



PERFECT WOMAN

A GAME BY
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Genre	Kinect Game
Current State	advanced prototype
Language	English
Duration	around 15 min.
University	Cooperation between Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg and UCLA
Implementation	Unity 3D, Body movement tracking via Microsoft Kinect Sensor
Exposé	<p><i>Perfect Woman</i> is a dance game for the Kinect, where it comes in an ironic way, to be as perfect woman. Career, family and personal life, as well as many other aspects in life, have to be in balance. You start as a five year old girl and, if you dance well, you could reaching an age of 85 years. The better the player masters the choreography, the more "perfect" is the rating.</p> <p>The higher the player puts his goals, the more difficult the choreography will be to master. Past decisions can complicate or simplify future choreographies - depending on how they match the path of life.</p>

USP

- Unique art-style
- 27 stages with their own soundtracks
- Individual game experience with personal analysis
- Innovative usage of Kinect-Technology: The theme of perfectness is experienced physically
- We combine the joy of dancing with a humanoid self reflection: Do we really want to be perfect all of the time?

Recognition (Feb. 2014)

- FMX 2014, Stuttgart
- „Sobre“ Vivir Em Berlim 2014, Sao Paolo
- Independent Games Festival 2014, San Francisco
- Spielsalon 2013, Kassel
- IndieCade 2013, Los Angeles
- What's Your Spiel 2013, New York
- Republika 2013, Rijeka
- UCLA Game Art Festival 2013, Los Angeles
- A MAZE. Indie Connect 2013, Berlin
- Swissnex 2013, San Francisco



INTRODUCTION

Inspired by questionnaires or “psychological tests” we know from women’s magazines, the game’s challenge is: Be as perfect as possible! Over the course of seven different age-stages you decide how your life is going to be. But be careful with your choices: Having a perfect youth can make it very difficult to be a perfect grandmother at the age of 80! And what is the perfect life after all?

It is a Western problem in the definition of the “perfect woman”, that she is expected to shine in so many aspects of her life: Work, family, friends, individuality, health, to name a few. In order to fulfill these expectations, some of the aspects rival, if not contradict each other.

In the game *Perfect Woman* it’s easier and possibly even more fun, not to always choose the perfect way of life. If she lives perfectly all the time, at the age of 34, the player has to take a decision. She can either choose the perfect life, which, due to it’s extreme difficulty, most probably leads to immediate death. Or she can try an easier and no quite as perfect life and get very old. And what’s so wrong about it? Can’t a woman be in love with her work, without feeling forced to have a fulfilled private life? Can’t she be an emotionally fulfilled housewife, with no urges to further develop her individuality? Does she have to be perfect?

If *Perfect Woman* wanted to promote anything to it’s players, it was to take away their pressure of never feeling perfect enough.

Perfect Woman is a Kinect game for adult women and men. One playthrough takes about 15 minutes. In order to play through all the content at least once, it offers approximately one hour of interactive entertainment.

Inspired by questionnaires or “psychological tests” we know from women’s magazines, the game’s challenge is: Be as perfect as possible! Over the course of seven different age-stages the player decides how her life is going to be. But she has to be careful with her choices: Having a perfect youth can make it very difficult to be a perfect grandmother at the age of 80! And what is the perfect life after all?

Perfect Woman is a collaboration between UCLA Game Lab and Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. Peter Lu (Los Angeles) and Lea Schönfelder (Ludwigsburg) have been working on it since Lea's residency at UCLA during fall quarter 2012. Recently they are supported by the producers Benedikt Haas and Annika Bauer, artist Marius Winter and students of the Musik Design class at Musikhochschule Trossingen.

OPERATIVE IDEA

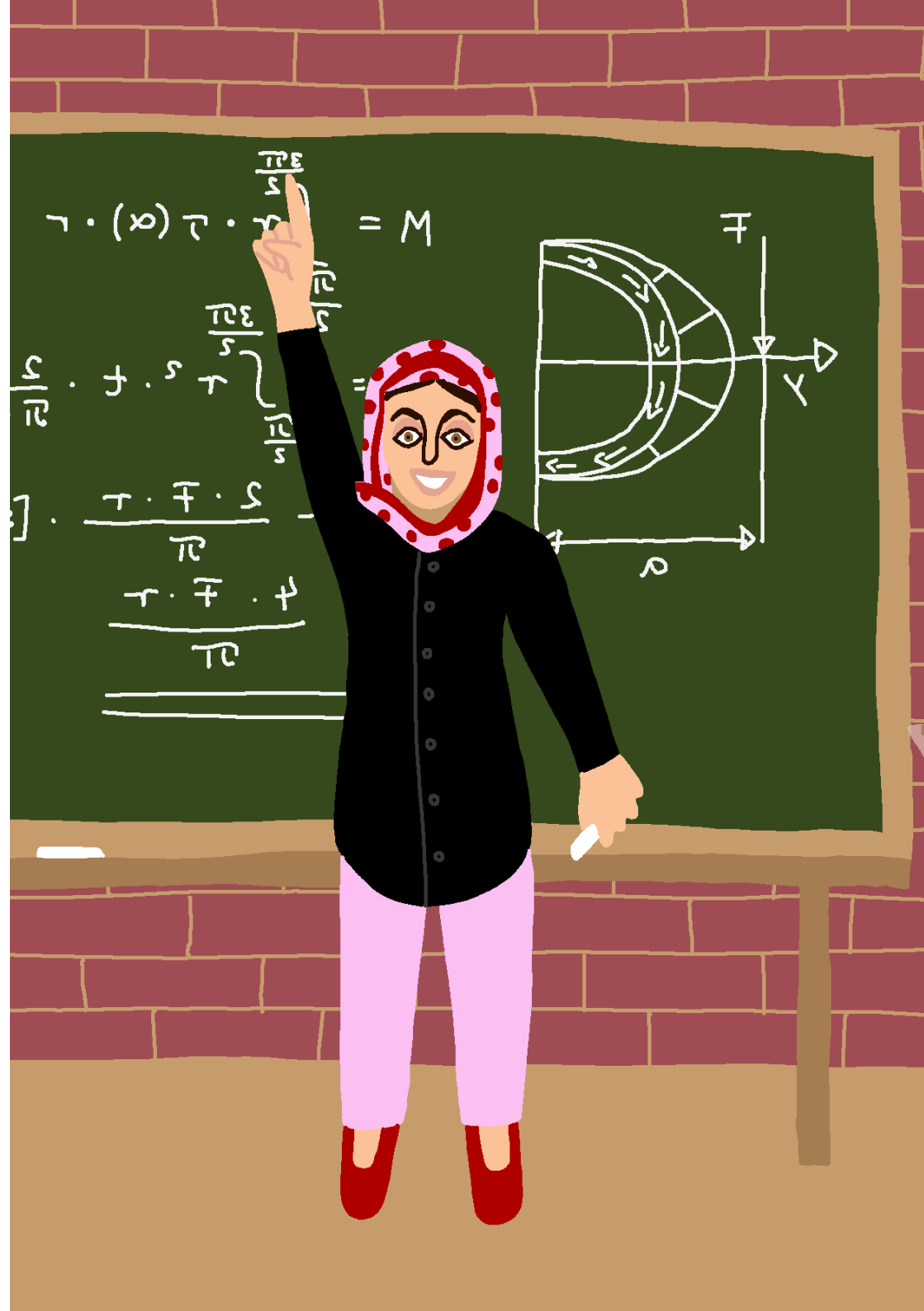
It is that Western problem in the definition of perfectness, that the "perfect woman" is expected to shine in so many aspects of her life: Work, family, friends, individuality, health and so on. You can imagine that in order to fulfill these expectations, some of the aspects rival, if not contradict each other. Of course the problem is already detected by the perfectionist women themselves and displayed in the media, like in the humorous article *Ratgeber für die perfekte Frau*¹ by Marie Amrhein, where she advises her readers:

*"Sie sind eine Frau oder wollen eine werden? Beachten sie ein paar Kleinigkeiten und das ganze wird ein riesengroßer Spaß. Vorausgesetzt, Sie funktionieren. In jeder Rolle die Ihnen zugeordnet wird - von Männern, Kindern, Müttern, Vätern, Freundinnen, Arbeitgebern und dem Staat."*²

Before one discusses how perfect we are or how important it is to be perfect, perfectness needs to be defined. In this document you will read about different meanings of the word "perfectness", about its development over time and its forms in different cultures and generations.

1 Amrhein, Marie. Rollenbilder - Ratgeber für die perfekte Frau (2013); <http://www.cicero.de/salon/emanzipation-rollebilder-ratgeber-fuer-die-perfekte-frau/54619> (2013/07/05)

2 ib.



MOTIVATION

In the past it has often been complained about games, that contentwise as well as aesthetically a big part of the market concentrates on lowbrow entertainment for a very limited audience. Luckily during the last years there has been a development that game developers concentrated more on ambivalent topics and experimentation in look and controls. Examples like *Cart Life*¹, a depressing simulation about an Ukrainian hot dog seller with an individual artistic style, are successful at big festivals like the *IGF*. Even at *GDC* awards, which are not limited to independent productions, two Indie games, *Journey*² and *Faster Than Light*³, have been honored. This shows a hunger for a bigger variety of game genres. We used to have a lot of “hollywood” in games, it’s time for a little bit “arthouse” now.

The team behind *Perfect Woman* wants to be part of this development. We have a topic, that bother people in real life. This topic - the struggle for perfectness - has already been discussed a lot in media. We port it to a Kinect controlled game. For the first time you can physically experience the balancing act of a woman that is expected - or expects herself - to be perfect. Being challenged like that and experiencing that you can be perfect - but in that case you die at 34, rises the core question of the game: Do we at all want to be perfect?

After all, the alternatives in *0* aren’t that bad: You can raise an adopted child with your girlfriend at the beach, or be a drunk girl on Oktoberfest having fun. These options are not perfect (or maybe to some of us they are?) but given certain circumstances they might be a lot easier to achieve and you will get very old.

So the game asks many questions. What is perfectness? How important is it to me to be perfect? And as a result: Do I even have to be perfect? But we don’t want to give any answers. Because that is what every player is free to decide by herself.

1 Hofmeier, Richard. *Cart Life*. richardhofmeier 2013.

2 Thatgamecompany. *Journey*. Sony Computer Entertainment 2012.

3 Subset Games. *Faster Than Light*. Subset Games 2012.

CORE EXPERIENCE

Perfect Woman is a game, and it is fun to play. Like we enjoy watching a movie about an interesting topic. Genre wise, it is our goal to create a feeling similar to a bitter sweet comedy humourous but including some things to think about. Testing the Prototype of *Perfect Woman* on the players reveals that one source of fun is the dancing around as all kinds of different women in all kinds of situations. The other fun part, especially for people that don’t play so much, is reading and experiencing how every decision in the game correlates with your future. We are happy that most players, after playing through one life and discovering these correlations, want to play again, to see if they can do better, or to get to know more stages. This is where we want the player to be, because after learning about the underneath system, she understands our message: It’s easier and possibly even more fun, not to always choose the perfect way of life. If she plays the perfect way, at the age of 34, the player has to take the decision of either choosing the perfect life, which, due to it’s extreme difficulty, most probably leads to immediate death. Or trying it with an easier and “not quite as perfect” life. And what’s so wrong about it? Can’t a woman be in love with her work, without feeling forced to have a fulfilled private life? Can’t she be an emotionally fulfilled housewife, with no urges to further develop her individuality? Does she have to be perfect?

GAME DESIGN

CORE MECHANICS

The core mechanics of *Perfect Woman* are based on classical dancing games for the *Kinect*, like *Dance Central*¹ and others. It is to match a choreography, shown on screen, as good as you can. Unlike in most of those games, *Perfect Woman* allows you to rotate the actual limbs of a figure. In most dancing and exercise games we know for the *Kinect*, you only see a video on screen which the player is supposed to match as good as she can. Her performance is evaluated “secretly” and revealed during or after the dance in form of meters or effects. In *Perfect woman* you live control a puppet on screen. In that manner the player can identify with the body on screen more easily. The performance is demonstrated by a “shadow” of the puppet, moving behind it. In the picture on the right, that would be the pink silhouette. The more accurately the player fits onto that shadow, the higher her score rises.

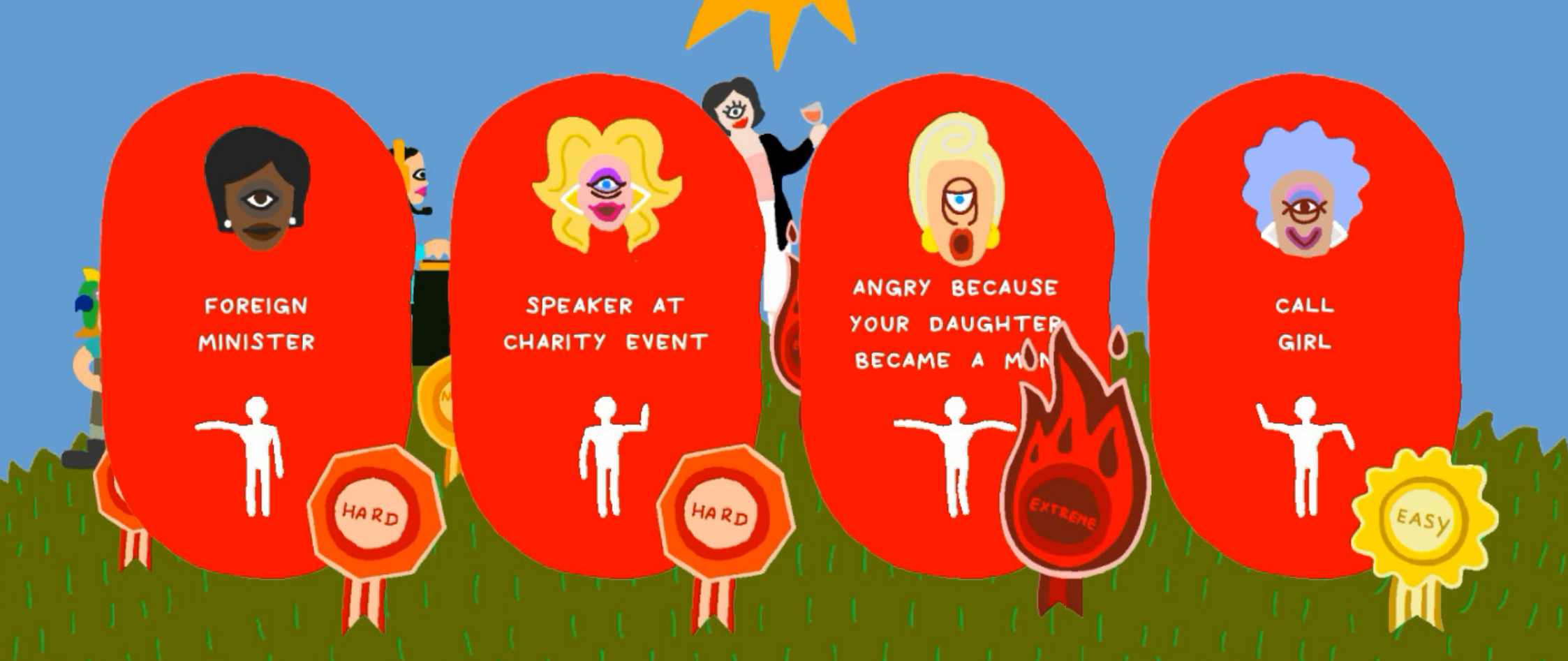
META GAME

Up to seven performances are linked together in a meta game. Each round, the player lives her own, customized life, beginning at age 5. There are seven life stages, each representing a certain age. At each stage the player can pick her favourite life style. At age 45 she can choose between being a *Belly Dance Teacher*, a *Rich Wife*, a *Burned Out Woman* or a *Whale Hunter*. The 4 choices are always the same for that age.

At this point it has to be said that *Perfect Woman* is also a strategy game. Because with each choice, the player takes, she influences the difficulty of upcoming performances. Let's give some examples: If at age 27, the player chooses to be a terrorist, at age 45 the whale hunter will be easier to perform. That is because the underneath system recognizes that the player is already used to unethical actions.

If she were a princess as a kid, the rich wife would be easy to perform later, because it fits the player's life as well.





But if she would have been a street kid before, becoming a rich wife would be really hard to perform because it doesn't fit her previous life at all.

CHALLENGE

When the player takes a choice, it is based on two informations. She is given a description of a life style (e.g. *Call Girl*) and the difficulty of the respective performance (e.g. *easy*). She can decide between 4 different life styles at a time and each one has it's own difficulty. Most playtesters took their choice based on their favourite life style. But they also had to take into account the difficulty of the respective performance. Sometimes their favourite life style was *easy* or *normal* to perform, so there was

no question going for it. But when their favourite life was linked to *hard* or *extreme* performance, like the *Foreign Minister*, you see in the example above, they would rather choose their second or third favorite life, in order to still get a decent score. Players have to constantly balance their own idea of a perfect life against the physical difficulty, that comes with it.

The message we want to bring across is, that within the system it is almost impossible for players to always live a *perfect life*. It may be doable for a while, but eventually one's life history will catch up. Players will have a real conflict with all the different aspects of life, that need to be *perfect*, such as work, family, friends, individuality, or health, to name a few.

But maybe, the *not so perfect life* is also fun!



USER TESTING

Since *Perfect Woman* was designed in an iterative way, we were constantly testing all new development on a variety of players.

Testing Basic Interaction

The first playtests were made while Peter Lu and Lea Schönfelder set up the core mechanics of the game in Fall 2012 at the *UCLA Game Lab*. According to the results of the tests the pacing of the figures' moving, controlled by the player in front of the Kinect, was set. At this point there was no moving shadow yet, so the player had to hold one pose throughout one life stage.

Communication with the player

When Lea Schönfelder moved back to Ludwigsburg to continue her study at *Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg* in early 2013 and Peter Lu stayed in Los Angeles, playtests had to be evaluated on Skype. Since the underneath counting system was decided on very early and seemed to work out well, a lot of effort was put into how the game communicates with it's players.

Perfect Woman was fully playable from early on. And everybody enjoyed the dancing part. But unfortunately the players had a hard time understanding what the connection between their choices and the game's course was, even if it was explained to them. In the earlier versions of the game, the players were shown a complicated matrix on the right side of the screen, including a graph of their current performance, all previous choices and all upcoming choices. Furthermore these choices showed information on their difficulty and the degree of their perfectness. This was apparently overwhelming and not making things clear to the player.

A confusing interface was not the only thing that had to be dealt with. What playtests at that time clearly showed, was that the overall experience just wasn't living a life from the beginning to the end. It felt more like playing through a series of dance performances, without them having much of a connection. By that, the team's intent to show off the ridiculousness of a perfect life was at stake!

Restructuring the Game

Major problems demanded for major changes. In order for the player to feel more involved in a continuous life, an overall game dramaturgy was developed.

As a meta game environment, the player finds herself in a grass hill now, where she gets an overview about the life she had so far and how old she currently is. Also the decision, what she wants to be next is made here. Once she took the decision, the player is released into the respective scene. She absolves the dancing part and gets an evaluation in form of a cut scene, telling her, how the performance affects her future life. Afterwards she comes back to the grass hill and has grown a little older.

Cutting down the interface

Communication-wise the game had to become less overwhelming and less about understanding but more about experiencing. It was decided to cut all information that was not crucial for knowing what was going on.

The matrix on the right side of the screen, which used to be the interface before, vanished completely. The showing of all previous and all future lives was just not necessary at that point.

The quality of the performance, which used to be a graph in a window, is now shown in form of particle effects, coming out of the dancing figure itself. Nothing more than the title of the scene and the difficulty in form of a badge, remained as an interface in the dancing part of the game, making the screen visually much more attractive. It is now also easier for the player to concentrate on the dance.

Information on how the future is affected by a scene, is given in the cut scene, following the dance. Only the affected future scenes are shown. The player is only given the information about what actually happens right now. Because she needs nothing more to enjoy and try out her perfect life.



RESEARCH: PERFECTNESS

DEFINITIONS

The adjective “perfect” is defined by *New Oxford American Dictionary* as

“1. Having all the required or desirable elements, qualities, or characteristics; as good as it is possible to be, and 2. Free from any flaw or defect in condition or quality; faultless”¹.

The word “perfection” is used more commonly than “perfectness” and is defined as

“1. The condition, state or quality of being free or as free as possible from all flaws or defects, 2. A person or thing perceived as the embodiment of such a condition, state or quality, 3. The action or process of improving something until it is faultless or as faultless as possible”².

Synonyms of “perfectness” are: perfection, excellence, exactness, crown, ending, idealism, quality, purity, supremacy, achievement, completeness, fulfillment, precision. It’s Antonyms are: damage, deficiency, flay, imperfection, uselessness.³

In this document the less common expression of “perfectness” is used instead of “perfection”. “Perfectness” directs the attention more on the first two aspects of the definition above, the state of being without flaw, rather than the third one, where the process of getting perfect at a certain action is more in focus. The reason for using the expression “perfectness” is, that Perfect Woman it is more about deciding for the perfect life or against it, rather than becoming more perfect over time.

Another contemporary and very specific definition of perfectness is found in the *Urban Dictionary*⁴: A perfect person is

“Someone with many if not all of these traits: beautiful on the inside and out, attractive, athletic, generous, caring, kind, funny, fun to be around, hardworking, friendly”⁵.

1 New Oxford American Dictionary. Oxford University Press, Inc. 2010

2 ib.

3 cf. Thesaurus; <http://thesaurus.com/browse/perfectness> (2013/07/05)

4 urban Dictionary; <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=perfectness> (2013/07/05)

5 ib.

Urban Dictionary is a collaborative platform in English, where members collaboratively come up with and define the content. So this is no scientific definition of perfectness but mirrors the subjective definition of a community that’s not too far away from the target group of *Perfect Woman*.

EUROPEAN HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PERFECTNESS

Linguistic origin

“The word ‘perfection’ derives from the Latin ‘perfectio’, and ‘perfect’ from ‘perfectus.’ These expressions in turn come from ‘perficio’ - ‘to finish’, ‘to bring to an end’. [...] The Greek equivalent of the Latin ‘perfectus’ was ‘teleos’.”⁶

Similar to the definition in the *Urban Dictionary*, the Greek word “teleos” had concrete referents, like a perfect physician or flutist, a perfect comedy or a perfect social system. It had not the abstract meaning of the Latin “perfectio” or the modern “perfection”. It was therefore translated as “completeness” rather than “perfection”.⁷

Ancient Greece

The ancient Greeks viewed perfection as a requisite for beauty and high art. The Pythagoreanism cult (5th century BC), which was considerably influenced by mathematics, music and astronomy, held that perfection was to be found in the right proportions and in a harmonious arrangement of parts.⁸

6 Perfection. In: Wikipedia; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfectness> (2013/07/05). Paragraph: Term and concept.

7 cf. ib.

8 cf. ib. Paragraph: Aesthetics.



Platon (428 BC–427 BC) seldom used the actual term “perfection”. According to him, the concept of “good”, which was central to his philosophy, was equivalent to “perfection.” He stated that approximation to the idea of perfection makes people perfect.⁹

The oldest definition of “perfection” goes back to Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC). He distinguished three different shades of perfectness.

“That is perfect: 1. which is complete - which contains all the requisite parts, 2. which is so good that nothing of the kind could be better, 3. which has attained its purpose.”¹⁰

Christianity

Plato and the Stoics had made perfection a philosophical watchword. Soon it was transformed, in Christianity, into a religious one. The Christian doctrine of perfection can be found in the Gospels as well as elsewhere in the Bible. Matthew 5:48 enjoins: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Early Christian writings, especially Paul’s, are replete with calls to perfection. Already in the Old Testament it says: “Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” (Deuteronomy 18:13.) Elsewhere synonyms for “perfection” in the bible are “undefiled”, “without rebuke”, “without blemish”, “blameless”, “holy”, “righteous”, “unblamable”, “unreprovable.”¹¹

You can read from these attributes that true perfection is not really a thing, a human being can obtain. Or as St. Jerome puts it: “Perfectio vera in coelestibus” — true perfection is to be found only in heaven.¹² Perfection on earth is unachievable.

If for the ancient philosophers, the essence of perfection had been harmony, for the Gospel and the Christian theologians it was charity, or love. St. Paul wrote (Epistle to the Colossians, 3:14): “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”¹³

9 cf. ib. Paragraph: Ethics.

10 ib. Paragraph: Term and concept.

11 cf. ib. Paragraph: Ethics.

12 cf. ib.

13 cf. ib.

Medieval Europe

Ideas of perfection in medieval Europe all derived from the omnipresent role the Christian church had as a religious, political, economic and educational institution at the time. There were many different shades the definition of perfectness could appear in though.

There was the thesis that the first condition for perfection is the desire of it. Also necessary is grace, but God gives grace to those who desire perfection and strive for it. Another condition in this thesis is constancy of striving and effort.

The second half of the 16th century brought the Counter-reformation and a return of the Catholic concept; and also, heroic attempts to attain perfection through contemplation and mortification.

With the second half of the 17th century came a further development in the doctrine of predestination — the doctrine of “Quietism.” Perfection could be reached through a passive awaiting of grace rather than by an active striving. This method of reaching perfection more or less contradicts the method of striving and effort.¹⁴

18th century

The 18th century brought a change to the idea of moral perfection. Faith in it remained, but it changed character from religious to secular. This secular, 18th-century perfection was a fundamental article of faith for the Enlightenment. Its central tenet was that nature was perfect; and perfect, too, was the man who lived in harmony with nature's law.

Already at this time people had different understandings of how to live perfect. The question is not easy, you see: A second interpretation took the contrary view: civilization perfected man by bringing him closer to reason, and thereby to nature.

These two mid-18th-century schools of thought - one seeing perfection in nature and in the past, and the other in civilization and in the future - represented a reaction not against the idea of perfection, but against its transcendental interpretation: as, earlier, the measure of perfection had been the idea of God, so now it was the idea of nature or of civilization.¹⁵

14 cf. ib.

15 cf. ib.

19th-21st century

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the advances of science and technology appear to have been paralleled to some extent by increasingly pluralistic attitudes. The Polish philosopher Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1886–1980) has written: “To demand of someone that he strive after perfection seems equally inappropriate as to blame him for not striving after it.” Such striving, he adds, “is often egocentric and yields poorer moral and social results than an outward-directed behavior based not on self-perfection but on good will and kindness toward others.”¹⁶ After Tatarkiewicz we don't need perfection any more.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERFECTIONISM

Having discussed the meaning of perfectness in it's development over time, we have reached the present, where, as we learned from Władysław Tatarkiewicz, perfectionism isn't seen as a virtue anymore but rather as a mental illness.

“Perfectionists strain compulsively and unceasingly towards unobtainable goals, and measure their self-worth by productivity and accomplishment. Pressuring oneself to achieve unrealistic goals inevitably sets the person up for disappointment. Perfectionists tend to be harsh critics of themselves when they fail to meet their standards.”¹⁷

Perfectionism can be treated by psychotherapies like cognitive-behavioral therapy, which should lead to alternative ways of coping and thinking, or psychoanalytic therapy, which focuses on analyzation of underlying motives and issues, or group therapy, for those who feel alone with their problems. Furthermore there is the person centered humanistic therapy where positive aspects are highlighted, self-therapy where journaling, self-discipline and self-monitoring is important. Cognitive-behavioral therapy intends to help people to allow themselves to make mistakes sometimes and that those mistakes can be lessons learned.¹⁸

16 cf. ib.

17 Perfectionism. In. Wikipedia; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfectionism_\(psychology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfectionism_(psychology)) (2013/07/05). Paragraph: Definition.

18 cf. ib. Paragraph: Treatment.



It unfortunately seems that big parts of young western women are fallen ill by perfectionism. Especially those who live a more modern lifestyle long to fulfill all expectations others and they have towards themselves, which, because there are so many of them, is often an unachievable goal. Now that we have discussed perfectness in all its abstract meanings, we will look into the specific virtues women in different cultures have to obtain in order to be whole, to be a real woman, to be perfect.

PERFECTNESS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

The game *Perfect Woman* is about the question, what it needs to be considered the perfect person, in this case, the perfect woman. So in the following it will be elaborated which virtues a woman is supposed to obtain, which goals she should have, which education which roles she should fulfill - shortly how she should live her life. These requirements for being perfect vary from culture to culture. We begin with German and American society, because that are the influences of the game's authors and compare it to other role models afterwards.

Western societies

GERMANY

What does it need to be a woman? An ironic article called *Ratgeber für die perfekte Frau*¹ lists: A happy relationship, have children in time, become mother for your own children but stay daughter for your parents, keep the family together, be a good mother, stay a good friend to your friends, have an ambitious and important job, be sexy, and if anything goes wrong, be the happy ex-wife.² Being all that apparently is not enough. You also have to be happy with your life yourself. You should be everything - but be also relaxed:

1 Amrhein, Marie. Rollenbilder - Ratgeber für die perfekte Frau (2013); <http://www.cicero.de/salon/emanzipation-rollenbilder-ratgeber-fuer-die-perfekte-frau/54619> (2013/07/05)

2 cf. ib.

“Es ist ein sehr hohes Ideal, dem viele Frauen entsprechen möchten: Im Beruf wollen sie selbstbestimmt und erfolgreich, zu Hause die liebende Supermama und attraktive Partnerin sein. Und auch wenn vier von fünf Frauen dem Thema Kinder am liebsten mit Gelassenheit begegnen würden - nur zwei von fünf fühlen sich dabei wirklich entspannt.

“Gelassene Eltern haben auch gelassene Kinder”. Dementsprechend würden sie es als persönliches Versagen betrachten, wenn die Kinder nicht gelassen seien, Wutanfälle hätten oder im Supermarkt tobten. Dieses Gelassenheitsideal gibt es laut Imdahl in allen sozialen Schichten.”³

Media, society, politics and parents suggest women: You can have it all. But this suggestion feels almost like a demand: you must have it all! In order to make everyone else happy, and please, be happy with it yourself, too!

Ursula von der Leyen

Ursula von der Leyen is one of the most famous German examples of a woman who apparently has it all. She is a German politician of the conservative CDU. Since 2009 she has served as the Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs under chancellor Merkel. She is married to Heiko von der Leyen, a professor of medicine, the CEO of a business development company and a member of the House of Leyen, an ancient family of high nobility. Ursula and Heiko von der Leyen have seven children.⁴

Women in rural areas in Germany

Germany is a densely populated country and many former rural areas merge together to form big agglomerations with a more urban atmosphere. There is still rural life though and the values in the countryside of course differ a little from the above described values of people in the cities who often live a more modern lifestyle. People who live in German villages are generally more focused on partnership and family. Due to less academic education they marry and get children earlier. A main concern of women in rural Germany is the compatibility of work and family. Women and men alike depend on adequate access

3 Mythos der perfekten Frau (2010); <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/leben/studie-ueber-junge-frauen-nicht-ideal-genug-1.1027800> (2013/07/06)

4 cf. Ursula von der Leyen. In: Wikipedia; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ursula_von_der_Leyen (2013/07/06) Paragraph: personal life.

to medical services, a good transportation structure and enough jobs.⁵

USA

Debora Spar writes in *The Daily Beast* about a problematic conclusion of the feminist movement. The fact that women are now free to have it all, she claims, is misinterpreted often by women themselves that they should have it all in order to be an emancipated woman.⁶ Spar writes:

“ [...] rather than leaping with glee at the liberation that has befallen women since the 1960s, we are laboring instead under a double whammy of impossible expectations—the old-fashioned ones (to be good mothers and wives, impeccable housekeepers and blushing brides) and those wrought more recently (to be athletic, strong, sexually versatile, and wholly independent). The result? We have become a generation desperate to be perfect wives, mothers, and professionals—Tiger Moms who prepare organic quinoa each evening after waltzing home from the IPO in our Manolo Blahnik heels.”⁷

The picture of a perfect woman in the US seems to be similar to the German one. Maybe focused a little more on economic success and outer appearance. As for example being athletic wouldn't be seen as very important in the picture of the perfect woman in Germany.

Women in rural areas in USA

Casey Quinlan, now living in the big city visits her hometown Cortland, New York, and writes about “small-town mentality”:

“Rural women face a different set of challenges than these Superwomen. It's less likely rural women's mothers received an education beyond high school. [...] So rural women focus on where they can achieve, and often the only avenue of achievement open to them is in raising children and getting married. Rural women are more likely to have sex and marry earlier than urban women [...]”

5 cf. Dr. Becker, Heinrich / Gombert, Pia / Moser, Andrea. Perspektiven und Probleme von Frauen in ländlichen Räumen (2005); http://download.ble.de/02HS012_2F.pdf (2013/07/06)

6 cf. Spar, Debora. Why Women Should Stop Trying To Be Perfect (2012); <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/09/23/why-women-should-stop-trying-to-be-perfect.html> (2013/07/06)

7 ib.



‘What makes life hard for rural women and young families in rural America is the stress of poverty, which is directly related to the loss of high-paying manufacturing jobs with benefits, increase in employers using temp and seasonal labor, and the costs of reliable transportation and health care’⁸

CONCLUSION WESTERN SOCIETIES

Analyzing the examples of Germany and USA, we understand that the women’s rights movement brought a lot of freedom to most of the women living in western countries. Unfortunately this freedom is often turned into pressure that dictates not only “you can have it all”, but also “you should have it all” in order to be perfect. It seems that women living in post-feminist societies try to prove the women’s rights movement right, by demonstrating that they can obtain all the rights they fought for. Obviously this is a strange misinterpretation, because this turns rights in to duties.

Role models in other societies

Whereas in western societies women complain about having to fulfill both types of expectations, the traditional and the modern ones, in many developing and emerging countries women’s roles focus more on the traditional ones. In economically booming societies like India and China, in many families, women are not kept from education and their own career anymore. These women’s problems sound very similar to the ones found in countries like the USA. Religious or cultic societies like the Aborigines often strictly separate roles for both genders. This contains less conflict for the individual and obviously less freedom. Altogether, family has a much higher priority in the following societies than in the western ones.

CHINA

Being a country with a history that began over 2000 BC and is much older than the European one, China for the longest time had very strict role models and expectations towards women. These times have changed in some ways. China’s new lucrative

8 Quinlan, Casey. *The Particular Struggles Of Rural Women* (2013); <http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/06/the-particular-struggles-of-rural-women/276803/> (2013/07/06) Paragraph: Marrying Young.

middle class in the big cities has prioritized giving their daughters what they never had. It has thus created a new female generation that's better educated, has more money and more career choices at hand. These women expect a lot from life.⁹ Yanglin, one of these women who lives in Beijing says:

*"To be a woman in China today, I need to carry on the traditional values of the Chinese woman. By traditional values I mean traditional values cherished by the whole cultures and my generation and at the same time I need to make full use of the freedom of choice given to me by my time."*¹⁰

Simply having stability or a job with a salary isn't enough for many modern women. Those with economic means want to and can travel abroad, something their mothers never did.

Zhu Chengxi:

*"In China, I think that still many people have expectations towards women. In my opinion, a woman can be an individual, but always with other characters. When I was little, I was my parents' daughter. When I grow up, I will be somebody's wife or somebody's mother. To be a woman in China, because China treasures family very much, sometimes, we don't treat women like individuals."*¹¹

Nevertheless, there is now a successful and affluent group of career women in China. However, there are other downsides. Yanglin also says that society may be more openminded, but the family pressures remain the same.¹²

INDIA

The blog *neoIndian*, written by an Indian who lived some time abroad but newly returned back home, describes in an humoristic way the values, that dominate an Indian's way of life. Of course the author of the article *A quick overview of Indian values*¹³ laughs about some of these values as old school, and as young Indians are

9 cf. Hunt, Andrea. Women in a Changing Chinese Society- More Success, More Choice (2011); <http://english.cri.xcn/7146/2011/03/11/2702s625516.htm> (2013/07/06)

10 ib.

11 ib.

12 cf. ib.

13 cf. A quick overview of Indian values (2010); <http://neoindian.org/2010/06/16/a-quick-overview-of-indian-values/> (2013/07/06)

very open towards the world, very diverse in their own culture and especially present in the online world, we can imagine that they no longer have the importance they used to have to the people over the last centuries. They still influence a young person's life though, simply because these values have been inside the heads of their parents and grandparents while raising their children.

Among these are - very important - respect for the elders, family orientation and trust in the institution of marriage but also focus on education.¹⁴ So family has still an important role in India.

Women have an ambivalent status though. From an equal status in ancient time, over a dark medieval period, when for reasons of honor widows were buried alive or girls were married very young, to the promotion of equal rights by many reforms and high education nowadays. Violence against women is still a major problem in Indian society, on the other hand Indian women maintain important positions in politics and economics, as for example India's presidency was held by Pratibha Patil until 2012.¹⁵ (Neither in Germany nor in USA, nor in many other Western countries there was ever a female president.)

ABORIGINES

*"Traditional Aboriginal society is a closely knit and interdependent unit. Every member has responsibilities and roles and the lines of communication and social activity are established with an intricate set of laws based on gender and age. The strength of the society lay in the strength of family over individualism. [...]Traditionally the women are the principal food gatherers, collecting seed, vegetables, fruit, small insects and larvae while the men are responsible for hunting for protein based food. Women are also responsible for the caring of the young children. At around six years of age, the male children join the men to learn hunting while the young girls remain with the women to learn food gathering."*¹⁶

Other functions of women in the Aboriginal society are healing, judging, painting and perform cultic ceremonies like dreaming. With a higher age, women gain more power

14 cf. ib.

15 cf. Pratibha Patil. In: Wikipedia; http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratibha_Patil (2013/07/06)

16 Aboriginal Women (2013); <http://www.aboriginalartstore.com.au/aboriginal-art-culture/aboriginal-women.php> (2013/07/06)

and prestige. An unusual custom is also that women as well as men are not allowed to speak to their mothers in law.¹⁷

PERFECT LIFE IN THE GAME

OVERVIEW OF ALL STAGES

This table shows all possible ways of life you can choose from in *Perfect Woman*. Light yellow represents choices that are considered to be the most perfect, the more red it gets, the least perfect the respective lives are. It needs to be said that the perfectness evaluation might differ slightly from person to person. So one person might find it more attractive to be a *drummer* at the age of 16, than to be a *sexy teenager*. Since *Perfect Woman* is an author game, the list below represents the evaluation of the authors of the game. As discussed in the *mechanics* section of this document, the perfectness of a choice is not directly linked to the rule set. But indirectly it is, since the choice of your life style is - in combination with difficulty - the factor, the player's selection is based on. In the following, all most perfect and some not so perfect stages are discussed, regarding the influences they evolved from.

age	conservative life	career life	hippie life	extreme life
0	Foetus			
5	Princess	Super Talented Singer And Performer	Street Kid, Leading A Gang	Child Worker
16	Teenager, Everybody Wants To Have Sex With	Eager Student	Playing In A Band In The Woods	Taking Care Of Your Younger Brother During War
27	Mother Of Two Happy Kids	Professional Gamer	Drunk Girl On Oktoberfest	Terrorist
34	7/11 Cashier	Successful Professor At MIT	Raising Adopted Child At The Beach	Mother Whose Child Dies Of Leukemia
45	Rich wife	Burned out	Belly Dance Teacher	Whale Hunter
60	Angry Because Your Daughter Became A Man	Speaker At Charity Event	Call Girl	Foreign Minister
85	Praying To God To Take You To Heaven	Demented But Happy	Wise And Experienced Grandmother	Tribal Matriarch
110	Astronaut			

17 cf. Traditional Life; <http://www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml> (2013/07/06)



5 year-old (most perfect): Princess

Little girls are surrounded by princesses. In fairy tales like *Cinderella*,¹ the unloved girl becomes a princess in the end. In *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*,² the misunderstood girl becomes a princess in the end. Most of the animated Disney films have beautiful princesses, little girls identify themselves with.

Many times I imagined myself being a princess when I was a child. I daydreamed about different kind of princesses, I pretended to be a princess in the playground and I dressed myself up, together with a friend, believing, we were preparing for a princess event. I did all of that despite, or maybe because, my mother tried to raise me gender neutral and forbid "sexist" toys like Barbie dolls.

1 Folk tale. Cinderella. Grimm's fairy tales 1805.

2 Disney's Beauty and the Beast. Buena Vista Pictures 1991.

5 year-old (not so perfect): Street Kid, Leading A Gang

If being princess is always the happy end, in many traditional stories, being a poor child, abandoned by her parents is the opposite of it. In fairy tales like *The little match girl*¹ or *Der Weihnachtsstern*² children living in the streets are shown in their misery. Also charity appeals for street children, which appear especially around Christmas suggest you: The kids with a home are so much better off than the poor street children. Luckily we can donate for them, so they, and we, feel better.



1 Andersen, Christian. The little match girl. Dansk Folkekalender for 1846.

2 Holst, Adolf / Kutzer, Ernst. Der Weihnachtsstern. Alfred Hahn's Verlag, Esslingen 2000.



16 year-old (most perfect): Teenager, Everybody Wants To Have Sex With

As a teenager it is very important that your classmates like you. Sexiness is very important because the more boys find you attractive, the more your girl friends will admire you too. Magazines like *Girl*¹, or high school comedies like *10 things I hate about you*² are all about sex. Teenage girls love to talk about it and pretend that they have had sex for years and with many boys already. That can be quite uncomfortable of course for those among them who have had very few sexual experiences yet.

1 BRAVO GiRL!. Bauer Media Group seit 1988.

2 10 things I hate about you. Buena Vista Pictures 1999.



27 year-old (most perfect): Mother Of Two Happy Kids

I am 27 years old. Recently I attended an alumni reunion of my old highschool class. I went to school in a little city in Swabia, so the average inhabitants are not exactly cosmopolitan. I understood that many of my old classmates were already married and even more of them had children. I somehow admired them because they already had an adult's life, working in a normal job and raising children, and even seem to be happy with it. Me, now going to 30 and still studying, felt a little bit childish in comparison.

And then there are all these advertisements for detergents or candy picturing a very clear idea of a pretty, happy, young mother with sweet little children.

34 year-old (most perfect): Successful Professor At MIT

This stage is inspired by the two flagship career women Sheryl Sandberg and Marissa Meyer.

Sheryl Sandberg was born 1969. She worked as management consultant for *McKinsey & Company*, Chief of Staff to then United States Secretary of the Treasury Larry Summers under President Bill Clinton, Vice President of Global Online Sales & Operations at *Google Inc.* and since 2007 holds the office as COO at *Facebook*¹. Of course her success didn't come peradventure.

*"She attended public school, where she was 'always at the top of her class'. In 1987, Sandberg enrolled at Harvard College and graduated in 1991 summa cum laude with an A.B. in economics and was awarded the John H. Williams Prize for the top graduating student in economics. In 1993, she enrolled at Harvard Business School and in 1995 she earned her M.B.A. with highest distinction."*²

Sheryl Sandberg held a TED-talk³, which obviously worked as an example when designing the Successful professor at MIT stage for the game.

Marissa Meyer, born in 1975 and since 2012 president and CEO of *Yahoo!* is the second example of young and economically super successful women that influenced this stage.⁴

Mayer graduated with honors from *Stanford University*. In 2009, the *Illinois Institute of Technology* granted Mayer an honoris causa doctorate degree. Mayer worked at the *UBS research lab Ubilab* in Zurich, Switzerland, and *SRI International* in Menlo Park, California. She helped building up *Google* in 1999 and held key roles in the company until her shift to *Yahoo!* in 2012.⁵

1 cf. Sheryl Sandberg. In: Wikipedia; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheryl_Sandberg (2013/07/06) Paragraph: Career.

2 ib. Paragraph: Early life and education.

3 Sheryl Sandberg: Why we have too few women leaders (2010). In: TED; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18uDutyIDa4> (2013/07/06)

4 cf. Marissa Meyer. In: Wikipedia; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marissa_Meyer (2013/07/06) Paragraph: Early life and education.

5 cf. ib. Paragraph: Career.



45 year-old (most perfect): Belly Dance Teacher

When getting older, other topics than the struggle for a good career, come up. Especially women claim, that they now seek for an inner richness and harmony and care more about their health than before, to live a harmonious life.

In institutions like community colleges, people can attend courses like belly dancing. This is healthy on the one side, and a possibility for social contacts on the other.

“Orientalischer Ausdruckstanz bedeutet Weiblichkeit und Ästhetik verbunden mit Lebensfreude - eine Freude, die durch die verborgene Sprache des eigenen Körpers immer wieder neu entdeckt wird. Unabhängig von Körpergröße, Figur und Beweglichkeit finden Frauen jeden Alters zu ihrer inneren und äußeren Balance.”¹

I myself took lessons in Tai Chi at a community college. There were merely elder women besides me and my friend and the Tai Chi instructor, a woman in her late 40ies, seemed very relaxed. I imagined her life simple but happy with her having much time for her friends and family. She seemed spiritually fulfilled.



1 Orientalischer Ausdruckstanz für Einsteigerinnen. In: Programm Frühjahr 2013. Volkshochschule Heidenheim; http://www.vhs-heidenheim.de/site/Heidenheim-VHS/get/documents/heidenheim/Mediathek_Heidenheim_VHS/Volkshochschule/VHS_Programm_Fruhjahn_2013.pdf (24/06/13) S. 32.



60 year-old (most perfect):

Foreign Minister

Women in deciding administrative positions have a tradition for quite some time now. Even in the generations of our mothers and grandmothers, there were famous female politicians and heads of states. From Catherine the Great or Queen Elisabeth over Margaret Thatcher to Condoleezza Rice, Hillary Clinton and Angela Merkel, who *Forbes*¹ rated to be the second powerful person after Barack Obama the and most powerful woman in the world. Many countries you wouldn't expect have had female presidents like Argentina, Jamaica, Mozambique or India. We see them ruling our society in the everyday news, so it seems to be a challenging but realistic and option to become an important politician as a woman.

1 Angela Merkel. *Forbes* 2012; <http://www.forbes.com/profile/angela-merkel/> (2013/07/06)

60 year-old (least perfect):

Angry Because Your Daughter Became A Man

Movies like *All About My Mother* by Pedro Almodovar¹ or games like *Dys4ia* by Anna Anthropy², deal with sex reassignment surgery. People now speak openly about it, because the public is accepting and understanding it more and more. Old school, conservative people who oppose or feel disgust about transsexuals are not cool any more. No one wants to be reactionary and there are no valid arguments why someone shouldn't reassign his or her sex if she or he feels to be born in the wrong body.

1 Almodovar, Pedro. *All About My Mother*. Sony Pictures Classics 1999.

2 Anthropy, Anna. *Dys4ia*. Newgrounds 2012.



85 year-old (most perfect): Wise And Experienced Grandmother

You just have to speak to your own grandmother, or old people who lived in a country like Germany, that went through a lot of history during the last century. One of my grandmothers for example experienced 2 dictatorships in her life, the Third Reich and the DDR, where she fled from, secretly with her children still being very young. She didn't have a happy marriage but it was just no option for her to divorce her husband. My other grandmother lost her first husband in an airplane crash, she had 7 children, in Second World War they fled from Schlesien to Western Germany, even during the escape she gave birth to more children. Later, she lost one of them to cancer.

My grandmothers' struggles were much more existential ones than problems of a spoiled children's life today. And you will hear stories like that from many old people who lived through difficult times. Nevertheless, my grandmothers were great with us grandchildren, and I assume they were happy, too.



85 year-old (least perfect): Praying To God To Take You To Heaven

This scene portraits religion in it's negative form. Nevertheless the basic ideas of Christianity are love and tolerance, there are more limiting aspects brought to it by all kinds of human interpretation. There is for example the idea of hell and the principles of suffering which especially religious women tend to adapt. Like the cult of Mater Dolorosa, with her seven sorrows: the Prophecy of Simeon or the Circumcision of Christ, the Flight into Egypt, the loss of the child Jesus in the Temple, Mary meets Jesus on the way to Calvary, Jesus dies on the cross, Mary receives the body of Jesus in her arms and the body of Jesus is placed in the tomb.¹

It is a tradition especially in Catholic countries like Latin America, that women visit 7 altars of the Virgin Mary in a row and pray one rosary in front of each.

¹ Our Lady of Sorrows. In: Wikipedia; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Sorrows (2013/07/06) Paragraph: Seven Sorrows.



CONCLUSION: PERFECTNESS IN THE GAME

We understand Perfect Woman as an author game, where the personal view on the world of the creators should be recognized. The definition of perfectness in it is thus rather personal. It is influenced by western media and lifestyle as well as biographical events and relationships.

Lea Schönfelder, who is responsible for all characters and most of the text in the game has been raised by a quite perfect mom, who was sometimes stressed out by her perfectness and a not so perfect dad who was mostly happy with his imperfectness. Being a happy child, a hot teenager, a great mom, a successful career woman, being spiritually and physically fulfilled and becoming a wise and experienced old grandmother later, in short: Being perfect can be really hard. Still perfect women actually seem to exist and some of them even seem to be happy in their lives. The game now tries to figure out what this perfectness is all about.



TARGET AUDIENCE

The Version you will be presented at Lea Schönfelder's diploma is designed in and recognized by the independent games community. People in that surrounding are experimenting a lot with bringing humanistic content into games, lately. The success of games like *Cartlife*¹ or *Papers Please*² shows a growing hunger for more life relevant content in games. And their outreach exceeds the borders of the Indie world by far.

In the long term, the goal is to liberate games from their lowbrow image and reaching out for broader audiences, like people who have so far considered playing as a waste of time. In that sense we are especially happy about the presentation of *Perfect Woman* at *Deutsches Haus at New York University* for the exhibition *What's Your Spiel?* in 2013. The intellectual audience of the institute usually focuses on literature and film. Still people, mostly elder and largely without any gaming experience, tried out the game in a comfortable atmosphere. It is important that games are part of a cultural discurs in the same way as more established media is already.

1 Hofmeier, Richard. *Cart Life*. richardhofmeier 2013.

2 Pope, Lucas. *Papers, Please*. 2013.

FUTURE PLANS

Perfect Woman is a Kinect game currently being built for PC and MAC. This version of the game can be easily presented in a festival or exhibition surrounding. Because no controller is necessary, everybody can step in and immediately start to play. Also other visitors are attracted easily to the game and usually a little crowd forms around the player, to see how she is doing.

Perfect Woman has been covered by various Media, like *Tagesthemen* or *3Sat* (both German television), print magazines like *Missy* or *an.schläge* and international blogs like *Indiegames* or *Killscreen*.

We have a strong presence in the Indie games community as we have been able to present at events like *IndieCade 2013* in Los Angeles, *Republika 2013* in Rijeka, the *Independent Games Festival 2014* in San Francisco or *FMX 2014* in Stuttgart.

Because not everybody has the possibility to take part in the festivals and events, mentioned above, and because our dream is to have more people playing the game, we are hoping to eventually launch *Perfect Woman* on *Xbox*.

With the Kinect 2.0 built into the new *Xbox One*, we aim to have our game published on this next gen platform. One possibility to do so is the upcoming *ID@Xbox program*. They plan to partnership with Unity to allow independent developers like us to publish our games with low financial overhead on their console using *Unity3d*.

Finally, we plan on releasing the game to a much broader audience by launching a keyboard compatible version on *Steam*. As *IGF* finalists, we are already approved to publish *Perfect Woman* on *Steam*.

