

The Erasure of Asian Gamers: The Gaming Industry as a Racialized Social Structure¹

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Abstract

The gaming industry has grown exponentially in the last decade, including large player bases and professional sports leagues. Still, sociological research has understudied specific aspects of the industry, such as the broader, global institutional patterns. Even less research has been done on how race is enacted and portrayed in the gaming community. Previous literature tends to be dated or only analyzes the games at the micro-level and the effect that racial representation in games can have on minority groups. This paper will connect these micro-level analyses to an argument about the gaming industry as part of the racialized social system. By analyzing the racial composition of the character designs of playable characters in the popular online game League of Legends and the racial composition of professional League of Legends players, I show that there are institutional barriers preventing minority players from achieving a privileged status through the racialized practices of the gaming industry. Furthermore, I illustrate that Asians, in particular, hold most of the professional gaming positions, but this has not translated into any power or even more representation within the game due to their status as middleman minorities within the gaming industry.

Keywords: Videogames, Racialized social structure, Gaming industry, Asian, Middle-man minorities, E-sports

Publication Type: Original research article

Preferred Citation: Devereaux, Taylor. 2023. "The Erasure of Asian Gamers: The Gaming Industry as a Racialized Social Structure." *Sociation* 22(1), 54-62.



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Introduction

The gaming community has long been an area of study among media scholars. Still, as it has grown and developed into a globalized industry, a sociological perspective is necessary to understand the social nuances of the gaming community. Professional videogames, or E-sports, are a rapidly rising institution that has already begun to infiltrate popular culture. According to an article by Forbes Magazine about League of Legends on professional league viewership, "Most would not expect them to be more popular than the Superbowl but the finale of the 2017 World Championship (Intel® Extreme Masters) in Katowice, Poland just set a new record for live attendance - more than 173,000 attendees - that's about 100,000 more than the Superbowl last year" (Armstrong, 2017). The official 2017 World Championship for League of Legends was played in Beijing's National Stadium, the same stadium used for the Olympics, and in 2018 League of Legends owner, Riot Games, built the first

E-sports stadium in South Korea. This growing industry, once considered nothing more than a marginalized community or hobby, has made its way onto the international stage, therefore affecting culture on both a national and global scale.

The racialized social structure is one that has been discussed a lot in race studies, but it has not been specifically applied to the gaming community. Often, race in gaming is studied at the micro level, focusing on the portrayal of race in games and how it affects individuals and their identities. These analyses leave out the institutionalized racism that affects players and how the structural factors of the gaming industry are directly connected to the portrayals of race in videogames. Therefore, stereotypes are not the only important aspect of study, but also how the gaming industry functions with certain structural barriers in mind, which leads to the overrepresentation of Whites in many cases. More specifically, the literature does not devote much time to studying the place of Asians within the gaming community. Although countries

like Korea and China are big economic centers for the gaming industry and produce some of the most skilled professional players, this has not translated into any kind of power to affect the games and what is included in them. Many large gaming companies are still primarily owned by people in Western countries and the games reflect the power that these companies still hold within the industry. Therefore, although I will be looking at the effect the racialized social structure has on all races in the gaming industry, I will be contributing to the literature a specific look at how Asians are portrayed and how they operate as middleman minorities within the racialized social structure of the gaming community.

The first dataset that I will be using is the League of Legends playable character list. League of Legends is the largest and most rapidly growing E-sports league internationally and the game has held a large, steady player base for many years. Although the overall number of active players can only be estimated, since it is not publicly released information, it is estimated that over 125 million players have been active in August 2021 (The Game Statistics Authority, 2021). The importance of using League of Legends is that, as the largest and most rapidly growing E-sports league, the game itself has a global impact on the many countries that play the game. League of Legends as a game, community, and E-sports organization, are currently shaping what the industry should look like on a global scale, which makes it a prime example of what others will look to do in the future with their own games. Therefore, if the game is racialized then it is also pushing these racialized ideals at the international level, which could not only have adverse effects on the players of the game, but also control the global racialized narrative and hierarchy.

The second dataset that I will use is a list of the current League of Legends professional players from the 4 most prominent regions around the world. These regions are North America, Europe, Korea, and China servers. I will use this to identify the racial makeup of the professional gamers in League of Legends and compare it to the racial makeup of the playable characters in the game to analyze how the racialized social structure functions at the structural level to either prevent certain minority groups from playing at the professional level or how, even if they do play, it does not cause an increase in representation in the playable characters.

In this paper, I do a preliminary investigation into the racial aspects of the gaming community and use sociological perspectives to connect these practices to the racialized social structure of society. The purpose of my paper is to identify how the character design of playable characters in League of Legends reflects a racialized social structure, instead

of reflecting the racial makeup of the overall player base, by comparing the racial makeup of the playable characters to the racial makeup of professional players. Specifically, I look at how the stereotypical characterization of Asians in League of Legends contributes to them being categorized as middleman minorities within the gaming industry, even though Asians and Asian countries supposedly hold power within the gaming industry. I then connect this with the literature to illustrate how the racialized social structure of Western countries, namely the United States, is using the gaming industry to push the racialized social structure to the international level.

Theoretical and Empirical Background

The literature on race in the gaming community and E-sports is scarce in sociology. Although some scholars have studied it from a digital media perspective, practically none has investigated the racial aspects of gaming from a sociological perspective. Even fewer of the previous studies have looked at race in gaming from an institutional perspective, instead opting to study how race is portrayed in gaming and affects minority groups on a micro level. It is also important to note that many of these studies were done during the 2010's, and although this does not seem like dated information, gaming has drastically changed over the last decade to warrant updated studies completed in a new context. Therefore, this literature review connects the micro level studies on gaming to the overall racialized institution of the gaming industry to understand the racial barriers that are faced by minority groups at an institutional level.

Theory

When analyzing the gaming community and E-sports, it is important to recognize that they operate within an economic industry, therefore they are part of the social institutions and structures that make up society. In this light, the gaming industry can be interpreted as part of the racialized social structure. A racialized social structure is a society in which all levels of society, including the economic and social, are at least partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). This allows for these races to be defined in a certain way and placed in a racial hierarchy. With the rise in popularity of the gaming industry, scholars are starting to consider it to be its own culture (Shaw, 2010). Therefore, if the gaming community is understood as a racialized social structure, some important aspects of the industry can be brought to

the forefront. Using Bonilla-Silva's (2021) concept of systemic racism, in which racism is systemic because it incorporates all actors into the system, it becomes clear that everyone in the gaming community, from the companies and developers to the players themselves, help to support the racialized social structure. According to Bonilla-Silva (2021), if racism is systemic, then the norms, culture, and collective practices that everyone takes part in are racialized. People can engage with systemic racism to different degrees or even fight against it, but ultimately, they are still consciously or unconsciously participating in the overall racial structure because the structure itself creates the conditions for the reproduction of whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). For example, although the indie gaming scene attempts to subvert the racialized system, it is still a significant aspect of upholding the reproduction of whiteness solely by existing as the "indie scene." It is not considered mainstream or even popular, instead these games are sectioned off into a separate section of the gaming industry, which unconsciously draws the racial line between "indie" diverse representations and mainstream "white" representations. Mainly, it will illustrate that racism in the gaming community and among the professional gaming industry is not an individual issue caused by a few "racist" individuals, but instead it is a product of the racialized social structure in which these games are created and played. From the creation of the games themselves to the types of games that are appealing to specific racial groups, much of the general gaming population is structured around who plays the games and which demographics the company is targeting for a specific game. This targeting shapes how the games are created, marketed, and played, which then shapes the community's understanding of different racial groups. As players, gamers then uphold this system by continuing to support games and companies that utilize stereotypical narratives of non-White groups. By continuing to buy and play these games, even as a hobby, every individual is complicit in supporting the racialized social structure within gaming.

Specifically in terms of media, some context is required to understand how the racialized social structure is reproduced through social institutions. Over the last few decades, institutions have pushed a color-blind ideology as a normative practice by using it as a guiding principle in their organizational mission and culture (Gallagher, 2020). This practice has socialized Whites into believing that institutional racism no longer exists and that it does not play a role in limiting the life chances or socioeconomic status of non-White groups (Gallagher, 2020). If this were true, then the staffing of major institutions would reflect the racial makeup of the United States

population, but instead it has been found that Whites are overrepresented in many of the most powerful and prestigious institutions (Gallagher, 2020). Gaming companies are not exempt from this institutional practice. The industry was shaped by it. The gaming industry grew exponentially during the late 90's and early 2000's, and from the beginning, gaming companies have utilized a color-blind ideology within their organizational culture. These companies regularly integrated color-blind vocabulary, like inclusion and diversity, that do not contribute to the issue of white racism as a systemic problem (Williams, 2020). This vocabulary allowed for a space for non-White groups, but regularly keeps these groups from demanding change (Williams, 2020). In addition, gaming media, similarly to films, utilize narrowly constructed racial narratives to highlight individual bigots overcoming personal racism, instead of addressing the structural components (Williams, 2020). Consequently, this effort reproduces the racialized social structure by minimizing racism to an individual issue, instead of one at the structural level. Therefore, it is impossible to separate racism from its structural components and it is crucial to examine the role of media in contributing to the racialized social structure by incorporating the institutions that create said media.

A particularly interesting point that has been vaguely touched on by scholars is the precarious position of Asians within the gaming industry. Therefore, in addition to the theory of racialized social structures, I will also incorporate the theory of middleman minorities. Middleman minorities are groups that occupy a position between the elite and low status racial groups. They occupy an intermediate economic status and tend to concentrate within certain occupations. These groups also tend to deal with hostility from the "host" racial group, otherwise known as the racial group that holds power (Whites in the United States), that creates an ambivalence towards their place of residence (Bonacich, 1973). Although this is a dated definition that was created in the context of immigration, it can be used to understand the position of Asians in the gaming community. Of the 13 regions that the game *League of Legends* has servers for, 7 of them are centered in Asian countries. Two of these regions, Korea, and China, are extremely competitive and have won the majority of World Championships for *League of Legends*. This regional division indicates that there is a large population of Asian players that play *League of Legends*, yet they are only marginally represented in the game itself. Therefore, Asians in the gaming community, especially the professional gaming industry, can be seen as middleman minorities in that they have a particular economic

status that is not the highest nor lowest globally, but they are also still marginalized by the host country (the United States) that makes the game.

Stereotypes in the Gaming Industry

The issue of race in gaming is largely a structural and economic issue. When studying video games, it is important to keep in mind that the games are created with a target audience that will allow the company producing the game to make the most profit. Representation in gaming has been studied previously, but much of the research has not reached full visibility at this point and tend to focus on single player games (Malkowski, 2017). It has been found that racial stereotypes in videogames define minority races, mainly in that minority characters are limited to violent and aggressive roles unless they are based on a celebrity (Burgess, 2011; Dickerman, 2008). It has also been found that after playing videogames with racial stereotypes, players are more likely to associate minority characters with violent and aggressive behavior (Burgess, 2011). This illustrates the direct effect that representation of minority groups in games can have on the racial conceptualizations of minority groups. These stereotypes also influence the minority players and what games they choose to play. It has been shown that Black gamers prefer to play games that are centered on sports or that featured characters from other aspects of their lives, like sports figures, rappers, and comic book characters (DiSalvo, 2008). This indicates that Black gamers are more likely to play games where they can play or interact with characters that align with their own racial identity, but are also portrayed in a realistic form, instead of a stereotypical one. Therefore, this may cause Black gamers to avoid playing certain games where there are no Black characters, or they are only portrayed as violent and aggressive. This illustrates the impact that these games can have on the racial ideology of the gaming community, and furthermore, how it upholds the racialized social structure of society through their characterizations and narratives.

The literature on Asians and their representation in the gaming community is slim to none in terms of academic literature, but the stereotypical representation of Asians in the gaming community has not gone unnoticed. One book discusses how Asian Americans have had to fit certain roles and rules to be seen as valuable in the United States (Fickle, 2017). A survey done in 2015 found that 49% of Asian American respondents felt that not all races have ample representation in videogame characters, which was double the number of Hispanic or African American respondents (Le, 2016). Since,

as stated previously, there is such a large population of Asians in the gaming community, it is surprising that they are not represented more in the games. One reason cited is that publishing executives claim that games with protagonists of color do not sell well because gamers cannot relate to a non-White protagonist, even though there have been games recently with protagonists of color that have done extremely well (Gunnery, 2016). It has also been stated that Asians are not allowed the same complexity as Whites due to racial stereotypes. Asians are regularly portrayed as villains, double agents, or crime bosses that are the antagonists of the game (Gunnery, 2016). Popular shooter games, like *Call of Duty*, feature a White hero killing Asian enemies in a war scenario, which alienates Asians by portraying them as foreign invaders in the gaming community (Dong, 2016). These examples illustrate how Asians are also marginalized in the gaming community, just like Blacks or Hispanics, but also how their plight goes unnoticed by academic scholars. Although there are many scholarly articles on the racial stereotypes of Blacks or Hispanics in gaming, Asians either go unmentioned or are included as a short side note. Therefore, there is clearly a need to analyze the position of Asians in the gaming community and the stereotypes held against them.

The Racialized Social System of Gaming

In understanding gaming as a racialized social structure, there are other barriers within gaming that must be assessed. For Black and Hispanic gamers, the main structural barrier to competing at the professional level in online games comes from the structural divide in economic wealth between these minority groups and Whites. It was found that the majority of African-American and Latino players play on consoles, since they are cheaper in comparison to a gaming personal computer (PC) (Peterson, 2018). On the surface, this does not seem like a racialized issue, but when taken in context with the growth of professional E-sports, it is a major factor. Financially, PC games grew into prominent E-sports with prize pools ranging in the millions, while console games have smaller leagues with prize pools only reaching the hundred-thousands. This is likely since the console versions of games are seen as “low quality” versions of PC games due to the limitations of the technology built into the console. Console games have lower graphics quality than PC’s and players must pay extra fees to play online against others (Honorof, 2017). Therefore, console gamers are not only seen as playing a low-quality version of these games, but they are also seen as less skilled

players because they play with these limitations. Due to the financial and structural divide between African-Americans and Latinos in relation to Whites, they are ostracized in the gaming community and professional gaming does not provide the same opportunities for them to be successful. This leads to a lack of representation both in the games themselves and in the professional sphere because African-American and Latino players go unnoticed as part of the gaming community.

For Asians, the structural barriers of the racialized social system are very different than African-Americans and Hispanics in the gaming community. Asian countries, especially Korea, are some of the best places for professional gaming and many professional players come from Asian countries, but Asians are still stereotyped and unrepresented in the games themselves. In Korea, professional players are often considered to be celebrities and are supported by corporate sponsorships and loyal fans but are also subjected to a lack of job security, low pay, long hours of practice, gender issues, and the commodification of players (Jin, 2010). It has also been found that Korean online gaming companies regularly engage in hybridization of its content, in which they mix their own culture with that of Western countries to make a successful game, but many of the attempts at hybridization are not successful and lose the local cultural aspects of the games (Jin, 2010). Although structurally, it has been shown that both American and Asian countries are key players in the globalized gaming industry, due to Western-based gaming firms having more capital, skills, and people with marketing expertise, the influence of Western countries remains powerful in the gaming industry (Jin, 2010). According to Fickle (2019), these practices allow games to be used to advance top-down political agendas. Although Fickle (2019) only studied this in terms of practices in the United States, by using this concept in conjunction with Jin (2010), researchers can see that this agenda has been continuing to extend to the global scale. Therefore, not only are Asian players operating as middleman minorities by taking lower pay while boosting the popularity of the Western online games, but also the Asian gaming companies themselves operate as middleman minorities by creating games that promote the gaming industry, but still having to succumb to the pressure and narratives of the Western gaming companies.

Methods

My aim in this paper is to identify one of the many factors that illustrates that the gaming industry

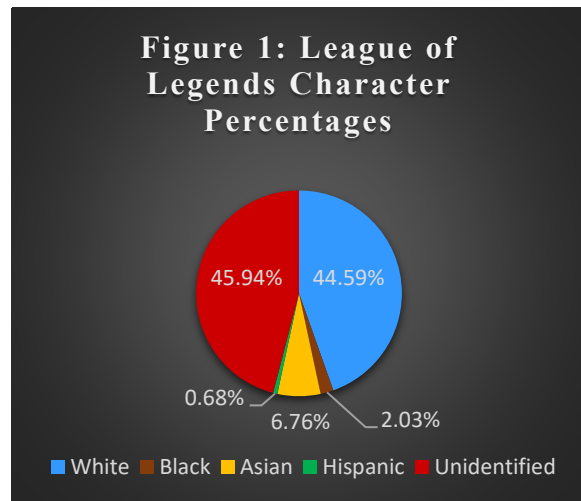
operates as a racialized social structure. Specifically, I illustrate how the racial makeup of the character designs in a popular online game contributes to the gaming racialized social structure and how this compares to the actual makeup of professional players for that game. The first data set that I will use for this analysis is the League of Legends playable character list. I chose to look at the League of Legends playable character list because it is currently the most popular online videogame with the largest E-sports league, holding regional and international tournaments frequently throughout the year. I categorized these characters by analyzing the original character design portrait of each of the 154 characters (as of March 2021) and put them into a race category based on this artwork. The categories that were used were White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Unknown/Undetermined. The Unknown/Undetermined category was used to place champions that were either not human or had their skin completely covered, therefore making it impossible to determine their race. For the White category, this was based on whether the character had pale skin, therefore being portrayed as White. For the Black category, this was based on whether they had dark skin, therefore being portrayed as Black. For the Asian category, the characters had to have a lighter skin color than the Black characters and clear identifiers that the character was Asian, such as slanted eyes or a stereotypical Asian name (Master Yi is one example). For the Hispanic category, the characters had to have a slightly dark skin color, but not dark enough that they were definitively Black. The use of these stereotypical categorizations was derived from the complications of determining a race for the characters within the game itself. League of Legends is set in a fantasy universe, therefore all the "countries" that these characters are from are fictional. This makes it impossible to determine the race of these characters based on their origin "country" alone, so stereotypical conceptualizations were used to categorize them. Although this categorization utilizes stereotypical images of these races, all the characters easily fell into one of the categories, further proving that character design in videogames is largely based on racial stereotypes.

The second dataset that I will use is a list of the League of Legends professional players for the 2021 season from the 4 most prominent regions around the world. I looked at the races for the players of the regions of North America, Europe, Korea, and China servers. I will categorize the players into White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic using both their physical features and their country of origin to identify their racial identification. I will mainly use the country of origin to identify race, then if the country of origin is ambiguous (like in the United States), then I will use

physical features to identify which racial category the player would most likely belong to. If physical features are necessary to identify the race of the player, then I will use the same guidelines as I did with the character design. Again, this is a stereotypical categorization, but by using it only when country of origin is unclear, most of these categorizations will be valid.

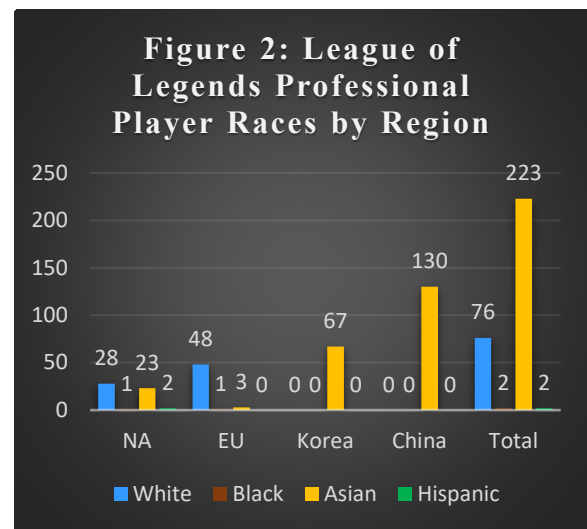
Results

The first data set was used to identify the racial makeup of playable characters in League of Legends and serve as a reference point for the second data set. As of March 2021, I found that the character designs in League of Legends are racially based, with many of the characters being portrayed as either White or Unknown/Undetermined. I found that of the 154 playable characters in the game, 65 (42.21%) were White, 4 (2.6%) were Black, 9 (5.84%) were Asian, 5 (3.25%) were Hispanic, and 71 (46.1%) were Unknown/Unidentified (See Table 1). Excluding the Unknown/Unidentified category, most of the characters are portrayed as White by a large margin compared with any other race. This illustrates how the game design of popular videogames, especially ones with a large E-sports league, still skew their character design in favor of White characters. Also, the fact that these characters easily fell into these categories demonstrates that the gaming industry is a racialized social structure that operates based on stereotypes and that these stereotypical portrayals could have adverse effects on minority gamers in the gaming community.



The second dataset of professional League of Legends players creates an even more telling story of how Asians are used as middle-man minorities within the gaming industry. For the races of professional

players, I found that many professional players are Asian, while White players are the second most common. In North America, there are 54 professional players total, in which 28 are White, 1 is Black, 23 are Asian, and 2 are Hispanic. In Europe, there are 52 professional players total, in which 48 are White, 1 is Black, 3 are Asian, and none are Hispanic. In Korea, there are 67 professional players total, all of which are Asian, and in China there are 130 professional players, all of which are Asian as well. Out of the 4 major regions, there are 303 total professional players. Of this 303, 76 are White, 2 are Black, 223 are Asian, and 2 are Hispanic (See Table 2). The number of professional players in Korea and China alone, both higher than North America and Europe, says a lot about the racial makeup of the people who play League of Legends at the highest level of play. Most of the players who are playing consistently at a high level of gameplay are overwhelmingly Asian. For Korea specifically, there is not a single player in their region that is not from South Korea and for China, all the players are from China or the surrounding Asian countries. Europe also abides largely by this model with only a couple of outsourced positions to players from Asian countries. North America, on the other hand, outsources quite a few of their professional spots to Asians from Korea and other Asian countries by work visas.



In comparison with the racial makeup of the playable characters in League of Legends a clear racial line is drawn. Most professional players, whose role is to play the game at a high skill level and bring popularity and profit to the game, are from Asian countries, but there is very little representation for them in the game itself. With only 9 playable Asian characters, the 223 professional Asian players have very few characters to choose from if they would like

to play a character that represents themselves and their own culture, and even then, it is a stereotypical depiction of themselves that does not account for the many Asian countries that the players come from. For example, two popular Asian characters, Lee Sin and Master Yi, are based on the Bruce Lee and samurai stereotypes respectively, which are commonly used when creating Asian characters. This shows how undervalued these players are within the League of Legends gaming structure and how racialized the organization of these gaming countries truly is.

Discussion and Conclusions

Specifically in terms of my findings for Asians in the gaming community, analysis of my data indicates that although Asians are a majority in the gaming community and the countries that they reside in hold power within this industry, they are still marginalized and underrepresented in major online games. The fact that there are only 9 identifiably Asian characters in the game shows that Asians are not valued as part of the representation in the community. This connects to the idea of Asians being a middleman minority within the gaming community because they are the economic force that makes these games popular and are a large part of the player base, but they are still stereotyped by game designers and do not gain an equal amount of representation. They also bring in many profits for the game itself by enticing people to watch and play the game in the hopes of getting to the same level of play as the professional players. Therefore, Asians in the gaming community have an economic power that is useful to Whites, but this does not translate to any power, even within game companies, to ensure equal and non-stereotypical representation. Referring to Gallagher (2020), if the representation of the population playing the games was equal, then there would be an overwhelmingly large number of Asian characters in the game, but instead we see that Whites are overrepresented. Essentially, these Asian players and Asian countries are being used to drive profits for the American gaming company, but they still have very little say in what characters get made for the game and how they are portrayed. This further illustrates that the gaming industry is a racialized social structure because even though League of Legends is an internationally acclaimed game with a large player base, most of the playable characters represent the Western ideal of the White savior as their playable characters instead of reflecting the diverse, but majority Asian, player base that they have. Many people in the gaming community would probably attribute this to individual character designers or say that the emphasis should be on the character itself and not the race of the character, but if Bonilla-Silva's

(2021) concept of systemic racism is considered, then all of these actors are complicit in reproducing the racialized social structure. Players, designers, and companies will all deny the racialized components of the games they create and play, but by doing so they silence players of color who would like to see more representation of their cultures within the games and create additional barriers to change within the gaming industry.

Even more concerning, and worth more research, is the fact that the Unknown/Unidentified category had about the same number of characters as the White category and many more characters than any of the other racial categories. This seems to imply that game designers would rather make unidentifiable or monster characters over making characters that portray any racial category other than White. This possibly connects with the thinly veiled excuse from executives that players can only identify with White characters and cannot identify with characters of color. This belief that characters of color are undesirable or difficult to create leads to the gaming industry upholding the racialized social system of Western society. Furthermore, it extends the racialized social structure on a global scale, since the games are played internationally, by only promoting stereotypical images of non-White characters within the game regardless of the racially diverse community that plays it. The underlying message that the lack of playable characters of color represents is that these characters of color are less desirable than White characters and now this is becoming the norm on an international scale, therefore pushing the racialized social structure to a globalized and international level.

This also further indicates the presence of the racialized social structure of the gaming industry and how Asians are in the position of middleman minorities. Not only do Asians make up most of the player base, but they also make up the bulk of the players at the professional level in the game's top regions. Although Asians hold most of the professional player positions, they have not been able to translate that into power or representation within the game, as illustrated by the extreme lack of Asian playable characters. Therefore, the racialized social structure keeps these players, and the countries themselves, in a middleman minority position, in which they boost the economic profits and popularity of League of Legends with their highly skilled gameplay but are not given any sort of privileged status or the ability to control anything that happens in the game itself. According to Bonilla-Silva's (2021) definition of systemic racism, this visibility, but lack of power, for Asian players also allows the gaming community to ignore structural barriers and racism by consciously or unconsciously supporting the

normative nature of this treatment of Asian players. This institutional barrier not only bars Asians from being represented in the games, but also normalizes this lack of representation on the international level as the professional league continues to grow.

Future researchers have many avenues that they can look at to further this analysis. Although this analysis only looks at one specific game made by one specific company, there are many others that can be investigated in a similar manner to understand the full impact of the racialized social structure on the gaming industry. On the institutional level, researchers need to begin to look at the companies themselves, who they are, and where they are based. Studies that address Western gaming companies must look at the company statements in terms of diversity and inclusion (Williams, 2020) and compare those to what ends up being put into the games they create. Are these companies truly diverse or is it a performative act that upholds the color-blind narrative? Institutional studies should also look at Eastern gaming companies to understand the influence Western gaming companies have on the gaming industry. For example, the incredibly popular Resident Evil franchise was created by the Japanese gaming company Capcom but is mostly set in the United States and utilizes mostly White characters. Why was the decision made by Japanese developers to create White characters and set the franchise in Western countries? Is this a personal preference or does it have to do with the lack of power Asian developers and countries have over their own narratives? More research will need to be done on the institutional level to uncover the true influence that the racialized social structure has at the global level.

There is also much more work to be done on the individual level stemming from this research. Previous research has already found that stereotypical images of characters of color influence how players view people of color (Burgess, 2011), but what is the impact of this influence? Research needs to be conducted on players within the gaming community to explore how these racialized images help to construct their conceptualization of non-White groups in real life. Furthermore, more research needs to be done into how Asian characters are constructed and how Asians are impacted by these stereotypical characterizations. This research was inspired by stories of discrimination faced by Asians within the gaming community (see Footnote 1), but much of the current literature either leaves Asians out of their analysis or lumps them into the same privileged position as Whites. Although Asians have a similar socioeconomic position and play the same types of games as Whites, this does not mean that they are represented or treated equally within the gaming community. Therefore, much more extensive research needs to be done on the experiences of Asian

players within the gaming community to fully understand the precarious middle-man position that they occupy.

This research provides a preliminary analysis and discussion into an important issue within the gaming community. As gaming continuously grows, researchers need to begin addressing the complexity of the narratives and communities that are within it. This paper is only the beginning of that discussion. By showing that the gaming industry operates within the racialized social structure, Whites still largely control the narratives of non-White groups within the games that are created. Regardless of the player base demographics, White characters and White stories are overly present in videogames and the characters and stories of non-Whites are regularly subjected to stereotypical images. Furthermore, everyone in the gaming community and industry plays a role in upholding and reproducing these norms and practices. Therefore, the only way to make change is to start to address the systemic aspects of race within the gaming community. Only then may games begin to reflect the people and cultures of the people that play them.

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Author Biography

Taylor Devereaux is a Ph.D. student at the University of Central Florida in their final year of the program. Their research revolves around social inequalities, such as race and gender, within games and the gaming industry. Specifically, Taylor Devereaux studies the organizational structure of gaming companies and the gaming industry at large to identify social inequalities within the overall structure of the industry instead of focusing on the micro-level interactions. They spend their free time playing the games they love while also researching their downsides in hopes of a better industry moving forward.

ⁱ Although I have been an avid gamer for many years, I regrettably admit that I did not recognize this issue within the gaming industry until recently. I sadly believed the narrative of the White boy gamer, which is the idea that most gamers are White boys, like many other gamers, for many years. This issue was brought to my attention by a close online friend of mine, Jason Kim, who expressed his experiences as an Asian man in gaming, specifically the discrimination he has faced throughout his gaming experiences. Therefore, I would like to thank Jason Kim for bringing this issue to my attention and inspiring this study because it is one that I believe has gone largely unnoticed within the gaming community but requires critical analysis.