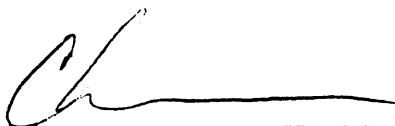This is to certify that the
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Stereotypes of the Black Male Image in Video Games

by

Christopher Alanye Covington

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media

2009

ABSTRACT

Stereotypes of the Black Male Image in Video Games

by

Christopher Alanye Covington

The aim of the study was to content analyze black males in different genres of popular video games of Microsoft Xbox 2002 and Xbox 360 2008 to demonstrate whether societal stereotypes of black males also exist in video games. These games were coded at two different levels, level 1 explored the appearance of Humaniod Male Characters (HMC) and then to revealed the appearance of Humaniod Black Male Characters (HBMC). The results revealed 41 of the 285 the games coded, showed 75 cases of HBMCs, and the majority of HBMCs were not stereotyped images which countered pre-study assumptions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Stereotypes

The influence of media on the development and maintenance of negative stereotypes and individual social development in general has been widely studied with regard to many media sources, such as television (Ruble & Martin, 1998). Only recently has this work extended to video games (see Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Calvert & Tan, 1994; Dill, Gentile, Richter, & Dill, 2005; Greenfield, 1994). Research on video games has traditionally focused on the effects of violent video game play on aggressive behavior, and addressed negative aggressive content of the games (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Bensley & Van Eenwyk, 2001; Carnagey & Anderson, 2004). Kafai, Cook, and Fields (2007), agrees with Nakamura (2001) and others that in Internet and games, like other forms of media, mirror racial stereotyping found in society.

Some researchers have argued that while individual racial stereotypes have faded in American society (Devine & Elliot, 1995). Others argue they have merely changed in their presentation moving from overt to covert forms (Omi & Winant, 1994). Despite the change in manifestation, stereotypes remain a problem in contemporary society. A stereotype represents a collection of traits (Rich, 1981), and refers to one group's generalized and widely accepted beliefs about the personal attributes of members of another group (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Dates & Barlow, 1990). Stereotypes reveal a series of unsubstantiated beliefs about what these groups are, what they are like, and how they behave (Omi, 1989). Studies suggest stereotypes operate as heuristic cues in social information processing, providing a basis for quick responses to members of outgroups. This occurs when individual's social perceivers cannot, or prefer not to, engage in a more

thoughtful or systematic outgroup members (Bodenhausen et al, 1994). In essence, people use stereotypes to simplify their lives and thought processes. Although human mind naturally groups similar experiences, especially early life experiences, categorizes and then labels them (Grimme & Grimme, 2008).

Quite often, we have stereotypes about persons who are members of groups with which we have not had firsthand contact (Grobman, 1990). By stereotyping we infer that a person has a whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of that group have (Stereotyping, 2009). Several socio-cultural forces such as family, friends, political leaders, and the mass media facilitate the formation, activation, and maintenance of cultural stereotypes (Hamilton et al., 1994). Television, books, comic strips, and movies are all abundant sources of stereotyped characters (Grobman, 1990). The most common denominator in the maintenance of stereotypes is the media through outlets such as: television, movies, and comics. Stereotyped characters negatively influence the way we view people in society. Television tends to depict racial groups, and other minorities similar, in the same manner. More often than not these groups are stereotyped in a negative way by television. (Shebloski, 2001). Positive stereotypes can also be found by viewing television. However there are far fewer positive stereotypes than negative ones (Stereotyping, 2009).

Black Males Stereotypes

The image of black males in America is still a work in progress, transcending from the past images of slavery, servants, blackfaces, and many other ways and examples that would show black males in an inferior or negative aspect. While media outlets use negative statistics to consistently cast black men as the scourge of this country, we must

admit that the statistics do not lie. But a statistic cannot give balance or provide a larger context to the story. The statistics often do not cover the remarkable advancement many black men in America have made in the last half century, nor do they report on the collapse of many white men in the same era (Williams, 2006). Although these representations have changed they are still negative. Black males are constructed as the drug dealer, dead-beat, comedian, or thug (Tash, 2007). Historical representations of African American males were Stepin Fetchit. Stepin Fetchit, shuffling, subservient, ignorant and eager to please (Grimme & Grimme, 2008). Other negative black male stereotypes are poor, loud, angry, tough, bitter, hostile, unemployed, and intimidating (Kawakami & Dovidio, 2001). With this knowledge known about black males in traditional media forms it brings to thought about how black males appear in new media such as video and computer games. While the percentage of black characters in video games is greater than the percentage of black people in the total population, black characters play stereotypical roles (Monifa, 2002). When black people appeared proportionate to their numbers, it was in sports games which reinforce stereotypes. Another stereotype in video games has less to do with numbers but in the construction of culture, for instance 50 Cent's Bulletproof (Woollacott, 2009). Black characters were the most verbally aggressive, they engaged in greater amounts of screaming, taunting, insulting and assaults (Monifa, 2002). Looking through the history of prominent black males in America such as, George Washington Carver, Cornel West, Huey P. Newton, and many others positive stereotypes exit as well. Musical, athletic, strong, colorful, muscular, humorous, religious, and rhythmic (Kawakami & Dovidio, 2001); to make note, but these are hardly stereotypes that are either hardly ever associated with black

males, or over popularly displayed. Based on prior research and review of relevant literature involving race, ethnicities, other media and video games.

Stereotypes in Video Games

Video games, like other forms of media, have often relied on the use of stereotypes. The influence of these stereotypes on people's attitudes warrants attention, especially considering the lack of positive images of certain groups in media. (Saleem, 2008). The implications of racial diversity and stereotypes in video games have yet to be fully explored (Glaubke et al, 2001). Although extreme and blatant racial tropes flourish within video games, those simplistic notions that it is "just a game" or "kid's entertainment," as well as the prominence of colorblind discourses, limit serious inquiry into their racial content and context (Leonard, 2006). All games have stereotypes, but a video game is going to pass that message along powerfully (Marriott, 1999). In the United States, for example, discussions center on the need to cultivate more ethnically diverse development teams with the aim of creating games that go beyond racially typecast characters and stereotypical narratives (Chan, 2005). The issues of stereotypes in video games have become more than a mere "chit-chat" between gamers and possible non-gamers.

There has been little research on gender portrayals of video game characters, especially male characters (Dill & Thill, 2007). Marriot (1999), a composer and computer-game sound designer in San Diego, when interviewed, said "In the 80's and 90's you never saw black characters, If there were black ones, they would get beat up, really whumped so fast, before they had time to get into character." Times have not slightly changed among the visual appearance of black characters, especially playable

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black males, with the only exception of athletic games. Some games have characters that can be correlated with males in reality in which has also had a helping hand in the building of stereotypes. Video games, at least the ones that have included characters, have always relied on stereotypes. As computing power increased and the figures became more fleshed out, that polygon-created flesh was mostly likely white. The result was a kind of racial stereotyping in which white men were all muscle-bound, violence-prone, silent types who mostly negotiated obstacles with grenades and machine guns (Marriott, 1999). In Glaubke et al. (2001), nearly every video game hero was white, noting that of 53 heroes, 46 were white (87%). Also, almost all African American males were portrayed as antagonist. Eight out of ten African American males (83%) were cast as competitors in sports-oriented games.

The notion is, there are many prominent black males in today's society that can be modeled after for the use of video game characters from a vast selection of professions, backgrounds and industries. As it seems, with a plain eye, that very few, are used to display black males in video games, if any at all. The main focus of this study will be to examine images of the black males in video games and analyze the portrayal of black males to ascertain if images align with positive or negative stereotypes. Finally this paper focuses on the construction and transfer of stereotypes from society to video games. The following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. Are stereotypes of African American males in the real world applied to African American males in video games?

RQ2: Are black males portrayed negatively in video games?

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RQ3: What genre of video games do black males appear in most?

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Sample

7th Generation entertainment gaming consoles consist of the Wii, Playstation 3, and Xbox 360. The three exist in heavy competition with each other, and comprise the biggest console battles of this generation. This paper used the gaming consoles Xbox 2002 and Xbox 360 and their associated 2008 games. The Xbox systems were chosen based upon the total number of games produced from the first model to its most recent model, 7th generation console. The number of games that were counted from the first full year of games that were created and produced for the first generation consoles, and the number of games that were created and produced in 2008 from the 7th generation. Xbox and Xbox 360 had the most totaled number of games with Xbox (2002) n=97 and Xbox 360 (2008) n=242 for a total of 339 games. The complied list of games was analyzed at two levels based upon images provided on the Xbox official site. If there were no images to correspond with a particular game, the game was noted, but not coded.

Unit of Analysis

Two main units of analysis were used in this study. These were identified as the game and the humanoid black characters. The humanoid black character variables were coded greater detail to later examine stereotypes. Please see Appendix 1 for the complete coding scheme.

The Game. In Level 1, based on the screen shots provided by the Xbox Official site, coders analyzed the images and determined if there were any humanoid male characters in the game. If there were humanoid male characters, coders observed if there

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were any humanoid black male characters in the same images. If humanoid black male characters existed, the game then moved to Level 2 coding, all others remained at level 1 coding.

Level 1 coding included the following categories: CoderID, game year, game name, game genre, Official Sports Game (OSG), Humanoid Male Character (HMC), Humanoid Black Male Character (HBMC) and number of Humanoid Black Male Characters (NHBMC). The game genre is based upon the genres listed on the official Xbox site genre chooser (http://games.teamxbox.com/index/general/by-genre/7/), for a total of 34 genres. See appendix 2 for the complete list of genres. OSG (official sports games) are games that have official sports organizations names attached, such as NBA, NFL, NHL, NCAA, FIFA etc. Humanoid Male Characters (HMC) and Humanoid Black Male Characters (HBMC) and Number of Humanoid Black Male Characters, were the major parts of the level one coding.

Humanoid Male Characters. Humanoid male characters are characters that are male and can be human, supernatural creature, robot, or other male human like figure. A human was classified as a homosapien with no supernatural features. Supernatural creature; a non-human that exceeds biological limits and/or possesses supernatural powers; robot: an electro-mechanical or bio-mechanical device or group of devices that can perform autonomous or preprogrammed tasks. These types of characters will be observed through the list of games, and games that have humanoid black characters will move on to be coded at level 2.

Humanoid Black Male Characters. Are characterized the same as Humaniod Male Characters with the exception of these characters are black. Black as defined by the U.S Census Bureau is a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Merriam Webster define black as used in this study is a combination of the US Census Bureau and Merriam- Webster dictionary, relating to any of various the populations that have dark skin pigmentation and "typical" or "representative" of the perceived characteristics of American black culture. Black is any racial group that has affiliation with Africa who may be of dark to light skin pigmentation that affiliates with American black culture.

Humanoid Black Male Character Variables are characters that were defined as a human, animal, or object within a video game, that displayed human-like appearance or qualities such as speaking, using tools, or making conscious decisions, (Mou, 2007) but adhered to the definition of black. Each humanoid black character received extended coding including subcategories.

Categories

The first category is type of character, and coded for human, supernatural creature, and robot. As Mou (2007) and Beasly and Standley (2002), Point out, characters should be coded as to their importance in the video games. Therefore the second category was coded as role of the character, which included four classifications. First, the player controlled primary character, which was actively manipulated and controlled onscreen by the video game player. Second, sometimes-controlled primary character, and this character was actively manipulated and controlled onscreen part of the time; however the

control switched to other characters during the game. It appeared most often in team sports games, when the player needed to switch control among multiple team members. The third category, secondary character, immediately tied to or related to the primary character by either aiding or deterring the primary character from fulfilling their quest. This character was completely controlled by the game. (Downs et al, 2005). Fourth, background characters, and those characters were not part of this study. Based upon the first reliability test, the characters were redefined to, Player-Controlled character, NPC (Non Player-Controlled) and Unsure. These were the only roles analyzed in this study.

The third category for humanoid black male character variables was skin color. Due to the variability in complexion, characters were analyzed for blackness on three levels, obviously black, possibly black, or black but possibly multiracial. Later, this changed to very dark/dark, very light/light and in between. The fourth category was clothing, including any garment that is worn in order to enhance, exaggerate, call attention to, or that may bring negative judgment and appears of inappropriate. (Downs et al, 2005). Because clothing is complex it was broken into three subcategories: amount of clothing, kind of clothing, and style of dress. Amount of clothing was coded as: fully clothed, minimal clothing (possible PG), partially clothed, and other. Kind of clothing was coded as: street clothes, sports attire, and fantasy costume. After discussion and following the initial reliability test, it was decided that uniform, should be added to the list of kind of clothing. Style of dress was coded as: well dressed this not equal baggy, (baggy, appearing loose, oversized), or sagging.

The fifth major category was appearance, which broke down to subcategories: muscles, weight and body markings. The muscles subcategory was coded as unnaturally

muscular, normal human muscles, and appears noticeably weak. Weight was coded as obese, overweight, about average, thin. Body marking, was coded as tattoos, piercings (being that other than the ordinary ear piercing, ie, nose, lip, etc.), or both and was coded as yes or no. The hair category breaks down into hair length, hair style, and hair grooming. Hair length was coded as bald, buzz cut, short, shoulder length, and long. The hair style was coded as braided/dreads/locks, curly/no dreads or locks, straight, no dreads or locks, afro appearance, and short, and the hair grooming category was coded as well groomed or ungroom/wild. After the first reliability test, there were slight modifications to the hair category. In the hair length, buzz cut was taken out, and hair curl was entered as, curly, straight, wavy or neither. Hair style was edited to be more straight forward and simpler to be coded as dreadlocks, braids, ordinary, straight, afro appearance, and Mohawk.

The sixth major category was accessories, which included jewelry, technological communication, weapon/armor, and headwear. The headwear was further coded as hat, du-rag, bandana/scarf, or none, then edited to include head-dressing along with hat/head-dressing. Jewelry, technological communication, and weapon were coded as yes or no, but later weapon became coded as weapon/armor. The seventh category was Socio-Economic Status (SES) which was coded as upper class, middle class, lower class, can not describe. SES was based upon appearance, stance, and apparent setting. Due to complications discovered after the first reliability test, SES was changed to Wealth and coded: seems rich, average, seems poor. The eighth category, occupation, was coded for government or agency, athlete, fighter, former athlete, criminal, other, or can not describe. The ninth category, demeanor, was broken down as facial recognition and

physical appearance. For facial recognition, Straker (2008) states, "much aggression can be shown in the face, from disapproving frowns and pursed lips to sneers and full snarls. The eyes can be used to stare and hold the gaze for long period. They may also squint, preventing the other person seeing where you are looking," and there was originally as aggressive, pleasant, no emotion, and can not describe. Facial demeanor coding changed to be coded as mostly hostile, mostly friendly or neither hostile or friendly. Straker (2008) argued for physical appearance changes when someone attacks. They give visual signal such as clenching of fists, redness in their face, lowering and spreading of the body for stability and appear ready to strike. They are also likely to give anger signs such as redness of the face. Being physical is more than being overtly aggressive. Opening oneself, or lowering defenses are also aggressive positions. Both overt and covert forms of aggression include not looking at the other person, crotch displays, relaxing the body, or turning away. Physical was therefore coded as aggressive, pleasantness, no emotion, or can not describe.

Coding

Coder Training and Reliability. Two coders (not including researcher) were trained for one hour to two hours prior to receiving the data to be coded for the study. Reliability testing was conducted using the first 11 games of the Xbox 2002 and Xbox 360 2008 list, for a total of 22 games from the complete sample of 339 leaving 317 games to be coded for the study. Several reliability tests were conducted until a reliability level of at least .80 for every code at level 1 and at least .67 for every code at level 2 was achieved. This test used 30 games, 15 from the Xbox 2002 list, and 15 from Xbox 360 2008 games taken from the bottom of the list of games leaving a total of 287 games to be coded for the

study . Percentage Agreement and Cohen Kappa was used to calculate the intercoder reliability. At level 1 the reliabilities for each variable were: game year (.967) game genre (1.000), OSG (1.000), HMC (.941), HBMC (.941) and NHBMC (.938). At level 2 after several trials the Percentage Agreement average was .98 and Cohen Kappa average was .857. Those results were: Game Name (1.000), Game Genre (1.000), Character Num (1.000), Character Varible (1.000), Role of Character (1.000), Skin Color (1.000), CL:Amount (1.000) CL:Kind (.50), CL:Style (1.000), AP: Muscles (1.000), AP:Weight (1.000), AP:BodyMarkings (1.000), HR:HairLength (1.000), HR:HairCurl (1.000), HR:HairStyle (1.000), HR:HairGrooming (1.000), AS:Jewlery (1.000), AS:TechComm (1.000), AS: Headwear (1.000), SES (1.000), Occupation (1.000), DM: FaceRec (1.000), and DM: PhysApp (1.000).

Each coder received a game list of combined games from both the 2002 and 2008 games list giving coders a total of 143 games each. After the coders finished the main sample, they were given list of 28 games to code for the intercoder reliability. This particular list was combined of games randomly selected from both of the sample lists of 143, and after those lists were coded, the Percentage Agreement average was .784.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Among a total of 285 Xbox and Xbox 360 games, there were 75 cases in which black males were displayed. This does not represent 76 games, instead it represents 75 black individual males that were in seen in 41 games, with some of those games having more than black male appear.

Here is how the statistics break down: there were 285 total games. of that, 251 were coded. The discrepancy is due to 18 games (see footnotes) that did not survive the first level of code analysis. Statistics of the 285 games revealed that of the 285 games, there were 70 games of Xbox 2002 and 215 games of Xbox 360 2008. Of the 34 game genres the top 10 genres with the most games were 1) Xbox Live Arcade (60), 2) Sports (44), 3) Action/Adventure (33), 4) Action (24), 5) First Person Shooter (16), 6) Racing/Driving (17), 7) Action/Shooter (12), 8) RPG (12), 9) Music/Dance (9), and 10) Fighting (6).

The sports games (OSG) categories totaled 34 out of the 285 games (11.9%) with one game making it to level 2. Data coded for the HMC accounted for 226 of the 267 games, or (84.6%). The HMC category had 158 Human Male Characters out of the total 285 games (55.4%). Of the total games that had HMC, 41 contained Human Black Male Characters (HBMC) (25.9%). Out of those 41 games there were 75 cases where black males appeared. Examining representations by year reveals an interesting spread. In 2008 there were 61HBMC were on the Xbox 360 whereas in 2002 there were only 14.

Of the 75 Humanoid Black Male Characters, 73 were characterized as actual Humans, while others were Supernatural Creatures. The role of characters included 13

player controlled characters (17.3%), 32 non-player controlled (46.6%), and the rest were not determined able. Therefore 30 were unsure (40%). The skin color analysis resulted in 40 cases (a majority) classified as very dark/dark (53.3%), 6 were very light/light (8%), and the other 29 were in between (38.6%). Of the total 75 cases coded for clothing, 10 were partially clothed (13.3%), and two were described as minimal clothed (2%). Surprisingly, the overwhelming majority, 63 were fully clothed (84%). Coding for the style of clothing revealed sports attire (1%), and fantasy costume (2%). The most common was the street clothes that had 60 characters (80%), with uniform coming second with 12 characters (16%). The style of dress category revealed the sagging had no characters, baggy, appearing loose, oversized only had 17 characters (22.6%), and astonishingly the well dressed had the vast majority of 58 characters (77.3%). The appearance category resulted in the HBMCs having 71 of the characters to seem have normal human muscles (95%), three were coded as unnaturally muscular (4%), and one as noticeably weak (1%). Another observation found that 73 were about average weight (98%), and two were thin (2%). Body markings resulted in 66 having neither (88%), characters with tattoos, had five (6%), and four with both tattoos and piercings (6%). The hair category resulted as follows: hair length had 14 bald characters (19%), five with shoulder length hair (6%) as well as six with long hair (8%), and the majority, 50 HBMCs (67%) wore short styled hair. Observations from hair curl category were 54 HBMCs with neither a straight, curly or wavy hair (72%), three characters had curly (4%) and the same for wavy hair (4%), and 15 had straight hair (20%). There was a similar outcome with the hair style; 54 of the characters had ordinary hair (72%), nine characters wore dreadlocks (12%), 11 characters wore afros (15%), one had braids (1%), and no

HBMCs had a Mohawks. Surprisingly the hair section showed there were 73 of the 75 HBMCs had well groomed hair (98%), and two having not groomed or wild hair (2%). The accessories category was simplified to involve yes and no questions with the exception of a headwear. The jewelry results revealed, 56 of the characters had none (75%) compared to 19 that did (25%); as for technological communication there were down to 74 (99%) to 1 (1%) that did not have any; and it was 42 (56%) to 33 (44%) of the characters that did not have weapons or armor. The headwear revealed, 16 of the characters wore some sort of hat or headdress (21%), no characters wore du-rags, two of the characters wore a scarf or bandana (3%), and what was discovered was 57 of the characters wore nothing at all (76%).

The last four categories were trying to view characteristics that were not as apparent as the ones discussed/described before. In the Wealth category, 10 percent (8) seemed rich, and 10 percent (7) seemed poor, but the vast majority of the characters 80 percent (60) appeared to be of an average/middleclass amount of wealth. The Occupation category was coded based on sole appearance and it showed that the least displayed occupations were athletes three percent (2) and fighters three percent(2), with criminals being seven percent (5) coming in third. The majority of the characters fell into the can not describe 53 % (40) section. Ten characters were placed into the other occupational value (13%), but the occupation of government or agency 21% (16) came to be the highest of occupations picked. The demeanor category is probably one of the most important to this study, and these observations came out to be interesting. The demeanor of facial recognition was revealed there were only 13 characters that appeared to be mostly hostile (17%), with nine being mostly friendly (12%). The rest of the characters

(53) were placed under neither hostile nor friendly (71%). When it came down to the physical appearance demeanor, the numbers were almost the opposite. There were 15 characters that could not be described (20%), 16 of the characters had no emotion (21%), with nine characters showing a pleasant physical appearance (12%). The highest percentage of the characters fell into the aggressive physical appearance category which had 35 HBMCs (47%). Out of the entire demeanor category the majority were perceived as neither hostile nor friendly but their physical appearance showed aggressive body language. Results tables available in appendix

Research Questions

Research question one asked if stereotypes of black males in the real world applied to African American males in video games. Analysis revealed that stereotypes were not that   Based upon the observations it shows stereotypes are not, in fact it would show the majority of black males were seen more positively in there appearance. This study, showed that the majority of black males were fully clothed wearing street clothes, and were well dressed. In this study street clothes being regular clothing worn everyday while walking on the street, which could be jeans, sneakers, slacks, button down shirts, etc. They also appear to be of average body build, not unnaturally muscular or weak with short hair, no type of hair style, but were well groomed. Also there was no jewelry or technological communication devices, or head garments. Wealth and occupation, were viewed as not too rich or not too poor but average, and with the exception of not being able to tell the occupation, which were non violence jobs.

When looking at demeanor it showed a large size of the HBMCs were neither hostile nor friendly when it pertained to facial recognition, but when physical appearance was observed majority showed to be aggressive (35), and as a combined of no emotion (16) and can not describe (15) the combined was close to the amount that were aggressive. With this known, it says that they are clothed nicely, the personal up keep was good, and they were indifferent with emotions in the face, but the physical appearance would appear aggressive.

The second research question asked were black males portrayed negatively in video games. From observations in this study, black males are not portrayed negatively. The way that it was determined if the black males were portrayed as negative or positive, by list of negative portrayal keys. These keys were selected out of the particular values out of select categories. Negative Portrayal Keys were criminal or athlete occupation, baggy or loose, sagging pants in clothing, wild/ ungroomed, hostile and aggressive of demeanor, du- rag, scarf, in headwear, unnaturally muscular. Of ten keys, in order for the black males to be viewed negatively, at least 6 of the keys identified to had to be attributed. Inversely there were Positive Portrayal Keys which were fully clothed, well dressed, no body markings, well groomed, none for headwear, average wealth, government agency, or other for occupation, either friendly, or neither, and pleasant or no emotion

Research question three asked, what genre of video games do black males appear in the most? This revealed that the majority of the HBMC cases fell into the Action category with 30 percent (23), and secondary was Action/Adventure with 24 percent (18) cases. Of the 34 genres, 28 had Humaniod Male Characters (HMC) (82%), of those 28

genres. 13 genres did not have not have an HBMC (46%), which leaves 15 genres to have

Humaniod Black Male Characters in this study with. A complete list of genres can be

viewed in the footnotes.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This study was originally developed through conversations that surrounded the experiences of black males in their daily lives. The media was central; television, comics, movies, and video games as it presented differing portrayals of black males, which in some cases mirrored personal experiences.

Furthermore, an over arching purpose of this study was to explore the images of black males in video games. Research examining stereotypes of black males in traditional forms of media constructed a baseline for future scholarship. This paper adds to this work through the exploration of stereotypes of black males in video games. The central question surrounding this study was, does common sense representations portray of black males presented in the media translate to characters in video games? Additionally do these representations present counter images to stereotypes and if so, how do they challenge representations of popular/playable characters? As indicated in the result section, the majority of black males appeared fully clothed in street clothes but still were well dressed and well groomed, neither hostile nor friendly as it pertains to facial recognition demeanor, but in physical appearance demeanor were still aggressive. Below, I will discuss in greater detail the implications of the results offering analysis, limitations and future research.

Examining level 1, coding reveals that black males do not comprise a majority of the players. In fact, they existed in only 40 out of 226 games that did not account for sports games. For level 2 coding, the numbers were revealed black males totaling 75

cases. Within this, 17.5 percent (13 HBMCs) were actually player controlled characters. However, this does not mean that the total number of characters were main characters that they were merely playable. This not surprising considering some of the more popular games have one "token" black male that acts as part of a team or group, but not the main character.

Examining level 1 coding, it reveals that black males do not comprise a majority of the players. In fact they existed in only 41 out of 226 games, that did not include professional or official sports games). For level 2 coding the numbers were slightly worse with black males totaling 75 cases. Within this, 17.5 percent (13 HBMCs) were actual player controlled characters. This is important because, it displays that there were not many characters to have a However, this does not mean that the total number of characters were the main characters, merely that they were playable. This is not surprising considering some of the more popular games have one "token" black male that acts as part of a of the team or group, but not the main character. This is usually the case in television shows that are not comprised of a majority of black characters.

In the level 1 coding the purpose of the OSG was to exclude games related to real world sports. In the data some games that were OSG made it through level 2 coding, because in order for OSG to qualify pass level 2 the criteria was there had to be a black male not seen during sports action; on the field, on the court, or on the ice. There were some cases where a game would take place off the field, for example in an office environment, a night club, or on the streets. It was observed how the black male would be viewed, considering they were not actually playing in the main context of the game.

It is important to notice in this study the majority of the HBMCs were not of the stereotypical forms. They were well dressed, well groomed, not unnaturally muscular, and their pants were not sagging or baggy. With the exception of the aggressive demeanor of their physical appearance, the Humaniod Black Male Characters came out the opposite of what was assumed. With the understanding this study was based upon pure images, if it were to be adjusted the HBMC would be more hand selected from popular video games, genres, and also characters audio or subtitles. Also, what would be looked for in these adjustments would be just HBMCs that are player controlled or characters that have a more serious role as a non player controlled character, such as to evaluate black male images and stereotypes further. Although the writer is thoroughly pleased with the outcome of the results, the main portion of the HBMCs were characters that were non player controlled or it could not be described from looking at the images. These characters are usually not as important as are player controlled characters, but in this study it hold some weight to the fact that although the are not as important they were not just modeled after stereotypes.

Outside of sports games, the representation of African Americans drops precipitously, with many of the remaining characters featured as gangsters and other street criminals as in *Grand Theft Auto* and *50 Cent Bulletproof*. Not coincidentally, the popularity of sports games is also a primary driver of the masculinity of characters, since sports titles are game versions of real-world men's sports leagues or sport commentators (Madden Football, NCAA Football, NBA live, MVP Baseball, WWE Wrestling). (William et al, 2009).

One of the major impacts that were planned for this study was to bring to the forefront what has only been said or speculated. As an avid gamer, exploring the contents of blogs and opinionated sites, it is clear the writer was not the only party with theses views. There are characters in the games that have been stereotyped, and these characters are some of the more popular and recognized black male characters in the gamer world, characters such as Barret, Cole Train, and Balrog. See Appendices 3-6 for images. Barret is the only black male character in the Final Fantasy 7, and also is the only character that has a massive gun attached to his arm. When he speaks in the game, you can usually see him talking very aggressively and cursing a lot. Cole Train appears in the games Gears of War 1&2 (GoW), by looking at his images, you think that he looks like the other of the characters in GoW, except he is the only character not covered on his arms. Morgan Gray, Senior Producer at Crystal Dynamics had this to say, "Cole Train is basically like every other effin' black character in a video game. Like here comes the urban stereotype. Where is this 1990's — not even 2000 — black slang, where does this fit in this futuristic world that doesn't even take place on Earth? They go really far to do a lot of fictional justifications for this culture that they've built, and they go right back to this urban stereotype for the black character. I'm not knocking Epic; the game was fun and gorgeous. But it's just a lack of thought, right? All it does is reinforce dumb stereotypes and it sort of reinforces casual racism". (Ashcraft, 2008). Lastly Balrog, like some other black males appearing in the Street Fighter Series, (Dudley and Dee Jay) is a boxer, mean and aggressive looking. Examining his appearance, what is not seen, his back story. The story reveals his past, being a championship boxer that was banned from the sport for permanently injuring his opponents and using illegal maneuvers.

The impact that needs to eventually be addressed is, these characters could have any other back story or have been displayed in any other form. They could be modeled after numerous professions other than athletes, looking or speaking aggressively. In a previous chapter, it was mentioned there are other many prominent black males could be explored when displaying the black male image, Muhammad Ali, Benjamin O. Davis Jr., Dr. Ronald McNair, and countless others. The issue which should be addressed by industry professionals is, if they have the right to form black males how they see fit within the game context, why not form their characters with back stories of more prominent black males, instead of the stereotypical black males that are used now. Although this appears not to be a priority, it is one that is spoken of behind closed doors, small gatherings, and side conversations

Finally, during these observations it shows there were more black males in video games in 2008 for the Xbox 360 81.3 %, (61 HBMCs) than there were in 2002 18.6 %, (14 HBMCs) the full year of games after the birth of Xbox. A suggested idea to expand on this study, would be to observe compare and contrast other consoles or even PC games that could be ran through the same series of coding. Another thought would be to increase the sample size by increasing the range of the years to be examined by the Xbox franchise from 2001 to the present year. For future research what can be observed is more in depth connection between either television and video games, movies and video games, or all three. The overall sample did show black males were underrepresented and the majority of black males in this study did not identify with the stereotypical black male. What would be interesting to explore would be what other groups of people opinions are

about the black male image with out knowing the results of this study, and then revealing

what was found, to see if their opinion changes.

34 instances breakdown

21 games were reported that there were "no screenshots"

6 games were reported that the "screenshots not working

2 games were report that there were "no screenshots available"

1 game that was reported as sports game, there were "no screenshots out side of the sport"

2 games were reported that they were "missing screenshots"

2 games were reported at PSGs, were "all on field shots"

Dee Jay- Originally was to display as being buff and mean and is a Kickboxer (http://www.capcom-unity.com/kramez/blog/2009/10/02/the_origin_of_dee_jay_straight_from_creator_james_goddard)

Dudley- Originally is British and came from a wealthy family

Tables

Table1
Results

Genre	# of Games	# of Games w/HMC	# of Games w/HMBC	% of games that have an HMC which include an HBMC
Xbox Live Arcade	60	17	2	.117
Sports	45	11	4	.363
Action/Adventure	33	25	18	.72
Action	24	14	6	.42
First Person Shooter	19	16	8	.5
Race/Driving	17	8	5	.625
Action/Shooter	12	10	3	.3
RPG	12	12	1	.083
Music/Dance	9	8	4	.5
Fighting	6	6	1	.16
Extreme Sports	5	5	0	
Action/RPG	5	5	0	
Adventure	5	3	0	
Real Time Strategy	5	3	1	.333
Shooter	4	3	1	.333
Survival/Horror	4	4	2	.5
*Wrestling	3	3	0	

Table 1 Con't				
Platformer	3	0	0	
Compilations	2	1	0	
Action/Strategy	2	1	0	
Action/Stealth	2	2	0	
Party	2	1	1	1.0
**Family	1	0	0	
Combat Racing	1	1	1	1.0
Card/Casino	1	1	0	
Strategy	1	1	0	
Puzzle	1	0	0	
Flying	1	0	0	
TBA	0	0	0	
Space Sim	0	0	0	
Simulation	0	0	0	
Other	0	0	0	
MMO	0	0	0	
FPS/Space Sim	0	0	0	
Total	285	160	39	.243

*All games are OSGs   **No Screenshots

Table 2
Results by Year

	# of Games	# of Games/HMC	# of Games/HMBC	% of games that have an HMC which include an HBMC
2002	70	37	7	.18
2008	215	121	34	.28
Overall	285	158	41	.46

Table 3
Skin Color

	Very Dark/Dark	Very Light/Light	In Between
# of HBMCs	40	6	29
% of HBMCs	53.3	8	38.6

Table 4
Clothing

Amount of Clothing	Fully clothed	Minimal clothing (possible PG)	Partially clothed	Other
# of HBMCs	63	2	10	0
% of HBMCs	84	2	13.3	0

Kind of Clothing	Street Clothes	Sports Attire	Uniform	Fantasy Costume
# of HBMCs	60	1	12	2
% of HBMCs	80	1	16	2

Style of Dress	Well dressed	Baggy, appearing loose, oversized	Sagging
# of HBMCs	58	17	0
% of HBMCs	77.3	22.6	0

Table 5
Appearance

Muscles	Unnaturally muscular	Normal human muscles	Appears Noticeably weak
# of HBMCs	3	71	1
% of HBMCs	4	95	1

Weight	Obese	Overweight	About average	Thin
# of HBMCs	0	0	73	2
% of HBMCs	0	0	98	2

Body Markings	Tattoo(s)	Piercing	Both	None
# of HBMCs	5	0	4	66
% of HBMCs	6	0	6	88

Table 6
Accessories

	Jewelry Yes/No	Technology Yes/No	Weapons/ Armor Yes/No
# of HBMCs	56/19	74/1	42/33
% of HBMCs	75/25	99/1	56/44

Table 7
Headwear

Headwear	Hat/Type of Headressin	Du-rag	Scarf or bandana	None
# of HBMCs	16	0	2	57
% of HBMCs	21	0	3	76

Table 8
Wealth

	Seems Rich	Average	Seems Poor
# of HBMCs	8	7	60
% of HBMCs	10	10	80

Table 9
Occupation

	Government or Agency	Athlete	Fighter (not professional)	Former Athlete	Criminal	Other	Can Not Describe
# of HBMC	16	2	2	0	5	10	40
% of HBMC	21	3	3	0	7	13	53

Table 10
Demeanor

Facial Recognition	Mostly Hostile	Mostly Friendly	Neither Hostile nor Friendly
# of HBMCs	13	9	53
% of HBMCs	17	12	71

Physical Appearance	Aggression	Pleasantness	No Emotion	Can Not Describe
# of HBMCs	35	9	16	15
% of HBMCs	47	12	21	20

APPENDIX 1

Coding Scheme

Level 1

Segment variable

Genre of Video Games (http://games.teamxbox.com/index/general/by-genre/7/)
1. Action
2. Adventure
3. Card/Casino
4. Combat Racing
5. Compilations
6. Extreme Sports
7. Family
8. Fighting
9. First Person Shooter
10. Flying
11. FPS/ Space Sim
12. MMO
13. Music/Dance
14. Other
15. Party
16. Platformer
17. Puzzle
18. Race/ Driving
19. Real Time Strategy
20. RPG
21. Shooter
22. Simulation
23. Space Sim
24. Sports
25. Strategy
26. Survival/Horror
27. TBA
28. Wrestling
29. Xbox Live Arcade
30. Action/Stealth
31. Action/Adventure
32. Action/Shooter
33. Action/Strategy
34. Action/RPG

OSG (official sporting game): Sports games that take on the official league name, NBA, NFL, NHL, NCAA, FIFA etc. ie, NBA 2k6. Also for sports games that may not use official league name, but uses official league teams, ie All Star Baseball.

PGS does not get coded further at all.

Content of games

Contains Humanoid Male Characters 1) Yes 2) No

Black male character will be identified as such. **Black or African American.** A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as "Haitian" or "Negro" can be used in addition to "Black or African American." (U.S Census, 1997).

The name: If the character has a nlame, and can NOT be identified as foreign.

Based upon atmosphere of the game: If the male figure in question is NOT based in another cultural surrounding or area, i.e Latin neighbor hood, or middle Eastern territory

Humanoid Black Male Characters 1) Yes 2) No

If Yes, How many (Code each)

Move To Level 2 Coding 1) Yes 2) No

Character variables:

1. **Character**: defined as a human, animal, or object within a video game that displayed human-like appearance or qualities such as speaking, using tools, or making conscious decisions. (Beasley & Standley, 2002) Only Characters that are Human or appear to be Human

Type of character:

Revelation: A character's true type may be concealed or may change, and the true type is revealed during the segment. Code the true type.

a. Human: A homosapien with no supernatural features.
b. Supernatural creature: A non-human that exceeds biological limits and/or possesses supernatural powers.
c. Robot: An electro-mechanical or bio-mechanical device or group of devices that can perform autonomous or preprogrammed tasks.

d. Other.

2. Role of character (Downs, E., 2004)

      a. Player Controlled (Always-control primary character): Those that a video game player actively manipulates and controls onscreen all the time.

      b. Non Player Controlled characters are those that are immediately tied to or related to the primary character by either aiding or deterring the primary character from fulfilling their quest, while are controlled by the game itself.

      c. Unsure: characters are those that can be identified as Player Controlled or Non Player Controlled based upon the images.

Level 2

Segment variable

Game Name

Game Genre: Based upon list provided.

CHARACTER variables:
Character: defined as a human, animal, or object within a video game that displayed human-like appearance or qualities such as speaking, using tools, or making conscious decisions. (Beasley & Standley, 2002) Only Characters that are Human or appear to be Human

Type of character:

      Revelation: A character's true type may be concealed or may change, and the true type is revealed during the segment. Code the true type.

1. Human: A homosapien with no supernatural features.
2. Supernatural creature: A non-human that exceeds biological limits and/or possesses supernatural powers.
3. Robot: An electro-mechanical or bio-mechanical device or group of devices that can perform autonomous or preprogrammed tasks.

4. Other.

Role of character (Downs, E., 2004)

1. Player-Controlled character (Always-control primary character: Those that a video game player actively manipulates and controls onscreen all the time.)

2. NPC (Sometimes-control primary character: Those that a video game player actively manipulates and controls onscreen part of the time; and the other the control switches to other characters.)

3. Unsure

Skin Color:

1. Very Dark/Dark

2. Very Light/Light

3. In Between

CLOTHING variable (Downs, 2004)(Wickham,2007)
Any garment that is worn in order to enhance, exaggerate, call attention, that may bring negative judgment or appearing of inappropriateness

Amount of Clothing

1. Fully clothed

2. Minimal clothing (possible PG)

3. Partially clothed

4. Other

Kind of Clothing

1. Street Clothes (style of dress you might see on the street)

2. Sports Attire (uniform/clothing appropriate for sports, such as race driver, football, wrestler)

3. Uniform (army, chef, nurse, etc.)

4. Fantasy Costume (such as cave man, superhero, wizard or alien)

Style of Dress

1. Well dressed (pants not sagging or low, shirt appears to be clean, neat, or tucked in pants, suited or business casual)

2. Baggy, appearing loose, oversized

3. Sagging

APPEARANCE
Based upon the look of the character.

Muscles

1. Unnaturally muscular
2. Normal human muscles
3. Appears Noticeably weak

Weight

1. Obese
2. Overweight
3. About average
4. Thin

Body Markings

1. Tattoo(s)
2. Piercing (other than ordinary ear piercing, ie, nose, lip, eye, etc)
3. Both
4. None

HAIR

Hair Length

1. Bald
2. Short (no longer than bottom of the ears)
3. Medium (Below the ears, but up to shoulder length)
4. Long (below the shoulders)

Hair Curl
1. Curly
2. Straight
3. Wavy
4. Neither

Hair Style

1. Dreadlocks
2. Braids
3. Ordinary
4. Afro appearance
5. Mohawk

Hair Grooming

1. Well Groomed
2. Ungroom/Wild

ACCESSORIES

1. Jewelry

2. Technological Communications

3. Weapon/Armor (if appears to be holding, wearing, or using a weapon. If appears to have on some sort of armor or addition protection)

Headwear

1. Hat/Type of Headressin

2. Du-rag

3. Scarf or bandana

4. None

Wealth.. Based upon appearance, stance, apparent setting

1. Seems Rich

2. Average

3. Seems Poor

OCCUPATION

Based upon character back story and possible appearance

Government or Agency

Athlete

Fighter (not professional)

Former Athlete

Criminal

Other (Hero, Villian, general work, student, laborer etc.)

Can Not Describe

DEMEANOR

Based upon face recognition and physical stance or pose,

Facial Recognition

Much aggression can be shown in the face, from disapproving frowns and pursed lips to sneers and full snarls. The eyes can be used to stare and hold the gaze for long period. They may also squint, preventing the other person seeing where you are looking. (Straker, 2008) Does the character's facial appearance seem to convey

1. Mostly Hostile

2. Mostly Friendly

3. Neither Hostile nor Friendly

Physical Appearance

When somebody is about to attack, they give visual signal such as clenching of fists ready to strike and lowering and spreading of the body for stability. They are also likely to give anger signs such as redness of the face. Exposing oneself to attack is also a form of aggression. It is saying 'Go on - I dare you. I will still win.' It can include not looking at the other person, crotch displays, relaxing the body, turning away and so on. (Straker,2008). Does the character's physical demeanor and body posture seem to convey

1. Aggression

2. Pleasantness

3. No Emotion

4. Can Not Describe

APPENDIX 2

Genre List

Action

Adventure

Card/Casino
Combat Racing
Compilations
Extreme Sports
Family
Fighting
First Person Shooter
Flying
FPS/ Space Sim
MMO
Music/Dance
Other
Party
Platformer
Puzzle
Race/ Driving
Real Time Strategy
RPG
Shooter
Simulation
Space Sim
Sports
Strategy
Survival/Horror
TBA
Wrestling
Xbox Live Arcade
Action/Stealth
Action/Adventure
Action/Shooter
Action/Strategy
Action/RPG

APPENDIX 3

Genres Not Represented with HBMC

TBA
Space Sim
Simulation
Other
MMO
FPS/Space Sim

FIGURE 1

Barret,

Final Fantasy 7

SQUARE ENIX.

FIGURE 2

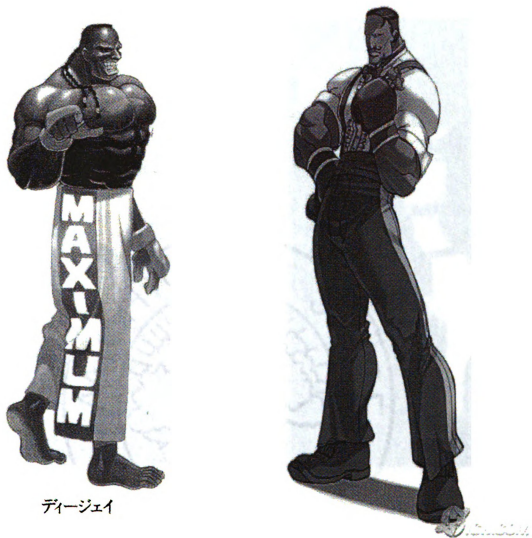

Balrog

Street Fighter 2 / Street Fighter 4

FIGURE 3

ディージェイ

Street Fighter Characters

Dee Jay \ Dudley

CAPCOM®

46

FIGURE 4

Cole Train

Gears of War 1 & 2

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