

# Satire in GTA V

---

**Horvat, Dino**

**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2022**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:965257>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-01-25**



**Sveučilište u Zadru**  
Universitas Studiorum  
Jadertina | 1396 | 2002 |

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

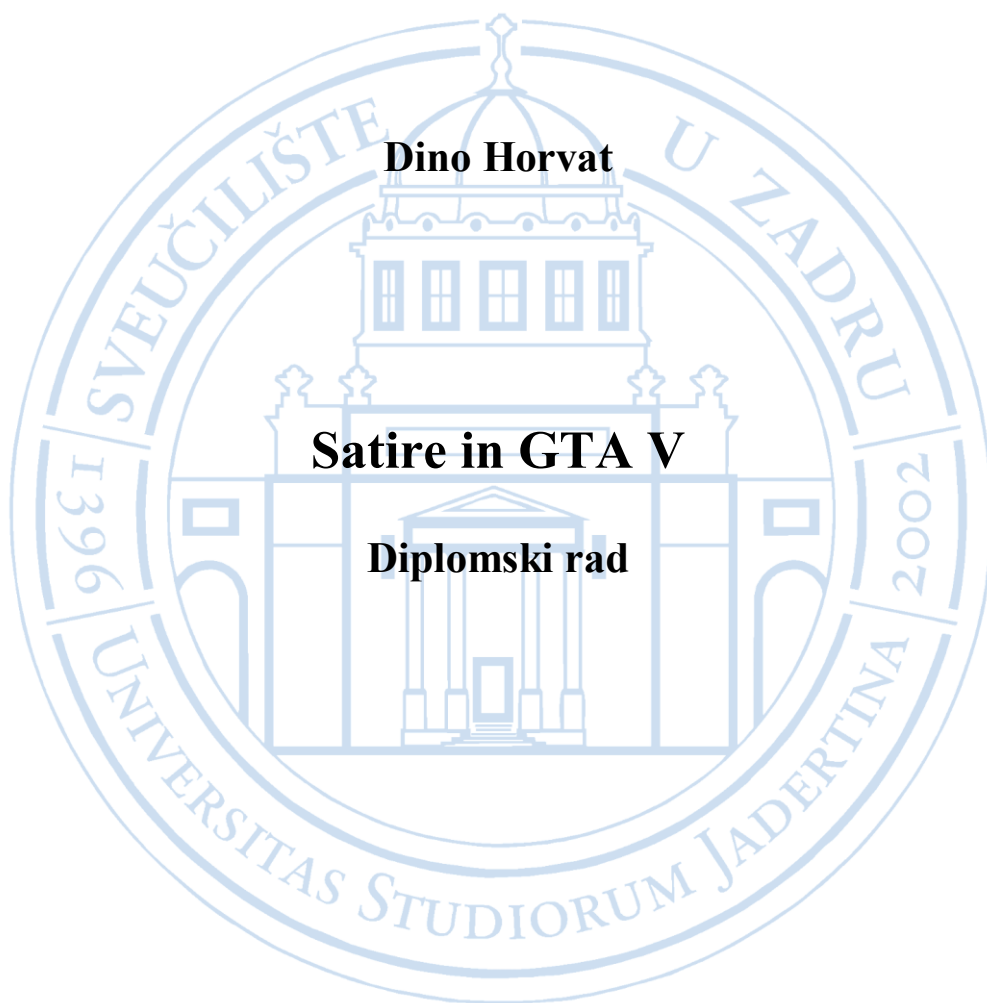
[University of Zadar Institutional Repository](#)



Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Sveučilišni diplomski studij anglistike: nastavnički smjer (dvopredmetni)



Zadar, 2022.

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Sveučilišni diplomski studij anglistike: nastavnički smjer (dvopredmetni)

Satire in GTA V

Diplomski rad

Student/ica:

Dino Horvat

Mentor/ica:

Doc. dr. sc. Zlatko Bukač

Zadar, 2022.



## Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Dino Horvat**, ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **Satire in GTA V** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 20. rujna 2022.

## Table of contents:

1. Introduction .....	5
2. Video game culture .....	7
3. <i>Grand Theft Auto V</i> .....	11
4. Theoretical framework .....	14
5. <i>Grand Theft Auto V</i> – analysis of stereotypes, satiric elements and contemporary problems .....	22
5.1 Main protagonists .....	22
5.1.1 Michael de Santa .....	24
5.1.2 Franklin Clinton .....	31
5.1.3 Trevor Philips .....	36
6. Race, gender and class .....	42
6.1 Race .....	43
6.2 Gender .....	50
6.3 Class .....	56
7. Modern issues in the city of Los Santos .....	58
8. Conclusion .....	62
9. Works cited: .....	64
10. SATIRE IN <i>GTA V</i> : Summary and key words .....	70
11. SATIRA U <i>GTA V</i> : Sažetak i ključne riječi .....	71

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, video games are a fast-growing industry, and this industry is slowly outrunning other forms of media. Video game culture is a worldwide new media subculture which has a significant influence on other media and popular culture. Video games have become an important part of today's modern society as they often genuinely replicate the structures of the social, political and cultural systems we live in. Another advantage of video games to other media outlets is that they do not offer just a passive spectacle, but an active participation in that world through playing the game (Reid). Naturally, there are many video games which take a high place in the field of popular culture and one of those games are surely Rockstar's *GTA* series, more specifically the newest one made in 2013, the *Grand Theft Auto V* (Rockstar Games). *GTA V* has been sold in more than 155 million copies and generated around 6 billion dollars in worldwide revenue. It is an open-world action-adventure game located in the fictional state of San Andreas, based on Southern California, most likely the city of Los Angeles. There are 3 main playable characters, antagonists with strong attitudes and characteristics, along with many other supporting characters which altogether create a movie-like plot and story. This narrative-based videogame is worthy of a deeper analysis as it authentically and critically depicts relevant issues of the modern society in the last decade (2010's) including the representation of race, gender and culture through the usage of satire.

The main aim of this thesis is to analyze the video game *Grand Theft Auto V* and its mirror-like representation of modern American society and relevant issues which are described through the usage of satire. Video games are the future of media, and *GTA V* has had such a wide public influence and interpretation which even non-gamers could not ignore. Representations defined in Hall's book: *Representations* (1997) including representation of race ("whiteness", "blackness", "white" privilege and supremacy). Double consciousness defined by Du Bois (1994), race issues and stereotypes which are created as a social construct as explained in Garcia's work: *Race and Ethnicity* (2017) will be analyzed, as well as different global attitudes, social class, gender, identities and cultural perceptions described in Lippmann's book: *Public Opinion* (1922). This is also connected to the postcolonial theory including cultural hegemony, stereotypical depictions of non-hegemonic groups in society and representation of the "otherness" and all these terms are explained by Ashcroft in his book *Post-Colonial Theory* (2000) which is closely connected to Foucault's definition of power, imperialism and orientalism, examined in Said's work: *Orientalism* (1978). Framework which combines all these aspects, and which is often present in the modern society is called

intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when she published a paper: *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*, analyzing three legal cases which focused on both racial and sexual discriminations. Another term which is relevant is race/identity tourism, examined by Berghe and Keyes (1984) – assuming racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, sexual or gender identity based on the content presented which new media like videogame culture offers to the wider public. It is important to highlight that the creators of *GTA V* use elements of satire (irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, paradox, antithesis, obscenity, violence, exaggeration and vividness) in order to criticize, but also raise awareness of all these modern and topical issues and this includes criticism towards the American government, American media industry and American race problems. This video game also depicts modern and relevant issues such as corruption, police brutality and racial bias, class differences and superficial American lifestyle located in LA, as well as making fun of the Internet and social media (for example, *Life Invader* which is a social media in the videogame representing *Facebook*) which will be further analyzed. All these factors and concepts make *GTA V* more than just a game.

Mentioned concepts will be analyzed throughout *GTA V* storyline and its rich narratives, which are a big part of the game, along with my own experience and impressions (regarding important issues and representations) while playing the game supported by the video materials from *YouTube*. The individual stories, narratives and actions of the three main protagonists (Michael, Trevor and Franklin) along with the relationship between them and between other supporting characters will be interpreted, representations of race, gender and class plus modern issues juxtaposed with the elements of satire which encompasses a great part of the main thesis.

## 2. Video game culture

Nowadays, with the immense rise of the Internet, video games gain more and more importance and popularity among people. Video games have been popular among the gaming community since 1972 when they had appeared as a commercial product with the first video game hit; Atari's *PONG*, but this trend peaked in 2010s. It has gotten so popular that people organized competitions with big rewards, there are teams involved, coaches, daily trainings and big crowds who follow their "star" players. Online gaming incorporates a big scope of players, and it stimulates communication, teamwork and a sense of belonging. It has become like a real sport, having big sponsorship deals and marketing on top of everything. This gaming scene also expanded onto various social platforms such as *YouTube* and *Twitch* where millions of people watch professional and casual players play video games. People who casually enjoy playing video games and those who are passionate about gaming are often marked as "gamers". They used to be called "geeks" or "nerds" carrying a negative connotation, but in today's world, it carries a more positive meaning. These groups are now people who understand technology and computers and often have video game skills which are desired by many people (Willaert). Video games stimulated the development of technology since most of the general non-professional public encountered with the usage of computers on a personal level for the first time in order to play and participate in the gaming culture.

With that immense popularity, a new subculture – "video game culture" has emerged. This culture encompasses a wider public, even non-gamers, as society got involved in what types of games there are, how they can be played and what influence they can have on people. Now, there is an academic field on this subject as narrative-based video games have gained a much wider and deeper importance in real-life. Since it has this interactive feature where players get involved in the game, make decisions and indulge into the virtual world, this culture differs from any other culture and form of media. It influences generations and changes the look on popular culture. Video game culture has a big role in creating opinions, defining perspectives on today's society and what is happening around us in the world, similarly to other media formats which are part of our cultural scope (Shaw 404). Video game culture offers competition and acquisition, but it also covers topics such as personal identity, cultural assimilation and cross-cultural conflict. All these issues are explored through a unique gaming experience. Some video games have been set up and influenced by real American history and it replicates many aspects of real-life situations. This is another reason why video game culture should be taken seriously, and it deserves a big spot in American popular culture, but also worldwide.



Popular culture could be defined as a part of media which is widely consumed and popular within society. Transmitted by the mass media, it influences a lot of people, and it creates a trend while this wave of popularity is enjoyed by the majority. This can be a book, a song, television or radio which also shapes the popular opinion and creates different representations of the world we live in. Video games are part of this group as well as they represent a virtual reality and sometimes offer an escape from the real world which is full of obstacles. It offers people a sense of belonging and a chance to participate in a world where one can feel successful and accomplish various things while also feeling productive (Reid). That is another reason why this interactive media is so popular today. Moreover, video games can replicate real-life issues such as representation of race, gender and class, female characters, minorities and all other sorts of political issues. With this urge for players to interact and participate in the virtual world, along with its popularity, video games can be a powerful medium to tackle certain issues, change attitudes and form a generation of young people who will act in the real-world, just as they do in the video games. Video games also influence education as there is a lot of educational material and useful information throughout playing, but there are also some negative aspects with violent content and vulgar depictions.

Since their onset, video games have always been influenced by other types of media and vice-versa. At the beginning, during the 70s and 80s, video games usually took inspiration or copied other forms of media (*Star Wars*). This direction has taken a big turn in the 80s, 90s and 2000s when there were many cartoon and movie adaptations made from video games. *Pac-Man*, *The Super Mario Bros* and *Pokémon* were big hit tv-series that aired on television following their immense popularity in videogame franchises. More recently, one of the most anticipated TV-series to be released in 2022 is *The Last of Us*, adapted from the videogame in 2013. Film adaptations are also following this wave of popularity with movies like *Mortal Kombat*, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* or *Resident Evil* and other movies with zombie apocalypse ("The Impact of Video Games on Culture"). Some of these movies grossed millions of dollars and the cost of their production is in range with some of the most influential films ever made. There are many "star" actresses involved such as Angelina Jolie or Milla Jovovich. Additionally, video games that are made today can rival many movies regarding sales and cost of production (for example: *GTA* series). Another phenomenon is the collaborations of musicians and video game culture. For instance, *GTA San Andreas* (2004) had tons of radio stations which were available to players with music hits from all around the world. Also, many music bands and their songs are promoted through a certain video game and this promotion

often leads to success (for example: *EA Sports FIFA*). Video games have also expanded to mobile phones which caused many people to become casual gamers “on the go”. Additionally, video games were introduced to social media platforms (*Facebook*) where there are millions of people playing games and collaborating with their *Facebook* friends which deepens the interactive features of video games. This means that video games are now deeply rooted into people’s everyday life and cultural perspective.

Video game culture has not only changed, influenced and collaborated with other forms of media or popular culture, but it has also affected the daily lives of people. Popularity of video games is also seen through gaming benefits and many studies that were conducted on this topic. Although many people still do not see the value of gaming, a lot of educational institutions and academics have embraced this new way of learning. *Federation of American Scientists* in 2006 concluded in a study that video games are to be approved in educational purposes. There are studies (Wold 125 qtd. in *Nature* 2002) which prove that people who play video games have better developed visual-processing skills and attention for details. Moreover, nowadays there are many flying simulators which are officially used to educate future pilots while there are simulators for soldiers which are used for military purposes as well (Wolf 126 qtd. in *Associated Press* 2003). There are even on-the-job trainings with the use of video games which teach people certain set of skills, simulate real-life clutch situations or test employees in different ways. This type of interactive education proved to be more effective than using traditional methods. Many schools and preschools incorporated tablets and different technology in order to teach through gaming. Some consoles and video games even stimulate working out, dancing or some other type of physical activity while playing the game which makes the consumers more active. All these games are often heavily advertised, and a lot of food and drinks were commercialized in video games. This just shows how big of an influence and power videogame culture has today. These are just some of the many examples of how popular and influential video games are, but also how this gaming culture can be used in educational purposes and form the minds of future generations. All this means that video games are reducing the gap from other forms of media as an influential and powerful source for a big mass of people. Nowadays, video games have numerous purposes and functions besides “just” entertainment, they are used for: simulations, education, news, exercise, art, politics, criticism etc. All of this while incorporating an interactive feature which requires the audience to take action, to make decisions, leave feedback and be tested in the virtual world set up by developers (Wolf 126). This form of media and large industry needs to be rightfully accepted as part of the popular

culture and needs to be further analyzed to grasp the value and appreciate this style of art that is being produced all around the globe.

In order to summarize this video game culture phenomenon, it is worth mentioning the term “gamification” of culture. This means that video games have intruded people’s everyday lives and that it affected one’s way of thinking and acting. Videogame content is now successfully part of our non-gaming world as it is dominant in business, education and politics. Every device that has a screen and some sort of input is likely to have games on it that can be played. The benefits include better motivation, competition, engagement of individuals and bigger interest or motivation for a particular problem. Some argue that this concept can have negative features (too much competition, lack of empathy), but this is now something that is evolving, and it includes all people in the process (Wolf 128). With further development of technology and involvement of almost everything on the Internet, the evolution and usage of video games is just going to keep growing. With everything mentioned, it can be said that video games are much more than just entertainment and that videogame culture is deeply connected with and becoming a part of American popular culture. This new subculture leaves a lot of room for analyzing different concepts and ideas in video games which are highly connected to the real-life problems.

### 3. *Grand Theft Auto V*

*GTA* series have changed the gaming scene forever since the first release in 1997. These action-adventure games were created by Mike Dailly and David Jones, developed by *Rockstar North* and published by *Rockstar Games*. The name comes from a reference to motor vehicle theft, and it is just one of the criminal activities that are possible in the game. The gameplay is based on an open-world concept where there are endless possibilities for a player to engage into the fictional world. The first two main titles were 2D (1997 and 1999). A big breakthrough was *GTA 3* (2001) which was the first to have 3D (three-dimension computer graphics). Another big release occurred with *GTA San Andreas* (2004) which represents the 90s in the United States. In the game, a player could swim, gain weight, go to the gym, get a haircut and much more. The game was also based on gang wars, drugs, prostitution and murder. The setting is often very realistic as is the whole game, *San Andreas* resembles *San Francisco* in real life. Therefore, it is often faced with criticism, just like any other game in the series. However, this game is considered one of the most popular video games in the history of gaming. *GTA Vice City* (2002) and *GTA IV* (2008) also had its influence on gaming, but the latest video game, *GTA V* (2013) is still considered as the peak in gaming diversity, creativity and room for analysis.

As it was established earlier, *GTA* series gained a lot of popularity over the years. *GTA V* was one of the most desired video games in 2013 as it won the game of the year award, and its impact is immense even today. By September 2021, 155 million copies of the game were sold across all platforms. The game broke several *Guinness World Records*, one of those being fastest entertainment property to gross one billion US dollars. These are just some of the reasons why this game can be compared to the best movies, songs and other sources of media that are part of the popular culture. With its interactive features that require action from the player and highly narrative story and plotline, this videogame is truly a masterpiece that needs to be analyzed in different ways.

Official site *Rockstar Games* (2013) describes the game in a specific way:

*“Visit Los Santos – a true paradise of golf courses, strip malls, environmental degradation and trailer parks – including; Fast cars at your fingertips, thriving economy and commerce, affordable healthcare, the great outdoors, accessible air travel, shopping and glamour, leadership you can trust, vehicular customization shops, beaches and watersports, friendly neighbors, local artisans, exclusive country clubs, serenity and wellness, exciting music and entertainment, fitness and relaxation, security*

*and peace of mind, lovely accommodations, sightseeing and celebrity, 24-hour convenience stores, opportunity for the upwardly mobile and so much more. All awaiting you and the whole family”*

These are just some of the features that are available to the players and many of these descriptions are paired with pictures that convey a satirical message which criticizes today's society.

Set in the city of Los Santos (representing Los Angeles) with the surrounding countryside (Blaine County) in 2010s, *GTA V* tells a story about 3 main characters (Michael – an ex professional robber, Trevor – short-tempered psychopath and Franklin – young rising gang member). Each character is playable and can easily be switched to. Surprisingly, when the players are playing as one of the three protagonists, the other two live their own life when not being played with, which adds to the reality of the gameplay. Along with the main missions and side quests that tell the story, players can also roam around the city and participate in various activities such as triathlons, tennis, golf, yoga, scuba diving etc. It is also possible to use the phone and reach various sites on the Internet, one of those being the *Life Invader* (representing *Facebook*). Other media include live television and radio stations. The players can also use a large variety of vehicles in the game including jet skis and submarines while there are many delivery vans or emergency vehicles which make the video game livelier. Every car can be customized and parked (saved) in the garage of a character's house. There are many businesses in the game from fast-food restaurants to pest control companies. There are stores called “Ammo-Nation” where players can buy an arsenal of weapons to use in missions and free time. Along with car customization, players can customize characters they play with by entering tattoo parlors, barber shops or clothes stores. This just adds to the personalization and the connection of the players to the video game characters. There is also a multiplayer segment where up to 100 players on a map can play with each other and do bank robberies and other missions or fun games together.

For all the reasons mentioned, *GTA V* is more than just an entertaining video game. In public, it has reached passionate and casual gamers of all ages and many generations have been influenced by *GTA* series. This popularity and growth of the game had sprung interest among non-gamers as well and *GTA V* has faced harsh criticism and complaints about some movie-like violent scenes, narrative, but also ability of the players to make progress through criminal activities, murders and other obscene behavior. Nonetheless it is important to keep in mind that

developers and creators of this game are criticizing today's society by using satirical elements in the game.

*GTA V* can be seen from many different perspectives and there is a lot to analyze in detail. The three main protagonists (Michael, Trevor and Franklin) all represent a different type of person, but they also share a lot of traits so there is a theory that they could all be one person depending on the context. Their identities, stories and actions could be analyzed, as well as the relationship and attitudes toward each other and other supportive characters in the game. Framework and hierarchy between the main characters along with the narrative references in the game are worth mentioning.

Through satirical elements, *GTA V* is basically a parody of modern life. It is communicated not just through the main narrative, but also via Internet (*Life Invader* for *Facebook*), radio stations that offer political topics, talk about plastic surgeries and television which presents all of LA's superficiality. There is a problem of privilege, sexuality, misogyny and a bad presentation of women, media propaganda and so on. Class and race differences that are seen even within the main characters and their treatment of other people. Obsession with "black" culture and the problem of *Blaxploitation* are also visible in gameplay, stereotypes, issues with police etc. The videogame itself is aware of this and the developers exaggerated some of these issues in order to make fun, but also raise awareness to some of these issues of today's society. The players are expected to understand this concept and the intention of the game while grasping the importance of these representations that are often the reality in the world, especially in the United States and the American popular culture.

#### 4. Theoretical framework

*GTA V* is a narrative-based video game which can be studied in many ways. Creators of the video game criticized today's society using satire which is a powerful tool for raising awareness and creating an environment for a positive change. This always needs to be taken into consideration when examining the video game or just playing it for entertainment. Analyzing these elements of satire throughout the game will be the focal point of this paper. That is why satire and some other concepts which will be mentioned, need to be explained in this section. Satire is a genre of the literary, visual and performing arts where certain shortcomings, vices or abuses are mocked in a humorous way in order to reveal the flaws of someone or something, including governments, corporations and society in general. It is supposed to be funny, attract and hold the attention of the viewer, but more importantly, ridicule, humor and wit are used in order to construct social criticism towards some important issues and to bring attention to those situations (Elliott 5). Satire is always topical and relevant. Four basic elements of satire are: 1) Attack/aggression, 2) Judgement, 3) Play (Wit), 4) Laughter (Humor) (Test 14). An additional one which is very important is 5) Desire to Instigate Reform (Intent). Some other important terms of satire that can be used are: irony, paradox, antithesis, parody, obscenity, violence, vividness, puns, sarcasm, juxtaposition, understatement, caricature, incongruity, hyperbole and exaggeration. Since satire is constructive, its goal is to provoke a shock of recognition and to inspire a change for the better, not to damage or harm the society. *GTA V* is full of these mentioned satirical elements and satire is the base of the whole concept.

Juxtaposed with the elements of satire, there are other terms which will be relevant for describing the phenomena in *GTA V*. Culture is a complex notion which has more than one wide definitions. According to Storey (2), it represents human development in terms of intellect, aesthetics and spirit, people's lifestyle, traditions and beliefs or other works in music, sport, art which are all shared by a group of people. Combining texts and practices it symbolizes and produces meaning which is relevant in representing an identity for an individual or a large mass of people. Popular culture, in the simplest definition, would represent a culture that is admired and popular among many people. It can be a poet, some type of sport, music or any other activity which gained enormous power, likability and influence in society which is often determined by the youth. *GTA V* certainly belongs to this group as it is highly popular and influential in modern society.

Identity and ideology are also two very important concepts which are connected to race.

Identity includes the construction of one's class, gender and sexuality. Identity is unique as such, but it is determined by social norms, and it is a representation of oneself towards others through nation, religion, ethnicity and many other characteristics. Identity may also be indicated by beliefs and values of an individual in a specific cultural society. It is always a framed construction, whether it is the case of national identity, cultural identity or sexual identity. Also, it is never self-governing, as identity is only recognized by what it is not. According to Wolfreys (99), it includes blending "otherness" into the structure of the "same" and it is realized through constant repetition and comparison in order to be recognized as a unique identity. Ideology is a term which consists of various beliefs and values which define the social order of people. Ideology and culture are highly connected notions while Storey (5) affirmed that the only difference between these two terms is that "ideology brings a political dimension to the shared terrain". Dominant ideology of the ruling class was often held in the past and it was used to oppress the laboring class on false pretenses and cultural pressure. Ethical ideology, religious ideology, political ideology and many others were created in order to influence the public opinion and install order within social classes which always favored the dominant one.

Representation is one of the most important aspects when speaking about the issues of today's society. It defines how people see and imagine certain concepts and how other people use symbols and language in order to create a mental and spoken picture for themselves and for the others. According to Hall (15), representation is "an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture.". This means that through the concept of representation, various effects may affect the society and determine a public opinion. Also, customs, beliefs and other traditional movements through history are covered by the notion of representation which presents these abstract terms in a way which is reasonable for humans. This "system of representation" which enables people to create meaning and explain objects in their minds, without present visual representation, is called "mental representation" (Hall 17). With this system, it is also possible to explain the unseen terms such as "friendship" or "love" and we can think, represent and classify these words in our head and connect them through our experiences. It is important to note that every individual makes a unique sense of the world, people, concepts and ideas and how they are represented. Nevertheless, through communication, people can share these unique representations and build a system of similar interpretations of the things and concepts around them. This set of common beliefs and traditions shared by several people is what creates a "culture". Hall (18) claimed that language is what enables communication between people and sharing of their meanings of



the world and therefore, this is the second “system of representation”. Shared language, signs and gestures mark an important link between people’s relations and their representation of things, events and abstract notions.

“*The relation between ‘things’, concepts and signs lie at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call ‘representation’*” (Hall 19).

Representation of race can lead to prejudice and the division of people on account of their skin color or some other visible factor. Detailed analysis of this subject created the terms such as “whiteness”, “blackness” and “double consciousness”. “Whiteness” is connected to the “white” supremacy implicating that being “white” brings privileges in life and that in the United States, the only true American can be “white”. Throughout history the term “blackness” used to be referred as “otherness” and it means that representation of “blacks” was seen as something wrong, different and they were even being considered as a threat to the society. However, it also represents the fight for African Americans to become recognized and to have access to the full participation in society. “White” supremacy and suppression created the need for this concept and the fight it entails. This is highly intertwined with the notion of “double consciousness”; meaning that “black” people are always torn between two parts, trying to keep their “true” selves, but in the same time society demands from them to become as “white” as possible, as that is portrayed as the “normal” behavior (Du Bois 7). All these racial stereotypes stem from people’s beliefs that individuals must be divided due to biological differences. In order to analyze race objectively, it is important to look at this matter as a social construct as it was defined by Justin Garcia in his work *Race and Ethnicity* (2017).

Now that we have explained the basic theoretical framework of this paper, it is important to mention other notions such as different global attitudes, social class, gender, identities and cultural perceptions. All these can be stereotyped, along with race, and there is abundance of different stereotypes in *GTA V* which were purposely exaggerated in order to showcase and make fun of society’s public opinion. Public opinion is distorted from ego needs and emotional factors, but also stereotypes and images we perceive to be true about people and things. We define first and then see, and not the other way around. People often live in so called “pseudo-environment” as there are mentally constructed representations which can be true, false or a mixture of both. Stereotypes can be defined as fixed habits which often abstract, generalize and classify reality falsely. People often rely on stereotypes to reflect the reality which suits their own projection which was created towards the world. Stereotypes are highly connected

to representations as they are images, generalizations or categorizations which highlight or take a particular viewpoint on certain characteristics, behavioral patterns or traits that are usually describing an individual or a group in a way that this pattern is something normal and regular. It can be connected to biological or psychological segments or ethnic, religious and national groups altogether. Walter Lippmann in his work *Public Opinion* (1922), divided studies on stereotypes on 3 perspectives: sociological, psychological and cognitive. Sociological perspective argues that stereotypes are learned through family, friends, mass media and everyday interaction. Stereotypes are accustomed through socialization just as every other behavior. Mass media controls the information and content that is being presented to the general public, while stereotypes tend to arise from cultural traditions, group interests and other differences between people. Psychological approach defines that stereotypes are created from general frustration, prejudices or inner drives, as some sort of defensive mechanism for people. The cognitive orientation is based on stereotypes that stem from social context in which people live and the image that is configured in one's mind. This is mostly based on prejudice as people tend to simplify everything that is happening around them and put everyone in a certain box (category) in order to gain stability, give meaning and achieve predictability in everyday situations. These mental images and beliefs become the dominant force in person's mind, and this becomes the only valid description, while this behavioral pattern confirms the stereotype that was constructed as we only accept what backs up our beliefs (Lippmann 14-18). *GTA V* is full of many different stereotypes which are highlighted in order to pinpoint and mock certain beliefs in the modern world and many of these will be analyzed throughout this paper.

This is also connected to the postcolonial theory and Ashcroft's book *Post-Colonial Studies* (2000) including cultural hegemony, stereotypical depictions of non-hegemonic groups in society and representation of the "otherness". Post-colonialism studies the effects of colonization on societies and cultures. Colonialism or the practice of implementing settlements on a distant territory is a very important notion in analyzing cultural expansion that had been developing. This is closely connected to imperialism which is the ideological force behind colonialism. Ethnicity is another important issue which encompasses human variation in language, ancestry, social patterns, culture and tradition. African American culture had been studied and highly connected to this notion, while "black" culture is considered world's biggest diaspora whose people have been oppressed. American culture and popular culture are historically connected to "black" culture, but also to other indigenous people who have been affected by racial discrimination despite being a large part of American groups. Ethnic group

is the one that is set apart by others or by itself based on the national or cultural characteristics. “Black” studies created a term “black consciousness” where the goal is to raise awareness of “blackness” and to identify a new ethnicity and class. Class plays a big role in defining postcolonialism. It influenced the construction of attitudes towards different groups from the dominant ones, but also among colonized people themselves where different cultural discourse was applied. Hegemony can be described as an ability or power of the dominant group to subtly force their interests on other groups through the usage of media, education and economic power. The “other” is anyone belonging to a non-hegemonic group or the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized. “Othering” is a process which describes different ways in which colonial discourse separates groups. These groups or individuals are labeled as less worthy and as if they do not belong or fit within the norms of a social group. These aspects are closely connected to Foucault’s definition of power, imperialism and orientalism. Said’s book *Orientalism* (1978) describes and analyzes all these aspects. Formation of an empire is considered to be imperialism and this power is usually used by one group or nation in order to dominate other nations. It is “the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” (Said 8). Part of this domination and ruling is seen in Orientalism. It is a term which describes the Orient or the East which is constructed by the dominant force (European thinking). Western world is dominating, having authority and restructuring everything in the East, and this presents a statement of power. This can also be applied to contemporary issues, especially in the United States where “whites” create mental constructs, representations of other non-hegemonic groups while teaching and authorizing their culture and the “right” way to live. Framework which combines all these aspects, and which is often present in the modern society is called “intersectionality” coined by Crenshaw in 1989. This analytical framework describes how one’s different aspects of political and social identities could be combined in order to create privilege and/or discrimination. All these notions could be used as advantage or disadvantage to empower or oppress certain groups. Some of these factors are: race, gender, class, religion, nationality sexuality, disability and physical appearance. This theoretical framework is trying to explain how there are many overlapping markers which influence people’s identities, experiences and stereotypes or prejudice they face on daily basis (Crenshaw 1242). There are many visible instances of this concept in *GTA V* which will be relevant for this thesis. Another term which is relevant is race/identity tourism introduced by Berghe and Keyes in 1984 – assuming racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, sexual or gender identity based on the content presented which new media like video game culture offers

to the wider public (Berghe and Keyes 344). This is an interesting modern concept and nowadays, with the presence of the Internet, people have a lot of information available online from which they can assume, assimilate or presuppose different cultural identities. Within the social media, everybody can present themselves and people make conclusions and assumptions based on what is served on the surface. This creates different mental representations of ethnic and cultural features gathered through social context. When playing *GTA V*, the players can control and assimilate with 3 different characters, make life-changing decisions, explore the city, analyze political propaganda presented by the media and grasp the superficial concept of LA lifestyle. All this while dealing with various problems, present stereotypes and different representations which are seen in the video game. Moreover, minorities in *GTA V* were always depicted in a certain stereotypical manner, with a lot of examples of blaxploitation, usage of street language, family issues and lower social status in every aspect of life. This was analyzed by Retana in her article “Grand Theft Auto: Depictions of Minorities” in 2019. Representations of minorities are worth exploring within the game and it is important to examine how different identities are presented to the players.

Representation of women is another topic that is interesting withing *GTA V*. It is not possible to choose a female main character in story mode and there is basically no positive female role model in game. Women are presented as objects, usually doing immoral things in order to achieve something in life and their bodies are often subjected of violence. Men on the other hand are presented as powerful and violent. There is no real communication nor punishment for violence and chaos that occurs, it is encouraged and exaggerated as normal behavior as this is presented as masculinity. Dominant social groups, race tourism, gender and sex, violence and masculinity in *GTA V* are analyzed through Campbell’s article: “GTA5 and the problem of privilege” from 2017. *GTA V* describes many notions of modern lifestyle, and one of those is the status of a modern Western woman. There is a lot of misogyny and misogynistic content present in the video game.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, women are treated as sexual objects and kept at a lower social status. This includes violence, sexual harassment and social exclusion which is all present within *GTA V*. Women are either prostitutes, strippers, ex-porn stars or gold-diggers, they are stereotyped as instruments to main male characters and this aspect is exaggerated and mocked. Masculinity is also stereotyped as men ought to be tough,

---

<sup>1</sup> Misogyny can be described as hatred or contempt towards women while there is traditional role of patriarchy where man is a dominating force in society. The concept of misogyny is defined through Manne’s book: “Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny” in 2019.

“macho” men and their masculinity is often in danger. For this aspect, I will use Turtiainen’s Bachelor’s Thesis titled *The Portrayal of Female Characters in Grand Theft Auto V* in 2017. *GTA V* basically depicts the fall of American dream seen through 3 main character’s eyes who deal with frustrated masculinity.

*GTA V* also depicts modern and relevant issues such as corruption – *FIB* which represents *FBI* and *IAA (CSI)* which has many corrupted agents who collaborate with criminals, police brutality; *LSPD (LAPD)* slogan “obey and survive” – the players deal with police as a normal game mechanic while police shoots at every instance, especially on Franklin, a “black” character. *LSPD* is accused of racism, corruption, police brutality and even hiring of prostitutes.

Los Santos (representing Los Angeles) is presented as a vibrant city which is gorgeous and luxurious on the outside, but once the players get deeper into the city, all its dark secrets, decay and modern issues come to the surface. There is a lot to analyze and digest as a player in this fictional superficial city where there are fast cars everywhere and the action is non-stop, there is always something new to explore. However, satire, parody and exaggeration of certain stereotypes and representations is always present as there is a lot to criticize in modern everyday life, especially in American culture and Californian lifestyle.

*“Imagine a city full of people ruthlessly pursuing wealth, fame and self-improvement, at any cost? Where everyone you met was either a celebrity, trying to be a celebrity, or used to be a celebrity? Where nature's bounty meant you could enjoy perfect weather all year round? Where the air was so good you could literally see and taste it? Dare to dream, because that city exists...”* (“Los Santos” *GTA* Wiki qtd. in *GTA V* Manual).

*GTA V* and the city of Los Santos convey numerous satirical and subliminal messages that can be discovered and critically analyzed by players. The usage of violence, political jokes, exaggeration in commercial media and the free will of players to decide the actions and fate of the main protagonists in this chaos beneath beauty stimulates critical awareness towards today’s issues. It can be said that *GTA V* describes and makes a parody of the Internet, where everything seems perfect at the beginning, but it hides many issues and situations which are not so normal. The main protagonists and the representation of Los Santos depicts the fall of American dream, and it is a perfect summary of 2010s with people’s superficiality, presence of the media and hyper consumerism that is a reality nowadays. Globalization which can be considered a successor of imperialism with all its injustice, prejudice and modern issues that are unfolding, especially towards non-hegemonic groups. All of these factors and concepts make *GTA V* more than just a game. Therefore, it is worthy of a detailed analysis as it presents an important part

of popular culture depicting relevant real-life issues. Mentioned concepts will be analyzed throughout *GTA V* storyline, plot and its rich narratives, which are a big part of the game, along with my own experience and impressions (regarding important issues and representations) while playing the game with addition of video materials from *YouTube*. The individual stories, narratives and actions of three main protagonists (Michael, Trevor and Franklin) along with the relationship between them and between other supporting characters will be interpreted, complemented by modern issues and stereotypes juxtaposed with the elements of satire which encompasses a great part of the main thesis.

The questions that this thesis tries to investigate are: 1. How are race, gender and social class represented in the game in the city of Los Santos (LA)? 2. What are the characteristics of main protagonists and their individual stories, how is their relationship hierarchy depicted and what are their attitudes towards each other and other characters in the game? 3. What modern issues are criticized in the game and how are they challenged?

## 5. *Grand Theft Auto V* – analysis of stereotypes, satiric elements and contemporary problems

*“Los Santos: a sprawling sun-soaked metropolis full of self-help gurus, starlets and fading celebrities, once the envy of the Western world, now struggling to stay afloat in an era of economic uncertainty and cheap reality TV. Amidst the turmoil, three very different criminals plot their own chances of survival and success: Franklin, a former street gangster, now looking for real opportunities and serious money; Michael, a professional ex-con whose retirement is a lot less rosy than he hoped it would be; and Trevor, a violent maniac driven by the chance of a cheap high and the next big score. Running out of options, the crew risks everything in a series of daring and dangerous heists that could set them up for life.”*

— Game description on box (“*Grand Theft Auto V*”, GTA Wiki qtd. in Rockstar Games)

*“When a young street hustler, a retired bank robber and a terrifying psychopath find themselves entangled with some of the most frightening and deranged elements of the criminal underworld, the U.S. government and the entertainment industry, they must pull off a series of dangerous heists to survive in a ruthless city in which they can trust nobody, least of all each other.”*

— Official Description (Rockstar Games)

### 5.1 Main protagonists

These two quotations were a short story description of the video game *GTA V*. The three main characters are playable and each of them leads their own life and can be found in different situations when changing the control of protagonists. When analyzing *GTA V*'s story and plot, it is necessary to describe the stories of three playable fictional men, their traits, flaws, roles and attitudes towards each other along with other main characters or random people. All three of them are similar, but also very different from one another. Retired and unhappy Michael, poor and young African American Franklin and a Caucasian psychopath Trevor offered player to control anti-heroes in an essentially male fictional space.

*“GTA thus featured a performative aspect; players learned a range of coded masculinities, albeit all men ultimately let down by the American dream and on a path of waywardness and transgression.”* (Wills 174)

They can be considered as anti-heroes who live for actions and criminal activities, but deep inside they can be good people if you do not interfere with their lives. The main characters

suffer from a serious lack of empathy and addiction to chaotic behavior, but they are loyal to one another and to people about whom they care in life. Despite all the hardships, betrayals and dangerous heists, Michael, Franklin and Trevor become good life-long friends.

Plot and story of *GTA V* heavily criticize today's society, especially through parodic or stereotypical representations of main characters. By using satire, the goal is for the players to become aware of the world around them and to approach everything they see critically while realizing there are many connections to a cultural phenomenon. This is achieved by creating interaction and processes between the game mechanisms put by game developers and by using multiple references and parodies *GTA V* is not afraid to "attack" people, institutions or processes that are essential part of today's society and social system of America. (Jovenaar 28) This is what makes video games like *GTA V* special as they give freedom to the player to infer meanings and create connections with real life surroundings by participating and analyzing the main characters and fictional world that was set up for them to explore.

Satire could be defined as a genre of the performing arts, visuals and literary in a form of fiction where sarcasm or irony is used in order to make fun of or shame certain actions and flaws of individuals, governments, corporations or society in general. Although it all revolves around humor and parody, satire's wider purpose is to provide social criticism, expose certain issues in society by using wit and provoke some changes and actions which would improve people's behavior in the future (Elliott 5). In addition to irony, sarcasm and parody; exaggeration, comparison, analogy and double entendre are all used for the same cause (Frye 76).

Generally, there are 3 main types of satire: Horatian, Juvenalian and Menippean. Horatian satire is humorous, and it provides a light social commentary directed at a person or a situation, but not in a too harsh and offensive way. Juvenalian satire is much darker, and it manifests truth in a brutal and powerful way; for instance, as in the television show *South Park*. Finally, Menippean satire's purpose is to cast moral judgement on topics such as racism or homophobia; it could be light as Horatian satire, but it might also be strong and direct as Juvenalian (MasterClass). In my opinion, *GTA V* consists of all three main types of satire, but it is mostly juxtaposed with the last one, the Menippean satire as it covers many serious topics which are often presented in a direct and judgmental way to the players.

According to Test (14), satire is expressed in various ways and the four main which are combined are: aggression, play, laughter and judgement. Aggression is used by the satirist in order to attack, show dislike, frustration or even hatred towards someone or something by using



verbal aggression. Play and laughter can be explained as the same category as they belong together. Play is used to make the attack more indirect and acceptable. Therefore, a good satire needs a bit of playfulness and the whole attack needs to be humorous as there is no satire without humor or laughter. Laughter can weaken the verbal aggression, but sometimes it can be an additional insult towards the target which makes purpose of satire even stronger and truer. Last element of satire, the judgement, is used as a conclusive part which is often paired with intent or desire to change the society for the better.

Nowadays, there are many video games which are satires such as: *Postal* franchise, *The Sims*, *Fallout* series, *Dead Rising* and others. However, here we are focusing on *Grand Theft Auto V* which forms a great part of popular culture today. As defined earlier, Storey (2) claims that popular culture, in the simplest definition, would represent a culture that is admired and popular among many people. With its immense power and influence gained over the past few years, *GTA V* belongs to this category and is worth of analyzing in detail. Controversial video games such as *GTA V* are deliberately disturbing and upsetting in order to point to some real-world issues and actual situations (rem5511;” Video Games as a Form of Satire (With Emphasis on Grand Theft Auto V”). The mockery of media and people who live in the fictional city of Los Santos will be analyzed in another chapter; therefore, in the next few paragraphs, main elements of satire (attack, play and laughter and aggression) will be examined through the three main playable protagonists primarily, (Michael, Franklin and Trevor) and their attitudes towards each other and other supportive characters in the video game. Examples that will support the arguments will be taken from the missions in the game along with free roaming around the city and interactions within the fictional city of Los Santos supported by video materials from *YouTube*.

### 5.1.1 Michael de Santa

"You forget a thousand things every day. Make sure this is one of them." (Izuniy (00:01:58-00:02:01)).

I will start with Michal De Santa, first playable character, narrator in the first scene and the most likable one in my opinion. He is a middle-aged man with grayish black hair and with possibly Irish descent. Michael is a strong robust man, although sometimes called “fat” by himself or by his friend Trevor. He also likes expensive clothes, suits or polo shirts which mirror his posh and materialistic lifestyle (Kettunen 51). Retired robber, Caucasian, lives with his attractive wife Amanda and two kids; Jimmy and Tracey in a rich mansion in Rockford Hills

(representing Beverly Hills). He has a swimming pool and a tennis court and has obviously accepted his new life, although he is unhappy. Michael's character represents a stereotypical "white" man who succeeded in life. Normally, "white" men are hard to stereotype as they are considered as "normal" but characters like Michael represent a typical "white" man living the American dream. Some stereotypical features Michael displays were found in previous studies and characters; this means he feels superior, impulsive and proud. He also behaves as if America is a "white" man's world and playground (Cothran 253). Moreover, he is materialistic and pleasure loving, ambitious, rich and lives a posh lifestyle. These are some typical characteristics of such people (Makowitch 877). We can also see these traits in many different stories. For instance, character Charlie Harper from *Two and a Half Men* portrayed by actor Charlie Sheen. Another example is Draco Malfoy from *Harry Potter* played by the actor Tom Felton. Moreover, Jay Gatsby played by Leonardo Di Caprio in the movie *The Great Gatsby* (2013) is another character who shares Michael's traits and represents the "white" privilege.

"Whiteness" is the human color, non-visible and it presents western culture, symbol of dominance and success, being beautiful, an example to follow. This also transfers then to dominance in economics, politics and media, "white" men generally have a better representation (Dyer 1-50). The connection of "whiteness" and the character of Michael can be noticed frequently when one puts focus on it, however it is worth noting how already by scrutinizing the personality of this protagonist and his hierarchy in relationships with other characters, the dominance of western culture is present and heavily satirized.

Michael likes rock music and is often nostalgic about his old life. He got a sweet deal with FIB (representing FBI) where he apparently got killed 9 years before the start of the plot and now lives the American dream in fictional city of Los Santos (representing LA) under the hidden witness protection with all his crimes put into past and all his wealth kept ("Michael de Santa", GTA Wiki). Michael is a cynical, short-tempered man and he loves to be sarcastic and as such, he always makes some silly jokes or comments on life which makes him a perfect component of play and laughter in the story. His use of sarcasm sometimes perfectly defines his character, identity and life.

Play and laughter are key elements of satire as they make things lighter and funnier which makes the players accept the critique (attack) more easily while also being open to judgement (Jovenaar 32). Michael's representations and characteristics define a classical shallow LA's lifestyle, and it is very easy, but interesting to analyze his life. He is egoistical, narcissistic and hypocritical; drown into capitalism, obsessed with making more money, staying

fit and being surrounded by rich people, celebrities and all other forms of media which promote the same values which Michael ironically appears to hate. The language Michael uses is often to assert dominance or twist the truth with a lot of swear words and sarcastic comments in between (Kettunen 54). Michael seems to be bipolar, especially regarding his social roles in life. He wants to be a family man but is also involved in criminal which endangers his family and hurts his relationship with them, he was raised from a poor family and despises his new materialistic lifestyle, but he is ironically part of one and even becomes a movie producer while portraying a rich and posh lifestyle (Kettunen 65-68). It is almost as Michael is living a double life in his mind because he is in mid-life crisis and is trying to settle down, but this lifestyle bores him, and he misses the adrenaline and his young and criminal self. "...I want something that isn't this. I want to be a good dad, love the family, live the dream" ("GTA 5 Michael Trailer", GTA Series Videos (00:08-00:18)) "But at the same time, I really want the other stuff too." ("GTA 5 Michael Trailer", GTA Series Videos (00:00:35-00:00:38)). He despises everything and everyone around him, but he is himself part of the materialistic world which makes him extremely unhappy. His life is ironic, just like himself and the next few paragraphs will just showcase how satirical Michael's life had become and what it represents.

Right from the start Michael is miserable and that his materialistic family had gotten dysfunctional over the years. From the therapy sessions he attends, the players get to know Michael better and we can see his vulnerable, true, but still ironic side he presents. "I am rich, I am unhappy. I guess I'm very normal for this city" ("GTA 5 Michael Trailer", GTA Series Videos (00:00:52-00:00:55)). Even though Michael loves his family, he had also neglected it multiple times due to his hectic lifestyle over the years: "Half the time, my kids can't stand me. The other half, my wife is cheating on me." ("GTA 5 - Michael's Therapy Sessions (Dr. Friedlander)", GTA Series Videos (00:06:30-00:06:34)) Michael wants to be a good and caring father, he even loves Amanda, but everything is highly complicated due to his criminal activities and general unhappiness. His emotional condition is getting worse, and he is coping by drinking, watching TV and visiting the psychologist (Marsh). All these are a stereotypical representation of a "white" and rich person and the city of LA, where everything seems well on the outside, but there are many hidden issues underneath. Even these therapy sessions are part of the satire. Michael seems forced to go because it is the "new" way of handling emotions and when he finally opens up, the therapist usually says something like "there is no more time" and charges him an insanely high amount of money for a short period of time which does not really solve any of Michael's worries.

His wife Amanda is cheating on him and is verbally abusive, ex stripper and prostitute, spends his money on jewelry and plastic surgeries while doing yoga and playing tennis. In the mission “Marriage Counseling”, Michael catches Amanda cheating on him with a tennis coach he is paying for: “I am paying that turd a hundred and fifty bucks an hour to fuck my wife?” (ThirstyHyena (01:03:04-01:03:07)). This mission is a clear example of how short-tempered Michael can be when his masculinity and ego are in danger, as he went after the coach with Franklin and demolished the house where the lover was hiding in by pulling the deck off with a car. This over dramatic reaction led to both Michael and Franklin getting in trouble with a Mexican drug lord whom they now owned the money for the house and had to do criminal activities in order to pay him back, which means Amanda cheating on Michael was a crucial moment for everybody to get involved in the criminal lifestyle. In the mission “Fame or Shame” we can see a stereotypical “white” and rich people’s “happy” marriage relationship between Michael and Amanda. After Michael finds his son’s weed pile, Amanda tells him “You are either drunk or you’re staring miserably at the clouds, or you’re out there doing God only knows what.” to which Michael satirically replies to her:

“Oh, yeah, I’ve done horrible by you. Pulled you out of a midwestern trailer park, got you a big mansion in Rockford Hills. The only thing you got to worry about is what part of your body you want to have chopped off or sucked out again.” (ThirstyHyena (03:12:32-03:12:53)).

This is mostly how their marriage is represented, cheating and cursing at each other, but eventually getting back together again because they are essentially similar and love each other. However, it is all juxtaposed with money, superficial and childish behavior while cherishing stereotypical shallow values which are the reality of today’s couples. This is how *GTA V* makes an irony of today’s “perfect” and “happy” marriages,

Michael’s daughter Tracey is disrespectful towards Michael, she is another stereotypical female character, classical “daddy’s girl” or “valley girl”. Jimmy, his son, is presented as lazy, addicted to video games and he blames Michael for his own failures (“Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists “). Jimmy and Tracey are presented as stereotypical posh kids and there are many aspects of modern American culture being satirized through their behavior. Domestic issues and mid-life crisis are also heavily satirized in a humorous way through Michael’s character and his role as a troubled father (Wills 175). Michael’s family issues add an extra dimension to the story as this middle-aged “tough” criminal now also deals with typical problems at home with his wife and teenage kids. Michael complained to his therapist about his

son, who “sits on his ass all day, smoking dope and jerking off while he plays that fucking game. If that is our standard for goodness, no wonder this country is screwed.” (“GTA 5 - Michael's Therapy Sessions (Dr. Friedlander)”, GTA Series Videos (00:00:36-00:00:43)). This shows Michael’s disappointment in Jimmy, but also the whole new generation of young, spoiled kids that are being raised in 2010’s. Although many players may not be aware of this, but Jimmy could be a stereotypical satirized representation of the many players themselves. He is a perfect, although exaggerated example of today’s kids who are disrespectful towards their parents, want an easy way towards money, do drugs, smoke or drink alcohol and play video games all day while still living at their parents’ house.

Michael and Jimmy have a complicated father-son relationship. At one point when coming back home and seeing Jimmy again playing video games and smoking pot, Michael smashes the TV in his room out of anger. In the mission “Father/Son”, Jimmy manages to lose Michael’s boat that had been kidnapped and after Franklin and Michael save Jimmy, we can see Michael still lamenting about losing the boat. Jimmy says to Michael: “I nearly died and all you give a shit about is this fucking boat” (ThirstyHyena (00:58:30-00:58:33)). This exhibits in a way how shallow Michael can be, where he actually cares more about materialistic things than about his own son. On the other hand, Jimmy is blaming all of his problems and insecurities on Michael, which satirizes the lack of responsibility and agency of today’s teenagers and young men. Rather than acting on it, working hard and improving himself, it is much easier for Jimmy to blame his dad and whine about family issues, while in reality he has all the factors to succeed in life.

In Michael’s version, these are some of the main reasons why he is returning to criminal activities, to escape his toxic family relations. Michael does not like the soft, old version of himself, he is bored at home, watching some Vinewood action movies, drinking whiskey and complaining to his therapist occasionally: “The only way I'm content and competent is with a gun in my hand or a price on my head.” (“GTA 5 - Michael's Therapy Sessions (Dr. Friedlander)”, GTA Series Videos (00:06:14-00:06:18)). He despises the materialistic obsession of his family and people around him and he is disappointed with corruption and superficiality of people in Los Santos. He might also represent the failure of the American Dream: “I’m living the dream, pal, and that dream is fucked.” (“GTA 5 - Michael's Therapy Sessions (Dr. Friedlander)”, GTA Series Videos (00:01:26-00:01:30)). He is a man that has it all but does not know what to do with his life (Kettunen 56). Michael feels very distant from his “new” mundane life, and he is very much aware of the fakeness and shallowness of his surroundings

which can be visible through his interactions with other characters (Creswell). Despite that, Michael is becoming more and more cynical, sarcastic and self-pitying as he presents the arrogant cliché of LA lifestyle. *GTA V* uses Michael in order to present and criticize the fakeness of today's society and media driven world (Jovenaar 33). TV, Radio stations and social media are all part of this "perfect" lifestyle that Michael is part of as well, but ironically despises all of it at the same time.

Through play and laughter, Michael presents a player who wants to get back into the game and keep playing. Even though he is at the top and has achieved everything, he is an underdog starting from zero again because he is old, out of form (assumably) and has a lot of domestic issues he needs to deal with unlike when he was young and dangerous. Now, he can be described as an experienced leader in heists, using his brain more than brute force, he is more aware of the possible consequences because he has a family to protect ("Grand Theft Auto V, Character Analysis: Michael", Gaming Backlog). Satire and irony that are presented through Michael and his own comments about his life make it easier for the player to accept the criticism about today's society. Without play and laughter, videogame's message would be way too brutal and direct, so many people would disregard it. Some players might not take Michael's character too seriously for the same reason; however, it makes an important part of developers' idea to convey a representation (in an exaggerated and parodic way) of people and the world around them in 2010s.

Regarding relationships with other main characters, Michael acts as a mentor to Franklin and he teaches him about crime and passes advice about this with his more than 20 years of experience, while Franklin returns the favor by advising Michael about how to manage life and still be motivated to do more. When Trevor notices the fond relationship Michael and Franklin have, in the mission "Three's Company" he comments: "Am I detecting some sort of 'son I never had' bullshit here, Mikey huh?" and then he adds to Franklin: "if you want to replace some father figure here, you can do a lot better than this fat snake, alright? This fucker would eat his own kids." (ThirstyHyena (03:43:02-03:43:13)). Michael responds sarcastically to this saying: "That's Trevor, my best friend. That's Franklin, the son I always wanted." (ThirstyHyena (03:43:20- 03:43:23)). This is the first time all the three main characters come together and are united by having to do some criminal activities for the FIB and the corrupted government. Already from the start we can see how Michael and Trevor have a long history and that is why they have a tolerated impoliteness in their speech towards each other, always teasing and arguing, while they both take care of Franklin as his mentors, but also sometimes

as bosses, which makes Franklin subordinate in many missions. Michael sees a lot of potential in Franklin, but he also does not want to make the same mistakes he made with his own son Jimmy, and he does not want Franklin to follow his own criminal path, although Franklin is ready to do anything in order to have Michael's rich lifestyle.

In the mission "Father/Son" Michael advises Franklin: "You know, I've been in this game for a lot of years, and I got out alive. If you want my advice — give the shit up." (ThirstyHyena (00:52:18-00:52:34)). Despite being his role-model and mentor, we can also see some sort of "white" superiority and dominance from Michael, plus the "white" privilege, while also being bossy and saying to Franklin "sit" when he comes and jokingly asking him "You are not going to rob me again, are you?" (ThirstyHyena (00:51:53-00:51:55)) While this all could be said in a friendly manner, it is also possible that game developers are satirizing the popular opinion in the media and society how "blacks" are always criminals, people who cannot be trusted and who would rob and betray you once they got the chance. Additionally, despite caring for Franklin, Michael is the one who gets him in trouble and makes him do the criminal activities.

Michael's relationship with Trevor is highly complicated and full of provocations, jokes and usage of sarcasm and all this somehow goes through in a good manner because Michael and Trevor know each other very well. They are always fighting and arguing like an old couple but are also brutally honest because they know each other's flaws and are not afraid to exploit them. In the mission "The Paleto Score" where Michael is mad at Trevor for kidnapping an older woman and falling in love with her. Michael tells Trevor: "It's another one of your fucking disasters" (ThirstyHyena (08:47:32-08:47:35)). Meanwhile, Trevor replies with how Michael is egocentric and how he "knew it would become about you" (ThirstyHyena (08:48:02-08:48:04)). And when Michael says he misses his family, Trevor exposes him by saying he ignored them his whole life and now he ironically misses them. All this is then stopped by Franklin who often must act as a peacemaker between the two „hot-heads" as he is goal-oriented and wants to focus on the plan and his personal goal of creating a better life for himself. Michael might be a very likable character, a "cool" dad and someone with strong authority, but he can also joke around by using sarcasm and irony in his speech. Nevertheless, players prefer to play with young Franklin, as the upcoming star, someone who struggles to succeed and who is different, mainly due to his race and class.

### 5.1.2 Franklin Clinton

Second protagonist that enters the plot is Franklin Clinton. He is a young Afro-American, ex-gang member from the hood. His hair is short, his gaze is focused, evaluative and judgmental which reflects his character. He is logical, practical, helpful and work-oriented. Franklin is probably the nicest of the three protagonists and the most respectful one (“Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists”). Although he aims for greater things in life, he still greets his old friends with familiar handshakes as they shared gang history from the ghetto. Franklin generally wears street clothes such as sweaters, tank tops, basketball jerseys or other colorful shirts which can be bought at Sub Urban store (Kettunen 52). All these visual features portray Franklin as a stereotypical “black” man from a poor neighborhood which force one to be part of a gang and earn street credibility by participating in various criminal activities. “Blackness” as a concept was seen as something different in a bad sense, something that seemed to threaten the “normal” society. However, great changes emerged for “black” people in the 19th century with major movements which mostly reaped the benefits on economic and social fields (Greason 49). There is a great deal of examples in *GTA V* of how concept of “blackness” is represented and satirized.

Franklin listens to gangster rap music and is heavily connected to the hood even though he wants to leave that life behind. His language use is also distinct as he uses AAVE (African American Vernacular English). Double negation, many swear words (like two other protagonists though), omission of copula and cutting the words short (Kettunen 78). On the other hand, Franklin’s speech has a sound of seriousness and calmness while also, his words match his actions which is a highly positive trait. Nevertheless, the usage of “street” language is a large part of his identity, and it has an influence on Franklin’s relationship with other characters.

Franklin works as a repossession man for a luxury car dealership, but his dreams are much greater, and he wants to escape the ghetto as he believes he is meant to do more in his life (“Franklin Clinton”, GTA Wiki). Franklin becomes depressed due to the lack of success and a feeling of underachieving (Marsh). His parents are gone, stereotypically he never met his father, and his mother was a drug addict. However, he was never affected by that, his goal is to make something out of himself. His kinship relations are very important in his identity development. Due to his childhood family issues and mistreatment by his aunt Denise he was pushed into joining the gang as he needed to belong somewhere which is a very common case for a young Afro-American. In the mission “Franklin and Lamar”, when Franklin returns home,



his aunt says while talking on the phone: “Oh, he here. We living on top of each other and it ain’t right. Shoo, shoo! Get on out of here! Goddamn freeloader!” (Thirsty Hyena (00:18:30-00:18:40)). This is just one of the examples of how Franklin is and was treated probably his whole life and this is just one of the reasons why he is so motivated to make a change. Moreover, in the speech of his aunt Denise we can again see an exaggerated and stereotypical representation of how Afro-Americans speak.

He is very ambitious, wants a better life and is very practical about it (“Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists”). In the mission “Chop” when Lamar wants to deal with some gang-street-wars Franklin tells him: “...no more gangbanging, retro-vengeance bullshit. I’m trying to make some fucking paper” (ThirstyHyena (00:39:56-00:40:02)). This again proves how Franklin wants to live a different life, but he obliges to do it because of his loyalty and street credibility from Lamar and other members in the hood. Also, Franklin comments on his relationship with his aunt Denise saying:” My aunt will be very happy homie. She wants me dead anyway so she can get the fucking house.” (ThirstyHyena (00:40:13-00:40:15)). This again exhibits the tense relationship his aunt and Franklin have and ironically in a way, these are the people who stop him from progressing in life as they always put guilt on him not respecting the streets that raised him.

He uses a lot of slang in his talk and deals with racial stereotyping while also being presented in an exaggerated way coming from a quiet suburban life at the beginning. Franklin is a stereotypical representation of an Afro-American with all pin-pointed attributes as seen from American dominant groups. He also lacks empathy and has sociopathic tendencies, but he is still the kindest and least dysfunctional member of the three protagonists.

Franklin is not able to connect with people as his only friend and partner in crime is Lamar - a good-crazy and funny character who later connects well with Trevor. Franklin only tolerates Lamar out of fear of not staying alone and not being part of the community (even though he wants to leave that gangster lifestyle behind) (“Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists”). In the mission “Franklin and Lamar”, Franklin tells Lamar: "You cool? Cool what? Slinging dope and throwing up gang signs?" (ThirstyHyena (00:11:13-00:11:16)). This just shows how Franklin is tired of the gang life and how he actually sees Lamar as part of his past which he does not want to participate anymore. In their conversations, there is a lot of usage of words such as “homie”, “dog” and “nigga” which is another stereotypical representation of an Afro-American. As Franklin is trying to upgrade his life, his friend Lamar and his aunt Denise see it as a betrayal and mistreatment of the family. They believe as he got

rich that he forgot his old friends and became part of the high-class society which is all about money. Even Tanisha, Franklin's ex-girlfriend (who married a rich doctor) is accusing Franklin of being materialistic and a traitor to his hood which is quite ironical (Kettunen 68-71). In the mission "Lamar down" Tanisha visits Franklin in his new house (towards the end of the game) and tells him Lamar is in trouble, his best friend, to which Franklin replies: "He's just another nigga from the hood. All they wanna do is drag a motherfucker down and live in the past" (ThirstyHyenna (11:58:07-11:58:16)). Tanisha replies that he now lives in a big empty house where nobody cares about him anymore and keeps guilt-tripping him: "I'm a legitimate businessman now, sister. I'm a CEO, an investor, I'm illuminati. I'm a fucking moron nigga. You a phony fuck!" (ThirstyHyenna (11:58:32-11:58:40)). In these examples we can see how Franklin feels that the "hood" is dragging him back, while they believe he betrayed them for money and became everything they dislike in a person. In the end of the scene, Franklin is still loyal to Lamar and goes to save him one more time which indicates he is a good character despite what they think of him.

Going back to the start of the story between the three protagonists, Franklin meets Michael by accident in one of his repossession actions where he steals a car from Michael's son. Michael catches him but accepts his story and his bold attitude. Once Franklin helps Michael's son and him on another occasion (repossessing a boat), Michael and Jimmy admire Franklin's skills and begin to trust him. That was the beginning of a sort of father-son relationship between Michael and Franklin ("Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists"). Franklin even provides advice for Michael's life and management of issues. Franklin often calms him down and tries reasoning with his short-tempered attitude. In the mission "Marriage Counseling" when Michael plans to tear down the house of his wife's lover, Franklin tries to put some sense in Michael's mind and says: "Man, you really gonna be this fucking dramatic?" (ThirstyHyena (01:05:25-01:05:27)) However, Michael proceeds with his plan and asserts his dominance in the relationship between the two once again. In the mission "Father/Son" Franklin tells Michael: "I just came down to see if there is something I can help you with. I see you doin' well for yourself" (ThirstyHyena (00:52:06-00:52:10)) Franklin is young and he admires Michael who has done it all in life, but here we can also see a sort of dominance in race and class as Franklin acts as a subordinate helper constantly trying to prove his worth. Franklin dreams about Michael's life and success. It is his goal to become rich in any way possible. Franklin always felt that due to his race and class it is highly unlikely for him to reach the goals of American dream which he sees in Michael (Creswell). Michael on the other hand, advises

him to go to college and then rip-off people legally, as he calls it, in the capitalism system. Along with criticizing consumerism through heavily exaggerated commercials<sup>2</sup>, *GTA V* with these comments criticizes the system of capitalism as well. Nevertheless, Franklin is persistent in following Michael's steps, and he even sometimes transfers some of his young spirit and motivation onto Michael.

For the players, Franklin's character is the most identifiable, because he is young, hard-working and he reflects the desire to progress and advance in life ("Grand Theft Auto V, Character Analysis: Franklin", Gaming Backlog) Franklin is always rethinking his life decisions and seems very self-critical of himself, but he will do anything to reach his goal of having a higher value lifestyle (Wills 177). Franklin seems as a subordinate to other two protagonists, as their helper hitman and gateway driver who always tries his best to impress, learn and get the money. Although Franklin could be considered the main character, as he is the one who decides the fate of the other two, he always seems to be caught in between Michael and Trevor who appear more dominant, vocal and the ones who plan or decide every big heist. On the other hand, Franklin is more polite, quiet, does what they tell him to do and is often assigned to some "dirty" work behind the scenes. This means Franklin is obliged to drive, steal a car, clean something up or do some other "smaller" tasks which Michael and Trevor do not want to do.

There is a theory by Marsh that all three protagonists could be one person. Michael is firepower of Franklin, making him abandon his rational thinking and decision-making, while Trevor presents his most dangerous and self-destructive manners. In this theory, Franklin is the main character, while Michael and Trevor are his two demons or two personalities and he also acts as a tampon zone between the two, making them all three functions together towards the common goal. In the end, Franklin is the decision-maker in the fate of all three protagonists. However, as the plot thickens, Franklin is getting more and more involved into professional criminal activity which leads to him being rich and important, although it all comes with great cost. Despite earning lots of money, Franklin feels equally lonely and miserable as Michael and Trevor, but he is hiding his true feelings (Marsh). Once he reaches his goal and moves to a big rich house and a nice neighborhood just like his role-model Michael, Franklin also gets Michael's feelings of being unfulfilled and empty despite all the success. This can be seen as

---

<sup>2</sup> Cluckin' Bell – parody of fast-food chains promoted as "chicken-flavored slabs of salt and fat"

Pißwasser – anglicized as Pisswasser in a way of mocking bad and watered American beers

Fly US – parody of United Airlines described as "fleet of aging deathtraps that they can no longer afford to repair or safety-check" ("Commercials" GTA Wiki)

*GTA V*'s critique on people who just chase money, status and glory nowadays, but they end up being unhappy and even more miserable than before. It is a wake-up call for society that the whole mindset needs to change for the better as greed for money, fake happiness, consumerism and happiness from the outside and on social media will lead nowhere once the chase is over.

Considering satire elements, Franklin can present judgement of racial stereotypes and corruptive economy system in the United States. It is visible from this character that *GTA V* also deals with the issues of poverty, inequality and hardships of everyday life and representation of "blackness" in the United States (Jovenaar 36). While interacting with other characters, it is visible that Franklin (as an African American) is being treated differently. For instance, Caucasian characters will change their speech and accent to "street" language when speaking to Franklin, unlike when they speak to other "white" characters. This is also visible with Trevor when he is talking to Michael. In the mission "Hood Safari" when Trevor is hanging out with Franklin and Lamar, he is often imitating their "street" slang, using words such as "homie", mentioning gangs, shootings and drive-by which he normally never talks about in that way. "We shooting shit up? Spraying some motherfuckers? I can drive-by with the best of 'em" (ThirstyHyena (05:04:37-05:04:40)). Trevor is acting as part of the "hood", but in the same time he is mocking the whole concept of it. In another scene, Trevor greets Franklin: "Oh, my N-word! Wassup, homie, uh?" (Generic Gaming (00:00:18-00:00:22)). Even though it is all done in laughter and friendly manner, we can see the difference in behavior and a dominant aspect of "white" race in their attitude towards Afro-Americans. Same as in the relation with Michael, Franklin seems subordinate, naïve and less intelligent than Trevor, who keeps giving him advice. "White" supremacy is seen in talks between Trevor, Lamar and Franklin, where Trevor is the smartest one, despite being a lunatic in his own way.

Race differences are also visible in the relationship of Franklin with Michael's son (Jimmy de Santa) where the two hang out and Jimmy is trying to act "gangster" like Franklin ("Franklin Clinton", GTA Wiki). This proclaims how "white" people stereotypically see "black" people. Also, players of the game can play as Franklin in order to experience this ghetto lifestyle or having control of a stereotypical "black" male. Despite their good relationship, because of their ethnicity, it can be seen how Jimmy has a much easier life, while Franklin has many hardships to face due to the color of his skin. Jimmy can be seen wearing gold chains, a hoodie or a basketball jersey and sometimes he is wearing a hat backwards, imitating a typical "black's" man style. Additionally, we can see that money is not an issue for Jimmy as his dad provided everything for him. While, for Franklin, it is quite the opposite, money is the biggest

issues he had dealt with almost all his life, and he never had emotional or financial support from the parents or other members of the family. As Franklin often hangs out with Jimmy and takes him out, we can see Jimmy has a lot of respect for Franklin, but also imitates his speech and expressions. He calls Franklin the “F dog”, “boy” or “homie” and saying things like “Yeah boy, I’m gangster now” (SharinganRebirth (00:01:45-00:01:48)). This again is a satirical exaggeration of how young “white” men see Afro-Americans nowadays. It also presents the desire of a “white” man to experience “black” culture and the players can do it in *GTA V* without any real-life issues, inequalities or consequences that “black” people may face in the ghetto. It is a perfect example of identity/race tourism which is available to players.

This way players can experience and make a judgement on racial difficulties that are present in the life of an African American. *GTA V* provokes this judgement and critique of American society through Jimmy and Franklin, as a mirror and difference between races, but also a mockery of American culture which needs to be recognized and objectively criticized by players themselves as they are a part of this society.

### 5.1.3 Trevor Philips

The last, but not least, third main protagonist is Trevor Philips. He is another middle-aged Caucasian male with receding hairline and Canadian heritage and accent which he is not particularly proud of. Trevor is a very expressive character who constantly makes various gestures which showcase his dynamic and explosive nature. Trevor’s language is full of swear words and impoliteness which reflect his abusive and threatening character, though his threats are expressed in a different manner when speaking to people he respects (Michel, Franklin or his mother) opposed to when he speaks to other characters.

He is the most irrational character which makes him unpredictable, dangerous and prone to violent acts. This can be seen immediately as the character enters the plot in the mission: “Mr. Philips”. While he is having intercourse with another man’s girlfriend, he realizes Michael is alive on TV news and immediately stops. When the mentioned boyfriend arrives being mad, Trevor violently murders him because he is angry for Michael’s betrayal.

Trevor always seems to be angry and even when laughing he has a menacing look. Unlike Franklin, he is always invading other people’s space and acts in a confrontational manner. This way he is representing aggression in satirical terms. His clothes are constantly dirty, he is wearing a V-necked white T-shirt, blue jeans and black boots and he buys his clothes from a flea market (Kettunen 52-53) Trevor is sending a message that he does not care what he

is wearing and that he hates hipsters, but Michael often teases him and deliberately calls him as one. During one car drive, Michael starts analyzing Trevor by saying: “Think about it, where you live, the way you dress? Yours are all a little out there. A little wacky. And there’s the tattoos, the hair, the weird music, the funny toys, the niche drugs, the everything. You are a hipster!” (calloftreyarch (00:00:50-00:02:04)) And when Trevor defends himself and says he hates hipsters, Michael adds: “Classic hipster denial. You, Trevor, are the proto-hipster.” (calloftreyarch (00:02:48-00:02:52)). This is just one of the satirical representations of Trevor and mockery of hipsters while also, the example of the relationship Michael and Trevor had, always teasing and arguing with each other, but also knowing the limit and when to stop.

Trevor is a Canadian-born former airman (his role in heists is usually to fly an aircraft or shoot a sniper). He devoted his life to criminal activities, and he is an old best friend of Michael and partner in crime. Similarly, to Michael, he lives alone in his trailer, unhappy and involved in drug usage (Marsh). He also appears to be one of the craziest characters in *GTA* series as he is a mentally unstable drug addict who lives in a trailer park which is full of biker gangs and meth heads. Trevor is addicted to creating chaos, often by killing, destroying or making explosions. During the story, the players find out that similarly to Michael and Franklin, Trevor too had a difficult childhood. Trevor’s father abandoned him in a shopping center when he was a child, and this could be one of the reasons why Trevor is holding so much anger within him and destroying everything around him could be a sort of coping mechanism. His mother was a drug addict and is often very critical and judgmental of him (“Trevor Philips”, *GTA* Wiki). He lives in Blaine County and represents a stereotypical American redneck. This would define a “white” man, with no education, living in a trailer, drinking beer, potentially living with his wife (who is also his cousin), listening to country music, being violent and extremely racist (Huber 148 and 149). In the official trailer, Michael describes him as “A major drug dealer. Real hillbilly type” (Rockstar Games (00:00:06-00:00:10)). He is a psychopath who turns into an absolute maniac for little to no reason.

When speaking of satirical elements, Trevor represents indirect attack/aggression. Playing with Trevor most often involves some very creepy tasks that need to be done with a high dose of violence (Stuart). Aggression presents an essential element of satire, and it puts satirist in a higher position than its target (Jovenaar 28) In this case, Trevor’s violence and chaos that is created can serve as a perfect example of an attack which highlights the problems in society nowadays. Trevor is an anarchist who opposes all forms of authority (including FIB representing FBI and LSPD representing LAPD) which often leads to him being wanted by the

police without the player doing anything wrong. Despite this, just like the two other protagonists, Trevor is doing some tasks for the corrupted system and agents which represent it. However, he is doing mostly for his own fun and destruction of anyone and anything around him.

A good example of Trevor's aggression can be experienced by player in the mission "By the Book" where Trevor has to torture a Middle Eastern man in order to get some information and the whole process was manipulated by the FIB (representing FBI). FIB agents are highly corrupted and involved in criminal activities with all the three main characters who often complete tasks for them or otherwise they would be in trouble. In the mission, Trevor has to use a set of tools in a brutal way which can make the players feel very uncomfortable. This was smartly set up by game developers in order to put emphasis how torture (which is still being used by agencies) is a sensitive and uncomfortable subject in today's society (Jovenaar 30). Afterwards, Trevor acknowledges how torture is only used for fun of the torturer as it often provides little or no useful information:

"The media and the government would have us believe that torture is some necessary thing. We need it to get information, to assert ourselves. Did we get any information out of you? Exactly. Torture's for the torturer... or for the guy giving orders to the torture. You torture for the good times – we should all admit that. It's useless as a means of getting information" (ThirstyHyena (04:07:51-04:08:16))

This was an indirect attack on American government and their behavior when getting the information out of someone. From Trevor's monologue, players could conclude how pointless these torturing tactics are and how insensitive the society still is. By using attack/aggression, although it may be uncomfortable, it is the best way to provoke a reaction in players and make them reevaluate these sorts of actions that are still being used today. There are many more examples of aggression in the video game which have a goal of rethinking and creating a response in public.

When playing with Trevor, it is possible to say insults to other people in the street, while for instance Franklin and Michael can only speak in polite manner which shows how Trevor is being presented in the videogame. Trevor dislikes his Canadian heritage and considers himself a "true" American who follows decadent and corrupt ideals of the modern USA. Most of the chaos Trevor creates is caused when he believes someone is mocking his Canadian accent and he is particularly sensitive to this aspect (Kettunen 63). On one occasion, after hearing him

speak, two army guys tell Trevor: “You are clearly a tourist” and start mocking his Canadian accent: “There’s a moose loose about the hoose” (GedorePerson (00:00:11-00:00:20)) Another time, two gang members tease Trevor for the same reason to which he replies it is “a slight accent!” (GedorePerson (00:00:42-00:00:44)) There are many more examples like these, and in every case, things escalate, and Trevor gets very violent. This is *GTA V*’s way of making a parody of Canada and the attitudes of some Americans towards that country. Additionally, they criticize those same people who are the “real” Americans, following right-wing extremism, hating on immigrants, worshiping guns and supporting conspiracy theories.

Just like Michael, Trevor often uses sarcasm and especially loves dark humor. He often calls himself a bisexual and a cannibal. He has a deal with a cult and the player can drive and sell people there as slaves in return for money. In one scene we can see Trevor eating some sort of soup and there is an eyelid inside for which Trevor is not certain if it is human or not and he does not care. He is not motivated by money, but he wants to stay in the game in order to create chaos and violence with no means to an end. Through violence and chaos Trevor causes, he is losing the sense of the world he lives in and is filled with hatred towards modern society (Creswell). In one scene, Trevor, while passing by a pedestrian on the street, out of nowhere asks him: “What was that?” proceeds to beat him while screaming “Asshole! Everybody! Assholes!” (Generic Gaming (00:02:55-00:03:05)). This sort of behavior just proves how distant Trevor is towards other human beings and how he displays deep anger issues while being far away from normal manners in today’s world, however he is often aware of this and accepts himself as it is. He is an American redneck, and he truly acts like one.

Additionally, while controlling Trevor, if a player gets near other NPC’s (non-player characters), Trevor will immediately provoke them on the street, hating on everyone and everything and trying to cause problems. Even when standing next to a police officer, Trevor makes a comment out of nowhere: “Only and idiot would join the cops. See, you don’t even understand simple sentences. I bet you like giving orders and arrest jaywalkers and tourists” (Vučko100 (00:00:23-00:00:40)). This can also be a satirical representation of police nowadays, where all of them are considered dumb, uneducated and violent. This is just one of the examples as there are many more where Trevor randomly calls people “hipster”, “chubby” or “fake”.

Although all 3 main characters are prone to physical aggression, Trevor is the most brutal one. Trevor has accepted his disorder and unfitting role in the society (a violent murderer) and he is not trying to justify this reckless behavior like the other two protagonists (Wills 177). He can be considered a sane (aware of his behavior) and good villain in a way (kills only people



worse than him: ruthless gang leaders, corrupt federal agents, and a jackass billionaire with mercenaries). He had abusive parents and that is one of the big reasons for his disorders. Despite his abusive behavior, he himself thinks he respects women and considers himself a bit of a feminist. On the other hand, he hates feminist protests and slogans which is pretty ironical, he believes they are all fake.

Trevor enters the main plot after thinking Michael was dead for 9 years and finds him in Los Santos. Trevor and Michael have known each other for a long time, and they have a high amount of resentment between them (Stuart). Trevor seems like a one-dimensional character, a monstrous killing psychopath who does not show any feelings, but through some parts of the story and through interactions with other characters, one can see that just like Franklin and Michael, Trevor has a kind side despite all his flaws and disorders (Kettunen 62). Trevor is a man of his word and follows his principles. He hates hypocritical behavior, and he can be very self-critical towards himself unlike other two main protagonists. Despite being infuriated with Michael's betrayal; he is still loyal to his old best friend even though he wants to murder him for the big part of the game; this just expresses that Trevor values his true friendships and connections in life. These two know each other so well, they are very direct and honest and frankly they need each other in their lives. On one occasion, Trevor tells Michael: "I guess I'm happy you made it out alive, and with enough money to make sure your kids become total complete nightmares." (SharinganRebirth (00:04:00-00:04:05)). They expose each other's flaws, often insult each other and satirically comment on their lives, but they call each other "best friend" and have a lot of respect for one another. The two reconnect and put their differences aside in order to do heists together with Franklin.

Trevor often calls Michael soft and teases Franklin by calling him with an N-word, but Trevor loves people who can stand up to him and not be bothered with his provocations. He becomes good friends with Franklin and his friend Lamar ("Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists "). Lamar calls Trevor "crazy dude" and says he is "alright", to which Franklin replies "Maybe ya'll too much alike" (ShariganRebirth (00:09:26-00:09:30)) which Lamar sort of denies. In the interactions and missions with the other two, Trevor acts as a leader and indicates his masculine dominance, but also "white" superiority in a way. Trevor makes fun of gangs and "black" lifestyle by asking Lamar why he is not wearing all green (representing his gang). Lamar says that is in the past to which Trevor pokes again asking how they recognize each other. Lamar eventually says: "Them Ballas might wear, like, a purple hat, or like a shirt with some purple in it, and we, the Families rock the Feuds hats with F's on it or rock the green

kicks with green laces.” (SharinganRebirth (00:13:30-00:13:42)) This just makes Lamar contradict himself while Trevor got the truth out of his sarcastic questions, mocking the gangs and making Lamar look dumb while trying to deny the stereotypical Afro-American gangster clothes and markings.

He is also very smart (though he cannot plan something long-term) and has wit and humor in his speeches. He also developed a good relationship with Michael’s kids (Jimmy and Tracey) who call him “Uncle T”, but he despises Amanda (“Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists”). Trevor being nice and protective with Michael’s children again exhibits his good side and humanize the character who seems distant at first. In the mission “Fame or Shame”, when Trevor enters Michael’s house for the first time after nine years, we can see his attitude and relationship with this modern family. He greets Amanda who he despises, and thinks is all fake saying “You used to be fatter, nice new tits, by the way” (ThirstyHyena (03:15:04-03:15:07)). This is Trevor’s way of mocking all the body operations Amanda has had and making fun of this new “happy” life they have. He also says to Jimmy that he got fatter, but he does not blame him for that, he is always protective of Michael’s children. He also asks where Tracey is, and once they find out she is on a TV show “Fame or Shame”, Trevor immediately reacts and goes with Michael into the studio where they proceed to move Tracey away from that disgraceful show where people embarrass themselves publicly. Despite all the differences Trevor has with Michael, he is still very loyal and cares about his children. Trevor represents a player’s desire to create violence and chaos in the city and that is Trevor’s ultimate motivation with no hidden agenda (“Grand Theft Auto V, Character Analysis: Trevor”, Gaming Backlog). His social roles (friend, uncle, son, CEO, criminal, killer, abuser) reflect his personality as both are complicated and filled with his violent nature. Trevor is a character that represents freedom and rebellion from the mainstream norms. That can also be visible from the off-road vehicles he is driving and the rebellious music he is listening to. Basically, he is a character of extremes (Ketunnen 71-73) Nothing is promised with Trevor as he could be one’s living nightmare or a loyal, protective and sincere friend. Now that I have analyzed in depth the three main protagonists along with all their traits, flaws and attitudes, in the next chapter I will deal with how race, gender and class are represented in the videogame’s storyline.

## 6. Race, gender and class

Race, gender and class are all mutually juxtaposed and often create a big part of one's identity. When speaking of race representation, it is important to mention concepts such as "whiteness", "blackness", "double consciousness" and others that are connected to each other and are very much present in *GTA V*. Representation is immensely important as it connects meaning, language and culture. People create mental representations, but these also depend on one's culture, traditions and beliefs, as well as language and signs that are assigned to a certain meaning.

"The relation between 'things', concepts and signs lie at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'" (Hall 19).

Secondly, gender is something that is heavily satirized in the video game, and it is a topic that is very controversial today. When discussing gender, I will cover the topics such as stereotypical masculinity and how women along with feminism are presented in this video game. Lastly, class is something that is very important and differences between high-class and low-class society plus the importance of money is something that is visible throughout the game. In *GTA V*, all these three terms are stereotyped and presented through main characters.

Lippmann (81) in his work *Public Opinion* argues that people always first define and then see, stereotypes are already predefined by our culture and surroundings we have been accustomed to. Humans are taught of the world from the early age, without witnessing it. These preconceptions are heavily rooted in our minds, and they are expanded through media and popular culture. Stereotypes are also used in order to save time as it is often much easier to put people in certain categories and define someone from a small detail or a visible cue, we noticed at first sight (Lippmann 90). Stereotypes can be used as a self-defense and for protection. When defining other people and putting them in certain boxes, people feel safe and protected, as if everything makes sense and it is something constant and adapted to the world, we think is familiar and normal (Lippmann 96). *GTA V* uses popular stereotypes about people in order to satirize these attitudes, criticize the society and the media who promote these prejudices. Examples that are showcased are exaggerated as to create doubt and instigate change among players and people who analyze the game.

The term "intersectionality", coined by Crenshaw in the 1980s connects all these categories in which way one may be oppressed in society, including race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality or any other. These notions are all mutually connected and used in order

to dominate and access privileges to the cost of the “other” (Runyan 1). Crenshaw (10) analyzed connection of gender and racism within oppressed “black” immigrant women, but this term can be applied to any underprivileged human being. She also brought terms such as “structural” and “political” intersectionality where she argues that all of inequality stems from different categories and even systemic decisions that are being taken. In *GTA V* it can be seen that Franklin is a victim of multiple inequalities. Like many “black” people, he is systematically oppressed due to his skin color and class. It seems almost impossible to get out of that loop and poverty of the “ghetto” where he grew up, unless he is doing criminal activities. Additionally, “black” women in *GTA V* deal with similar issues as Franklin, in addition to being discriminated or hated on due to their gender and sexuality. Just like in real life, these issues which are all connected to one another are ironically presented in order to criticize the modern society. In this chapter I will discuss how race, gender and class are stereotypically and satirically represented in *GTA V*.

### 6.1 Race

Race as the broadest concept can be defined as a set of many different terms shared by a nation, its people, families or tribes. The shared attributions may include common beliefs, interests, characteristics or habits which are connected through the everyday life. Race is a concept which, in colonial terms, can be used to make a distinctive division and binary opposition between humans. This division can then be used to assert dominance and to rate someone as “civilized” and another as “primitive”. These differences include biological, physical and genetical factors (Ashcroft 180). These divisions create subaltern groups of people; the ones that are oppressed and ruled by the hegemonic groups (Ashcroft 198). There are distinct physical and genetic factors such as eye, hair and skin color, but it remains questionable if these characteristics are enough to divide human races and separate groups of people in general.

Race is a valid term, but it is not scientifically confirmed in biological patterns. Instead, race lies on social, cultural and environmental concepts which are not covered by biology. Consequently, race is formed by sociological concepts which people have created subjectively in order to provide significant division between people. “White” or “black” race truly exist, just as categories like “Asian” or “European” exist, but these rely on social characteristics and environmental background of people. Racial categories as an aspect of culture are typically learned, internalized, and accepted without question or critical thought in

a process not so different from children learning their native language as they grow up. (Garcia 10).

When discussing race and representation of race in *GTA V*, it is best to return to two main protagonists, Michael and Franklin, and analyze binary opposition they represent in the story. According to Ashcroft (18), binarism is a term used to describe a combination of two things, while binary opposition are two extremes such as man/woman or birth/death. In the context of imperialism, this notion has been used to provide a visible dominance of one towards the other, for example; colonizer/colonized or “white”/” black”. Imperialism is still present today as it presents an idea of dominating and ruling a distant territory (Said 8). Regarding race in *GTA V*, we have “white”/” black” comparison within the two main protagonists. As previously mentioned, Michael is a stereotypical “white” man, being rich, but unhappy, drinking alcohol, dealing with domestic issues and battling his internal thoughts about life while also being dominant and superior as opposed to Franklin. Regarding status, dominance and arrogance presented in speech, leadership and decision-making plus social roles that each character acquires during missions, there is a visible superiority by Michael over Franklin.

“Whiteness” is presented as non-race, while the “other” is raced and stereotyped as such. The concept of “whiteness” has just recently become a category of race since it was just a human race before. Now this racial category is being analyzed as well and how it was and still is used as a social discriminator, creating a dominant and hegemonic group with visible advantages (Ashcroft 220). Dyer (1-10) in his book *Whiteness* has tried to decompose “whiteness” and put it in a category with other races. He confirmed that “white” is a human race that is always seen and presented in a good light, but it is practically invisible as a separate category or used as a discriminatory factor. It was used and still can be used as an advantage and dominant feature in all spheres of life. “Whiteness” and “white” supremacy have been projected in all the media and it is deeply rooted in people’s mental representations and attitudes towards these differences. Movies, series and video games such as *GTA V* had used this as an opportunity to criticize society and make it aware of the issues with the usage of satire. The “other” in colonial terms is an individual or a group that is different, that does not belong, that is discriminated and needs to be civilized and changed according to Western views of life (Ashcroft 155). “Whiteness” has a dominant position in society, in the case of Michael we can see that he is always provided with power, opportunity and resources needed to succeed while there are negative social consequences for others, such as in the case of Franklin who grew up in the ghetto which is very difficult to escape. “White” supremacy and patriarchy are

stereotypically represented in the videogame through Michael and Trevor. Franklin, even though he is trying to escape that life, is a typical representation of African American urban life dealing with racial profiling, police corruption, gang wars, drugs, listening to rap and wearing stereotypical “black” man’s clothes. Franklin is a commodification of “black” culture within American popular culture and all the race issues that exist are portrayed through the representation of this character (Jovenaar 36). He is heavily stereotyped as he is often called by the “N” word, smokes marijuana and is part of the “Families” gang while doing lower-end and pettier crimes at the beginning. Stereotypically for many “black” kids, Franklin had never met his father and his mother died due to drug addiction. Franklin lives in Chamberlin Hills, one of the poorest parts of the city where racial epithets are dominant, gangster lifestyle, aggression and territory fights are an everyday occurrence. Even though *Rockstar* leaves many choices to the players themselves, gangster rap is always present around “blacks” and abuse from police or attitude from other characters is evident and satirized (Retana). Despite Rockstar trying to provide players the “black” experience, Franklin as one of main characters sometimes seems plain and shallow, defined only by ironical and exaggerated Afro-American stereotypes such as music, gangs, shootings, street language and hunting for money.

In the United States, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fight for promotion, “black” education and development had begun led by many “black” intellectuals who had been affected by slavery and colonialism. They analyzed all aspects of the African negro diaspora and formed movements such as “negritude” in order to base a new ethnicity (Ashcroft 24). Garcia (17) claims that ethnic groups are defined through a group of cultural characteristics, for instance, the language, which is used, religion which is mainstream, customs, beliefs, holidays, food and many other factors. Therefore, ethnicity is used as an important equivalent point for many people, but this concept is highly variable and open to change depending on economic state and social or heritage customs. Negritude presents a theory of unification of people of “black” race. It includes the whole diaspora of “black” people and their culture, shared characteristics, values and traditions (Ashcroft 145).

“Blackness” as a concept was seen as something different in a bad sense, something that seemed to threaten the “normal” society. However, great changes emerged for “black” people in the 19th century with major movements which mostly reaped the benefits on economic and social fields. *The Civil Rights Act*, *The Civil Rights Movement* and *The Voting Rights Act* in the 60s yielded many benefits for the “blacks” who had a sense of

belonging after a long and dark period of their history in the United States. There were many scholars and intellectuals who promoted equal society and motivated “black” people to support various ideologies. Among them, Greason (49) highlighted that key figure was W.E.B. DuBois and his work *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) which has put down the foundations for “black” race to become equal. However, it was the ordinary people in the middle class who raised their children in a way which integrated ideals that would stand as a foundation for the future generations. A. Philip Randolph, leader of the *National Negro Congress* (NNC) was a key man in installing and realizing the idea of a black public sphere, whose only goal was permanent liberty and the establishment of “black” people as equal participants in every sphere of a normal life (Greason 49). These movements and actions presented a first global idea of “blackness”, acceptance of their identity and their representation in an equal society which fought against the oppression of the “white” supremacy at that time.

In *GTA V*, “blackness” is not represented just through race or skin color, but through music, clothing, crimes committed, and the language used. Franklin often seems to believe that due to his skin color and social status or “ghetto” and gang-life he is (was) a part of, makes him incapable of reaching the American dream as Michael (Creswell). Michael lives in Rockford, in Vinewood Hills (representing Beverly Hills), where almost all big mansions and houses are owned by the “white” and conversations about money, trendy diet or some other shallow topic such as something about plastic surgery can be heard on the street. On the other hand, for instance, Franklin lives in the south, the “ghetto”, a poor neighborhood, a lot of abandoned small houses with shattered windows where graffiti, gangs and drugs rule the world. Franklin lives in Chamberlin Hills, one of the poorest parts of the city where racial epithets are dominant, gangster lifestyle, aggression and territory fights are an everyday occurrence. This is another way how the video game connects race, neighborhoods and wealth. (Darvasi 135 and 136). Furthermore, the “white” neighborhoods consist of almost no “blacks” and the other way around as well. One of the most obvious and brutal examples of racial issues can be seen in Blaine County where Trevor lives. This uphill, village part outside of the city consist mostly of rednecks who are extremely racist, and nation driven. Some of the missions there done by Trevor include working for a “white” fanatic on border patrol assault and deport people of different color or minorities that are not considered “real” Americans (Faquza). Michael represents a “true” American and what typically means success in the American way, while Franklin is dreaming of that life and in order to achieve it, he needs to opt for crime while also acting as “white” as possible, in other words, struggling with “double consciousness”. This term

represents the fight through which “black” people go through due to “white” domination. In the American society, “black” people have always felt torn between two sides of themselves, as they must act as “white” as possible in order to blend into an American way of living and diminish their “blackness”. This is what “double consciousness” refers to and it affects “black” people on a daily basis (Du Bois 6). Once Franklin moves away from the “ghetto” and enters a “white” man’s world and neighborhood, only then he can succeed in life or find what is perceived as success by the West. This is also connected to Orientalism, where Western’s attitudes, actions and way of thinking are forced onto the East. Imperialism is defined as taking power through colonization and expanding a country’s power (Said 8 and 9). These sorts of movements can be transferred to America and how “blacks” are influenced or being dominated by the “whites”. Rockstar is basically mocking modern America where every “black” man is either doing crime, drugs or is strangled in poverty, while “white” man are dominant, but all of them are presented as fake, superficial and arrogant. In essence, *GTA V* is both promoting and stereotyping “black” culture in positive and negative way because it celebrates “blackness”, while everything is juxtaposed with crime and shootings.

Another important term here is “identity tourism” where predominantly “white” teens have an opportunity to control and live the life of a “black” person in the United States (Wills 181). *GTA V* could be considered as a form of virtual, identity and race tourism (Stuart.). Identity tourism is a notion represents an act of presupposing or assuming someone’s identity, values, traditions, race, gender and other characteristics through tourism, in this case, virtual tourism. The term was first examined by Berghe and Keyes in their paper titled: □  
 “Introduction: tourism and re-created ethnicity “(1984). Today, it can mostly be achieved through media representations, while in *GTA V* there are satirical and exaggerated representations of people, race, gender, class and the city of LA. It has been revealed that teens prefer to play with Franklin, a “black” character as they want to experience something different from their normal lives. Additionally, just as players can then cross boundaries and indulge in crimes and some stereotypical “black” gangster lifestyle without consequences, a parallel can be drawn with a much longer colonial tradition. This sort of cross-cultural performance was seen in the past where according to Said, main actors of colonial holdings could do whatever they liked in contrast to what they could do at home, in the West (Darvasi 145 and 146). So, for some young players, playing *GTA V* is like a true colonial experience where race, gender and class can be analyzed through satirical examples (Campbell). Through this identity tourism that



the videogame offers, it is crucial to critically examine the stereotypical examples shown as there are a lot of messages and criticism directed towards modern society, particularly from 2010s could be drawn out.

Even though *GTA V* has plenty of representations of minorities, they are mostly represented and satirized as criminals. These sorts of representations may alter one's opinion and attitude towards races and that is the reason why one needs to remember these are satirical representations of "black" culture and as such, must not be taken as 100% real, but as a critic towards those kinds of attitudes that tend to prevail in people's minds created as a social construct. *GTA V* does not present "black" lives as they are, but as they are perceived through the popular media and other sources that are available to an average person who did not have an opportunity to experience the "hood" first-hand.

According to Darvasi (6) *GTA V* mocks' media cliches representing various gangs including Chinese triads, Latino drug lords, Italian American gangsters, Middle Eastern terrorists, but predominantly "black" gangsters from the hood. For instance, Mexican gangs typically speak slowly, have a noticeable accent and wear bandanas, while "black" gangs have cars with big rims and always listen to hip-hop very loudly. Additionally, each car a player might overtake will have specific music played, for Mexicans it would be ranchero, "white" men will have some pop mainstream station, while "black" men's car will have hip-hop (Jeff and Karlin). Characters such as Franklin or Lamar have embodied all the stereotypes of a "black" man that were already promoted in the past by Blaxploitation movies, hip-hop music and videos, TV-series and other media. "Black" life seems to always consist of crime, violence, shootings and disposal of bodies and *GTA V* is basically putting an ironical note making it even more obvious, exaggerated and comical in order to criticize these representations in today's media. *GTA V* is an "elusive, referential cultural artifact that embodies the worst of society while simultaneously critiquing it." (Darvasi 6). *GTA V* embodies all the worst trends, actions, political movements and media exposure drawn from 2010s mainly coming from the United States. If considered as a satire and purposeful exaggeration, many conclusions and flaws of today's society can be seen from the players.

By stereotypical representations, *GTA V* in essence criticizes the treatment of disadvantaged minorities, their lack of opportunities and social injustice they endure (Darvasi 18 qtd in Latorre 14). The issue that might arise with this kind of identity tourism is that, by playing the game, the players naturalize and accept these kinds of circumstances as normal, instead of criticizing these attitudes. On the other hand, with a bit of pointing cues and help,

*GTA V* could be a perfect material for teens to engage in critical thinking and learn about different races, genders and classes, though in an extreme manner.

On various occasions, Franklin seems to be treated differently on the street due to his skin color. For example, when approaching police officers, they might insult him or even shoot him for no reason, while something like that never happens when playing Michael, a “white” character. On the street, while Franklin is approaching police officers, we can hear them saying “I only listen to white rappers”. Franklin says, “Hey you keep us safe, alright officer.” And the police officer pulls out a gun saying, “You have crossed the line” and proceeds to shoot him down (scudpunk (00:00:00-00:00:20)). I will address this issue in more detail in the next chapter where I discuss modern issues that *GTA V* tackles, including racial profiling and police corruption. Moreover, when Franklin approaches “white” women on the street, they are not interested and are kind of rude towards him, and a similar thing occurs when he approaches “black” women, he is not treated well. Additionally, it can be observed that most taxi drivers and small store owners are immigrants, which is another interesting detail, and another ironically presented comment by *GTA V* where the “dirty” work in the United States is mostly being done by the “newcomers”.

Another interesting instance of satire is visible within the character of Jimmy de Santa, Michael’s spoiled son. He smokes weed all day, refuses to do anything productive, plays violent video games and has constant fights with his father, whom he blames for all his life failures. Jimmy is the ridicule of today’s “white” privileged youth, many of which played the video game, but did not realize they were being mocked. Jimmy also has a specific relationship with Franklin, who is his role-model. Jimmy is changing his speech around Franklin, trying to impress him and become part of the hood, dressing as an Afro-American and listening to hip-hop. This is a high mastery of satire by Rockstar, as Jimmy, an affluent and stereotypical example of a “posh” kid could never fit in the “ghetto” society but is forcing that sort of lifestyle as it seems interesting and cool to him, just as the players who play *GTA V* want to experience “black” lives through Franklin. In one cutscene when Jimmy and Franklin meet, Jimmy is wearing a hoodie and trying to impersonate a “black” man while simultaneously being racist towards Franklin. Jimmy says: “Come on my nigga”, adding: “No one creeps on the J-dog my niggers” (Toni Cipriani (00:00:08-00:00:28)). This is just one of instances of how racism, “white” man’s attitude and dominance is being satirized in *GTA V*. Jimmy represents a parody of many “white” kids who play *GTA V* and who prefer to play as Franklin in order to experience the “black” culture while still having the privileges and commodities of being “white” in reality.

## 6.2 Gender

When discussing gender, it is important to mention femininity, misogyny and hegemonic masculinity which are all represented in a way in *GTA V*. As mentioned in previous chapters, representation of women, and especially “black” women in video games is a rarity. Women have been underrepresented and sexualized in the video game history. Men are usually the main protagonists and agents who are role-models and heroes in the players’ minds. These tendencies changed a little bit with the modern video games, but in *GTA V*, the representation of women is questionable to say the least. The most popular and controversial presentation of women in the videogame is them being prostitutes, while a player can pay for their services and afterwards take the money back by murdering the same prostitute. This is just one of the first examples of how women are portrayed and brutally treated in the game. Femininity in *GTA V* is equal with sexuality. Some other representations include modern-age feminists, who are again satirized and made laughable. As *GTA V* deals with deconstruction of masculinity and fall of the American Dream, there is not much agency and importance given to women and feminism, except negative representations and mockery.

*GTA V* portrayed women as sexual objects serving men or as extreme failures with multiple issues. Women are objectified, having just a supporting role and usually presented as shallow or superficial, working as strippers or prostitutes, being unfaithful, only caring about their looks. They are also subjected to violence, many of them having bruises and it seems like a normal occurrence. *GTA V* is making a parody out of misogynistic and violent men who pretend to be “macho” but are essentially just bullying weaker men and women in order to compensate for their failure and the failure of the American dream (Stuart). Women are here just for male’s fun, as an erotic impact, serving as *GTA V*’s wallpaper. On the other hand, men are the prototypes of action, while masculinity and “macho” lifestyle are stereotyped, promoted and discussed (Wills 181). When speaking of feminism and female representation in *GTA V*, the best examples are found withing Michael’s family. His wife Amanda, perfectly exaggerated instance of a modern woman in LA and his daughter Tracey, a spoiled teenage girl. Other less important female characters include Franklin’s aunt, who often joins other middle-aged women, walking and demanding justice and rights for women. Moreover, there is Patricia who was kidnapped by Trevor and possibly experienced psychological torture and misogyny (Jones 5 and 6).

To start with Amanda, she is represented as an ex-stripper and ex-prostitute, now being a modern wife and mother of two children, having shallow values and questionable attitudes.

She was faithful to Michael, until he cheated on her, then Amanda proceeds to cheat him with multiple characters. She is wearing expensive clothes, jewelry, has had plastic surgeries and is very much money-oriented. Despite that, she is presenting herself as a spiritual person, doing yoga, playing tennis and being a successful woman. Similarly, to the city of LA, she is leading a perfect life from the outside, but there are multiple issues when one scratches through the surface and façade. Amanda despises Michael and does not have empathy for his issues, does not approve lifestyles of her children and the whole family is in constant fights and disagreements (“Amanda de Santa” GTA Wiki). Amanda is often drinking alcohol as well, being extremely unhappy, but she does not leave Michael as she prefers the easy and rich lifestyle, he provides for her. She actually represents a “bitchy trophy wife” (Koster 23 qtd. in Jones 10). In another cutscene, Amanda is complaining to Michael about the kids and how she got only herself to blame for choosing a husband like him even though she is very similar to him. She adds: “I would divorce you if I could” (Gaming Celebrity (00:03:37-00:03:40)). This goes to show that Amanda got comfortable with the rich life Michael is providing for her and she does not want to abandon the mansion and the lifestyle even though she hates Michael. Additionally, she says: “You have ruined my serenity yet again, my yoga is fucked!” (Gaming Celebrity (00:03:44-00:03:50)). Amanda tends to scream at her children and Michael, while at the same time pretending that she found peace with yoga and acting all calm and controlled once her yoga instructor enters the room. This conveys all the hypocrisy and fakeness of Amanda and today’s people.

Visually, Amanda represents all the Western beauty standards, being thin, but also having curves and sexually appealing body. Her sexual behavior can only be seen as she is cheating on Michael, but it is obvious that she serves the story mode as a problematic wife and a sexual object (Turtiainen 13 and 14). Her character is not very profound and most of her character traits are hypocritical, mocking a stereotypical version of Western housewife and a gold-digger. When Michael is about to catch her cheating on him, the first thing she says is: “Fuck you Michael, go away!” (Gaming Celebrity (00:02:04-00:02:08)). When Franklin enters the scene, she refers to him as “you” and orders him to stop Michael, which could also be interpreted as a “white” Western woman dominating in society and always being used to get what she wants due to her beauty. Otherwise, when the situation is not going as planned for Amanda, she tends to throw tantrums, scream and be angry on the whole world.

When speaking of Amanda’s language use, the tone is almost always negative and there are some issues to be discussed. In her interactions with Michael, they are always arguing and

Amanda is the one complaining and being the annoying wife as she is unhappy with their marriage. She also rarely speaks to other female characters, and when she does speak with Tracey, it is usually some drama, problems and arguments. In one cutscene, she is arguing with Tracey about her boyfriend sleeping over and there is a lot of unreasonable drama and screaming from both of them. Amanda says: “He’s a bum. I don’t even know why you are with him!” (Gaming Celebrity (00:01:27: 00:01:32)). These sort of arguments present Amanda as a dramatic and overreactive woman who is interfering and insulting people who are not at her level. Despite this, other characters refer to Amanda in neutral terms which indicates that there is some respect towards female characters (Turtainen 14 and 15).

Amanda’s roles are various, and she is very important for the whole video game’s story and plot. She could be seen as an evil character, always complaining to Michael, guilt-tripping him, using his money and finally cheating on him. Additionally, she could be seen as an ally, as she is sometimes helping Michael and is really trying to keep the family together. Moreover, she is seen as typical housewife and sometimes as a sexual object (Turtainen 15 and 16). Despite all her flaws, Amanda remains an important character in the game, often supporting Michael and having a love/hate relationship with him. We can see that she can dominate, be assertive, smart and sexy in a powerful way all while being dressed classy.

Tracey, Michael’s daughter is representing a stereotypical “daddy’s girl”. She is a spoiled and immature teenager, often being rebellious or throwing tantrums. She can also be considered a “valley girl”, a materialistic upper-class woman. She is often hooking up with boys of questionable values and she is trying to make some money quickly. Therefore, she wants to be an actress, or a future star of some show and she is not afraid of embarrassing herself for glory. She is ready to do anything to become famous. She even has had several attempts in making porn. When Michael comes home, he can hear Jimmy and Tracey arguing sometimes. Tracey tells Jimmy: “Go masturbate!” to which he replies: “I would, but you’re in all the nastiest pornos!” (Madd Gamer (00:00:20-00:00:26)) She could also be seen as a “dumb blonde” for these reasons, her speech is often witty, light and basic, while her actions show that she is shallow and caring more about fame than some real-life values. She often blames family for her failures just like Jimmy, but on a more positive note, she still accepts Michael as her dad and wants her family to be reunited (“Tracey de Santa” GTA Wiki). In one version of a cutscene, Tracey performs on a show “Fame or Shame” even though she is originally stopped by Michael and Trevor. In this cutscene she is singing a song called “Daddy Issues” and she is dressed extremely provocatively while performing a very sexual dance on live television. Tracey

describes the song about how there is a thin line between whether a girl becomes a “scholar” or a “stripper”. Some of the lyrics are: “Don’t want to become a hoe oh oh” (beastwho (00:01:34-00:01:38)) and “I could never get your damn attention!” (beastwho (00:02:06-00:02:10)). This show in general is very problematic, promoting racism, homophobia, sexuality and materialism. This is a way of *GTA V* mocking today’s society and obsession with making money quickly and participating in these low value shows which influences future generations just like Tracey who obviously does not mind doing anything for fame. It is also a hit at these shows nowadays which promote negative values and influence teenagers along with their view of the world and “success”.

Unlike Amanda who dresses classy depending on the occasion, Tracey is always dressed provocatively, showing a lot of her body wearing miniskirts, revealing shirts and thigh highs. She is also obeying Western beauty standards, having a perfect body and being liberate about showing it and using to her advantage. Tracey is being very much sexualized in many cutscenes, sometimes dancing on top of the table or another time dancing in the reality TV show audition, she is clearly presented as a sexualized object (Turtiainen 14). In the mission “Fame or Shame”, Tracey is wearing a tight skirt, showing off her cleavage and dancing sexually, completely inappropriate and being represent just as a sexual object. She is also being mocked by the show host and she is completely oblivious to it just smiling and nodding. The host says while presenting Tracey: “Tracey is a ‘dancer’, but she also likes acting, modelling and working with children. That’s beautiful. You’re so original, like a basket full of puppies, or a rainbow or a pile of puke.” (ThirstyHyena (03:19:10-03:19:30)). This presents Tracey as a “dumb blonde” and a typical girl who wants success fast without noticing she is being used and insulted in a live show. This is also a critique towards today’s commercials and shows where women are presented as sex objects and where sex sells the product.

Tracey’s language usage is often plain, simple and non-assertive. She is, just like Amanda, complaining and arguing with Michael, as well as with Amanda. Tracey is also referred to in neutral terms by other characters, which is a sign of respect (Turtiainen 13). However, other than that, her role in the story revolves around some short and funny comments, being a spoiled and rich teenager and her body being her strongest card. On another occasion where Michael comes home and sees Jimmy and Tracey fighting, them arguing goes something like this; Jimmy keeps calling her: “Willing cock magnet!” and “Nympho!” while she calls him: “Loser, loser!” (Madd Gamer (00:00:35: 00:00:45)) and proceeds screaming like a spoiled brat.

Just like Amanda's, Tracey's roles often change, and she is highly important for the story, not as much as Amanda though. As mentioned already, she is seen as a "daddy's" girl, she is heavily sexualized and that is her most prominent role. She could also be seen as a victim, as often, she is being used due to her inexperience, naiveness and hunt for money and glory (Turtiainen 15). Despite all her flaws and teenage mistakes, she commits, she is loved and protected by Michael and Trevor on numerous occasions. This again expresses the weakness of women presented in *GTA V*, as they always need men to protect and save them whenever they start doing something by themselves.

Moreover, most famous discussion and representation of women in *GTA V* is that of strippers and prostitutes. The players are even encouraged to go to a strip club and flirt by even touching the strippers when the guard is not looking (Koster 23). Afterwards, the stripper wants to sleep with the player, which kind of promotes sexual harassment and equals strippers with prostitutes, which is a common misconception nowadays and mockery towards those kinds of opinions. Female characters are represented as weak, naïve and always in need of a man's help to get out of trouble or succeed in life. On the other hand, women's only weapon or trait seems to be their sexuality by which they can control men and get what they want. This is another notorious parody *GTA V* is trying to convey about modern life relationships between men and women and their powers. Women like Amanda, Tracey or Patricia are frequently using seduction as their strongest card against men but are still often depending on men or require some sort of help from them.

The way women are treated and represented in *GTA V* could be considered misogynistic as they are stereotyped, one-dimensional characters carrying a negative connotation. Misogyny could be defined as prejudice, hatred or unfair treatment against women, usually combined with violence or some other physical or verbal abuse (Manne 4). However, it can also be said that *GTA V* criticizes today's media, the beauty standards that had been put up and followed, rushing towards glory through sex and so on. *GTA V* mocks sexual ads, modern-age feminists and all the things that surround us and that have been created by people in the modern era. In the same light, *GTA V* ironizes and mocks hegemonic masculinity and misogyny, putting focus on the problems and treatment between men and women. Both genders are exploited in their flaws and actions that are present. It is a social critique towards women haters, but also towards women who often take advantage of men using their sexuality.

Just as women are forced to reach the incredible Western beauty standards in order to be successful, men are supposed to be rich and upper-class in order to be respected and fulfill

their masculinity, and this media representation is something that *GTA V* mocks a lot. Hegemonic masculinity is a dominant topic when speaking of *GTA V*. The videogame was created in a way that appeals to men and explores the “macho” lifestyle. Fast cars, guns, gang wars, robberies, money, hot women...*GTA V* was created in this way that so that it suits males. Main characters in *GTA V* are dominant, hyper-masculine and aggressive. *GTA V* developers are basically making fun of and parodying masculinity through this hyper-violent representation and frustration main characters are going through (Jones 4-5). Being tough, aggressive and macho, including corporate power, military heroism and action-adventure scenes are all present in *GTA V*, while the players need to use violence and guns in almost every mission (Saflor). As mentioned previously, Michael represents the American dream, but also the destruction of that dream fulfilled with unhappiness. The same happens with other two main protagonists, but Michael is a perfect character to analyze endangered and frustrated hegemonic masculinity. Even though Michael can be considered as the epitome of smart moves and calm reactions in missions, his ‘evil’ side often comes out on surface. His domestic issues and being bored with his rich life make him frustrated and sad, which leads to him cheating on his wife and violent outbursts out of nowhere when he wants to establish control over other men or women.

Michael is a man who has it all, a gorgeous wife, two kids, big mansion, expensive cars and lives in a sunny place of Los Santos. Nevertheless, he is miserable. Being a “macho” man as he is, his voice is always strong, actions are very direct, and he is not afraid to use violence when threatened. However, his dysfunctional family makes him seem weak and frustrated and him being a “cheating husband” is a threat to his masculinity and the American Dream. His family does not respect him as his wife cheats on him, while Tracey and Jimmy do whatever they want and then blame Michael when their intentions fail. This makes Michael unhappy, miserable, sad and angry about life. That is why on one occasion he smashes his son’s TV out of nowhere when he again finds him playing video games all day and smoking pot. Whenever his ego is tarnished or his masculinity is threatened, Michael seems to lose control and show his evil side. This is *GTA V*’s comment and critique on these “macho” men and their hegemonic masculinity which seems to fall to pieces and turn into violence on the first sign of inconvenience.

There is another example where main characters need to run a race against a woman Mary-Ann who is in super form. And, Michael, who is supposed to be old and out of form, still manages to beat her, mocks her on the way and manages to get her number in the end. This is again a sort of satire towards male’s dominance and masculinity that needs to be preserved,



while women are there to be won and sexually objectified. Similarly, in order to protect his masculinity, Trevor is destroying everything around him, cursing, threatening other people, using violence whenever he can and mocking other people on the street in addition to using women and asserting dominance over everyone weaker than him.

### 6.3 Class

Class was an important notion in colonialism, and it is an important issue in post-colonialism and imperialism. Economic control, oppression, exclusion and social injustice all stem from class. Binarism opposites is again present between high-class and low-class society and the differences between those in power and the “other” or those on the margin is clearly visible in representation and attitudes of people (Ashcroft 34). Class is concerned with a hierarchy, ranking or position of people in the society. It interferes closely with culture, traditions and ideology of humans. Basic class relation has always been between a dominant class and a working class. Dominant class, through history, was always a class which indicated a sense of nationalism, and it did not only include economic and cultural supremacy, but also political power which was established through laws and punishment of people (Wolfreys 31-35)

Social class, status, power and money are big forces in today’s world. And the same is happening in *GTA V*, just on a bigger, more exaggerated scale where money controls everything. Class is also highly connected to race and gender, as previously mentioned, mostly Caucasian men are the richest, while minorities, African Americans and women depend on these “white” men to provide them with money and jobs. Low-class neighborhoods such as Franklin’s Chamberlin Hills are full of crimes and the chances of witnessing or being a victim of attack are much more common than in the richer parts of the city (Jovenaar 37). Class and social status are again best seen through the 3 main protagonists. Franklin starts the story as part of the lower-class, living in Chamberlin Hills, Strawberry with his aunt where most people are poor, and it consists mostly of abandoned houses and industrial buildings. Later on, with the help of Michael and Trevor (who are “white” men), Franklin upgrades his socioeconomic position and moves to a rich neighborhood with a fancy LA lifestyle. The third protagonist, Trevor, lives in Blain County in the poor town called Sandy Shores. As he lives there in a trailer, he could be considered lower-class as well. However, through criminal activities and his drug-smuggling company, Trevor might belong to an upper-class level, but he lacks manners and prestige that are needed in that category (Kettunen 48-50). He is even completely against that

sort of modern lifestyle that Michael lives so he purposely puts himself in a lower level as he just does not care about status.

Michael lives in fictional Beverly Hills, a high-class area, although his background is actually a lower/working class. Michael has “earned” his way to an upper-class level through criminal activities and connections he gathered through life. His high-class status is visible by the mansion he lives in, the cars he owns and the fashion clothes he wears. Moreover, Michael has connections within the whole city of LS, including the corrupted core of political and justice systems. Due to his status, all the doors are open to him, and he even managed to fulfill his dream of producing a movie in Vinewood (representing Hollywood). Nevertheless, Michael also deals with typical ‘rich peoples’ problems including domestic issues, alcohol addiction and being bored with the superficiality he managed to surround himself with where everybody just cares about their status, looks, money and power.

Franklin, on the other hand, grew up in the ghetto of Chamberlin hills, the poorest part of Los Santos. This shattered and dirty neighborhood is presented as full of shootings, gang-wars, rap music and inability to progress in life, the typical hood. For that reason, in order to succeed in life, Franklin knows he has got to move away from that part of the city. Until he meets Michael and Trevor, all Franklin can do are some petty crimes, repossession and unprofessional thefts and shootings. Only with the help of a “white” high-class men can Franklin advance in life and go from low-value criminal to a professional heist robber. Once he moves to a high-class society, opportunities to earn money and gain a higher status keep coming to Franklin, as he is now a valued member of the society, unlike the people from the ghetto. Despite that, change of lifestyle and glory do not bring happiness to Franklin, as he becomes miserable and lonely just as Michael. Nevertheless, this is another satirical message from *GTA V* developers who want to showcase how different class and neighborhood one grows up in can have a major impact on life opportunities. In Chamberlin Hills Franklin was just another criminal, a disposable “black” body, while in Vinewood Hills he becomes appreciated and involved in all spheres of Los Santos life, including politics, police, corruption and other high-class activities; he is now a high-class criminal whose life is worth much more than the ones living in the ghetto.

## 7. Modern issues in the city of Los Santos

After analyzing the main characters of the game, their attitudes towards each other and other people, decomposing various representations of race, gender and class, now it is time to have a look at some other modern issues that are relevant in the videogame. *GTA V* satirically criticizes modern issues such as corruption, consumerism, mass media, money-based society, police brutality and this is what makes it apart from other games, *GTA V* is more than a videogame and it can be analyzed from many different perspectives.

*GTA V* could be considered as a speculative fiction which combines presumptive and stereotypical varieties of fantasy and fiction, including a very realistic description of 2010s in the United States (and the rest of the world) where people are surrounded by corruption, greed and right-wing extremism (Quelette 12 and 13). These various representations of the fictional world and the city of Los Santos are perplexed with the popular culture (clothes, music, cars, technology) and dominating media promotion including political movements. Therefore, *GTA V* leaves a permanent mark in the history of gaming as every person that plays the game can experience 2010s and its most important features, though in an exaggerated manner. *GTA V* predicts, but also criticizes various things that are a real issue in today's world. Some of these include right-wing politics, deportation, dehumanization and intolerance to immigrants, police brutality and racism, justice system and police corruption along with naturalization of school shootings, fear of socialism and presence of Russian operatives. Additionally, *GTA V* hits and mocks at some of the most important topics in the United States such as; conspiracy theories, hatred of immigrants and satisfying to the Christian right (Quelette 14 and 15).

*GTA V* blatant solution to these issues is taking everything to the street and beat the enemies in a dirty way, using their own tactics against them. A great advantage of video games such as *GTA V* is that it allows players to experience a possible dystopian future, participate in it and practice or test appropriate solutions by taking action. For every player, *GTA V* presents America. *GTA V* developers satirized the American experience juxtaposing it with fakeness, emptiness and consumer excess in California all while making it look super beautiful, colorful and never boring. Los Santos (LA) is represented as a hyper-realistic fun park made mostly for male players to have fun, but also experience many issues that come with this sort of lifestyle or the downfall of the American dream (Wills 187).

The city of Los Santos perfectly describes the state of people in 2010s, especially in the United States. The city is corrupt, and people are focused on money, status and shallow values. People are fake and pretending to be happy while they are unsatisfied, lonely and miserable,

just like Michael. The state of mind in the city is defined through radio and billboard commercials where plastic operations are promoted, celebrity gossips are news of the day and low-quality shows are dominating the public space. It is the endpoint of the American dream as such (Wills 190). All three main characters are unable to find true happiness and they create chaos, disrupt the system and chase money in order to make life more exciting. Nevertheless, even after gaining money, all three of them are unhappy and lonely. No matter the money, status or success, the American dream is unreachable and disappointing.

One of many satirical representations of today's society is the social network in game, *Life Invader*, representing *Facebook*. Its motto is: "Invasion never felt so good" and it hits at company's recent scandal with selling personal information from people in order to promote certain products. Some other slogans include: "making the private public" or "Inflate yourself online" and the word "privacy" is being crossed out everywhere. This is *GTA V*'s way of criticizing the lack of privacy people have created for themselves. In the game, there is a mission where the player is supposed to eliminate a character like Mark Zuckerberg, the owner of *Facebook*. The headquarters of *Life Invader* and its employees are also part of the satire as they do yoga, sit on bean bags, they have their thinking rooms, fancy cafes and vegan diet, it is an irony of IT guys and real employees of *Facebook* or *Google* for instance. They are all wearing cargo shorts, constantly talk about lactose and gluten-free products and act towards their boss with immense respect and God-like worshiping (Stuart). This is just another way of how *GTA V* satirizes our society and social networks that have become a big part of everyone's life. *GTA V* is like a parody of the Internet or the modern lifestyle which mocks humanity through popular culture such as reality TV, plastic surgery, self-help books and celebrity magazines along with hilarious billboards and public media commercials. It satirizes modern life presenting people as narcissistic or self-obsessed with numerous celebrity role-models and apathy towards politics and different views or attitudes on life.

Los Santos in *GTA V* is corrupted to the core along with FBI and CIA agents who are a big part of the storyline. This is even promoted in the media as one prominent US law firm is helping guilty people get away with crimes and this is publicly advertised as such, another brilliant irony of life in *GTA V*. *GTA V* is with its satire is challenging and provoking its players, making them analyze everything with care. The game is violent, but it is also realistic in describing a world where happiness cannot be bought, where sensationalist media is occupying our everyday lives and where hyper consumerism and capitalism lead to corruption which is being normalized today (Wills 189 and 190). *GTA V* also included various political topics

through media and talks on the street. Some examples are right-wing domination and infamous “war on terror” agenda (Barret 95-98). Corporate advertising and politics are something *GTA V* constantly makes fun of; the fakeness and transparency of these promotions, including real-life brands, make *GTA V* way closer to real life. One of those ads is the one for *Pißwasser*, which mocks watered-down beers of low quality, which is produced heavily, especially the beer in the United States is infamous of being bad. Another one is *Clucking’ Bell* representing greasy and unhealthy fast-food restaurant all over America. Then there is *Ammu-Nation* where player can easily walk in and buy all sorts of weapons which is a way of criticizing how easy it is to get a gun in the United States and possibly connected to mass shootings that are frequently happening in schools. Regarding politics, *GTA V* likes to satirize and present conservatives and liberals as absolute extremists, pointing out all their flaws and absurd attitudes on some issues. This can be seen on another product description, tobacco company *Redwood Cigarettes* which are described as: “Tobacco products for real men who don’t go to the doctors or read fearmongering. Left wing so-called medical propaganda.” (“Redwood Cigarettes”, GTA Wiki). Moreover, a commercial for phone service *Tinkle* which is advertised as: “A North American mobile phone operator with awful North American mobile phone coverage.” (“Tinkle”, GTA Wiki).

Another stance from Darvasi (84-99) on *GTA V* is that it is a realistic simulation of the world with multicomplex representations which put spotlight on US consumer culture, stereotypical media descriptions, shallow celebrities, money hustlers and neoconservative politicians. *GTA V* criticizes USA’s political system, sense of democracy, freedom and other notions which are being promoted, but are not even close to reality. It could also be concluded that *GTA V* wants to correct everything that is wrong with America and maybe direct attention to lack of opportunities for minorities like Franklin and social inequality that occurs daily. As mentioned previously, through the city of Los Santos, *GTA V* heavily criticizes the divisions regarding race and class between people. By the way neighborhoods are divided, the “black” community represents people who are poor, low-value, dangerous, unable to change, full of crime and lack of opportunities to create a better life for themselves. “Black” people are criminals and are always treated as suspicious, especially by the police and the justice system. On the other hand, “white” neighborhoods are rich, clean, high-class, full of big houses and cars with prosperity and opportunity at every corner. *GTA V* represents America through stereotypes in the popular culture and media depictions.

Los Santos as a city seems very realistic as it contains many references to real-world companies or landmarks. For instance, there is a Vinewood sign (Hollywood sign), then the Maze Bank Tower (U.S. Bank Tower). In Michael's rich neighborhood, Vinewood Hills it is possible to take a tour of all the celebrity homes or hear stories about them (Jovenaar 33). These stories tend to be very negative, and it paints the reality of this posh neighborhood, which is full of fakeness, shallowness and low-value traits. It is another way of how *GTA V* puts irony on modern life. Apart from music in cars that is different in every neighborhood, Radio stations play another important role in *GTA V* as they paint the situation in the world, including hilarious commercials. One of those is a parody on both American and United Airlines, it is a commercial for the fictional *Fly US*. The commercial goes: "Sit back, relax and shut up" (Jovenaar 34). It is an exaggerated comment on the attitude and rudeness of these American flight companies which are often involved in different scandals.

As mentioned previously, there are many examples in *GTA V* of direct racism or racial profiling. Police has a slogan "obey and survive" which is another satirical hit from videogame developers. This is especially obvious when playing with Franklin, an Afro-American. He can get a wanted level when just randomly driving around the "white" neighborhood and proceed being chased by the police for no apparent reason. Moreover, when walking near a police officer, he is often being insulted on the account of his race or being beaten, arrested and/or shot down for saying anything to the officials. When there is a police-chase, police tend to shoot at "black" people while the "whites" will just be arrested as it is supposed to be without murdering them unnecessarily. This can be seen as an exaggerated and satirical attack from *GTA V* on what is happening in the United States today. Firstly, it criticizes the minimum or almost no control on purchasing guns, where almost every person on the street has one, or believes that it is needed "just in case". Another critique goes to police who first shoots and then asks, especially when it is a colored person in question. Another issue presented by *GTA V* is the corruption, as the whole city seems to be corrupted. This corruption problem can especially be seen between police members, FIB and CAA organizations where all the main people are involved. All these issues mentioned are satirized in *GTA V* and the goal is to make everyone aware in the most direct and brutal way of what surrounds us, not just in the USA, but in the whole world. *GTA V* is trying to raise awareness about these situations and is trying to warn people of what we are becoming and what might be our near future if the same trends continue. Therefore, *GTA V* aspires to make the players analyze everything critically and start the change for the better, from every individual.

## 8. Conclusion

Video games and video game culture is growing rapidly and becoming a crucial part of the popular culture. Video games can no longer be seen just as entertainment, but rather a media that influences all spheres of people's lives, including early education, academic studies and work purposes. *GTA* series and especially *GTA V* have influenced more than one generation and have changed the perspective of videogaming. For that reason, this video game can be analyzed from multiple viewpoints and in this paper, it was analyzed as a satiric, but mirror-like representation of the United States in 2010s with all the world's beauties and problems. On the first glance, *GTA V* might seem like a chaotic shooting game filled with irony, but this narrative-based videogame is much more than that. The developers of the game used satire, exaggeration, parody and stereotypes in order to mock certain behaviors, but also to highlight these situations and inspire change withing people who play the game. All three main characters and their relationship with other characters are complex, but this is what makes them interesting. Michael is a stereotypical "white" man living the American Dream and having "white" privileges all while being miserable, having domestic issues, facing endangered masculinity while simultaneously following and hating on the 'posh' lifestyle. Franklin is representing "blackness", trying to grasp the success that Michael has while dealing with racial discrimination. Trevor is a typical American redneck, creating chaos for no apparent reason and protecting his "macho" lifestyle while hating on his Canadian heritage and following "true" American values, corruption, crime and extremism. *GTA V* is describing the fall of the American Dream, where all three protagonists are unhappy with their lives, no matter the money. Even though all three of them become good friends, Franklin is often the subordinate one, doing the "dirty" work for the other two while they are the dominant leaders and decision-makers.

Regarding race, Franklin and his "gang" are showcased, but also stereotyped considering "blackness" through music, slang, gun shootings, hip-hop clothes, fatherless families and racial profiling. Despite Amanda and Tracey being one of the main characters, women are presented mostly in a bad manner being prostitutes, cheating and nagging wives, following Western beauty standards by doing plastic surgeries, being "trophy-wives" and "daddy's girls". *GTA V* is a man's world, but they on the other hand, deals with endangered masculinity, always trying to be dominant and "macho" while being rich, possessing guns, driving fast cars and having a good social status. Class and social status are another visible categorization of the game and it is clear that "black" neighborhoods such as Chamberlin Hills

are poor, abandoned, full of gang families and crime where it is almost impossible to “break” the circle while “white” neighborhoods such as Vinewood Hills are rich, full of mansions, great cars and superior lifestyle which comes with its flaws, but the opportunities are always present.

*GTA V* deals with modern problems such as corruption which includes the whole system from government to police officers, racial profiling, mocking of social media and invasion of privacy (*Life Invader* representing *Facebook*). Irony is also present with conspiracy theories, immigrants who are always doing “dirty” jobs and politics where there are only extremists in the *GTA* world. Los Santos represents modern America, city of hope, dreams and beauty from the outside, but a city full of problems and chaos from the inside. Capitalism and media are another big ‘thing’ where there are many exaggerated commercials hitting at all the low-quality and bad companies.

*GTA V* needs to be analyzed in even greater detail as this paper has just scratched the surface of it and video game culture in general. Further research will help not just the players and people who study this academic field, but also the game developers who are a big part of this process. This videogame reveals all that is bad within America and the world itself. Through its satire, stereotypes, irony, parody and exaggeration there is an attack and laughter on all these issues, but it is also a social critique on negative behavior that is always present. So, instead of criticizing the violence in the *GTA V*, it needs to be analyzed more and through proper guidance, players can learn from it about race, “black” culture, gender, class, other modern issues and stereotypes that are occurring in everyday life. What is more, such video games can inspire players to take action in real life and stimulate change in their own behavior, thus actively contributing to participation, modification and development of society for the better.



## 9. Works cited:

1. "Characters / Grand Theft Auto V – Protagonists" <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Characters/GrandTheftAutoVProtagonists> (Accessed 14 Mar 2022).
2. "Grand Theft Auto V – Amanda Cutscenes." *YouTube*, uploaded by Gaming Celebrity, 01 January 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAZJqwPgL0c&t=475s>
3. "Grand Theft Auto V – Favorite Trevor Scene." *YouTube*, uploaded by Generic Gaming, 20 September 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8O2cAyCoIY>
4. "Grand Theft Auto V: Trevor." *YouTube*, uploaded by Rockstar Games, 30 April 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAOUlsmzYM>
5. "GTA 5 – Michael Trailer." *YouTube*, uploaded by GTA Series Videos, 30 April 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehEc4C6bleY>
6. "GTA 5 – Michael's Therapy Sessions (Dr. Friedlander)." *YouTube*, uploaded by GTA Series Videos, 03 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQUNTX7rJyw>
7. "GTA 5 FULL MOVIE - Grand Theft Auto V Movie." *YouTube*, uploaded by Izuniy, 15 December 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF8t4ygOZwo>
8. "GTA V – Racist Cops." *YouTube*, uploaded by scudpunk, 29 November 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhNEdBxUlwc>
9. "GTA V – Trevor Bully People #1." *YouTube*, uploaded by Vučko100, 24 November 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0VNHWaDU5g>
10. "GTA V 100% #2 (1080p 60fps) OLD." *YouTube*, uploaded by Thirsty Hyena, 04 May 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEqBkkgQoic>
11. "GTA V Conversations: Franklin Hangs With Jimmy." *YouTube*, uploaded by SharinganRebirth, 26 February 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba5StE\\_W944&t=107s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba5StE_W944&t=107s)
12. "GTA V: Michael Proves Trevor's A Hipster." *YouTube*, uploaded by calloftreyarch, 21 September 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dyh3sQN6ne4>
13. "Jimmy De Santa Roasts Franklin Again." *YouTube*, uploaded by Toni Cipriani, 18 December 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipm3XixbhGI>
14. "Mrs. Philips: Trevor's Mother (GTA V)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Windo, 23 September 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJW85cWqCsA>

15. “The Impact of Video Games on Culture”. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/10-4-the-impact-of-video-games-on-culture/> (Accessed 20 Feb 2022).
16. “Tracey and Jimmy Arguing (GTA 5).” *YouTube*, uploaded by Madd Gamer, 14 March 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4qS2mg88fk>
17. “Trevor getting bullied because of his canadian accent.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Gedore Person, 19 November 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpJ7wwwmoLs>
18. Ashcroft, Bill et al. (2000). *Post-Colonial Theory: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.
19. Backlog Gaming. “Grand Theft Auto V, Character Analysis: Franklin.” Books and Gaming, 04 August 2015, [gamingbacklogjournal.wordpress.com/2015/08/04/grand-theft-auto-v-character-analysis-franklin](http://gamingbacklogjournal.wordpress.com/2015/08/04/grand-theft-auto-v-character-analysis-franklin). (Accessed 09 Dec 2021).
20. Backlog, Gaming. “Grand Theft Auto V, Character Analysis: Michael.” Books and Gaming, 05 August 2015, <https://gamingbacklogjournal.wordpress.com/2015/08/05/grand-theft-auto-v-character-analysis-michael/>. (Accessed 10 Dec 2021).
21. Backlog, Gaming. “Grand Theft Auto V, Character Analysis: Trevor.” Books and Gaming, 06 August 2015, <https://gamingbacklogjournal.wordpress.com/2015/08/06/grand-theft-auto-character-analysis-trevor/>. (Accessed 08 Dec 2021).
22. Berghe, P., Keyes, C.F. (1984) *Introduction tourism and re-created ethnicity*. Annals of Tourism Research. Volume 11, Issue 3, Pages 343-352
23. Campbell, C., *GTA 5 and the problem of privilege*. Polygon. 2017. <https://www.polygon.com/features/2017/8/4/16058318/gta-5-teaching-race-gender-violence-privilege> (Accessed 20 Dec 2021).
24. Cothran, Tilman (1950). *White Stereotypes in Fiction by Negroes*. Phylon. **11** (3): 252–256. doi:10.2307/272012. JSTOR 272012
25. Crenshaw, K. (1991). *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241-1299. doi:10.2307/1229039
26. Darvasi, Paul. *UNDER THE HOOD: AN (AUTO) ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF HOW WHITE ADOLESCENT MALES CRITICALLY ENGAGE WITH RACE IN GRAND THEFT AUTO V*. 2019. York University. PhD Dissertation.

- [https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/37454/Darvasi\\_Paul\\_2019\\_PhD.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/37454/Darvasi_Paul_2019_PhD.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y) (Accessed Feb 4).
27. Du Bois, W. E. B (1994)., *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York, Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books.
  28. Elliott, Robert C (2004), *The nature of satire. Encyclopædia Britannica*.
  29. Faquza. *Race, Class, and Gender in Grand Theft Auto V*.  
<https://faquza.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/race-class-and-gender-in-grand-theft-auto-v/>  
(Accessed\_07 Nov 2021)
  30. Frye, Northrop. "The Nature of Satire." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 14 no. 1, 1944, p. 75-89. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/551010. (Accessed 22 Nov 2021).
  31. Garcia, Justin D. (2017)., *Race and Ethnicity*. Millersville University of Pennsylvania.
  32. GTA Wiki "Amanda de Santa". *Fandom*. 2022.[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Amanda\\_De\\_Santa](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Amanda_De_Santa) (Accessed Apr 11 2022).
  33. GTA Wiki. "Franklin Clinton". 2022. *Fandom*.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Franklin\\_Clinton](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Franklin_Clinton) (Accessed Apr 22 2022).
  34. GTA Wiki. "Grand Theft Auto V. "Fandom. 2022.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Grand\\_Theft\\_Auto\\_V](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Grand_Theft_Auto_V) (Accessed 07 Mar 2022).
  35. GTA Wiki. "Jimmy de Santa". 2022. *Fandom*.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Jimmy\\_De\\_Santa](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Jimmy_De_Santa) (Accessed May 29 2022).
  36. GTA Wiki. "Los Santos". *Fandom*. 2022.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Los\\_Santos\\_\(HD\\_Universe\)](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Los_Santos_(HD_Universe)) (Accessed May 15 2022).
  37. GTA Wiki. "Michal de Santa". *Fandom*. 2022.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Michael\\_De\\_Santa](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Michael_De_Santa) (Accessed Apr 8 2022).
  38. GTA Wiki. "Redwood Cigarettes". *Fandom*. 2022.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Redwood\\_Cigarettes](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Redwood_Cigarettes) (Accessed Jun 5 2022).
  39. GTA Wiki. "Tinkle". 2022. <https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Tinkle> (Accessed Jun 5 2022).
  40. GTA Wiki. "Tracey de Santa". *Fandom*. 2022.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Tracey\\_De\\_Santa](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Tracey_De_Santa) (Accessed Apr 9 2022).
  41. GTA Wiki. "Trevor Philips". 2022. *Fandom*.  
[https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Trevor\\_Philips](https://gta.fandom.com/wiki/Trevor_Philips) (Accessed Apr 20 2022).
  42. Hall, S. (1997)., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: The Open University, SAGE Publications.

43. Huber, Patrick. "A Short History of 'Redneck': The Fashioning of a Southern White Masculine Identity." *Southern Cultures*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1995, pp. 145–166. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44378645>. Accessed 18 Apr. 2022.
44. Jones, D. *Masculinity & Misogyny in Grand Theft Auto V*. <https://studylib.net/doc/9920745/masculinity-and-misogyny-in-grand-theft-auto-v>
45. Jovenaar, Barbara. *The Satirical Message of Grand Theft Auto V. A Critique on Contemporary American Society*. 2017. Bachelor thesis. [https://theses.uibn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/123456789/4770/Jouenaar%2C\\_B\\_1.pdf?sequence=1](https://theses.uibn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/123456789/4770/Jouenaar%2C_B_1.pdf?sequence=1) (Accessed Feb 20 2022).
46. Kettunen, Joonas. *CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES IN SAN ANDREAS: Characterizing the protagonists in Grand Theft Auto V*. University of Jyväskylä. 2015. Master thesis. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/46561/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201508042607.pdf?sequence=1> (Accessed Mar 29 2022).
47. Lippmann, Walter (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press Paperback.
48. Makovitch, Minako Kurukawa (March 5, 1972). "Reciprocity in Racial Stereotypes: White, Black and Yellow". *American Journal of Sociology*. 77 (5): 876–897. doi:10.1086/225229. JSTOR 2776927. S2CID 143996344
49. Manne, K. (2019). *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Ithaca, New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190604981.
50. MasterClass. "What Is Satire? How to Use Satire in Literature, Pop Culture, and Politics—Plus Tips on Using Satire in Writing.". 2021. <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-satire-how-to-use-satire-in-literature-pop-culture-and-politics-plus-tips-on-using-satire-in-writing> (Accessed 18 Mar 2022).
51. Ouellete, Marc. "Society Doesn't Owe You Anything: Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas & Video Games as Speculative Fiction." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2021. <http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v8-issue-1/society-doesnt-owe-you-anything-grand-theft-auto-san-andreas-video-games-as-speculative-fiction> (Accessed 10 Apr 2022).
52. Reid, A. "Video Games as Popular Culture ". 2014 <https://medium.com/@ajreid93/video-games-as-popular-culture-49d22adbd091> (Accessed 5 Jan 2022).
53. Rem5511. "Video Games as a Form of Satire (With Emphasis on Grand Theft Auto V) ". *The Gaming Gazette*. 2015.

- <https://sites.psu.edu/passionblogrmoussa/2015/09/09/video-games-as-a-form-of-satire-with-emphasis-on-grand-theft-auto-v/> (Accessed 10 Mar 2022).
54. Retana, J. (2019)., Grand Theft Auto: Depictions of Minorities. <https://medium.com/@biretana/grand-theft-auto-depictions-of-minorities-a761b40bca34> (Accessed 28 May 2022).
  55. Rockstar Games (2001); *Grand Theft Auto III*. Windows PC version, developed by *DMA Design*. Produced by Leslie Benzies.
  56. Rockstar Games (2002); *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, developed by *Rockstar North*. Produced by Leslie Benzies.
  57. Rockstar Games (2004), *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. Windows PC version, developed by *Rockstar North*. Produced by Leslie Benzies.
  58. Rockstar Games (2013); *Grand Theft Auto V*. Windows PC version, developed by *Rockstar North*. *Rockstar games*. Produced by Leslie Benzies. <https://www.rockstargames.com/V/> (Accessed 20 Nov 2021).
  59. Rockstar Games (2008), *Grand Theft Auto IV*. Windows PC version. Developed by *Rockstar North*. Produced by Leslie Benzies.
  60. Saflor, K. "Masculinity Portrayed in Grand Theft Auto V." Ryerson University. 2017. <https://visualculture.blog.ryerson.ca/masculinity-portrayed-in-grand-theft-auto-v/> (Accessed 7 May 2022).
  61. Said, Edward (1978). *Orientalism*. London: Routledge.
  62. Shaw A. What Is Video Game Culture? *Cultural Studies and Game Studies*. *Games and Culture*. 2010;5(4):403-424. doi:10.1177/1555412009360414
  63. Storey, John (2015)., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction*. Fifth Edition. University of Sunderland, pp. 1-13.
  64. Test, George A. (1991) *Satire: Spirit and Art*. Gainesville: *University of South Florida Press, Print*.
  65. Turtiainen, Emilia. *The Portrayal of Female Characters in Grand Theft Auto V*. 2017. University of Jyväskylä. Bachelor thesis. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/54613/1/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201706202992.pdf> (Accessed Mar 18 2022).
  66. Walter Greason (2009) Blackness and Whiteness as Historical Forces in the 20th Century United States, *Multicultural Perspectives*, 11:1, 49-53, DOI: 10.1080/15210960902717650

67. Willaert, Kate “The Origin of the Term ‘Gamer.’ “A Critical Hit! 23 2019. [www.acriticalhit.com/origin-of-gamer](http://www.acriticalhit.com/origin-of-gamer). (Accessed 15 Mar 2022).
68. Wills, John. “Gamer Nation”. Video Games and American Culture. *Johns Hopkins University Press*. 2019.
69. Windows MS-DOS (1997); *Grand Theft Auto*. Windows PC version, developed by *DMA Design* and *Tarantula Studios*. Produced by David Jones.
70. Wolf, M. *VIDEO GAMES AS AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE*, *Concordia University of Wisconsin*. 2017.
71. Wolfreys, Julian (2004)., *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory*. *Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan*.

## 10. SATIRE IN *GTA V*: Summary and key words

Video game culture is the future of media, and it is becoming as influential as movies, books or music. *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013) is still the most popular video game nowadays and due to its complex story, it is used as case study for this paper. The aim of this master thesis is to analyze the main protagonists in the video game, representation of race, gender and class, and modern issues of our society, with the usage of satire. Satirical representations are complemented with theoretical notions such as “whiteness”, “blackness”, “otherness”, race tourism, intersectionality and different stereotypes. Satire in *GTA V* showcases not only many issues of the United States in 2010s, but also gives a social critique directed at individuals. Consequently, *GTA* series and other video games of this magnitude need to be analyzed in greater detail as future generations can learn from these satirical examples and what is more, interactive material will motivate people to act, change their own negative behavior and start a change in society for the better.

Key words: video game culture, satire, *GTA V*, race, gender, class, stereotypes

## 11. SATIRA U *GTA V*: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Kultura videoigara je budućnost medija i postaje jednako utjecajna kao filmovi, knjige ili glazba. Grand Theft Auto V (2013.) i danas je najpopularnija video igra, a zbog svoje složene priče korištena je kao studija slučaja za ovaj rad. Cilj ovog magistarskog rada je analizirati glavne protagoniste u video igri, reprezentaciju rase, spola i klase, te suvremene probleme našeg društva, uz korištenje satire. Satirični prikazi nadopunjuju se s teorijskim pojmovima kao što su “bjelina”, “crnilo”, “različitost”, rasni turizam, intersekcionalnost i različiti stereotipi. Satira u *GTA V* prikazuje ne samo mnoge probleme Sjedinjenih Država u 2010-ima, već daje i društvenu kritiku usmjerenu na pojedince. Slijedom toga, GTA serijal i druge videoigre ove veličine potrebno je detaljnije analizirati jer buduće generacije mogu učiti iz ovih satiričnih primjera i čak štoviše, interaktivni materijal će motivirati ljude na aktivno poduzimanje, promjenu vlastitog negativnog ponašanja i pokretanje promjena u društvu na bolje.

Ključne riječi: kultura videoigara, satira, *GTA V*, rasa, spol, klasa, stereotipi