

Project Proposal - Shaun T (2004667) *by Shaun Tierney*

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Diversity in Fighting Games and Character Design

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Diversity in Fighting Games and Character Design

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Introduction

In this proposal, we will be going over the essential aims and objectives to my project along with addressing potential assets, resources, plans and research methods and methodologies. We will be briefly going over the history of fighting games and talking about how diversity is or is not prevalent throughout.

Background Information

Fighting games are a genre of video games in which the player engages in combat with an opponent with the expressed purpose of defeating said opponent. The games are normally full of unique move sets, abilities, and characters. These characters often have unique designs, quite different from others within the same game. This may be due to their appearance resembling their move set or fighting style to give the player a better idea on how they would play, allow them to stand out in a roster, or a number of varied reasons. Having a diverse roster of characters and designs will undoubtedly bring in eyes to any fighting game and aid it in standing out from its competitors. Discussion online has brought up the topic of diversity in the rosters of fighting games. Talk like, "(I have seen people complain) ...about SF6 having more diversity, a third gender option for WT, and accusing Capcom of "pandering"..." [1].

However, on the other hand many people and players are celebrating the diversity in newer fighting games "Capcom deserves a lot of credit for making it a priority to design fighters that appeal to a wide audience. In terms of race, nationality, gender and fighting style... Street Fighter 6 is very inclusive and reflects the diversity of the franchise's fan base." [2]

My written dissertation study would first begin with the history of fighting games. I would look at early titles such as Karate Champ (1984) [3], Kung-Fu (1985) [4] and the original Street Fighter (1987) [5]. From there I will touch on games old and new and compare them and their diversity and representation within their roster of characters. I will look at games such as the newer Streetfighter 6 [6], the Mortal Combat [7] series, and Guilty Gear [8] to name a few.

Moving on from that, I will discuss different character designers for these games and their backgrounds before moving onto the characters themselves. Looking through these series I will then discuss the diversity in the base roster of characters comparing titles of the same series over time as well as comparing different series as well. Discussion points for this will be character's builds, gender, race, and other such points. I will also be looking into the audience of fighting games to attempt to draw lines between international representation in the game and its players.

As for my practical work I will be creating characters for a theoretical fighting game, designing them from scratch. I will attempt to design characters to fit preestablished fighting game roles (agile glass canons, slow heavy hitters, ranged fighters, etc.). With these characters I will then create 2D sprite sheets for them, including idle animations, intro and outro animations, their unique attacks and potentially more. With a completed sprite sheet, I would then attempt to put the character into the MUGEN [9] engine as a playable character.

Aims & Objectives

Some aims for my project would be as such:

1. To look back on the history and development of notable fighting games through the years. Here I would discuss the progression fighting games went through to get where they are today.
2. To investigate the international representation within these popular fighting games and their audience. This would be looking at, gender, race, sexual orientation, builds and more among the cast and audience.

Has the audience changed over time? Who do these games attempt to sell too? Does this reflect in the game's representation.

3. Analyse accuracy. Taking some examples of the diverse cast, I will look over how accurately some of their character designs are portrayed within the game.
4. Apply findings to my own work. Attempt to use people's responses to aid in creating my own characters for my theoretical fighting game.

Some objectives I have for this project are:

1. Conduct a literature review. Review any existing literature on diversity in gaming and character representation.
2. Look into the demographics. Analyse the demographics of games and specific characters. Are people of a (race, gender, sexuality, etc.) drawn to a character of the same (race, gender, sexuality, etc.) over other characters?
3. Player perception. Conduct surveys or interviews with players to gather insights into their perceptions of diversity in fighting game characters and how representation affects their gaming experience. How do they feel about the portrayal of their (race, gender, sexuality, etc.)?
4. Compare Cultural Depictions. Compare depictions of diverse characters across different fighting games when relating to their regional origin and cultures.

Methodology

For this project I will be looking, mainly, into more of the history of fighting games and analysing their diversity. However, I will also be looking for others' opinions on such diversity and their representation. For this, I will send out questionnaires to people within the fighting games scene as well as casual fans of fighting games.

I will be using a mainly phenomenological approach during this project as I would like to find out people's opinions and how they view diversity in fighting games. Is it enough? Should it be more diverse? Is this specific instance of diversity accurate? My main strategy for this project is that of a literature review, going over the progression of diversity in fighting games via my own research and looking into secondary research as well to back up my claims. On top of this I will also be conducting primary research via surveys. For my

sample group I will be taking answers from a variety of different people within the fighting game scene as well as casual fans, aiming to get a wide variety of diverse people. The main ethical issue I foresee would be within the questionnaire. To correlate answers to a person or their (race, gender, sexuality, etc.) I will need to have people potentially fill in their: name, age, pronouns, race, sexuality, etc, in order to find their opinions on certain portrayals. I would need to insure that their information would not be used for anything outside of my project and would be destroyed after reporting my findings for this project.

Resources & Planning

In terms of resources, I will require a computer and (or) laptop to complete my research and my practical work. In addition to this I will be using both a sketchbook and drawing tablet to help me design my characters. Some software I will be using will be Photoshop (2023) [10] and Clip Studio Paint (v 2.2.0) [11]. For my written I will require the use of Microsoft Word, Excel and Forms. On top of this I will need a sample group of about 20-30 people preferably, all within the fighting game fanbase with a diverse spread between them.

With all this laid out, all of the above will be necessary for me to complete and aid me in my project. I will aim to complete my projects to the best of my abilities in the time given.

References

- [1] Reddit User T-Ragemar, *"So do people here think SF6 is "woke"?"*, Reddit r/StreetFighter, accessed on October 16th 2023, Found online here: https://www.reddit.com/r/StreetFighter/comments/130qzde/so_do_people_here_think_sf6_is_woke/
- [2] L.Inglis, *"Street Fighter 6's Diverse Starting Roster Is Worth Celebrating"*, CBR, accessed on October 16th 2023, Found online here: <https://www.cbr.com/street-fighter-6-roster-diversity-capcom/>
- [3] Karate Champ, *Videogame*, Technōs Japan, Arcade Game, 1984
- [4] "Kung-Fu", *Videogame*, Irem Software Engineering, Arcade Game, 1985

- [5] "Street Fighter", *Videogame Series*, CAPCOM Co, 1987-Present
- [6] "Streetfighter 6", *Videogame*, CAPCOM Co, PC, 2023
- [7] "Mortal Combat", *Videogame Series*, Midway Games, 1992-Present
- [8] "Guilty Gear", *Videogame Series*, Arc System Works, 1998-Present
- [9] "MUGEN", *Game Engine*, Elecbyte, 19995
- [10] "Photoshop", Adobe Inc., 2023 Version, Available here:
<https://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html>
- [11] "Clip Studio Paint", Version 2.2.0, Available here:
<https://www.clipstudio.net/en/dl/>

Project Proposal - Shaun T (2004667)

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

65/100

Intro / A&O (500 words)		
Project title; Identification of a specific problem to be investigated; Well-defined aims and SMART objectives; Explaining why this project is worth doing; Discussion of what the project needs to do in order to be a success; Description any deliverables that will be produced at the end of the project - Introduction to document gives reader an overview of what to expect in proposal, well done. - Interesting elaboration on a topic that is contextual to your field of practice. - Discussion on what is essential to the success of the project described along with potential deliverables.	40	27
Background to the Project (500 words)		
Description of how the work to be done by in the project relates to the work identified in the literature review; Discussion of any ethical issues raised by the project Identifying what has already been done within the field;	40	26

Topic familiarity; Brief literature review using appropriate sources – 6-8 journal papers and book chapters rather than just websites; Selection of relevant models & concepts - The project requirements outlined give a good breakdown and description of work to be carried out in order to successfully answer the topic chosen. - A good amount of topic familiarity evident. - Wide range of topical research planned and explained. - Potentially more authored entries could be present. (Books, articles etc.) - Be careful when choosing appropriate references for your dissertation. Try and keep away from referencing things like reddit posts/users in your work.		
Document Presentation		
Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation; Flow of narrative/fluency; Coherence; Word processed ; Correct use of referencing with	20	12

bibliography; Strict word limit - Bibliography present with use of IEEE referencing throughout. - Document has good flow of narrative and an honest representation of own expectations relating to project. - Correct punctuation, spelling and grammar used throughout document.		
TOTAL	100	65

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