ARTICLE SUMMARY

"Examining the intersection of race & gender in video game advertising"

Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz (2014)
Journal of Marketing Communications

PURPOSE

- The gaming population is expanding
- Video game marketing must adapt and appeal to new audiences
- This study seeks to explore race and gender representation in video game advertising

Dead or Alive Xtreme 3 (2016)

KEY FINDINGS

- Video game advertising stereotypes about women and ethnic minorities are still prevalent in the modern era
  - The "white male hero"
  - The "submissive sexualized female"
  - The "asian ninja"
  - The "deviant black male"

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ 1: What is the racial/ethnic and gender **composition** of characters in video game advertisements?

RQ 2: Does the **rate of appearance in violent video game** advertisements differ based on character race/ethnicity and gender?

RQ 3: Does the **rate of depiction of engaging in a violent act** in video game advertisements differ based on character race/ethnicity and gender?

RQ 4: Does **possession of a weapon** in a video game advertisement vary based on character race/ethnicity and gender?

RQ 5: Does **character appearance** in video game advertisements vary based on character race/ethnicity and gender?

METHODS
CONTENT ANALYSIS

SAMPLING

- 6 months (12 issues) of two gaming magazines:
  - *Game Informer:* The top-selling video game magazine
  - *PC Gamer:* Top-selling US and UK PC-based magazine

- 383 US magazine advertisements for console, mobile, & PC games
  - *Game Informer, n = 165*
  - *PC Gamer, n = 218*

- 783 characters
  - *Game Informer, n = 412*
  - *PC Gamer, n = 371*

- 260 unique game titles

L.A. Noire (2011)

PC MAG
PCMAG.COM

METHODS

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- **Gender**
  - Male or female

- **Race/ethnicity**
  - White, Latino, Black, Asian, Native American, Other, or Unknown

Tomb Raider (2013)

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- **Game type**
  - Violent or non-violent
    - ESRB label/no label

- **Violent behavior**
  - Engaging or not engaging in behavior

- **Possession of weapons**
  - Bow & arrow, gun, sword, knife, spear, grenade, rocket launcher, magic, other, or none

- **Attractiveness**
  - Highly, average, unattractive, cannot tell (face obscured)

- **Body type**
  - Realistic or unrealistic
    - Waist size, muscularity, and breast size for women

- **Sexualization**
  - Sexualized or not sexualized
    - Baring of body parts, provocativeness of attire, and overall judgement

METHODS

PROCEDURE OF COLLECTION

1. Characters shown in ads were rated by coders according to variable categories
2. Chi-square tests were used to assess relationships between variables
3. The Marascuilo procedure was used in some cases for pairwise comparisons
4. Latina and female Native American categories were eliminated from certain RQs due to low frequency

Coder composition
- Four undergraduate and two graduate students
  - Four coders were white, one coder was black, one coder was latina
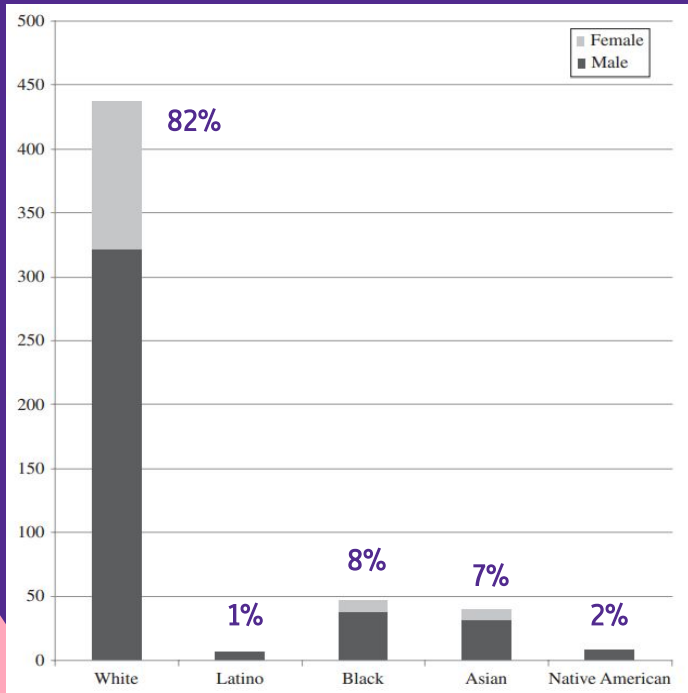 - Five coders were female, one coder was male

Divinity Original Sin 2 (2013)

RESULTS

RQ 1: Composition
Gender: Male: 78%   Female: 20%

Character frequency by race/ethnicity and gender

Behm-Morawitz (2014)

RQ 2: Appearance in violent games
- **Male characters**: more likely to appear in violent games (89%)
- No significant differences found for race

RQ 3: Rate of depiction of engaging in a violent act
- **Asian characters**: most likely to be shown acting violently (60%)
- **Male characters**: more likely to be shown doing violent acts (53%)

RQ 4: Possession of a weapon
- **Asian characters**: most likely to have weapons (53%)
  - Most likely to possess swords (20%)
- **Black characters**: most likely to possess guns (41%)
- **Male characters**: more likely to have a weapon (44%)

RQ 5: Character appearance
- **White characters**:
  - Depicted as most attractive (18%); most likely in provocative clothing (16%); most sexualized appearance (21%)
- **Black characters**:
  - Depicted as least attractive (5%); least likely in provocative clothing (2%); most muscular (28%)

CONCLUSIONS

- Women and non-white populations are **underrepresented**

- **White women** are hyper-sexualized and depicted as highly attractive over non-white women
  - Implies a white-centered type of beauty

- **Black men** are depicted as most muscular but not attractive
  - Perpetuates 'black male criminals' stereotype

- **Asian characters** are depicted as highly violent w/ swords
  - Perpetuates 'asian ninja' stereotype

- **White men** are least likely to be depicted as violent & have weapons; and are more attractive
  - Perpetuates 'white male hero' stereotype

GTA V (2013)

Bioshock Infinite (2013)
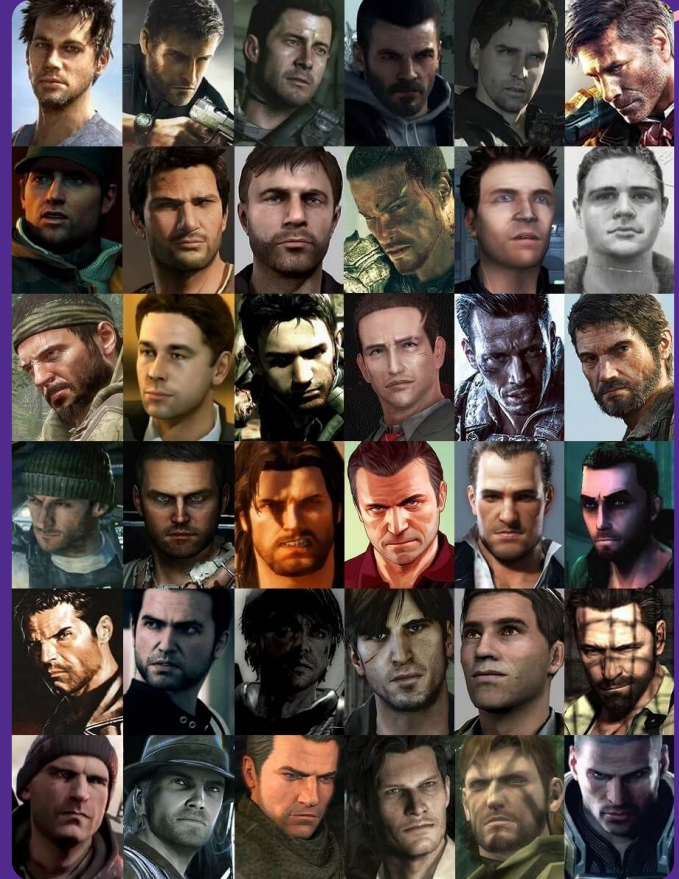
Video game protagonists

IMPLICATIONS

(2020)

(2022)

- Video game stereotypes **reinforce sexist and racist societal views**

- Increasing diverse representation can **combat harmful stereotypes**

- Increasing diverse representation may **increase profits**
  - Can attract new audiences in the growing gamer population

(2012)

(2008)

(2021)

CRITIQUES

SUBJECTIVITY

- Measuring 'attractiveness' is subjective
- Coders were mostly female and white
- A more diverse group of coders could lessen biases

MAGAZINES

- Print is becoming an outdated form of media
- Content analysis of game review websites or social media pages could be more applicable
  - IGN, PCGamer, GameInformer, GamesRadar

SAMPLING LIMITATIONS

- Small numbers of certain categories limits analysis
  - Latina and female Native American characters were near-absent
  - Too few non-white characters for some significant findings

IGN Tweet

CITATION

QUESTIONS?

Bayonetta (2010)