

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TOP SELLING VIDEO GAMES AND THEIR PRODUCTION  
STAFF

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Sociology

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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By

Phoenicia N. Fares

May, 2014

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## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research on video games in the United States has repeated the same mantra: women are sexualized, minimized, or just absent. This study evaluates the position and role of women, particularly women of color, in video games. Employing symbolic annihilation, standpoint epistemology, and tokenism, this study assesses characters and their connection to the production team (writers, producers, and directors). Current research on video games has not previously made a first-order linkage of this kind. I analyzed, using a structured content analysis, the extent to which women are present and what type of roles they occupy in forty-one top selling video games (2008 to 2012). The study found that women, particularly women of color, were often tokens or minorities, were more sexualized than men, less violent than men, less likely to possess a weapon, and occupy less active and meaningful roles. Women were often positioned as a commodity or a motivating factor for male character narratives. The research found that production teams consist predominately of white males and that there is no significant correlation between production staff members and the final product. The thesis explores the social implications of such dismal character representation in video games.

## BACKGROUND

Video games have had a difficult standing with the public over the years with violence and sexuality as top areas of critique (Burgess et al. 2007; Dietz 1998; Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Miller and Summers 2007). Previous research on the topic has repeated the same mantra: that women are sexualized, minimalized, or just plain absent in video games (Burgess et al. 2007; Beasley and Standley et al. 2002; Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Jansz and Martis 2007; Miller and Summers 2007).

A prime example of this subordination of women in the gaming community is seen with the recent release of *Tomb Raider*. Lara Croft, the game protagonist, has gone through multiple transformations throughout her existence in this popular adventure game—from the strong and intelligent crypt “robber” to the sexy vixen most people grew to know her as. Her most recent transformation was released in a game teaser far before the game itself was released. The short teaser showed Lara as a victim of sexual assault, something that did not go over well with many fans of the series (Gera 2012). The removal of her power as either an intelligent rogue or a sexual agent reinvented her as a powerless victim. While this is hotly debated among gamers on blogs such as Polygon and IGN (leading gaming websites), the releasing company of *Tomb Raider* has stated that sexual assault will not be a major theme of the game (Gera 2012).

In addition, women gamers are often met with either hostility or sexual advances. For example, IGN reports that women are more marginalized now (in 2012) than ever before, providing examples of sexual harassment both in games and out (IGN 2012). Examples of hostile language in and out of games can be seen through the online arena (specifically shooters, which is commonly referred to as a male only space) with commonplace language such as “rape” or other violent sexual slurs. Trivialization of sexual assault is not isolated to adolescent boys on

Xbox Live either. The meaning of “rape” is often reframed in the context of the game to reflect both positive and negative outcomes. For example, the use of the word rape as in “raping” a dungeon or a boss is often casual. Lead designer of *Spec Ops* (a popular shooter game) has famously referenced his displeasure with the multiplayer atmosphere of his game by stating that “the game mechanics were raped to make it happen, and it was a waste of money” (IGN 2012). An additional example of sexist (as well as heteronormative) language is seen in *Borderlands 2* when a lead designer referred to the “easy” mode as the “girlfriend mode”; implying that girls are bad at games and need a simpler version of the game to succeed (IGN 2012). This assumption emphasizes the beliefs of game producers about the female consumer. Female gamers also experience overt sexual harassment. This was the case for Miranda Pakozdi who, when attending a gaming tournament, was asked about her bra size and told by teammates and tournament coach to “take off your shirt and focus [the] webcam on [your] chest, feet and legs” (IGN 2012).

Alongside this sexist video gaming culture is also a racist culture. Specifically, the gaming community has been accused of racism and stigmatizing racial minorities (e.g., Grey 2012). For example, the use of racial slurs is commonly used among the gaming community especially in online gaming settings. The group “Gamers Against Bigotry” highlights some specific cases of trivializing racial minority characters in games. For example, the group points out that games often depict alien races more frequently and as more developed characters than human racial minorities (Killerman 2013). Online organizations, such as “Gamers Against Bigotry,” have formed to fight back against the unchecked use of racial slurs and bigotry used throughout the gaming community. However, only one week after the group’s formation in July 2012 it was subject to racial attacks (Schreier 2012). Hackers almost immediately posted images

of sexual vulgarity and racial slurs on the site's main webpage (Schreier 2012). Notably, my own personal experience and observations suggest that the use of the "n-word" and anti-semitic slurs is pervasive in gaming culture. Racism against black gamers is also manifest in open gaming systems such as Xbox Live (Grey 2012; Killerman 2013). For example, with regards to characters in games, racial minorities are often pigeonholed as characters playing stereotypical roles and wearing stereotypical attire. This can be seen in games such as *Tekken* and *Mortal Kombat* where African American characters are light skinned, comic reliefs, break-dancers, or dressed in disco clothing.

This sexist and racist culture in the gaming industry is not altogether surprising when examining who produces these games. According to the International Game Developers Association (IGDA 2005), the "average" member of the production team is a white male. In fact, men make up 88.5 percent of the industry, with women only equally represented in areas such as Human Resources (HR) (IGDA 2005). Whites make up approximately 83.3 percent of the industry with Asians trailing in second at 7.5 percent (IGDA 2005). Men (of all races) dominate the majority of jobs such as writing, production, and other executive positions. Furthermore, men are also compensated approximately ten thousand dollars more than women; with men's average compensation at \$57,719 (average of 5.5 years of experience) and women's compensation at \$48,763 (average of 4.8 years of experience) (IGDA 2005). The argument that women fall into less paying positions does not hold true in the gaming industry either. In fact IGDA's (2005) report states that HR personnel and members of the production team make roughly the same annually. Thus, differences in pay cannot be accounted for by position of employment. Of note, blacks and Hispanics are compensated at the same lower rate as women, which are coupled by fewer years in the industry (IGDA 2005). In addition, women and non-whites are more likely to

believe that a “diverse workforce has a direct impact on the games produced” then are men and whites (IGDA 2005).

In light of this sexist and racist culture in the gaming community, as well as the observation that game production is overseen by predominantly male and white production teams, goals of the present research are to assess the roles of women and racial minorities as they have been presented in video games. Specifically, through a quantitative content analysis, this research examines the depiction of women and racial minorities in top selling contemporary video games. Additionally, this research examines the relationship between games producers and these depictions.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *Media Depictions of Women and Racial Minorities*

In her work on the development of black feminist standpoint theory, Patricia Hill Collins (1998) describes intersectionality as the ability of multiple social factors (race, sex, class, etc.) to be constructed mutually. Collins (1998) emphasizes the importance of including race in social analysis because, like gender, it is a physical indicator that marks the body in some way. Concepts such as sex and race are then obvious and often the first thing noticed by others who then make social judgments. This theory has also been adapted in recent years to state that “all individuals occupy multiple social statuses, and that these statuses work together to shape the experiences of all individuals” (Harnois and Ifatunji 2011:1008). In similar vein, Kimberle Crenshaw writes that “the intersection of racism and sexism factors...in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (1991:1244). For these reasons, it is not only important to examine how women and men are

depicted in video games, but to also make sense of the role of racial signifiers as they intersect with gender.

For example, the media often depicts women, and particularly racial minority women, in stereotypical and negative ways. According to Patricia Hill Collins (1990), African American women are often depicted as the “other” and are only considered in relation to their white counterparts. Collins (1990) argues that African American women are normally cast in roles such that they exemplify more “animalistic” qualities, as a mammy (an un-sexualized care giver), a matriarch (an overly aggressive and unfeminine women; a failed mammy), and a Jezebel (a sexually aggressive women). These negative depictions are problematic, Collins argues, insofar as they create an atmosphere in which racial minority roles are subordinated and dominated by others (i.e., whites). Notably, Collins (1990) maintains that this subordination and domination also occurs when white ideals of beauty are imposed on African American women. These include the lightening of skin color, hair, and eyes, as well as the relaxing or straightening of black women’s hair.

In addition to negative depictions, women’s representations are often diminished in multiple forms of media. Repeated negative depictions coupled with underrepresentation develop into a situation coined as “symbolic annihilation” (Gerbner and Gross 1976). This concept was originally developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross while studying violence in television shows and its global implications. Gaye Tuckman (1979) later defines it in reference to the misrepresentation (when at all) of women in the mass media. Tuckman (1979) defines symbolic annihilation in three essential parts: (1) The absence of women in positions of power in the media resulting in (2) a distorted conception of women’s status in reality which therefore (3) demeans women and their accomplishments resulting in pigeonholing women’s roles as either

sex objects or domestic figures (wives or mothers). Tuckman (1979) refers specifically to television shows in her research but the logic in her theory can be applied to video games as well. Milkie (2002), for instance, adapts this theory to advertisement stating that this not only puts women in an irrelevant or inferior position but it also makes it difficult for women to evaluate who they are and how they fit into what is being portrayed in the media form. This leaves the dominant group (i.e., men, whites, etc.) to be portrayed in more positive and privileged ways, allowing people who occupy that dominant group, to see themselves in media representations without feeling confused about their portrayal (Milkie 2002).

### *Cultural Producers*

Tuckman's theory relates not only to depictions of women in media, but also to the industry that produces such depictions. Indeed, the first component of her theory emphasizes the absence of women in positions of power in the media. In light of the demographic data presented earlier about the video gaming industry, it seems that white men enjoy the majority in presence, power, and compensation in the gaming industry. In addition, since white men are less likely to believe that diversifying production teams are beneficial to the game product, they may be less likely to do so. This then leads to a small number of non-whites and females in the industry. It is possible then that a "token" status emerges through their occupation of these positions. As aforementioned, this is problematic as Tuckman and Milkie point out: Lack of female representation on the production crew may lead to misrepresentations of women in the product.

Tokenism is a concept first developed by Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) in her research on men and women in the workplace. Kanter (1977) argues that the lack of women in group settings leads to the development of the "token." Tokenism is numerically derived by individuals

occupying zero to twenty percent of the group; which is different from “minorities” which occupy twenty to forty percent. When a token woman is present, the male dominated group will display higher levels of aggression, sexual innuendos, forceful sexual teasing, and “showing off” behavior. In addition Kanter points to specialized jobs made for women, which she refers to as the “woman’s slot.” These jobs are usually defined along gendered roles. However, embracing these jobs usually means acceptance by the larger dominant group, i.e., the men. Finally, Kanter (1977) describes four stereotypical roles token women will occupy: the mother (who tends to domestic needs of others), the seductress (a sexual object who is usually involved with sexual competition and jealousy, oftentimes needing protection by a male “masking” his own sexual interests), the pet (a mascot or cheerleader of the group who is treated as special or precious and embodies a “look-what-she-did-and-she’s-only-a-women” mentality), and the iron maiden (who is tough, dangerous, and distant, and usually not liked by the rest of the group).

Tokenism can also be used to describe race relations, such as the lone Asian in a group of whites. For example, previous literature has assessed the different stereotypical roles ethnic tokens are placed in such as slaves and tribesmen (for African Americans, Thibodeau 1989) or domestic workers (Johnson 2012). African American tokens are also often associated with music, as a singer or musician (Colfax and Sternberg 1972), particularly related to Jazz music, Hip-Hop, and rap. In addition, when Middle Easterners and Arabs are present in media form they are often positioned as “evil” (Semmerling 2008) or as the “villain” in movie or film (Shaheen 2003).

Tokenism theory thus has the potential to illuminate video game culture in two important ways. It not only relates directly to control over the production of cultural objects (where female and racial minority game producers are outnumbered in this male- and white-dominated

industry), but it also relates to the depiction of women and racial minorities in the games themselves (through stereotypical token roles).

## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### *Sex and Gender*

Much research focuses on the position and quality of the female representation of video game characters. Generally speaking, women are a smaller number of game characters than men (Burgess et al. 2007; Beasley and Standley 2002; Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Jansz and Martis 2007; Miller and Summers 2007) except for the case of casual games (Wohn 2011). This larger presence of women in casual games may be due to assumptions about the market place; producers are assuming women play more casual games than other genres, regardless if this is true or not (Wohn 2011). In addition, males are overwhelmingly the main protagonist of games (Miller and Summers 2007).

Beyond the underrepresentation of women characters in video games, previous research also looks at the physical representations of female bodies. Video games have historically been critiqued for their sexualized portrayal of women characters. It seems that, as a result, most research focuses on this topic. Overwhelmingly the research finds that females are significantly more sexualized than males (Burgess et al. 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Jansz and Martis 2007; Miller and Summers 2007). This is normally made evident by both clothing and body proportions (Beasley 2002). Downs and Smith (2009) also found that female characters exhibit more overtly sexual themes and behaviors than male characters and are more often (40 percent more) shown partially or fully nude and with unrealistic body proportions. Findings also support

the mindset that men are more powerful and/or violent than women (Dill and Thill 2007; Jansz and Martis 2007; Miller and Summers 2007).

In addition, females are generally represented in traditional roles. Some roles in previous research include princess (Dickerman et al. 2008), “damsel in distress”/victim (Burgess et al. 2007; Dietz 1998) and roles more likely to be focused on family and physical appearances (Dietz 1998). Males are more likely than females to be found as heroes of video games (Burgess et al. 2007), with traditional gender roles often rewarded in game (Dietz 1998).

### *Race and Ethnicity*

Similar to findings about female characters, there seems to be an underrepresentation of racial minorities in video games (Dietrich 2013; Dietz 1998; Downs and Smith 2009; Jansz and Martis; Wohn 2011), with 80 percent of racial minority characters located in sport games (Gray 2012). Dietrich (2013) refers to this as a “presence of absence” in which racial minorities are almost completely missing from video games. In addition, with the lack of non-whites, white characters become default and norm, with the rare examples of non-whites positioned as the “other” (Dietrich 2013; Gray 2012). Even when racial minorities are present, they are often depicted in stereotypical positions and occupations such as athletes, gangsters, or associated with voodoo (Dickerman 2008; Gray 2012).

Combining racial portrayals with gendered portrayals is seldom accomplished by the previous research. The few instances where it is done however, shows that female characters of color are often depicted as light skinned or not at all (Jansz and Martis 2007) or as a mammy archetype (Dickerman et al. 2008) while male characters of color are depicted as angry, aggressive, and violent (compared to whites, Gray 2012).

While there is some research on African American gamers (Gray 2012) there is disproportionately less research on racial minorities compared to research on sexualized females. Most of the research cited here only mentions non-white to white ratios briefly, without assessing race of character as it relates to roles, themes, or motivations. In addition, research on Asian characters or Hispanics is also lacking. This is alarming considering Japan's influence in the production of video games. Dickerman et al. (2008) briefly states that Asian characters are more often depicted as ninjas or experts in martial arts (especially in the form of villains); however this has yet to be confirmed through systematic research.

### *The Production Team*

While connections between video games and the production team have not been previously assessed, noteworthy research in this area has been conducted in terms of television, movies, and workplace situations. From this body of research it appears that women conform to the ideologies that are dominating (normally those of men) and reproduce feminine roles (Tuckman 1979). In addition it is possible that stereotypes of racial minorities are reproduced through the media by those in dominant positions and their narrow understanding of racial minorities (Gray 2012). Similarly, Smith (1999) found that the greater the female creative control over the production was, the higher the level of characters that fell along stereotypical or rigid gender roles.

In their research, Lauzen and colleagues (2008) observed that gendered social roles of television characters are related to the gender of writers behind the scenes. They found that female characters are more closely related to domestic roles (such as wives) and exhibit more interpersonal and relational characteristics than male characters (Lauzen et al. 2008). In addition,

the authors cite Glascock (2001) who found that the “employment of at least one woman as writer or executive producer was positively and significantly related to the number of female characters on screen (Lauzen et al. 2008: 203). Female writers also contribute to a decrease in insults and an increase in the importance of physical appearance on screen (Lauzen et al. 2008). They also found that mixed sex production teams are more likely to depict female and male characters in interpersonal roles than are male only teams (Lauzen et al. 2008). It would seem then that, when women are present in production teams, they position female characters in traditional roles more often than men-only production teams. In addition, when women are present in the production team, they are less likely to position female and male characters in work roles (Lauzen et al. 2008). That being said, men are still more likely to be depicted in work roles than women and women are more likely to be in relational roles (Lauzen et al. 2008).

Video game characters are in the end products of human creation and it is noteworthy to assess if the presence of women impact whether or not they would create powerful, independent female characters. It is also possible that there is an opposite effect in so far as women “selling themselves” in a male dominated world. In this somewhat unique way, game producers have the ability to “do gender” outside of themselves. They can evaluate at what point a female character is a female character. They can demonstrate the “passing” element (adhering to strict gender roles in order to fit in) in gender roles because these characters are not (and never will be) real people. Unlike actors and actresses in movies, video game characters are completely constructed and made to reflect society’s notions of what it means to be male, female, white, black, lesbian, etc. With the production crew’s ability to define these lines, it is necessary to see how they do that. And while there is some connection with what gamers want and pervasive cultural sentiments in society, it is ultimately the production crew who has the final call.

## METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN PREVIOUS EMPIRICAL STUDIES

### *Still Images and Character Depictions*

Much of the previous research on video games focuses on character bodies depicted in pictures and image stills: sexualized bodies, body positions, and body proportions (Burgess et al. 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Miller and Summers 2007). The study of character bodies, through the use of pictures and image stills, removes the character from the game itself, which would not normally be a problem, except that this research often attempts to make statements about the game based on pictures or stills and no analysis of actual game content (e.g., Burgess et al 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Miller and Summers 2007). Another major issue with only using pictures is the inability to develop a complete representation of the character. Instead, characters are detached from their settings and evaluated as an isolated item.

### *Men as Hypermasculine and Women as Hypersexual*

Research that focuses on the sexual themes in video games tends to categorize sexualized characters into a dichotomy of either muscular men or sexy women. Often, the research would revolve around a similar hypothesis: whether characters are portrayed as sexy/attractive or muscular (e.g., Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Miller and Summers 2007). This situation ultimately sets up a condition that by definition, men will not be sexy; they will be muscular. Aside from the opinion that “sexy” and “attractive” can be objective and arbitrary, this research begs the question: Are male video game characters not sexy or attractive? Downs and Smith (2009) also found this dichotomy in their research of the first twenty minutes of game play which includes games such as *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai*, *Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus*, and *Lord of the Rings: Two Towers*, which all show muscular male leads with exposed chests, arms, legs, or

partially-mostly nude. So then the issue arises: Is Tien and Nappa from *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai* shown wearing almost no clothing with budding muscles, coded as muscular or sexual? The problem with this previous research is that if by definition men are never sexy or attractive, then the subsequent results reflect researcher bias and assumptions.

*Children as Researcher Blinders: Redefining the “Gamer”*

Much of the previous research focuses on the consumption of games by teenagers and children (e.g., Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Miller and Summers 2007). Even with popular conception of the average “gamer,” children are actually not the primary consumer of video games. The ESA reports that since 2008 to 2011 the average gamer has increased from thirty five years old to thirty seven, only to drop down to thirty in 2012 (ESA 2008-2012). In fact, those under the age of eighteen only make up around twenty five percent of gamers, with those eighteen to fifty years old making up the largest proportion across the years (ESA 2008-2012). With regards to gender, adult women actually make up a larger group of gamers (around thirty percent) when compared to boys under eighteen (ESA 2008-2012). This would lead researchers to believe that adults (and women) gamers should be a more central focus.

There is also a heavy focus on *E* (Everyone) rated games in the literature. These studies attempt to address and critique the types of images children are receiving via video games. This is problematic however as a singular focus on *E* rated games ignores some major issues including: (1) Children also play *T* and *M* (Teen and Mature) games, (2) children make up a minority within gamers, and (3) parents and adults generally approve of video game content presented in children games (ESA 2011).

## RESEARCH GOALS AND QUESTIONS

Addressing these methodological problems in previous empirical research, my research analyzes recent games in order to examine the depiction of women and racial minorities in these games. Moreover, since no research to date has attempted to connect game producers with game product, my research attempts to understand the relationship between production team demographics and these cultural depictions. This research therefore addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What types of characters are portrayed in video games?

RQ2: Are the characters depicted stereotypically and based on traditional gender roles?

RQ3: Are racial/ethnic minority characters depicted stereotypically?

RQ4: What motivations are depicted for characters? Do these motivations vary by gender or race/ethnicity?

RQ5: What is the relationship between the sex and race/ethnic ratio of the production team members and the depiction of characters, character roles, and motivations?

## METHODS

In order to address these research questions the following methods have been employed:

### *Sampling Strategies*

Purposeful sampling was used in this study, with some inclusion criteria considerations borrowed from previous research on video games (Jansz and Martis 2007). For the purpose of analyzing game content for character representation and character motivations, I enforced the following specific inclusion criteria.

*Sampling by Profitability.* The Entertainment Software Association (ESA, an organization which caters to business and public affairs associated with the video game industry)

reports the top grossing games in sales for any particular year. The ESA reports the top twenty games by profitability for each year. The list of games used in this study came from this list. I have analyzed games between 2008 and 2012 in order to examine recent and contemporary games. The top twenty profitable games are available by the ESA's annual reports. Profitability reflects the games that are not only most common but also highly received by the gaming community. These games have received the most traffic and would be common knowledge among gamers. In similar logic, previous research has also employed the use of sampling by profitability as a means of avoiding niche genres of gaming (Dill and Thill 2007; Jansz and Martis 2007). Niche gaming can be applied to "indie games" which are developed and produced by small companies or groups of individuals. These types of games have a high traffic to niche consumers but are not widely purchased by gamers. Sampling by profitability will exclude games that only satisfy a small niche of the gaming market. These "indie" or niche games do not represent the games that are consumed regularly and on a massive level as do other games, and thus have not be included in the sample. These niche or indie games do not generally represent what is heavily consumed. In sum, the most profitable games comprise my sample. The sample list was generated by reviewing the ESA's released top selling games between 2012 and 2008, as well as by applying the following further criteria about genres, game systems, and game ratings.

*Story Focused Genres.* The ESA divides video games into very specific genres that are used to convey a common game play. Genres that are included in the sample are Action and Adventure, Role-Playing Games, Strategy, and Shooters. These four genres include the most character development and involve more advanced themes than alternative game genres. For the purpose of my study I labeled these four genres as one "Story Focused" genre. Examples of Action and Adventure from the sample include the *Assassin's Creed* series, *Resident Evil 5*, and

*Mass Effect 3*. Role-Playing games will often involve the most story focused themes and include games such as *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, *Fallout: New Vegas*, and *Final Fantasy XIII*.

Strategy games vary on their story development however, and some of the major titles such as *StarCraft II* have a strong story focused theme. Shooters consist of the least amount of story development and include games such as *Call of Duty: Black OPS* and *Battlefield: Bad Company*

2. It should be made clear that these four genres are very closely related and often games within one of these categories will include aspects of another genre. For example, *Mass Effect 3*, *Resident Evil 5*, and *Fall Out: New Vegas* can also be classified as shooters. Since these four genres are at times interrelated, they should all be included in the sample. These four genres contain the most story focused themes, even though they have varying degrees among them. In addition, these four genres are distinctively different from other genres (explained below) and would not be confused for another.

*Gaming System*. The sample of video games included also come from the top selling consoles: PlayStation 3, Xbox360, and PC. Games that are featured on any one of these three consoles are generally also offered on others. For example, the top selling game *Sleeping Dogs* is available on PlayStation 3, Xbox360, and PC. A few games were exclusive to one particular console; however these games, if ranked as a best seller, were not excluded from the sample on that criterion. Consoles that were excluded include Nintendo Wii, Nintendo DS, PlayStation Vita, and other hand held consoles. This exclusion is based on two primary concerns: (1) the exclusion of *E* rated games (explained below) and (2) issues with comparability of technology. Simply put, the included consoles operate on higher levels of resolution and quality than those consoles that are excluded.

### *Exclusion Criteria*

*Sporting Games, Simulation Games, Racing Games and Fighting Games.* In their study of video games Jansz and Martis (2007) excluded sports, racing, and fighting games. The justification is the same for them as it is here: these games contain little to no story, character development, or character motivations. I add simulation games such as *The Sims* to this list of exclusion for like-minded reasons. Because of the unscripted nature of simulation games, there can be no true measure of game themes or character progression as it will vary from player to player (this is in fact the purpose of the game). Most sporting games such as *Madden NFL 11* do not even contain female characters, which does not allow for the analysis of women's roles in games. While it is significant that sporting games show little to no women, they will be excluded from my sample. Fighting games, on the other hand, do include women; in fact, they often have the most variety of characters to choose from. For example *Mortal Kombat 9* and *Soul Calibur V* both have almost thirty playable characters each. At the same time, the characters are mostly for show and contain little development. In fact, the character development throughout all fighting games, racing games, and sporting games is often small to none, and it is difficult to assess character roles beyond the clothing and body shapes of the characters.

*Casual Games.* Casual games, also known as "mini games," have often been ignored by video game research. Donghee Wahn (2011) argues for the inclusion of these games as they are widely consumed. Casual games include games such as *Angry Birds* or *Plants vs. Zombies*, which are popular tablet games. I excluded these types of games for similar reasons for excluding fighting and sports games: when and if characters are present, they offer little to no story development. In a sense, they are a totally different type of game. Character roles and motivation often times can only be assessed through short dialogue between the few characters

and main character and the consumer (usually to convey instructions for the game), or through clothing and body shape. In addition, the amount of storytelling, graphics and detail in casual games are often less extensive than the games included in my study.

*Online Video Games.* Online games allow for a new assessment of research as they allow a closer connection between the individual and the game world. This form of gaming allows for personal character development, individual character motivations, and character representation unique to the gamers' choices. Even though research on avatar-gamer connections is valuable and should be explored, this genre is not suitable for the purposes of this study. This stems mostly from the individual freedom available to the gamer. This study analyzes scripted stories from off-line games to assess the types of messages being produced through this agent of socialization.

*E (Everyone) rated games.* The ERSB has four specific ratings for video games: *E*, *T*, *M*, and *A*. *E* refers to "Everyone," in that the game is appropriate for all audiences. *T* refers to "Teen" which generally is thirteen years of age and above. *M* refers to "Mature" audiences eighteen and older and *A*, "Adult," is reserved for games not intended for general sales by the public (sexually explicit or intense violence). Games rated *E* are generally made for children and have been excluded. This will allow for a stronger focus on games with deeper themes, character development, and established stories.

*Repetitive Stories.* Finally, there are a few instances of games in the sample that are from the same series. For example, the *Halo* series appears multiple times in the data. This is because the series was listed by the ESA for those years as top grossing, and the game met the other criteria. After coding all games it was made apparent that the perceived similarities were not as evident. While the games may have had similar themes (such as humanity versus aliens) they did

not always have the same primary and secondary characters. Often, the premise of the story was entirely different (as is the case with the *Call of Duty* series). I coded all series games as usual and have chosen not to alter their state in the data. These games are separate stories which include new characters, different roles for old characters, and various plots.

In conclusion, the video games examined are Story Focused (Roleplaying, Strategy, Shooters, and Action Adventure), top selling and available on top selling gaming systems. (See Appendix A for a complete list of games.) As stated above, these complex criteria were employed so as to focus on the types of characters, motivations, and roles being produced by video games. While exclusions may seem numerous, the included genres make up 56.9 percent of the top selling games on all gaming systems and make up 73.6 percent of top selling games on the PC in 2011 (the next highest genre is sport games at only 14.8 percent) (ESA 2012). Since this is a majority of the market it is significant to assess the product being produced.

## UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Previous research studies have tackled a key issue in this line of research: What is an adequate unit of analysis for video games? Often video games (especially those that meet the previous criteria) have multiple hours of solid game play that can easily go over twenty-four hours. This creates a unique issue for video game research that sets it aside from similar forms of media. Some researchers have simply looked at box cover art (Brurgess et al. 2007; Ramirez et al. 2002) or magazine depictions of characters (Dill and Thill 2007; Miller and Summers 2007). Others who have looked at actual game content have only looked at game introductions (Brand et al. 2003; Jansz and Martis 2007), limited segment of game play, such as the first 30 minutes (Downs and Smiths 2009), or random intervals of timed game play (Beasley and Standley 2002).

While it is still a challenging task to look at entire game content, I attempted to encompass as much game content relevant to this study's goals. One and a half hours of game content was coded from the start of the game, including the game's introductory cinematic and the following game play. The "introductory cinematic" is defined as the short film that is shown before any game play takes place in a video game. Introductory cinematics usually last about five to ten minutes and include information about the main characters and the main conflict of the game while both setting up the scenario and introducing the game world. The conclusion of the cinematic is the first moment the player takes control of a character. The second section of the game is then the actual game play. Game play may include moments of "cut scenes" which is a temporary break in the game play when the player loses control over the characters as a story is played out. These moments are usually very brief and when they occurred within the first hour and a half, they were included in the coding.

The final thirty minutes of the game were also coded and included any game play (such as end game battles or puzzles), as well as the end game cinematic. An "end game cinematic" is very similar to the "introductory cinematic" in that it is a moment of storytelling via a short film clip. The characters are not controllable by the player as the game concludes the story. For example in the game *Grand Theft Auto IV* the game begins with the main character Niko immigrating to the United States. The short clip unfolds some motivation behind future actions by Niko (mostly illegal) as his attempt to live "The American Dream." The cinematic concludes once Niko arrives in the United States and meets up with his cousin Roman and the player then takes control of Niko's actions. *Grand Theft Auto IV* concludes with Niko seeking revenge on a secondary enemy character (a chase scene the player controls). The end game cinematic shows a

short film clip of Niko killing his enemy with some allusions to his never-ending search of his “American Dream.”

End game scenarios are necessary to assess in order to code overall themes of motivations and rewards. If characters were rewarded along gendered or racial stereotypes, it was during the end of the game that rewards were revealed. The fate of characters can also only be determined by the inclusion of end game scenarios. In addition, significant events (such as the death of a character) that occur after the first hour and a half of game play were evident in the final parts of the game. Thus, significant events that may be missed in the coding process were captured at the end of the game.

## DATA COLLECTION

Since the completion of most of the research on video games, two major changes in technology have emerged that aided my goal of bridging previous literature and increasing the inclusion of more game content in the analysis. Game content was assessed by consumer videos that were uploaded to the internet. Known by the gaming community as “walkthroughs,” these are created with the intent to assist other gamers with progress through the game. Walkthroughs were downloaded from websites such as YouTube or Let’s Play and coding was derived from these recordings. The content of these videos are essentially the same as any other individual playing the game themselves otherwise the function of a “walkthrough” would be senseless. The individuals playing the games and providing these “walkthroughs” are assumed to have advanced gaming skills and it can be inferred (based on their ease of game play) that they have played through the game at least once before recording and uploading. The use of walkthroughs among gamers is widely known. Based on the number of views on YouTube of popular games, it

can also be assumed that many people know to look for them and use them. For example the “walkthrough” for *Crisis* has around eighty thousand YouTube Views. The use of these walkthroughs is also advantageous to my own research as the second coder and I did not participate in any game play ourselves. Not only is game play extremely time consuming but it also allows us to separate ourselves from coding and gaming. Some games may take upwards of fifty hours to run through, making “end game coding” very laborious; this may be why previous research has not included any end game scenarios.

That being said, in order to capture *The Walking Dead*'s various options and story lines I did play through this game. *The Walking Dead* is a game which allows the player to make various choices about who to save, how to respond in dialogue (from a list of options), and even the option to amputate the primary character's arm. That being said, the story is still very linear, ending the same way regardless of previous choices made by the player. Characters that die, die no matter what, although the circumstances surrounding their death and time of death may vary. The game's producer “TellTale” released statistics on the “average gamer answers” for options in the game that affect story line. With this information in hand, I played through the game making all of the “average choices.” The most dramatic of these choices included the option to save Carely instead of Doug from the zombies, resulting in Doug's death. Carely however does die before the end of the game no matter what. Another “average choice” made by gamers was the choice to amputate Lee's arm, however, this too does not change the progression of the story (other than a few lines of dialogue by other character's reacting to his missing arm).

## CODING

Based on previous literature, as well as my personal experiences and observations as a female gamer, the following variables were coded (see Appendix B for codebook):

### Identifying Characters of Importance

Similar to the method by Downs and Smiths (2009), characters were initially coded for their importance to the game story. This information required investigation using online data bases on each of the games. Fan based online databases included information for every character in the game, their significance in the game (playable, major, minor, or background character), and the amount of time each character appeared in the game. The databases also included information such as the character's biography, their specifications, as well as a picture. I created a list of playable characters as well as those characters that were indicated as "major" or "significant" to the story. In cases where a game had an abundance of characters (such as *Dragon Age II*), characters were also selected based on the amount of time they appeared in the game (for example, a major character who also appears in more than 50 percent of the game).

The characters were then divided into three categories:

*Primary Characters:* Characters actually controlled by the gamer; the game is seen through the eyes of these characters.

*Secondary Characters:* Characters necessary for story progression; these characters assist the primary character in completing the game or may be the motivation for the primary character (e.g., character needs to be rescued, character is an enemy, character is a partner).

*Tertiary Characters:* Background characters that are not necessary for story progression.

In addition, secondary characters were coded for their relation to the primary character. For example they may be a stranger or acquaintance, a friend or family member, a romantic interest, or an enemy.

### *Defining Character Gender Behaviors*

Characters were also assessed in respect to their gender for either traditional gender role or atypical gender role. The coding for traditional gender roles was based on the presence of the following characteristics, some of which were also employed by Dill and Thill (2007):

*Traditionally Masculine:* Competitive, aggressive, assertive, violent, independent, non-emotional, tough-skinned, strong, active, self-confident, rebellious, and hard willed.

*Traditionally Feminine:* Nurturing, cooperative, sensitive, empathetic, submissive, dependent, emotional, passive, quiet, graceful, innocent, flirtatious, and soft willed.

Characters that did not match their sex role category were coded as atypical. This was assessed as a totality of components as some characters often exhibited multiple attributes. Characters that exhibit an equal balance of masculine and feminine traits were coded as neutral.

### *Racial Minority Characters*

Primary and secondary characters were also coded for their race/ethnicity to the best of the ability of the coder considering that many games do not take place on Earth or with humanoid characters. Even with this in mind, many characters still personify different racial categories. The categories that were included are: white/Anglo, black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, alien (to refer to other-worldly creatures), ambiguous, other

real world, other non-real races, robots, and choice. This categorization was based on a crude assessment of hair color, skin color, and other facial features, etc.

### *Defining Character Motivations*

Primary and secondary character motivations were divided into four categories: (1) to save the world, (2) to rescue a secondary character, (3) for solely personal gain (i.e., finding treasure, exploration, self-discovery, and/or revenge), and (4) passive motives. This was measured by the primary initial motivation presented to the player (usually in the introduction cinematic) and allowed for an exclusive motivation. Character's motivations were categorized based on the totality of the character's incentives in the game. In addition, not only was the initial motivation recorded but motivation was also assessed by the end game to determine what motivations have been addressed (e.g., the world is saved, captured character has been rescued, or the primary character achieves a personal goal). Character motivations were recorded at two intervals of the game: first in the introductory cinematic and then again at the end game cinematic. If in the end, the world was saved, then the argument that the primary goal was saving the world is supported. If however, the motivations have changed (which was not typical) then this information was noted. How the primary character was rewarded at the end helped to define the intended message about motivations.

### *Defining Character Roles*

All primary and secondary characters were coded in terms of role categories, some of which have been explored in previous literature and some I developed for the purpose of this study. First there were the general categories used by others in past research including: *Hero*,

*Victim, or Villain* (Jansz and Martis 2007). Throughout the coding process, *assistant* was added to this list. Second, occupational and behavioral roles were developed from previous research on race/ethnicity and gender stereotypes as well as my personal experience.

*Occupational Roles:* musician, singer, domestic worker, slave, tribesmen/women, athletes, gangster or mobster, healer, muscle or tank, and the intellect.

*Behavioral Roles:* iron maiden, pet, mother, seductress, princess, rotten princess, white knight, the brash, and the dark knight.

Character traits were also recorded as they appeared. Some character traits included: aggressive, angry, violent, family focused, appearance focused, expert in martial arts, and close to nature. Unlike other codes, traits were recorded in an open-ended memo and qualitatively, specifically with regards to coding personality and appearance characteristics.

### *Character Violence*

Violent acts perpetuated and received by each primary and secondary character was also recorded. A character can act out or receive no violent acts, some violent acts, moderate violent acts, or excessive violent acts. In addition, violent acts committed across racial and sex lines were noted.

### *Character Sexuality*

Sexual behaviors, themes, and qualities were also coded for each character. Characters had no sexual quality to them, some sexual quality, moderate sexual quality or excessive quality. Sexual explicitness referred to acts that characters engaged in which were either none, some, moderate, or excessive.

### *Character Clothing*

In addition to sexuality, each character's clothing was also evaluated. First, characters were assessed by their nudity as completely nude, partially nude, clothed, or covered. Second, the tightness of the characters' clothing was coded as very tight, somewhat tight, not tight, or oversized.

### *Weapons*

Weapons used by each primary and secondary character were also evaluated during the coding process. Characters were first categorized as either having a weapon or not, if they used that weapon more than half of the game, and if the player had any choice over the character's weapon. Second, if a character did use a weapon, the weapon was categorized by type: household items, projectile weapons, swords/knives, staff/wand, and grenades/frags/explosives.

### *Point of View*

All games have a specific point of view in the game play. "Point of View" in respect to video games refers to the perspective the player has into the game world. There are generally only two gaming perspectives: first person and third person. First person view is when only a hand, gun or other weapon is viewable by the player. The character's body is not seen in first person view. This is markedly different from a third person view where the entire body of the character is visible to the player. For example, all the *Halo* titles are in first person as only the arm or weapon of Master Chief is viewable. On the other hand, *Grand Theft Auto IV* is in third person as the player can see all of Niko's body in addition to weapons he may be holding. The game's point of view is usually set and rarely (if at all) changed during game play. Introduction

cinematic do not accurately reflect the point of view so this variable was only measured during game play.

### *Defining Game Themes*

Game themes are overarching concepts and ideologies that represent commonalities across specific elements in the game. A game's "theme" is a reoccurring allusion to some sort of understood experience. Themes of video games can be very dynamic and convoluted. Themes were examined qualitatively by describing situations as they connect to some overall theme. For example, a game that focuses on survival will call upon references to death threats and/or the success through survival. The same game may also encompass evidence of a romantic theme, which includes love relationships or the ideology that "love conquers all." The following guidelines were used to capture game themes:

*Survival:* Are the characters fighting for their lives? Are they being hunted? Do any characters die? If so, which ones? Is a character forced to survive in a new land/territory?

*Romance:* Is there a love story between the primary character and any secondary characters? Or among the secondary characters? Which, if any, of the character's backstory revolves around a love interest? Is romance an aspect of the character's motivations? Is romance, love, or sexual gratification an end game victory?

*Violence:* What violent themes are present in the game world (i.e., gore, warfare, blood, human sacrifice, or mutilation). Does the game contain violent imagery such as death or abuse in art, music, or background videos? Is "taking damage" an in game obstacle for the player? Are violent acts necessary for game progression? Are violent acts rewarded or punished?

*Sexuality*: What kind of sexual themes are present in the game world (i.e., prostitution, sexual scenes, sexual contact among characters, nudity, revealing clothing). Does the game contain sexual imagery such as nude images or sexual contact in art music, or background videos? Are sexual behaviors necessary for game progression? Are sexual behaviors used as rewards/punishments?

These themes are not mutually exclusive. Instead, we looked for elements of these themes during the analysis to better shape character development. Story themes are important to analyze and have received little attention in previous research. This is perhaps due to the difficulty associated with coding game content as previously mentioned. For this study, themes were used to better understand and conceptualize the resulting data.

#### *Production Team Demographics*

As with film, all games have a staff based on a system of hierarchy. This hierarchy potentially impacts the final cultural product. For example, Smith (1999) compared writers, directors, producers, and editors to the characteristics of female-focused films they produced. Neuendorf (2002) refers to this study as a Type A first-order linkage because of the connection between the cultural item (i.e., depictions of female characters and the film content) and its source (i.e., the producers). It was my intent to mimic the logic used in Smith's (1999) study in my own research to also make a first order linkage.

Unlike film and television, the gaming industry has a less organized hieratical system. Although they all have producers, writers, and directors working on each game, these staff members do not have equal creative control over the final product (Edwards 2005). In addition, there is a lack of consistency across gaming companies. According to IGN (a gaming news

journal), there are inconsistencies across who has the final say. For example, while some companies give the final power to producers, other games are products of the writer's creative control (Edwards 2005). This is something that has been critiqued by many in the gaming industry (Sinclair 2013).

Nevertheless, at the top of this system are producers and directors (as with film). Some producers are subdivided into "executive producer" at the top "producers" in the middle and "assistant producers" at the bottom. Writers can also be assumed to have some creative control over the stories and themes of a video game, and for such they will also be accounted for. There is no set number of producers, directors, or writers required for the production of a game either, so some games in the sample have many more people involved than others. All production staff comparisons were made on a ratio, in order to control for this discrepancy. For example, if there are twenty members on the team and two are women the ratio we coded 1:10 men or 10 percent women. This calculation was done for both the sex and the racial minority makeup of the production team. Producers, directors, and writers were accounted for from game databases and cross-checked with official listings of the game staff on sites such as the Internet Media Database (IMDB, a website which hosts information on films including actors, crew, staff, and production team), which was originally for movies but now includes video games.

Producers, directors, and writers were coded for their sex and race to determine the position of creative control in that particular game. This information required looking beyond IMDB and game databases as they do not include pictures of these individuals. Many of these individuals have professional websites or have appeared on television (usually to promote the game), so finding their race and sex was not difficult.

Once the production team was counted and coded for race and sex, Kanter's (1977)

tokenism schema was employed. Women and people of color were listed as either tokens (0 to 20 percent) or minorities (21 to 40 percent) within the team. This information was used to determine relationships between characteristics of the production team and the cultural product (i.e., video game depictions).

## VALIDITY

The goal of the measurement tool is to be able to capture the true experience of the game. A major threat to validity would be the inability of the measurement tool to adequately do this. I took specific measures to eradicate this threat. In order to assess the face validity, I kept the following guidelines in mind: criterion validity (will others agree on the measurement being used), content validity (will my measure encompass the entire intended concept), and construct validity (are my measures related to other measures). In addition, a review of the codebook was included in the second coder's training at which point he also evaluated the measurement tools' face validity. Both the second coder and I reviewed and determined the above validity checks have been addressed in the codebook.

An additional threat to validity may be the argument that omitting the center part of the game will create missing data. This argument is that events may occur in the middle of the game that are momentous to the overall theme and portrayal of characters. However, if such events do occur (e.g., the death of a character, the romance of two characters, etc.) this would be evident at the conclusion of the game. It is unlikely that events that are truly important will not be carried out in the final moments of the game. In addition, choices that may be possible in the game do not dramatically shift the themes and character portrayal. These choices (if at all present) are still scripted and usually point to the same conclusion. Any game that concludes with multiple

endings has each ending included in the final portion of coding. Alternate endings are not common in video games, and when they occur they are again still scripted with any “true” difference being minimal.

In light of Patricia Hill Collins’ (1998) standpoint theory, it is important for the validity of this research that I position myself within the context of the study. I consider myself a woman of color (Latina and Middle Eastern ethnic identity) who is an experienced gamer. I feel comfortable identifying myself as a “gamer” to others, and as a female gamer I have personally experienced sexism and racism projected from other gamers. The second coder involved in this study was a white male who also identifies himself as a “gamer.” I realize the affect that this may have had on the research presented. I have attempted to be reflexive of my subjective standpoint throughout the extent of this research.

## RELIABILITY

In order to ensure reliability between myself and the second coder a period of training took place. The codebook required some terms to be redefined and reorganized. Inclusion of pictures and detailed examples helped create a stronger sense of understanding and thus better reliability. Once both myself and the second coder reviewed and understood the codebook, we then conducted a pilot test using *Final Fantasy X*. I selected this game because it met all of the requirements of the study with the exception of time frame. *Final Fantasy X* came out prior to the 2008 cut off (and was on an older gaming console). The graphics of the game were still considerably advanced and thus comparable to the post 2008 sample. After a practice round of coding, I generated a random subsample ( $n = 5$ ) of the data and we coded it first as a test of reliability. Reliability tests were conducted and areas which were lacking required more training

and refinement of the codebook. Once a minimum score of kappa = 0.80 (for nominal variables) and a Spearman's correlation, rho = 0.80 (for ordinal variables), was reached, coding for the sample began.

I generated a random post-sub sample (n = 5) which I used to re-check reliability. The reliability results for the nominal variables are as follows: Race (staff members) kappa = 1.000 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Sex (staff members) kappa = 1.000 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Race (characters) kappa = 0.955 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Sex (characters) kappa = 0.958 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Character Motives kappa = 0.844 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), End Game Motives kappa = 0.891 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Story Roles kappa = 0.920 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Occupational Roles kappa = 0.805 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Behavioral Roles kappa = 0.683 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Primary Weapon Style kappa = 1.000 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ), Secondary Weapon Style kappa = 1.000 (approximate significance  $p < 0.000$ ).

I found all nominal variables to be reliable, with the exception of the Behavioral Roles variable. Thus when considering the following results pertaining to behavioral roles and the social implications of such roles, it is important to take into consideration this low rate of reliability. During the first sub-sample, a low reliability score for behavioral roles was corrected by lengthening and further explaining the definition of each category. However, in the final sub sample, difficulty remained throughout the data collection when attempting to code for behavioral roles. Future studies may benefit by separating behavioral roles (such as the "mother" role) from personality traits (such as "the dark knight").

The reliability results for ordinal variables are as follows: Gender Spearman's rho correlation = 0.894 ( $p < 0.01$ ), Character Violence Spearman's rho correlation = 0.835 ( $p < 0.01$ ), Violence to Character Spearman's rho correlation = 0.845 ( $p < 0.01$ ), Sexual Quality Spearman's rho correlation = 0.958 ( $p < 0.01$ ), Explicit Sexuality Spearman's rho correlation = 0.930 ( $p < 0.01$ ), Nudity Spearman's rho correlation = 0.837 ( $p < 0.01$ ), and Clothing Tightness Spearman's rho correlation = 0.854 ( $p < 0.01$ ). These results suggest that all ordinal variables are reliable.

## RESULTS

### *Video Game Characters*

A total of 41 games were included in the study based on their story focused genre, profitability, ESRB rating (teen and mature), and type of console (Xbox 360, PS3, and PC). From these 41 games, there are a total of 406 characters recorded in the data set. These characters include the characters coded as important to the progression of the narrative. Before coding for each game, I reviewed online databases (each game had its own and multiple online databases) which included all speaking characters and their role to the story. Characters who were listed as "major," "primary," and/or "key" were included as "important to the story." In addition, most online databases also keep track of how long each character appears in the game, thus, characters that appeared in the game more than fifty percent were also included. These characters, however, were almost always listed as "major" or "primary." This list comprised the characters that would be coded (although, any character which appeared important but not included on the list was also coded). Once actual coding took place, some characters did not appear in the viewed two-hour footage. There are 92 (22.7 percent) characters that did not appear

in the footage. Some characters are also duplicated as some series of games appear in the data more than once. For example, *Assassin's Creed* appears in the sample four times (*Assassin's Creed II*, *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*, etc.); thus, some of the games' major characters appear multiple times in the sample. Specifically, Desmond Miles, Shaun Hastings, and Rebecca Crane from the *Assassin's Creed* and Captain John Price from the *Call of Duty* series appear four times in the data, with four being the highest frequency for any individual character. Characters were then categorized by significance of the story as either primary (n = 70) or secondary (n = 336). There are a total of 35 characters that appear two or more times in the sample. These 35 characters account for 46 additional (not including the 1 data point for each character) data points. See Table 1 for a list of duplicate characters and their frequencies. (All tables are in Appendix C. Charts and figures for relevant results are in Appendix D.)

Most of the characters are white men. Male characters make up 73.0 percent (n = 297) of all characters, and white characters are the majority at 66.5 percent (n = 270). Two hundred of the 406 characters are white males, making this the largest category in the sample (49.3 percent of all characters). A few of the games also allow for choices between male and female characters (primary characters). Games which allow the player to completely customize their primary character were coded as "choice" and only account for eight characters. In other situations where the player can pick between a set of premade characters (no customization of the character), I coded each premade character as an individual data point. There are three games that give the player a choice between premade characters. For example, *Resident Evil 5* allows the player to pick between premade characters Shiva Alomar and Chris Redfield and each of those characters are included in the data (and each recorded as a primary character).

There are very few characters of color in the sample. Characters depicted as black or

African-American make up 7.9 percent ( $n = 32$ ) of the sample, Asians 3.0 percent ( $n = 12$ ), Hispanics 4.7 percent ( $n = 19$ ), and Middle Easterners or Arabs 1.7 percent ( $n = 7$ ). Three percent ( $n = 12$ ) of the characters were coded as “ambiguous”; some games have alien characters that make up 4.7 percent ( $n = 19$ ) of the coded characters, while 1.7 percent ( $n = 7$ ) are robots. A fewer number of games allowed for full customization of characters which included racial elements; these characters make up only 1.5 percent ( $n = 6$ ) of all characters. A final category labeled “other” represents only 1.5 percent ( $n = 6$ ) of all characters. Some of the “others” are from “real world” races (such as Native Americans) while others are not (such as mutants). Finally, some characters never appear visually in the game (e.g., there is only a voice, the game is seen from the first person perspective, or the character’s face is covered by a mask, etc.). Characters that were completely indiscernible were coded as “Unsure/Not Determinable” and represent 3.2 percent ( $n = 13$ ) of all characters.

To put these numbers in content, demographic data in the 2010 U.S. Census data shows that the United States has a population of 308 million people, with half being female (50.8 percent, U.S. Census 2010). In addition, white non-Hispanics make up about 63.0 percent of the total population (this number may be lower as “Middle Eastern” is not an option on the U.S. Census). Reflecting on the current study, whites and males are overrepresented. This remains the case when comparing results of video game characters’ race and the United States population. For example, blacks make up around 13 percent of the population; however, they represent less than 8 percent in this study. Asian video game characters were only three percent, while Asians make up around five percent of the population. Hispanic characters are under five percent of the sample and yet make up around 17 percent of the population (U.S. Census 2010). Elements of tokenism are present among the games and their characters. Recall that, according to Kanter

(1977), “tokenism” occurs when a subgroup comprises 1 to 20 percent of the total group; “minorities” exist when a subgroup comprises 21 to 40 percent of the total group; a “balanced” group occurs when subgroups comprise 41 to 50 percent of the total group; and a “majority” occurs when a group comprises anything above 51 percent of the total group. Of the 41 games studied, 17.1 percent (n = 7) had no female primary or secondary characters; 29.3 percent (n = 12) showed women as tokens; 36.6 percent (n = 15) showed women as minorities; 12.2 percent (n = 5) had an even number of women and men; and in only 4.9 percent (n = 2) of games, women were the majority. I also coded for racial tokens; however, due to the small percentages of some racial groups, tokenism was evaluated based on “white” and “non-white” categories. Aliens, mutants, robots, and “non-real” racial categories were not counted as racial minorities. These characters were counted in the total number of characters used to calculate the percentages, but not considered as “racial minorities.” The reason for this is to display the abundance of aliens, mutants, and robots when compared to “real world” racial minorities. Of all the games, 26.8 percent (n = 11) had no racial minorities as primary or secondary characters; 29.3 percent (n = 12) showed racial minorities as tokens; and 31.7 percent (n = 13) showed them as a minority. Only 1.4 percent (n = 1) had an even number of racial minorities to whites and, surprisingly, 9.8 percent (n = 4) had more racial minorities than whites in the game. The implications of such results are discussed below. In addition, chi-square tests were employed in order to evaluate relationships between the mostly nominal data. However, due to the small number of women and small number of racial minorities, chi-squared tests were not always fitting. A Fisher’s test was used whenever appropriate.

### *Female and Male Characters*

Characters were categorized as traditionally feminine, neutral, or traditionally masculine. I conceptualize traditionally feminine as being nurturing, cooperative, sensitive, empathetic, submissive, soft spoken, emotional, passive, etc. Traditionally masculine is conceptualized as competitiveness, aggression, assertiveness, independent, non-emotional, etc. Neutral was for characters who exhibited both feminine and masculine qualities. There are a total of 298 characters (66 female, 222 male, and seven “choice” characters) that have a coded gender. A cross tabulation run on only males and females (removing the choice characters) shows that 88.3 percent (n = 196) of the men are “traditionally masculine,” 11.3 percent (n = 25) are “neutral” and only one male character (0.5 percent) was “traditionally feminine.” For females the range of gender expression was surprisingly more diverse. 40.3 percent (n = 27) of the women were “traditionally feminine,” 34.4 percent (n = 23) “neutral,” and 25.4 percent (n = 17) “traditionally masculine.” “Choice” characters were more likely to be depicted as “neutral” (57.1 percentage, n = 4), while others were “traditionally masculine” (42.9 percent, n = 3). See Table 2 for more information on gender expression among characters, including information on sex and race. Information on the relationship between coded variables and race will be further discussed below. A chi-squared test yields a value of 140.968 ( $p < 0.00$ ) indicating a significant relationship between sex and gender expression. With respect to the gender variable, it seems that women in fact are not portrayed as gender rigid as their male counterparts.

Occupational and behavioral roles were more difficult to capture than had previously been assumed. Occupational roles refer to the types of jobs a character may have, such as a “muscle/tank” (character is used to attack and little else) or as an “intellect” (character is used to rely information on enemy, works puzzles or electronics, and/or engages in higher level thinking

then other characters). Behavioral roles refer more to a character's personality traits such as an "iron maiden" (character is strong willed, tough, dangers and comes off as cold and unemotional) or a "white knight" (character is gallant, righteous, lawful, and motivated to save others). There were a total of 296 (68 women and 228 men) characters that I was able to code for an occupational role, and 279 (64 women and 215 men) characters that I was able to code for a behavioral role. The most common occupational role for men was as a "muscle or tank" (131 out of 228 or 57.5 percent), and the second most common was as an "intellect" (39 out of 228 or 17.1 percent). The most common occupational role for women was as an "intellect" (20 of 68 or 29.4 percent), and the second most common role was tied between a "muscle/tank" (16 out of 68 23.5 percent) and "none" (16 out of 68 23.5 percent). The most common behavioral role for a male character was as "the brash" (57 of 215 or 26.5 percent) and the second most common role was as "the white knight" (46 of 215 or 21.4 percent). For women, the most common behavioral role was as an "iron maiden" (17 of 64 or 26.6 percent) and the second most common role was as a "mother" (14 of 64 or 21.9 percent). See Table 3 and 4 for the occupational role categories and Table 5 and 6 for behavioral role categories. Once again, tables include information on race which is further discussed below.

Another way to evaluate a character's role in a narrative is to look at the type of characters controlled by the player and the type of roles characters have within the context of the game's narrative. Primary characters are the characters that the story follows: The game is the primary character's story. Of the 399 male and female characters ("choice" characters are by nature always primary characters), 63 of them are primary characters and 336 are secondary characters. Primary characters are predominantly male (55 of 63 or 87.3 percent) compared to females (8 of 63 or 12.7 percent).

Story roles also give information about what kinds of characters' stories are told. I coded 319 characters (73 female, 246 male) with a "story role." Both men (168 of 246 males or 68.3 percent) and women (43 of 73 females or 58.9 percent) are most likely to be depicted as "heroes" compared to any other story role. However, men are least likely to be depicted as the "victim" (5 of 246 or 2.0 percent) whereas for women "victim" and "assistant" are tied for the second most common story role (12 of 246 or 16.4 percent). Men on the other hand, are more likely to be a "villain" (51 of 246 or 20.7 percent) compared to women (6 of 73 or 8.2 percent). See Table 7 for more information about story roles by sex and race.

Sexual themes and explicitness that surround a character were also difficult to capture in the limited amount of time covered in the game. Few sexual themes and occurrences arose during the two hours of coding. Most males (217 of 233 or 93.1 percent), females (58 of 72 or 80.6 percent) and "choice" characters (5 of 7 or 71.4 percent) had no sexual quality observed. Women, however, were more likely than men to have some sexual quality (6 of 72 or 8.3 percent compared to 13 of 233 or 5.6 percent), moderate sexual quality (5 of 72 or 6.9 percent compared to 2 of 233 or 0.9 percent), or excessive sexual quality (3 of 72 or 4.2 percent, compared to 1 of 233 or 0.4 percent). Sexual explicitness was also seldom, with most males (214 of 233 or 91.8 percent) and females (49 of 72 or 68.1 percent) and "choice" characters (6 of 7 or 85.7 percent) having none. Women, again, were more likely than men to have some sexual explicitness (16 of 72 or 22.2 percent compared to 17 of 233 or 7.3 percent), moderate sexual explicitness (5 of 72 or 6.9 percent compared to 1 of 233 or 0.4 percent), or excessive sexual explicitness (2 of 72 or 2.8 percent compared to 1 of 233 or 0.4 percent).<sup>1</sup> Only a minority of women expressed any amount of sexuality at all (24 of 72 or 33.3 percent); however, even less men expressed any level of sexuality (22 of 233 or 9.4 percent). A Fisher Exact Test shows a probability less than 0.00

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 8 for "choice" character results.

indicating a significant relationship between sex and sexuality expression. Table 8 shows sexual expression of characters by sex.

In similar fashion as sexuality, a character's nudity and tightness of clothing were also coded. Due to the customization available to "choice" characters, the categories have been removed from this analysis. Women are most likely to be clothed (46 of 100 or 45.5 percent) or fully covered (43 of 100 or 42.6 percent) compared to partially nude (5 of 100 or 5.0 percent) or completely nude (7 of 100 or 6.9 percent). Men are most likely to be completely covered (204 of 290 or 70.6 percent) or clothed (75 of 290 or 26.0 percent) compared to partially nude (5 of 290 or 1.7 percent) or completely nude (5 of 290 or 1.7 percent). A chi-squared test yields a value of 23.367 ( $p < 0.000$ ) indicating a significant relationship between sex and nudity. Both women (89.9 percent) and men (95.9 percent) were coded as either clothed or covered. A Fisher's Exact Test yields a significance value of  $p = 0.01$ . In addition, women are more likely than men to have tight clothing over all. This was also significant using Fisher's Exact Test ( $p = 0.000$ ) showing that 47.9 percent ( $n = 45$ )<sup>2</sup> of women, had some sort of tight clothing and only 10.6 percent ( $n = 30$ ) of men had some sort of tight clothing. Most men have no tight clothing at all (235 of 290 or 81.3 percent) and a few men have oversized clothing (19 of 290 or 6.6 percent), somewhat tight clothing (25 of 290 or 8.7 percent), or very tight clothing (5 of 290 or 1.7 percent). Women, on the other hand, are less likely than men to not wear tight clothing (49 of 100 or 48.5 percent), but are more likely to have somewhat tight clothing (32 of 100 or 31.7 percent) and very tight clothing (13 of 100 or 12.9 percent); no women wore oversized clothing. More information on character's clothing can be seen in Table 9 and Table 10. A chi-squared test yields a value of 67.371 ( $p < 0.000$ ); three cells have lower than the expected count) indicating a significant

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<sup>2</sup> Characters not wearing any clothing were removed from the "tightness" variable.

relationship between sex and clothing tightness. While men and women are more likely to appear clothed, women had a higher probability of appearing with some amount of tight clothing.

To understand the relationship between gender and violence, I coded the violence *exhibited* by a character, as well as the violence *received* by a character. The data reveals several themes. First, video games in the sample are violent, especially the games with *Teen* and *Mature* ratings. There are 37 of the 41 games that were labeled as “Mature” by the ESRB with the remaining four games labeled as “Teen.” All 41 games were flagged for having some level of violence (ranging from just “violence” to “intense violence”). All but one game was flagged as having either just “blood” or “blood and gore.” Twenty-four games (or 58.5 percent) were flagged by ESRB as having some level of sexual content (ranging from “suggestive themes” to “strong sexual themes”). That being said, most female characters exhibited no violence (39 of 71 or 54.9 percent), compared to male characters (48 of 233 or 20.6 percent), and “choice” characters (0 percent). Men were however less likely to be categorized as having “some violence” (22 of 233 or 9.4 percent) compared to women (10 of 71 or 14.1 percent).<sup>3</sup> Yet, most men were considered “moderately violent” (123 of 233 or 52.8 percent) or “excessively violent” (40 of 233 or 17.2 percent). Women were less likely to be considered “moderately violent” (21 of 71 or 29.6 percent) or “excessively violent” (1 of 71 or 1.4 percent). “Choice” characters were almost exclusively considered “moderately violent” (6 of 7 85.7 percent) with only one character coded as “excessively violent” (14.3 percent). Men were more likely to exhibit some level of violence (185 of 233 or 79.4 percent) compared to women (32 of 71 or 45.1 percent). This relationship was found significant (Fisher’s Exact Test  $p = 0.000$ ;  $\chi^2 = 31.392$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). In addition, women were seen as committing “little to no violent acts” (49 of 70 or 70.0 percent) less often than men (70 of 234 or 30.0 percent). This relationship was significant (Fisher’s Exact

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<sup>3</sup> No “choice characters” coded as “some violence” or “no violence.”

Test  $p = 0.000$ ;  $\chi^2 = 36.345$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), indicating that women have a lower probability of committing “some” to “a lot” of violent acts compared to men. See Table 11 for more information on sex, race, and character violence.

The numbers are slightly different when looking at violence committed against a character. Almost half of the women (46.5 percent or 33 of 71) had no violent acts committed against them, other women had “some violence” (18.3 percent or 13 of 71) against them, fewer women had “moderate” (23.9 percent or 17 of 71), acts of violence committed against them, or “excessive” acts of violence against them (11.3 percent or 8 of 71). Men were coded as having no violent acts committed against them 21.0 percent (49 of 233), “some violence” 17.2 percent (40 of 233), “moderate violence” 48.1 percent (112 of 233), and “excessive violence” against them 13.7 percent (32 of 233). “Choice” characters almost exclusively were coded as having moderate violence against them (6 of 7 or 85.7 percent), with one character having “some violence” against them (14.3 percent). A chi-square value of 16.723 shows a significant relationship at the  $p < 0.000$  between males and females. Men had a higher rate of having some to a lot of violent acts committed to them (145 out of 234 or 62.0 percent) than women (242 of 70 or 34.3 percent). Later I will discuss some qualitative findings on violent acts executed across sex lines. Refer to Table 12 for more information on violence done to the characters.

Another way of looking at violence is by assessing the types of primary weapons (if at all) used by the characters. Once again, “choice” characters have been removed from the analysis due to the full customization allowed for choice of weapons. There were 307 characters (72 women, 235 men) for which a primary weapon type was coded. For women, the most common primary weapon type was the absence of a weapon (45 of 72 or 62.5 percent). The second most common primary weapon type for women was projectile weapons, mostly guns (20 of 72 or 27.8

percent). The most common primary weapon for men was projectile weapons, mostly guns (141 of 235 or 60.0 percent), and the second most common being no primary weapon (72 of 235 or 30.6 percent). In fact, guns were the most common weapon across the board for all characters (161 of 307 52.4 percent), with “no primary weapon” at a more distant second (38.1 percent, n = 117). See Table 13 and 14 for additional information on weapons.

Examining whether or not a character has or does not have a primary weapon reveals significant results by sex. Specifically, comparing only men and women, a Fisher’s Exact Test ( $p = 0.000$ ) shows that women characters have a higher probability (62.5 percent,  $n = 45$ ) of not having a primary weapon, whereas men were less inclined (30.6 percent,  $n = 72$ ) to not possess a primary weapon.

### *Characters of Color*

As previously mentioned, there are only 123 non-white primary and secondary characters. Removing the robots, aliens, mutants, and “choice” characters there were only 87 “real world” racial minorities. Differences between “real world” racial minorities and “fantasy world” racial minorities are further discussed below. In addition, female characters of color while few, will also be discussed. For now, focus will be given on how “real world” male/female racial minorities are portrayed, and if they fall along stereotypes.

Roles that characters occupy in a narrative often can reveal information about society’s preconceived notions of race and ethnicity. With regards to the 267 characters coded for occupational roles, whites were most likely to be portrayed as “muscle/tanks” (89 of 202 white characters or 44.1 percent) as were blacks (19 of 25 black characters, or 76.0 percent), Hispanics (9 of 13 Hispanic characters, or 69.2 percent), Middle Eastern/Arabs (4 of 5 or 80.0 percent), ambiguous characters (5 of 7 or 71.4 percent), and “real world” others (2 of 4 or 50.0 percent).

Asians were most likely to be represented as “gangsters/mobsters/thugs” (36.4 percent,  $n = 6$ ). Behavioral roles were slightly harder to capture as they were usually less obvious than occupational roles resulting in only 275 coded characters. The most common role for a white character was “the brash” (47 of 194 or 24.2 percent) with “the dark knight” (31 of 194 or 16.0 percent) as the second most common role. Black characters were most commonly portrayed as “the white knight” (10 of 25 or 40.0 percent) or as some other role (6 of 25 or 24.0 percent). Asian characters were found as having no behavioral role (4 of 11 or 36.4 percent), which denotes a bland or uninteresting character, with “the dark knight” and “the brash” tied for second (2 of 11 or 18.2 percent). Hispanic and/or Latino characters were most commonly depicted as “the white knight” (4 of 12 or 33.3 percent) or “the brash” (3 of 12 or 25.0 percent). “Real world” other characters were seen as “the brash” (2 of 4 or 50.0 percent) or “the dark knight” (1 of 4 or 25.0 percent) or as the “pet” (1 of 4 or 25.0 percent). Characters that were ambiguous along racial lines had a three-way tie with either being the uninteresting “none,” “the brash,” or some other role (2 of 7 or 28.6 percent). Middle Eastern or Arab characters were depicted mostly by the uninteresting “none” category (4 of 5 or 80.0 percent). See Tables 3 through 7 for additional information on character roles and race.

I also coded other types of roles such as story roles and primary/secondary roles for racial minorities ( $n = 313$ ). The most common role across all racial categories was the “hero” (65.5 percent of all characters). Specifically, 138 of 217 whites (63.6 percent) occupy this category, 25 of 26 blacks (96.2 percent), 5 of 11 Asians (45.5 percent), 10 of 16 Hispanics (62.5 percent), 2 of 4 “real world” other (50.0 percent), and 5 of 7 ambiguous characters (71.5 percent). The only exception to the “everyone’s a hero” position is Middle Easterners and Arabs, where only two characters (28.6 percent) were represented as heroes. The most common role for Middle Eastern

and Arab characters was villain (5 out of 7 or 71.4 percent). The second most common story roles for each racial category were as follows: whites—villain (40 of 217 or 18.4 percent), blacks—villain (1 of 26 or 3.8 percent), Asian—assistant (4 of 11 or 36.4 percent), Hispanic/Latino—villain (4 of 16 or 25.0 percent), and “real world” other—victim/villain (1 of 4 or 25.0 percent). Table 7 has additional information on story roles by race.

Primary characters are mostly white (43 of 62 or 69.4 percent). Black characters make up 8.1 percent (5 of 62) of the primary characters, while there is only one Asian (1.6 percent), one Hispanic (1.6 percent), one “real world” other (1.6 percent) and one Middle Eastern/Arab character (1.6 percent) that is primary. Ambiguous characters make up 4.8 percent (3 of 62) of all primary characters. Once again, comparing whites to “real world” non-whites in the collapsed race variable yields an insignificant Fisher’s Exact Test with a probability value of  $p = 0.734$  when comparing race to character’s importance (primary or secondary). This is most likely due to the weighted “secondary character” cells, as most of the data is situated there. This once again demonstrates that video game narratives continue to focus not only on males, but on white males.

#### *Racial Minorities versus Aliens, Robots, and Mutants*

The following analysis focuses on the differences between “real world” non-whites (RWNW) and “fantasy” races (FR) such as aliens, robots, and mutants. The goal of this section is to determine what, if any, differences occur between these races unique to the fantasy element that surrounds video games. Once again, there are 87 “real world” non-white characters, 30 “fantasy” non-white characters, and six choice characters. Due to the customization of racial elements among choice characters, they have been removed from the following analysis.

RWNW are more likely to be male (66 of 87 or 75.9 percent male), as is the case with FRs (19 of 30 or 63.3 percent male). This relationship however, has an insignificant Fisher’s

Exact score of  $p = 0.23$ . Differences among story roles are also insignificant (however, three cells are still less than the expected count,  $\chi^2 = 2.491.477$ ,  $p < 0.695$ ).

### *Characters of Color and Sex*

Continuing along the same logic as above, characters of color should also be evaluated by sex: women of color and men of color.

### *Women of Color*

Of the 102 female characters, 101 have a coded race (Jennifer from *Battlefield 3* is never seen outside of the first person view so there is no visual image available to determine her race): white 67.6 percent ( $n = 69$ ), black 3.9 percent ( $n = 4$ ), Asian 3.9 percent ( $n = 4$ ), and Hispanic/Latina 3.9 percent each ( $n = 4$ ), alien 6.9 percent ( $n = 7$ ), “real world” other 2.0 percent ( $n = 2$ ), and robot 2.0 percent ( $n = 2$ ), ambiguous 6.9 percent ( $n = 7$ ), non-real world other 1 percent ( $n = 1$ ). There are no female Middle Eastern or Arab characters. Once again there are more FRs ( $n = 11$ ) than any individual racial minority group. In fact, there are more aliens than any other race category other than white.

Earlier it was stated that women have a more diverse display of gender. This seems to remain true for white women and ambiguous women (and to lesser extent Asian women). Of the 46 white women, 37.0 percent ( $n = 17$ ) are “traditionally feminine,” 39.1 percent ( $n = 18$ ) are “neutral,” and 23.9 percent ( $n = 11$ ) are traditionally masculine. There are only three “ambiguous” women and each fell into one of the three categories (33.3 percent,  $n = 1$  each). The four Asian women were also somewhat diverse in gender expression, 25.0 percent ( $n = 1$ ) were “traditionally feminine” or “neutral” and 50.0 percent ( $n = 2$ ) of the Asian women were

“traditionally masculine.” The diversity of gender expression becomes less apparent with other racial groups. For example, two of the three black women were “neutral,” while the third was feminine. All three Hispanic women were coded as “traditionally feminine.” Two of the three alien women were “traditionally feminine” while the other was “traditionally masculine.” There was only one “real world” other character (nine-year old Clementine from *The Walking Dead* is half black half white) who is “traditionally feminine.” Finally, there are two robots that were coded for gender, one “traditionally feminine” the other “neutral.” Refer to Table 2 for more information on race, sex, and gender.

There are eight female characters that the player can control (primary characters): 4 white characters (3 are “no choice” situations, and the other only represents an entire army, the player does not control just the character but her army), 2 black characters (both are choices among “pre made” characters), one ambiguous character (choice among “pre made” characters), and one character whose race was indeterminable due to the “first person” perspective (“no choice” situation).

Removing white women from the before mentioned variables leaves very few women in each category. For example, there are only 67 women coded for their occupational role, 21 of them are racial minorities, and only 13 are RWNWs. With regards to primary or secondary roles for whites and RWNWs there is no significance between the variables ( $p = 0.347$ ). It is also insignificant for RWNWS and FRs ( $p = 0.533$ ).

For the sexuality variable there were 14 female RWNWs, 50 female whites, and 6 female FRs. Fisher’s Exact test yields insignificant results for both whites and RWNWs ( $p = 1.00$ ) and for RWNWs and FRs ( $p = 0.161$ ).<sup>4</sup> The nudity variable shows that white women ( $n = 68$ ) and RWNW ( $n = 21$ ) women are both more likely to be clothed or covered (95.6 percent white, 90.5

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<sup>4</sup> See Table 8 for additional information on Sexual Expression and Race.

percent RWNWs). However, this relationship is not significant according to a Fisher's Exact Test at the probability level of 0.588. When comparing RWNWs and FRs ( $n = 10$ ), the significance value increases to a probability level of 0.022 with 71.4 percent of the FR women appearing completely or partially nude. The clothing tightness variable shows that white women ( $n = 68$ ) and RWNW women ( $n = 21$ ) do not yield a significant value for the Fisher's Exact Test ( $p = 0.806$ ).<sup>5</sup> There are 47.1 percent of white women (32 of 68) wearing tight clothing and 42.9 percent of RWNW (9 of 21) women wearing tight clothing. When comparing RWNWs and FRs ( $n = 5$ )<sup>6</sup> a Fisher's Exact Test does not yield a significant value ( $p = 0.322$ ). Of the FR women, 80.0 percent ( $n = 4$ ) appear in tight fitting clothing. Since many FR women appeared in tight clothing, I also compared FR women to white women. A Fisher's exact Test shows a significant relationship between white women and FR women for nudity ( $p = 0.001$ ) but not for clothing tightness ( $p = 0.199$ ).<sup>7</sup> This, coupled with information from the nudity variable, suggests that FR women have a high probability of being naked and possibly for wearing tight clothing.

The weapons variable shows that 70.0 percent of white women (35 of 50) do not have a primary weapon and 42.9 percent of RWNW women (6 of 14) do not have a primary weapon ( $p = 0.113$ ). FR women are split on either having a weapon (3 of 6) or not (3 of 6). However, the relationship between RWNW women and FR women is not significant ( $p = 1.00$ ). Table 13 and 14 shows primary weapon choice by race and sex.

### *Men of Color*

There are 297 male characters in the data set. Of these men, 200 (67.3 percent) are white, 28 (9.4 percent) are black/African American/African, eight (2.7 percent) are Asian, 15 (5.1

<sup>5</sup> See Table 9 for additional information on Nudity and Race.

<sup>6</sup> The  $n$  value drops for the nudity variable as 6 of the 11 FR females are nude.

<sup>7</sup> See Table 10 for additional information on Clothing Tightness and Race.

percent) are Hispanic/Latino, 12 (3.7 percent) are Aliens, three (1.0 percent) are “real world” other’s, five (1.7 percent) are ambiguous, seven (2.4 percent) are Middle Eastern/Arab, and five (1.7 percent) are robots. There are three (1.0 percent) “non-real world” others. Unfortunately, 12 (4.0 percent) of the men had a race that was “undeterminable” due to a lack of footage, wearing a mask, or only seen from the first person perspective. As with previous cases, the 19 FR men make up more than any other racial minority group with the exception of blacks.

Previously it was reported that men were skewed toward “traditionally masculine” on the gender scale. This remains the case when the data is broken down by race. Almost all racial categories were situated as exclusively “traditionally masculine.” Only one white male (Doc Mitchel from *Fallout: New Vegas*, who is comforting, soft spoken, and caring toward the town and the primary character) is considered “traditionally feminine.” There are 25 “neutral” characters, most of which are white (n = 18). Refer to Table 2 for information on race, sex, and gender.

Characters that are controllable by the player (primary characters) are almost exclusively white (38 of 55 or 69.1 percent). There are seven (12.7 percent) primary male characters whose race was undeterminable due largely to the nature of the “first person” perspective. The remaining ten primary characters are: three black (5.5 percent, two are a “no choice” situation, the other is an option among premade characters), one Asian (1.8 percent, a “no choice” situation), one Hispanic (1.8 percent, a choice among premade characters), one alien (1.8 percent this character used to represent an entire alien race, is not actually controlled by the player, instead, the player controls the entire race), one “real world” other (1.8 percent, a “no choice”), one Middle Eastern/Arab (1.8 percent, a “no choice” situation), two ambiguous (3.6 percent, one is a choice among premade characters, one is a “no choice”), and zero robots or “non-real world”

others. A Fisher's Exact Test on whites and RWNW males ( $p = 0.359$ ) and RWNW and FR males ( $p = 0.445$ ) shows the relationship between race and level of importance insignificant. This is most likely due to the fact that the majority of characters are "secondary."

Again, most male characters were categorized as "good guys" (79.3 percent). Good characters would be any other story role besides "villain." The villains are made up mostly by white males (70.6 percent,  $n = 36$ ), as with most of the data. There is however, one category of racial minority that is composed primarily of villains. For Middle Easterners and Arabs, five out of seven (71.4 percent) characters are villains in the narrative. A Fisher's Exact Test on whites and RWNW males ( $p = 0.855$ ) and RWNW and FR males ( $p = 1.000$ ) shows the relationship between race and "good guy/villain" insignificant. This is most likely due to the fact that the majority of characters are "good."

A Fisher's Exact Test for sexuality was also not significant, which makes sense since most men were seen as having "no sexuality expressed." The probability levels found for whites and RWNW males ( $p = 0.796$ ) and RWNW and FR males ( $p = 0.584$ ) show an insignificant relationship. With respect to nudity, a Fisher's Exact Test on whites and RWNW males ( $p = 0.015$ ) and RWNW and FR males ( $p = 0.000$ ) shows the relationship between race and nudity as significant. White males (100 percent,  $n = 198$ ) and RWNW (63 of 65 or 95.5 percent) males had a higher chance of appearing clothed or covered (as seen by the overall male score for nudity); however, FR males were less likely (11 of 20 or 55.0 percent) to appear clothed or covered than their counterparts. The relationship between RWNW males and whites ( $p = 1.00$ ) was not significant for tightness of clothing but was significant for RWNW males and FR males ( $p = 0.003$ ). While most men did not wear tight clothing, FR males did (7 of 13 or 53.8 percent). This was also true of FR women. I later discuss the implications of the differences between FR men

and women in terms of sexualization. While FR women and men have about the same probability of appearing completely or partially nude (50.0 percent women, 45.0 percent males), FR women are more likely to appear in tight clothing (80.0 percent women, 46.2 percent males, although not significant,  $p = 0.314$ ) and as more sexual ( $p = 0.005$ ). Specifically, when FR men appear nude, their fantasy bodies are less sexualized than when FR women appear nude. (See Appendix E for images of Cortana from *Halo* series and Victor from *Fallout 3*).

Most men acted out violent behaviors in the games: whites 119 of 158 or 75.3 percent, RWNWs 46 of 52 or 88.5 percent, and FRs 9 of 11 or 81.8 percent. White males and RWNW males were found to be not significantly related with respect to their own violent behavior (Fisher's Exact Test  $p = 0.085$ ), but not with the violence committed against them ( $p = 0.330$ ), or with the use of a primary weapon ( $p = 0.169$ ). For RWNW men and FR men, there was no significant relationship between their own violent behavior (Fisher's Exact Test  $p = 0.715$ ), violence committed against them ( $p = 1.000$ ), or with the use of a primary weapon ( $p = 0.475$ ).

### *Character Motivations*

Of the characters that I was able to code for motive, most of them were motivated to save the world, country and/or land (167 of 306 or 54.8 percent). The second most common motive for all characters was solely personal gains (70 of 306 or 23.4 percent), followed by passive motives (47 of 306 or 15.7 percent), rescuing another character (8 of 306 or 2.7 percent), and other (of 306 or 2.5 percent). When looking only at female characters' motivations, the most common is to "save the world, country, and/or land" (34 of 69 or 33.3 percent), the second being "passive motives" (20 of 69 or 19.6 percent), then "solely personal gains" (13 of 69 or 12.7 percent), and finally two women had some "other" motive (2.0 percent). No woman was

motivated to save another character. Similarly, men were most likely to be motivated to “save the world, country, and/or land” (130 of 230 or 43.8 percent), the second most common is “solely personal gains” (57 of 230 or 19.2 percent), then “passive motives” (27 of 230 or 9.1 percent), rescuing another character (8 of 230 or 2.7 percent), or some “other” motive (8 of 230 or 2.7 percent).

Motivations by race shows that whites (n = 204) are most motivated by saving the world (53.4 percent), or by personal gains (25.5 percent). Blacks (n = 25) are mostly motivated by saving the world (72.0 percent) or by passive motives (20.0 percent). Asians (n = 11) are also mostly motivated to save the world (45.5 percent), and either passive motives (27.3 percent) or personal gains (27.3 percent). Hispanics (n=13) are somewhat less motivated by saving the world (38.5 percent) than others, as well as by personal gains (30.8 percent). Middle Eastern/Arab (n = 6) characters are most motivated by personal gains (66.7 percent) or by passive motives (16.7 percent) or by saving the world (16.7 percent). Ambiguous characters (n = 7) are either motivated by saving the world (42.9 percent) or by personal gains (42.9 percent). “Real world” other (n = 4) characters were motivated by saving the world (50 percent) or by personal gains (25.0 percent) or passive motives (25.0 percent). Alien (n= 11) characters were almost exclusively motivated by saving the world (or any world, 81.8 percent) with a distant second as either personal gains (9.1 percent) or some other motive (9.1 percent). Robot (n = 5) characters had personal gains motivating them (40.0 percent) with saving the world (20 percent) or passive (20 percent) or some other motive (20 percent) as a distant second. Finally, the only “non-real world” other character whose motive was collected was to save the world.

Overall, character motivations were not as diverse as had previously been assumed. Most video game narratives focused on characters that had benevolent goals that focused on protecting

some sort of physical land. The antagonist characters were often those who sought out some sort of personal gain such as power, destruction of the world, or world domination.

### *Sex and Race Ratio of Production Team and Video Game Characters*

A total of 391 staff members produced the 41 games coded. Of these staff members, women make up a small proportion 6.1 percent ( $n = 24$ ). There are 306 (78.3 percent) male staff members and 61 staff members (15.6 percent) whose sex was not determinable (either from a picture or from a biography). While the percentage of female characters in the games was also less than male characters (25.1 percent), the difference is not nearly as large. Half of the women on the teams were titled “producers,” 33.3 percent (8 of 24) are writers, only one woman was a director (4.2 percent), and 12.5 percent of women were production managers (3 of 24). Men on the other hand were more evenly dispersed between writer (105 of 306 or 34.3 percent), producer (134 of 306 or 43.8 percent), director (63 of 306 or 20.6 percent), and production manager (4 of 306 or 1.3 percent). See Table 15 for more information about sex and staff members.

White staff members also make up the majority at 72.1 percent of the total ( $n = 282$ ). There were only three black staff members (0.8 percent), 31 Asian (7.9 percent), three Hispanics (0.8 percent), and two Middle Easterners (0.5 percent). There were, however, 70 staff members (17.9 percent) whose pictures were not found and thus a race could not be determined. There are only two women of color who are both Asian. All three black staff members, all three Hispanics/Latinos, and both Middle Eastern/Arabs worked as producers. Asians were mostly producers as well (21 of 31 or 67.7 percent), with seven as directors (22.6 percent) and three as writers (9.7 percent). Whites had a slightly higher number of producers (113 of 282 or 40.1 percent), with writers a close second (107 of 282 or 37.9 percent), 55 were directors (19.5

percent), and seven where production managers (2.5 percent). See Table 16 for additional information on staff members by race.

Similar to the case with video game characters, some people appear multiple times in the data because they have worked on multiple games in the sample. Often this occurs with games within the same series such as *Assassin's Creed* who have had many of the same staff members working on each game in that series. In addition, some people occupied multiple roles on the production team (for example as the lead writer and the producer). In order to capture the number of positions on the games and how many of those positions were filled by men/women and whites/non-whites, the staff members were arranged by position. Therefore, if a person had two roles they would appear twice in the data set, once for each title they held on any game. The most frequent staff member is Dan Houser, who appears six times in the sample. There is one person (Dave Anthony) who appears five times, and five other people who appear four times. These are the most frequent occurrences.

Tokenism among staff members was also analyzed. Again, tokenism” occurs when a subgroup comprises 1 to 20 percent of the total group; “minorities” exist when a subgroup comprises 21 to 40 percent of the total group; a “balanced” group occurs when subgroups comprise 41 to 50 percent of the total group; and a “majority” occurs when a group comprises anything above 51 percent of the total group (Kanter 1977). Of the 41 games in the sample, 28 of them (65.9 percent) have no females on their “production staff” (writers, directors, and producers only accounted for). Additionally, twenty-seven (65.9 percent) of the games have no people of color on their production staff. Further analysis shows that ten (24.4 percent) games have a “token” amount of women on their staff, three games (7.3 percent) have a “minority” of women, and only one game had an even amount (2.4 percent) of women to men. No games had a

majority of women on their “production team.” A similar situation exists for people of color. Nine games (22.0 percent) have racial minorities as “tokens,” two games have a “minority” (4.9 percent) of racial minorities on their staff, and two other games (4.9 percent) have a majority of racial minorities when compared to whites. Both games with a majority of racial minorities are Japanese games with Asians as the majority (though there are still whites present on these production teams).

The influence of women on the creation of women characters is still difficult to capture with the data collected in my study. However, what I can see is that all of the seven games that have no female characters as primary or secondary characters also have no female writers, directors, or producers. On the other hand, male only production teams are responsible for the two games that have a majority of women. In addition, men only teams produced nine games with female characters as tokens, nine other games with female characters as minorities, and no games with an even amount of women and men. Production teams with a token amount of women are responsible for two games with a token amount of women, five games with a minority amount of women, and three games with an even amount of characters. The three groups with a minority amount of women made games with a token number of women, a minority women, and even amount of women and men ( $n = 1$  each). The one game with an even number of women and men on the production staff is responsible for one game with an even amount of male and female characters.

Results are slightly different for staff with people of color. Of the 28 games with no racial minority staff members, seven games had no racial minorities in them,<sup>8</sup> seven had them as tokens, nine had them as minorities, one had them as even to whites, and the only four games featured more racial minority than white characters were made by these all white staffs. Staffs

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<sup>8</sup> Analysis does not include fantasy races.

with a token amount of racial minorities created two games with no racial minority characters, four games with a token amount of racial minorities in them, and three games with a minority of racial minority characters. Two games with no racial minorities were made by a production team that consisted of a minority of racial minority staff members. The two staff teams with majority members who were non-white (both were mostly Asian) created one game with token racial minority characters and one game with a minority of them. Games with no female staff members produced most of the games with racial minority characters (65.9 percent  $n = 27$ )

With regards to primary characters, six out of seven of the games that allow for a “customized” primary character have female staff members on those games. However, six out of the seven games that have a female option as a primary character, are made by male only production teams. Four of the seven games that allow a player to fully customize the race of the primary character are made by white only teams. Five of the games which have an option of a RWNW primary character are also made by white only staff teams. Removing the choice options from the analysis revealed that the relationship between staff races and primary character’s race was insignificant ( $p = 1.00$ ), as well as the relationship between primary character’s sex and staff race ( $p = 0.656$ ), primary character’s race and sex of staff ( $p = 0.634$ ), and not significant relationship between primary character’s sex and staff’s sex ( $p = 1.00$ ).

An analysis between the percentage of female characters and female staff members on each game was also compared. A paired t-test shows that there is a significant difference between the mean of the percentage of female characters and the percentage of female staff members ( $t = 7.165$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). However, a Pearson’s correlation test shows no correlation between the two ( $r = 0.243$ ,  $p < 0.125$ ). A paired t-test also shows a significant mean ( $t = 3.181$ ,  $p < 0.003$ ) difference between the percent racial minority character and the percent racial

minority staff members for each game. Once again, however, the Pearson's correlation coefficient shows no significant correlation between the two ( $r = 0.026$ ,  $p < 0.870$ ). A Pearson's  $r$  score of  $-0.218$  (while insignificant,  $p < 0.171$ ) shows an interesting negative relationship between female staff members and the presence of racial minority characters in the game. See tables 18 and 19 for more information.

## DISCUSSION

### *The Symbolic Annihilation of Female and Racial Minority Video Game Characters*

As seen in the previous results, white men are the majority of story focused video games. Women and racial minorities are very few to come by in these games. When and if a racial minority is present in a game, they were more likely to be a man. Women of color make up one of the smallest category type of character. This is true especially when considering primary characters, which are mostly white males. The use of only white males as primary characters creates games which focus only on the white male narratives. Only focusing on white male stories and the triumph of white males is indicative of traditional and rigid gender and racial narratives. The symbolic annihilation of women and racial minorities in video games has continued into 2012.

This exclusion of women and racial minorities is not something that has gone unnoticed in the gaming community. A blogger from *The Border House*, a gaming community which focuses on the inclusion of all gamers ("feminist, queer, disabled, people of color, transgender, poor, gay, lesbian, and other... marginalized groups"), argues that cookie cutter male characters are a result of lazy game design (Alex 2010). Alex argues that these male characters are a result of game designer's opinion of the "default human being" which notable excludes many people. *The Border House* points to examples of white males being used as a "default" character when

designers need to quickly produce a character for a game. Not only do these male characters exclude many categories of possibilities within a fantasy world such as video games, but it also presents a second issue: tokenism. If game designers are simply throwing in characters without much consideration (thus resulting in the overwhelmingly white male sample) then racial minority characters are frequently overlooked. This seems more plausible when considering the writers, directors, and producers of these video games. There is an abundance of white males within the gaming industry; a suggestive extrapolation may be that these white men staff members are creating what they view as default: themselves. As a result, racial minorities and women who do make it into a video game will find themselves as either tokens or minorities.

According to both Gerbner and Gross's theory on symbolic annihilation (1976) and Kanter's tokenism (1977), women who actually make it into any media form are usually depicted negatively, demeaning, or stereotypically. Even though the majority of characters are males, male racial minority characters are still tokens in almost all of the games. In addition, many of these male characters of color are pigeonholed as racial stereotypes. Additionally, even though women are often seen as tokens and minorities in these video games, some women experience diverse representations. However, the luxury of diverse personalities, roles, and gender expression is not seen across racial barriers.

### *The Situation of Female Characters*

“Where’s Barbara with Big Titties and Stephani who Sucks like a Vacuum?”

—Niko to Roman in *Grand Theft Auto IV*

The results indicate that gender roles for women were quite diverse along the feminine-neutral-masculine scale. This however did not remain evident when looking at women of color.

Only white women, Asian women, and ambiguous women seemed to exhibit a variety of gender expressions. Other racial stereotypes did emerge for racial minority women. For example, as noted above, the three Hispanic women with a recorded gender are all “traditionally feminine.”

Kanter (1977) states that when women are present in a media form they will be categorized into specific and confined personality roles. These token roles (such as mother, seductress, pet, and iron maiden) were included in the codebook in order to examine if video game women were also depicted in these ways. I found that women in this study were most likely to be depicted as either an “iron maiden,” a “mother,” or as “none/uninteresting.” While there is no definite behavioral role for women, the diversity only appears with regards to white women.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues that when women of color are presented in the media they will be positioned as an “other” or different from white women. Using again Kanter’s (1977) token roles, it seems that women of color are much more likely to be portrayed stereotypically. For example, most black women, most alien women, and all Hispanic women are depicted as “mothers.” Robot women were most likely to be depicted as either an “iron maiden” or as a “pet.” Clementine from *The Walking Dead* (the only real world other female), was depicted as a “pet.” White women, ambiguous women, and Asian women were again much likely to be depicted in diverse token roles. In the case of gender and behavioral roles, white women enjoy a diversity of behavioral roles, while most racial minority women are positioned not only differently from white women (as the “other”) but also stereotypically. In contrast, occupational roles for all women appear to be less strict toward stereotypical roles. Most women (regardless of race) were represented as either an “intellect” or as a “muscle.”

Just as Niko was surprised by the lack of sexually available women in the introduction of *Grand Theft Auto IV*, the analysis points to a lack of sexual themes and sexually exposed women. While more females than males had more sexually revealing clothing or tight clothing, most characters did not. While there are references to women in a sexual manner (such as this quote from *Grand Theft Auto*), these do not make up the majority of the game play viewed. That being said, the differences between men and women are still found to be significant and thus women continue to be *more* sexualized than men. It may also be the case that the salience of sexualized women in video games may be a product of its marketing in either the box cover art or in advertisements. While this is outside the scope of this analysis, this may be why many of the previous research done by others on box art and advertisements yielded high levels of sexuality (e.g., Burgess et al. 2007; Dill and Thill 2007; Miller and Summers 2007). Another answer may also be in the time line. A positive perspective may be that games are relying less on the overt sexuality of its female characters in order to sell games. Perhaps game producers have become sensitive to public and academic outcry over the “hypersexuality” of female characters.

Conversely, alien and robot women were depicted as more sexual than not only their male counter parts but also other women. Alien and robot women were more likely to appear completely or partially nude and when clothed are more likely to appear in tight clothing. On the one hand, video games appear to have gotten less sexual then previous research indicates. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted that the sexual references and themes have been preoccupied by alien and robot women. It is possible this may be due to censorship and rating labels. The ESRB (run by the ESA) regulates video game ratings in the United States. If a video game were to feature a nude *human* female the game may get slapped with an *A—Adult* rating. Adult ratings are a death sentence for big business gaming industries as retail stores such as

*GameStop* and even *Target*, *Walmart*, and any other store that sales video games, will not sell them. While this is only speculation, it may be possible that game producers are compartmentalizing sexual themes and nudity into non-human characters in order to avoid the A rating. This way they can still feature a totally naked female character (see Cortana and EDI) who would not normally have genitals or nipples (due to their robotic or alien features), avoid “adult” ratings and maybe even parent outrage.

Women were found to be less violent, have less violent acts done to them, and also less likely to use a weapon. This result may seem to be contradictory. On the one hand, as previously illustrated, the video games in the sample are violent. So then why are the women in these games not violent? If so much of a game’s action revolves around the use of weapons (62.7 percent of all the characters use a weapon and all 41 games are flagged as “violent”), why are women not using weapons? Much of the previous literature on video games focuses on violence as a negative character trait (Burgess et al. 2007; Dietz 1998; Dill and Thill 2007; Downs and Smith 2009; Miller and Summers 2007). Regardless of the moral dilemma, women *not* engaging in violent acts suggest a less active role in the game. For example, EDI from *Mass Effect 3*, Anya from *Gears of War 2*, and Abigail Marston from *Red Dead Redemption* are all women who do not have a weapon or engage in violent acts in games where all of the other (male) characters do.

The majority of games which do not feature any women are military games (i.e., *Call of Duty* series and *Battlefield* series). These military games feature grounded warfare with face-to-face combat with the enemy. In reality, female soldiers have historically been barred from front line combat. It is noteworthy to discuss if these games can be excused for their lack of women due to their “realistic” representation of a front line military warzone. However, given that video games (including these military games) evoke much creative freedom when it comes to

interpreting real world events and protocol it is not appropriate for the systematic removal of women from these games. Extrapolating from the ESA (2008-2013) demographics of gamers, women are increasingly active in the gaming community. It is likely that they are also playing military games which feature no female characters. It may then be in the production teams' best interest to feature female characters with meaningful roles and stories in the game.

Unfortunately, since these games are still numerous on top profit lists, game producers may not feel they need (or want) to change this element of the game. Again, this is an area of interest that would be better suited with an interview method and thus beyond the scope of this study.

On the other hand, what is the alternative? To say there are not enough women in these video games (which there is not), and that women have less interesting and less active roles in video games (which is a reasonable argument) may require a leveling off of the difference between men and women with regards to violence and weapon use. This then would result in more similar male and female characters. The argument here could be that video game producers are just "throwing in" female characters as carbon copies of male characters in order to increase their dismal male-to-female ratio. The game *Aliens* was guilty of haphazardly including women as a second thought. This is exhibited in other games from the sample. For example, Lieutenant Jennifer from *Battlefield 3*, Samantha Byrne from *Gears of War 3*, and Kat from *Halo Reach* are all examples of these "carbon copy" women. These women are all in games with a high male-to-female ratio, with moderate to intense amounts of violence, and with a variety of weapon uses. Just like their male counterparts these women are masculine, moderately violent, and use a gun as a primary weapon. These women have become more like their male counterparts.

The second issue is that, as mentioned before, the video games in the sample are violent. To say there women are mostly tokens or minorities in these video games (which they are), and

then to find issues with their role in violent acts (as either receivers or perpetrators) creates a dilemma. The answer may be in the proportion of violent acts male and female characters engage in. I found that female character perpetuate and receive much less violent acts than males. Differences then arise in *how* and *why* female characters are actors and receivers in violent acts. Understanding these dynamics about the nature of violent behavior in video games, however, involves a qualitative analysis that was beyond the scope of the current study. Motives for violence were not previously considered for analysis. However, some themes do formulate surrounding women as commodities with regards to violence. This is explored below while I discuss character game motives.

### *Men as Mundane*

“You are being deliberately obscure as a substitute for having a personality.”

—Bonnie to John in *Red Dead Redemption*

As I previously mentioned, male video game characters in this study were found to be much more homogenous than predicted. Men were almost exclusively masculine, were mostly represented as a “muscle” or “tank,” and had personality traits almost entirely as either a “white knight,” a “brash,” or as a “dark knight.” Men were almost exclusively non-sexual, clothed, or completely covered without tight clothing and received and administered moderate levels of violence. The cookie-cutter video game male is white, masculine, edgy and/or mysterious, nonsexual, and moderately violent. So, while video games are focusing on only male (white) stories, these characters are overwhelmingly similar and repetitive. In similar lines, the study suggests that Arab and Middle Eastern men are stereotypically portrayed. Specifically, Arab and Middle Eastern men are more likely to be depicted as the villain. Another example of

stereotyping is among Asian men. The analysis indicates that none used a primary weapon and a deeper look into these men shows that five come from the game *Sleeping Dogs* which takes place in modern Hong Kong. The story is heavily focused on gang activity and most of the characters have some kind of gang affiliation. The Asian men in this story do not use a primary weapon because they are all martial arts experts and rely on fist-to-fist combat to defeat their enemies. *Sleeping Dogs* is an interesting situation as it is a game about China, produced and developed by Japanese companies, with all white men as the writers, producers, and directors. In addition, Asian staff members made up the largest minority group whereas Asian characters are almost non-existent. In fact, a game with no Asian staff members, *Sleeping Dogs*, hosts half of all the Asian characters found the sample (6 out of 12).

Downs and Smith (2009) argued that male video game characters in their study were found to be “hypermasculine” instead of “hypersexual.” They dichotomized the two and as I argued before, the definition of these two categories makes it difficult for a male to be “hypersexual.” Separating the “sexuality” variable from the “clothing” variable shows that men were in fact more often to have their body covered with non-tight clothing (meaning no muscles exposed) and were seldom sexual. While there were some men with unrealistic muscles such as the men in the *Gears of War* series, over all the Downs and Smith (2009) definition of “hypermasculine” does not seem to apply here. If “hypermasculine” was expanded to include occupational roles such as a “muscle” or a “tank”, behavioral roles of “the brash,” the “dark knight,” and the “white knight,” as well as exclusive traditional masculine personality traits, then the men in this study can be seen as “hypermasculine.” There is something to be said about their overt masculine persona that is embodied by the majority of the male characters in this study.

However, they do not personify masculinity through abnormal muscle size, but instead through personality and gender expression.

*Women as a Commodity*

“Shiiiiittt...move out of the way, I've got to save me some cheerleaders.”

—*Battlefield: Bad Company 2*

While most characters were motivated to save the world, there was a secondary theme motivating many of the characters. This secondary theme focused around women as a motivating source as either dead, and thus requiring revenge, or as kidnapped, and requiring saving. Examples of women who die in order to progress the story (or begin a character's story) include Kate from *Grand Theft Auto IV* who is gunned down brutally by Niko's enemy; the primary character from *Fable 2* witnesses his/her sister shot and killed by the enemy; Max Payne's persona is motivated by his wife and daughter's murder; and Batman is finally motivated to kill the Joker after the Joker kills his girlfriend (although, in the comic book theme, Batman never kills his enemies). Women dying off as a motive for another character's narrative is not uncommon in the gaming and comic book genres. In fact, the term “Women in Refrigerators” was coined by Gail Simone (1999) in reference to comic book heroines who die as a plot device for another (usually male) character's story. The trope “Women in Refrigerators” refers to the disproportionate killing off of women in fantasy narratives (comic books, movies, video games, etc.). Because these women die, they are not always considered a “primary” or “secondary” character. For example, Max Payne's wife would be a “Woman in a Refrigerator” but she was a tertiary character in the game *Max Payne 3*. In the current study, tertiary character's deaths were more difficult to evaluate as those characters were not given full attention. Therefore, it is not

possible to fully evaluate the extent to which the trope fits within the context of this study. Instead, this may be an area of future evaluation especially with the release of even more recent gaming systems (e.g., Xbox One, PlayStation 4, etc.).

The “Women in Refrigerators” trope also only speaks specifically to women who have *died* during the progression of the narrative. This does not allow for inclusion of women who are kidnapped, wounded, or are not even present in the game but rather an abstract reward. It was the case in this study that women were treated as commodities for the progression of another character’s story without having to die. Examples of women who have been taken or are in danger requiring saving are also present. For instance, Glenn is motivated at one point in the game to rescue a woman he had just met for the sole prospect of dating her; Snow from *Final Fantasy XIII* is motivated to rescue his fiancé Serah who has been captured and taken from him; Lilith in *Borderlands 2* is captured and must be saved by the primary character; and the premise of *Max Payne 3* revolves around his job as a body guard and later rescuer of Fabiana and Giovanna. There are many other instances of women requiring saving which occupy a much smaller story role, and were thus difficult to capture by the structured codebook. For example, in *Resident Evil 5* an unnamed woman is seen screaming for help in a nearby building and Chris and Shiva rush to her aid. However, situations such as this would not constitute a character’s entire motive for the game.

Other games use women as a commodity by referencing them in abstract ways as a reward or goal. This however was not usually the case for an entire game’s narrative. For example, it was not the case that the primary character was solely motivated to save a female character, and thus the female character was the end game reward. Instead, only off-the-cuff references are made throughout the games toward women as a reward or goal. For example, in

*Battlefield: Bad Company 2*, characters pump each other up for battle by saying “do it for the cheerleaders!” or by the prospect of “there is this girl named Shantel and she can fuck!” These references are usually short or said in a joking manner as is the case with *Gears of War 3* when Samantha is offered up as collateral (after the camera lingered on her breasts) to a stranger in exchange for passage through a gate and some bacon. Another example of this is seen in *Batman Arkam City* when Catwomen is tied up by Two-Face she implores him, “I can make it worth your while” to let her go. Of course Samantha was not *actually* traded for bacon and Catwomen did not *actually* exchange sexual favors for her safety. In fact, the entire scenes are played off as nothing more than a joke.

#### *The Men [and Women] of the Gaming Industry*

“If you look at what sells, it’s tough to justify [a female protagonist].”

—Chris Perna (*Epic Games*)

As stated above, white males are the majority of game writers, directors, and producers. Contrary to stereotypical belief, Asians did *not* dominate the production teams of video games. In fact, similar to the report by the International Game Developers Association (IGDA 2005), my data shows that white males make up the majority of the industry. It is unfortunate to see that between 2005 and 2012, very little has changed in the demographics of video game production teams.

On the one hand, these white male dominated production teams are creating games for themselves, with white male characters. However, there does not seem to be even a representative percentage of staff members to characters. Women are only six percent of the staff and yet were twenty seven percent of the characters. The second largest race category of staff

members is Asian at about eight percent of the sample, compared to three percent of the characters. The second largest race category of characters in the games is black at about eight percent of the sample, compared to less than one percent staff members. This means that white male staff members are responsible for creating many different types of characters (male and female as well as various racial categories). Often white male staff members are creating these marginalized groups of characters in their games without any reference group within their own production team.

Unfortunately, when a woman or racial minority is present on the production team, there is no correlation or increase of female characters in the games. An increase of women and racial minorities does not seem to lead to an increase of those characters in the games. However, this is a reflection of a very small amount of people in the gaming industry. While these correlations seem bleak, it is not to say that a movement within the industry cannot help eradicate some of these issues. Future research that stems from this preliminary study should focus on the women and people of color behind the games in order to better evaluate their role in the creative process of game development.

## CONCLUSION

If trying to address the direction game producers should take when creating female characters, it may be best to compare the direction of the “default video game character”: men. However, I have found male characters in these highly profitable and story focused games to be very mundane and repetitive. These male characters are still embraced and loved, especially enough to be repeated several times in game series. For example, Captain “Soap”, John Price, and Desmond Miles all have very similar qualities, and yet they are valued enough by developers

and gamers to be reproduced and mimicked by other male characters. Although, the alternative argument is laziness, as many other gamers may claim. It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate which characters are “good” or “bad” video game characters. Instead, this study asked about differences and similarity among the characters that may or may not reproduce hegemonic masculinity, racial stereotypes, and patterns between staff members and their products.

There is one thing, however, that male characters have over females and racial minorities: quantity. This time the answer may not be in the quality of the characters, but in their quantity. Having *more* female and racial minority characters would be a step forward for video games. While diversity of personalities, traits, and abilities are also necessary there are simply not enough female and racial minority characters to begin with. It is hard to discuss the quality of females when one out of four video game characters are males. The *ideal* female or racial minority character may be just as mundane and common place as the males found in this study. These male characters are selling games, making fans, and making money.

This leads me to the first major limitation to this study: the connection to the gamer. I cannot evaluate how much these “mundane men” are actually embraced by gamers. I can only extrapolate based on the high profitability and reproduction in game series that these mundane men are in fact valued by the gaming community. In addition, I cannot speak for the experience of the female and racial minority staff members on the team. I assume they have creative control over the final product based on their title, however systematic marginalization may expand into the production team, limiting these staff member’s actual creative control. In fact, this may be why I found no significant relationship of the influence between the staff members and the product; because, they (women and people of color) have none. However, without actually speaking to these marginalized staff members, I cannot fully grasp their relationship to the final

product. Future studies would benefit by expanding the linkage I have attempted to make between staff members and the product through interview methods. In addition, interviews of gamers' opinion over the images, representations, and quality of these characters would also expand the depth of information presented by this research.

Public concern over the types of characters presented in video games always asks about connections to the gamers: What influences do viewing violent male characters have on male gamers? On female gamers? To this I would ask: What influence does *not* viewing female characters and characters of color have on female gamers and gamers of color? How do female gamers construct their identity as a "gamer" with a limited representation in the game? With blatant racist stereotypes in these highly profitable games, how do racial minorities construct their "gamer" identity? Is it different for white males? These types of questions can only be evaluated by combining studies such as this with first order linkages to actual gamers. Some research has suggested that when presented with a female character in films women are more critical of the portrayal than men with females calling for more stereotypical gender expressions (Taylor and Settlers 2011). Women may also internalize heightened body self-consciousness when presented with objectifying media (Aubrey 2007), however, this may have an age limit (Hine 2011). However, this area of study needs further analysis with regards to video games and the gamer identity.

Finally, another limitation is the sample. While I defended the use of profitable games only, it is possible that mundane men and limited female and racial minority characters are a product of sales. It is possible that the "default white male" character has shown to be profitable to game producers, and thus they continue to cash in on it. This study misses the niche gaming industry. Of my own experience, "indie games" (games from niche gaming companies) often

feature more female and racial minority characters with meaningful stories and roles. Even though indie games by no means are representative to the consumption rates of video games in the United States, they do offer an alternative to the mundane featured in this sample. It may also be possible that more female and racial minority staff members find themselves working on indie games. Future studies may benefit from analyzing the differences (or similarities) in indie and top ten games to see if the noted patterns continue. The purpose of this study was to measure the types of characters and messages being portrayed in video games. It is not within the scope of this study to explain its results to anything outside of video games. Based on the previously mentioned criteria, it is only possible to extend the results of this research to “Story Focused” genres as well.

In conclusion, video games continue to perpetuate a narrative about women, men, and racial minorities. Regardless of what type of character is the ideal type, white male characters continue to dominate video games. Female characters and characters of color have shown to be “symbolically annihilated” in top profitable story focused games. They are both small in quantity, and when present, occupy less active and more stereotypical roles. Considering the cultural consumption video games have in the United States, it is important to fully evaluate the content presented in them. Just as cultural studies focus on the dynamics of television, movies, and advertisements, video games must find itself a focus within academic research.

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## APPENDIX A: Game List

2008

Grand Theft Auto IV  
 Call of Duty: World at War  
 Gears of War 2  
 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare  
 Fable II  
 Fallout 3  
 Sins of a Solar Empire  
 Crisis

2009

Halo 3: ODST  
 Assassin's Creed II  
 Left 4 Dead 2  
 Resident Evil 5  
 WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR  
 II

2010

Call of Duty: Black Ops  
 Halo: Reach  
 Red Dead Redemption  
 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2  
 Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood  
 Battlefield: Bad Company 2  
 Fallout: New Vegas  
 Final Fantasy XIII

Mass Effect 2

2011

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3  
 Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim  
 Battlefield 3  
 Batman: Arkam City  
 Gears of War 3  
 Assassin's Creed: Revelations  
 LA. Noire  
 Starcraft II  
 Dragon Age II

2012

Assassin's Creed III  
 Borderlands 2  
 Call of Duty: Black Ops II  
 Halo 4  
 DarkSiders II  
 Mass Effect 3  
 Max Payne 3  
 Sleeping Dogs 3  
 Walking Dead  
 XCOM

Total: 41

## APPENDIX B: Codebook

**Game ID:** Fill in the game's ID number as it is listed in Game ID list

**Game Name:** Identify the entire name of the game, including subtitles

**Coder ID:** Indicate the ID of the individual who coded the game

**Game Choice: Does this game allow for any choice between the main character?**

\_\_\_ Yes, Full customization                      \_\_\_ Yes, between pre-made characters

\_\_\_ No, main character is predetermined by game

## I. Introduction

1. **Narration:** Who is narrating the cinematic?

0. Women

1. Man

2. No narration

88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game footage

99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage

2. **Character Description:** Code characters as they speak. Include a brief character description that includes distinctive attributes (e.g., female child in blue dress) and character name (if given).

3. **Character Importance:** Indicate the significance of the character as either the main (primary) or supportive (secondary) or background (tertiary).

1. Primary Character: controllable character; some games may have more than one

2. Secondary Character: characters with names, which speak, and participate in activities with main character

3. Tertiary Character: Background character; reserve extensive coding for primary and secondary characters; elements of background characters can be described in sections III - 4

4. **Relation to Primary Character:** For secondary characters only, indicate the relation to the Primary

1. Stranger: Primary character does not know who they are

2. Acquaintance: Primary character may know the name, or what they look like but other information is limited

3. Friend: Primary character knows much about this person and has a good/positive relationship with them

4. Family Member: some type of kinship is shared between the Primary character and this character

5. Romantic Interest: Romantic elements surround the two characters; they may

- not be open or accepting of their emotions
6. Lover: romantic feelings are either made public to others and/or the two characters express love to one another (usually involving sexual contact either implied or explicit)
  7. Enemy: Regardless of how much knowledge the primary character has of this character, this character is the antagonist of the game story; usually has ill intent for the primary character
  8. Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game footage
  99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
- 5. Character Sex:** Identify the sex of the character as it is made obvious by sex characteristics
0. Woman
  1. Man
  2. Choice: the game allows for a choice between male/female primary character; if so indicate the file currently being coded as either the female option or male option  
           \_\_Female                          \_\_Male
  3. Other: Specify
- 6. Character Gender:** Identify the gender that is expressed through behaviors and actions by the character (**independent of their biological sex**). Based on a totality of components, as it is very likely that some characters will exhibit multiple attributes
0. Traditionally Feminine: Character exhibits overt feminine traits/behaviors such as nurturing, cooperative, sensitive, empathetic, submissive, dependent, emotional, passive, quiet, graceful, innocent, flirtatious, soft, etc.
  1. Neutral: Character exhibits equal masculine/feminine traits
  2. Traditionally Masculine: Character exhibits overt masculine traits/behaviors such as competitiveness, aggression, assertiveness, violent, independent, non-emotional, tough-skinned, strong, active, self-confident, rebellious, hard etc.
  88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game Footage
  99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
- 7. Character Race/Ethnicity:** Identify the race/ethnicity based on stereotyped features such as: hair/eye/skin color of character. May use other information available in game such as character's name, country of origin, accent, or other stereotypical features
0. White/Anglo
  1. Black/African American

2. Asian
3. Hispanic/Latino
4. Alien
5. Other (specify)
6. Ambiguous: character's features encompass vague or multiple ethnic types
7. Choice
8. Middle Eastern/Arab
9. Robot

- 8. Character Motivations:** For primary and secondary characters evaluate their motives which progress the story of the game. Select only one for each character:
1. Save the world, country, land: physical space is jeopardized in game; character must save it
  2. Rescue another character: another character is taken against their will; character must save them
  3. Solely personal gains: motives include personal development (i.e., learning about their past), monetary gains (i.e., tomb raiding to obtain secret treasure)
  4. Passive Motives: character responds to game world actions that are done to them (i.e., surviving, being rescued)
  5. Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game Footage
  99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
- 9. Character Story Roles:** For all characters
1. Hero: Character has been bestowed a task (usually righteous) that requires their participation and success
  2. Victim: Character occupies a passive role; requiring a hero
  3. Villain: Character causes peril that affects others (victims) and requires another to radiate it (hero)
  4. Assistant: Character helps primary character without being preserved as the game's "hero"
  5. Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game footage
  99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
  6. **Character Occupational Roles:** For all characters, check the **primary** role that represents or embodies the character. If secondary roles are present, describe them in character traits (variable #25). Only one variable should be

recorded.

0. None: Character exhibits no occupational role

1. Musician: Character plays an instrument

2. Singer: Character engages often in singing

3. Domestic Worker: occupational role; including cleaning, cooking, and child care

4. Slave: Character is in some way owned (or has a history of being owned) by other/s

5. Tribesmen/women: Character is involved with tribe images and clothing; spiritual or close to nature

6. Athlete: Sports surround the character's personal including athletic ability, sport knowledge, and references or possession of sport equipment

7. Gangster/Mobster: Usually violent character who is involved with illegal group activities. Stereotypes include thick and flashy jewelry, baggy clothing, and etc.

8. Healer: Character's role/contribution to the group is to heal physical wounds; usually fragile in combat

9. Muscle/Tank: Character's role/contribution to the group is to deal damage/attack enemies as well as capable of taking on a lot of damage

10. Intellect: Character's role/contribution to the group surrounds higher level of thinking, working puzzles, handling machinery, engaging in electronics, enjoys "tinkering"; usually fragile in combat, but less than a Healer

11. Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game footage

99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage

7. **Character Behavioral Roles**: For primary and secondary characters, check the **primary** role that represents or embodies the character. If secondary roles are present, describe them in character traits (variable #25). Only one variable should be recorded.

0. None: Character exhibits no distinguishable characteristics

1. Iron Maiden: character is strong willed, tough, dangerous, often regarded with suspicion, undue and exaggerated shows of politeness follow them, comes off as cold and unemotional

2. Pet: character can be described as "cute", "precious", or "amusing"; a "cheerleader" for the group, admires others in charge

8.

3. Mother: character is sympathetic, good listener, easy to talk to about

one's problems, accepting of others, excess emotionality, "emotional specialist", "feminine"; as well as engaging in domestic work (i.e., laundry, sewing, cooking, etc.)

4. Seductress: character is surrounded with elements of sexual tension from others, sexual competition, often seen as a sex object

5. Princess: may include an actual royal character or not; character is "feminine", flooded with good will and benevolence, usually pampered and loved by others

6. Rotten Princess: may or may not actually be royal: like a princess character is "feminine" however exhibits traits such as spoiled, high maintained, arrogant, and emotionally unstable

7. White Knight: character's main focus is to protect (or save) either one other or many others. Character is generally gallant, righteous, and lawful.

8. The Brash: this character is assertive, rough around the edges, aggressive, and violently over emotional.

9. The "Dark Knight": This character is mysterious, stoic, unemotional and detached from the other characters around them. This often gives off the impression of deep thought or wisdom but mixed with unapproachable apathy.

10. Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

88. Unsure/Not Determinable: due to insufficient information presented in game Footage

99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage

9. **Character Violence**: Record violent acts perpetuated by primary and secondary characters. Situations to focus on are those that occur separate from in-game-play such as cut scenes.

0. None: Character engages in no violence

1. Some Violence: Some elements of the game requires combat, such as random battle sequences, or enemy obstacles necessary to progress the story, but is not a central behavior of character. Violent acts consume less than 30% of the character's overall behavior.

2. Moderate Violence: Character acts out isolated violent acts, such as kicking, punching, slapping, etc., to other characters/animals/creatures; elements of in game combat consume behavior of character (i.e., such as in a shooter game). Violent acts consume between 30% and 60% of the character's overall behavior.

3. Excessive Violence: Character acts out multiple violent acts, such as kicking, punching, slapping, etc., to other characters (especially to a primary or secondary character) that are beyond elements of in game combat (such as

would be the case in a shooter game). Violent acts consume at least 60% or more of the character's overall behavior.

99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
10. **Violence to Character**: record violent acts to/towards a primary and secondary character. Situations to focus on are those that occur separate from in-game-play such as cut scenes.
0. None: No violence occurs to this character
  1. Some Violence: character receives damage from game enemies; violence within the context of gaming (i.e., taking damage or loss of "health"). Violent acts make up less than 30% of character's received social interaction.
  2. Moderate Violence: Character receives isolated violent acts from another character; beyond elements of in game combat. Violent acts make up between 30% to 60% of characters received social interaction.
  3. Excessive Violence: Character receives multiple violent acts from other characters (especially a primary or secondary character) that are beyond elements of in game combat or events. Violent acts make up more than 60% of character's received social interaction.
99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
11. **Gendered Violence**: Does this character perpetuate or receive violent acts to/from another character (primary, secondary, tertiary) that is of the opposite sex. (i.e., slapping, punching, kicking, rape, and/or mental/psychological abuse)
- Yes/No
- If Yes: record time segment of each moment \_\_\_\_\_
12. **Racial Violence**: Does this character perpetuate or receive violent acts to/from another character (primary, secondary, tertiary) who is of a different racial group (i.e., slapping, punching, kicking, rape, and/or mental/psychological abuse)
- Yes/No
- If Yes: record time segment of each moment \_\_\_\_\_
13. **Character Sexual Quantity**: The amount of sexual themes that surrounds the individual primary and secondary characters
0. No Sexual Quantity: Sexual themes do not occur for this character.
  1. Some Sexual Quantity: Sexual themes surround the character and consume less than 30% of their social behavior.
  2. Moderate Sexual Quantity: Sexual themes surround the character and consume between 30% and 60% of their social behavior.

3. Excessive Sexual Quantity: Character engages in sexual contact often, surrounded by sexual references and activity, may also use seduction coupled with massively exaggerated or bulging sex characteristics. Sexual themes surround the character and consume more than 60% of their social behavior.
99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
14. **Character Sexual Explicitness**: The type and intensity of sexual activity that primary and secondary characters engage in.
0. No Sexual Explicitness: The character does not engage in sexual content, sexual innuendos, does not use seduction, and does not have large, exaggerated or bulging sex characteristics.
  1. Some Sexual Explicitness: There is some level of sexual contact or use of seduction, may have subtle sexual themes or slightly bulging sex characteristics.
  2. Moderate Sexual Explicitness: Even more sexual references, activity and contact surrounding this character. May use seduction may have exaggerated or bulging sex characteristics. Does not engage in explicit sexual activity, may only allude to sexual acts but does not show player.
  3. Excessive Sexual Explicitness: Character engages in sexual contact, surrounded by intense sexual references and explicit activity, may also use seduction coupled with massively exaggerated or bulging sex characteristics. Sexual acts are explicit and player observes them.
99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage
15. **Clothing Choice**: Are outfits worn by characters in game selected by player?  
Does the player choose between different clothing styles?  
 Yes, player selected clothing for character  
 No, player has no choice when selecting clothing for character
16. **Nudity**: Indicate the level of nudity versus complete covering for each character. If primary or secondary character appears nude during the game record the time segments that this occurs. If the character changes clothes throughout the context of the game, record multiple numbers for each character. Check all that apply:
0. Completely Nude: some characters are completely nude throughout the game, such as robots, aliens, or anthropomorphic humans, etc.
  1. Partially Nude: much of the characters body is exposed (i.e., shirtless, swimwear, short dresses or miniskirts, shorts or pants coupled with tops that are almost nude such as bikini tops
  2. Clothed: much of the character's body is covered with clothing (i.e., latex/spandex/rubber suits, unitards, shirt with shorts/pants/capris)

3. Covered: almost or all entire body is covered with clothing. (i.e., abayas/burkas, robes, hooded robes, long pants with long sleeved shirts, latex/spandex/rubber body suits, unitards with tights)

99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage

17. **Clothing**: Record the tightness of clothing worn by the primary and secondary characters. If the character changes clothes throughout the context of the game, record multiple numbers for each character. Check all that apply:

0. Completely Nude: some characters are completely nude throughout the game, such as robots, aliens, or anthropomorphic humans, etc.

1. Very Tight Clothing: Outfit worn by character is skin tight against the body.(i.e., latex/spandex/rubber body suits, unitards with tights)

2. Somewhat Tight Clothing: clothing worn by character is tight around the body, but not skin tight. (i.e., tight pants, tight swimwear, tight dresses or miniskirts, tight shorts or pants, etc.)

3. No Tight Clothing: character's body is covered with comfortable and properly fitting clothing. Clothing is not tight nor is it oversized. (i.e., comfortable yet fitting pants/shirts, fitting robes or relaxed dress, etc.)

4. Oversized Clothing: clothing worn by character is loose, too big, and/or oversized. (i.e., oversized outfits, loose robes, oversized jackets/shirts, baggy pants, etc.)

99. Unavailable: Due to missing character in game footage

18. **Weapon**: Does the character at any point of the game use a weapon?

Yes

No

19. **Weapon Use**: Does the character use this or any weapon for a majority (more than 50%) of the game?

Yes

No

20. **Weapon Choice**: Are weapons used by characters in game selected by player? Does the player choose between different weapon styles? This is beyond the change of color or the increase of weapon stats relevant to the game. Weapon style refers to weapon type (i.e., swords, knives, projectile weapons, etc.) not to minor changes in color, appearance, or even in game stats.

Yes, player selects from multiple weapon styles

\_\_\_\_\_No, player has no choice when selecting weapon styles

- 21. Weapon Styles:** for each character list each weapon style used. If multiple weapons are used record multiple numbers. Record each change in weapon style in separate categories (i.e., Weapon #1 = 2, Weapon #2 = 4, etc.).
0. None: Character uses only hands if any combat or assault occurs
  1. Household Items: Character uses nontraditional every day weapons (i.e., cooking equipment including knives, crowbars/wrenches or other tools, furniture, sport equipment)
  2. Projectile Weapons: guns of any type or size, projectile weapons not found in household items (i.e., handgun, pistol, machine gun, crossbow/bowgun, bow and arrow)
  3. Swords/Knives: any type of swords or knives not including household knives (i.e., katana, sabers, cutlass, daggers,
  4. Staff/Wand: any type of staff or wand (i.e., quarterstaff, long spear, scepter)
  5. Grenades/Frags/Explosives
  6. Other: specify
- 22. Character Traits:** record all noteworthy character traits as they appear for each character that may not have been covered in previous sections. For example: *aggressive, angry, violent, family focused, appearance focused, expert in martial arts, close to nature, spiritual*. Record any other information you feel it fit or missing from the codebook that is relevant to the character.

## II. Game Play

- 1. Characters:** continue coding additional characters that were not included in the introduction. Repeat I 2-20 for each new Primary/Secondary Character
- 2. Point Of View:**
  1. 1<sup>st</sup> Person: only a hand, gun or other weapon is viewable by the player; character's body is not seen

Example from Halo 1 (2001):



2. 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Over-the-Shoulder: most or all of the body of the character is visible to the player, body in addition to weapons that characters may be holding, player is generally limited to character's scope of view

Example from Resident Evil 4 (2005):



3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Person- Bird Eye: entire body of the character is visible to the player, including weapons. Angled overhead, player can see more of game world than the character's scope of view

Example from Civilization 5 (2010):



### III. **Ending** (Last 30 minutes of game play)

**Characters:** Are the characters present now the same from the first hour and a half of game play? Describe and code for any new characters (repeat I 2-20).

**Character Motivation:** For primary and secondary characters only- Has the character motivation changed at the end of the game? If character appears only partially during game footage record their motive under “motives” under I - 8, if any change occurs record a 1 here. If a change occurs also record the specified value (i.e., 1: 4, indicating a change in motive to passive motives).

0. No change

1. Changed (specify new motivation from category in I -8)

### IV. **Game Themes:** Describe the overall game themes. Include elements from all recorded material

1. **Survival Themes:** Are the characters fighting for their lives? Are they being hunted? Do any characters die? If so, which ones? Is a character forced to survive in a new land/territory? Are there themes of apocalyptic times?

2. **Romantic Themes:** Is there a love story between the primary character and any secondary characters? Or among the secondary characters? Which, if any, of the character's backstory revolves around a love interest? Is romance an aspect of the character's motivations? Is romance, love, or sexual gratification an end game victory?
3. **Violent Themes:** What violent themes are present in the game world (i.e., gore, warfare, blood, human sacrifice or mutilation of tertiary characters). Does the game contain violent imagery such as death or abuse in art, music, or background videos? Is "taking damage" an in game obstacle for the player? Are violent acts necessary for game progression? Are violent acts rewarded or punished? Describe both the sections of recorded material.
4. **Sexual Themes:** What kind of sexual themes are present in the game world (i.e., prostitution, sexual scenes, sexual contact among characters including tertiary characters, tertiary characters nude or in revealing clothing). Does the game contain sexual imagery such as nude images or sexual contact in art, music, or background videos? Are sexual behaviors necessary for game progression? Are sexual behaviors used as rewards/punishments? Describe both the sections of recorded material.

## V. **Production Staff**

Record staff members (titles with producers/directors/writers only) in order as they are credited on IMDb.

1. **Name** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Title** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Sex**

0. Female

1. Male

99. **Unavailable:** Unable to obtain a quality photograph of team member, or biographical information necessary to determine

4. **Race/Ethnicity:**

0. White/Anglo

1. Black/African American

2. Asian

3. Hispanic/Latino

4. Middle Eastern

5. Other (specify)

99. **Unavailable:** Unable to obtain a quality photograph of team member or biographical information necessary to determine

## APPENDIX C: Tables and Charts

Table 1. Alphabetical list of duplicate characters

Character Name	Number of Appearances
Alex Mason	2
Anya Stroud	2
Agustus “Cole Train”	2
Captain “Deadly” Pelayo	2
Captain John “Soap”	4
“Illusive Man”	2
John Price	4
Prescot	2
Catherine Halsey	2
Claudia	2
Shepard	2
Cristina Vespucci	2
Damon	2
Desmond	4
Dominic Santiago	2
Ezio	3
Frank Woods	2
Garrus Vakarian	2
Imran Zakhaev	2
Khaled Al-Asad	2
Lieutenant “Gaz”	2
Lilith	2
Lucy Stillman	2
Marcus Fenix	2
Marrio Auditore	2
Myrrah	2
“Overlord”	2
Rebecca Crane	4
Sergeant Kamarov	2
Sergeant Paul Jackson	2
Shawn Hastings	4
Staff Sergeant Griggs	2
Vladimir Makarov	2
William Miles	2

Table 2. Percentages of Gender Expression by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	Traditionally Feminine	Neutral	Traditionally Masculine
Women n = 65		40.3% (n=27)***	34.4% (n=23)***	25.4% (n=17)***
	White n = 46	37.0% (n = 17)	39.1% (n = 18)	23.9% (n = 11)
	Black n = 3	33.3 % ( n = 1)	66.6 % ( n = 2)	0% (n = 0)
	Asian n = 4	25.0% (n = 1)	25.0% (n = 1)	50.0% ( n = 2)
	Hispanic n = 3	100% (n = 3)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)
	Ambiguous n = 3	33.3% (n = 1)	33.3% (n = 1)	33.3% (n = 1)
	Real World Other n = 1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)
	Alien n = 4	75.0% ( n = 3)	0% (n = 0)	25.0% (n = 1)
	Robot n = 2	50.0% ( n = 1)	50.0% ( n = 1)	0% (n = 0)
Men n = 223		0.50% (n=1)***	11.3% (n=25)***	88.3% (n=196)***
	White n = 155	0.6% (n = 1)	11.6% (n = 18)	87.7% (n = 136)
	Black n = 22	0% (n = 0)	4.5% (n = 1)	95.5% (n =21)
	Asian n = 7	0% (n = 0)	14.3% (n = 1)	85.7% (n = 6)
	Hispanic n = 10	0% (n = 0)	20.0% (n = 2)	80.0% (n = 8)
	Middle Eastern n = 6	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 6)
	Ambiguous n = 4	0% (n = 0)	25.0% (n = 1)	75.0% (n = 3)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 3)
	Non-Real "Other" n = 1	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 1)
	Alien n = 3	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 3)
	Robot n = 3	0% (n = 0)	33.3% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 2)
	Not Determinable n = 9	0% (n = 0)	11.1% (n = 1)	88.9% (n = 8)
Choice n = 7		0% (n = 0)	57.1% (n=4)	42.9% (n = 3)
Male and Female Characters by Gender		$\chi^2 = 140.968$	df = 4	p < 0.000***

Table 3. Percentages for Occupational Roles among Female Characters and by Race

Sex	Race	None	Musician	Domestic Worker	Slave	Athlete	Gangster	Healer	Muscle	Intellect	Other
Women n = 67		23.5% (n=16)	1.5% (n=1)	2.9% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	1.5% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	23.5% (n=16)	29.4% (n=20)	14.7% (n=10)
	White n=46	23.9% (n=11)	0% (n=0)	4.3% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	2.2% (n=1)	4.3% (n=2)	19.6% (n=9)	28.3% (n=13)	14.4% (n=8)
	Black n = 3	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	66.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Asian n = 4	25.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	25.0% (n=1)	50.0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)
	Hispanic n= 3	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)	33.3% (n=1)
	Ambiguous n = 3	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	66.7% (n= 2)	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
	Real World Other n = 1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n = 4	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	50.0% (n= 2)	50.0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)
	Robot n= 2	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)

Table 4. Percentages for Occupational Roles among Male and Choice Characters and by Race

Sex	Race	None	Musician	Domestic Worker	Slave	Athlete	Gangster	Healer	Muscle	Intellect	Other
Men n=229		7.5% (n=17)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0.4% (n=1)	0.4% (n=1)	9.2% (n=21)	0.4% (n=1)	57.5% (n=131)	17.1% (n=39)	7.5% (n=17)
	White n=155	8.4% (n=13)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0.6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	10.3% (n=16)	0.6% (n=1)	51.6% (n = 80)	21.3% (n=33)	7.1% (n=11)
	Black n=22	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	4.5% (n=1)	4.5% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	77.3% (n=17)	9.1% (n=2)	4.5% (n=1)
	Asian n = 7	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	57.1% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	14.3% (n=1)	28.6% (n=2)
	Hispanic n=10	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	90.0% (n=9)	0% (n=0)	10.0% (n=1)
	Middle Eastern n = 5	20.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	80.0% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Ambiguous n=4	25.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	75.0% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	66.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)
	Non-Real "Other" n=1	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n = 8	37.5% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	62.5% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Robot n = 2	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	50.0% (n=1)	50.0% (n=1)
Not Determinable n = 12	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	83.3% (n = 10)	16.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	
Choice n = 7		57.1% (n = 4)	0% (n= 0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	42.9% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)



Table 6. Percentages for Behavioral Roles among Male and Choice Characters and by Race

Sex	Race	None	Iron Maiden	Pet	Mother	Seductress	Princess	Rotten Princess	White Knight	Brash	Dark Knight	Other
Men n=216		17.7% (n=38)	0% (n=0)	1.4% (n=3)	0.5% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	21.4% (n=46)	26.5% (n=57)	19.1% (n=41)	13.5% (n=29)
	White n=148	15.5% (n=23)	0% (n=0)	0.7% (n=1)	0.7% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	18.2% (n=27)	31.1% (n=46)	20.9% (n=31)	12.8% (n=19)
	Black n=22	4.5% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	45.5% (n=10)	9.1% (n=2)	18.2% (n=4)	22.7% (n=5)
	Asian n = 7	28.6% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	14.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	14.3% (n=1)	28.6% (n=2)	14.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
	Hispanic n=10	10.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	40.0% (n=4)	30.0% (n=2)	10.0% (n=1)	10.0% (n=1)
	Middle Eastern n = 5	80.0% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	20.0% (n=1)
	Ambiguous n= 4	25.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	50.0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	25.0% (n=1)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	66.7% (n=2)	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
	Non-Real "Other" n =1	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n = 3	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)
	Robot n = 2	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	50.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	50.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
	Not Determinable n = 11	45.5% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	18.2% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	27.3% (n=3)	9.1% (n=1)
Choice n = 7		57.1% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	14.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)

Table 7. Percentages for Story Roles by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	Hero	Victim	Villain	Assistant	
Women n=72		58.9% (n=43)	16.4% (n=12)	8.2% (n=6)	16.4% (n=12)	
	White n=51	54.9% (n=28)	15.7% (n=8)	7.8% (n=4)	21.6% (n=11)	
	Black n=3	100% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
	Asian n=4	50.0% (n=2)	25.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	25.0% (n=1)	
	Hispanic n=3	33.3% (n=1)	66.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
	Ambiguous n=3	100% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
	Real World Other n=1	0% (n=0)	100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
	Alien n=4	75.0% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	25.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	
	Robot n=2	100% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
	Not Determinable n=1	100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
	Men n=247		68.3% (n=168)	2.0% (n=5)	20.7% (n=51)	8.9% (n=22)
		White n=165	66.1% (n=109)	3.0% (n=5)	21.8% (n=36)	9.1% (n=15)
		Black n=23	95.7% (n=22)	0% (n=0)	4.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
Asian n = 7		42.9% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	14.3% (n=1)	42.9% (n=3)	
Hispanic n=13		59.2% (n=9)	0% (n=0)	30.8% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	
Middle Eastern n = 7		28.6% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	71.4% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	
Ambiguous n= 4		50.0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	25.0% (n=1)	25.0% (n=1)	
Real World Other n = 3		66.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	
Non-Real "Other" n =1		100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
Alien n = 9		66.7% (n=6)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	
Robot n = 3		0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	100% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	
Not Determinable n = 12		100% (n=12)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	
Choice n=7		100% (n=7)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	

Race by Story Roles  $\chi^2 = 1.447$  df = 3 p = 0.695  
 White Males by RWNW Males by "Good/Bad" Role Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.855  
 RWNW Males by FR Males by "Good/Bad" Role Fisher's Exact Test p = 1.000

Table 8. Percentages for Sexual Expression by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	No Sexuality Expressed	Sexuality Expressed
Women n=71		66.7% (n=48)***	33.3% (n=24)***
	White n=50	68.0% (n = 34)	32.0% (n =16)
	Black n=3	100% (n =3)	0% (n=0)
	Asian n=4	100% (n = 4)	0% (n=0)
	Hispanic n=3	0% (n=0)	100.0% (n = 3)
	Ambiguous n=3	66.7% (n = 2)	33.3% (n =1)
	Real World Other n=1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n=4	50.0% (n =2)	50.0% (n = 2)
	Robot n=2	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 2)
	Not Determinable n=1	100% (n =1)	0% (n=0)
Men n=234		90.6% (n = 211)***	9.4% (n= 22)***
	White n=158	89.9% (n = 142)	10.1% (n = 16)
	Black n=22	86.4% (n = 19)	13.6% (n = 3)
	Asian n = 7	71.4% (n = 5)	28.6% (n =2)
	Hispanic n=10	90.0% (n = 9)	10.0% (n = 1)
	Middle Eastern n = 6	100% (n = 6)	0% (n=0)
	Ambiguous n= 4	100% (n= 4)	0% (n=0)
	Real World Other n = 3	100% (n =3)	0% (n=0)
	Non-Real "Other" n =1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n = 8	100% (n=8)	0% (n=0)
	Robot n = 3	100% (n = 3)	0% (n=0)
	Not Determinable n= 12	100% (n =12)	0% (n=0)
Choice n=7		71.4% (n=5)	28.6% (n=2)
Men and Women by Sexual Expression		Fisher's Exact Test p < 0.000***	
White Women by RWNW Women by Sexual Expression		Fisher's Exact Test p = 1.000	
RWNW Women by FR Women by Sexual Expression		Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.161	
White Men by RWNW Men by Sexual Expression		Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.796	
RWNW Men by FR Men by Sexual Expression		Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.584	
FR Men by FR Women by Sexual Expression		Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.005**	

Table 9. Percentages for Nudity by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	Completely or Partially Nude	Clothed or Covered
Women n=100		11.0% (n=11)*	89.9% (n=89)*
	White n=68	4.4% (n = 3)	95.6% (n = 65)
	Black n=4	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 4)
	Asian n=4	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 4)
	Hispanic n= 4	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 4)
	Ambiguous n= 7	28.6% (n = 2)	71.5% (n=5)
	Real World Other n= 2	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 2)
	Alien n= 7	42.9% (n = 3)	57.1% (n = 4)
	Robot n= 2	100% (n = 2)	0% (n=0)
	Non-Real World Other n=1	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 1)
Men n=290		3.8% (n = 11)*	95.9% (n= 279)*
	White n=198	0% (n=0)	100% (n =198)
	Black n=28	3.6% (n =1)	96.4% (n =27)
	Asian n = 8	0% (n=0)	100% (n =8)
	Hispanic n=15	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 15)
	Middle Eastern n = 7	0% (n=0)	100% (n =7)
	Ambiguous n= 5	40.0% (n = 2)	60.0% (n =3)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n=0)	100% (n=3)
	Non-Real "Other" n = 3	33.3% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 2)
	Alien n = 12	25.0% (n = 3)	75.0% (n = 9)
	Robot n = 5	100% (n =5)	0% (n=0)
	Not Determinable n= 7	0% (n=0)	100% (n =7)
Men and Women by Nudity (nude, partially nude, clothed, covered)		$\chi^2 = 23.367$	df = 3 p < 0.000***
Men and Women by Nudity			Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.040*
White Women by RWNW Women by Nudity			Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.588
RWNWs by FR Women by Nudity			Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.022*
White Men by RWNW Men by Nudity			Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.015*
RWNW Men by FR Men by Nudity			Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.000***
White Women by FR Women by Nudity			Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.001**

Table 10. Percentages for Clothing Tightness by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	Tight Clothing	Not Tight Clothing
Women n = 94		47.9% (n=45)***	52.1% (n=49)***
	White n=68	47.1% (n = 32)	52.9% (n = 36)
	Black n=4	50.0% (n = 2)	50.0% (n = 2)
	Asian n=4	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 4)
	Hispanic n=4	50.0% (n = 2)	50.0% (n = 2)
	Ambiguous n=7	71.4% (n =5)	28.6% (n =2)
	Real World Other n=2	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 2)
	Alien n=4	100% (n =4)	0% (n=0)
	Non-Real World Other n=1	0% (n=0)	100% (n =1)
Men n = 284		10.6% (n = 30)***	89.4% (n= 254)***
	White n=198	9.1% (n = 18)	90.9% (n = 180)
	Black n=28	10.7% (n = 3)	89.3% (n = 25)
	Asian n = 8	12.5% (n = 1)	87.5% (n = 7)
	Hispanic n=15	6.7% (n = 1)	93.3% (n =14)
	Middle Eastern n = 7	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 7)
	Ambiguous n= 5	20.0% (n = 1)	80.0% (n =4)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 3)
	Non-Real "Other" n =3	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 3)
	Alien n = 10	60.0% (n = 6)	40.0% (n =4)
	Not Determinable n= 12	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 7)

Men and Women by Clothing Tightness (very tight, somewhat tight, not tight, oversized)  $\chi^2 = 67.371$ , df = 4, p < 0.000\*\*\*

3 cells (30.0%) have lower observed count than expected

White Women by RWNW Women by Clothing Tightness

Fisher's Exact Test p < 0.806

RWNWs by FR Women by Clothing Tightness

Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.322

White Women by FRs Women by Clothing Tightness

Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.199

White Men by RWNW Men by Clothing Tightness

Fisher's Exact Test p = 1.000

RWNW Men by FR Men by Clothing Tightness

Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.003\*\*

FR Men by FR Females by Clothing Tightness

Fisher's Exact Test p = 0.314

Table 11. Percentages for Violence Perpetuated by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	Little to no Violence	Some to a lot of Violence
Women n = 70		70.0% (n= 49)***	30.0% (n= 22)***
	White n=49	77.6% (n = 38)	22.4% (n = 11)
	Black n=3	33.3% (n =1)	66.7% (n = 2)
	Asian n=4	50.0% (n =2)	50.0% (n =2)
	Hispanic n= 3	100% (n = 3)	0% (n=0)
	Ambiguous n= 3	33.3% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 2)
	Real World Other n= 1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n= 4	20.0% (n = 1)	75.0% (n = 3)
	Robot n = 2	100% (n = 2)	0% (n=0)
	Not Determinable n=1	100% (n =1)	0% (n=0)
Men n = 234		30.0% (n = 70)***	70.0% (n= 163)***
	White n=158	34.8% (n = 55)	65.2% (n = 103)
	Black n=22	13.6% (n = 3)	86.4% (n = 19)
	Asian n = 7	57.1% (n = 4)	42.9% (n = 3)
	Hispanic n=10	10.0% (n = 1)	90.0% (n= 10)
	Middle Eastern n = 6	33.3% (n = 2)	66.7% (n = 4)
	Ambiguous n= 4	25.0% (n = 1)	75.0% (n = 3)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n=0)	100% (n = 3)
	Non-Real "Other" n=1	0% (n=0)	100% (n =1)
	Alien n = 8	12.5% (n =1)	87.5% (n =7)
	Not Determinable n= 12	8.3% (n = 1)	91.7% (n =11)
Choice n = 7		0% (n=0)	100% (n = 7)
Women and Men by Violence Perpetuated		$\chi^2 = 36.345$ df = 1	p < 0.000***
White Men and RWNW Men by Violence Perpetuated		Fisher's Exact Test	p = 0.085
RWNW Men and FR Men by Violence Perpetuated		Fisher's Exact Test	p = 0.715
Women and Men by Violence Perpetuated		Fisher's Exact Test	p < 0.000***

Table 12. Percentages for Violence Received by Sex and Race

Sex	Race	Little to no Violence	Some to a lot of Violence
Women n = 70		65.7% (n= 46)***	34.3% (n= 24)***
	White n=49	69.4% (n = 34)	30.6% (n =15)
	Black n=3	66.7% (n = 2)	33.3% (n = 1)
	Asian n=4	50.0% (n = 2)	50.0% (n = 2)
	Hispanic n= 3	66.7% (n = 2)	33.3% (n = 1)
	Ambiguous n= 3	33.3% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 2)
	Real World Other n= 1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n = 0)
	Alien n= 4	20.0% (n = 1)	75.0% (n = 3)
	Robot n = 2	100% (n = 2)	0% (n = 0)
	Not Determinable n=1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n = 0)
Men n = 234		38.0% (n = 89)***	62.0% (n= 144)***
	White n=158	40.5% (n = 64)	59.5% (n = 94)
	Black n=22	27.3% (n = 6)	72.7% (n = 16)
	Asian n = 7	71.4% (n = 5)	28.6% (n =2)
	Hispanic n=10	10.0% (n = 1)	90.0% (n = 9)
	Middle Eastern n = 6	66.7% (n = 4)	33.3% (n = 2)
	Ambiguous n= 4	25.0% (n =1)	75.0% (n = 3)
	Real World Other n = 3	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 3)
	Non-Real "Other" n =1	100% (n = 1)	0% (n = 0)
	Alien n = 7	12.5% (n = 1)	87.5% (n = 7)
	Not Determinable n= 12	33.3% (n = 4)	66.7% (n = 8)
Choice n = 7		14.3% (n = 1)	85.7% (n = 6)
Men and Women by Violence Received		$\chi^2 = 16.723$	df = 1
White Men and RWNW Men by Violence Received		Fisher's Exact Test	
RWNW Men and FR Men by Violence Received		Fisher's Exact Test	
		p < 0.000***	
		p < 0.330	
		p < 1.000	

Table 13. Percentages for Primary Weapons among Women and by Race

Sex	Race	None	Household Items	Projectile Weapons	Swords/Knives	Staff/Wand	Other
Women n = 72		62.5% (n=45)** *	2.8% (n=2)***	27.8% (n=20)***	2.8% (n=2)***	2.8% (n=2)***	1.4% (n=1)***
	White n=49	70.0% (n=35)	0% (n = 0)	20.0% (n=10)	4.0% (n=2)	4.0% (n=2)	2.0% (n=1)
	Black n=3	0% (n=0)	0% (n = 0)	100% (n=3)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Asian n=4	50.0% (n=2)	0% (n = 0)	50.0% (n=2)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Hispanic n= 3	100% (n=3)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Ambiguous n=3	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n = 0)	66.7% (n=2)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Real World Other n= 1	0% (n = 0)	100% (n=1)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Alien n= 4	25.0% (n=1)	0% (n = 0)	75.0% (n=3)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Robot n = 2	100% (n=2)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
	Not Determinable n=1	0% (n=0)	0% (n = 0)	100% (n=1)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)
White Women by RWNW Women by Primary Weapon				Fisher's Exact Test		p = 0.113	
RWNW Women by FR Women by Primary Weapon				Fisher's Exact Test		p = 1.000	
Men and Women by Primary Weapon (yes/no)				Fisher's Exact Test		p < 0.000***	

Table 14. Percentages for Primary Weapons among Men and Choice Characters and by Race

Sex	Race	None	Household Items	Projectile Weapons	Swords/Knives	Staff/Wand	Other
Men n =236		30.6% (n=72)***	2.6% (n=6)***	60% (n=141)***	6.0% (n=14)***	0.4% (n=1)***	0.4% (n=1)***
	White n=160	34.4% (n=55)	3.1% (n=1)	56.9% (n=91)	5.6% (n=9)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Black n=22	13.6% (n=3)	4.5% (n=1)	81.8% (n=18)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)
	Asian n = 7	100% (n=7)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Hispanic n=10	10.0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	80.0% (n=8)	10.0% (n=1)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Middle Eastern n=6	16.7% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	83.0% (n=5)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Ambiguous n= 4	0% (n= 0)	0% (n=0)	25.0% (n=1)	50.0% (n=2)	0% (n = 0)	25.0% (n=1)
	Real World Other n= 3	0% (n= 0)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)	66.7% (n=2)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Non-Real "Other" n=1	0% (n= 0)	0% (n=0)	100% (n =1)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Alien n = 8	20.0% (n =1)	0% (n=0)	62.5% (n=5)	0% (n = 0)	12.5% (n=1)	0% (n= 0)
	Robot n = 3	66.7% (n =2)	0% (n=0)	33.3% (n=1)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
	Not Determinable n= 12	16.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	83.3% (n=10)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n= 0)
Choice n = 7		0% (n = 0)	0% (n=0)	71.4% (n= 5)	5.4% (n = 17)	1.3% (n=4)	0% (n= 0)
White Men by RWNW Men by Primary Weapon				$\chi^2 = 2.318$	df = 1	p = 0.169	
RWNW Men by FR Men by Primary Weapon				Fisher's Exact Test		p < 0.475	

Table 15. Percentages for Staff Members by Sex

Sex	Percentage
Female	6.1% (n = 21)
Male	78.3% (n = 306)
No Photo Found	15.6% (n = 61)

Table 16. Percentages for Staff Members by Race

Race	Percentage
White	72.1% (n = 282)
Black	0.8% (n = 3)
Asian	7.9% (n = 31)
Hispanic	0.8% (n = 3)
Middle Eastern	0.5% (n = 2)
No Photo Found	17.9% (n = 70)

Table 17. Percentages for Staff Members by Title

Race	Title	Percentage
White	Producers	40.1% (n = 113)
	Directors	19.5% (n = 55)
	Writers	37.9% (n = 107)
Black	Producers	100% (n = 3)
	Directors	0% (n = 0)
	Writers	0% (n = 0)
Asian	Producers	67.7% (n = 21)
	Directors	22.6% (n = 7)
	Writers	9.7% (n = 3)
Hispanic	Producers	100% (n = 3)
	Directors	0% (n = 0)
	Writers	0% (n = 0)
Middle Eastern	Producers	100% (n = 2)
	Directors	0% (n = 0)
	Writers	0% (n = 0)

Table 18. Pearson Correlation between Percent Staff and Percent Characters

	Female Characters	Racial Minority Characters
Female Staff	0.243	-0.218
Racial Minority Staff	0.118	0.026

Table 19. Mean Differences between Percent Staff and Percent Characters

	Female Characters	Racial Minority Characters
Female Staff	$t = 7.165^{***}$	$t = 6.188^{***}$
Racial Minority Staff	$t = 9.247^{***}$	$t = 3.181^{**}$

$p < 0.000^{***}$        $p < 0.001^{**}$

APPENDIX D: Charts and Figures

Figure 1. Characters by Sex

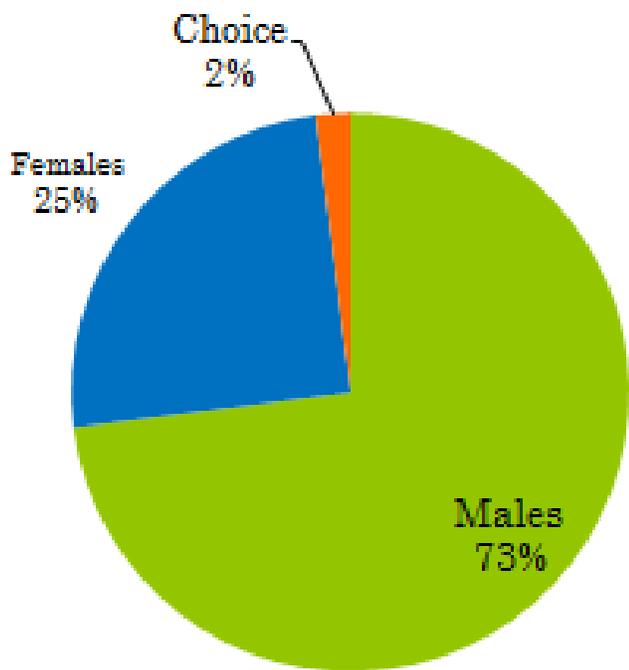


Figure 2. Characters by Race

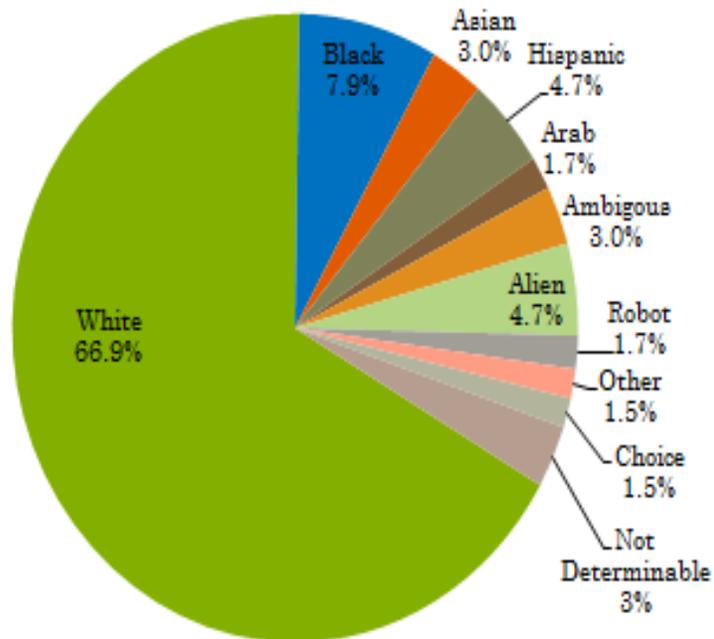


Figure 3: Primary Characters by Sex

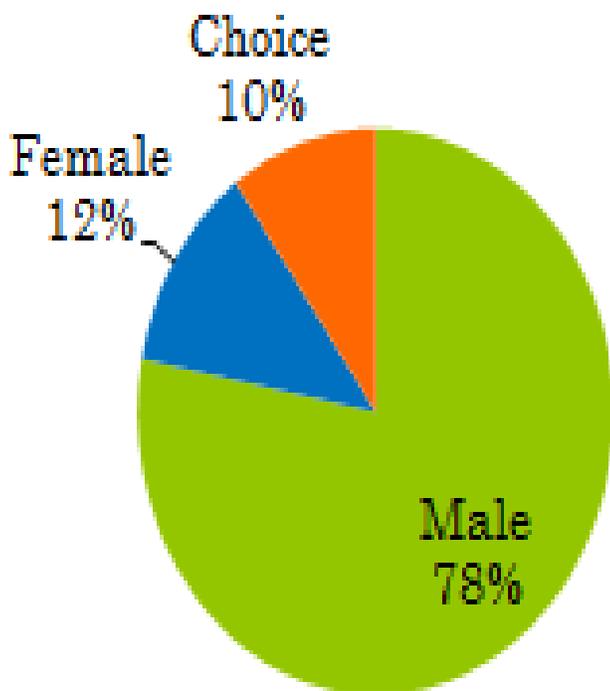


Figure 4. Primary Characters by Race

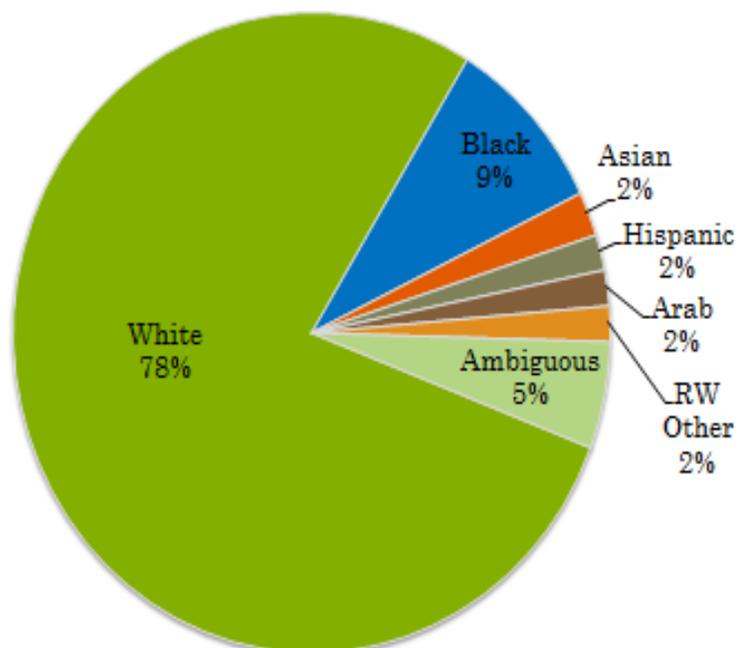


Figure 5. Race and Sex by Nudity

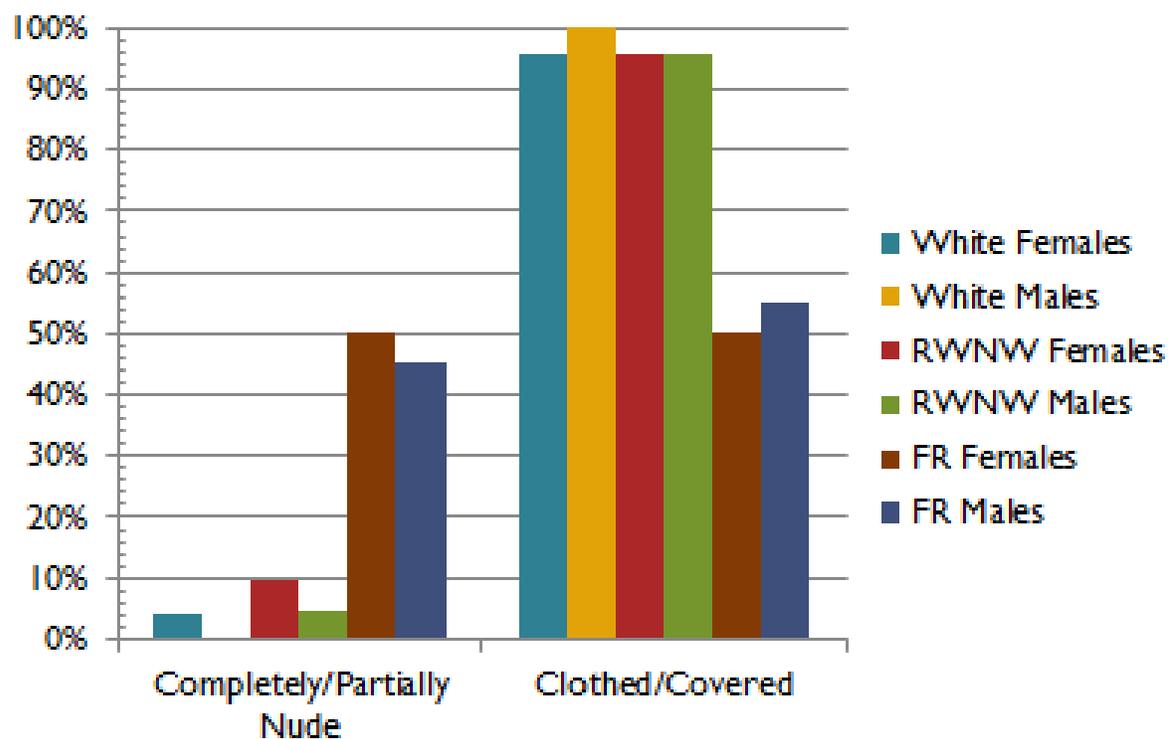


Figure 6. Race and Sex by Clothing Tightness

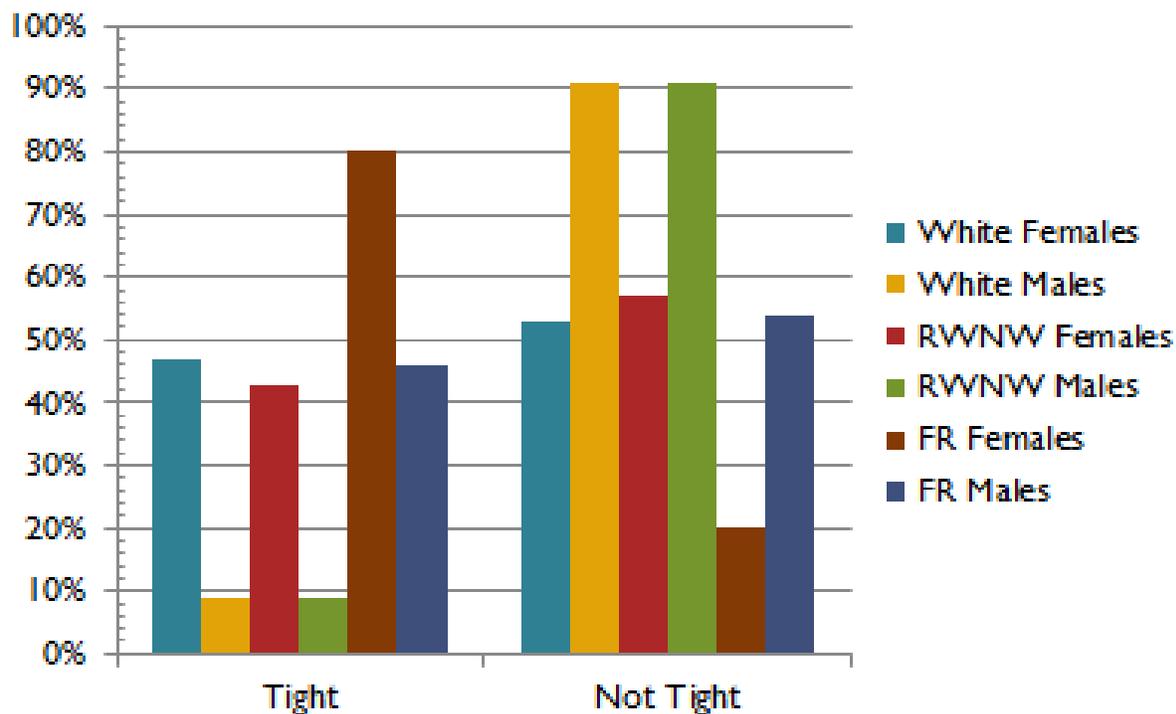


Figure 7. Race and Sex by Sexual Expressed

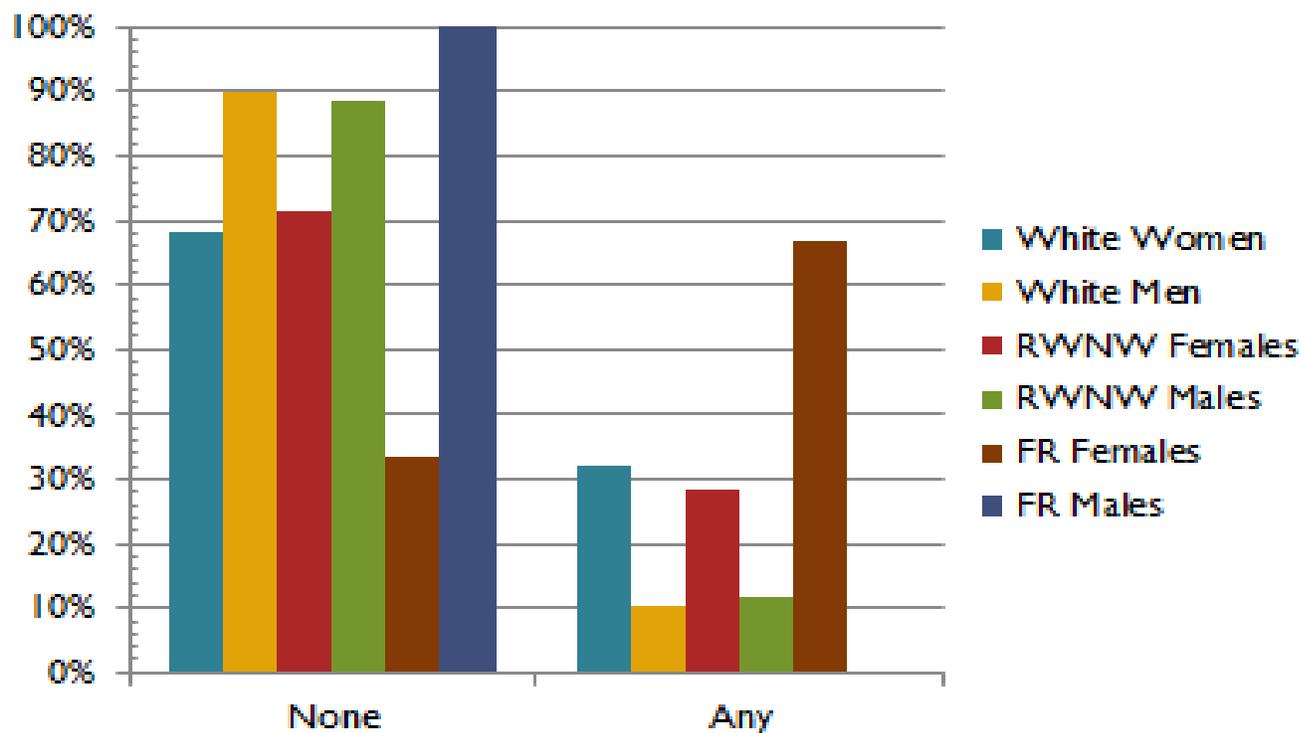


Figure 8. Men and Women by Violence Perpetuated

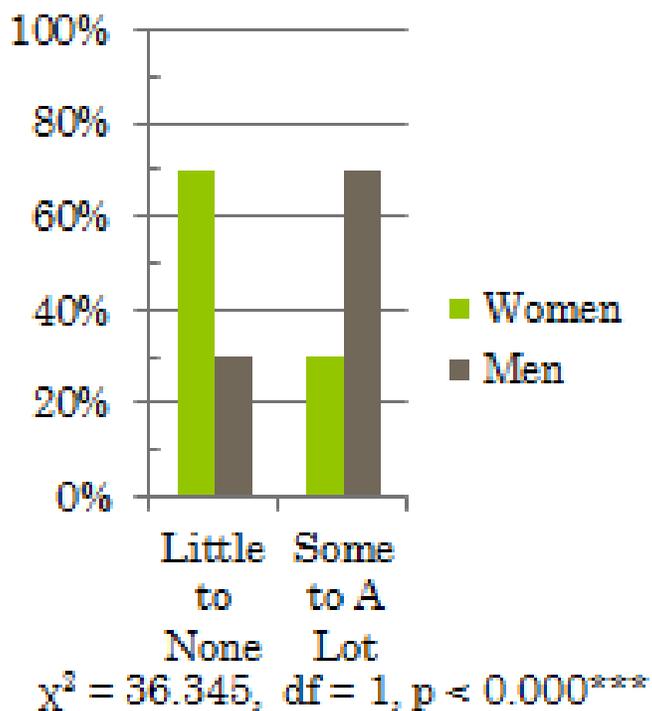


Figure 9. Men and Women by Violence Received

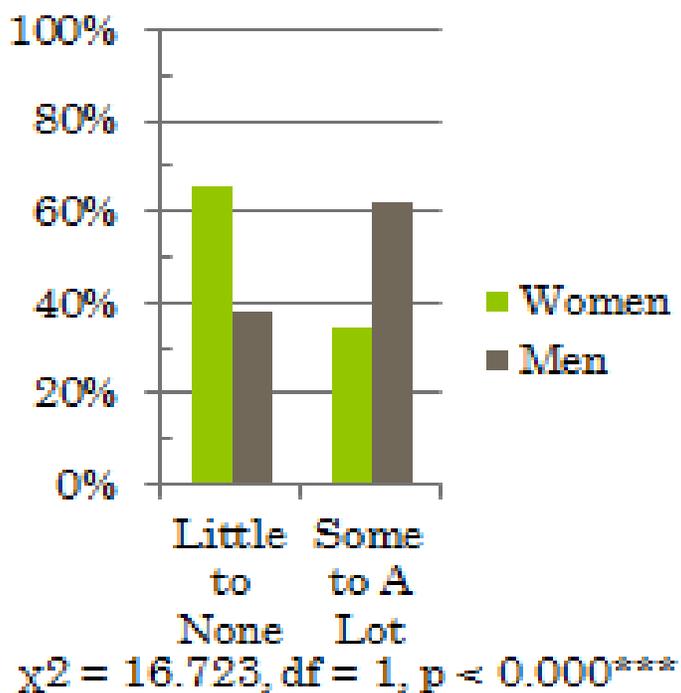


Figure 10. Production Staff by Sex

■ Women ■ Men ■ No Photo

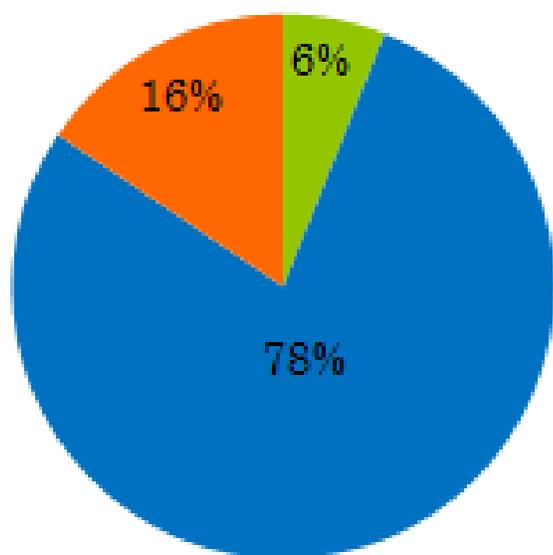
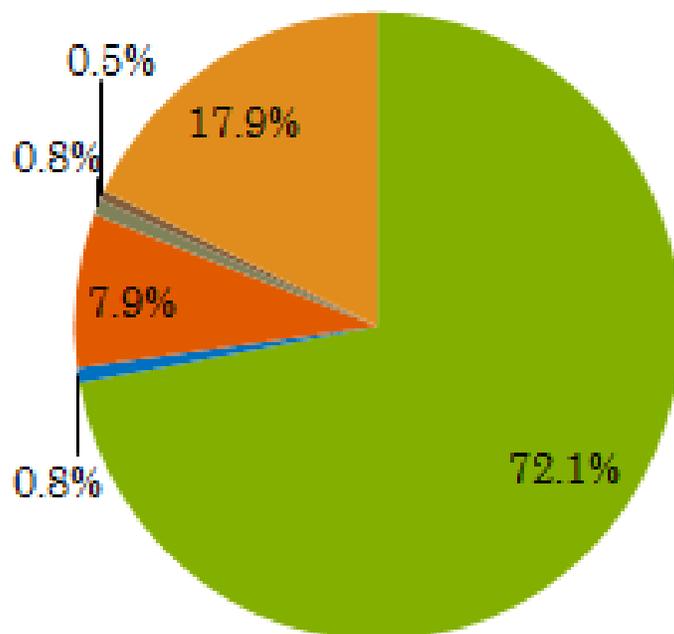


Figure 11. Production Staff by Race

■ White ■ Black  
 ■ Asian ■ Hispanic  
 ■ Middle Eastern ■ No Photo Found



APPENDIX E: Featured Characters

Cortana *Halo* Series



EDI *Mass Effect* Series



Victor *Fallout New Vegas*



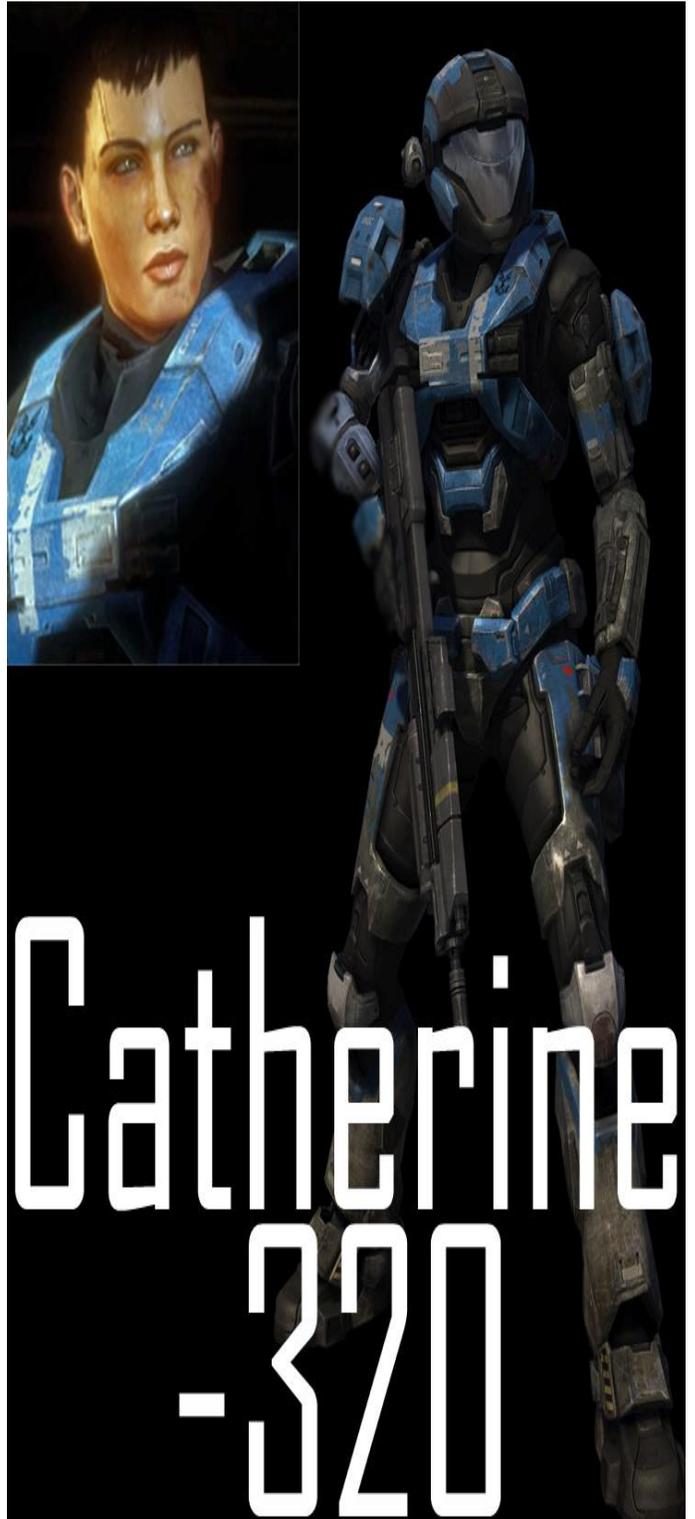
Anya *Gears of War Series*



Samantha Byrne *Gears of War 3*



Kat B-320 *Halo Reach*



Abigail Marston *Red Dead Redemption*



Catwoman *Batman Arkam City*



Clementine *The Walking Dead*



Doc Mitchel *Fallout: New Vegas*



*Niko Grand Theft Auto IV*



*Max Payne Max Payne 3*

