STEREOTYPES OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS
REPRESENTED IN
LOS SANTOS MISSIONS OF *GTA: SAN ANDREAS*

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states sincerely that this project was compiled by her without doing plagiarism and without taking the results from other research in any university. Furthermore, the writer states that she did not take the material from other publications or someone else work except from the references mentioned in the bibliography.

Semarang, August 2016

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

We are all different. Which is great because we are all unique. Without diversity, life would be very boring.

(Catherine Pulsifer)

Never lose hope, my dear heart. Miracles dwell in the invisible.

(Jalaluddin Rumi)

This paper is dedicated to

whoever will read it

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The writer realizes that this final project is still far from perfection. She, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism to make this final project better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about stereotypes, especially in American popular culture.

Semarang, August 2016

Atma Sofa Rosyada

TABLE OF CONTENT

LIST OFPICTURES

ABSTRACT

"GTA: San Andreas" is an action adventure video game developed by Rockstar North and published by Rockstar Game. The game's main storyline represents racial issues in the United States especially the African-American stereotypes. The purpose of this study is to analyze the gameplay, storyline, and cutscene of the game. The study uses ergodic, textual, and contextual theories to analyze the data and library research to compile the data. Library research is used to get literary and stereotype theories. There are five stereotypes showed in this game, namely, African-Americans have savage behaviour; African-Americans are poor people who live in ghettos; African-Americans tend to love hip-hop as well as raps music; African-Americans use ebonic language; and African-American males love to wear saggy pants or baggy clothes.

Keywords: video game, stereotype, African-Americans, interactive media, popular culture.

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1. Introduction

Issues of racism have been very common in America which has a diverse population. It especially began when a massive immigration from Africa to America occurred within 360 years between 1500s until the end of the slave trade in 1860s. Millions of Africans were forcibly taken to America and suchdark skin color has been considered as a marker of low status. The Blacks, African-Americans, have been through everything to escape from slavery and set themselves free. However, they still face some obstacles or offensive behaviour from the dominant groups even though they already get freedom. One offensive behaviour that broadly discussed is the racial stereotyping toward African-Americans.

Nowadays, stereotype commonly appears in media or popular culture like music, literature, art, television, film, and video game. The influence of media images can be very powerful. Hall as cited in Welch (2007) states that media have the power to divide or classify race in society:

> They help to classify out the world in terms of the categories of race. The media are not only a powerful source of ideas about race. They are also one place where these ideas are articulated, worked on, transformed, and elaborated. (Hall, 2003, p. 90).

In this manner, it is possible that media or pop culture plays an eminent role in defining images or stereotypes of African-Americans as a result of the way they are represented to readers, players, or viewers.

One of video games that represents the stereotype against the subordinate groups in America is GTA: San Andreas. It is an action adventure video game that takes place in San Andreas which is replicated West Coast cities. The game is quest based on its storyline leads the player to operate a fictional character on violent and tricky adventure. The writer chooses this game to be analyzed since GTA: San Andreas is one of pop culture that covers racial issues in the United States, especially toward the stereotypes of African-American.

2. Developer and The Game

GTA: San Andreas is one of GTA series developed by Rockstar North and published by Rockstar Game. Rockstar is multinational video game developers and publishers that is based in California, United Stsates. GTA: San Andreas was first released on 26 October 2004 for PlayStasion 2. The game has been re-realised for several times on various platforms like Xbox, Xbox 360, Microsoft Windows, Mac OS, Fire OS, IOS, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Android, and Windows Phone.

In 2015, techtimes.com reported that according to Rockstar Games, GTA: San Andreas has sold more than 27.5 million copies worldwide and considered as top 15 best-selling video games of all time. Ever since the first realise, many reviewers praised this game due to its music, open-endedness, storyline and gameplay. However, the racial issues and violent content of this

game have become the source of public concern and controversy.This is the reason the writer chooses this game to be analyzed.

3. Object

The object of this study is an action adventure video game "GTA: San Andreas" including its storyline, gameplay, cutscenes and background music that are going to be analyzed in ergodic, textual and contextual aspects. The ergodic aspects will elaborate the gameplay, and interactivity of the player. The textual aspects will discuss the theme, character, setting, plot, conflict in the game through itsaural, verbal, and visual elements, while the contextual aspects will discuss the African-Americans stereotypes as reflected on this video game.

4. Theory

In analyzing the storyline, gameplay and cutscenes of *GTA: San Andreas*, the writer divides into three aspects. There are ergodic, textual, and contextual aspects.

4.1 Ergodic Aspect

Since the object of this research is an action adventure video game, interactivity of the player is important in order to unfold the story of the game. Video games as interactive media provide the player to interact with a virtual world inside the game. Aarseth Espen (1997) in Wolf (2003) explains that player activity, also called as ergodic aspects, becomes the

heart of video game experience. Stories are created during play and arise from the activity within the game missions that the player engages in. Due to its interactivity, playing an open adventure game will never actually be the same experience for one player and others.

4.2 Textual Aspect

In this study, the writer uses textual aspects to analyze characters, background story, and setting of the game. To support the textual aspect, audiovisual elements will be used by the writer. It allows a video game can be seen as a combination of spoken words, music, and visual arts. In addition, cinematography elements will be applied as modern videogames have been complemented with the scripts, voiced characters, and dramatic cutscenes.

4.2.1 Verbal and Aural

The writer will only analyze verbal and aural of the game from its voiced dialogues and its music. Dialogue plays an important part of a video game. It is verbal language used by the characters. Meanwhile, music is needed to create the atmosphere, nuance, ambiance and mood in the game.

4.2.2 Visual

The writer uses the distant camera to analyze the visual presentation especially the cutscenes of the game. Pratista in his book *Memahami Film* explains distances as the dimension of distance between the

camera and the object of the frame (2008:104). There are seven kinds of shot in distantcamera:

1. Extreme close up is the closest shot that shows the detailed parts of an object, for instance, part of face, such as ears, eyes, and nose (2008: 105)

2. Close up shows a part of the object, such as face, hand, foot, or other parts to show expression in a more detailed way (2008: 105).

3. Medium close-up shot shows the object from the chest to the head. It is usually used for shooting normal dialogue scenes (2008: 105).

4. Medium shot shows the object from the waist to head so the expression of the face starting to show (2008: 105).

5. Medium long shot shows the body of the object only appear from the knee to head (2008: 105).

6. Long shot is occured if the physical appearance of the object can be seen clearly but the background is still dominant (2008: 105).

7. Extreme long shot is a shot that shows the long distance between the camera and the object that the physical appearance of the object is small (2008: 105).

4.3 Contextual Aspect

Contextual aspects are the aspect which areindirectly related to the video game. Contextual elements emphasize the understanding of social phenomena through analysis of *GTA: San Andreas'* storyline, cutscenes,

and walkthrough. It allows the writer to explore the game and its relativity with stereotypes toward African-Americans.

4.3.1 Stereotypes

Cardwell (1996) in McLeod (2008) describes stereotype as an over generalized beliefs about a particular group or class of people. Stereotypes can be positive, neutral, or negative. Stereotypes are largely caused by the differences of the skin color. It occurs in many forms around the world and becomes a big stain on humanitarian. According to Perkins (1979), stereotypes usually focuse on the negative things and disadvantageous things, but sometimes stereotypes may reflect the reality.

Stereotypes are generally replicated in modern media, as well as in video games. Deskins (2013) states that stereotypes used in video games are created from two distinct areas. The first area is culture. From generation to generation stereotypes are inserted into culture. The second area is the beliefs. Stereotypes may reflect the truth, and a group may have some aspects of the stereotypical belief, and this leads to the common acceptance of the stereotype. Nevertheless, unlike television or movies, video games let the player to become a game character. In other words, stereotyping in video games allows the player to pretend to be a different person. Stereotypes in video games begin to stimulate a new form of racist expansion due to the player that

has assumed as a virtual character that interacted repeatedly as the game's walkthrough unfolded.

5. Method

Hariwijaya (2007) states that there are two ways of collecting data. The first is participatory observation.It happens when observers take part in the observed society. The second is non-participatory observation.It happenswhen observers do not participatein the observed society.In collecting and analyzing the data, the writer uses non-participantory observation. In addition, she also uses library research to find some information related to the topic. The information on the library research were collected from books, journals, and articles.

6. Analysis

Here is the analysis of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. In this chapter, thewriterwill elaborate ergodic, textualand contextual aspects of the game.

6.1 Ergodic Analysis

The devices used by the writer to play GTA San Andreas are a unit of personal computer and a game stick. The game stick was chosen instead of keyboard as it is considered to be more flexible and comfortable to use. Buttons used in either game stick or keyboard can be customized through setting menu as the player please. There are two language options for the

player to choose in GTA San Andreas, namely English and Spanish. The writer prefers English to Spanish in playing this game as it is easier to understand.

Gameplay of the game can simply interacting with the virtual environment by driving cars, buying outfits, dancing at clubs, working out in fitness centers, buying a house, and so on. Meanwhile, the games' main missions often require the player to participate in violent and harmful acts like drug dealing, gang wars, car theft, house robbery, and friends betrayal. Chaotic cause can lure attention from the authorities. In this case, the police will handle the small crimes like pointing guns at civilians, hurting pedestrians, or robbing vehicles. On the other hand, the military, the FBI, and the SWAT teams react to the higher crime levels.

The player controls Carl Johnson also known as "CJ". In order to attend his mother's funeral who was murdered, he returns to San Andreas after living in New York city for five years. Immediately upon returning to San Andreas, CJ is confronted by policemen, blamed for a crime he did not commit, and warned that he had better stay out of trouble. CJ misses his mother's funeral because of it. Later, he joins his old gang in order to protect his family and re-establishes it against the rival gangs that has killed his mother. CJ's gang, The Grove Street Families, gains power in Los Santos, even though their enemies, the Ballas and the Vagos, continue to harass them.

The writer completed the Los Santos mission which consists of twenty eight missions in five months of the writer's spare time. While playing this game, she did not only focus on the main missions, but also spent her time walking around Los Santos with or without transportation. She tended to build the main character's posture (CJ) with athletic body since it affected CJ's stamina and speeded when moving or carrying missions out. To get CJ's ideal posture cannot be done instantly. Hence the player should send CJ often to the fitness center near the ghetto and organize his dietary habit.

6.2 Textual Analysis

The textual analysis that will be discussed includes characters, storyline, elements of cinematography, setting and social environment of *GTA: San Andreas.*

6.2.1 Characters and background story of the game

The writer only analyzes the main protagonist, the main antagonist, and the major characters that appear in Los Santos missions.

1. Carl Johnson

Carl Johnson, well known as CJ, is the main protagonist character in *GTA: San Andreas*. He was dubbed by Chriss Bellard, also known as Young Malay. CJ is an African-American who lives in ghetto and a gang member.

Picture 1

Picture 2

The opening cutscene of the game shows CJ is coming back to Los Santos after living in Liberty City for five years. The reason for his return is to attend his mother's funeral that was killed by the rival gang. On his way to his home, CJ is blocked and harassed by the policemen whom he used to know long ago before he left his hometown. Picture 2 in medium close-up shot shows that CJ misses his mother's funeral ceremony because of the policemen and feels in grief as he was watching his mother's picture. Later, he joins his old gang named Grove Street Families. Due to some complicated situations, CJ and his gang have to deal with violence and crime.

2. Frank Tenpenny

Frank Tenpenny is a corrupt police officer and becomes the main antagonist character of *GTA San Andreas*. He was dubbed by Samuel L. Jackson.

Picture 3

Picture 4

Picture 5

Tenpenny : I'll take that.
CJ : Hey, that's my paper man. That's money.

First appearance of officer Tenpenny is in the opening cutscene of this game when he and his friends arresting CJ and taking CJ's money. Tenpenny is the leader of C.R.A.S.H. or the Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums division of the Los Santos Police Department.

3. Melvin Harris

Melvin Harris is known as Big Smoke and dubbed by Clifton Powell.Big Smoke considered as the second main antagonist characters of the game after officer Tenpenny.

| Picture 6 | Picture 7 |

Big Smoke : CJ, my dog! Whassup? Hey baby, you OK, man?
CJ : No, man, it's my Moms, homie.
Big Smoke : Hey, I don't know why this had to happen, but I promise you, I'm going to find out who killed your Moms! The streets is cold, dog. Like it says in the book, we are blessed and cursed.

Picture 6 in medium shot shows Big Smoke welcomes CJ that just returned to Los Santos and ask CJ to help the Grove Street Families to get back the power in Los Santos. He promises to help CJ to find out the

murderer who has killed his mother. Big Smoke later joins the Ballas, the Grove Street's main rival gang, in order to become involved in the drugs trade.

4. Sean Johnson

Sean Johnson, also known as Sweet, is CJ's older brother that dubbed by Faizon Love. He is the secondary protagonist in *GTA: San Andreas*. Sweet is the leader of the Grove Street Families.

Picture 8	**Picture 9**

CJ : I can't believe she's gone, man.
Sweet :That's another funeral you ran away from, fool. Just like Brian's.
CJ : Hey, she was my Momma too.
Sweet : Not for the past five years.

Picture 8 is taken in medium long shot to show that Sweet is angry at CJ for skipping their brother's (five years before CJ leaving Los Santos) and mother's funerals. At the beginning, he did not trust CJ for leaving their family to New York. Sweet later realized CJ's true intentions of staying and helping the Grove Street Families. He then decided to have Carl work for the gang. This makes their brotherly relationship fonder.

6.2.2 Setting and Social Environment

The game's setting of time is in 1992. The explanation is displayed on the opening cutscnene when CJ is at Francis International Airport, Liberty City, for his departure to Los Santos.

The game takes place in San Andreas that replicates California. There are three separate cities in San Andreas. The first city that has been unlocked from the beginning of the game is Los Santos while Las Venturas and San Fierro cannot be played before the player finished the Los Santos mission. Los Santos is a virtual city based on Los Angeles. There are many places that can be explored by the player. Los Santos consists of three different areas. First, there is Ganton (East Lost Santos) where CJ, Grove Street Family, and the rival gangs reside. It is described as shabby, rough, a symbol of poverty, prostitution, joblessness where the poor people, ethnic minorities and gangsters dwell. Second, there are Vinewood and Rodeo (South Los Santos) that replicates Hollywood and Beverly Hills. It is an area where the rich, famous people or the upper-classes live. The last, there is Central Los Santos that is marked by skyscrapers, hectic streets, and civic centres.

6.3 Contextual Analysis

The writer found some stereotypes showed in this action adventure video game through its main missions, cutscenes, dialogues (written or spoken) and its soundtrack.

GTA: San Andreas represents streotypes of three races, Asians, Mexicans, and African-Americans, yet the writer will analyze the stereotypes of the African-Americans only since the main character in this game is an African-American. Related to history, The Blacks have been stereotyped in some characteristics. There are five stereotypes showed in this game, namely,African-Americans are violent criminals; African-Americans are poor people who live in ghettos; African-Americans tend to love hip-hop as well as raps music and use slang language; and African-American males who love to wear baggy clothes.

1. The Savage

GTA: San Andreas shows that the blacks tend to have violent behaviour. It can be seen through the game's missions direct the writer to do violent and crime actions.

Picture 10

Picture 11

The stereotype of African-Americans' savage is presented in CJ's activities in the story. For instance, CJ frequently involves in a gang war, drive-by shootings, homicide, hurting the targetted people, and hijacking vehicles. Picture 10 in long shot shows that according to the mission CJ is directed to beat up the crack dealer. The blacks are reputed as wild and out of control. It proves that the violent profiling of African-Americanshave been perpetuated over and over. They commonly related with crime eventhough the FBI's record shows that the majority of crimes in the United States are caused by Hispanics and Caucasians. Yet, people tends to associatethe African-Americans with crime and violence.

2. Hip-hop and Gangsta Raps Music

GTA: San Andreas' sound tracks are filled with the songs that categorized in gangsta raps music. Gangsta rap is a subgenre of hip hop that reflects the violent lifestyles of African-American youths. It has upbeat tempo that is used to illustrate African-Americans are always on the run. They run to freed themselves from trouble, harassment, insecurity, and discrimination. The subject matter in its lyric commonly has caused controversy due to its violent meaning and its critical issues that expose the contradictions of American culture.

Here is some lyric from the original soundtrack of GTA: San Andreas entitled San Andreas or CJ rap by Young Malay.

Visual	
Audio

Twisted predicaments hostile positions. Tenpenny and Pulaski harass me. |

The lyric shows that throughout the game's missions, CJ has to face some complicated situations. He has to fight against the rival gangs, reestablish his old gang reputation, bring back his gang's influence in Los Santos, save his friends and his family. The condition is worsen by Tenpenny and other officers that keep harrashing CJ.

Visual	
Audio	 *cause the 'Dreas is full of gangsters homeboy, hands is the language for the 'bangers homeboy. And its dangerous homeboy.*

CJ warns that the dreas' or San Andreas is a dangerous area that full of gangsters. They use hand signs to comunicate with their gang members. Its lyrics portrayed anti-social behavior such as provocation, harassment, rejection of authority, vandalism, and so on.

3. Ghetto Inhabitant

One of racial issues in *GTA: San Andreas* is marked by housing segregation between minorities and majorities. Throughout the game's story unfolded, the writer sees that CJ and his Black-American friends become ghetto residents in a poor inner-city area. Ghetto is used to describe authorized isolated areas occupied by ethnic minorities.

Picture 12

The ghetto as shown in the picture consists of rustic houses and located near the bridge in deindustrialized area. It is inversely to the rich environment across the bridge that filled with luxurious apartments, skyscrapers, and others fancy buildings.

4. Baggy Clothes and Headbands

GTA: San Andreas shows that The African-American males likely to wear baggy pants or oversized clothes and headbands. This, leads to an impression of people who lack of self-respect because their tendency to wear pants below the waist and almost falling down.

Picture 13

Picture 13 is taken in long shot shows The Groove Street Families gang members wear saggy trousers and oversized flanel top or T-shirts in the same color. The baggy clothes are closely related to hip hop music while

the headbands or bandanas tied at the forehead are used as a symbol that they belong to a certain gang. It draws to a common image that African-Americans are dangerous because their membership in a gang. Moreover, they do not blend well with the majority groups.

5. Ebonics

Through the game's dialogue, the African-Americans tend to use ebonics in their conversations. The following dialogue from *Cleaning the Hood* mission is the example of ebonic language used by CJ and his African-American fellows.

CJ : Whassup, ya'll?
Sweet : Whassup, CJ?
Ryder : What's crackin'?
Sweet : Man, all they care about is smokin' and money.
Big Smoke : You can't knock a homie's hustle, Sweet.
Sweet : Them marks ain't soldiers. They're idiots tryin' to be business men.
Big Smoke : Yeah, but they're down with us, man.

Ebonics or sometimes called "Black English" refers to the unique dialect that considered as African-Americans way to pronounce English words. The dialogue above shows that ebonic has its own distinctive pronounciation or speech pattern, vocabulary, and grammatical rules. For instance, ebonics pronounciation usually omits the final consonant in words like *crakin'* (cracking), *smokin'* (smoking), or *tryin'* (trying).In this case, ebonics has also lead to a general stereotyping that the African-American's are uneducated due to their tendency in mispronouncing words.

7. Conclusion

The United States is considered as a diverse country where racial issues and segregation have come and gone due to its multicultural populations. Stereotypes are beliefs about people or group based on their membership in a particular class of people. Stereotypes based on ethnicity, or occupation are common in societies especially in multicultural country like the United States of America. In conclusion, stereotyping against subordinate groups, especially the African-Americans, are still occurs until now. This iseasily found in the popular culture media like video games. It can be proven through *GTA: San Andreas* that portrays African-Americans such as people who lack of education since they tend to mispronounce words, as the people who have the violent behaviour, as the people who love rap music and wearing oversized clothes, as the people who live in a ghetto area which is a symbol of poverty. These situations make the African-Americans have been viewed as inferior by some negative stereotypes and false beliefs that are shown in American media.

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