Sexualization (Video Games)

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KEYWORDS
video games, gender roles, stereotypes, sexist gender representations, female character, body image

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
This variable aims at identifying how bodies and movements of (mostly female) characters are portrayed in video games. This is often done by coding specific bodily attributes of characters or to what degree certain body parts are covered (or not covered) by clothing.

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION
The variable sexualization is an indicator commonly used in studies investigating the depiction of gender roles in video games and especially in studies aiming to identify stereotypical or sexist portrayals of women in games. Other variables that are often considered in such analyses are character attributes like being physically capable in terms of strength and agility (which is often how male characters are portrayed; Lynch et al., 2016) or whether characters are perpetrators or victims in violent interactions.

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
Content analytic codings of stereotypical or sexist gender representations can be complemented by surveys among players to ask about their perception of the games they play. In addition, researchers may consider using computer vision methods for, e.g., detecting the amount of skin shown by characters (if they use screenshots or printed ads as coding materials).

EXAMPLE STUDIES
see Table 1

Table 1. *Example studies.*

Coding Material	Measure	Operationalization	Unit(s) of analysis	Source(s) (reported reliability of coding)
20-minute segment of game play	Sexualization by clothing	sexually revealing clothing, nudity (none, partial, full, not applicable, cannot tell), appropriateness of attire (appropriate, inappropriate, not applicable, cannot tell)	Primary and secondary characters	Downs & Smith, 2010 (Scott's Pi = .87; .90; .90)

Coding Material	Measure	Operationalization	Unit(s) of analysis	Source(s) (reported reliability of
5-minute segments of recorded gameplay after "the player had taken control of the character's onscreen action" (Lynch et al., 2016, p. 571)	Sexualization by clothing	Bare skin between armpits and bottom of the breasts (both dummy coded: bare skin vs. no bare skin)	Target female character	Lynch et al., 2016 (α = .70)
20-minute segment of game play	Sexualization by size of body parts and proportions	body proportion (realistic, unrealistic, not applicable, cannot tell), breast size (flat, average, voluptuous, cannot tell), waist size (disproportionately small, average, disproportionately large, cannot tell)	Primary and secondary characters	Downs & Smith, 2010 (Scott's Pi = .82; .98; .88)
5-minute segments of recorded gameplay after "the player had taken control of the character's onscreen action" (Lynch et	Sexualization by size of body parts and proportions	Breast proportion to body size (dummy coded: proportionate vs. disproportionate)	Target female character	Lynch et al., 2016 (α = .81)
20-minute segment of game play	Sexualization by specific behavior(s)	sex talk (dummy coded: present vs. absent); sexual behavior (dummy coded: present vs. absent)	Interactions between characters	Downs & Smith, 2010 (Scott's Pi = .99; 1.00)
5-minute segments of recorded gameplay after "the player had taken control of the character's onscreen action" (Lynch et al., 2016, p. 571)	Sexualization by specific behavior(s)	presence of sexualized movement (dummy coded, "unnecessary undulation or jiggling that drew attention to their body in a sexual manner", Lynch et al., 2016, p. 572)	Target female character	Lynch et al., 2016 (α = .75)

Coding Material	Measure	Operationalization	Unit(s) of analysis	Source(s) (reported reliability of
5-minute segments of recorded gameplay after "the player had taken control of the character's onscreen action" (Lynch et al., 2016, p. 571)	Physical capability	dummy coded: engagement in feats of physical strength or agility vs. no engagement in feats of physical strength or agility	Target female character	Lynch et al., 2016 (α = .84)

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