



**REINFORCING STEREOTYPES AND NORMATIVE IDEOLOGIES THROUGH
ANIMATED SUBSERVIENCE: ‘HOW DOES *GRAND THEFT AUTO V*
PERPETUATE THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY OF PATRIARCHY THROUGH
MALE PROTAGONIST GAME PLAY?’**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify whether *Grand Theft Auto V* perpetrates the dominant ideology of patriarchy through male protagonist game play. Analyzing data obtained from 10 semi-structured interviews, findings were transcribed and established according to themes and sub-themes. The literature review examines masculinities and the objectification of women in conjunction with patriarchal and capitalist interconnections. The corporatization and privatization of the gaming industry connects capitalism and patriarchy as they both execute a form of exploitative politics. The difference between fantasy and reality is explored, as moral boundaries are often crossed in *Grand Theft Auto V* together with aggressive behaviour and sexual imagery as it represents destructive attitudes towards women.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The central question of this thesis asks how *Grand Theft Auto V* perpetuates the dominant ideology¹ of patriarchy² through male protagonist³ game play⁴. The overall structure of the study takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 begins by exploring *GTA V* from a historical context with a focus on the freedom aspect of the game through signature graphics and intricate cities created by Rockstar that were continuously rebuilt and refined to a higher standard in order to give the freedom of control back to the player. A brief synopsis examining earlier *Grand Theft Auto*'s in comparison to the latest series, *Grand Theft Auto V*, reveals the technological advancements and innovative cognitive skills that contributed towards its success in the gaming industry. Next, *Grand Theft Auto V* is analyzed from various feminist perspectives such as an anarchy-feminist perspective, identifying a coercive form of

¹ Ideology refers primarily to those most alienated by the status quo (Gerring, 1997:957).

² Patriarchy is the idea of male domination and female subordination which is often insensitive to historical and cross-cultural variations according to Walby (1990).

³ A protagonist is the main playable player in a video game which can be a hero or a villain in a story (GTA Wiki, 2014).

⁴ Huizinga (1980:4) defines play as a social function, a form of social construction and as a cultural factor in life using our imagination to manipulate certain images of reality.

hierarchy from the dominant position of male protagonists ensuring the subjugation of female characters in the game. Next, the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism through the perspective of Marxism and feminism⁵ examines the video game industry and systems of global capitalism as male dominated areas of power and authority. Next, I explore the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu, who intellectually examines the dynamics of power in society. Similar to feminist analysis and discourse, Bourdieu asserts that gender roles are socially and culturally constructed, identifying patriarchal networks that maintain the gender dominance of one group over the other. The review of literature will examine themes including roles that support patriarchal structures which are examined and compared with similar academic discourse on the topic. Literature on capitalist and patriarchal interconnections examines the relationship between capitalist labour and male power. Literature on different masculinities is examined, in particular Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity as it specifically analyses the control and dominance of men over women through the social construct of power. The difference between fantasy and reality is examined in literature relating to moral boundaries that are often crossed. Literature relating to harmless indulgence is in contrast with misogynistic and sexist attitudes which serve to de-humanize and disempower women. Literature exploring violent imagery that harvests oppressive aggression towards females in video games is investigated as it represents destructive and detrimental attitudes towards women. The third chapter is concerned with the research design and methodology used for this study. My ontological stance on the effects of patriarchal structures is viewed through feminist discourse on the knowledge and understanding

⁵ Marxist feminists theoretically analyze the relationship between patriarchy and the capitalist mode of production according to Beechey (1979).

of themes such as oppression and objectification based on one's gender. This research is examined predominantly from a feminist perspective using semi-structured interviews as a qualitative method. Data was generated through 10 interviews which were analyzed and transcribed verbatim. Ethical considerations protected the identities of the interview participants including confidential and anonymous data collection procedures. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research which found both positive and negative representation of male and female characters in the game. In a very much male-orientated game, protagonists are represented as masculine driven, violent and offensive according to specified participants. Findings indicated that female characters in the game are de-humanized and sexually objectified through stereotypical gender role association promoting chauvinist and sexist attitudes, often leading to violence. However, not all interview participants were of this view as most of them saw it as just a game to be played for fun. *Grand Theft Auto V* as a multibillion dollar industry investigates the link between capitalism and patriarchy through the social and political narrative of creators Rockstar. A concern that was highlighted by some interview participants was a transparency in the actual storyline. Although contemporary technical graphics showed extraordinary innovation and skill, the lack of new missions, humour and 'soul' was disappointing for some. Chapter 5 discusses the analysis and implications of the research findings. A background to the study includes narrative on YouTube videos that transmit sexual and often violent videos of game play from *Grand Theft Auto V*. The argument as to whether masculinities are inherently biological or whether they are artificially constructed is explored through alpha-male protagonists. Patriarchal structures that oversee the control and subordination of women are examined such as the supervision of females in the strip club by male bouncers. Misogynistic attitudes and the use of violence against women in *Grand Theft Auto V* inquires as

to whether creators Rockstar are responsible for creating such scenarios or if it is a genuine reflection of societal norms. Interactive experiences through peripheral illusion examine Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social constructionism identifying the socialization and normalization of gender roles that form a habitus in gender discrimination. The corporatization and privatization of the video game industry are briefly critiqued outlining the relationships between capitalism and patriarchy in terms of hierarchal and authoritative roles that support the current globally dominated capitalist society. Through this system, women are exploited through a process of commodification (such as strippers or prostitutes), creating a high marketplace demand for such business.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review

The exploration for literature relating to the effects of patriarchal ideologies specifically in *Grand Theft Auto V* is a somewhat unexplored terrain. In saying that, themes and subthemes from this research in relation to previous *Grand Theft Auto*'s are academically explored and analyzed. Factors found to be influencing patriarchal ideologies have been analyzed in several studies in academia. A large body of literature has investigated the overall theme of gender inequality, specifically the dominance of one gender (male) over another (female). Firstly, this chapter will explore the historical context of the *Grand Theft Auto* series, and the considerable technological advancements through signature graphics that have gradually emphasized the freedom aspect of the game. Secondly, I will describe my feminist perspective and justify its significance in terms of this research project. I would describe my comprehension of feminism as a combination of Anarcha-Feminism, Marxist-Feminism and Bourdieu's concept of social constructionism. This literature fundamentally examines academic discourse as seen from a personal feminist perspective. Thirdly, the underrepresentation of strong female characters in video games is investigated by Braun and Giroux (1989) who argue that the majority of main characters are male, in comparison to a small population of females. In a more contemporary study by Beasley and Standley (2002), an analysis of discriminative stereotyping, such as the sexualization of the female body, crucially fails to examine gender power roles as well as aggressive behavioural tendencies in video games, and is therefore inconclusive in terms of providing a comprehensive argument. In 2007, Dill and Thill published a paper identifying 60% of female characters in video games as sexualized in comparison to only 1% of men. In an

analysis of female oppression, Tong (1988) argues the fundamental cause is the socially constructed gender systems that see power in the hands of males over females. On a similar theme, Dworkin and MacKinnon (1988) examine the eroticization of hierarchy through the exploitation of women in pornography, satisfying male desires and then capitalizing on it.

Fourthly, various masculinities and male power roles are examined including an understanding and articulation of the system of patriarchy. Its objective as a powerful political tool is revealed in this chapter through a knowledge of feminist epistemology and transformative learning techniques. In a study by Rajkowska (2014), the assignment of protagonist roles are examined revealing main playable character as 'strong and independent', with supporting roles assigned to weaker characters. Next, Connell's (1987) analysis of the impact of the construction of gender roles identifies the association of male roles with dominance and female roles with submission, in terms of patriarchal configurations. Intensive studies of different masculinities by Connell (2005) explore the concept of hegemonic masculinity and reaches different conclusions, as it is an apparent threat to both men and women. Next, the difference between fetish and fantasy in video games identifies harmless game play as opposed to the cognitive effects of the over-exposure to violence. The commodification of the female body in a virtually male-dominated video game industry is affiliated with capitalist economic relations and patriarchal sexual relations. Next, the interconnectedness between capitalist and patriarchal relations is examined in relation to women's inferior position in the economic market place. Finally, I will critique existing knowledge of game play in terms of accessibility and neutrality.

2.2 Historical Context of *Grand Theft Auto V*

Fundamental to the *Grand Theft Auto* series is the culture of freedom it represents within a contemporary fictional world. Released in 1997, game play options controversially allowed the use of violence, crime and sexually explicit animated interaction which carried an ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) rating of 18+ in Europe and 17+ in the USA. *Grand Theft Auto* game play includes ‘intense violence, blood and gore, nudity, mature humour, strong language, strong sexual content and the use of drugs and alcohol’ according to Rockstar games (2014). Rockstar has created both intricate and multifarious regions for gamers to explore through the personalized unrestricted construction of game play. The *Grand Theft Auto* series follows the life story of various fictional criminals bringing a sometimes controversial freedom of choice to the gamer experience. *GTA* began with graphics similar to arcade style gaming using a top-down view mode of gaming. Previous video game design included pre-set instructions whereas a high level of freedom alongside open mission structures provided the framework for future games to work on. Rockstar refined and built upon these ideas enhancing core game play ideas as time went on. A wider range of mission types with signature graphics and realistic characters served to enhance this action-orientated game experience and for the first time, actions mattered, for example, association with a certain gang had consequences (in terms of rivals). A complete redesign of graphics from 2D to 3D graphics refined the fan base as it now included complex driving as well as combat missions. *GTA* was continuously built to a higher standard with a focus on the freedom aspect of the game, essentially giving control back to the player.

2.3 From a Feminist Perspective

My belief is that men and women are entitled to the same rights and privileges, and in that sense, I am a feminist. In Rosemarie Tong's book, 'Feminist Thought', she approaches a variety of feminist frameworks to suit alternate perspectives on female oppression. I would affiliate my personal feminist beliefs with qualities of Anarcha-Feminism, Marxist-Feminism and Bourdieu's concept of social constructionism. By analyzing and incorporating these aspects into my understanding of feminism, I will address my theories of feminism within an 'anarcha-Marxist-socially constructed' framework. I would argue that patriarchy is an unethical form of power, which is promoted and enforced by hierarchical institutions such as state bodies and corporations in which socially constructed gender roles that dominate both men and women are administered on a global scale. Oppression is a concept that describes the relationship between social groups, for one group to be oppressed there must be an oppressor group (Friere, 1970). From a feminist perspective, it is imperative that the patriarchal nature of the games industry is addressed if equilibrium is to be reached in relation to how women are represented in society. Feminist blogger on video games, Anita Sarkeesian, was subjected to rape and death threats following her critique of female roles in games (<http://www.feministfrequency.com>), which according to De Castell and Jenkins (2013:77) reveals the way in which online systems such as Youtube as well as institutional bodies such as the state, have failed to address discrimination and hatred based on gender. It is fundamental that global legislation and structures are put in place to eliminate gender inequality and create awareness should it emanate in the future.

2.3.1 Anarcha-Feminism on *Grand Theft Auto V*

Similar to Anarchist feminists, I oppose both the socially constructed structures that patriarchy subsumes as I identify it with a coercive form of hierarchy. In the same manner, the state is identified as a corrupt relationship of power that is dominated and exploited by men. Similarly, in the nineteenth century, Voltairine de Cleyre believed that the church played a key role in terms of patriarchal and population control and so she was of the view that marriage was a bourgeois institution that restricted the development and freedom of women. I greatly admire her social and political perspective on the mechanically controlled and organized structures consciously installed to incarcerate females without end. According to de Cleyre (2005),

Every married woman is a bonded slave, who takes her master's name, her master's bread, her master's commands, and serves her master's passion; who passes through the ordeal of pregnancy and the throes of travail at his dictation, not at her desire; who can control no property, not even her own body, without his consent, and from whose straining arms the children she bears may be torn at his pleasure, or willed away while they are yet unborn... Yes, our masters! The earth is a prison, the marriage-bed is a cell, women are the prisoners, and you are the keepers!

In relation to *Grand Theft Auto V*, patriarchal structures within the game use the dominant position of male characters as instruments of control and authority ensuring the subservience of female characters in the game. There are no playable female protagonists in *GTA V* as the three main overriding characters are male. Under the jurisdiction of protagonist Michael, his family members are considered his property as he likes to be in control of the family (P9). Even though Michael indulges in extra marital affairs and fornicates with prostitutes and strippers in the game, he violently flexes hegemonically masculine attributes when he catches his wife in bed with another man. He beats the guy with a baseball bat after literally razing his house to the ground.

Central to the social organization of patriarchy is a primary male authoritative figure that demonstrates a male dominated system of control. In saying that, Michael's wife 'Amanda' asserts a form of territorial control in terms of preserving the family unit in times of familial disputes.

2.3.2 Marxist Feminist Critique of Grand Theft Auto V

Fundamental to feminism and Marxism is the partnership between patriarchy and capitalism. 'Patriarchy is and must be located in a political and economic process' (Smith, 2005:229). Maintaining patriarchal social control often segregates both men and women, in that it is similar to a class system where the role of the bourgeois is played by men and the role of the proletariat is played by women. Marx's analysis of capitalism as an economic and political system sees the capitalist ruling class manifest itself through systemic inequality at the expense of the proletariat. The multi-billion dollar video-game industry is entrenched within a male-dominated system of global capitalism in which gender plays a key role. Acker (2004:3) defines gender in terms of global capitalism discourse,

Gender as used here is defined as inequalities, divisions, and differences socially constructed around assumed distinctions between female and male. Gender is a basic organizing principle in social life, a principle for allocation of duties, rights, rewards, and power, including the means of violence. Gender is a factor in organizing daily life for individuals, families, communities, and societies as large structures. Women are usually disadvantaged in terms of power and material and status rewards. Gender is neither an essential attribute of individuals nor a constant in social life, but consists of material and symbolic aspects of existence, constantly produced and reproduced in the course of ongoing social activities and practices.

. Contemporary political and economic systems that cultivate this structure of hierarchy are examined by MacKinnon who argues that male dominance is exposed in public when made subject to law (2005:106). MacKinnon asserts that male dominance is an institutionalized social system where women have ‘often refused to accept the premises, limits, and rules’ of this law (2005:118). In saying that, MacKinnon recognizes the need for balance and so argues that ‘feminist dominance theory is a theory of social and political inequality’ (2005:90). The exploitation of women through pornographic means is protected by laws that ‘participate in their marketing strategy of sexualizing pornography by making it seem forbidden’ (2005:39). It would seem that social and political power remains discretionary in terms of gender in both game play and the real world.

In *Grand Theft Auto V*, female characters are economically exploited through roles of prostitution and sexually exploited through roles of subservience. In the strip club, females are paid to strip naked and perform in a male dominated zone, ultimately disempowering and dehumanizing their characters. Overly-sexualized depictions of women are harmful to women and girls in society as it can lead to victimization and even rape on a daily basis (Scala, 2013:60). Millett (1969) sees patriarchy ‘as an institution and a social constant so deeply entrenched as to run through all other political, social, or economic forms’. Lawless and Fox (2012) found the underrepresentation of women in US politics from a study of nearly 4,000 candidates was due to gender bias against female candidates. However, in challenging the status quo, a combination of feminism and radicalism aims to challenge capitalism’s andocentric bias constructed by a predominantly male perspective.

Emerging from the ferment surrounding the New Left, the “movement for women’s liberation began life as an insurrectionary force, which challenged male dominance in state-organized capitalist societies of the post-War era’ (Fraser, 2012:4).

This is mirrored in the real world according to the CSO (Central Statistics Office),

Women are under-represented in decision making structures at both national and regional levels. In 2011, only 15.1% of TDs in Dail Eireann were women, while they accounted for just over a third of members of State Boards, less than a fifth of members of local authorities and just over a third of the membership of Vocational Education Committees (2011).

Although Marxism fails to theorize adequately either subjectivity or gender (Haines, 1997:643), it identifies the patriarchal position of women within capitalist structures and discourse. In a way, *Grand Theft Auto V* makes capitalism visible, as the fundamental objective of the game is not just to increase economic capital, but to maintain gendered social, political and economic positions in society.

2.3.3 Bourdieu's Social Constructionist Perspective of Grand Theft Auto V

Stemming from Marxism are theories of social constructionism, in the same way as knowledge is produced by human thought, so is one's position in society, which is often socially constructed through gender activities and performed as a social product. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu examines the social construction of gender differences, which are analogous with contemporary feminist theories of inequality based on gender. Bourdieu identifies capital as 'proportionate to one's position in the social space' (Thorpe, 2009:493). Social, economic and political capital is,

in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. And the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices (Bourdieu, 1986).

Through this analysis, gender roles are both socially and culturally constructed and prescribed as appropriate behaviour with a focus on how meaning is created. Materialist theories examine the structures responsible for maintaining gender roles in order for them to appear as naturalized. Adapting a feminist perspective from Bourdieu's theories through the understanding of a society based on capital, is relevant as the value of different capitals corresponds with power and privilege. Feminism exposes these structures and processes characteristic of this system, offering 'a powerfully elaborate conceptual framework for understanding the role of gender in the social relations of modern capitalist society' (McCall 1992: 837). Similar to most feminist's approach; Bourdieu adapts an anti-essentialist position, seeing for example, sexism embraced within patriarchal networks in order to regulate the domination of one gender over another. Moi (1990: 281) argues this is 'politically nefarious insofar as it is invoked to predict and thus to control the behaviour of every member of a given social group'. In relation to *Grand Theft Auto V*, hyper-masculine roles are assigned to male protagonists who display characteristics of strength, control, leadership and dominance, whereas females in the game are represented as over-sexualized, objectified, and stereotypically programmed to follow a male dominated system of decree. The virtual identification of the social settings in *Grand Theft Auto V* is presented from the perspective of a team of designers who base the *Grand Theft Auto V* world on real-life. Rockstar North art director, Aaron Garbut states in an interview,

We always use the same process: working with real cities, starting on a macro level to define the districts we want to use, and working down. I think the only variation is how many real landmarks we decide to use once we get to the individual building level- we're still a long way from being dictated by reality. Instead, we use it as a starting point (Edge Staff, 2014).

Likewise, a patriarchal society depends on the overall structures of power and control which is rationalized, interpreted and enforced through specifically targeted ideologies of game play.

2.4 Normalizing Gender Roles

Assimilating gender roles can often sustain a male dominated system where casual hypersexual depictions normalize the objectification of female bodies through continuous misrepresentation. Conceptions of masculinity and femininity have ramifications in terms of how the roles and abilities of both men and women are played out (Connell 1987, Dill and Thill 2007, Martin 2009, Blaise 2012, Cotter *et al* 2011, Rudman *et al* 2010). The construction of gender roles in *GTA V* attributes promiscuity to female characters, which is similar to Connell's (1987) argument that acts of sexual harassment that support male dominance and female submission supports a patriarchal social structure. Variations within masculinities in video games often lead to unrealistic expectations which according to Dill and Thill (2007:853) can damage their sense of social desirability. In an interview with 'The Guardian' newspaper in 2013, Rockstar co-founder 'Dan Houser' revealed the 'concept of being masculine was key to this story' (Hill, 2013). Similarly, Martin (2009:196) examines the normalization of heterosexual masculinity, otherwise known as heteronormativity, through the sexual socialization of children during childhood where most parents assumed their children were heterosexual and normalized it through stereotypical gender teaching. According to Blaise (2012:10), 'in the early childhood classroom, children are often rewarded, either implicitly or explicitly, for sex-appropriate behaviours and discouraged or punished for inappropriate ones'. Children often develop a set of specific gender roles under the guidance of parental interaction and the influence of media exposure that influence cognitive as

well as behavioural patterns as to the roles they are expected to play in society. These roles often confine men and women in terms of gender equality. Cotter *et al.* (2011:259) argue the lack of change in gender role attitudes is ‘a consequence of a rise of a new cultural frame and egalitarian essentialism that blends aspects of feminist equality and traditional motherhood roles’. Rudman *et al* (2010) investigates the priming of gender roles and whether they influence the career aspirations of women. It found ‘exposure to atypical gender roles significantly decreased women’s interest in masculine jobs’ (2010:198). It uncovered evidence that automatic gender stereotypes influence the career aspirations of women.

2.4.1 Stereotypical Representations of Females in GTA V

Simplistic generalizations on the roles of individuals can be construed as gender stereotyping (Beasley and Standley 2002, Cassell and Jenkins 2000, Morawitz and Maestro 2009, Jansz and Martiz 2007, Brescoll *et al* 2011, Acker 1992, Downs and Smith 2010, Frederickson and Roberts 1997). A study by Beasley and Standley (2002:289) found considerable gender role stereotyping in video games that included the unimportance and underrepresentation of female characters, while citing gender role discrimination in the media industry for creating those attitudes. Conversely, re-examination of the findings revealed the inclusion of characters in the introductory footage that were absent from actual game play. The study failed to examine gender power roles, aggressive behavioural tendencies as well as contrasting masculinities and femininities which would have augmented the study by categorizing the various aspects that accompany gender role stereotyping. This is demonstrated in the video game *Tomb Raider*, where protagonist Lara Croft is stereotypically represented as an overly-sexual female character.

Cassell and Jenkins (2000:338) describe her as having ‘thin thighs, long legs, a waist you could encircle with one hand and knockers like medicine balls’. However, Jansz and Martis (2007) argued that although there was a sexual emphasis on Lara’s body, she appeared in a confident and dominant position as the lead protagonist in the game. Similarly, the latest in the *Tomb Raider* series sees Lara Croft as a protagonist who has been humanized, physically and psychologically. Designers of the game have attempted to create a gender balance by de-sexualizing the main female character and completely redesigning her character. Therefore, although Lara Croft is stereotypically sexualized from previous games, her current position in terms of power and dominance is represented as androgynous. Hence, redesigning video game characters is not impossible when it comes to negative representations in video games.

Additionally, Morawitz and Maestro (2009) maintains that the sexualization of female video game characters has an effect on gender stereotyping in social situations, establishing that ‘sexualization is defined by the degree to which the female body is exposed and ‘idealized’ with larger breasts and a smaller waist’. Furthermore, occupying a gender stereotyped role as a man can result in a loss of status according to a study by Brescoll *et al* (2011). It found that ‘male subordinates who worked for a woman in a stereotypically male domain or a man in a stereotypically female domain were accorded diminished status and lower salaries’ (2011:357). A reduction in masculinity resulted in subordinate credentials as a result of gender bias. This proves that men as well as women are affected by gender role stereotyping that can often call gender identity into question. Formerly, the term gender was attached to the biological differences between men and women (Acker, 1992:565). A study by Downs and Smith (2010), examining male and female sexuality in video game characters found that female characters were more likely to be portrayed semi-naked with improbable bodily proportions. Hypersexual

(overtly sexualized) stereotypes can be learned through modelled behaviour in video game play 'leading some males to view women and their bodies as possessions (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997). Understanding the experiential consequences of living in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body, using objectification theory as a framework, reveals an increase in mental health issues stemming from shame, anxiety, unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction and eating disorders (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997:173). However, it concluded that not all women were equally affected by objectification. Further studies would need to investigate individual experiences, including those that take precautions to avoid appearing in situations that can trigger self-objectification, for example, the different levels of bodily shame associated with eating disorders. As a feminist, Franklin's aunt Denise draws attention to issues on gender equality (P9) but at the same time she is ridiculed for chanting phrases such as 'we are women and we are free, bringing an end to patriarchy' (*Grand Theft Auto V*, 2013).

2.4.2 Female Oppression through Game Play Roles

Gender is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 127). Recent research indicates that women are portrayed differently depending on the role they play. Female protagonists are likely to be strong and independent whereas support characters are likely to be weak, dependent and even stereotyped (Rajkowska, 2014:61). In agreement with this analysis, the underrepresentation of strong female characters in video games is established in a study exploring gender representation in video games, which showed that 60% of arcade games contained male characters whereas only 2% contained females (Braun and Giroux, 1989). The

female body as dispensable, as a disposable commodity is evident throughout *Grand Theft Auto V*. De-humanizing women through objectification in *GTA V* can associate them with submissive roles which can often lead to violence. An examination by Dietz revealed that gender is often a process of socialization where ‘boys and girls are encouraged to adopt and develop certain personality traits that are often referred to as masculine and feminine (1998:426). In saying that, Rojkowska maintains this socially constructed form of gender oppression can contribute towards positive social dispositions that ‘can further affect its imagery and have the potential of changing it’ (2014:13).

2.4.3 The Pornification of Female Game Characters

The Pornification of female characters relates to the occurrence of sexual themes and explicit imagery in video games. The word *pornography* is derived from the ancient Greek *porne* and *graphos*, meaning to ‘write about whores’ (Dworkin, 1989:199). Graphic representations in the media, for example in the advertisement industry, depicting ‘women tied up on beds’, accommodates disrespect for the comprehensive population of women in society according to Cassell and Jenkins (2000:341). Video games portray 60% of female characters as sexualized in comparison to only 1% of men (Dill and Thill 2007:851), which often attributes to the oppression of females in society. Eroticizing hierarchy and sexualizing inequality through pornography creates the illusion of freedom which is similar to a bourgeois culture (Dworkin and MacKinnon, 1988:301). The capitalization of the female body through exploitative lewd content is embraced by pornography according to Dworkin (1989:202), an industry where women are ‘defined by what male desire requires for arousal and satisfaction’ (MacKinnon, 1989: 318).

Degrading women in video games has been cultivated over time from games such as *Animated Strip Poker* (1983) and *Sex Games*(1985) which personified women as sexual objects following a quest by the player (Flamma, 2014:410).

The industrialized and globalized pornography business has ‘real-world implications’ in the form of oppression that see one group flexing power over the other for monetary gain (Dines, 2010). According to Szalai (2010), in 2010 in the US, the monetary value of the pornography industry ranged from \$8 billion to \$13 billion. Belleau (2003) reflects upon the sex industry in terms of real-life consequences for women.

The globalization of the sex industry means that markets in women’s bodies are no longer confined within national boundaries. Trafficking, sex tourism and the mail order bride business have ensured that women’s severe inequality can be transferred beyond national boundaries as the women of poor countries can be sexually bought by men from rich countries.

In terms of feminist politics, Jeffreys (2009:17) asserts that socialist feminists see prostitution ‘as an issue of worker’s rights rather than one of violence against women’. In *Grand Theft Auto V*, the majority of female characters are represented as sexualized, objectified or victimized. Repercussively, consuming copious amounts of explicit game play has psychological effects on the player according to a recent study by Stermer and Burkley (2012). In the investigation of whether regular exposure to sexist video games was associated with players’ hostile and benevolent sexism, one hundred and seventy five undergraduate students completed an online survey. Using 61 male and 114 female participants, results indicated that sexist video game play is related to men perceiving women in a stereotypic and sexist way. Consistently rated as a highly sexist game was *Grand Theft Auto* that contained ‘strong sexual content and partial nudity’ (Stermer and Burkley, 2012:5). The study also found that objectifying virtual images are

associated with elevated sexist attitudes. Future research in this area requires an equal ratio of female to male participants, as well as the need to define the association between sexist video games and sexist attitudes. Another suggestion would be to perhaps modify the way in which empirical data was collected and adapt a more ethnological approach, such as participant observation, in order to analyze the different characteristics or behaviours of participants for a more in-depth exploration of the topic. In a discussion on how fantasy often becomes reality, Dill (2009:19), uses the following example.

Mass media provide us with images of extreme people –extremely beautiful or extremely successful people. That gets our attention, which means we are watching the commercials, which means we are more likely to buy the advertised products.

Similarly, *GTA V* constructs female characters to cater for a predominantly male audience, catering to a market that embraces the doctrine of patriarchy.

2.5 Masculinities

Video games that support and produce masculinities often, consciously or unconsciously, contribute to a game culture of misogyny and violence against women (Cassell and Jenkins, 2013:74). In a patriarchal structure, the complexity of the term ‘masculine’ is often substituted and naturalized by the term ‘boys will be boys’. Connell (2005:836) argues that masculinities are ‘configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting’. Sociologist John MacInnes observes the context of masculinity from a historical perspective.

It has become a cliché to argue that masculinity is in crisis. But although men's privilege is under unprecedented material and ideological challenge, the briefest historical survey will show that masculinity has always been in one crisis or another. ... This is because the whole idea that man's natures can be understood in terms of their 'masculinity' arose out of a 'crisis' for all men: the fundamental incompatibility between the core principal of modernity that all human beings are essentially equal (regardless of their sex) and the core tenet of patriarchy that men are naturally superior to women and thus destined to rule over them (Buchbinder, 2012:17).

2.5.1 Exploring Male Power Roles

The concept of hegemonic masculinity explores the use of control and dominance by men over both men and women (Thompson and Zerbinos 1995, MacKinnon 1989, Williams *et al* 2009, Hierro and Marquez 1994). Thompson and Zerbinos (1995:923) contends that compared to female characters, male characters in video games exhibit qualities of leadership and achievement, demonstrating an unequal social order through the social construct of power, which essentially locates sexuality within a theory of the hierarchy of men over women (Thompson and Zerbinos 1995: 316). As there are no playable female characters in *GTA V*, players have a choice of three male lead protagonists to play in a game that was designed, according to P9, 'with a man's world in mind'. Male dominance and hierarchy is essentially sexualized, often through prostitution and pornography, where the body and the mind of women are violated through exercises of power, ultimately creating an unequal social order constructed by males for males. Similarly, MacKinnon argues that 'men have object relations and women are the objects of those relations' (1989:316). Research findings from a study by Williams *et al.* show the over-representation of males in video games which correlate with media depictions of gender (2009:829). Female reliance on males in video games, including the media, reinforces the notion of the weaker sex that subsidizes negative social and political representation portraying males as

‘dominating in number, status, authority, and will’ (Wood, 1994:39). Hierro and Marquez (1994;174) examines patriarchy from a historical perspective where it was based on ‘a hierarchy of fixed values that regulate, distribute, inherit, and transmit the power of dominion of this group of men over others’.

2.5.2 Patriarchy

Several authors have contended that the essence of patriarchy is accumulated in a system of power relations that maintains the domination of men over women (Johannsdottir 2009, Andersen 2006, Patil 2013, Tong 1998, Pateman 1988, Connell 1990,). Walby (1990:20) explains the patriarchal concept as

A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women...the use of the term social structures is important here, since it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every women in a subordinate one... patriarchy is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions.

From a historical context, Andersen (2006) identifies a belief in human rationality enabled women to confront prejudice which led to the birth of feminism in the late nineteenth century.

From a radical feminist historical point of view, Johannsdottir (2009: 2) returns to the birth of Christ, at a time when philosopher Aristotle assumed women were a defective miscalculation of nature. This ideology, in time, gave birth to feminism that saw equal voting rights and equal access to education through first wave feminism during the nineteenth and early twentieth

century to a second wave of feminism in the early 1960's to a third wave of feminism in the 1990's. Contemporary concepts of patriarchy are twisted between multiple axis of power and interrelated dimensions that identify fractures within how it has been articulated (Patil, 2013:848). Tong (1998) argues this artificially constructed gender system is the fundamental cause of women's oppression which often invades and violates through the power of patriarchy. In *Grand Theft Auto V*, protagonist Michael exercises his authority as head of the household, in which he methodically regulates his family in accordance with patriarchal social conduct. This generic concept of patriarchy operates as an oppressive social system that popularizes the objectification of women in *Grand Theft Auto V*, ultimately creating an unequal social order fashioned to men's needs. According to Carole Pateman (1988:207), 'the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection'. Shared knowledge and experience through feminist epistemology contributes towards a diversity of transformative learning that is critical in understanding oppression, which is enforced, asserted and maintained through the guise of patriarchal power. Connell (1990:514) argues that patriarchy is comprehensively institutionalized and reigns supreme in society through the arrangement of the family, the workplace, the education system, the media, in religion and the economy.

2.6 Fantasy Game Play

This chapter will examine whether fantasy roles influence perceptions outside of games. Much of the current literature on the cognitive effects of fantasy roles in game play focuses on violent or sexual performances. The rapid growth of the video games industry now plays a central role in

contemporary society. In saying that, a number of studies disseminate evidence that can be significantly problematic for the video games industry in terms of social responsibility. In 2009, Gentile *et al.* found that 88% of American youth between the ages of 8 and 18 played video games, revealing 46% had rules as to how long they could play for and 56% were told what games they were allowed to play. Findings from the study revealed that ‘pathological gamers were twice as likely to have been diagnosed with an attention disorder’ (Gentile, 2009:600), however, there is no standard definition of pathological gaming; therefore further research is required as this study is somewhat exploratory. If symptoms of pathological game play influence everyday life then a responsible approach to gaming is essential in maintaining a healthy state of mental health. Likewise, alternative studies reveal similar patterns in pathological gaming habits such as 10.3% in China (Peng and Li, 2009), 8% in Australia (Porter *et al.*, 2010), 11.9% in Germany (Grusser *et al.*, 2007), 8.5% in Singapore (Gentile, 2009) and 7.5 % in Taiwan (Ko *et al.*, 2007). In order to counteract the problematic effects of game play, China introduced measures to discourage gaming for more than three hours at a time (Griffiths and Meredith, 2009) and the government in Thailand banned *GTA IV* when a student tried to recreate a scene in the game by murdering a taxi driver (Reed, 2008). A possible solution from Van Rooij *et al.* (2010) is for Western governments to replicate Asian governments by limiting usage. In opposition to these theories, Wood (2007) argues that video game play in excess is due to ‘either ineffective time management skills or as a symptomatic response to other underlying problems they are escaping from, rather than any inherent addictive properties of the actual games’.

Jordan and Romer (2014: 110) investigate how a person’s social; personological and biological factors can influence an aggressive or non-aggressive response from a gamer following game play containing violence. They argue that ‘the likelihood of an aggressive response is increased

due to heightened arousal and primed aggressive thoughts and feelings'. The correlation between Jordan and Romer's study (2014) and Wood's analysis (2007) reveal a person's constitution influences behaviour, and not actual game play. In saying that, video game addiction is not classified as a formal disorder in the Diagnostic and Static Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as it is an area that requires further research according to the American Psychiatric Association (2013). When game play ceases to be a form of entertainment and produces negative life consequences, only then is it classified as pathological (Sim *et al.*, 2012). In general, studies into the pathological effects of video gaming show dependability and validity (Gentile, Coyne & Bricolo 2013).

Game Transfer Phenomena (GTP) explores the transformation of video game experiences into real life experiences. The individual experiences of players differ as some gamers are more susceptible to its experiences. The 'International Journal of Cyber Behaviour' presents a paper that examines how absorption into the virtual world of video games can influence behaviour during the game and after the game has finished as thoughts, sensations and actions are triggered through the cognitive experience of game play. In *GTA V*, high levels of realistic and emotional design would be considered as a 'fantasy trigger' (De Gortari and Griffiths, 2011) because the player primarily adapts to a choice of three male protagonists who in turn transfer scenarios of fantasy situations that infiltrate the consciousness of the gamer.

Video games have become a matter of emotional touch, evoking not just sensations but lasting emotive imprints, which hold for the gamer many of the same characteristics as memorable real life experiences (Ortiz de Gortari, 2007).

If visual perceptions are altered from playing *GTA V*, I would question whether the cognitive experiences of game play continues after the game has finished.

2.6.1 *Crossing Moral Boundaries*

Crossing moral boundaries often involves real-life consequences as a result of what is deemed a ‘fantasy trigger’ (De Gortari and Griffiths, 2011). An example of a video game that unquestionably lacks morals is the video game *Hatred* (GamersPrey, 2014). In the game, a male protagonist embarks upon a suicidal shooting spree glorifying violent racism and white supremacy in order to kill as many innocent civilians as he can before he is himself killed. In a paper discussing whether there is a link between mass-shootings, especially in the US, Ferguson (2014) concludes that there is no conclusive evidence to link violent video games to actual violent events and even looks upon this type of investigative discourse as a distraction from what is actually influencing societal violence such as ‘poverty, mental health and educational disparities’ (2014: 579). Although Ferguson is a clinical psychologist, he failed to interrogate the subject further. Perhaps if he were to use studies of his own, rather than relying on the research of others that may have proven otherwise. The logic behind this example, and why I use it, is to illustrate evidence that although moral boundaries are often crossed in *GTA V*, it is possible that remnants of game play remain after the game has finished, that may or may not influence the behaviour or cognitive understandings of the player.

An inquiry into fetish and fantasy through graphic content reveals that the video game industry have begun to take advantage of sexual fantasies in order to drive the market (Martinez and Manolovitz, 2010:68). Fantasy game play that crosses moral boundaries, such as the video game *RapeLay*, is based on ‘misogynistic attitudes towards women and naturalizes the sexual enslavement of women and girls’ (Hiroshi, 2012). Male gamers in a position of power and control over women can often encourage, for example, silence with regards to reporting sexual assault to the authorities as it is often considered ‘a betrayal of men and men’s sexual privilege’

(Hiroshi, 2012). The cognitive predisposition to rape undermines internal (ethical and human rights point of view) as well as social inhibitions against acting out rape desires, a practice that embodies an ideology of biological superiority (Russell, 1993:69). Crossing the line between fantasy and reality can often seem like a harmless indulgence; however it can lead to continuous pleasure-seeking and immediate gratification (Margoles, 2012).

2.7 Violence in Grand Theft Auto V

Dill and Thill (2007:851) argue 83% of male video game characters compared to 62% of female characters are likely to be portrayed as aggressive. The cultivation of pornographic imagery in *GTA V* is evident as technological advancements are made in the gaming industry. Donnerstein *et al.* (1987) found that when females are shown to be sexually aroused in video games, sexual violence is often cognitively acknowledged and accepted. Similarly, MacKinnon (1989) argues that gender inequality through pornography is de-humanizing, eroticizing dominance with masculinity and submission with femininity. In saying that, a more contemporary view by Snyder (2008:183) argues that although third wave feminists are on the pro-sex side of feminism, it is still at an ‘embryonic stage’ of feminist politics. This includes the women’s movements which defend pornography and sex work (Heywood, 2006:260). Through a radical feminist framework of understanding, Jeffreys (2009:10) maintains that prostitution is a ‘harmful cultural practice originating in the subordination of women and constituting a form of violence against women. Over exposure to violence in video games consequentially causes repercussive cognitive damage often unconsciously approved by the gamer. Kutner and Olson (2008:104) argue that children are susceptible to empathetic reduction as a result of exposure to ‘gory virtual violence’

which can cause desensitization as there are no consequences for actions that would accompany such violence in real life. Anderson and Bushman (2001:358) argue violence in video games is associated with oppressive aggression and an increased physiological arousal that decreases pro-social behaviour in gamers. However, an avant-garde analysis of the effects of violence in video games is imperative in order to understand and critique *GTA V*. Representations of misogyny and sexism is often inherent in violent video games that tolerate sexual harassment (Nelson, 2014). Conversely, Nelson's study corresponds with previous research such as Yao *et al.* (2008) who found no relationship between heterosexual males and misogyny. In *GTA V*, players must engage in a torture scene if they wish to fully complete the game. In a study by Hartmann *et al.* (2010), guilt levels of respondents were measured in relation to the use of virtual violence in video games. It concluded that people felt guiltier following engagement of unjustified virtual violence, confirming that 'video games are capable of inducing affective moral responses in users'.

2.8 Capitalism

Burris (1982:51) argues the social subordination of women must be analyzed as an *interaction* between capitalist economic relations and patriarchal sexual relations. Similarly, Hartman (1979) examines the interconnections between the organization of capitalist labour and male power. The link between global capitalism and video games is exposed as the economic market demonstrates sales of *GTA V* at approximately 33 million copies in 2013, earning Rockstar roughly \$2bn (Forbes, 2014). The interconnectedness of capitalism and patriarchy can be analyzed through both feminism and Marxism, which addresses not only women's inferior status in society but examines how capitalism as a system of oppression maintains that status. Challenging the current

state of affairs, Fraser (2012:12), proposes ‘a framework aimed at disrupting our dangerous liaison with neo-liberalism and liberating our radical energies’. In the same manner, Marxist feminists argue the subordination of women is inseparable from exploitation and oppression within capitalist societies (Beechey, 1979:67). Sex differences are identified through the division of labour that not only ‘relegates women to a subsidiary component of the labour force’ but places them in an inferior status that promotes unequal power relations between men and women based upon male control of the means of production and exchange (Gimenez, 1975:66). In 1992, in opposition to women’s equal rights, a GOP member, (US Republican Party), Pat Robertson, opposed a state equal rights amendment declaring,

The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians (Gehrmann, 2012).

In a predominantly male dominated video game industry (Witthford and Sharman, 2005), global game market revenue increased from \$10.3bn in 2004 to \$65bn in 2011 (Reuters, 2011).

Borowiecki and Prieto-Rodriguez (2013:3) examine the economics of the video game industry as it is now recognized at a political level affecting market outcomes in a competitive market.

2.9 Critique of Existing Knowledge of Game Play

One suggestion by De Castell and Jensen (2013:80) is to hold a public hearing as to where responsibilities lie for gender based disadvantage and exclusion in video games. However, although gender discrimination in video games is evident and acknowledged, it is non-inclusive to those without academic discourse, therefore excluding populations whose opinions are equally

significant. These articles establish that male dominance is reflected through defined roles of game play to the detriment of female characters but seem to lack clarity in what these risks comprehensively include for society. The literature that I have used for this research principally reflects a feminist body of knowledge analyzed from the perspective of women. Academia is shaping our interpretations of video game play through analytic discourse, and in doing so, creating theories and discussions on games and gamers. The international journal of computer games research, 'Game Studies' (www.gamestudies.org) is an open-access journal that focuses on the aesthetic, cultural and communicative aspects in video games and their role in society and culture. In this academic channel of discourse, scholars are welcome to submit unpublished articles relevant to the gaming industry. However, the use of violence, overly-sexualized stereotypes of female characters, and unethical social and political content, and their cognitive effects remain unaddressed in this journal. Investigations into the harmful effects of video games are typically addressed in psychological or mental health journals, an area which is somewhat detached from the gaming industry. I propose an affiliation between game designers and mental health experts to examine the cognitive effects of over-exposure to immoderate violence and sexually explicit material and identify specific patterns of game play that causes de-sensitization.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Question

This research project offers an epistemological analysis into how *Grand Theft Auto V* perpetuates the dominant ideology of patriarchy through male protagonist game play. As a social researcher, I agree with bell hooks (2004) that society must acknowledge the problem of patriarchy and work together to end it. However, the unheard voices and experiences of those affected by patriarchal structures must be heard in order to highlight this destructive force in society (Zimmerman, 2014). This main purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology, analyze the sample selection, to illustrate the procedure used in the collection of research data, and the techniques used to analyze that data.

3.2 Methodology

Qualitative methods observed participants that have direct experience playing *GTA V* which generated theories through raw data collected from semi-structured interviews. A range of factors affect the way research is carried out. These include,

beliefs about the nature of the social world (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology), the purpose(s) and goals of the research, the characteristics of research participants, the audience for the research, the funders, and the positions and environments of the researchers themselves (Ritchie, 2013:2).

Adopting different factors can lead to numerous variations in discourse and knowledge. Systems of knowledge call for the confrontation of the apparatus within that system in its 'economic, political and discursive dimensions-and learning how to make sense of the world for other ends'

(Hennessy, 2012:5). Understanding the nature and justification of knowledge involves perception and scepticism in order to understand the philosophical aspects of inquiry.

Epistemology⁶determines what does and does not constitute as knowledge through philosophical discussion that will determine any claims to this knowledge. ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it’ (Marx, 1845). Trochim (2006) states that there are two realms involved in research, theory and observation. In order to investigate theory’s behind patriarchal power, an extensive analysis of literature from female as well as male theorists must be examined. From a feminist perspective,

Patriarchy is the organization and division of all practices and signification in culture in terms of gender and the privileging of one gender over the other, giving males control over female sexuality, fertility, and labour (Ebert, 1988:19).

From a male perspective on patriarchy, Patterson and Elliott (2010:235) argue that feminists are themselves responsible for the creation of these masculinities that enforce privilege and power over women. My ontological stance on the effects of patriarchal structures emanate from feminist theories aiming to understand the nature of gender inequality in society. My phenomenological approach contains experiential preconceptions based on my understanding of knowledge. Therefore, analysis is based not only on research findings but also from my own interpretations and preconceptions of visual representations in chapter five. Crucial to feminist theory is the generation and production of knowledge from an epistemological stance such as ‘how does the knowledge women produce about themselves differ from that produced by patriarchy?’ (Kolmar and Bartowski, 2005:45). The Literature Review is predominantly

⁶ Epistemology is concerned with ways of knowing and learning about the world and focuses on issues such as how we can learn about reality and what forms the basis of our knowledge (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013:6).

composed from a woman's perspective of this body of knowledge through individual theories relevant to the topics discussed. A Marxist Feminist analysis of collected data can,

provide accounts of the way social arrangements of patterned and cumulative disparity can be internally rational and systematic yet unjust. Both are theories of power, its social derivations and its maldistribution. Both are theories of social inequality. In unequal societies, gender and with it sexual desire and kinship structures, like value and with it acquisitiveness and the forms of property ownership, are considered presocial, part of the natural world, primordial or magical or aboriginal. As Marxism exposes value as social creation, feminism exposes desire as socially relational, internally necessary to unequal social orders but historically contingent (MacKinnon, 1983).

Whereas a Bourdieuan approach examines a micro-theory of social power where oppression is structured by habitus, and that the only way to empty these categories of meaning is through social change. Feminist philosophies of the theory of knowledge, also known as feminist epistemology, are concerned with how a body of knowledge is influenced by gender (Jiang, 2005:56). Understanding a feminist body of experiential knowledge must emanate from a female perspective as it offers an insight into what it is like to be a woman and gives a voice to a woman's way of knowing. Brooks (2006:56) argues that feminist epistemology 'requires us to place women at the centre of the research process: Women's concrete experiences provide the starting point from which to build knowledge'. Some would argue that this praxis is discriminatory based on gender and that there is no justification for such exclusions. Khan (2014: 144) examines the role and position of men in feminist research and concluded that feminist research that is exclusively carried out by women stems mainly from radical feminists. He goes on to argue,

Men surely have much to contribute to feminist research. If men study women's lives from a feminist perspective and if women study men's lives from the same perspective as well, the dynamics of feminist research will be unique indeed.

Although it is crucial that women and experiential knowledge is analyzed through a feminist-lens, I agree with Khan (2014) in that a male understanding would contribute towards the field of feminist knowledge in a constructive way. Excluding men from feminism is 'not only an essentialist argument but such a position falls into a trap set by patriarchy itself' (Schacht and Ewing, 1997).

3.3 Sampling

I hand-picked these particular interview participants as they had experience playing *GTA V*. I was previously acquainted with 8 out of the 10 interview participants. One was acquired through the games society at Maynooth University after I contacted the president of the 'Games Society' via email and asked if any members would be interested in participating in an interview based on *GTA V*. I secured the second interview through a colleague whom I had previously asked whether they knew someone who was familiar with *GTA V*. Each participant was provided with a copy of my contact details, such as my mobile phone number and my email address should they wish to communicate with me.

3.4 Data Collection

By composing a research strategy using tools that are relevant to the outcome of this research, I choose to conduct semi-structured interviews as they allow for a two-way focused communication through questions formulated ahead of time. This allows for flexibility as individual narrative often provides the opportunity to explore personal experiences of playing the game. Semi-structured interviews are consistent with participatory and emancipatory conditions that are significant in understanding the perceptions of others. According to O'Leary (2004:164),

Semi-structured interviews are never fully fixed nor fully free, and are perhaps best seen as flexible. Interviewers generally start with some defined questioning plan but pursue a more conversational style of interview that may see questions answered in an order more natural to the flow of conversation. They may also start with a few defined questions but be ready to pursue any interesting tangents that may develop.

Interview questions were informed by a personal interest in how patriarchal structures have been intertwined in contemporary game play which reflects realistic models of patriarchy in society. I designed a consent form for each interview participant ensuring complete anonymity and confidentiality regarding any data collected via recording device (Dictaphone).

In deciding upon a sample, it was imperative that the method of data collection was carefully selected, therefore it seemed that semi-structured interviews were the best option in order to investigate the research topic. Semi-structured interviews according to Bloom and Crabtree (2006:315),

are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project and are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside of everyday events. They are generally organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee /s. Semi-

structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups. Most commonly they are only conducted once for an individual or group and take between 30 minutes to several hours to complete.

Thus it was necessary to select this method as individual interviews inform the research on personal attitudes and opinions key to the research findings of this project. I designed an interview schedule containing key questions which were typed in advance. I borrowed a Dictaphone from the 'Adult Education' department at Maynooth University in order to record the interviews. All participants allowed me to proceed with questioning and the audio recording of the interviews on my Dictaphone. Specifically, I conducted 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews with both male and female participants who have experience playing *GTA V*. Using a prepared set of questions, alongside general discussion of the topic, participants provided an insight into the proposed research question. Interviews, according to Ackroyd and Hughes (1983:66), are 'encounters between researcher and a respondent in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research'. I downloaded the data from the listening device onto a memory stick and then cleared the original data from the listening device (Dictaphone). It is vital that recording devices are tested out beforehand in order to eliminate any technical problems that may arise. Digital Dictaphones can be directly downloaded onto a computer and transcribed using specialist software (King and Horrocks, 2010:45).

All of the interviews were conducted in completely different environments. The first, fourth, fifth and seventh interviews were conducted at the family home of the participants as it was convenient for them at the time. The second and third participants were interviewed at Maynooth University in a free room within the campus. The sixth and eight interview participants were

game store employees and were interviewed in a quiet area of the store while they were at work. The ninth and tenth participants were interviewed at a friend's house as it was beneficial to their interests at the time. All interviewees read and signed the consent forms, which I have stored in a locker at my home along with the memory stick in which I downloaded all 10 audio and transcribed interviews onto. Each interview lasted no more than half an hour long. In general, most of the participants provided interesting findings for analysis. A chart is attached to the appendices section outlining the sex of the participants, the dates interviewed, whether they were audio recorded in addition to whether they were underage at the time of the interview. The identities of the interview participants will remain anonymous and collected data stored confidentially, as per the consent form signed by each participant.

Out of the 10 interviewees, 2 were female, 8 were male and 1 was underage (under the age of 18). Therefore I requested permission from the parent of the underage participant to conduct the interview and presented the consent form for examination and a signature of consent, which I was granted. This research was conducted following Maynooth University child protection guidelines in relation to person(s) under the age of 18,

Adults interacting with children are in a position of trust and influence. They are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with children. In doing so they should recognize the imbalance in power inherent in adult-child relationships. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect and that the self-esteem of the child is enhanced. They should always strive to enhance the child's involvement and enjoyment of the activity undertaken while ensuring their welfare and safety (Maynooth University, 2011:11).

3.5 Coding and Data Analysis

It is of great importance that the general public be given the opportunity to experience, consciously and intelligently, the efforts and results of scientific research. Restricting the body of knowledge to a small group deadens the philosophical spirit of a people and leads to spiritual poverty (Einstein, 2010:400).

All collected data from interview participants was critically analyzed and examined, generating an overall analysis of the research findings collected. All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and catalogued under the identifying marker of the interview participant. For example, the first interviewee that I interviewed is known as P1, the second is known as P2 and so on. A library of the 10 interviews was saved on a memory stick and individually printed and colour coded in order to identify corresponding themes. Themes and sub-themes were established in order to construct chapters and sub-chapters based on the research findings. According to Huxley (1926-29), 'facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored'. Therefore, it was necessary to highlight the main findings of the research in order to form an inquiry into how *GTA V* perpetuates the ideology of patriarchy through male protagonist game play.

A visual analysis of the research findings was incorporated into chapter 5 using still pictures of actual game play downloaded from the internet. Visual data can be polysemous as it can generate multiple meanings and according to Barthes (1977), 'the image is penetrated through and through by the system of meaning, in exactly the same way as man is articulated to the very depths of his being in distinct languages'. Having coordinated research findings with visual data, analysis and implications can be explicated. According to Weber (2008:47), 'found or existing images can be used as data or springboards for theorizing'. I have incorporated visual

representations into this research as it reproduces captions of game play necessary in understanding the interpretation and analysis of collected data. Banks (2001:331) argues we need to be mindful of the internal and the external narrative of an image, in which the image was established as well as the context in which it is viewed. In chapter five, the theme of patriarchy is visually represented in figure 5.3.2 exhibiting prostitutes standing on the street waiting for male customers. It was necessary to include this as it not only demonstrates the sexually exploitative game play roles assigned to female characters but it is reflective of their pornified, sexualized and objectified status in a social system where male power is dominant. Next, the impact of patriarchy is visually explored using a picture of male guardianship over females, as patriarchy includes the control of property, including human property, and authority over women and children. Figure 5.3.3 shows protagonist Michael being entertained by a stripper at the strip club in the game under the watchful eye of a male bouncer who is hired to protect human female property. Likewise, gender power roles are explored as misogynistic images frequently appear within *GTA V*. Figure 5.4 illustrates an advertisement in a metro station of a bottle of perfume called 'Le Chien', meaning 'The Dog' in French. Captioning this advertisement is the slogan 'Smell like a Bitch'. This is relevant as misogynistic male attitudes literally de-humanize females in the game, in this case, a dog. Figure 5.4.2 (a) visually represents a statistical analysis of female getaway driver Taliana Martinez, noting that she is paid considerably less than the rest of the criminal gang, because of her gender. This is significant as it is representative of economically exploitative labour in terms of the gender pay gap, as mirrored in real life. Figure 5.4.2 (b) visually represents a male protagonist killing a prostitute for a refund of his money. Hyper-sexualizing females then exploiting them as prostitutes maintains male privilege manifested through violent means. Figure 5.5 is visually representative of a scene in which protagonist

Trevor pulls teeth from a victim using pliers. It was necessary to illustrate this scene involving torture as all players must participate in order to achieve 100% completion of the game.

Inconsequential violent acts through animated game play are a concern for psychologists as over-exposure is thought to de-sensitize and de-humanize the player. Figure 5.6.1 (a) represents a visual chart illustrating popular interest for the release of *GTA V* through clever marketing techniques adopted by Rockstar. In a male-ruled environment, players knowingly or unknowingly, become capitalists as they create a market through commodities in order to self-expand capital leading to unmitigated access to social resources and prestige. Figure 5.6.2 (b) visually represents a chart illustrating how long it took Rockstar to earn \$1billion. With a marketing budget of \$265million, it only took three days to earn \$1billion. Integral to capitalist ideology are objectives of wealth and power through domination on a global scale. From virtuality to actuality, Dusenberry (2009) explores how video games often affirm capitalist ideologies through ‘controller design and corporate branding’ (33) and in relation to *Grand Theft Auto*, ‘recreating the system of exploitation rather than enabling a space to interrogate it’ (34). This study was originally based on the views of interview participants; however, the introduction of visuals came at a later stage as I felt it was necessary to visualize actual game play scenes for a greater understanding of the results. I realize that my interpretation of those visuals is attached to my individual understanding of the meaning of those visuals. In saying that, I am aware of any biases that may have accompanied them.

Visual semiotics involves a philosophical interpretation of visual data on several iconic, symbolic or indexical levels. According to Deeley (1990:5), at the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretative structure mediated and sustained by signs’. Central to mass communication is an interpretation of visual

data that that cultivates patterns of meaning and understanding. According to Bopry (2002:5), ‘Semiotics is the study of sign action (semiosis). As such, it is a purely human endeavour. All life forms engage in semiosis, all use signs, or sign activity’. The semiotics of video games is explored by Bruchansky (2011) who declares,

Video games immerse the players into an environment that is spatial and algorithmic, but also textual, acoustic and visual. All these dimensions participate in the construction of a mental model that the player enacts by his play. It is that mental model ‘located in the head of the player’ that gives meaning to the video game’.

‘Narrative analysis is typically employed as a means of unpacking the underlying themes that run through such sources of data as interview transcripts (Becker *et al.*, 2012:332). Research findings are analyzed and categorized so that concepts and categories shape themes and subthemes.

Concepts of masculinities were developed as a result of observations of the three male protagonists in the game. All three males are designed to participate in highly sexualized roles in which heterosexuality and concepts of hegemonic masculinity are played out. Through transcribed data from interview participants, it materialized that protagonist Trevor used sexual violence against both males and females in the game in order to assert his dominance. The theme of patriarchy was explored as protagonist Michael appeared overly-masculine a father figure in the game. He enforced one set of rules for the family to follow but failed to adhere to those rules himself. He used violence to assert his alpha-male status both inside and outside of the familial home. Subsequently, themes of violence were explored as advancements in technology led to significant improvement in graphics which in turn provided clearer audio as well as visual depictions of violence for the player. This led to exploring how fantasy and reality often intersect and transfers into real life experiences when moral boundaries are crossed. The theme of

capitalism emerged as it represents a system of inequality that is mirrored in the game. Economic relations between men and women in *GTA V* are representative of an exploitative and oppressive system beneficial to males. Women characterized as strippers or prostitutes in the game sell their bodies in return for capital under rules and regulations set by men. Likewise, there is an emphasis on the gender pay gap in which a female member of a gang receives less pay than her male counterparts, based on her gender. Capitalism is a system that is incompatible with feminism as capitalism requires inequality to thrive and feminism requires the abolition of inequality, based on gender. Normalizing a male dominated system that systematically enforces the subjugation of women through continuous misrepresentation is examined in themes relating to the stereotypical representation of female characters in the game and the normalization of the gender roles in which they are allocated.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

According to O’Leary (2004:41), ‘ethics refer to principles or rules of behaviour that act to dictate what is actually acceptable or allowed within a profession’. With a clear understanding of the consent form, participants were assured that their privacy would be upheld in that I would be the only person that could identify them as their identity was masked with the first interview participant known as P1 and so on. ‘Consent is a process that involves oral and /or written consent, and may be negotiated over the duration of the research’ (Papademas *et al.* 2009:256-7). The consent form outlines the purpose of the research as part of my thesis for an MA in ‘Community Education, Equality and Social Activism’ (CEESA). It outlines that should the

interview participant agree to an audio recording of the interview, then a copy would be made available to them upon request. It also offers a paper copy of the interview transcript if sought. It clarifies the absence of risks involved in the research and describes the benefits such as access to the research findings and analysis as well as a proposition to use the data in order to understand how their experience compares with others or to the wider sociological literature. An explanation of anonymity and confidentiality is provided along with assurance as to the safety of the audio as well as the transcribed interview. There is an affirmation that the interviewee is free to refuse to take part, and can refuse to answer any questions or stop at any time. He/she may also withdraw data at any time up until the work is completed.

I have applied NUIM ethical guidelines <http://research.nuim.ie/support-services/research-ethics> to my research which:

Demands that those engaging in research and scholarship, of whatever discipline, should at all times, and without exception, adhere to the following basic principles. The highest professional standards in designing and conducting investigations are maintained. A critical, open-minded approach in conducting research and scholarship and in analyzing data is upheld. Frankness and fairness with regard to the contributions of partners, competitors, and predecessors is protected. Absolute honesty at all stages of enquiry is preserved, in particular, avoiding: Any form of fraud, such as fabricating or falsifying data or records, piracy or plagiarism, sabotaging the work, records or protocols of other researchers, or breach of confidence as a reviewer or supervisor, and complicity in such actions by fellow researchers.

My understanding of feminism is very similar to Mertens (2005:154).

A common belief that guides feminism is that gender bias exists systematically and is manifest in the major institutions in society...Feminism examines the intersection of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the context of power.

Adapting a gender evaluation framework identifies and focuses on describing women's lives, whereas a feminist evaluation would challenge me to reflect upon and recognize my biases. The personal shaping this research project, whether consciously or unconsciously, is inevitable as our social cognition of feminist and academic bias, processes information through our personal lens of theories and interpretations. Bias will undoubtedly reduce the validity of any results obtained and as Selltitz (1962: 583) declares, 'interviewers are human beings and not machines, and their manner may have an effect on respondents'. Knowing what a society considers ethical and unethical shapes the dimensions in which research is conducted. The concept of informed consent is based on the ethical norms of voluntary participation with no harm committed against the participants involved (Babbie, 2012:64).

3.7 Limitations of the Methodology

Limitations that had an impact of the quality of the research findings include the small size of the sample, the possible composition of interview questions, the uneven distribution of gender within the sample as well as concerns finding a specific audience that have experienced playing *GTA V*. There were only 10 interview participants which seemed an acceptable measure of data at the time; however, most of the interviews contained insufficient information which possibly reflects the actual interview questions. An example of this is best demonstrated by some of the answers by interview participants. When asked if there was a link between game play and a particular view of women in society and whether females perform similarly in social roles, P7 responded, 'No, not really. I suppose certain women would'. Another example of desolate feedback as a result of either poor questioning or uninterested participation was, at times, by P1. When asked if there was any part of *GTA V* that they initially felt uncomfortable with, but have become

comfortable with over time, P1 responded, 'Em, no. I don't think so'. The relevance of the question was initially designed to identify whether gamers have become de-sensitized to violence or sexually explicit material as a result of dominant masculine ideology within the game. With regards to violence in the game, P1 was asked if there was any part of the game they absolutely refused to take part in and p1 responded, 'nope'. The relevance of that particular question stemmed from an option in the game where players choose whether or not to inflict torture upon a suspected terrorist (involving water-boarding tactics, electrocution alongside pulling out teeth with pliers). In order to achieve full success, (100%) completion of the game, players must participate in violent game play. Inconclusive data is likely to limit the scope of analysis and is likely to impact meaningful relationships through weak argumentation within the study itself.

In order to strengthen the data findings, perhaps questions could have been addressed differently or alternate questions could have been asked, even more specific to the research question, creating a greater academic body of knowledge on the topics. Creating hermeneutic-phenomenological discourse is essential in terms of social and political transformation. In saying that, subjectivity refers to the thoughts and emotions (both conscious and unconscious) of the individual and the individual's different ways of understanding his or her relation to the world (Alverman, 1995:11). At times it was difficult to find significant relationships between collected data so that a representative distribution of the population could be identified and compared. 'At the heart of qualitative data analysis is the task of discovering themes' (Bernard and Ryan, 1998).

Unexpected short answers to questions as well as a misinterpretation of some of them contributed to the lack of detail this research requires in order to fully address the issues

discussed. For example, my research question focused on the ideology of patriarchy in *GTA V*, however discourse from some of the interview participants focused on highlighting issues with the online version of *GTA V* which contain multiplayer options whereas the *GTA V* that is on the Xbox or Playstation 3 is played by a single player.

Unforeseen consequences should not be identified with consequences which are necessarily undesirable. For though these results are unintended, they are not upon their occurrence always deemed axio-logically negative. In short, undesired effects are not always undesirable effects (Merton, 1936:895).

In addition it is important to ask whether my ontological outlook as a feminist restricted the construction of knowledge and whether alternative questions, not directly implicating patriarchy as an obstacle in the first place, could have been asked. Although unbiased interpretation of data is essential, the evaluative process is never totally objective or independent of ontological perspective.

We usually act, not on the basis of scientific knowledge, but opinion and estimate. Thus, situations which demand (or what is for our purposes tantamount to the same thing, appear to the actor to demand) immediate action of some sort, will usually involve ignorance of certain aspects of the situation and will bring about unexpected results (Merton, 1936:900).

3.8 Cognitive learning and Reflexivity

Freire's social concept of critical consciousness focuses on an in-depth understanding of the world, one in which the social construction of knowledge as a form of false consciousness, must be replaced by a critical pedagogy. 'Critical consciousness represents things and facts as they exist empirically, in their causal and circumstantial correlations' (Freire, 1974:39). In terms of

my personal learning experience, my initial research proposal originally intended to investigate the impact of patriarchy on female characters in video games. My interest in the area of gender roles in video games stems from my personal experience as a video game player, in which my thoughts transferred into discourse, and then into the written word. I first wrote about gender roles in video games in my undergraduate sociology thesis which examined how and in what ways female representations are based on stereotypes in video games. My personal need was to undertake further studies into the area as I was intellectually stimulated by the topic of gender equality. For my B.A. degree in sociology I purposely choose modules to reflect my interests in order to increase my knowledge of gender equality. Likewise, for my B.A. degree in ancient classics, I also studied gender equality in ancient Greece and Rome, which I embraced with enthusiasm and interest. I set a personal target to complete a Masters degree in a similar area as I was keen on continuing my studies in this area. Initially I had on investigating gender inequality within the overall grouping of video games; however, it materialized as a mammoth task in which to undertake, that is, within the timeline allocated. Perhaps, if the opportunity arises, I will extend the research to reach the overall area of video games in a PhD study. Therefore, I voiced my concerns within the confines of the classroom at Maynooth University in terms of refining my research question. A fellow student suggested that I focus on one game, rather than the body of video games in general. I had considered this previously, but upon hearing it aloud I was able to connect my area of interest to one game in particular, *Grand Theft Auto V*. After some reflection, I composed a research question and decided that semi-structured interviews would best address my area of research. I was able to focus in on a specific area of interest after consultation with my supervisor which allowed me to refine my overall research question asking, ‘how does *Grand Theft Auto V* perpetuate the dominant ideology of patriarchy through male

protagonist game play?’ My initial concern was gathering interview participants as it was limited to those who had actually played the game in question. At the outset, only one participant volunteered from the games society at Maynooth University to my request for interview participants. However, following discussion with fellow researchers at the University, I was able to secure a further seven participants in which to interview. After further refinement of the interview questions, I conducted all eight interviews within a relatively short space of time. Most of the interviews were shorter than anticipated, and it occurred to me that I was not asking the right questions. After further reflection, I included a fresh set of ideas within the new interview questions and obtained two new interview participants familiar with the game. This somewhat proved successful as themes and subthemes quickly emerged and along with them a bounty of literature with which to consult. Most of the research findings were not in agreement with my views on the game, and I quickly discovered my research question that asked how *GTA V* perpetuated patriarchy was in a way biased as it was my understanding that it was, rather than the understanding of the participants involved in the research. Out of the ten interview participants, only three acknowledged gender inequality within the game as the rest viewed it as just a game, for adults, in that they were able to differentiate between fantasy and reality. As I gathered literature I came across studies I had previously encountered in my B.A. thesis, for example, Beasley and Standley’s 2002 study investigating gender role stereotypes in video games, Dietz 1998 examination into the relationship between violence and gender role portrayals in video games as well as Yao (*et al.*) 2010 investigation into the cognitive effects of playing a sexually explicit video game, among others. I organized the analysis and implications chapter to reflect both the views of the participants along with relevant literature reflecting those findings. I found this area of composition the most interesting as I was not only enthusiastic to be writing a body

of knowledge on gender inequality within the game, but I came across ample academic literature which is of great interest to me. In contact with my supervisor, I composed the rest of the thesis, referencing according to CEESA (Community Education, equality and Social Activism) specifications. Subsequent to the first draft, I identified areas of improvement in terms of academic discourse and style until it contained a concise, more logical argument in which I could build upon.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The initial objective of this research project was to determine how *GTA V* perpetuates patriarchy through male protagonist game play. My research findings are based on ten semi-structured interviews of players that have specifically played the game. Out of the ten participants interviewed, there were eight males, two females, including one participant who was underage. Research findings based on these interviews found both positive and negative representations of particular male and female characters. Although it is portrayed as a very much a male orientated game, there are female characters who hold authoritative as well as powerful positions within game play. However, detrimental for female representation, is the sexual objectification of women in the game through the clothes they wear, the roles they play, the sexual acts they perform and the violence inflicted upon them. As a result, chauvinist attitudes towards women can manifest, as pointed out by an interview participant who discussed the inclination of creators Rockstar to match character temperaments to paradigmatic assumptions of behavioural tendencies based on gender. In saying that, less than half of the interview participants concluded that *GTA V* was masculine driven, therefore smashing the concept of patriarchal ideologies. Despite this, players were obliged to perform violent acts of game play in order to fully complete *Grand Theft Auto V*, such as an interactive scene involving the torture of a victim. Not all participants were comfortable with this aspect of game play; it was however necessary if the player intended to complete 100% of the game. The economic value of *GTA V* as a multibillion dollar industry as a result of technological breakthroughs in audio and visual graphics and clever marketing techniques, seduced gamers into buying the game, in turn generating huge profits for

creators Rockstar, despite a weak story line. In terms of positive feedback, most participants specified that the freedom aspect of the game provided an entertaining indulgence, in terms of game play.

4.2 Male Dominated Virtual Reality

There are no female avatars (playable characters) in *Grand Theft Auto V*. You can only play as a man, why? You should play as a woman as well if that's the idea of a good adult game, you should be able to run around with women and have your woman character (P6).

Grand Theft Auto V was designed with 'a man's world in mind' (P9) as it can only be played using one of three male protagonists, Michael, Franklin or Trevor. A similar disposition is shared by P10 who notes that 'it would have been nicer if Rockstar could have introduced a lead female character in the game'. Protagonist Trevor 'is an arsonist, a drug addict and a criminal and he treats women with total disrespect' (P9). His vilipendency towards women is similarly noted by P4 who says that 'some of the stuff is kinda like in a real sexual type of way and he just like treats them like dirt'. P10 found that 'Trevor is probably one of the most violent characters I've ever come across' in a game. An example of Trevor's attitude can be seen in a mission called 'By the Book', where in order to achieve full success (100% completion), protagonists must interrogate a victim using techniques such as water boarding and using pliers to pull teeth with. Some participants found these scenes disturbing and unnecessary and as P2 noted, 'I don't think they want you to be comfortable with it, it's very intense and I wasn't comfortable with it. I didn't like that it wasn't optional'. Similarly, P10 thought these scenes were 'disgusting'.

Contemporary interactive game play provides the player with a choice whether or not to administer adrenaline or revive the victim (so further questioning and torture techniques can continue). P1 argues this type of violence is not just limited to video games as it is openly glorified on mainstream television.

I have played that part of the game. It's all part of getting 100%. Well it was a bit kind of squeamish, not the most pleasant scene to be watching the video sequence of it, but once again, it's just a game. No-one is actually getting hurt. It's no different to watching a movie. This kind of thing happens in movies all the time and a lot of TV programmes has a lot of violence. There's no reason why *Grand Theft Auto V* should be singled out more than anything else.

Protagonist Michael 'likes to be in control of his family' according to P9 where he thinks of them as his 'property'. Although he is unfaithful to his wife he still tries to control their lives. His temper is often violent and it can fulminate spontaneously as noted by P10.

When he catches his wife Amanda having sex with the tennis coach, him and Trevor chases him to his house on stilts and he ties a rope to them and uses his car to pull the house down. It's funny cause it's not his house, it bongs to another gangster who finds him and beats him with a baseball bat.

Protagonist Franklin epitomizes the conventional characteristics of a *Grand Theft Auto* protagonist. He is typecast as a 'criminal and a drug dealer' and he lives with his aunt Denise who is a feminist (P9). Conversely, his character 'doesn't seem as bad as the other two' even though they are all 'misogynistic assholes' (P10).

4.2.1 Concepts of Masculinities

The three male protagonists are well known for their heterosexual appetite in the game. However, one participant noted the character Trevor reflects bisexual qualities for example, when he flexes his dominance through game play he often uses ‘threats of sexual violence against other male characters in the game’ (P9). As one of the most popular characters in the game, Trevor can be a bit of a ‘psychopath’ (P9). In order to create an awareness of gender equality participants were asked their opinion if a gay character was introduced to the game. As noted by P2,

It’s all masculine driven. That would be a stereotype that they would bring in. I don’t think they could do it properly and do it well. I think they’d mess it up.

The previous introduction of a gay character to the game in the last *Grand Theft Auto* installment did not have a huge impact on opinion (P1).

The game before it, *Grand Theft Auto IV*, the expansion pack was called ‘The Ballad of Gay Tony’, that the main character, not the one you play, the other main character is gay. I don’t think they would have much of a problem with it really.

Michael extends his masculinity through the domination of his wife and two children. He is restrictive in terms of his daughter Tracy’s participation in extracurricular activities and tries to be ‘a good dad and tame her’ (P9). He demonstrates his enforced restrictions when he and Trevor follow Tracy to a talent show he didn’t approve of and forcibly chaperoned her home. According to P9, Rockstar are going to ‘push it to see how far they can get away with things’, in terms of

game experience. Similarly, in terms of male control over female subordination, according to P1 ‘it is very much a male orientated game’.

4.2.2 *Cultivating Violent Behaviours*

Using meticulous construction in design, ‘Rockstar uses a relatively new form of interactive game play’ that allows the player to become ‘violent or sexually active’ (P10) and according to P6, it simultaneously ‘undermines women in the game’. The blend of power fantasy and social commentary is often misinterpreted, especially by the younger generation who are often ingenuous to the situation at hand. A game store employee notes,

I would see a lot of parents who would buy it for really young kids. I would be like, it’s a bit much. Now they wouldn’t get the satire that’s involved, you know cause there’s an awful lot of satire in it, and you know there is an underlying social commentary in it that would be lost on young kids. They would just see violence, that’s what they would see and they would think it’s great (P8).

Interaction with prostitutes has amplified in terms of graphic sexual and violent content.

According to P2, ‘the sex workers are more prone...so you can hurt them if you want to’. It seems that despite strong female characters in the past, there are not as many of them in this particular game (P2). Technological improvements in visuals in conjunction with a violent narrative have transformed the game that has now become almost transparently violent in nature.

They have always been really violent but as they get newer, especially with *Grand Theft Auto V*, the graphics has kinda gotten better and it’s you know, you get to see, I know it sounds bad but it’s more gorey in that type of way, you know how they die and stuff like that, cause previous games you just lie flat out and there’s a pool of red circle around the body but it’s you know the way the graphics are, it’s pretty gorey alright (P4).

4.2.3 Behavioural Tendencies of Characters

Participants were asked their opinions on the levels of violence in the game, in particular, violent acts committed against female characters. P1 responded 'I don't think there's much violence against women. I think the vast majority of the violence is against men. By men, against men'. A similar sentiment is shared by P9 who noted that 'men are portrayed just as bad as women in the game'. When participants were asked whether game play in *GTA V* goes beyond the moral limits, it was noted that 'as gaming goes, nah. In real life the stuff that goes on is beyond moral limits and it's only just a game and it's only played by a target audience, over 18's' (P1). The game itself is based on well known stereotypes and reflects social structures of power, such as elements of criminal activities and the Pornification of women, which is incessant throughout the game often emanating negative behavioural tendencies towards women. Participants noted that MMORPG's, (massive multiplayer online role playing games), often subjects gamers to an intrusion of untamed and offensive language, often affecting the constitution of others.

When it's like *GTA* online against other players I can really see like violence, and eh, it's ok because I'm an adult, I can separate those things, but putting myself in a kids shoes I don't know. Online can be a bit rough, like you have people talking on the chat-pad and they can be quite rude sometimes you know, and that's not some kind of language that a kid should listen to (P6)

The freedom to roam and explore was fundamental according to P10, however, Rockstar allows criminal acts of purging and blatant acts of gender discrimination (P10). Another participant held Rockstar responsible for negative gender portrayal in the way women act in missions and the

way they are dressed in the game. P9 asserts that Rockstar ‘designed *GTA* with a man’s world in mind’.

4.2.4 *Smashing Patriarchy*

I think in *Grand Theft Auto* the female characters are stronger, they don’t play the damsel in distress. They are kinda just as dangerous and just as powerful as the male characters in it. They don’t need their help, em, they are trying to get their own way, trying to basically just challenge the male dominance in the game (P3).

The idea of patriarchy is somewhat smashed when effeminate power is exercised within the confines of *GTA V*. According to P3, females in the game are portrayed as tenacious as well as authoratative in essence. Maternal interconnections are somewhat established according to P8, between Trevor, from whom he secured his idiosyncrasies from, and his mother.

I thought Trevor’s mother was brilliant, that kind of... why he was so mad, and then you see it’s only a fleeting kind of meeting you have with Trevor’s mother, but she was mad, so it explained a lot like and eh a very domineering type of personality and so I thought that explained how Trevor was why he was.

In saying that, there is an episode where a female character, Taliana Martinez (the only female getaway driver in the game), is endorsed to participate in a robbery, however, she is paid significantly less than the men which is somewhat reflective of the gender pay gap we see today (P9).

4.3 Matriarchal Moms

A somewhat positive representation of matriarchal influence comes from Michael's wife Amanda, who is portrayed in the game as a 'strong character', and someone who is 'a positive reflection of women today' (P3). Amanda bore similar characteristics to Carmella from the Sopranos, 'that kind of strong, Italian female head of the house kind of thing'. Overall, there were a 'lot of interesting dynamics from the women in the game (P8). Similarly, P3 saw Amanda as a strong female character in the game.

Assertive, powerful, intelligent. She was more of a go-getter. She wanted to fix things rather than just being like a damsel in distress. She was the one that was like bringing things back together, trying to fix them, doing her own thing, and not really like just playing the victim. But she wasn't an evil character either. She was a good character, she fixed the family.

A somewhat proficient female character was Trevor's mother (Mrs. Philips), who is seen as accountable for Trevor's 'personality and behavior', according to P8. Appearing in one of the missions, Mrs. Philips antagonizes Trevor by telling him how disappointed she is in him. She is superciliously blunt in abandoning him which could possibly explain his acrimonious constitution.

4.3.1 Objectification of the Female Body

Representations of females in *GTA V* indicate intellectual as well as sexual portrayals that often convey de-humanizing images. According to P4 they are treated like 'objects'. There is an embellished form of Pornification recognized in the revealing clothes they wear, the manner in

which they conduct themselves and the professions in which they undertake. According to P6, 'every time that you see a woman in that game it's either a prostitute or used for some sexual gain'. Various women are almost ceremoniously profiled wearing derogatory clothing which emits negative connotations to players that are unaware of the satire that is incorporated into *GTA V*. P5 noted these particular women were 'underdressed', and seen 'especially at night time' when 'you see the hookers goin' out', which transmitted a negative image for them. An interactive location where women are objectified is the strip club where females graphically entertain customers in return for cash. Not all gamers participate in this form of interactive entertainment. According to P2, 'there's strip clubs and stuff like that, but I don't participate in any of that'. Players can 'make it rain' by showering strippers with dollar bills when she performs (P9). It was recognized that women are objectified not only in the game itself but in the real world, as P2 states, 'there's the whole prostitution and strip club thing, but I mean that's in real life as well'.

4.3.2 Systematizing Female Attributes

Predisposed dispositions that accumulate as a result of gender stereotypes often communicate negative game play roles that see women as being 'no use in the game, unless to make missions or take advantage' of them (P6). Detrimental depictions of females that encourage adverse sexist attitudes are demonstrated by getaway driver, Taliana Martinez who earns considerably less than her male counterparts. The strip club in Los Santos doesn't portray women as strong characters (P1) and according to P9; their roles are constructed in a way that 'deliberately makes them look

bad'. Denise's portrayal as a caricature of a feminist and Mrs. Philips portrayal as a single parent (who was originally a prostitute) presents them in a negative light.

4.3.3 Gender Specific Discrimination through Game Play

Rockstar provides the platform for pre-conceptions of how women react to situations in comparison to men. For example, indiscriminate car-jacking that is abundant throughout game play is often reflective of antagonistic gender stereotypes.

I suppose for example, when you car-jack someone in the game, a lot of the time it's a man that chases after you to try and get the car back, but if a woman happens to be driving the car she just runs away screaming (P1).

In a contemplative interpretation in relation to current stereotypes and clichés in the real world, P4 identifies performances within *Grand Theft Auto V* that 'have a lot to do with society at the moment'. Female characters on the beach and in the strip club in the game are representative of 'real' women in society, in consonance with music videos and the internet.

The women wear really small bikinis and there's even strip clubs and all like that. It's the way society is now and the game is kind of reinforcing that type of stereotypical image and stuff like that, what's been portrayed in society at the moment (P4).

4.4 Demonstrating Human Agency through Artificial Freedom Simulators

Overall most participants articulated that *GTA V* was not only a pleasurable exploration of an expansive environment, but the ultimate high in gaming. As a fundamental feature of the game, it

is admired by fellow gamers and according to P8, 'the freedom to do what you want in the game is something I always loved'. While it is true that *GTA V* provide the tools to explore expansively through animated realism, it provides unquestionable entertainment in abundance.

I do enjoy playing it cause there is a lot to do. Most of the missions are a lot of fun. Some of it is actually quite funny and it's just great. There is a huge area to explore in it. There's cities, there's countryside, planes, helicopters, boats, cars, the whole lot. I find it a lot of fun. A great way to use up spare time (P1).

P1 expresses a similar interpretation of the game in that, 'it's nice to be able to do what you want in the game without any consequences. In a way, you can enjoy it. No-one's getting hurt'. An enjoyable gaming atmosphere was also observed by P9 who deemed the ability to play another character and take part in missions as 'exciting'.

4.5 Sexual Politics

I'd say for *GTA* to be a bit more fair towards women and men; they should be able to do the single quests and a single player mode with women characters as well because you could see one side of the story, how it's done by a man and then you could see the other side of the story how it's done by a woman and I think that would be better for everyone because at the moment the female characters in the game, like I said earlier on, it's just you know in regards to prostitution or making a quest or stuff like that em, I just think that Rockstar could be a bit fair when it comes to that (P6).

In terms of creating a revolutionary platform that promotes gender equality, creators of *GTA V* need to embrace the idea of female lead characters through reciprocated roles of game play that enable an unobjectionable disposition. In saying that, it was also articulated that female characters are more 'empowered than they would be in a lot of other video games' (P3). An

example of this is demonstrated by Franklin's aunt Denise who practices a new-age spiritual feminism; however she is ridiculed and framed as a satirical 'stereotypical man-hater' (P10) in doing so. In saying that, the challenge to powerful male figures in the game is visible as 'not all women in the game are sluts or hookers or nagging wives or dumb blondes' (P10).

An intoxicatingly tenacious character who is somewhat equal in authority and power sharing roles is Michael's wife, Amanda,

She has the power over Michael. She's the one that wears the trousers in the relationship. She's the one who gets the family back together, fixes the marriage and gets him on the straight and narrow (P3).

In terms of overall leadership roles, female characters are assigned subservient duties, whereas male protagonists seem to occupy commanding roles demonstrating superiority, occupying roles of dominance. Conversely, Amanda is the glue that holds the family together and according to P3 'she still has power, but in a different kind of power, kind of more positive power'. Previous *Grand Theft Auto* games saw female bosses whereas there are none in *GTA V* as they are 'all side characters that play small parts' (P3).

4.6 Contemporary Post-Economic Crisis in *GTA V*

Most participants noted the colossal leap forward in terms of video and audio effects and have adapted to them with great enthusiasm, as P5 described, 'game play wise I think it's a lot better. The graphics have a big improvement and the overall game play is just better'. *GTA V* offers economic flexibility when it comes to purchasing a car and personalizing it to suit your interests.

I basically play it, just goin' around and you can basically do whatever you want really, especially in the newer ones in *Grand Theft Auto v*. I customize cars but you can do like practically anything you want (P4).

Subversive advertising promoting the use of violence is evident as graphics continuously improve. Prejudicial radio advertisements such as 'using a woman as a urinal' (P10) is contrast with theories of political messages on the radio and on billboards that 'show a satirical look on society' (P3). Getting drawn into the consumer culture in *GTA V* is inevitable as money is fundamental to gaining assets. Generating income in order to pursue options can often take time, which leads to longer game play.

They did add in extra activities and stuff into it that you can do, em, some of the stuff costs a lot of money and it will take you a while to save up for it. It sort of get's you playing for even longer (P5).

4.6.1 Clever Economic Simulator

Innovative marketing techniques by Rockstar have paved the way for *GTA V* to generate huge profits from advertisements on the internet as well as on mainstream television. As one participant noted,

They were very kinda intelligent with the marketing. Kinda leaked the game and slowly dripped out, so, and then there was a lot of hype about it on the internet, and then when the first ad's hit the telly, it was kinda just like seeing it in full screen. It became exciting and it was a thing everyone had to get if you were into your video games so, it just came into a big hype frame thing, and then I had to get it, to see what it was like, to see what the hype was about. It was just kind of, it all spawned from very smart marketing from Rockstar really.

This creative marketing formula allowed for the game franchise to almost seduce gamers into purchasing the latest *Grand Theft Auto* in the series. ‘Every time there was a new one, it was just go out and buy the newest one kind of thing’ (P4). Word of mouth also contributed to the marketing criterion as another participant ‘heard about others playin’ it’ and ‘wanted to see what the big fuss was about (P4). Resourceful public relations strategies are evident throughout game play from radio broadcasts that contain social and political narrative to advertising placards that promote people as well as products. In a way, Rockstar have worked out the formula for ‘what people want and don’t want’ in a video game in order to create a profitable demand for their products.

4.7 Simplistic Under-Developed Storyline

A proficiency in contemporary game play is transparent as audio and visual renovations place *GTA V* as a preferred game of choice. A considerable improvement in graphics and game play sees *GTA V* as ‘far superior’ to other games (P3). However, some participants noted the actual storyline fell short of inventiveness.

It lacked something that *GTA* always had. Kinda like broadness. It lacked a sense of humor that like the likes of ‘San Andreas’ and ‘Vice City’ had. It was more about the graphics than the actual game play, than it was about the actual story this time round (P3).

Although players can choose between the three main protagonists, this storyline along with the storyline of *Grand Theft Auto IV* was lacking in terms of narrative and optical structure and according to P3, ‘the story line wasn’t as strong as the other past *Grand Theft Auto*’s. Similarly

P5 stated that the lack of new missions creates insufficient diversity throughout game play, stating ‘I don’t think there were a lot of missions. There wasn’t really a lot to do in it’.

Furthermore, P3 added that the game ‘lacked a bit of soul’ in terms of actual game play.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the inquiry into how *GTA V* perpetuates the dominant ideology of patriarchy through male protagonist game play. The results from the investigation somewhat satisfies the overall research question in that patriarchal structures are set in place ensuring men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. This is evident as female characters in the game predominantly occupy roles of subservience in contrast to male dominated roles of leadership and control. *Grand Theft Auto V* depicts masculine rules that are observed and followed, often through violent or sexual means. Out of the three male protagonists, Michael is the only one who identified with the essence of patriarchy, according to his rule over his wife and children. Despite this, his wife Amanda is one of the strongest females in the game, as demonstrated by her confident and able-bodied performances. Contemporary technological developments have implemented a particular formula that allows interactive game play endorsing violent and sexual performances through the only playable characters in the game, which are male. Although both violence and sexual contact is inflicted upon both male and female characters in the game, the intent of creators Rockstar is evident. They are indeed perpetrated by males, as only the male protagonists in the game are capable of executing these acts. Overall findings identified *GTA V* as just a game; however some participants affiliated it with real life situations. These included the gender pay gap, females stripping in the strip club in return for money, women in music videos and women on the internet. The most enjoyable aspect of the game was the ability to roam freely since players are not tied to following a specific

structure of game play which they must follow. Money is a fundamental element in order to purchase commodities, which include females. Finally, an under-developed storyline not only proved disappointing but it failed to identify with players as it lacked personality.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the key findings on the subject of how *GTA V* perpetuates the dominant ideology of patriarchy through male protagonist game play. An important aid in designing this chapter is a critical understanding of how research can be informed by and built on existing knowledge or ideas, and a tentative theory or conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2005). Findings based on data collected from 10 interviews revealed four main themes. Firstly, the themes of patriarchal understandings are explored. Feminist bell hooks terms patriarchy as ‘a social disease and a political social system that dominates the weak’ (2004). Correspondingly, sociologist Johnson identifies it as a male controlled society based on the oppression of women (2005). Different masculinities that include alpha males and subordinated males are explored by Connell (2005) categorize men in terms of masculinity. However, stereotypical characteristics of male protagonists are often misinterpreted as heterosexual when in fact protagonist Trevor is seen to flex his dominance through sexual violence (against men) in *Grand Theft Auto V*. Connell (1995) reveals that the concept of hegemonic masculinity legitimizes patriarchy through the sexualization and subordination of women in society. Marilyn French (1985) reflects on the history of patriarchy from a feminist perspective identifying it as a system of power and control over women. The impact of patriarchal structures is discussed as it mirrors media representations of gender roles in society, such as misogynistic behaviour towards women through aggressive game play.

Next, gender power roles are examined as hypersexualized images of women are often manifested through a culture of misogyny and patriarchy. Video game reviewer Carolyn Petit

argues that females in *Grand Theft Auto V* are portrayed as sexual and demeaning objects which serve to encourage negative gender stereotypes. Following that, the cognitive repercussions of over-exposure to violent and sexually explicit game play in *Grand Theft Auto V* as it is a somewhat unexplored terrain. Previous studies by Miller (2007) identify fantasy game play in the *Grand Theft Auto* series as ‘consequence-free escape zones’, a sentiment which is shared by most of the interview participants involved in this research. In saying that, an anticlimax to the favoured freedom aspect of the game is a disappointing storyline which proved weak for many of the interview participants in terms of personal gamer experience. Finally, the theme of capitalism identifies the link between patriarchy and capitalism and the gender roles of authority and hierarchy. MacKinnon (1989) identifies the oppression and exploitation of women through a male dominated capitalist society.

5.2 Background to the Study

The target audience for *GTA V* is undoubtedly male as it uses inherently masculine attributes correlative to those incorporated within patriarchal understandings. A comprehension of patriarchy is essential in order to identify the effects upon both men and women. According to bell hooks (2004), this system of institutionalized gender role play is both a social disease and a political social system that dominates the weak, such as females and subordinated masculinities. A similar comprehension of patriarchy is shared by Johnson (2005),

Patriarchy does not refer to any man or collection of men, but to a kind of society in which men and women participate...A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women.

The sexual objectification and discrimination of women is evident almost throughout the game as money is exchanged in return for sexual services. Arguing that prostitution is ‘much like other women’s work’, McLeod asserts that prostitutes ‘barter sex for goods’ (1982:28). In defining sex work, Weitzer (2009:1) states,

Sex work involves the exchange of sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation. It includes activities of direct physical contact between buyers and sellers (prostitution, lap dancing) as well as indirect sexual stimulation (pornography, stripping, telephone sex, live sex shows, erotic web cam performances). The sex industry refers to the workers, managers, owners; agencies, clubs, trade associations, and marketing involved in sexual commerce, both legal and illegal varieties.

Suspicious game play involving objectification, rape, the gender pay gap, gender stereotypes and violent behaviour fall under the umbrella of known patriarchal structures and although *GTA V* contains misogynistic and patriarchal connotations, most participants considered it a fun way to use up spare time (P1).

The passage between fantasy and reality often intersect creating feelings of desire towards female characters in the game. In a YouTube video entitled, ‘Everyone can hear you Flirting with Strippers on *GTA V*’, the player is heard to grunt and groan on his chat pad, alongside intimate feelings towards females in the game (Brooks, 2013). Combining explicit lyrics with live chat not only gives us ‘an unsettling insight into the psyche of some gamers’ (Hooton, 2014), but it completely disrespects those that have been ‘real life’ victims of sex crimes. In the online multiplayer version of *GTA V*, there are real life consequences for those who fall victim to that particular psyche of some gamers. For example, in the video game *DayZ*, writer Kim Correa describes her thoughts on being virtually raped in the online multiplayer game verifying that there is no escape from rape, even in the fantasy world of game play.

One of them made a comment about how I was a girl. One of them said he hadn't gotten pussy since the end of the world. He was pointing a gun at my face. I made a disgusted noise over my mic and started to back up and he said his friend wasn't sure if they should kill me or not. I called him a sick puppy. He said that unfortunately for me, he was into necrophilia, and that he wanted to rape my dead body, and then he shot me (Stoeffel, New York Magazine, 2014).

5.3 Stereotypical Characteristics of a Male Protagonist

Typically male protagonists are characterized as heroes or villains in video games. This often creates a mode of inquiry as to whether these characteristics are inherently biological, that is, whether they relate to human nature or if they are artificially constructed to adapt to a societal acceptance of the hypersexualization or Pornification of females in the game. According to T. Walter Herbert,

The sexual pressures within men feel primordial-and thus determined by biological imperatives-because we have inherited a cultural tradition telling us they are. A pernicious morality follows: that a sexually aroused man is not answerable for complying with the dictates of his genetic constitution, and that responsibility for male sexual aggression belongs to the woman, particularly if she can be imagined to have aroused him intentionally (2002:22).

The misappropriation of the female body by male protagonists appropriate sexual procurement through interactive highly sexualized roles, which are catered for, inevitably serving to undermine females in the game. However, if the stereotypical male protagonist is heterosexual, then what are the effects of having a gay character introduced to the game? Although Michael, Franklin and Trevor portray components of heterosexuality, one participant was skeptical as to whether Rockstar could design a gay character without using damaging stereotypes (P2). It was claimed that protagonist Trevor 'uses threats of sexual violence against other male characters'

(P9) in order to establish dominance proving that male dominance is not always affiliated with heterosexuality.

5.3.1 Alpha Male in Essence

Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as the ‘configuration of gender practice which embodies the current accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (1995:77). Similarly, Donaldson (1993:655) argues how hegemonic masculinity is a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimize and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance. A hierarchy exists within different masculinities where men enact and embody different configurations of masculinity. The defining characteristics of a hegemonic male are ‘based on practice that permits men’s collective dominance over women to continue (Connell, 2005: 840). At the bottom there are marginalized masculinities, including homosexuals, who are subordinated and oppressed by the alpha males in society. This type of masculinity supports and reinforces gender inequality in its most dominant form that often sees violence used as a way of claiming or asserting that masculinity. However, it is apparent that although Trevor exercises authority and power over both men and women in the game, he reflects a bisexual identity that is disconnected from known alpha male patterns of behaviour in game play. Similarly, Demetriou’s critique of Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity argues that ‘it unites practices from diverse masculinities in order to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy’ (2001:337). In the system of gender relations, hegemonic masculinity

legitimizes patriarchy when female characters are sexualized and subordinated by dominant male protagonists through scenarios of social and sexual anarchy in the game.

5.3.2 Patriarchal Quintessence

Nearly 40 years ago, patriarchy was defined as ‘a system of relationships in which men ‘own’ the women and children and rule over them’ (Fortier, 1975:278). Similarly, gender relationships in video games often reflect this system of inequality and oppression. According to Bertozzi,

Males are to act forcefully to seek out females and accomplish external goals while females passively await male attention and focus most of their activity on improving their status as sexually appealing objects (2010:8).

Feminist writer, Marilyn French reflects on the history of patriarchy saying, ‘in the beginning was the Mother, the world began a new era, one we have come to call patriarchy (1985:65). She identifies patriarchy from a feminist perspective, as the determinant men use to maintain supremacy over women through a system that values power and control over life and pleasure. Alternatively, Johnson sees patriarchy as a kind of ‘society’ which is more than just a collection of people (2005:5). Johnson states that patriarchal culture is about the core value of control and domination in almost every area of human existence (2005:39). Johnson argues, ‘to live in patriarchy is to breathe in misogynistic images of women as objectified sexual property valued primarily for their usefulness to men (2005:41). This awareness is emulated throughout the game as negative stereotypes depict sexually explicit material serving to disempower females.



Figure 5.3.2: Interaction with prostitutes in *GTA V* can involve sexually explicit game play serving to subordinate females through pornification, objectification and sexualization.

There is a lot of sexual content in it, especially nudity, and one thing I didn't like about the game is that they kinda undermine women in the game. So every time that you see a woman in that game, it's either a prostitute or used for some sexual gain (P6).

Promoting sexist ideologies in *GTA V* through socially prescribed beliefs and expectations dehumanizes women by reducing them to sexual objects while dominance and hierarchy continues to be maintained by men. This is demonstrated in figure 5.3.2 through a visual caption of game play that shows an example of subordinate roles that are assigned to females in the game.

5.3.3 *The Impact of Patriarchy in GTA V*

Patriarchy as a construct of male power enforces an unequal social order with a dominantly male social hierarchy in the form of sexual exploitation and violence. The freedom to do ‘practically anything you want’ in the game is enjoyed by most participants, however recognizable structures that promote male leadership and power to the affliction of women is echoed in ‘music videos, the internet and in strip clubs’ (P4). The strip club in *GTA V* includes a game where if you successfully grope a stripper without getting caught by the bouncer, you are allowed to have sex with her, essentially turning sexual harassment into a game for which you are rewarded (as visually demonstrated in figure 5.3.3). Female characters are often violated through these exercises of power creating an unequal social order, the type of which is socially constructed ‘by males, for males’ (MacKinnon, 1989:316). In order to reflect upon and include opinions and expressions towards gender equality, females must be allowed to have their own construct of individuality, including sexuality without judgment. Accompanying suggestive content can have detrimental ramifications when females perform and conform to male sexual needs, at the risk of being subjected to acts of violence and aggression.



Figure 5.3.3: Illustrated above sees a male bouncer maintaining regulation of the sex industry as he watches over protagonist Michael with a stripper at the club.

5.3.4 Misogynistic Behaviour

When does virtual violence become a reality? Violence against females through misogynistic and sexist performances in *GTA V* transgresses from pixelated subservience into social mechanisms of the human population. Aspects of misogyny are prevalent in movies, mainstream television and through advertising and in some ways have become regularized. Conversely,

It's just a game. No-one is actually getting hurt. It's no different to watching a movie. This kind of thing happens in movies all the time and a lot of TV programmes has a lot of violence. There's no reason why *Grand Theft Auto V* should be singled out more than anything else (P1).

Innocent game play is often reflective of realistic brutality against women by violating social norms and values. For example, in a YouTube video entitled 'Let's Play: part 3 – Killing Hookers', a player adapts to the role of protagonist Franklin and mirrors misogynistic attitudes from his perspective as he indulges in a violent attack on a prostitute using the butt of his gun. Through the chat pad, the player (TheJordanJames, 2014) narrates, 'alright love, you know the drill'. He then picks a weapon from a menu of weapons and laughs saying 'c'mon bitch! Where's me money bitch?' while beating her to the ground. A study by Reeves (2009:527) examines the physiological effects of over-exposure to violence on gamers, which found 'a positive relationship between violent video games and aggressive behaviour'. Are the effects of gender role assumptions that are based on violent game play answerable to game designers? Reeves (2009:544) argues 'violent video games should be subject to liability because psychological studies show a substantial connection between violent video games and their ability to motivate one to commit violent acts'. Unintentional or not, Gameson *et al.* observes 'a wide variety of media messages can act as teachers of values, ideologies, and beliefs and... can provide images for interpreting the world whether or not the designers are conscious of this intent (1992:374). Gender-sexual hierarchies are associated with heterosexual masculine identity through the influential dominant form of patriarchy. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is normative, in that 'ascendency is achieved through culture, institutions and persuasion' (2005:832). Men lacking in patriarchal facilitation and masculine dominance are often regarded as showing a 'complicit masculinity', leading towards an abolition of gender hierarchies (Connell, 2005:832). In contrast, Holter (1997) highlights evidence of a Norwegian survey showing the gender identities of men are not always correlated with the patriarchal subordination of women. Relevantly, *Grand Theft Auto V* the concept of masculinity is a key factor with an

emphasis on physical strength, aggression and sexuality through exaggerated forms of stereotypical male behaviour.

5.4 Gender Power Roles

Man's sexuality has always been considered a function of his personal enjoyment and well-being, woman's sexuality has been considered as society's property to be used to further its aims, whatever the cost to her own welfare (Fortier, 1975:280).

The reliance of male supremacy in the game reinforces the notion of the weaker sex that portrays hypersexualized images of females through a misogynistic culture often manifested through patriarchy. According to Mackinnon, 'dominance eroticized defines the imperatives of its masculinity, submission eroticized defines its femininity' (318). P6 suggests smashing gender roles by creating gender inclusive options in the game so that females can take part in missions ultimately contributing towards gender solidarity. Instead, females are exposed as sexual objects, performing for the male protagonist appetite in essentially pornographic performances. Dworkin (1989:223) sees the pornography industry as a machine of de-humanization for the female saying, 'the woman's sex is appropriated, her body is possessed, she is used and she is despised: the pornography does it and the pornography proves it'.

Objectification is the accomplished fact: an internalized, nearly invariable response by the male to form, that is, in his estimation and experience, sufficiently whatever he needs to provoke arousal (Dworkin, 1989:113).

Central to feminist theory is the notion of objectification. Video game reviewer, Carolyn Petit, analyzes *GTA V* saying,

GTA V has little room for women except to portray them as strippers, prostitutes, long suffering wives, humourless girlfriends and goofy, new-age feminists we're meant to laugh at. Characters constantly spout lines that glorify male sexuality while demeaning women, and the billboards and the radio stations of the world reinforce this misogyny, with ads that equate manhood with sleek sports cars while encouraging women to purchase a fragrance that will make them smell like a bitch' (Petit, 2013).



Figure 5.4: 'Le Chien' perfume, meaning 'the dog' in French, reinforces the misogynistic experience in *GTA V*

Figure 5.4 visually illustrates this example of misogynistic advertising, as seen throughout game play in *GTA V*. To portray females as hypersexualized not only promotes negative gender stereotypes but attempts to entrench gender roles through controlling behaviour. Opinions on the levels of gender oppression varied as 6 out of 10 participants acknowledged oppressive gender roles in the game.

5.4.1 Authorized Domination

Visual and audio simulations of females engaging in sexual activities under male guidelines are deeply embedded into the core of *GTA V*, serving to disempower and de-humanize them.

Pornography is a means through which sexuality is socially constructed, a site of construction, a domain of exercise. It constructs women as things for sexual use and constructs its consumers to desperately want women to desperately want possession and cruelty and dehumanization (MacKinnon 1989, 327).

Casting female characters as ‘hookers or strippers’ (P9) or ‘slutty’ (P10) subordinates females, ensuring the reproduction of male dominance and hierarchy through male protagonist game play. According to Pateman, prostitution is an embodiment of patriarchy where men exercise the ownership of the female body through contracts of ‘sexual services’ (1999:54). On the contrary, Bell (2009:2) argues that laws allow men control of the female body and not prostitution itself. Authorized domination of the female body through laws that maintain systems of oppression is demonstrated by the criminalization of ‘fornication, adultery, abortion and prostitution’ (Henderson, 1991:412). MacKinnon (1989:149) argues that women under the patriarchal system of power are ‘objects’ under male power ensuring that ‘all women live in sexual objectification the way fish live in water’. In the strip club in *GTA V*, women strip and dance for customers who pay them for their services (P10). Adding to this exploitative business is the fact that they have a male guarding over them at all times. The grip of patriarchy penetrates through the unequal division of labour which must be eradicated in order to achieve equal status for women (Hartmann, 1979:137).

5.4.2 Archaic Perceptions of Women

‘Social progress can be measured by the social position of the female sex’ (Marx, 1868). One of the strongest female characters is getaway driver ‘Taliana Martinez’. She is paid considerably less than the other male crew members according to an advertisement of her skills (as visually demonstrated in figure 5.4.2 (a)). This pay gap that is ultimately based on gender highlights the patriarchal networks that can confine women to the home.

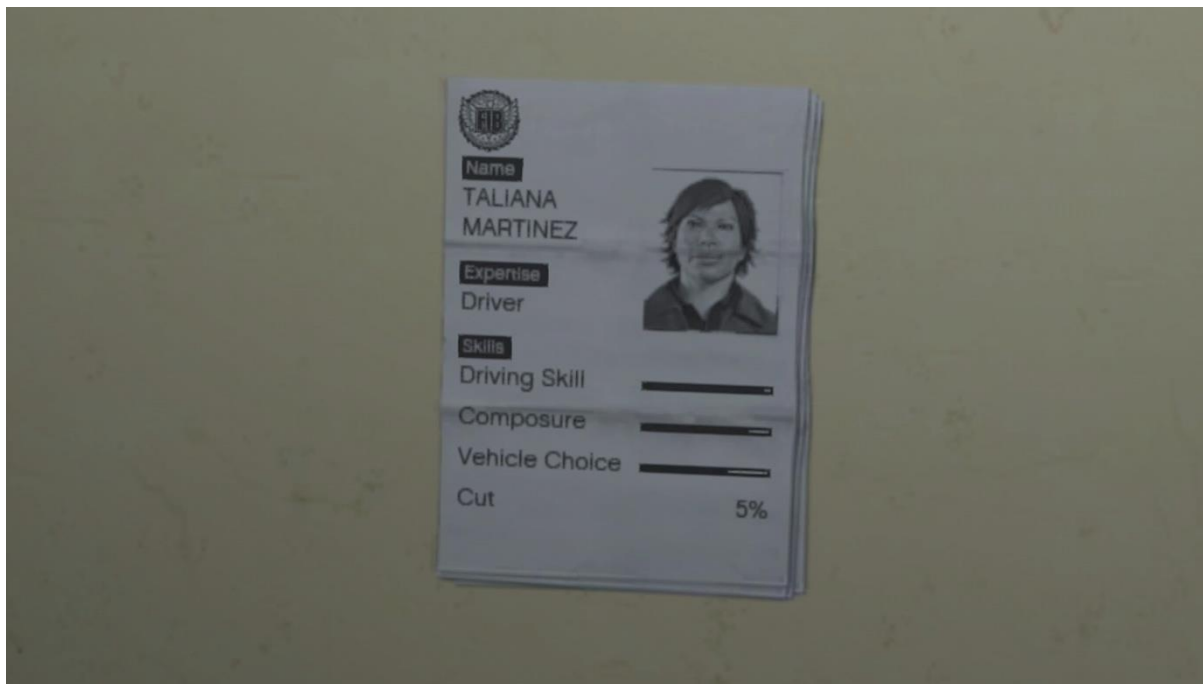


Figure 5.4.2 (a): Statistical analysis of female getaway driver ‘Taliana Martinez’ mirrors the gender wage gap seen in patriarchal structures

According to Barry,

The relational power of male domination reaches into the private, into and onto the body, through interactive sexual relations that are rendered into sexual exploitation by the power that forges the economic relations of women under patriarchy (1996:77).

Hyper sexualizing and downgrading females through interactive character assignments emanate negative impersonations through the way they dress and the tasks assigned to them. A drop down menu of sexual services is available that rewards players with health packs when performed, and the retrieval of payment from the prostitute afterwards through discretionary as well as violent means. This is visually demonstrated in figure 5.4.2 (b) as a prostitute is attacked by a customer, following sexual contact, in order to retrieve a refund of her services.



Figure 5.4.2 (b): A scene from *GTA V* shows a male protagonist killing a prostitute

According to Echols (1983:46), cultural feminists claim that ‘pornography compels women to accept dehumanization over personhood’.

5.5 Physiological Desensitization

A prerequisite into areas previously unexplored is essential in order to determine cognitive repercussions. An analysis of *Grand Theft Auto* games is required because according to Miller,

Millions of people are under taking experimental, exploratory travels into unfamiliar terrain where their goal-orientated success and personal satisfaction depend upon their powers of interpretation and adaptation (2007:407).



Figure 5.5: Protagonist Trevor pulls a victim's teeth out with pliers in order to retrieve information

Figure 5.5 visually illustrates a caption of game play demonstrating one of the methods of torture used by male protagonists in the game in order to acquire information.

There are varying perspectives on the effects of violence in *GTA V*, between the freedom to act as you please without consequences (P1) in contrast to people who fail to envisage their actions because they are ‘completely desensitized’ (P2) to it. Realistic graphics that allow actual participation to cause excruciation can often influence that person’s interpretation of game play. According to P8, a lack of common sense and underage game play can have an effect on how you interpret violence.

I think any sort of media can have an effect on a person. I think, be it a computer game, be it a movie, be it music, you know, anything like that can influence a person’s point of view. I suppose to go back to that, if it’s the young child playing it and it’s not meant for them, it’s 18’s for a reason. I suppose if you have a bit of wear at all about you and you understand its make-believe, it’s not real, that it should be fine. I suppose it could have an effect on young people if they are playing it, even if they don’t understand what’s going on in it.

The performances of torturous methods in *GTA V* are methodologically descriptive; however participants were mindful of the distinctions between fantasy and reality.

I think there would be something wrong with someone if they acted like that in real life just because it’s like that in the game. I think most normal people keep them two things separate and don’t let themselves be influenced’ (P1).

5.5.1 Reality vs. Fantasy

Interactive agency through the power of fantasy game play can often de-sensitize and de-moralize the gamer at the expense of female objectification.

GTA's 'freedom' derives partly from its medicated, artificial qualities: players can control their degree of identification with local characters, choose their own preferred depth of immersion, and tack between viewing the games as consequence-free escape zones or as trenchant commentary on other violence-saturated media products (Miller, 2007:407).

The transcendent journey from game play to actual social analogy is explained by P6 who explained how audio segments of actual game play transferred into real life social situations between people.

It's not the first time that I'm walking down the street or something like that and I overhear a conversation between a couple and they actually quote phrases from the game, and I go I look at them like hello what?

Real-life interpersonal contact on reality TV shows is compared with modes of game play from *GTA V* in order to simulate the macrocosm of society in shows such as 'Jersey Shore' and 'Big Brother' (P6). This is communicated through a universal language of 'reality TV' that is based on a genre of unscripted television programming, with physical and mental consequences as a result of being placed in an artificial situation that is often exploitative. For example, there are numerous quotes in game play that are heard on television, which are applied to the game to create an overall familiarity and connection. Complications can arise as a result of 'free-play' within a realistic environment through online communications, which are occasionally undesirable. P6 notes the obscenities expressed through online game play unsuitable for most people, especially minors. Similarly, Plante argues,

I say without hesitation that the people I met in *Grand Theft Auto* online were the worst I've ever encountered in an online game. Racism, sexism, homophobia and general hate were the nouns that bookended their increasingly threatening verbs. Rockstar didn't design these humans, but they did design a game that awards antagonism directly (being murdered time and again in the street) and passively (2013).

5.5.2 Satirical Illusions of Creativity

GTA V incorporates impressive graphics which are immaculately presented, and are ‘far superior’ to all other video games (P3). Morally inept protagonists reinforce underlying patriarchal traditions through uncreative satire that prescribe women’s dependence upon men. Characters are archetypes and stereotypes that engage in artificial discourse that seems disconnected from the gamer experience. A hollow story-line in exchange for dynamic audio-visuals resulted in a lack of ‘soul’ (P3) and personality unsatisfactory to individual gamer prerequisite and appetite. The demand for personalized technology that ‘facilitates consumers decision making processes’ requires investigative study into a system of ‘collaborative filtering’ in order to generate intelligent data (Zhang *et al.*,2014). An interactive experience through peripheral illusion creates individual ‘identity’ similar to Bourdieu’s theory of social constructionism.

It structures human perceptions so that they identify certain objects under specified conditions as necessitating specific kinds of behavioural response. It works on a prior set of physiognomic attributes, or dispositions of selves within bodies, to generate and sustain new *habitus*, a process that is operative in our interactions with the field’s privileged object (s) (Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Bourdieu’s theory sees the socialization of an agent into a set of roles in a social domain where social and financial capital are at stake. *Habitus* forms over time developing a ‘taste’ for such objects. Similarly in *Grand Theft Auto V*, a ‘feel for the game’ is developed, creating unique areas of knowledge as forms of capital. Structures of patriarchy remain unquestioned when the investigation itself is contaminated.

Sociologists, when they go to work, enter into the conceptually ordered society they are investigating. They observe, analyze, explain, and examine that world as if there were no problem in how it becomes observable to them (Smith, 1990:16).

If a male-orientated view of the world is projected through this social construction, feminists would argue that there is a vacancy in examination, analysis and experiences of women in larger social systems of economic and political structures. According to Bourdieu, (1996:17),

When perceived through these social categories of perception, these principles of vision and division, the differences between practices, the goods which are possessed, the opinions which are expressed become symbolic differences and constitute a real language.

Similarly, the illusion of patriarchy through the reality of internalized and naturalized oppressive rule must be smashed in order to transform the current gender order.

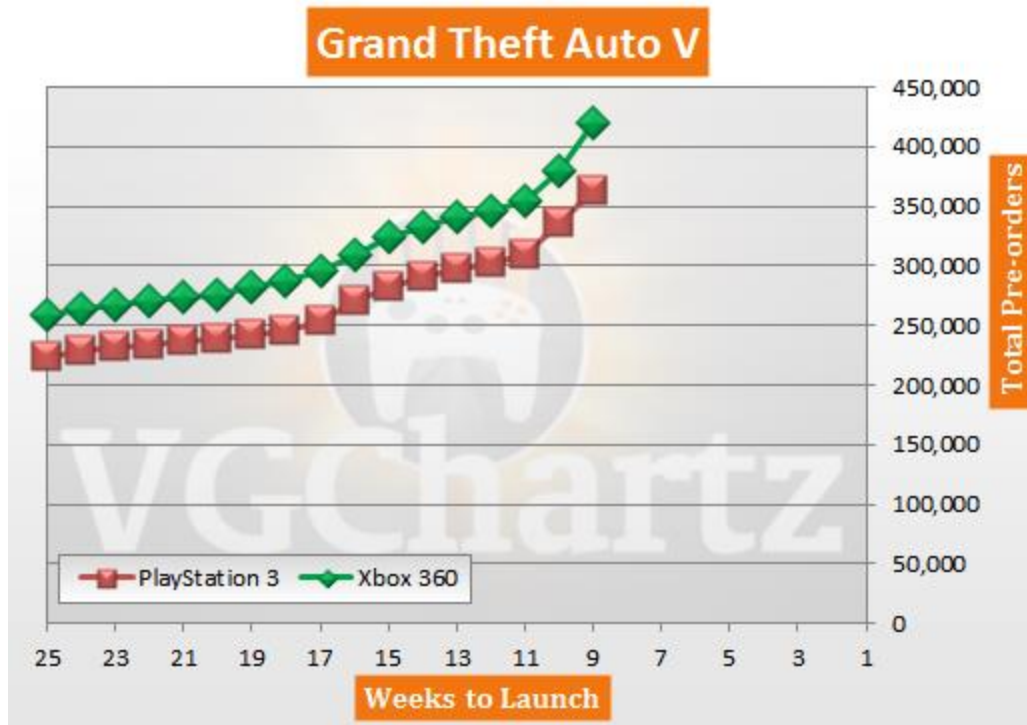
5.6 Grand Theft Capitalism

Multinational video game developers, Rockstar games are due to release *GTA V* on Playstation 4 and Xbox One in November 2014 (Rockstar, 2014). As an incentive, those that pre-order the game will receive \$1,000,000 into a *GTA* online bank account to spend (in the game) and alongside enhancements in technology, there are major visual improvements. Questionably, in August 2014 Rockstar announced that 'Playstation 3 owners will need to upgrade their hard drives' or lose access to *GTA V* online (KJ, 2014). Similarly, Kerr argues the upgrading of technology imposes an extra cost on the consumer as a result of the rapid corporatization and professionalization of video games (Kerr, 2006:2). This highly successful strategy is used to maximize global sales in a 'conflict between multinational cultural corporation(s) and local political, cultural and social actors' (Kerr, 2006:2). The relationship between capitalism and patriarchy is linked to roles concerning authority and hierarchy which are then traditionalized

through social norms and values. In a Marxist analysis, this system ensures ‘a steady supply of labour power’ that ‘reinforces divisions and backwardness within the proletariat’ (Proletarian Revolution, 1989). The autonomous system of patriarchy and capitalism oversee unbalanced gender relations that support a dominant capitalist economy. Females are oppressed through male dominated capitalist societies where ‘sexuality is shaped and controlled and exploited and repressed by capitalism’ (MacKinnon, 1989:319). The commodification of females in *GTA V* (through prostitution) is normalized and legitimized due to a high marketplace demand and according to P3 it was a necessary purchase if ‘you were into your video games’. Capitalism ensures the subordination of women by consigning them to ‘positions with less power and lower pay than men within the sphere of production’ (Acker, 2004). An example of this is the sexual exploitation of females in the strip clubs where you can ‘make it rain’ (P9) by throwing dollar bills at strippers in exchange for sexual performances. Fraser (2012:9) analyzes sexism as, ‘a two-dimensional mode of subordination, rooted simultaneously in the political economy and status order of capitalist society’.

5.6.1 Capitalist Patriarchy

In the ‘Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and feminism’, Hartmann argues that ‘a partnership of patriarchy and capitalism has evolved’ (1979:2) in which ‘the accumulation of capital both accommodates itself to patriarchal social structure and helps to perpetuate it (1979:2) Through this prejudiced system, the difference between freedom and subjugation is uncovered (Pateman, 1988). In the online gaming world, free-market capitalism ensures that everything is for sale, undermining moral values, disregarding the consequences.



5.6.1 (a): Advance interest appropriated a total of 420,388 pre-orders for *Grand Theft Auto* Von the Xbox 360 and 362,719 pre-orders for the Playstation 3 version with nine weeks from launch in the US

Grand Theft Auto games are highly successful in terms of sales, and their content is part of an explicit business strategy which aims to exploit the latest technologies and platforms to develop content aimed at adult game players in certain markets (Kerr, 2006:1).

3,670,234 copies of *Grand Theft Auto V* were sold in the UK in 2013 (Westfield-Bell, 2014).

Within a capitalist ruled environment of game play, *GTA V* players were forbidden from taking money from other players in an exercise of control, where Rockstar penalized ‘defaulters with temporary account suspensions and permanent bans (Yalburgy, 2014). Passivity and accessibility provide market place demands for pornographic depictions of women that are often legitimized

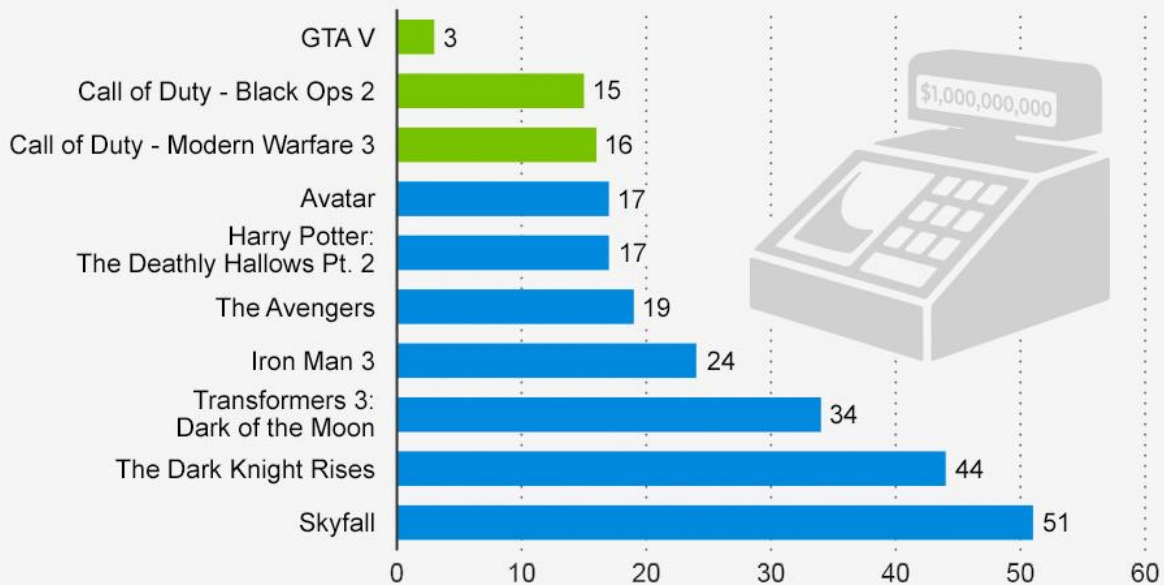
by technology itself (Dworkin, 1989:202). Furthermore, Kant sees prostitution as a commodity that dehumanizes and objectifies women. 'To allow one's person for profit to be used for the satisfaction of sexual desire, to make oneself an object of demand, is to dispose over oneself as over a thing' (1963:165). Treating a person as something that can be bought or sold, as something lacking in agency and autonomy, and to identify them according to their body parts is known as objectification (Nussbaum,1995). To allow oneself to be used for the sexual satisfaction of others in exchange for money reduces them to 'a thing on which another satisfies his appetite' (Kant, 1963). Correspondingly, Dworkin argues,

Objectification occurs when a human being, through social means, is made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold. When objectification occurs, a person is depersonalized, so that no individuality or integrity is available socially or in what is an extremely circumscribed privacy. Objectification is an injury right at the heart of discrimination: those who can be used as if they are not fully human are no longer fully human in social terms; their humanity is hurt by being diminished (2000: 30).

The possibility of resistance would undermine masculine identities, threatening patriarchal institutions through economic and political power. Connell scrutinizes these socially constructed configurations that embrace neoliberalism 'as a form of masculine politics due to its powerful role of the state in the gender order' (2005:1816).

GTA V is the Fastest-Selling Entertainment Product Ever

Number of days it took the following games/movies to reach \$1 billion in revenue



statista
The Statistics Portal



Source: Take-Two Interactive, Statista Research

Figure 5.6.1 (b): According to Statista (Online statistics portal, 2013), it took *GTA V* only 3 days to reach sales of \$1bn in revenue

With a marketing budget of \$265 million, *GTA V* is the most expensively marketed video game of all time (Richter, 2013). A campaign on Twitter (https://twitter.com/1_Reason_Why) highlights not only a concerned lack of female game designers in a mostly male dominated industry, but a staggering disparity between the average pay between men and women (Yare, 2012). This demonstrates a systematic form of gender inequality that operates as a system of power that has become acclimatized in institutional as well as societal environments.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented an analysis and interpretation of research findings in conjunction with relevant knowledge and data as presented in the literature review. These included a thematic investigation into patriarchal representations of masculinity through stereotypical roles assigned to male protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V*. The inclusion of images in addition to the written word can evoke emotional and intellectual responses, so for those reasons I used various images to describe my analysis of the research data collected. Illustrations of women depicted as objects through portrayals of negative gender stereotypes and power roles are discussed in accordance with feminist knowledge and literature. The theme of capitalism in relation to patriarchal structures is attached to a specific set of social institutions such as the state, in order to maintain power in terms of an absent female presence in the political and economic sphere.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Overall Discussion

This research aimed to address whether *Grand Theft Auto V* perpetuates the dominant ideology of patriarchy through male protagonist game play. I choose this topic as I feel it is a critical area of investigation for feminists, which is reflected in the body of literature used for this thesis. The effects of patriarchal structures in society are a relevant argument as findings indicate both positive and negative effects in terms of sexual politics. In this male-dominated frame of game play, male protagonists hold the majority of power; however, some female characters hold unquestionable roles of authority and influence. In saying that, prejudicial roles are often assigned to particular female characters in the game that represent them as hypersexualized, objectified and exploited through sexual, violent and economic means. The accumulation of sexist attitudes corresponds with a misogynistic domain that often leads to violence. Similar attitudes are mirrored in society, such as the stereotypical representation of females in the social as well as the political arena. Similarly, violence against male characters, for example the torture scenes, made for uncomfortable viewing according to some interview participants. Overall, the freedom aspect of the game provided endless entertainment according to most participants which was mostly due to significant technological advances in graphics. In the gaming industry, *GTA V* was at one point dominant, with sales exceeding that of other games on the market. The exploitation of women in a capitalist society reinforces oppressive roles based on gender. Male protagonists in *GTA V* maintain and assert a culture of patriarchy through manifestations of hierarchy, control and dominance. Overall findings revealed a male dominated control of game play that reinforced a system of power and hierarchy as visible in patriarchal structures.

Glorifying acts of violence and (explicitly) sexual content in an autonomous environment often saw the exchange of economic capital for the sexual services of strippers or prostitutes, assimilating the female body into roles of submission while selling her as a commodity. Michael's guardianship over daughter Tracy enforces a relationship of constraint through the regulation of her personal space. Similarly, strippers are observed and supervised by male bouncers in the strip club in order to maintain control, and this is exercised through alpha male tendencies. A patriarchal framework is somewhat exercised by protagonist Michael over his family, however his wife Amanda maintains the regulation of the family using female guidance and management. The concept of being masculine was key to the overall storyline, and although *Grand Theft Auto V* is essentially viewed as just a game, it is however a reality for some.

6.2 Further Investigative Studies

There has been a great deal of work done in this area; however it has mostly been conducted by females. While it is imperative that lived experience and a feminist perspective is essential, a philosophy of male contribution is fundamental in order to fully gain a gender inclusive body of knowledge that will identify and create awareness as to the concerns at hand. This study offers a new perspective to the current research on the effects of patriarchal structures on female characters in video games; however, there were several limitations that should be corrected for further study. This includes the gender imbalance in the group of interview participants for this research, meaning there were eight males and only two females. Also, a larger study is necessary in order to gain a wider perspective as these findings were generated from a small group of ten. Patriarchy is a system of power and dominance that affects both men and women. As both a

feminist and a woman, gender egalitarianism is a fundamental human right. Highlighting gender inequality in this thesis creates awareness of the issues discussed so that men and women are equal in opportunity and participation in political, economic, cultural and social domains.

This particular research is essential not only for equal access and opportunities for women, but it also highlights the effects of patriarchy on both men and women in society, demonstrating prejudicial 'alpha male' expectations and the persistence of the subjugation of women. Previous research in the area mainly focused on the effects of patriarchy on women whereas investigation into the effects of patriarchy on men is equally significant. Complex issues surrounding class and race based bias and discrimination that exist in *GTA V* have not been addressed directly as the focus is on the effects of patriarchal structures within the game. The *Grand Theft Auto V* franchise is a billion dollar industry in which game play is centered on money that sees players seduced by patriarchal conditioning. In terms of context, as an activist, I am inclined to place gender inequality as a part of the overall problem relating to the global unequal distribution of wealth. Similarly, capitalism is based on inequality, exploitation and oppression according to class, just like patriarchy demonstrates inequality, exploitation and oppression according to gender.

Money is the measure of all things, and profit the primary goal. For the oppressors, what is worthwhile is to have more-always more-even at the cost of the oppressed having less or having nothing (Freire, 1970).

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APPENDICES

Appendix I : Interview Participants:

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Date</u> <u>Interviewed</u>	<u>Consent</u>	<u>Audio</u> <u>Recorded</u>	<u>Under</u> <u>age</u>
<u>P1</u>	M	17-11-2013	✓	✓	
<u>P2</u>	F	20-11-2013	✓	✓	
<u>P3</u>	M	5-03-2014	✓	✓	
<u>P4</u>	M	6-03-2014	✓	✓	
<u>P5</u>	M	6-03-2014	✓	✓	✓
<u>P6</u>	M	7-03-2014	✓	✓	
<u>P7</u>	M	10-03-2014	✓	✓	
<u>P8</u>	M	24-04-2014	✓	✓	
<u>P9</u>	M	04-09-2014	✓	✓	
<u>P10</u>	F	04-09-2014	✓	✓	

Illustration 1: Details of Interview Participants without revealing their identities.

Appendix II: Consent Form:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed with regards to the video game ‘*Grand Theft Auto 5*’.

I am conducting this research as part of my thesis for my Masters Degree in ‘Community Education, Equality and Social Activism’ (CEESA) at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

This interview may take up to one hour and with your permission we would like to tape record the conversation. A copy of the interview tape will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to hear it.

I can send you a copy of the interview transcript if you wish.

There are no risks involved in this research and the interview does not constitute any type of counseling or treatment.

The benefit to you is that you will have access to the research when it is finished and you may use it to understand how your experience compares with others or to the wider sociology literature.

All of the interview information will be kept confidential. We will store the tapes and notes of our conversation safely. Your identity will be kept confidential and we will use a code number to identify your interview data. Neither your name nor private information will appear in the final research project.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw your data at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me at niamhmalone@ymail.com or my research supervisor Michael Murray at Michael.J.Murray@nuim.ie or at 01 7083591.

“I have read the description above and consent to participate.”

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix III: List of Figures

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Figure 5.3.3. Accessed 8 August 2014.

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Figure 5.4.2 (a). Accessed 20 August 2014.

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Figure 5.6.1 (a). Accessed 1 September 2014.

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