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الهيئة الدولية للتسامح

**Building Bridges of Tolerance Through Friday Prayer:
Religious Tolerance and the Acceptance of Each Other.**

**A paper written for the
Tolerance Across Cultures Conference**

*September 12-14 2019
Bucharest, Romania*

Written by Dr Sandra Phelps and Ambassador Hussain Sinjari

Abstract 3-7000 words

This paper explores the ways in which Friday sermons can be harnessed to fight religious extremism and build bridges of tolerance across divergent communities. The authors contend that religious extremism cannot be successfully challenged by warfare. There must be a coordinated, multisectoral approach emerging from many directions and addressing a multiplicity of social spaces; religious, cultural, educational, economic and political. In addition, the Internet, must be harnessed to address and counter the current proliferation of hate speech and wide dissemination of Fatwas determining halal and haram around the globe.

The authors of this paper posit that above all, the mosques and the clergymen are critical sites through which bridges of tolerance and anti-extremism can emerge. In Islamic communities, the Friday sermon is at the forefront of setting community awareness. There are millions of mosques in the Muslim world and beyond, and not a small number of Imams and Khatibs. Imams and Khatibs can be supported to not merely deliver their sermons and stop there. They can be provided with the

requisite skills and tools to guide the faithful in building bridges of peace through sharing positive examples of spiritual matters, in both real and virtual spaces. Through offering education in the sciences, world religions, critical thinking, conflict resolution and human rights, Imams and Khatibs can serve at the forefront of building a culture of tolerance.

Introduction

Middle Eastern and North African communities have struggled over recent decades to achieve tolerance across cultures and acceptance of each other's differences as well as to ensure stability and peace within and between nations. The failure of countries in this region to achieve sustainable peace and the concurrent interference of western nations have resulted in instability and wide spread violence. This paper looks at the problem of violent extremism and specifically violent religious extremism. The authors argue that contemporary struggles against violent extremism must engage religious leaders at the forefront of efforts to overcome these problems. Moreover, we posit that it is critical that national and international governing bodies provide support for

religious leaders to ensure that they are adequately prepared to engage in these struggles.

Problems of religious intolerance and the rise in violent extremism are a foremost concern in our world today. Increasingly we are seeing media portrayals of violence in the name of religion. From New Zealand to Sri Lanka and to Libya outbursts of violence in the name of religion are claiming the lives of many. Through news media and the internet these killings are watched from one end of the world to the other. The breaking down of barriers in communication between people and cultures, made possible by advances in communication technologies and travel, and the simultaneous rise in nationalist and religious ideologies of exclusion and hatred, have set the stage for a global viewing of religious intolerance and violent extremism. As we move into the future we are faced with increasing fears of difference and seemingly less bridges to unite us. Both real, and imaginary, walls are erected by politicians and communities and by extremists and terrorists. At the same time bridges uniting people are blocked or destroyed. Through advances in technology we

are all watching and responding as the worst acts of humanity are being carried out in the name of religion. While the role of religion as a driver of violent extremism is recognised the role of religion in struggles against violent extremism is given less attention.

The importance of unpacking terms such as 'violent extremism', 'violence' and 'tolerance' is acknowledged, however these tasks are not the focus here. Here we are concerned with discussing the problems of intolerance and the possibilities of building bridges that unite people. We focus on cultures in conflict, plans to address these conflicts and the feasibility of these plans. Concepts of tolerance have evolved over the centuries in line with changing global demographics, colonisation and migration. Here we accept a positive and active view of tolerance which accepts difference and seeks commonalities and shared values across cultures. It is accepted here that tolerance is a step that conflicting parties enter into and a step through which the parties must progress to achieve mutual respect and acceptance of each other. Sustainable peace requires mutual respect and the acceptance of each other's' right to be.

Violent Extremism

Current expressions of violent extremism and the rise in expressions of nationalist and religious divisions are evident in Europe's pockets of radicalised youth, the intolerance of groups such as the "Islamic State" and Boko Haram, the religious and racist hatred expressed by the Hilltop youth of Israel, the Buddhist Military violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar, the religious based attacks and retributions in Europe over the past years and in attacks such as those which took place in Sri Lanka and New Zealand earlier this year. Violent extremism is an increasing concern in all corners of the world and is indeed a global problem. Intolerance is expressed in religious conflict, anti-Semitic accusations such as those blaming the Jews for the mosque attacks in New Zealand and the death of Mohammad Morsi or those hateful narratives depicting Jews as the recalcitrant other, the persistent violent chauvinism towards the Kurds and other minorities by the Arabs, Persians and Turks, the nationalist uprising in Virginia USA, and the widespread intolerance expressed in islamophobia, homophobia and misogyny, to name

just a few examples. Tensions between local and global communities which have been concerns for many decades are finding new places for expression through religious intolerance and violent extremism.

Commonly the boundaries of violent extremism are depicted in media images of terrorists, and increasingly Islamic terrorists, or in the portrayal of the polarised opposite, ethno-nationalists, white supremacist or, so called Islamophobics. There is an abundance of different and often times competing definitions of violent extremism, such as terrorists, nationalist, racists, anti-migrationists and so on. This paper looks specifically at current narratives of violent extremism as experienced in Islamic communities and through articulations of politicised Islam. However, that violent extremism exists in most religions and certainly in all the Abrahamic religions is acknowledged.

Responses to extremist ideologies and actions generally include moral outrage quickly followed by acts of counter violence. Violent responses have been in the form of foreign invasions, occupations and incursions as witnessed in Afghanistan, Iraq

and Syria (to name just three recent examples) and in internal ethnic and religious conflicts which in recent years have torn countries, neighbourhoods and even families apart. These political, legal, territorial and international responses to acts of violent extremism offer limited possibilities to address such acts. Such problems cannot be adequately addressed in isolation from community based initiatives. There are many reasons why people succumb to the pressures of radicalisation. Therefore, overcoming radicalisation requires a multidimensional approach. Most often, violence has been fought with violence, with the repressive state apparatus of the military and with political restrictions and laws which curtail the movement of, and meetings between, citizens. However, these methods have not been successful in eradicating violent extremism and news media report that extremism is on the rise. A concerted, multisectoral, holistic approach to addressing violent extremism in a thorough and systematic way is necessary. Countering violent extremism requires that both state and community actors take a united and determined approach towards building cultures of tolerance and acceptance.

There must be an approach emerging from many directions, such as schools and universities, mosques, prisons, political and governing bodies and the media. These must address a multiplicity of social spaces; religious, cultural, educational, economic and political.

Over recent years, attempts at countering violent extremism from both national and international bodies have favoured one group and/or one single method over the other. Often times these reductive attempts serve to further ignite tensions through elevating differences, erecting walls and engaging narrow and limited approaches at promoting tolerance and peace between conflicting groups. Many such attempts have resulted in short interludes of peace on the stage of enduring conflict. For instance, towards the end of the first decade of this century it seemed to most that stability had finally come to Iraq. People were returning to their homes and jobs in the conflict torn parts of the country and there was hope for the future. However this hope was short-lived and soon replaced by the terror of violent attacks suffered by the Iraqi people and in particular the Ezidis of

Sinjar, the massacres carried out by the group calling themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. National and international attempts to eradicate these threats through military force had failed.

Sustainable peace requires much more than oppressive military and foreign responses to violence. Sustainable peace that builds lasting bridges of tolerance and acceptance must be informed by people from local communities who are directly affected by the conflict and must include support of a system of justice for all citizens. This does not occlude international engagement in building bridges of tolerance and peace. But rather, this approach ensures that national and international efforts to eradicate violent extremism are more able to be absorbed locally, are locally driven and have better chances of success.

Internet and digital extremism

An increasing number of religious extremists including Jihadists and fanatics, are using social media and other digital means to spread their calls for violence. As evidenced in the sudden and wide spread coverage of Al

Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Nusra Front, and other such radicalising groups as well as in the recruitment successes of the so called Islamic State, global media platforms have been central in attracting an audience and support for violent extremism and political religious radicalisation. The use of social media and the internet have proven invaluable in spreading extremist ideologies, recruiting supporters and inciting violence. In addition, these media platforms provide the space for radicalisation, indoctrination, misinformation and the spreading of divisive hate speech. Anything from how to make an explosive device to fatwas on fashion and music are disseminated to millions of people through these medium every day.

Similarly, attempts to build bridges of tolerance and acceptance across cultures can engage these media to disseminate their messages and strengthen the call for tolerance and acceptance. The media provides tools, spaces and possibilities to overcome violent extremism. In today's world the media shapes our knowledge and understanding of the world and is an essential tool for building bridges of

tolerance in efforts to counter conflict. Rather than fuelling the fires of violence the media and more specifically the internet and social media can be utilised to build bridges of tolerance, acceptance and peace. The media can be engaged to spread messages of shared humanity, to bring into question radicalised notions of religion and to disseminate religious messages that are relevant to contemporary life, contemporary troubles and to a future informed through the advances made through the enlightenment and scientific study as well as the human quest for peace and happiness.

Efforts to Counter Extremism

For the most part political leaders have failed to overcome threats of violent extremism. Significant investment has been put into security which is high, however the threat of terrorist violence looms, airport checks are arduous, cars are armoured, public places and places of worship are deemed unsafe and meetings are monitored, yet attacks continue to go undetected and to cause carnage all over our world. From the streets of Nice and London, to Mosques in Baghdad and Christchurch and to the churches of Egypt and Sri Lanka

violent extremism marks its presence on the bodies it takes.

Combating violent extremism has recently become a focus for both international and national governing bodies. For instance, substantive attention is paid to mitigating security risks through monitoring the internet and tightening security procedures at events and airports. International organisations and governments have developed programs aimed at identifying risk factors and preventing extremism as well as supporting at risk groups. Youth in particular have been targeted for these initiatives as they are considered to be a significant at risk group. Understanding how religious factors are engaged to shape violent extremism can help inform the design of counter extremism interventions that engage the religious sector. It is generally agreed vital to include religious groups and figures as supporters of these initiatives. However, these are not commonly focused on developing the capacity of religious groups or religious leaders themselves. The leaders are somehow expected to have all the expertise required to consult adequately on such matters.

There are a few notable exceptions. In Tajikistan the government has supported media professionals to develop the capacity of Imams and Khatibs. These trainings were conducted under the *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (IWRP) project “Stability in Central Asia via Open Dialogue”. IWRP Tajikistan trained 71 Imam-khatibs in the cities of Tursunzoda, Khujand and Konibodom. Imam-khatibs from border districts, representatives of local authorities; the Committee of Religion, Regulation of Traditions, Celebrations and Ceremonies under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan; and the Centre for Islamic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan participated in the trainings. The educational seminars were aimed to improve participants’ media literacy, knowledge of the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan in the sphere of religious freedom and anti-extremism, as well as at raising the awareness about the modern methods of countering violent extremism. Another objective of these events was to involve religious leaders in the promotion of the tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

The second exception is in Morocco where it is recognised by governing

institutions that despite the existing level of capacity and knowledge, religious leaders face challenges in countering the growth of dangerous ideologies and the promotion of interfaith tolerance. The Ministry of Awqaf (religion) in Morocco has strategies and initiatives directly supporting Imams in developing their understanding of the modern world, cultural difference and global popular culture. The government provides university courses for Imams so that they are better equipped to meet the challenges of contemporary international life.

Religious leaders have long had influence over local communities and in many places they continue to be the most influential civil society actors. Religious leaders do not simply transmit religious knowledge, they also act as confidants and mentors offering support and advice to the faithful and those in need. Subsequently, these figures have an important role to play in overcoming conflicts and violence. Like other community leaders, religious leaders too are concerned about the rise in extremism and specifically politicised religious extremism propagated over the internet.

Imams, Building Bridges of Tolerance

As previously mentioned religious figures such as Imams are highly respected by their faithful followers. They are influential community members and are uniquely positioned to support initiatives aimed at building interfaith communication and building bridges of tolerance across cultures. However, like their fellow citizens, many of these Imams and Khatibs have been negatively affected by war, sanctions and the general instability of the countries they live. For many the commitment to acquiring religious knowledge alone has proven challenging enough in these circumstances. The possibilities to also develop knowledge and skills through education in the social sciences, the humanities, languages and technology skills have been extremely limited. Subsequently, in countries most effected by conflict and intolerance, religious leaders such as Mullahs, Imams and Khatibs require substantive support. These leaders are critically important in national and international efforts to build tolerant communities and to combat violent extremism. However, like their fellow

citizens they have suffered the limits on education and development paucity as a consequence of instability.

National and international initiatives are needed to support the knowledge and skill development of these important cultural and religious representatives so that they are better equipped to work with communities. Building on the Tajikistan and Moroccan examples above, governments, investors, philanthropists and international aid organisations can develop programs aimed at upskilling religious leaders and providing them with the requisite talents to lead their communities through these challenging times. With the right knowledge and skills religious leaders can be engaged as consultants in the design and implementation of counter extremism programs and in return enhance the impact and sustainability of such initiatives. Given the right support religious leaders can be at the front line in the fight against extremism and in local, community, national and international efforts to build bridges of tolerance across cultures.

Local governments can support these initiatives through taking care to provide religious leaders with support

and educational opportunities so that they can take the time to study. With skills in media, reporting and social media, messages of tolerance and peace can be widely disseminated to the faithful and beyond. Counter narratives to hate speech can be developed by, and through, the respected leaders in local and international communities. Corrections to false reporting and misinterpretation of religious text can help followers to walk the paths of tolerance and acceptance. Through offering education in the sciences, critical thinking, conflict resolution and human rights, Imams and Khatibs can serve at the forefront of building cultures of cross cultural tolerance. Religious leaders in the diaspora can be encouraged to learn the languages of their homelands so that communication opportunities are not missed but rather are harnessed in the interest of tolerance. Messages of tolerance can be disseminated across news and social media in all the languages of the faithful to reach all the people. Carefully designed and approved investment in skill development for these religious figures is an investment in building sustainable peace.

Religious leaders such as Imams and Khatibs can be supported to not merely deliver their sermons and stop there. They can be provided with the requisite skills and tools to guide the faithful in building bridges of peace through sharing positive examples of spiritual matters, in both real and virtual spaces. In addition, given that the communities they serve are healing from the wounds of war and often times continue to face violence or are immersed within cultures of violence and instability, religious leaders can support communities towards peace and stability. For example as a consequence of the emergence of ISIS, and the ensuing violence, there are now a great number of prisoners in the prisons of effected countries. Many of these prisoners have been arrested after outbreaks of violence in cities such as Mosul, Raqqa and Aleppo. As many violent extremists have 'graduated' in prisons and many Dai'sh and Al Qaida leaders and Jihadists have been recruited in such prisons, these are places that urgently require support from religious mentors. However, the challenges of countering radicalism and extremism are intense. Religious leaders must have the skills to de-radicalise such extremists and to provide these people

with adequate care as well as alternative visions of the future.

Programs that support education and skill building in the areas of peace, conflict resolution, ideas of tolerance and good governance, critical thinking and open dialogue, science and technology, and human rights can prepare leaders with the skills to face the difficult and many challenges of violent extremism. With these skills religious leaders will be better positioned to lead initiatives countering violence and hatred. Local governments can provide a system of reward whereby religious leaders who produce positive initiatives for communities are supported to continue their work until all cultures are connected by bridges of tolerance.

Imams, Friday Sermons and Bridges of Tolerance

One space deemed most at risk of physical attack by violent extremists is the place of worship, whether that be the church in Alexandria Egypt or the mosque in Baghdad, Iraq, the place of worship has persistently attracted acts of violence over recent years. Moreover, as previously mentioned, places of worship have increasingly become sites for radicalisation, recruitment of

followers of violent extremism and the incitement to acts of violence.

A European example of this is the case of the An’Nur mosque preacher who was convicted for inciting hate in his Friday sermon in Winterthur, Switzerland. During his sermon the Imam called for Muslims that don’t pray within the community to be “banned, rejected, shunned, and slandered until they return”. If this doesn’t work, they should be killed, he reportedly said. The mosque which has now been shut down is just one of many in Europe suspected of radicalising youth.

A North American example is that of invited cleric Jordanian Sheikh Muhammad bin Musa Al Nasr whose speech at a Montreal mosque resulted in complaints and rebukes from the larger Muslim community. The sermon took place at the Dar Al-Arqam Mosque in 2016. A video of the sermon in which he asks for Jews to be killed surfaced online. In the video, the imam recites in Arabic the verse: “O Muslim, O servant of Allah, O Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”

Similarly Friday sermons inciting violence through hate speech and

promoting radicalism are heard in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. At mosques all over the world hate speech inciting worshippers to violence can be heard during Friday sermons. Sadly, these hateful sermons have resulted in the killings of many people. Hate speech and incitement to violence and radicalisation are certainly not the norm in mosques around the world. The vast majority of Muslim preachers and believers oppose such violence and the ignorance that promotes it. However, there is a noted rise in hate speech globally and it is recognised that the mosque has become a potential site for radicalisation, for the dissemination of extremist ideology as well as a site that risks violent attack. Likewise, Christian preachers are guilty of both inciting and condoning acts of violence against non-believers and people of different faiths. That the leaders of most religions of the world engage in these acts of incitement to violence is acknowledged, however this paper specifically concerns the leaders of the Muslim faith in Muslim dominated regions of the world. This does not exclude other religious leaders from either the blame or the benefits discussed here. Indeed initiatives supporting interfaith dialogue and collaboration in building cultures

of tolerance and acceptance and in countering violent extremism across the globe are necessary for sustainable cultures of tolerance.

How can Friday sermons be harnessed to fight religious extremism and build bridges of tolerance across divergent communities? Recognising the invaluable space of the Friday sermon and supporting the influencing role of the Imam and Khatib is a first step in thinking about ways that governments and civil society can work together towards creating a more peaceful world. How can the place of the Friday sermon provide a constructive platform whereby a sense of responsibility towards each other can be strengthened? The mosque provides the space to foster ideas of tolerance and to build common narratives of coexistence and peace. In the mosque during the Friday sermon the Imams and Khatibs have the invaluable occasion to lead the faithful away from notions of intolerance and violence.

In summary

The peaceful coexistence of various religions and cultures is currently seriously threatened by polarising ideas

of cultural and religious difference. Local and international governments and civil societies must work together to address religious and cultural conflicts and violent extremism. They must work together to foster cultures of tolerance and acceptance. The intention of this paper is to discuss the important role of religious leaders in countering violent extremism and in building bridges of tolerance between different religions and cultures. Moreover, the intention here is to think about possible ways in which religious leaders can utilise the space of the Friday sermon to spread messages of tolerance and to inspire believers to build bridges of tolerance and acceptance across cultures. The aim is to gain support for religious leaders so that they can help in the struggles to counter violent extremism and to help in developing connections and bonds that unite people as more tolerant, respectful and accepting communities.

As suggested above a coordinated, multisectoral approach emerging from many directions and addressing a multiplicity of social spaces; religious, cultural, educational,

economic and political is required to fight violent extremism. Bringing

religious leaders to the centre of such coordinated approaches will broaden the impact and strengthen the success of such innovations. As community leaders, religious leaders have unique influence over communities and are uniquely situated to encourage interfaith dialogue and practices of cultural tolerance. These leaders can support followers to learn about other religions and to respect the rights of other religions to exist. They can ensure that followers have a well-founded knowledge of their own religion as well as those of others.

They can also support followers to understand the rights of people to be free to choose their faith or alternatively to choose no faith. Religious leaders can influence followers to respect the rights of women and children and to encourage women to participate in religious leadership and discussions. Religious leaders are integral members of civil society and key contributors to public and political discourse. Problems of intolerance and extremism cannot be adequately addressed through the coercive power of the state. Violence is a problem and religion can be at the forefront of countering violence and respecting the rights of all human beings.

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**Communication Across Borders and Cultures: Impact of Race and Gender
Stereotypes in Video Games on Players**

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Communication Across Borders and Cultures: Impact of Race and Gender Stereotypes in Video Games on Players.

Abstract

Potential effects of video games on players are receiving growing attention. This paper examines the way minority groups and women are portrayed in video games and the impact of those portrayals on the mind and cognition of gamers. Traditionally, minority groups and women are represented in terms of negative stereotypes and have a set role within a game. For example, Black people are generally portrayed as more violent than white characters, Asian characters are stereotypical martial artists while the women are hypersexualised and subservient. Gamers who are presented with these images have unreal, made-up beauty and moral rules, are typically less tolerant to the members of minority groups and tend to see women as subservient. However, changing the way that these characters are portrayed in video games could lead to breaking the stereotypes and the impact they have on gamers. As the review of the recent research suggests, the negative

stereotypical representation of gender and minority group shows some signs of the improvement, with more strong female and minority group representative acting as protagonists.

Keyword: video games, race, gender, communication, stereotype, Games are good at objectification; stories are good at empathy.

Koster, 2013

Introduction

Video games have been around since the middle of the 20th century, in various forms. Originally, they were thought to be played mostly by teen males. This perception has changed, however, as technology changes. People of all ages are playing games, in fact, the average age of the video game player today is 33 (Dickerman, Christensen, & Kerl-McClain, 2008). Video Games have become so widespread and pervasive that they have become a significant force in the business and entertainment world. The DigiCapital's forecasts that the global video games market, which includes hardware, software, peripherals and components across the world, could reach as high as \$170

billion in 2018. The World of Warcraft franchise (1994 -present) has reportedly earned more than \$10 billion for its developer, Blizzard Entertainment. The open world game Grand Theft Auto V made \$800 million in sales on the first day of its availability (Brightman, 2013).

There are more than 2 billion video game players worldwide playing approximately three billion hours weekly (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith, Tosca, & Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2015). An average youngster spends 10,000 hours playing by the age of 21 (McGonigal, 2011). Of the most frequent gamers, 75% believe playing video games provide mental stimulation or education. 68% of parents say video games are a positive part of their child's life. Moreover, 61% per cent of surveyed CEOs, CFOs and other senior executives say they take daily game breaks at work (McGonigal, 2011).

Stories about

somebody dying from dehydration playing for 50+ hours nonstop;

somebody marrying Nintendo DS character;

somebody making a fortune playing Call of Duty;

21-years old getting a job as a football manager after playing Football Manager;

a skill from World of Warcraft saving the lives of a child and his grandmother,

hit the headlines all over the world making an audience wonder about the world of video games. Thus, nowadays, real-life experience blends with virtual experience, and virtual experiences contribute to the way we live, we act, we think and understand our real-lives.

There are a large variety of genres and styles of video games. They range from casual, single-player games to multi-player games with thousands of players. They also vary in content. Some games are violent enough that in 1993, the US government began to rate games based on their level of violence (Kondrat, 2015).

Even though that such a wide variety of people are playing video games, the games continue to stereotype minority groups and women negatively. Till very recent little discussion has taken place in understanding their appeal and impact.

However, there is growing attention to this topic from the academic world.

Stereotyping against women and minority groups in video games

Even though a continually widening audience is playing video games nowadays, the games continue to stereotype minority groups and women.

In 2001, the children's advocacy group Children Now conducted a content analysis of a sample of 70 top-selling video games of that year. The findings of the study revealed that video games often, ignored women and people of colour, and reinforced racial and gender stereotypes.

- Female characters are underrepresented in video games, 16% of all characters, and are pops or bystanders (50%), more likely to scream and wear revealing clothes;

- Male and female character roles and behaviours are stereotyped, with male portrayed as competitors (47%) engaged in physical aggression.

- The majority of the video game population is white characters.

- No Latina characters or Native American male characters in any of the games;

- Nearly all heroes are white while African Americans and Latinos are typically athletes and Asian or Pacific Islanders with a role of wrestlers or fighters, and are often computer-controlled antagonists (Glaubke, Christina R., Miller, Patti, Parker, McCrae A., Espejo, 2001)

Thirteen years later not much has changed. Behm-Morawitz & Ta, (2014) second-order cultivation effects from video game play and provides a significant contribution to our understanding of how virtual representations of race and ethnicity may impact real-world racial and ethnic beliefs. This research used a survey design to assess the relationship between White college students' frequency of video game play and attitudes toward Blacks and Asians. Results suggest that video game play cultivates real-world beliefs about Blacks, such that individuals who spend more time playing video games have less egalitarian views of Blacks. Interracial contact was explored as a moderator but had no influence on the relationship

between game play and stereotyping. Results are discussed from a cultivation theory as well as a social identity theory perspective.”,”author”:[{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Behm-Morawitz”,“given”：“Elizabet”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”}],{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Ta”,“given”：“David”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”}],“container-title”：“Howard Journal of Communications”,“id”：“ITEM-1”,“issue”：“1”,“issued”：{“date-parts”：[[“2014”,“1”,“20”]]},“page”：“1-15”,“publisher”：“Taylor & Francis Group”,“title”：“Cultivating Virtual Stereotypes?: The Impact of Video Game Play on Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes”,“type”：“article-journal”,“volume”：“25”},“uris”：[“http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=bdd057db-f301-396e-b75b-5d94aa7b25eb”]],“mendeley”：{“formattedCitation”：“(Elizabet Behm-Morawitz & Ta, 2014 examined 383 US magazine advertisements of the console, mobile, and PC video games, and revealed that marketing of video games in the USA stereotype minorities and women, including that of the White male hero, submissive sexualised

female, Asian ninja, and deviant Black male.

Women representation and their role in games

In the early 90s, Provenzo (1991) carried a content analysis of games on the Nintendo platform and revealed that of the 47 top-selling games covered, 115 males and only nine females were identified. Some years later, Dietz (1998) examined the portrayal of women in a sample of 33 popular Nintendo and Sega Genesis video games, and the analysis revealed that there were no female characters in 41% of the games with characters. Five years later, the situation hasn't improved much, Beasley & Standley (2002) analysed 47 randomly selected games from the Nintendo and 64 and Sony Play Station games and found that out of the 597 characters coded, only 82 (13.74%) were women. In the same way, Scharrer (2005) after analysing the images and text of advertisements of the top three selling video game magazines, found out that males outnumbered females, three to one, and female characters depicted as much sexier and attractive compared to their male counterparts. Robinson, Callister,

Clark, & Phillips (2009) examined the official Web sites for games promotion, and results showed that male characters outnumber female characters 3 to 1 (577 male characters to 196 female characters). Moreover, the results revealed that female characters are greatly stereotyped. EEDAR, a video game metadata research firm, released the findings that out of 669 titles with the protagonists of a specific gender, only 24 of were exclusively fronted by women (Parmar, 2013).

Kondrat (2015) concluded that the most popular ways of stereotyping females in video games is by creating female characters which are sexually provocative and are almost undressed or dressed in a seductive way. Beasley & Standley (2002) found that 70% of female characters in Mature-rated video games and 46% of female characters in Teen-rated video games were presented with abundant cleavage, 86% of female characters were dressed in clothing with low or revealing necklines versus 14% of male characters wearing clothing with low/revealing necklines, and 48% of female characters had outfits with no sleeves versus 22% of male characters. Typical outfit of female characters is

tight clothes, shorts, mini skirts and bathing suits (Robinson et al., 2009). What is more, female characters have large breasts (Beasley & Standley, 2002). Similarly, Dill & Thill (2007) conducted a content analysis of images of video game characters from top-selling American gaming magazines, and found out that female characters are more likely than male characters to be portrayed as sexualized (60% versus 1%), scantily clad (39% versus 8%) and as showing a mix of sex and aggression (39 versus 1%). In addition to this, Burgess, Dill, Stermer, Burgess, & Brown (2011)"type": "article-journal", "volume": "14"}, "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=670a53e2-46a8-34fd-95aa-a5ee0a28254b"}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Burgess, Dill, Stermer, Burgess, & Brown, 2011 reviewed over 149 games and found that female characters usually are portrayed with unreal large breasts, thin waists, and large, exposed buttocks, long legs.

In addition to that, women are shown as not very bright, and they need the male protagonist in the game to save them because they are kidnapped (Gutiérrez, 2014; Provenzo, 1991)

which is primarily or exclusively motivated by their sex, and includes both intimate partner abuse and physical or sexual assault by strangers. The aim of the present research was to investigate whether gender-based violence is depicted in the world of video games and whether video games contribute to the socialisation of young people in this regard. The methodology employed went beyond the administration of questionnaires to ascertain the perceptions of those who use video games or an analysis of the associated advertising, the habitual research strategies in this field. Rather, an analysis was conducted of the videogames themselves, examining their contents, dynamics and development, and the possibilities that they offer, etc., based on a “videographic analysis” of the variables explored. The results show that video games, which contain explicit incitements to violence, are widely available on the Internet, from the “anime”, with various subgenres such as eroge and hentai, to the famous GTA, one of the best-selling video games worldwide, which contains a clear incitement to violence in the sense defined by the Comprehensive Law against Gender-Based Violence. The

conclusion drawn from this research leads us to ask whether, as Amnesty International claims, we are in breach of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which requires States to take steps to remove such discrimination in all its manifestations.”,”author”:[{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Gutiérrez”,“given”：“Enrique Javier Díez”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”}],“container-title”：“Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences”,“id”：“ITEM-1”,“issued”：{“date-parts”：[[“2014”,“5”,“15”]]},“page”：“58-64”,“publisher”：“Elsevier”,“title”：“Video Games and Gender-based Violence”,“type”：“article-journal”,“volume”：“132”},“uris”：[[“http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=7288c112-a5be-3c9f-905a-cafb68f623b8”]],{“id”：“ITEM-2”,“itemData”：{“DOI”：“10.4159/harvard.9780674422483”,“ISBN”：“9780674422483”,“author”：[[{“dropping-particle”：“”,“family”：“Provenzo, Jr.”,“given”：“Eugene F.”,“non-dropping-particle”：“”,“parse-names”：false,“suffix”：“”}],“id”：“ITEM-2”,“issued”：{“date-parts”：[[“199

1", "1", "31"]}], "publisher": "Harvard University Press", "publisher-place": "Cambridge, MA and London, England", "title": "Video Kids", "type": "book"}, "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=e85b3eac-f0a5-342f-889b-1603190c74f4"}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Gutiérrez, 2014; Provenzo, Jr., 1991. Women usually play submissive, stereotyped gender or the marginal role of women or subject to objectification (Burgess et al., 2011; Dietz, 1998; Provenzo, 1991)MA and London, England", "title": "Video Kids", "type": "book"}, "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=e85b3eac-f0a5-342f-889b-1603190c74f4"}], {"id": "ITEM-2", "itemData": {"DOI": "10.1023/A:1018709905920", "ISSN": "03600025", "author": [{"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Dietz", "given": "Tracy L.", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], "container-title": "Sex Roles", "id": "ITEM-2", "issue": "5/6", "issued": {"date-parts": [{"1998}], "page": "425-442", "publisher": "Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers", "title": "An Examination of

Violence and Gender Role Portrayals in Video Games: Implications for Gender Socialization and Aggressive Behavior", "type": "article-journal", "volume": "38"}, "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=3d6671b4-f63b-3542-b76d-ffa9b068efe2"}], {"id": "ITEM-3", "itemData": {"DOI": "10.1080/15213269.2011.596467", "ISSN": "1521-3269", "author": [{"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Burgess", "given": "Melinda C. R.", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], {"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Dill", "given": "Karen E.", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], {"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Stermer", "given": "S. Paul", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], {"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Burgess", "given": "Stephen R.", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], {"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Brown", "given": "Brian P.", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}], "container-title": "Media Psychology", "id": "ITEM-3", "issue": "3", "issued": {"date-

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one example, the adventure of Bayou Billy (1989), the beginning of the video game shows a woman in a low-cut, red dress, this woman has large, well-rounded breasts. A man is holding her and has a knife placed in her throat. Apparently, this man has kidnapped Annabelle and Billy's mission is to save her." (p.435). Another example of this, in The Legend of Zelda: Wind Walker, in the opening stages of this game, travels to the Forbidden Fortress to confront his sister's kidnapper. One more example, in the game Mortal Kombat, the character Princess Kitana, having outstanding fighting abilities, needed assistance from the male characters (Stermer & Burkley, 2015).

Thus, it could be argued that in the overwhelming majority of video games, female presence is peripheral, female of colour are almost invisible. There is a lack of female protagonists which can represent female as strong and independent.

Minority groups representation and its role within games

A great deal of Video Games available on the market contains racially stereotypical material, with the

minority characters built around either negative or cultural stereotypes.

In their study, Children Now (2001) revealed that Blacks account for one-fifth of all characters; Asians account for less than 10%; Latinos account for just 2% (all of which are men and involved in sports games), and native Americans are absent in the game world. Similarly, the research by Leonard (2002), evaluating race in Video Game characters, unfolds that 56% of all characters are White; African Americans (22%) made up the second group (most of them being sports competitors characters). Passmore, Yates, Birk, & Mandryk (2017) categorized 42 characters in 63 games as humans; the majority (n=34, 69.4%) of the main characters were White, 4 characters were Asian (8.16%), 3 characters were Black (6.12%), no main character was Hispanic (0%), 1 character was Native (2.04%), and 7 characters were bi-racial or ambiguous (14.29%). Among the secondary characters: 17 games featured NPCs (non-playable characters) with 2 or more skin tones; only 5 games did not feature White NPCs. There were 49 games that included White NPCs (55.06%), 12 with Asian NPCs (13.48%), 8

with Black NPCs (10.11%), 4 with Hispanic NPCs (4.49%), 3 with Native NPCs (3.37%), and 12 with bi-racial or ambiguous NPCs. Furthermore, Williams, Martins, Consalvo, & Ivory (2009) after analysing 150 games across nine platforms, exposed a systematic over-representation of males, white and adults and a systematic under-representation of females, Hispanics, Native Americans, children and the elderly. White main characters remain over-represented (85.0%) in games; Black (9.7%); Biracial (3.7%); and Asian (1.7%) as main characters are much less present.

Similarly, the investigations of Burgess et al. (2011); Dill, Gentile, Richter, & Dill (2005); Glaubke et al. (2001)CA.”,”title”:"Fair Play? Violence, Gender and Race in Video games.”,”type”:"report"},”uris”:[“http://www.mendeleym.com/documents/?uuiid=9fcf9495-153b-34fb-a427-4a9291f77b07”]},{“id”:"ITEM-2”,”itemData”:{“DOI”:"10.1037/11213-008”,”author”:[{“dropping-particle”:"”,”family”:"Dill”,”given”:"Karen E.”,”non-dropping-particle”:"”,”parse-

names":false,"suffix":"",""}, {"dropping-particle":"","","family":"Gentile","given":"Douglas A.,"non-dropping-particle":"","","parse-names":false,"suffix":"",""}, {"dropping-particle":"","","family":"Richter","given":"William A.,"non-dropping-particle":"","","parse-names":false,"suffix":"",""}, {"dropping-particle":"","","family":"Dill","given":"Jody C.,"non-dropping-particle":"","","parse-names":false,"suffix":"",""}], "container-title":"In E. Cole & J. H. Daniel (Eds. revealed stereotyped presenting minority groups in games. Glaubke et al. (2001) after examining 70 console games, found that Latino characters are present only in sports games; Black characters are portrayed as more violent with a lack of pain or physical suffering; Asian characters only accounted for wrestling and fighting roles; many of the Mexican characters are off-centre and not entirely likeable; the Black and Latino male characters tend to be competitors within sports games, and 70% of all Asian characters are combatants. In line with that, Burgess et al. (2011)"type":"article-journal", "volume":"14"}, "uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=670a53e2-46a8-34fd-95aa-a5ee0a28254b"}], "mend

eley": {"formattedCitation":"(Burgess et al., 2011, after studying over 149 games, found that 100% of Black males are portrayed as either athletic, violent, or both. The results of the content analysis say that Black characters are often a menace to society with oversized weapons and gang posturing, where the Asians in the games are to practice martial arts, give a treat to one another, and do not save anyone (Burgess et al., 2011)"type":"article-journal", "volume":"14"}, "uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=670a53e2-46a8-34fd-95aa-a5ee0a28254b"}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation":"(Burgess et al., 2011. Higgin, (2009) adds, "black and brown bodies, although increasingly more visible within the medium, are seemingly inescapably objectified as hyper-masculine variations of the gangsta or sports player tropes" (p.3). Blacks make up a disproportionate number of athletes in sports games like Street, NBA, NFL Street, Madden 2003, "jumping as high as the sun, knocking their competitors through concrete walls, and making unfathomable moves on the court"(4). Moreover, in sports games, nearly 80% of the African Americans are involved in physical and verbal aggression,

whereas only 57% of the White characters are (Leonard, 2003). Some examples showing the stereotypes for black characters are Lee Everett from *The Walking Dead* and Alyx Vance from *Half-Life 2*. *The Walking Dead* opens with a handcuffed Everett sitting in the back of a police car while Vance's character is a non-playable sidekick.

In consonance with that, Dickerman et al. (2008) reveal that many characters belonging to the minority groups have a certain set role within a game. Adams (2003) speaking about fighting games, concludes that minority characters are included in these games just for the sake of a pure visual variety. And what is more, minorities are almost never a primary character (Burgess et al., 2011) "type": "article-journal", "volume": "14", "uris": ["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=670a53e2-46a8-34fd-95aa-a5ee0a28254b"]}, "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Burgess et al., 2011. Minority characters function primarily as objects of oppression, derision, or as narrative obstacles to be overcome or mastered (Everett, 2005).

Whites are the majority of the characters and an overwhelming

number of the heroes. Gottschalk (1995) speaking about videology, states that the 'Hero' is overwhelmingly young, white, muscular, and male, "He is blond. He is broad. He is buff" (Herz, 1997, p.165). In fantasy MMORPGs, white protagonists engage in heroic battles, they are brave, strong and moral, "their completion of herculean feats earns them well-deserved glory and esteem" (Embrick, Wright, & Lukács, 2012, p.151) power and liberatory fantasies in virtual play. The first section, social-psychological implications of virtual gameplay, highlights recent research that examines how the virtual realms of MMORPGs and other games shape emotion and influence social interactions between players within the game. Section two features studies that entertain questions on the marketing of race and gender stereotypes in video games and how (and if).

The others-as-enemies are overwhelmingly male, often darker than the hero, are sometimes assigned foreign-sounding names, they speak in heavily accented English or unrecognisable languages. The hero's lives are valuable, limited in number, and monitored by flashing warning

signals. The lives of the “others” seem to be less important and are vanished off the screen as soon as they are killed (Gottschalk, 1995). For example, In *Ethnic Cleansing*, the player kills Blacks and Hispanics before entering a subway. In *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, during one of the missions, the players were instructed to “Kill the Haitians.”

In addition to this, Parungao (2006), cited in Gillentine (2007), researched four-game content of *Kung Fu*, *Warcraft 3*, *Shadow Warrior*, and *Grand Theft Auto 3* to evaluate the Asian character portrayal with and to assess gamer perceptions of Asian stereotypes. Parungao’s study (2006) indicated that characters in these games wear fabulous Asian costumes, possess martial arts skills, and promote a shifty-eyed, angry eye-browed look (Gillentine, 2007, p.40).

Similarly, Dill, Gentile, Richter, & Dill (2005) after the examination of 20 computer games found out that targets of violence are usually portrayed as Middle Eastern. Gerber (2016), after examining some first-person shooters (FPS) games, claims that Arab or Muslim are represented in these type of games as the targets to eliminate: bearded, roaring in Arabic, shooting everywhere and with

a lack of self-control. Borries et al. (2007) claim that virtual combat games allow western users to “fight” enemies in distant cities (usually in the Middle East). *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, *Gulf War I*, *Gulf War II*, *Full Spectrum Warrior* reinforce imaginary Arab cities full with terrorism, people in these games are represented as shadowy, subhuman, racialised Arabs, alien “terrorists” to be repeatedly annihilated. Šisler (2008) explores the stereotypical representation of Muslims and Arabs in 90 of European and American Video Games; he concludes that in adventure and role-playing games ‘Orientalist’ image is explored while in first-person shooters, Arabs and Muslims are enemies.

Everett (2005) after analysis of the skin colour types that the gamer could choose in *R2R-2*, found that it’s possible to play the games as Maori, Brazilian, Hawaiian, Taiwanese, and Mexican, but these characters are described as “Beast from the East”, “Maori fighting ways are a savage,” “lacking confidence”, etc. While white skins representing Italy, Croatia, England, Canada are described sympathetically, “high tolerance to pain”, “dedicated to boxing”, “refined skills and superior

knowledge of the sweet science”, etc. Everett concluded that these skin colour types are still undesirable to choose. In the same vein, the characteristics of races in World of Warcraft, the most popular MMORPG, are analysed. The Orcs, are obvious tropes of Africa, are brutal and mindless, beastly, aggressive, wily and superstitious; the speck of the Troll contains stereotypical West Indies accents; the Tauren race has hooves for feet, horns on their heads, “huge, bestial creatures” who “cultivate a quiet, tribal society” representing the Great Plains of North America (Embrick et al., 2012)power and liberatory fantasies in virtual play. The first section, social-psychological implications of virtual gameplay, highlights recent research that examines how the virtual realms of MMORPGs and other games shape emotion and influence social interactions between players within the game. Section two features studies that entertain questions on the marketing of race and gender stereotypes in video games and how (and if).

The popular Grand Theft Auto series has historically promoted and reinforced stereotypes about minority groups and women: the black criminal; the Latino

drug dealer; the Chinese crime boss; the Italian mobster; and the East Indian cab driver; the heavy accented East-Indian cabbie; the poor-English speaking Chinese women walking on the street; “charming, smart, traditionally well-dressed, strong Sicilian family”, the Jewish attorney portrayed as an effeminate, cowardly poseur with the stereotypical intonation of the “New York Jew”; Puerto Rican female drug dealers and assassinating rival gang members (all people of colour). In the Liberty City of GTA III, your enemies consist of the Triads (Chinese), Yazuka (Japanese), Diablos (“Hispanic street gang”), South Side Hoods (blacks), Columbian Cartel, and the Yardies (Jamaican) gangs. Racism toward immigrants from European nations that have not become part of the “white” group can also be found (Embrick et al., 2012)power and liberatory fantasies in virtual play. The first section, social-psychological implications of virtual gameplay, highlights recent research that examines how the virtual realms of MMORPGs and other games shape emotion and influence social interactions between players within the game. Section two features studies that entertain questions on the marketing of

race and gender stereotypes in video games and how (and if).

Discussion

It is important to admit the role of computer games as a tool for learning. Koster (2013) mentions that games primarily teach us things that we absorb into the unconscious. Thus, numerous critics and children's advocates remain concerned the impact on people who play games. Provenzo (1991), the game critic, raises four main concerns with video games. Video games: a) can lead to violent, aggressive behaviour, b) employ destructive gender stereotyping, c) promote unhealthy "rugged individualist" attitudes, and d) stifle creative play (Provenzo, 1991). Over time these stereotypes have the potential to alter the way gamers think and behave offline (Burgess et al., 2011). Because video games can change the way gamers perceive the world around them, players may be affected by these stereotypical images and messages. Kondrat (2015), Burgess et al.

(2011) studied how video games change the perceptions of the gamers who play them.

According to Dickerman et al. (2008) gamers who participated in an online forum listed the positive impact of video games on the way they learned and what they chose to learn. Educators have been using video games in school, even those that were not created for strictly educational purposes, such as the popular Minecraft franchise. As Kondrat (2015) writes, "video games train for a logical way of thinking, teach cooperation with other people – players, create and improve their imagination" (p. 1). Video games can improve the cognition of players, and increase their ability to imagine. Also, playing games allows the gamer to gain a different perspective on things. Bourgonjon et al. (2016) write that video games "offer a perspective on how other people interpret specific problems, dilemmas, and situations in life and

suggest potential ways of dealing with them” (p. 1740). Gamers themselves recognise that games have an impact on the way they think and the way they see the world. According to Bourgonjon et al. (2016), gamers admit the influence of gaming on their attitudes toward everything from education to the books they read.

Impact of the representation of women on players.

Women suffer from negative stereotyping in many video games. Researchers nowadays are trying to show that mass media affects the perception of the real world and its standards by providing unreal, made-up beauty and moral rules. Kondrat (2015, Dickerman et al. (2008) and Gutierrez (2014), among the others, have researched the ways how the portrayal of women in video games affects the way they are viewed out of those games.

Since video games are a part of mass media, nowadays they are partly responsible for the unrealistic, ideal body perceptions. Girls and boys who play video games that use this ideal shaped body image for females are

more likely to create their concept of how female should look based on this representation (Kondrat, 2015). Near (2013) studied 399 box art cases from games released in the US from 2005 to 2010. His study showed that sales were positively related to the sexualisation of female characters. He concluded that there was an economic motive for the marginalisation and sexualisation of women in video games (Near, 2013). Generally, women are portrayed as having more significant breasts than most women have in real life. Measurement of the body proportions of female characters in games aimed at older players was thinner than real adult females (Martins et al., 2009). This image of the female body, because it is portrayed so often in video games, has contributed to the unrealistic body perceptions among many females today (Kondrat, 2015).

Moreover, the data indicate that gender portrayals in video games affect people’s beliefs about women in the real world, and women’s self-efficacy. Behm-Morawitz & Mastro (2009) found that playing the sexualised heroine resulted in lower self-efficacy in comparison to playing the non-sexualized heroine,

assuming that female players exposure to sexualised images of women in video games may affect negatively their confidence in the ability to succeed in the real world. In line with that, Funk (2001) suggested that playing games with harmful gender stereotypes may affect how younger children, under ages 10 to 12 view themselves and others because children of this age do not yet have a mature gender identity. Adults may be affected as well as negative gender stereotypes may strengthen the belief that women are as less capable than men after playing video games in which women are portrayed as brainless victims, “examine the game box of one of the top-selling games. You will likely see a male with a weapon, and possibly a well-endowed damsel in distress. If you happen to choose “Tomb Raider,” you will see an underdressed buxom female with a weapon. Both pictures are likely to be attractive to males, and basically consistent with schemas for male behaviour (being aggressive or scrutinising good-looking females). Neither picture is likely to be appealing to females because they invoke the gender stereotype that women are brainless and helpless, or that power for women is dependent on sexual appeal” (p.1).

Dietz (1998) adds, “this representation is harmful to children of both sexes since they will internalise these expectations and accept the idea that women are to be viewed as weak, as victims, and as sex objects”. A survey of teens confirmed that even by nongamers hold the stereotypes of female characters as sexually objectified physical specimens (Dill & Thill, 2007).

Beck, Boys, Rose, & Beck (2012) found that a video game depicting sexual objectification of women and violence against women resulted in statistically significant increased rape myths acceptance (rape-supportive attitudes) for male study participants. Similarly, Deskins (2015) revealed that those who play violent video games, scored high on benevolent sexism rated the sexist stimuli messages more amusing than others. Some players have reported that they gained the perspective from some video games that women can't be trusted (Bourgonjon et al., 2016).

Brown (2008;2014) states that female players must reconcile with gender stereotypes imported into virtual worlds through sexualised images of female avatars. A female EverQuest player reflects:

“I don’t have a problem with a ‘sexy’ character; I just don’t want to play one where body parts are hanging out in the world (half-elves, dark elves). This did influence my choice of a race because the dwarven women are allowed to stand straight and keep themselves clothed in something that makes sense. Guess I have a gripe about representations of fantasy women; who would go into battle wearing a chain bikini? Really? OUCH!” (p.24)

Thus, when playing games which portray women in a negative light, or which hypersexualise women, players are more likely to view women sexually, and they do not take complaints of sexual discrimination as seriously as players who played games without these images.

However, the results of the open-ended survey revealed that the situation is slowly changing. There are more and more games which are trying to equally represent females and males as well as female protagonists (Kondrat, 2015). Therefore, it seems like the situation with the adverse representation of women is slowly improving. Also, according to the expert’s opinion’s the current representation of female gender

in video games is better in comparison with video games in the 80s and 90s and it is slowly changing because of the new independent game companies which are interested in creating new types of video games with diverse characters. Lynch, Tompkins, van Driel, & Fritz (2016) examined in-game content from 571 titles released between 1983 and 2014 featuring playable female characters. Results indicate that sexualisation is lower nowadays than in the 1990s, role-playing games feature less sexualised female characters than traditionally male-oriented genres, and critical success of games was unrelated to sexualisation. The number of female characters is increasing. The active figures and principle character like Lara Croft (Tomb Rider), Tina (Dead or Alive), Xiaoyu (Tekken 3) represent potent figures in popular games (Schott & Horrell, 2000). The Face magazine featured Lara Croft as one of the most popular 20th-century icons. However, despite an increase in games featuring playable female characters, games still depict female characters more often in secondary roles and sexualised them more than primary characters (Lynch et al., 2016). Nevertheless, there is some heterogeneity of gender representation

in games by genre and target audience; in so-called “casual games” more than half of the main characters are women and, games aimed at children are less likely to sexualise female characters (Wohn, 2011).

Interestingly, the Pew Research Centre (2015) investigated if American players think that “video games portray women poorly”. 40% of Americans say they are not sure whether video games portray women poorly, 18% say this is not true for most games, 14% say this is true for most games. More than a quarter of all adults (27%) say this is true for some video games but not others (Duggan, 2015).

Although the results are somewhat limited, they shed light on the influence of exposure to sexualised female video game characters on individuals’ gender attitudes and beliefs and self-concept. Other than that they were stereotyped by being dressed in tight and provocative clothing, which showed their large breasts and long legs. Given that many VGs make use of stereotypes, particularly negative stereotypes related to gender, there is a need to investigate how video games might reinforce and normalise the mistreatment of women in society.

Impact of minority groups representation on players

In many games, the minority characters seem to be built around negative cultural stereotypes. Most games encourage “othering” the opponent, treating him as “not like us” (Koster, 2013). ‘You’ versus ‘Them’ conflict structure seems to be a standard and understood functional motif (Everett, 2005).

This attitude both toward the dominant culture and toward “others” becomes more enhanced, not less when a player can literally take on whichever “skin” he or she wishes (Williams, 2010). Many games allow the player to change the way they look as an avatar is customizable. Given this fact, Martey & Consalvo (2011), Behm-Morawitz, Pennell, & Speno (2016) and Williams (2010) have studied the way players choose to look, and how the way an avatar appears changes the way a player acts. Behm-Morawitz et al. (2016) found that gamers identified more with avatars that looked like they did, but that this identification did not mean that the character’s racism was lessened. Interestingly, Martey & Consalvo (2011) found that, even

when players had a chance to be from minority groups, they tended to create avatars which were white. Martey & Consalvo (2011) write that even though Second City players could appear any way they chose, they felt they needed to appear part of a dominant culture, “leading many participants to seek socially acceptable appearance that would be interpreted in certain ways as part of their interactions” (p. 165). When characters chose not to be white, they were more likely to select a non-human appearance than they were to appear Black. Even when players can have an avatar which looks exactly the way they want to look, most decide to appear from the dominant culture, or not human at all, rather than as being a part of a definable minority group. This shows that the negative stereotyping of minority groups in video games makes those characters less desirable for many gamers when the gamers can choose how they wish to appear.

In other research, Gray (2012) investigated the online community known as Xbox Live and found that women of colour face intersecting oppressions when in mainstream video gaming. Specifically, Latina women in

the Xbox Live community experience racism, sexism, and even heterosexism if identified as a sexual minority while African-American women experience sexism due to their race and gender (Gray, 2012). As a result, these women form groups within the video gaming community by creating their own clans and restrict membership of these groups to other women (Gray, 2012).

A great deal of video games available on the market contains racially stereotypical material. According to Parungao (2006) study, gamers do notice the stereotypes present but internalise them only for gameplay studied. Some participants thought the racism in games was terrible, but the majority thought video games should not have to be politically correct and society should not take them seriously. Moreover, the offensive names, slurs, or physical features depicted in today’s video games seem to enhance gameplay (Parungao, 2006). In line with that, Gillentine (2007) directly addressed the concerns of how players perceive and accept stereotypes portrayed in video games. In her dissertation research, she found most people indicated their awareness of the excessive use of racial and gender stereotypes in video

games, and all participants believed the negative stereotypes could influence or be misinterpreted by younger players. Similarly, Dickerman et al. (2008) have found that the content of video games often portrays minority groups in stereotypical negative light and that players of video games, both male and female, having been exposed to this content, often show signs that their belief system is incorporating these beliefs.

However, it is worth admitting that situation starts changing little by little. The action-adventure game Assassin's Creed III: Liberation features the half-French, half-Haitian protagonist Aveline living in 18th-century New Orleans, We Are Chicago, a first-person narrative adventure, played through the eyes of Aaron, a young African-American man growing up in Chicago's Englewood neighbourhood, in Mafia 3, its protagonist, Lincoln Clay, is African-American. The PlayStation 2 title Just Cause, set in the fictitious tropical island of San Esperito, is one of the first games with a protagonist of Hispanic descent, thus offering a broad audience of players the possibility of virtual experimentation with Latin identity.

Finally, the Pew Research Centre (2015) revealed that 33% of game

players do not think most video games portray minority groups poorly. Some 15% of black and 12% of Hispanic game players feel that most video games portray minority groups poorly, compared with 7% of white players. At the same time, 39% of Hispanics and 24% of blacks who play games feel that most games do not portray minorities poorly (Duggan, 2015).

Conclusion

Everyone is playing video games, be they casual games played on a mobile phone, or serious games played through a console. They are more popular than they have ever been with video game characters being icons in youth popular culture. Given the fact that the violence, racism and gender discrimination are so common in video games, it is important that the trend toward negative stereotypes in video games be reversed. As long as people continue to show negative images of minority groups and women in video games, violence, racism and gender discrimination will continue, since gamers have become desensitised to these images. Video games do affect the way people think and interact. Children may build their gender identities, roles and schemas in part on their observation of characters in video games.

If negative portrayals of these groups have such a negative impact on players' attitudes, then positive portrayals may have a positive impact (Behm-Morawitz et al., 2016). One study determined that a player was more likely to see a Black person as admirable if they had recently played a game where there were positive images of Black people. Changing stereotypes may be as simple as changing negative images to positive ones. Black men do not have to be violent criminals. Women do not have to be

hypersexualised, and they can be strong, fully participatory characters, meeting women's fantasies of empowerment. If equal screen time is given to strong, capable, admirable characters, perhaps intolerance toward these characters and out-of-game members of these groups would decrease as well. Many game companies, particularly those of independent game providers, are changing the way they portray women and minorities. There is still much room for improvement, however.

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**HOW NEUROSCIENCE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE APPLICATION OF
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