# Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Xbox Live: Examining Minority Gamers' Responses and Rate of Adoption to Changes in Xbox Live

Kishonna L. Gray[1]

## Abstract

This article examines the response of minority gamers as they adopt new innovations in Xbox Live. Using diffusion of innovation theory, specific attention is given to gamers' rate of adoption of the new Xbox Live environment, which was a recent update to the Xbox Live interface. By employing virtual ethnography, observations, and interviews reveal that gaming duration and gender are significant factors in identifying a gamer's successful rate of adoption of the new innovation. Female participants reveal that Xbox Live intentionally targets males as the default gamer and enact changes based on their needs. The research concludes with a plea to Xbox Live to acknowledge minority gamers such as women to incorporate their needs within the decision-making process of new innovations.

## Keywords

Xbox Live, video games, gender, convergence, diffusion of innovation theory

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to provide exploratory data on the disparity that exists among minority users within Xbox Live in adopting new changes and innovations. I hypothesize that changes are made with the default gamer in mind— the White male. By employing virtual ethnography, Xbox live users in this study reveal that the adoption of new innovations is forced and little assistance is given in learning the changes within the system. This study highlights some differences that may exist among types of gamers (age, gender, race) in adopting new innovations. The overall focus of the research examines what factors contribute to the successful or unsuccessful adoption of technologies in Xbox Live and what role Xbox Live administrators play in this adoption.

As Henry Jenkins (2004) explains, we live in an era of convergence: technological, economic, aesthetic, organic, global—and they all intersect to redefine and reconstruct how we interact with mediated environments. Xbox Live, as one of those mediated environments, has evolved from a mere console video game to a massive entertainment outlet providing games, movies, TV, music, social networking, and more. By incorporating old and new media to provide choice for the user, Microsoft administrators have positioned Xbox to reach millions of individuals who may not necessarily be gamers, but who may decide to use the console to satisfy varying entertainment needs. As Quinn (2005) pointed out,

the popularity of media convergence originates from the need to reach as many individuals as possible to grant them unlimited access to information when and wherever they want it. Although Quinn was referring to news media, the statement readily applies to other entities striving for convergence. Xbox has continuously repositioned itself as a convergent medium and has successfully maintained a following of users. However, with a recent update to the Xbox Live System, many users felt left behind by the dramatic changes incurred by the update. Female gamers of color specifically stated their positions in blogs and other social media outlets. Even more damaging, the default gamer, the male, uses examples such as these to support his position on why girls should not game. To help contextualize the changes in Xbox Live, several of the new features included the following: Bing voice search, beacons, cloud saves, improved Netflix app, ESPN app, Xbox Companion app for Windows phone users, as well as a revamped home page among others(Miller, 2011). Several of these additions made daily gaming difficult as some gamers explain. This article will highlight the experiences of these minority gamers examining the factors that

[1]Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY, USA

**Corresponding Author:**
Kishonna L. Gray, School of Justice Studies, Eastern Kentucky University, 467 Stratton 521 Lancaster Avenue, Richmond, KY 40475, USA
Email: kishonna.gray@eku.edu

led to their successful (or unsuccessful) adoption of this innovation in Xbox Live. But before discussing these changes, it is imperative to provide coverage to changes in Xbox Live over time.

## Overview of Changes in Xbox Live

Microsoft Xbox has implemented several upgrades to the Xbox Live gaming space over time. Many of these changes were in response to continued verbal abuse (excessive cursing, sexism, racist, heterosexism, etc.). One upgrade in particular, gamer zones, was introduced that would only allow players to interact with other gamers that match their playing style (as cited in Gray, 2011). When a gamer creates a profile, they select a gamer zone: Recreation, Family, Pro, and Underground. Gamers select these zones based on the description given when creating the profile. "Recreation" is for casual gamers. "Family" is for gamers who prefer a family safe zone. "Pro" is for competitive gamers who enjoy a challenge, and "Underground" is for gaming where anything goes as long as it does not violate the Xbox Live Terms of Use (Xbox Live, 2009). In practice, these gamer zones do not mean much as they do not affect gameplay or the matching of players in online games Xbox also uses a feedback system that allows gamers to file complaints about others through the system (Gray, 2011). But as that study also found, these changes did not affect gameplay or reduce verbal attacks.

There were further upgrades to Xbox Live implemented in November 2008. This upgrade was called the "New Xbox Experience," which featured the addition of Netflix (instant movie streaming), the forced creation of avatars,[1] and the introduction of the party chat system (the party chat allows for up to eight gamers to enter a private chat room; Geddes, 2008). The party system has actually proven useful for gamers who experience verbal abuse in this space because users can self-segregate and interact with gamers they choose to (Gray, 2012). Although the addition of this feature in Xbox Live limits integration of gamers, it does provide an outlet for gamers who may have previously experienced verbal attacks such as racism and sexism.

As has been stated, an important feature of Xbox live is its communication abilities. The communication features actually aid in the adoption of innovations deployed by Xbox Live. Many gamers communicate with one another to keep each other abreast or to even troubleshoot and identify how to perform new tasks. Since communication channels are indirect in Xbox Live to its users (it is a top-down communication style), users often rely on one another. The communication features help many users embrace change which is an important aspect of media convergence—the public's willingness to adopt new technologies and embrace the change. This captures the essence of Everett Rogers's (1962) diffusion of innovation theory and directly reflects the disconnect present with Xbox Live and many of its users.

## Diffusion of Innovation Theory

> The rate of convergence will be uneven within a given culture, with those who are most affluent and most technologically literate becoming the early adapters and other segments of the population struggling to catch up. (Henry Jenkins)

Everett Rogers (2003) defines diffusion as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). He further identifies four main elements of diffusion of innovation as the innovation itself, communication, time, and the social system adopting the innovation. Diffusion of innovation theory refers to several parts within the diffusion process, how they interact, facilitate, or impede adoption of an innovation, and how they can be controlled or manipulated to maximize adoption (Surry, 1997). Rogers (2003) discusses four main aspects of diffusion theory in his *Diffusion of Innovations* book: the innovation-decision process, the attributes of innovations, the categories of adopter, and the change agent. For the purposes of the current research, several of these processes do not have to be discussed. For instance, the decision process is an aspect that does not apply to users within Xbox Live. The innovations are forced on them by the administrator. But to briefly describe this aspect of diffusion theory, the decision process involves the decision maker moving from an initial understanding of the innovation, to adoption, to seeking reinforcement that the decision was the right one. There are also several stages involved in the decision process: the knowledge stage, the persuasion stage, the decision stage, the implementation stage, and the confirmation stage (Rogers, 2003). Again, these steps are absent when users in Xbox Live adopt innovations. These innovations are mandatory and are decided on by the Xbox Live administrators.

The second aspect of diffusion theory involves attributes of the innovation. Rogers (2003) defines the rate of adoption of an innovation as the speed that an innovation is adopted by members of a social system. This aspect directly relates to users in Xbox Live. As Rogers (2003) outlined, the rate of adoption of an innovation can be explained by the following attributes: (a) the relative advantage of the innovation; (b) the ease of trying the innovation (compatibility), the complexity of the innovation; (c) the ease of trying the innovation; and (d) how readily observable the benefits of the innovation are to others (p. 229). Although Xbox Live uses beta testers for games and other applications within the system, there is no way to assess the ease of adoption of an innovation within a system of 20 million plus users. But what researchers find is the most significant aspect of the rate of adoption is relative advantage. Innovations having the greatest reward with the least risk will be accepted most rapidly (Fliegel & Kivlin, 1966). And although this aspect does not directly apply to

users, Xbox Live does adjust and modify changes according to reward and risk. For instance, the Gamer Zones were implemented to ensure that younger gamers were not exposed to harsh conditions that can be present in hardcore gaming environments (cursing, racism, sexism, etc.).

To get back to the characteristics of the innovation, diffusion theory focuses on the advantages of the new innovation as well as its compatibility for users. According to users, Xbox has been diligent in adhering to the needs of the gamer/user. Changes most often reflect changes that Xbox Live users want. However, given the number of users, it is unrealistic to assume that all users will be accommodated.

Even though Xbox Live requires complete adoption of innovation by all users, the adopter categories, associated with the third tenet, are directly applicable. The rate of successful adoption in Xbox Live depends on the type of user. The five adopter categories are (a) Innovators, (b) Early Adopters, (c) Early Majority, (d) Late Majority, and (e) Laggards. Each is explained below as they relate to users in Xbox Live. This facet of diffusion of innovation theory will form the basis of understanding minority users in Xbox Live.

Innovators are the first individuals to adopt an innovation. For the sake of the current research, adoption of an innovation in Xbox Live encompasses the time it takes users to learn to use the new innovation in Xbox Live. Innovators are willing to take risks, tend to be the youngest in age, have the highest social class, have great financial lucidity, are very social, and have the closest contact to scientific sources and interactions with other innovators (Rogers, 2003, p. 282). With regard to Xbox Live, the Innovators are the users/gamers who can easily adopt an innovation. These individuals are typically younger in age, may have some college education, and have the resources and ability to be able to spend hours within the Xbox Live gaming space. The amount of time a user is able to devote in Xbox Live is a key factor in determining their rate of adoption.

Early Adopters are the second category of individuals who adopt an innovation. Early Adopters tend to be younger in age, have a higher social status, more financial lucidity, advanced education, and are more socially forward than late adopters (Rogers, 2003, p. 283). Within Xbox Live, Early Adopters are very similar to Innovators. These individuals have close relationships with Innovators (they interact regularly) and rely on the Innovators to inform them about new innovations. There was not a huge difference between these two types. The Innovators essentially told the Early Adopters what to do and how to navigate the space—leading them both to adopt the innovation rather simultaneously. It is imperative to note that the majority of these individuals also had ample time to devote to the changes associated with the New Xbox Live Environment.

The Early Majority adopt an innovation after a varying amount of time. The time of adoption is significantly longer than the Innovators and Early Adopters. Early Majority tend to be slow in the adoption process, have above average social status, and have contact with early adopters (Rogers, 2003, p. 283). Within this study, the Early Majority were individuals who worked or attended school for the majority of the day and were unable to keep up with continued changes in Xbox Live. These individuals relied on their friends who were Innovators and Early Adopters to stay abreast of changes in Xbox Live. These individuals held no opinion either way regarding changes in Xbox Live. Many of these individuals also sought outside assistance to keep up with change, such as seeking out blogs, Xbox Live forums, and other Internet-based information. Although this group was not an Innovator or an Early Adopter, they did have the necessary and needed social capital and resources to stay up to date.

Individuals in the Late Majority category adopt an innovation after the average member of the social system. Late Majority tend to be skeptical about an innovation, have below average social status, very little financial lucidity, have contact with others in the Late Majority, and have very little opinion leadership (Rogers, 2003, p. 283). Late Majority members in Xbox Live were highly skeptical of Microsoft and Xbox Live. They were critical of changes and often made remarks challenging the intent of changes in Xbox Live as is seen in many of users' private blogs. Members in this category criticized the rising class division in Xbox Live and recognized the class divisions were attributed to changes made such as the New Xbox Live Environment. For example, Xbox Live users have the ability to sign up for Call of Duty: Elite, a paid, premium, membership allowing those who sign up with early access to maps, missions, and other game content. Gears of War Season Pass is another premium membership option requiring members to pay for extra or early content. Because these two premium memberships require additional money, many gamers are unable to take advantage of them leading to class divisions among gamers.

Laggards are individuals who are the last to adopt an innovation. Unlike other categories, they show little to no opinion leadership. They tend to have an aversion to change agents and tend to be advanced in age. Laggards typically tend to be focused on traditional things, are likely to have the lowest social status, have the lowest financial lucidity, tend to be the oldest of the adopters, and tend to be in contact with only family and close friends (Rogers, 2003, p. 284). Laggards in Xbox Live are similar to those in the Late Majority, especially in regard to their criticism of Microsoft and Xbox Live. Laggards in Xbox Live are traditional in the sense that they resist and/or lack interest in change. Much of their resistance is because of an inability to understand the changes. Oftentimes, Laggards refuse to download the changes deployed by Xbox Live and game for a significant amount of time offline (if system updates are not downloaded, a user is unable to participate online). They all ultimately adopt the new innovation but with much resistance. From the Laggard perspective, Xbox has not taken steps to

ensure all users can readily understand what the changes are and why they should be implemented. Within this study, age was not a factor in determining one's adopter category.

The final tenet of diffusion of innovation is the change agent or the social system associated with innovation. As Rogers (1995) states,

> . . . diffusion occurs within a social system. The social structure of the system affects the innovation's diffusion in several ways. The social system constitutes a boundary within which an innovation diffuses. (p. 24)

Although there are six major components within the social system, for the purposes of this research, only the following three will be examined: (a) information about how the diffusion occurred within the system (system norms); (b) information on how the social structure impacted the diffusion, either positively or negatively (social structure); and (c) how the communication structure impacted the diffusion (communication structure; Rogers, 1995). Changes deployed within Xbox Live actually circumvent the tenets of diffusion of innovation and the decision-making process. The processes of decision making are eliminated first because an authority (in this case, Xbox administrator's) has already decided that the innovation will be forced upon users within the community. System norms in Xbox Live privilege the administrator's decision-making process of forced adoption by all users. The communication structure in place is sufficient according to many gamers who identify as Innovators and Early Adopters. These individuals have the willingness and time to digest information provided by Xbox Live related to the new innovations. In the following sections, I will examine the method employed to further uncover minority user's rate of successful or unsuccessful adoption of the new changes in Xbox Live.

## Virtual Ethnographic Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to identify the success rate of minority users' adoption of new innovations in Xbox Live. Virtual ethnography was used. For a period of 10 months, I conducted a virtual ethnographic study of the methods employed by Xbox Live users to either learn new innovations or resist changes. Observations were conducted within the Xbox Live gaming community. Specifically, I observed gamers while they interacted within the Xbox Live home page, while they navigated new applications, and while they played the following games: *Gears of War 2* and *3, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*, and *Call of Duty Black Ops*.

I specifically observed 19 active users in Xbox Live. It is important to note the total number of registered users exceeds 40 million(Raby, 2012). My intent is not to generalize to the larger Xbox Live population, but rather privilege the experiences of gamers that are most often ignored: women and people of color. Because Xbox Live terms of service restrict

soliciting, I used snowball sampling to generate the sample. This led to overrepresentation of males and African Americans in the study. Although the core of the sample comprised these 19 individuals, the nature of the gaming space allowed me to observe hundreds of gamers. We would game with the larger Xbox Live community.

I also documented the virtual observations, and field notes were coded and analyzed using the method outlined by Lichterman (1996), which combines the methodological strategies of Burowoy et al. (1991) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). I also conducted in-depth interviews with the core sample. These were open-ended and semistructured interviews. Institutional review board approval and consent were obtained prior to conducting any interviews. All interviews were taped using one of several methods: digitally recorded using private chat in Xbox Live, outside the Xbox Live space using Yahoo or MSN instant messenger, or by combining audio, textual, and visual in Skype or ooVoo. All interviews were then transcribed and coded for a more detailed analysis. The participants' demographic information is located in Table 1. Table 1 also includes educational and employment information as well as years and time on Xbox Live.

## Findings and Analysis

Previously, Xbox rolled out minor changes over time to allow the user to become familiar with new innovations. The most recent update to the Xbox Live system, according to users, was rather dramatic leading many to lag behind others in their rate of successful adoption. Xbox Live users expressed their personal reflections regarding the changes. I observed these comments in personal blogs of users, which led to this study.

Table 2 illustrates several items that emerged from the interviews and observations. First, the adopter category is listed, which identifies the participant selected adopter category. These categories were assigned based off of participant responses to questions related to their education level, hours played a week, ease of adopting new innovations, and so on. The next category, labeled New Xbox Live Environment Adopter Category refers to participant's ability to adopt the newest innovation unveiled by Xbox Live. Again, based on their responses, they were assigned a particular adopter category. The table also reiterates their weekly gaming duration in addition to key demographic traits. As will be discussed, these items proved most instrumental in uncovering Xbox Live users' successful rate of adoption.

### Weekly Gaming Duration

Overwhelmingly, hours played each week was the most significant factor determining adoption rates among users. *KrazyKush* and *PoppinSmoke* exceeded 50 hours of gameplay each week. They suggest that successful adoption of the new innovation relied heavily on how much time a gamer is willing and able to devote.

**Table 1.** Participant Demographic Summary

| Gamertag[a] | Age (years)/ gender | Race/ ethnicity | Education | Employed FT/PT/IC | Years on Xbox Live | Gaming hours/week |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| silentassassin321 | 27/Male | B/AfrAmer | College degree | Y/FT | 9 | 25-30 |
| PoppinSmoke | 30/Male | W/Latino | High school diploma | N | 4 | 50+ |
| KrazyKush | 30/Male | B/AfrAmer | High school diploma | N | 10 | 50+ |
| ChrisIsNice | 32/Male | B/AfrAmer | High school diploma | N | 9 | 40-45 |
| LightzOut | 24/Male | B/AfrAmer | College degree | Y/PT | 4 | 40-45 |
| ApocalypseNow | 27/Male | B/AfrAmer | High school diploma | Y/FT | 8 | 30-35 |
| xxRobotechxx: | 22/Male | B/Latino | Some college | Y/PT | 6 | 30-35 |
| MissUnique | 28/Female | B/AfrAmer | Master's degree | Y/FT | 7 | 5-10 |
| ThugMisses | 31/Female | B/AfrAmer | Master's degree | Y/FT | 6 | 5-10 |
| cdXFemmeFataleXcd | 29/Female | B/AfrAmer | College degree | Y/FT | 6 | 10-15 |
| ShedaBoss | 26/Female | B/AfrAmer | Graduate school | Y/PT/IC | 5 | 10-15 |
| MizzBoss917 | 23/Female | B/Latina | Some college | N/IC | 3 | 15-20 |
| XpkX RicanMami | 23/Female | B/Latina | Some college | N/IC | 3 | 10-15 |
| XpkX MammaMia | 20/Female | Latina | High school diploma | N | 2 | 20-25 |
| YeahSheBlaze | 19/Female | B/AfrAmer | Some college | N/IC | 4 | 20-25 |
| StealthNoob101 | 22/Male | W/EuroAmer | Some college | N/IC | 3 | 25-30 |
| DukeNukem | 21/Male | W/EuroAmer | Some college | N/IC | 5 | 25-30 |
| LilSigPi | 26/Male | W/EuroAmer | College degree | Y/FT | 7 | 15-20 |
| KillaSigPi | 32/Male | W/EuroAmer | Some college | Y/FT | 7 | 20-25 |

*Note.* B = Black; W = White; AfrAmer = African American; EuroAmer = European American; Y = yes; N = No; FT = full time; PT = part time; IC = in college.
a. A gamertag in Xbox Live is the universal username that identifies a user in all facets of the Xbox Live environment. A pseudonym was created for all participants.

*KrazyKush*: You ain't gon get it if you don't get in 'nur [there] and try it out. But you know, I aint got a job. So I got all day to figure shit out. That's why I be tryna help my boys when they get on. Dis is my job.

*MzMygrane*[2]: How are you able to explain to other gamers in a way that they can understand?

*KrazyKush*: I put it in terms dey unda'stan'. I guess I'm used to da language dat Xbox use and I can relay dat to e'erbody else.

*MzMygrane*: So you have to essentially take classes to successful adopt the changes? But the changes are made for you already right?

*PoppinSmoke*: Right, but people be thinking they can just download the update and everything will be crystal clear. That ain't happening. It's like class. They even called the tutorials Xbox 101. Dis shit college level

(*ApocalypseNow starts laughing and chimes in*)

*ApocalypseNow*: I don't mind the change, but how in the fuck do I work this shit now? We supposed to watch seminars on how to learn how to figure it all out. I ain't got time for that. I got my kid showing me how to work this shit now (*laughs*). I could just stay disconnected and keep it as is. But if you not online, you get left behind.

*KrazyKush*: That's why people don't get it. It's on another level. I ain't saying that some of us stupid, but if you get the technical language then you good.

*ChrisIsNice*: But even aside from all dat, if you ain't got time to figure shit out, then you won't figure it out. You'll get left behind. You might eventually catch up, but e'erbody'll be passed you by then.

Their assessment provided such insight into the successful rate of adoption by Xbox Live users. Even though tutorials are provided by Xbox Live about the innovations, it still seems that one would need to spend a significant amount of time just learning to navigate the changes.

*KrazyKush*: Now *Mygrane*, I ain't gon lie. I'm able to do all dis shit cuz I sit home all day. So when my boys gone to work, I ain't got nobody to game with. So I spend time watching the tutorials, look up YouTube videos that people put up, check out Xbox forums, blogs, all dat shit. I got time to learn it. And if I only had a few hours a day to absorb it all, it would take me way longer.

*MzMygrane*: Why do you think Xbox made it so hard to learn the new changes?

*KrazyKush*: Dey didn't make it hard. I think Xbox just don't know how to talk to all their gamers. They can talk to the super geeky ones, like me. But for super smart people like you and ur homegirls, yall smart. But yall not techie, geek smart. Dat's who Xbox talking to.

**Table 2.** Participant Analysis

| Gamertag | Age (years)/ gender | Race/ ethnicity | Gaming hours/ week | Adopter category[a] | NXLE adopter category |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KrazyKush | 30/Male | B/AfrAmer | 50+ | I | I |
| PoppinSmoke | 30/Male | W/Latino | 50+ | I | I |
| ChrisIsNice | 32/Male | B/AfrAmer | 40-45 | EA | I |
| LightzOut | 24/Male | B/AfrAmer | 40-45 | EA | L |
| ApocalypseNow | 27/Male | B/AfrAmer | 30-35 | I | LM |
| xxRobotechxx: | 22/Male | B/Latino | 30-35 | EM | LM |
| silentassassin321 | 27/Male | B/AfrAmer | 25-30 | EM | LM |
| StealthNoob101 | 22/Male | W/EuroAmer | 25-30 | I | I |
| DukeNukem | 21/Male | W/EuroAmer | 25-30 | I | EA |
| XpkX MammaMia | 20/Female | Latina | 20-25 | EA | L |
| KillaSigPi | 32/Male | W/EuroAmer | 20-25 | EA | EM |
| YeahSheBlaze | 19/Female | B/AfrAmer | 20-25 | EA | L |
| MizzBoss917 | 23/Female | B/Latina | 15-20 | EA | L |
| LilSigPi | 26/Male | W/EuroAmer | 15-20 | EA | EA |
| cdXFemmeFataleXcd | 29/Female | B/AfrAmer | 10-15 | EM | L |
| ShedaBoss | 26/Female | B/AfrAmer | 10-15 | EM | L |
| XpkX RicanMami | 23/Female | B/Latina | 10-15 | EM | L |
| MissUnique | 28/Female | B/AfrAmer | 5-10 | LM | L |
| ThugMisses | 31/Female | B/AfrAmer | 5-10 | LM | L |

*Note.* B = Black; W = White; AfrAmer = African American; EuroAmer = European American; NXLE = New Xbox Live Environment.
a. Adopter category: I = innovator; EA = early adopter; EM = early majority; LM = late majority; L = laggard.

*KrazyKush* was able to elicit what the disconnect is—a failed communication structure. Xbox does not seem to be aware of their gaming audience and they assume that gamers fit within a specific profile—the techie geek that *KrazyKush* mentions. This leads into the second most significant factor identified within this study, gender differences among gamers.

## Gender Significance

Gender differences among rates of adoption were very striking. Overwhelmingly, the women in the study lagged behind males in their rates of adoption. What is important to note is that the women in the study did not spend a significant amount of time gaming each week. They felt that they had enough social capital—education, knowledge to seek outside information, social contacts, and so on—to successfully adopt the innovation.

> *ShedaBoss*: Now I don't game that often but I aint dumb.
> *MissUnique*: I know right. I feel like when I get on here and download the update that it's like a foreign language. It takes me forever to figure out how to navigate the shit.
> *ShedaBoss*: I don't have time to sit and watch tutorials and lectures on how to use a fucking app. They make the shit too damn hard. I feel like these dudes who make the shit like making people look slow.

> *ThugMisses*: Oh she talking crazy now!
> (*All laughing*)
> *ShedaBoss*: No no no. Chill chill chill. Hear me out. We have to watch tutorials right? There are tons of them to watch? I think they feel like they want people to respect their jobs and what they do. It's like the rise of the geek.
> *MzMygrane*: But we have just as much education as they do in some cases. Why is so hard for us to learn to navigate the new stuff?
> *ThugMisses*: Cuz we don't want to. It's not that we can't. We won't. I don't want to do it on their terms. And the fact that they force us to isn't fair. I had no idea a new update was coming. And if I don't download it when they tell me to, I can't get online. That's fucking tyranny!
> *MissUnique*: Well it takes me forever. Not because I don't wanna learn it, but because I can't. The tutorials really make no sense to me. And they try and make them too fancy. If they wrote it in a textbook, I'd be good.

Two themes emerged from the conversation with this group of gamers. First, several of the women indicated that the issue with their adoption rates resided in the hard to digest information provided by Xbox. This was a point reiterated by not only women within the study, but also by several of the male gamers. Xbox administrators, according to participants, do not know how to communicate effectively

with all their gamers. They are able to reach a target demographic who they may deem their default gamer, but Xbox Live users are a diverse group and Xbox should make an effort to be able to reach all of them.

Second, because of their inability to make decisions regarding an innovation, many women within this study simply refused to adopt the changes. They decided that they would download the changes when they felt ready and would go months without playing Xbox Live. They still were able to play the actual console video game, but they were unable to access the online content that draws many Xbox Live users.

A third theme that emerged from interviews with my female participants is the level of disrespect and belittling felt by the forced adoption of innovation by the authority figure—Xbox Live.

> *XpkX RicanMami*: Games are always catering to what boys want.
> *YeahSheBlaze*: It's a man's world (*singing James Brown song*)
> *(All Laughing)*
> *XpkX RicanMami*: But I think we [females] like simple things. Guys need flashing lights, scrolling images, big boobs (*laughs*) . . . you know what I'm saying. It's like you have to keep changing things to keep guys happy.
> *MizzBoss917*: You know I'd be good with the first dashboard (the dashboard is the homepage for Xbox Live which has been constantly changing since Xbox Live launched in 2002). The dashboard or marketplace or whatever it's called right now is for people with a Kinect. To me, that's further catering to a certain kind of gamer . . . (*gets cut off by YeahSheBlaze*)
> *YeahSheBlaze*: And to gamers with money. I don't have a Kinect. Can't afford one and don't have space for one. But they assumed that everyone will upgrade to the Kinect.
> *MizzBoss917*: Watch and see. They gon' force us to get the Kinect.

Again, this excerpt highlights the level of disrespect that many female gamers feel regarding forced adoption of innovation in Xbox Live. They gather that Xbox caters to the male demographic to the detriment of the female gamer. Although many women resist adopting certain innovations in Xbox Live, they ultimately download and adopt the innovation, but on their own terms.

## Level of Education

Going into the project, I assumed that level of education would play a huge factor in determining successful rates of adoption. This was not the case at all. For instance, *PoppinSmoke, KrazyKush*, and *ChrisIsNice* have only attained

their high school diplomas and their adopter category is Innovator or Early Adopter. On the other hand, *MissUnique* and *ThugMisses* have master's degrees. Looking intersectionally, lower education levels combined with employment status had a direct bearing on the amount of time a gamer is able to devote to learning to navigate an innovation. *PoppinSmoke, KrazyKush*, and *ChrisIsNice* mentioned on several occasions that they would spend hours previewing the tutorials to learn more about the New Xbox Live Environment:

> *ChrisIsNice*: Man I been on dis shit since 3 this morning. I got excited as fuck when I heard dis new shit was coming out. I been waiting for 'em to fix Netflix. That app is a piece of shit right now but they said they finally fixing it.
> *MzMygrane*: But I hear the tutorials are confusing. Like, real technical wording. Did you think that?
> *ChrisIsNice*: Nah it's straight forward. Shit I ain't go to high school and I get this shit. They lay it all out for you. I don't know what people complaining about.

The gamers indicated that level of education had no bearing on one's ability to adopt the innovation. But for those with lower education levels and who lacked employment, as is highlighted above, they had the time to spend in Xbox Live.

Female gamers overall had higher levels of education than the male participants. Interestingly, they had the lowest rates of successful adoption. Several women indicated that because of their education level, they engaged in other education and recreational activities removing them from full time devotion to Xbox Live.

> *MzMygrane*: Why do y'all think learning the new system has been so difficult?
> *Miss Unique*: It aint' difficult, I got a life.
> *(All laughing)*
> *ShedaBoss*: Shit me too! I'm finishing my damn thesis!
> *(All laughing)*
> *Miss Unique*: Some of the dudes we game with stay home with they mama's! Like *Kush*. He don't do nothing all day. His mama work all day and he draw food stamps.
> *(All laughing)*
> *ThugMisses*: If I could stay home all day, I'd be an Xbox guru too. So he ain't no innovator. That word is making him seem too smart. We're the innovators. We're resisting authority. We're anti-establishment. That should be applauded.
> *MissUnique*: Oh shut up girl! Ain't nothing revolutionary about what we do. We eventually download the system update (the new innovation) either way. We actually kinda stupid. We paid money for the service and will spend months not using it. Xbox don't give a fuck. They got our money.

Again, this excerpt reveals not only a disconnect between Xbox Live and its minority users but also a disconnect between male and female gamers in Xbox Live. These women have profiled gamers like *KrazyKush* who is Xbox Lives target demographic, the techie male. They have also built up animosity toward Xbox Live because of the lack of user control within the space. They have spent thousands of dollars on consoles, controllers, games, memberships, and so forth and have no say about changes in the system. They also suggest that if they devoted a substantial amount of time within the space, that they could easily adopt the innovation. But by choice alone, they refuse.

## Conclusion

As Xbox Live continues it media dominance, its larger impact on entertainment culture cannot be projected and must be examined for its potential to create its own digital divide. One such issue that Xbox Live will have to address is the decision making process in the forced adoption of changes within the system. Rogers (2003) identified four types of innovation decisions: optional, collective, authority, and contingent. In this case, authority decisions are made by the dominant authority— Xbox Live. As Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) found, authority decisions are more likely to be discontinued in favor of more collective decisions where time to implement innovation is valued. They also found that participation (internal communication) was shown to improve willingness to implement (Zaltman, Duncan, & Holbeck, 1973/1984). The positive and residual effects of collective decisions, based on consensus, include better acceptance of the adoption of an innovation based on inclusion in the decision-making process and better feedback from the lower adoption levels. Unfortunately, by nature of the Xbox Live entertainment space, the authority does not have to consult with its millions of users as an office manager may have to. But minority gamers such as women may soon form a critical mass and identify some way to revolt against the dominant oppressor—Xbox Live. Xbox Live administrators should uncover some means to develop more efficient communication and include users in the process of media convergence and dissemination. Users should recognize that with converging media, there will be some that will get left behind due to cultural lag and some who will adopt the innovations with limited reservation. Xbox Live must bridge this gap to ensure all users have the resources needed to adequately adopt new innovations.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

### Funding

### Notes

1.  The avatar in Xbox Live is a visual depiction of the gamer. Users are able to customize the body, gender, skin color, facial features, hairstyle, and clothing. The avatar does not enter traditional gameplay in Xbox Live.
2.  MzMygrane is the actual Xbox Live gamertag of the author

### References

Burowoy, M., Burton, A., Ferguson, A., Fox, K., Gamson, J., Gartrell, N., & Ui, S. (1991). *Ethnography unbound: Power and resistance in modern metropolis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fliegel, F., & Kivlin, J. (1966). Attributes of innovations as factors in diffusion. *American Journal of Sociology*, *72*, 235-248.

Geddes, R. (2008, October 9). *IGN: TGS 2008: Avatars required*. Retrieved from http://xboxlive.ign.com/articles/918/918113p1.html

Gray, K. L. (2011). *Deviant bodies resisting online: Examining the intersecting realities of women of color in Xbox Live* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication No. AAT 3452875). Retrieved from http://repository.asu.edu/items/9027

Gray, K. L. (2012). Intersecting oppressions and online communities: Examining the experiences of women of color in Xbox Live. *Information Communication & Society*, *15*, 411-428.

Jenkins, H. (2004). The cultural logic of media convergence. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *7*, 33-43.

Lichterman, P. (1996). *The search for political community: American activists reinventing commitment*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Quinn, S. (2005). Convergence's fundamental question. *Journalism Studies*, *6*, 29-38.

Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Rogers, E. M., & Shoemaker, F. F. (1971). *Communication of innovations: A cross-cultural approach*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Surry, D. (1997, February). *Diffusion theory and instructional technology*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association of Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), Albuquerque, NM.

Xbox Live. (2009, September 24). *Description of Xbox 360 gamer profiles*. Retrieved from http://support.xbox.com/support/en/us/nxe/kb.aspx?ID=905882&lcid=1033&category=xboxlive

Zaltman, G., Duncan, R., & Holbeck, J. (1984). *Innovations and organizations*. Malabar, FL: Robert E. Kreiger. (Original work published 1973)

### Bio

**Kishonna L. Gray** is an assistant professor of Justice Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. She completed her PhD at Arizona State University in justice studies with a media, technology, and culture concentration.