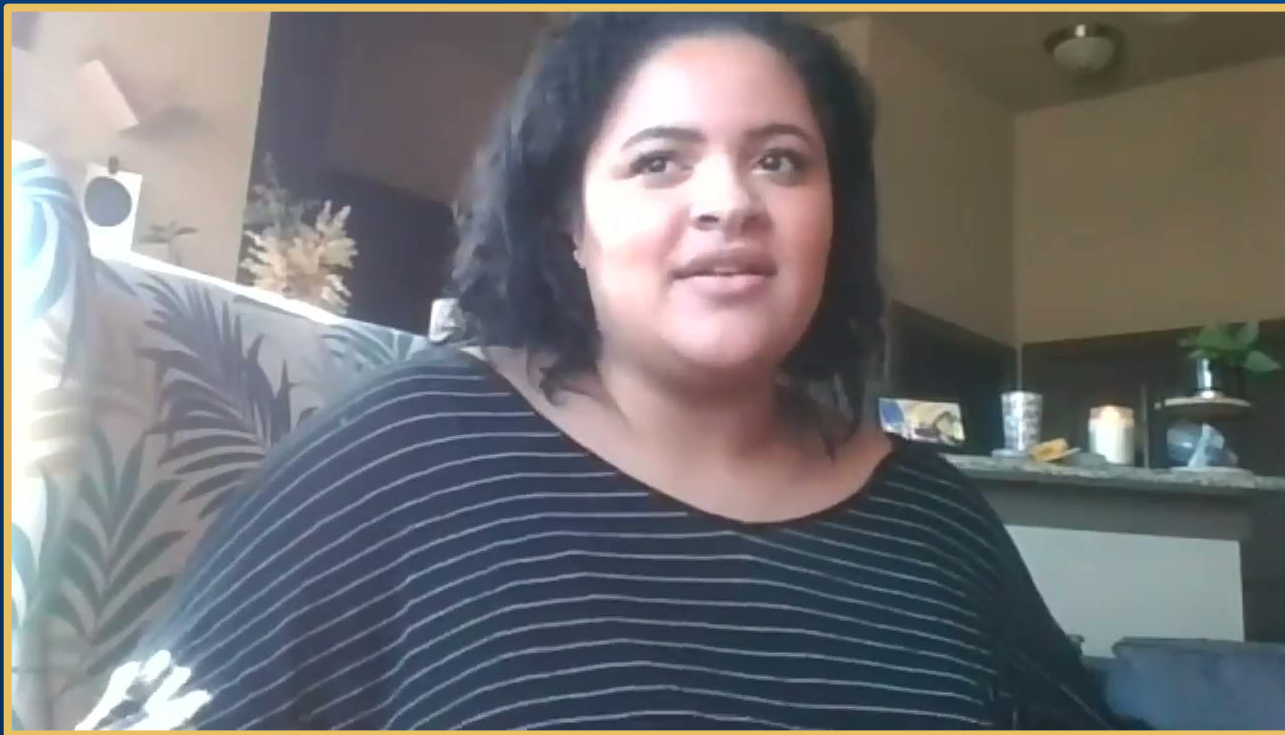
# Design Implication
## Reflect Overlapping Communities

- Players communicate different things to different groups

- Overlapping groups have similar interests and identities
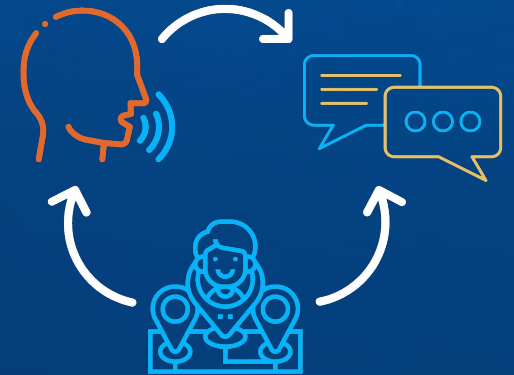
BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Design Implication
## Reflect Overlapping Communities

- Communication changes based on:
  - Other players
  - Game
  - Game mode




- Communities create safe spaces

# Groups within Communities

# Questions?

# 3 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Nadia Bejdaoui, Nick Jordan,
Arooj Qureshi, Lisa Stocker

# Overview of Communication Channels Used

- Discord was favored

- Gamers used multiple channels

- Gamers communicate before, during, and after gaming

LIST OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- Discord
- FaceTime
- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Twitch
- Phone call
- Text message
- Mobile game
- Xbox Party Chat
- Playstation Party Chat
- Call of Duty Crossplay
- In-game text chat

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

JOURNEY MAP FOR PHASES OF COMMUNICATION IN GAMING

# Communicating Through Phases of Gaming

## Before Gaming

- A lot of activity before gaming

- Schedule games and form groups

- Who is online? What are they playing?

- Unique channels for different social circles

## During Gaming

- Gaming with strangers was often uncomfortable

- Gamers switched channels for audio issues

- Multiple channels used at once

## After Gaming

- Debrief game and discuss strategy

- The game stops, but talking continues

# **Before Phase:** *Different Channels for Different Circles*

# Design Implication
## Friend Beacon

Participant activities included:
- Scheduling
- Seeing who's online
- Communicating on multiple channels (i.e., text, Discord & Snapchat)

**COMMUNICATION BEFORE THE GAME**

| Schedule a game | See who's online | Form a group | Get on the same channel |

Rubix

Washington

**Offer visibility across multiple communication channels, so that gamers can easily find each other.**

**Allow friends to schedule gameplay ahead of time.**

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Design Implication
## Group Management

Participant activities included:
- Managing different groups
- Vetting new gamer friends
- Protecting the trusted circle

**Make it easy to vet new members of online groups and offer functionality to moderate.**

**Allow users to form and manage groups for shared interests and gamer teams.**



Create a Private Voice Channel
in Voice Channels

CHANNEL TYPE

Text Channel
Post images, GIFs, stickers, opinions, and puns

Voice Channel
Hang out with voice, video, and screen sharing

CHANNEL NAME

Overwatch

Private Channel

By making a channel private, only select members and roles will have access to view or connect to this channel.

Cancel          Next

# **Questions?**

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT
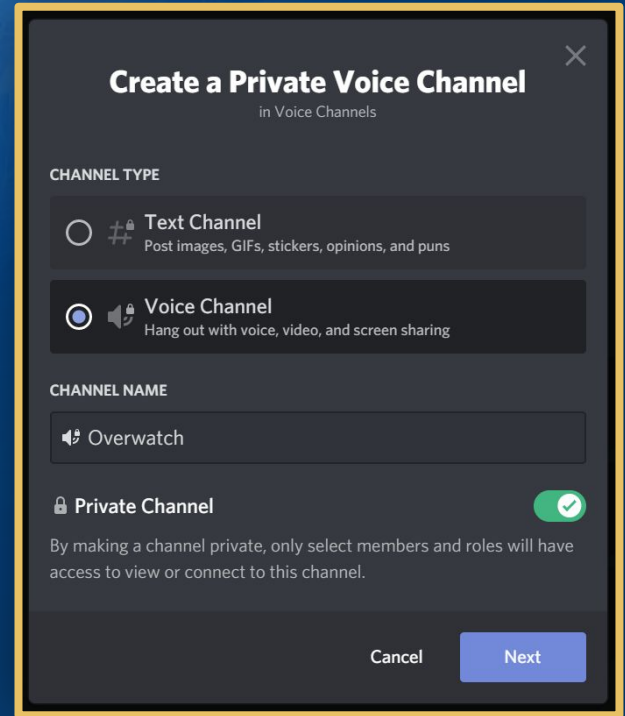
# 4

# PHYSICAL DEVICES AND ENVIRONMENT

Ben Clark, Kathryn Hays, and Ammar Multani

# Device Use

- Variety of types of devices, including personal, consoles, and additional

- Combinations of devices make up a gamer's setup

- Participants picked devices based on what's available and what is needed to meet their communication needs

PERSONAL · These devices are often the main facilitators of communication during cross-platform gaming. Every participant utilized at least one personal device in their communication process.

- PC
- Laptop
- Smartphone

CONSOLE · These devices create gateways and barriers for cross-platform communication. Unsatisfactory communication experiences lead gamers to use other devices to meet their needs.

- XBOX
- Playstation
- Nintendo Switch

ADDITIONAL · These devices customize a gamer's setup and address specific needs. They may make communication easier, address in-game communication needs, or make other devices easier to use.

- Additional monitor
- Headest
- Webcam/video call
- Television
- Headphones
- Streaming devices
- Keyboard
- Microphone
- Controller

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Different Devices

- All participants used a personal device, like a computer or smartphone, during gameplay

- 8/10 used a smartphone

- All participants used a headset or headphones

- Only 3 participants used Video chat

- Dollar had a setup with lots of devices, Washington and Flash were middle of the road, and Quinner only used 3 devices



Melissa

Dollar — Smartphone stand

Rubix — Speakers

Eric

Sophie

Minous

Washington

Quinner — Bluetooth modifier for Switch

Daniel — Foot pedals/assistive technology
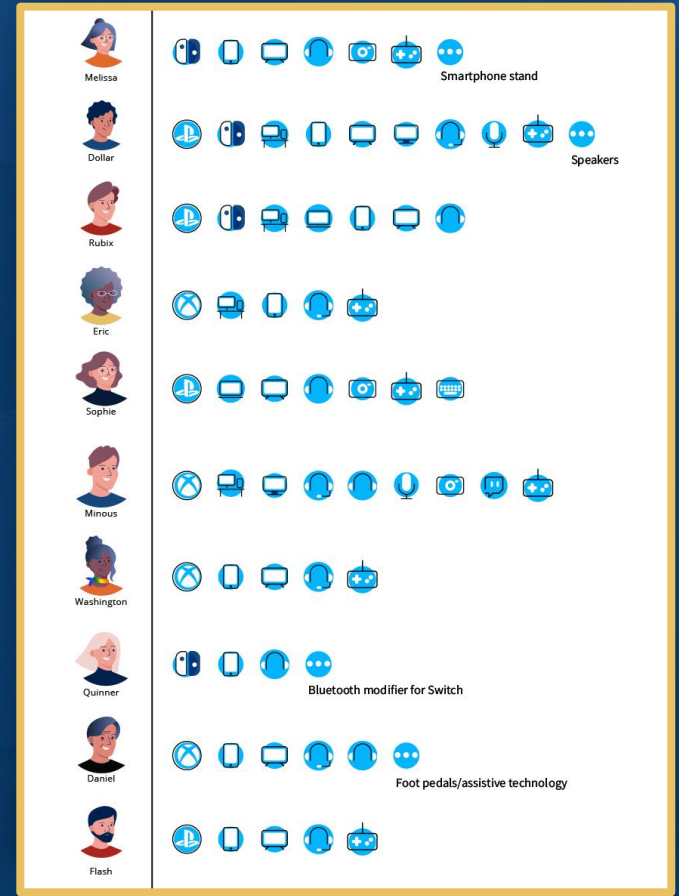
Flash

# Speed & Communication

- Multiple participants noted speed as a communication need

- Flash and Dollar said voice communication was the fastest way to interact with teammates during online play

- Sophie needed to use text-based communication in her game, and bought a keyboard to make typing faster

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Preference and Adaptation

# Setup Design & Psychology

- The space we occupy shapes our behavior

- Lighting, colors, configuration, acoustics, and materials address the senses of the individual and affect feelings

- The gaming areas reflect the player's character



*Flash's gaming setup

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Portability *vs* Permanence

### Portability

- Objects users can move around, like mouse or headset

- "The Switch is very modular and you can pick up the controllers" (Melissa)

- "Xbox app on my phone that I can use as a speaker microphone" (Daniel)

### Permanence

- Objects that are hard to move, like TV or desktop

- Wired gaming devices are not reliant on batteries and charging cables

- No issues with latency, meaning no input lag when playing

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Changes in Device Use

### Satisfaction

- Focused on devices in setup

- Sense of ownership or personalization

- Nintendo Switch's portability

- Different microphones

### Pain Points

- Handling multiple devices

- Microphone picking up background noise or visual distractions in periphery

- Functional limitations of console

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Communication Needs



2021-02-13 15:20:08

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# **Changes in Device Use:** *Desires & Motivations*

**Motivations for changes...**

- changes driven by necessity

- cost effective changes

- increasing comfort

- increasing ease of use

- increasing customization

- desires for new functionalities of current devices

# Headset Needs



2021-02-28 11:48:57

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Design Implication
## Developments

- Tool Recommendations

- Physical switches and hotkeys

- Cross-platform applications

- Integrated headset

# Design Implication
## AR Possibilities

- Mobile AR application

  - Shows additional info when pointed at screen

- HUD (Heads up display)

  - Integrated with traditional headset

  - Mimics the second monitor experience

  - Visually changes environment

# Questions?

# 5 MANAGING TOXICITY

Salvador Hernandez, Sheila Hoang, and Martina Spangrud
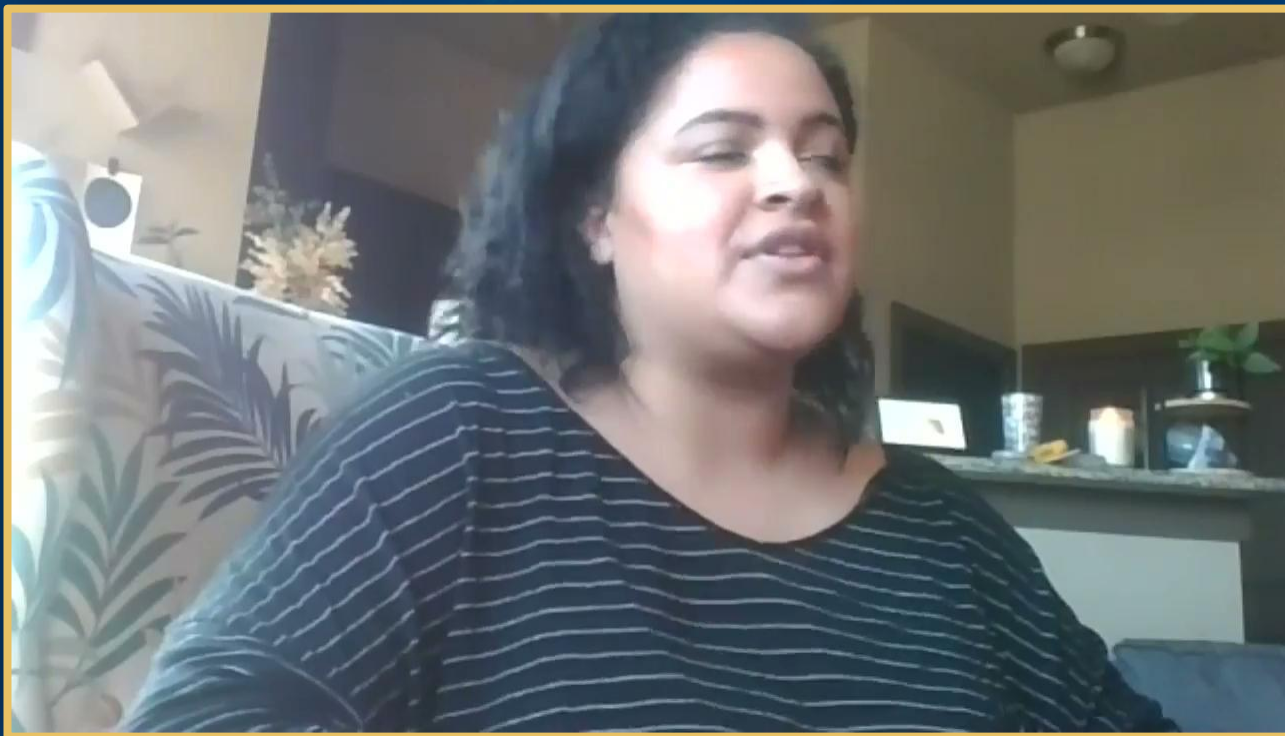
# Toxicity & Identity

- Discriminatory language is related to identity:
  - Gender
  - Race
  - Age

- Political situations may influence toxicity

- Audio quality and gaming style may also be criticized
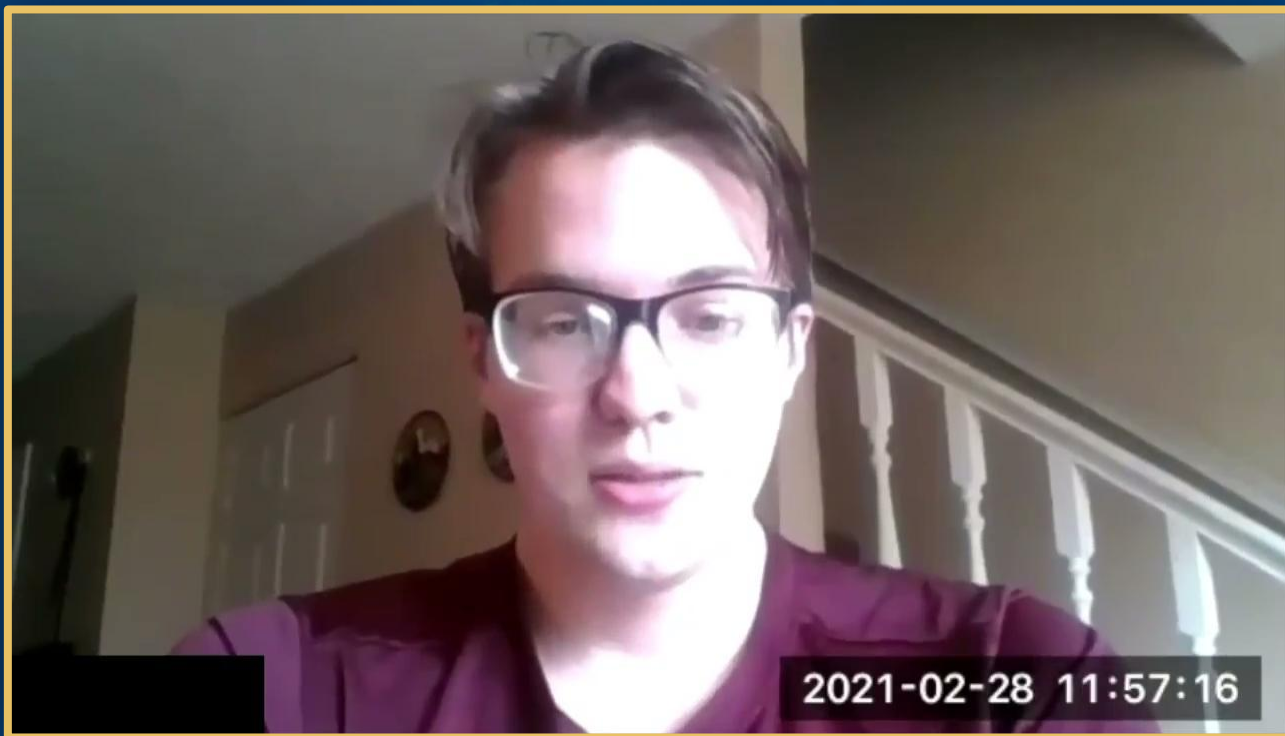
# Toxicity & Identity

# Existing Forms of Toxicity Management

- Muting other people through volume control

- Participants muting themselves

- The "Trusted Circle"
  - Playing only with friends
  - Group chats / calls

# Existing Forms of Toxicity Management



2021-02-28  11:57:16

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Design Implication

## Using Artificial Intelligence to Flag Toxic Behaviors

- AI used as a tool to help address common issues

- AI will learn different contexts over time

- Goal is to address toxic behaviors and have human moderators address the most critical flags

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
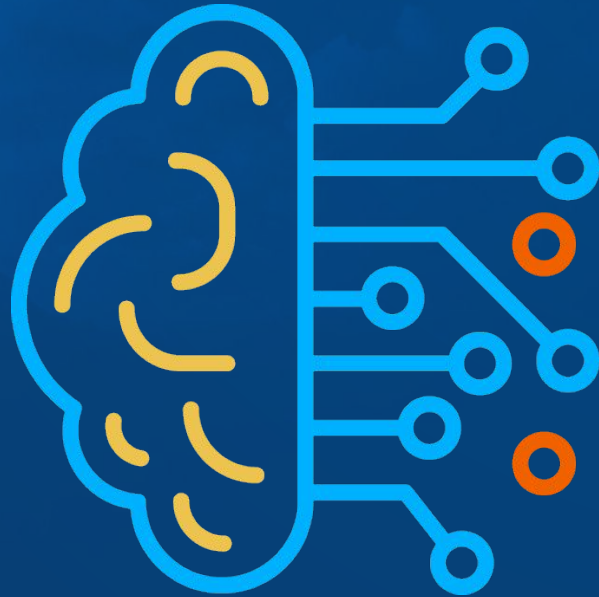
# Design Implication
## Award & Badging System

- Players gift awards to others for exceptional posts

- Players earn badges after a certain number of awards

- Badges unlock player privileges

- Goal is to create a positive environment

Wumpus#0001

**Bronze Badge**
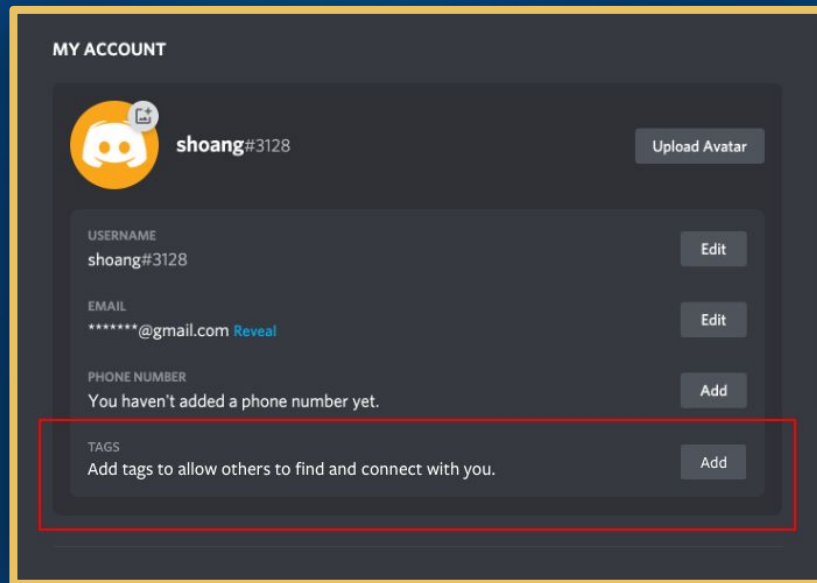Need 100 Awards

**Silver Badge**
Need 300 Awards

**Gold Badge**
Need 500 Awards

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Design Implication
## Connecting Players Using Tags

- Players can add personal tags

- Custom tags can be suggested

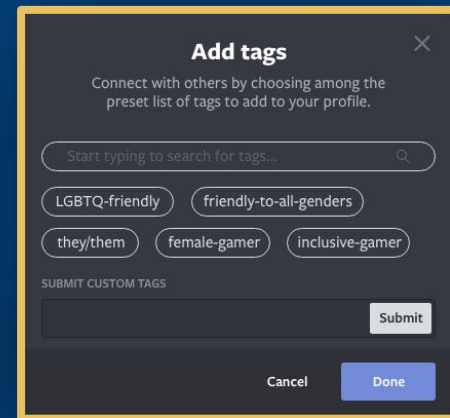- Goal is to find other like-minded players



**MY ACCOUNT**

shoang#3128      Upload Avatar

USERNAME
shoang#3128      Edit

EMAIL
*******@gmail.com Reveal      Edit

PHONE NUMBER
You haven't added a phone number yet.      Add

TAGS
Add tags to allow others to find and connect with you.      Add

**Add tags**
Connect with others by choosing among the preset list of tags to add to your profile.

Start typing to search for tags...

LGBTQ-friendly   friendly-to-all-genders
they/them   female-gamer   inclusive-gamer
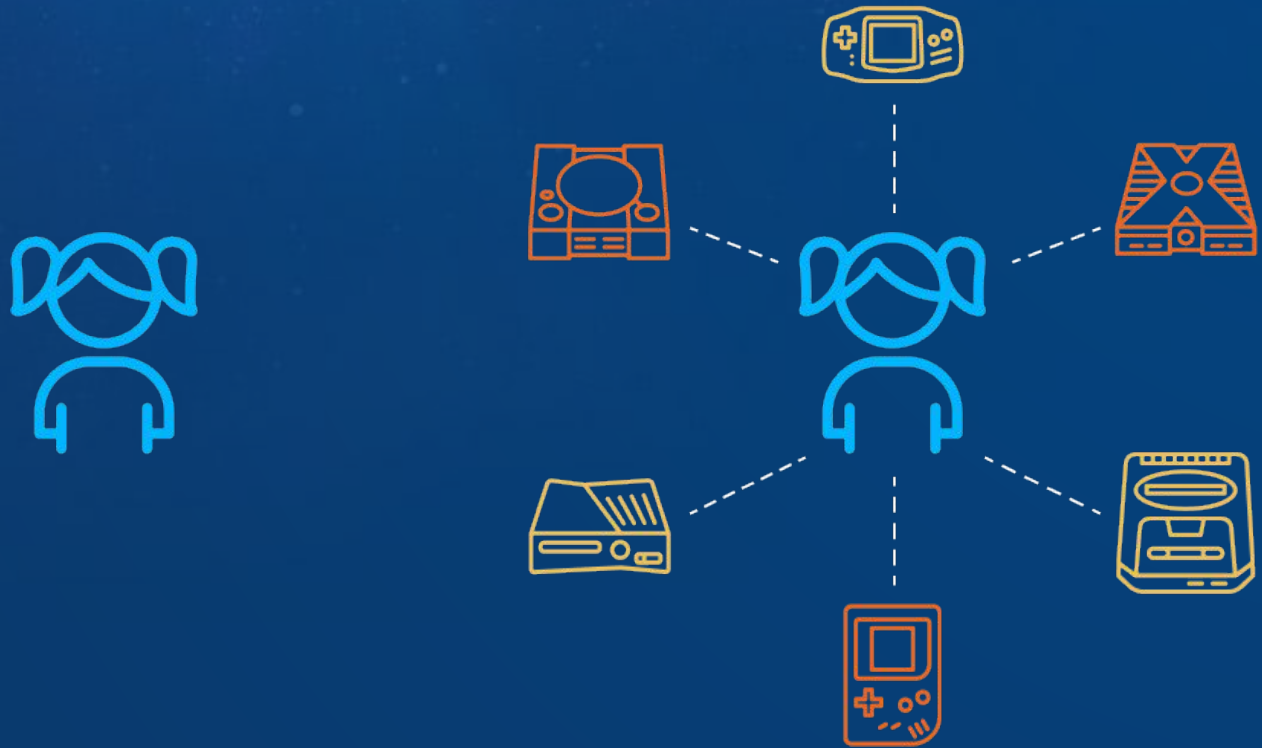
SUBMIT CUSTOM TAGS

Submit

Cancel    Done

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Questions?

# 6

# GAME DISCOVERY AND INFORMATION

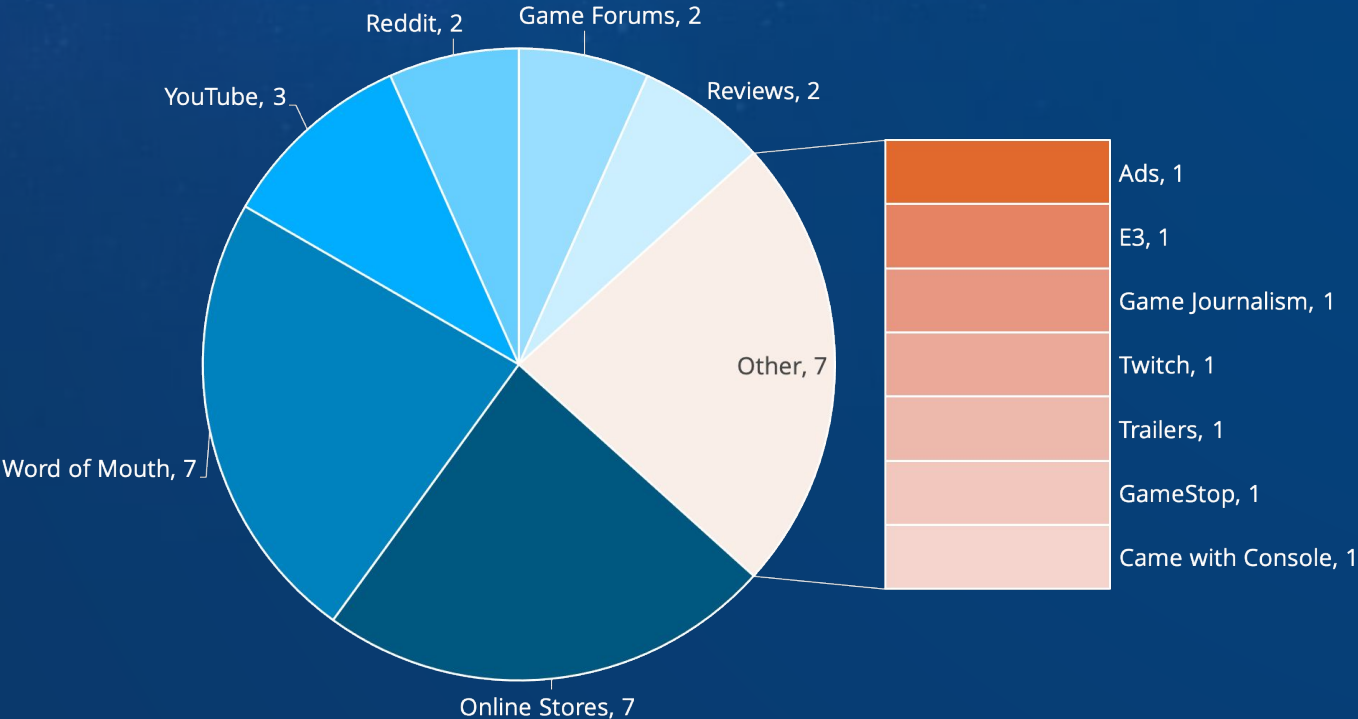Kennedy Burch, Vanessa Terry, and Lareina Yap

# Discovering Console Gaming

# Word of Mouth

**Conversations influencing gaming selection**

# New Game Search Methods



Reddit, 2
Game Forums, 2
YouTube, 3
Reviews, 2
Other, 7
Word of Mouth, 7
Online Stores, 7

Ads, 1
E3, 1
Game Journalism, 1
Twitch, 1
Trailers, 1
GameStop, 1
Came with Console, 1

# New Game Discovery : *Example 1*

# New Game Discovery : *Example 2*
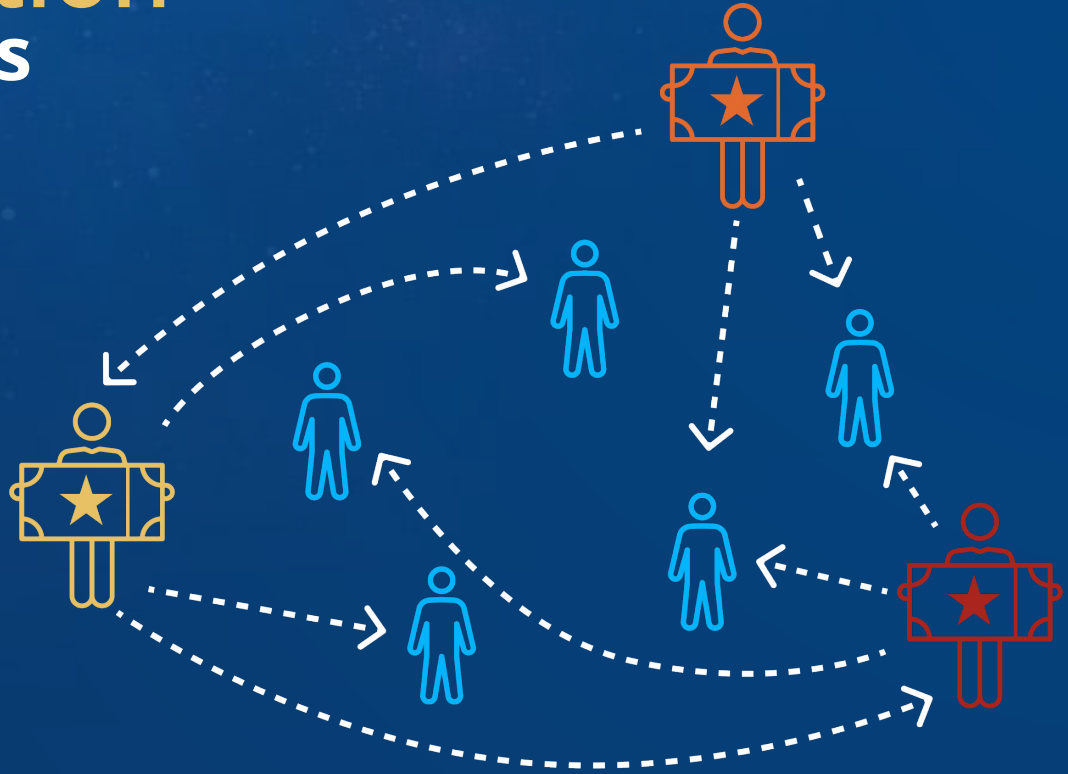
# Design Implication
## Personalized Play Store

A page in the play store that lists down games that friends had downloaded.

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Design Implication
## Shared Game Pass

**The ability to share a game pass with friends.**

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Questions?

BLIZZARD
ENTERTAINMENT

# Thank you!

A big thank you to Diana for all her contributions and guidance.