CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES IN SAN ANDREAS:

Characterizing the protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V*

Master's thesis
Joonas Kettunen

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Joonas Kettunen	
Työn nimi – Title CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES IN SAN ANDREAS: Characterizing the protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V*	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Pro gradu -tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Elokuu 2015	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 101+2 liitettä

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Digitaalisten pelien merkitys on nykyään huomattava taloudellisesti ja kulttuurisesti. Ihmiset käyttävät aikaa ja rahaa digitaalipelien pelaamiseen enemmän kuin koskaan aikaisemmin ja pelaajamäärät kasvavat jatkuvasti. Yksi viime vuosien suurimmista digitaalipeleistä, niin budjetiltaan kuin pelaajamäärältäänkin, on *Grand Theft Auto V*. Lisäksi *GTA V* on saanut erinomaiset arvostelut ja peliä pidetäänkin yhtenä parhaana digitaalipelinä kautta aikojen. Erityisesti pelin hahmoja on kehuttu. Edellä mainittujen seikkojen perusteella *GTA V* -pelin päähahmot, Michael, Franklin ja Trevor, ovat tämän tutkimuksen keskiössä. Tutkimuksessa *Grand Theft Auto V* -peliä tarkastellaan kulttuurituotteena.

Päähahmojen identiteetin rakentumista tutkitaan hahmoanalyysin avulla, joka pohjautuu kirjallisuusteoriaan. Analyysissa jokaisen hahmon ryhmäkategoriat, persoonallisuuskategoriat, sosiaalisten roolien kategoriat ja kieli on analysoitu hyödyntäen hahmoanalyysia. Tutkimuksen pääaineiston muodostaa *GTA V* –pelistä tehty "elokuva", joka sisältää kaikki välianimaatiot *GTA V* –pelistä. Lisäksi tutkimukseen on sisällytetty videoleikkeitä tehtävien suorittamisesta, mikäli ne sisältävät tärkeää informaatiota pelin päähahmoista. Tutkimuksen tulokset puhuvat sen puolesta, että päähahmojen identiteetit on rakennettu *GTA V*:ssä erittäin huolellisesti ja yksityiskohtaisesti. Hahmot ovat hyvin todentuntuisia, mutta varsinkin heidän moraalinen käyttäytymisensä erottaa heidät todellisuudesta. Lisäksi tutkimus osoitti, että virtuaalisia hahmoja digitaaliympäristössä voidaan tutkia kirjallisuusanalyysin menetelmiä hyödyntäen. *Grand Theft Auto V* ei ole pelkästään digitaalinen peli, vaan ilmiö, jota on syytä tutkia jatkossa lisää sen kulttuurisen merkittävyyden vuoksi.

Asiasanat – Keywords *Grand Theft Auto V*, digital games, characterization, identity
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX
Muita tietoja – Additional information

Contents

List of figures

List of tables

1 INTRODUCTION

Video games, also often referred to as digital games, continue to grow in popularity. Playing video games has been a niche hobby in the past but nowadays games play a major role in our society, both time-wise and also economically. Gaming is no longer only the hobby of some socially excluded teenager boys, but a multibillion business concerning tens of millions of people across the globe. According to Gartner and Gartner (2013) the global video game industry revenue, including mobile games on phones and tablets, was worth $93 billion in 2013. This is a $15 billion increase from the $78 billion in 2012 and estimates say that the video game industry is expected to increase to $111 billion in 2017. As a comparison, the global box office for films reached $34 billion in revenues in 2012 (Theatrical Market Statistics 2012). In addition to the economic impact, games take a good deal of our free time. As an example, U.S players aged 13 and over spent six hours and twenty minutes a week playing games in 2013, which adds up to nearly 330 hours a year (The Nielsen Company 2014). Moreover, a survey commissioned by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (2012) reported that 25 % of the European online population play at least once a week, 49 % of players in Europe are 35 years or older and genders in the field of gaming are represented quite equally – 45 % of gamers are female and the remaining 55 % are male.

As the numbers suggest, digital games have become mainstream and one of the biggest games in the history of digital games is *Grand Theft Auto V* (*GTA V*), which was developed by Rockstar North and published by Rockstar Games. *GTA V* is an open world action-adventure game set within a fictional city of Los Santos and its countryside, based on Los Angeles and its surroundings. The game was released on the 17th of September in 2013 for Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 and on the 18th of November 2014 for the current generation of consoles Xbox One and PlayStation 4. Additionally, the game was released for PC on the 14th of April 2015. It is estimated that the development and marketing of *Grand Theft Auto V* cost approximately 265 million US dollars, making it the world's most expensive digital game to date (Brustein 2013). Upon its release, *GTA V* broke 7 world records, including the best-selling video game in 24 hours grossing over $800 million in the first day and fastest entertainment product to gross $1 billion, which happened in three days (Bora 2013, Lynch

2013). For comparison, it took 14 days to reach the $1 billion mark for *Jurassic World*, which is the fastest film in history to reach $1 billion at the global box office (Child 2015). By the end of October in 2013, *GTA V* had sold nearly 29 million copies making it one of the world's best-selling games in the history after having been available for purchase for less than two months (Take-Two Interactive 2013). Furthermore, on the 3rd of February 2015 Take-Two Interactive (2015a) released a report stating that *GTA V* has sold 45 million copies and SuperData Research (2015) reports that *GTA V* made nearly 32 million dollars in worldwide digital revenue in January 2015, making it the highest-grossing game of the month. The latest report released on 18th of June 2015 states that *GTA V* has shipped over 52 million copies worldwide (Take-Two Interactive 2015b). Thus, the *Grand Theft Auto V* phenomenon continues even after nearly two years after its initial release.

Not only has *GTA V* sold well but it has also received universal acclaim from both critics and consumers alike. The critics have praised the game for its huge scope and size, its sharp wit behind the satirizing humor, well-written story and varied missions. Naturally the fans have similar plaudits but they have stressed that *GTA V* is simply more fun and entertaining to play than, for example, its predecessor. In addition, gamers have taken a liking to the colorful and interesting protagonists. "Nothing short of a masterpiece", "best game of this generation", "one of the greatest games ever made" and "landmark event in the history of videogames" are just some of the phrases used repeatedly in the dozens of reviews in the media (Metacritic 2013).

In other words, *GTA V* is an extremely popular product. Millions of people across the world play *Grand Theft Auto V*. The *Grand Theft Auto* series consists of 15 different games on various platforms, but both critics and players often stress that the latest installment is the best thus far (Metacritic 2013). I also play *GTA V*, and having played most of the previous titles in the *Grand Theft Auto* series, I agree with the critics and other fans that *GTA V* is the most enjoyable game in the series. Consequently, *GTA V* is an interesting game to analyze, partly because of its popularity, partly because of my own interest in the game but also partly because it is such a multi-layered cultural product satirizing modern phenomena, including vanity, capitalism, and the American Dream. While all the previous *Grand Theft Auto* games have centered around one protagonist, *Grand Theft Auto V* was the first

installment in the series to introduce three playable main characters. The shift from one protagonist to three protagonists caused doubts and hopes prior to the game's release but in hindsight it proved to be a successful change; generally the characters in the game have been described as well-developed and interesting (Metacritic 2013). Since the characters play a central role in the game and the game has been such a huge success in terms of sales and reviews, the present study intends to find out what exactly makes the characters stand out and thus so memorable and enjoyable to play. What are the key characters' identities like since they appeal to the large audience? How are believable but at the same time fun characters constructed? In essence, the present study will focus on identity construction in *Grand Theft Auto V*.

As mentioned above, the single-player story of *GTA V* is told through three player controlled protagonists: Michael, Trevor and Franklin. They will be the main focus of the study and the main aim is to find out how the characters' identity is constructed and developed. As identity is a sum of a number of factors, the theoretical and methodological framework of characterization presented by Culpeper (2001) is used to examine the various factors including group memberships, visual features, social roles, personality and to an extent language.

An increasing number of studies on identity construction in digital games have been conducted. For instance, Boudreau (2007, 2012) has studied identity construction focusing mainly on the player's perspective, analyzing her own experiences while playing. Brenick et al. (2007), Bryce and Rutter (2002), Cassell and Jenkins (2000) and McMenomy (2011) have all researched the concepts of gender identity and stereotypes in digital games, the focus being on gender. Moreover, Pallit (2013) also studies gender identity but she focuses on how children perceive the concept of gender in digital games. In addition, Corneliussen and Rettberg (2008) have conducted a study on *World of Warcraft* where they, for example, examine players' identification with their in-game characters among other topics. However, these studies focus almost purely on how the players' identity is constructed through his or her avatar, that is, the studies are about player identities and identity construction more or less outside the digital world, which this study addresses.

Studies focusing on identity in a virtual environment are sparse. However, Boudreau (2007, 2012) has studied the concept of identity in video games and even though her focus is mostly on the player, her findings suggest that the player's identity affects the player character's identity and vice versa, thus creating a "hybrid-identity". Naturally the results vary depending on the games analyzed, especially the genre of the game, and whether or not the game in question is played online or offline. Games with online aspects are more prone to offer a suitable environment for hybrid-identity to form, whereas high-quality single player games nowadays tend to rely on scripted events, cutscenes (non-interactive sequences) and strong narration. Thus, the player's input concerning identity is not as important as in games, where social interaction is a crucial factor. Since *GTA V* is a single player game and the present study analyses in-game identities focusing on the protagonists' semi-scripted identities, the gamer's identity in the analysis is thus left out from the analysis. Studies on in-game identity are virtually non-existent, therefore one needs to study the topic, in order to form a thorough understanding of identity and games.

1.1 Aims and research questions

Identity construction and expression are the main themes of the present study. During the story of *GTA V*, the protagonists' characteristics are under close scrutiny but also their actions are analyzed, since they are in the center of the game. In narrative-heavy games, a protagonist typically follows a certain path, an arc, over the course of a story, i.e. the protagonist goes through different events that change the character and consequently mold the character's identity into a certain direction. Digital games, as a medium, offer an interactive experience and even though most of the events in the story of *Grand Theft Auto V* are scripted and major events story-wise are conveyed through various cutscenes, there are three possible endings to the plot. *Grand Theft Auto V* is a story about three different protagonists but ultimately the player's actions play a role in what will become of them in the end. Consequently, the player will have a significant role in deciding how the story of *GTA V* ends.

During the story, the protagonists perform honorable but also despiteful actions and thus it is ultimately up to the perceiver to form a subjective picture of each protagonist. In

addition, regarding the player's actions in forming the end for the plot, Boudreau (2012: 97) argues that cinematics and cutscenes provide contextual narrative information about the avatar and the provided additional information may affect the player's future choices in the game once the gameplay continues after the cutscenes. Moreover, Kücklich (2006: 108) claims that even though the player controls the game through the protagonist, the game also controls the player. In other words, even though the player has to decide what action to pursue in the final mission, the protagonists' actions and personalities as depicted in the cutscenes throughout the game, before the actual decision is made, possibly affect the decision the player has to make.

In *GTA V* there is no separate narrator, the story unfolds by itself and the protagonists themselves further the plot. One could argue that the cutscenes, which have been rendered using the in-game engine, are the narration of the story in *GTA V*. However, the key question in the study is how the main characters' identities are constructed in *GTA V*. Therefore, the aim is to profile each of the three protagonists and evaluate how their characteristics, skills, quirks and features create distinctive personas and ultimately develop an identity of their own in a virtual environment. The research questions in the present study are as follows:

1. How are the protagonists' identities constructed?
   - Do the protagonists belong to any groups/communities?
   - What type of visual features do the protagonists have?
   - What type of personalities do the protagonists have?
   - What type of social relations do the protagonists have?
   - What type of language do the protagonists use?

2. Do the main characters' identities develop during the story?
   - If the characters' identities develop during the story, how do they develop and why?
   - Do the protagonists have multiple/different identities during the story?
   - What factors contribute to possible shifts in a protagonist's identity?

The aim is that the questions presented above would provide general guidelines to analyze the main characters qualitatively, by using tools provided by different characterization theories, and thus provide a comprehensive picture of identity manifestation in *Grand Theft Auto V*. Furthermore, since characterization used in the present study is based on literary theories, the study experiments whether literary devices are applicable for analyzing digital environments. Overall, the study aims to provide insight on how the main characters are constructed and presented in *GTA V*.

It should be noted that *GTA V* is a massive game, which includes plenty of content outside the main story and its protagonists. Similarly to other popular games, *GTA V* has dozens of community created wiki pages online describing the different elements of the game. Although vast in quantity, *GTA V* has a fixed amount of content and therefore similarities in describing the content, such as characters in the game, are inevitable across the wikis and the present study. However, the present study does not compete with the wiki pages in terms of quantity; rather it aims to provide an academic approach to the process of characterizing the protagonists' identity in *Grand Theft Auto V*.

1.2 Data

The primary data of the study comprises all of the cutscenes shown in the main story of *Grand Theft Auto V* (Figure 1) and have been compiled into a "movie". Basically, the movie has been created by first downloading the separate cutscenes on to a hard drive and then merging them, by using appropriate software, into one chronologically continuous clip. Nearly all player controlled gameplay between the cutscenes is omitted. The aforementioned process has been done by "NRMgamingHD" (n.d.), which is a channel on YouTube specializing in high definition movies composed of a game's cutscenes. NRMgamingHD (n.d.) uploaded the *Grand Theft Auto V* cutscene movie (Playstation 3 footage) on their YouTube channel for public display but the movie has now been removed from the channel. However, I downloaded the footage to my personal computer on the 12th of November in 2013 to prevent the primary data of the present study from disappearing before finishing the study, which in hindsight proved to be a wise maneuver. Currently the unofficial *Grand Theft Auto V* movie used as the present study's primary data can be found

on my personal YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXQjmslRpvY
with NRMgamingHD's (n.d.) consent. The total length of the cutscenes in the game, i.e. the
movie, is 5 hours, 10 minutes and 25 seconds. In addition, gameplay videos from a gaming
channel called "MKIceAndFire" (n.d.) on YouTube are used to analyze important
conversations between the protagonists outside the scripted cutscenes, for example
dialogues during jobs. MKIceAndFire (n.d.) offers 78 clips varying in length from 15
minutes to two hours (Xbox 360 footage). The total length of the clips is 23 hours. The
clips can be found at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=ELJ58FooV6tJk and were first
accessed on the 27th of January 2014.

Figure 1. Screenshot of *GTA V* story cutscene on YouTube

The cutscenes were chosen as the primary data because the cinematics form the gist of the
story and reveal the protagonists' personal traits as well as show some pivotal actions
performed by the protagonists. Conversations outside the cutscenes, in other words during
the main missions' and side missions' gameplay, offer valuable information on the
protagonists' background as well as offer additional samples of language to analyze.

In the analysis, cutscenes are prioritized over mission gameplay, since the story cutscenes
form a solid entity, whereas missions and other activities in the game add flavor and reveal
additional information about the main characters. However, it is debatable whether or not
cutscenes are considered as a part of the missions in *GTA V*. On the one hand, the cutscenes
are a part of the missions, since they introduce the mission setup to the player and the
gameplay part of the missions starts straight after the cutscenes. On the other hand,

cutscenes are separate scripted events in which the player has no influence on the dialogue or other actions performed by the characters. Nonetheless, for the sake of clarity, cutscenes and missions involving active player participation are treated as separate entities in the present study. However, cutscenes and active gameplay do not exist in a vacuum, on the contrary, cutscenes offer contextual information about the avatars which may affect future gameplay choices.

1.3 *Grand Theft Auto V* – the game

There are three playable protagonists – Michael De Santa (Figure 1), Franklin Clinton (Figure 2) and Trevor Phillips (Figure 3) – in *Grand Theft Auto V´s* single player story.

Figure 2. Michael De Santa   Figure 3. Franklin Clinton   Figure 4. Trevor Phillips

GTA V is an open-world game since after the mandatory introductory mission the player is free to explore the areas of the city of Los Santos and the surrounding countryside Blaine County. It should be noted that *GTA V* also has an online multiplayer mode *Grand Theft Auto Online*, which is set in the same game world but the player creates his or her own avatar and the game is played online – opposed to *GTA V*. However, apart from a few mentions, the present study does not take *GTA Online* into account in the analysis. The map of *GTA V* is about 101 square miles, which is approximately 260 square kilometers and thus it is considered to be a very large area in a video game (Bertz 2012). However, even though the world is open to exploration, the player has to complete missions in order to make progress in the story to unlock all the characters. Namely Franklin is the first protagonist whom the player controls (excluding the introductory mission in the very beginning of the game) even though Michael is the first character, who is properly introduced to the player via a cutscene. After the player has completed a set of missions by playing as Franklin, Michael becomes playable and eventually Trevor is added to the mix

as well. Moreover, additional content such as weapons, outfits and vehicles only become available after a certain point has been reached in the main story or specific missions have been completed.

The story is set around the three protagonists, whom all are involved in criminal activities to some extent. However, they all are from different backgrounds and they live completely different lives compared to each other. Michael is a retired criminal living lavishly under witness protection with his family, which includes his wife Amanda and his children Tracy and Jimmy who are in their early twenties. Franklin is living with his aunt and working as a repossession man along with his friend Lamar, both of whom have been gang members in the past, and to some degree, still continue to be affiliated with gang activity. Trevor lives in a trailer and runs his own drug dealing business. As a substance abusing person himself, he is often found in compromising situations alongside with his friends Ron Jakowski and Wade Hebert, who obey Trevor blindly (Ron and Wade are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.4.3). Trevor and Michael share history, since they used to be partners in crime but after the introductory mission, which is a bank robbery gone wrong, their paths diverge. As the story advances, the protagonists end up together after a series of incidents and eventually become full-time criminals.

Michael, Franklin and Trevor perform various missions in the game. A mission consists of a set of objectives that need to be completed in order to pass the mission; failure is possible if the objectives are not met. There are a total of 69 missions in the story, eight optional story-driven side missions, three different ending missions and a number of other missions including random character-missions and missions related with hobbies and past time ranging from yoga to arms trafficking.

The missions in *GTA V* usually involve dialogue, use of firearms and/or driving a vehicle of some sort. Thus *GTA V* is an action-adventure game (see 2.2 for discussion of genres and terminology). Some of the missions can be carried out by only one character; other missions require all of the protagonists and their henchmen. The player can switch between the protagonists using the character wheel (see figure 5 in APPENDIX 1) in the heads-up display. The protagonists are "color coded" in the sense that each protagonist has a distinct

color to separate him from the other two protagonists. The colors can be seen in the character wheel: Michael's color is blue, Franklin's color is green and Trevor's color is orange. The colors are displayed when the protagonists use their special ability or when the player switches characters, for example the screen turns into a shade of blue when the player switches Michael to Franklin or Trevor and green when the player switches Franklin to Michael or Trevor and so forth. The switch between players is possible during missions, if there is more than one protagonist performing a mission and nearly any time during free-roam gameplay.

The concept of acquiring wealth plays a big role in *Grand Theft Auto V* and for example completed missions yield money for the player/protagonist. Moreover, there are complex, multi-part missions called heists in *GTA V*. Heists require careful planning and usually the protagonist has to set up a crew, which includes a driver, gunman and a hacker in order to be able to complete a heist successfully. Heists can be completed by using a stealthy approach or a more direct, "guns blazing", approach – it is up to the player to decide. Whether the player decides to choose a stealthy or a more explosive approach for the missions offered, eventually the illegal actions performed by the player controlled protagonist may elicit a "wanted" level during the missions but also during free roam gameplay. A wanted level has five different stages and as the wanted level increases, the more aggressive and deadly the law enforcement personnel become. The player character can try to elude the law enforcement troops and eventually negate the wanted level by staying hidden for a certain period of time.

The world of *GTA V* is navigated by foot or by vehicle, whether by land, sea or air. The characters can also swim, dive or indulge in other sport activities such as parachuting, tennis and golf to name a few. All protagonists carry a smartphone, which can be used to call other characters in the game, receive missions or browse the in-game internet where one can purchase properties, vehicles or even trade in stocks to earn in-game currency.

The protagonists have a set of eight skills, which include: stamina, shooting, strength, stealth, flying, driving, lung capacity and a special unique skill for every protagonist. The special abilities can be activated on and off by the player and need to be replenished on a

regular basis, if used actively. Michael's special ability is "bullet time", which slows down time during firefights and thus makes shooting considerably easier for the player. Michael can replenish his special ability, for example, by taking down enemies by headshots or driving at high speeds. Franklin has the ability to slow down time while driving a road vehicle. This ability makes driving considerably easier allowing the player to avoid collisions making sharp turns possible even at high speeds. Franklin's special ability meter is replenished by driving at high speeds, avoiding collisions and by performing other stunts while driving such as drifting around corners and driving on the wrong side of the road facing oncoming traffic. Trevor's special ability allows him to enter a berserk mode, which makes him practically invulnerable to damage and he also inflicts significantly more damage to his enemies and vehicles making him almost invincible for a short period of time. Trevor's special ability is replenished, for example, by driving at high speeds, killing pedestrians by explosions or by ramming them over and by performing headshots. These skills can be improved during the course of the game but all protagonists start with default values, which differ from each other. In other words, each protagonist excels in certain skills in the beginning of the story but all skills are improvable during the course of the game. For example, swimming and running around will increase stamina and driving at high speeds without crashing the car will increase the driving skill of the protagonist. (*Grand Theft Auto V Limited Edition Strategy Guide* 2013: 6-7.)

1.4 The structure of the study

The present study consists of six main chapters. The Introduction chapter above has outlined the research questions and the data of the study, in other words the game of *Grand Theft Auto V*. After the introductory chapter, digital game studies are discussed in chapters on game definitions, digital game terminology, as well as in chapters on different approaches to game studies and identity in games. Even though identity is a broad and elusive term to define, a definition relevant to the study is provided. In chapter three, the process of characterization is presented. Theories on characterization are crucial regarding the research questions of the study and essentially form the framework for the analysis, and therefore characterization is discussed extensively.

The fourth chapter introduces the methodology used in the study. The chapter presents a concrete description of the methods and practices utilized in processing the data. The fifth section is the Analysis chapter, where the protagonists are analyzed by applying characterization theories and the results are introduced in their respective subchapters. The concluding chapter in the study is the Discussion chapter. The main findings and the limitations of the study are discussed. Additionally, conclusions are presented and further research suggestions are contemplated.

2 DIGITAL GAMES

The focus in the present study is on character identity in a virtual game setting, in other words on artificial identities in a digital game. Therefore, some insights on the basic elements of a digital game are in order. Rutter and Bryce (2006: xiii) acknowledge that digital games have shown that stories can be told in new interesting ways compared to traditional media such as television, film and music but digital games also add a sense of interaction used in face-to-face communication. Mäyrä (2008: 5) states that games are intrinsically interactive. Moreover, Latva (2004: 35) points out that interactivity distinguishes games from movies and books. The very core of digital games is based on interactivity and active participation, whereas books and films produce a passive, receiving-oriented experience.

However, it is worth noting that gameplay, i.e. active participation by the player, is not the only defining characteristic of a digital game. Buckingham (2006: 3) states that some scholars see games as art but be that as it may, they most certainly are entertainment and are now "an established cultural form". Murray (2006: 187) even argues that "digital games are becoming the assimilator of all earlier forms of media culture." According to her, digital games allow the player to become the characters of print literature and films and include cinematic elements such as camera angels and lightning. She goes onto say that digital games incorporate music, graphic design and dialog. Additionally, Murray (2006: 187) states that adventure, romance, gangsters and superheroes are just some of the narrative genres used in digital games. Many of the mentioned aspects such as cinematic elements, music, graphic design and gangster narrative can be found, for example in *GTA V*.

The following subchapters will firstly introduce some concepts presented by notable game study scholars of what constitutes a game. Next, relevant game terminology is introduced. After having discussed terminology, different approaches on game studies are discussed, as well as the present study's approach is presented (chapter 2.3). Finally, the concept of identity especially in digital games is explored; also some relevant studies on identity related to digital games will be introduced in order to place the present study in the field of identity studies in digital games (chapter 2.4).

2.1. What constitutes a game?

One might think that the term "game" is a relatively easy concept to define but this is not the case. In fact, different scholars have presented alternative views on what constitutes a game thus emphasizing different aspects in games. For instance, Murray (2006: 187) focuses on digital games and relates them to a wider cultural context as stated above. She notes that digital games bring together a number of players, include a great deal of information and a variety of media forms. She also acknowledges that digital games provide spaces to move in, require interaction and include complex rule systems.

Juul (2005: 6-7) incorporates both digital and non-digital games in his definition of a game. He has created a set of six rules, which underline the role of the player, to define the characteristics of a game:

> 1) a rule-based formal system with
> 2) variable and quantifiable outcome, where
> 3) different outcomes are assigned different values,
> 4) the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome,
> 5) the player feels attached to the outcome, and
> 6) the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.

Juul (2005) emphasizes the role of rules and active intervention by the player in games. His definition is more quantitative than qualitative and disregards the role of narration in games.

Järvinen (2003: 70-72) states that games are based on rules but rules need to be placed in context. Similarly to Juul (2005), he presents a set of characteristics to be found in games:

1) Components, which are usually represented by objects, for example in board games as cards or in digital games as characters, vehicles or tools such as weapons (Järvinen 2003: 72-74). The protagonists in *GTA V* could be seen as components; 2) Procedures are actions performed by the player or the game-system, as long they are allowed and encouraged by the rules. Procedures start up and keep the game going and are executed through components (Järvinen 2003: 74-75). The actions, such as walking or driving, performed by the protagonists in *GTA V* could be regarded as procedures; 3) Environments provide the physical or digital space for components and procedures and set the boundaries for the game (Järvinen 2003: 75). It can be a board, for example in chess or a world such as Los Santos and its surroundings in *GTA V*; 4) Themes offer the context in which the game takes place. The theme in a game is realized by the representation of game components, procedures and environments (Järvinen 2003: 75-76). *GTA V* has many underlying themes but one theme could be interpersonal conflict. Such a theme most likely requires that the components are characters, procedures include social interaction and that they take place in a certain environment; 5) Interface in a board game could simply be a board but in digital games the concept of interface is more complicated. In digital games the interface is part of the game rules. It is through the interface that a player gains access to the game world, and thus it can be physical or digital (Järvinen 2003: 77). For example, the map, the weapon selection wheel, the health bar and the selection circle are all part of the user interface in *GTA V*.

Aarseth (2003: 2) claims that any game, including sports, board games and digital games, can be described by his "tripartite model". The three dimensions of games are: 1) Gameplay, which includes the players' actions, strategies and motives; 2) Game structure, which includes the rules of a game; 3) Game world, which includes the fictional content, topology and textures of a game. Aarseth's (2003: 2) model also emphasizes the role of the player and he stresses that the game structure, i.e. the rules of the game, creates the foundations for a game and thus is the most important element in the model. He experiences games as processes rather than (textual) objects and states that without rules, actions in game worlds could not be regarded as gameplay.

Lastly, Salen and Zimmerman (2004: 94, 98, 122) see games taking place within a magic

circle. The magic circle creates a frame which separates games from reality in time and space. However, rules create the core of a game and those rules are applied in the magic circle. Consequently, rules are the separating factor between the game environment and real life even though the game space and reality can have similarities – as is the case in *GTA V*. However, Buckingham (2006: 9-10) argues that while rule based definitions are useful, representational dimensions are equally important when discussing digital games and especially the appeal of digital games. Representational elements include the visuals of a game, the narrative, the character's emotional appeal and the use of humor. Also playability, in other words how the game's controls and rules are implemented, is important in digital games (Buckingham 2006: 9-10).

Overall, all of the described elements in the different models can be found in or applied to *GTA V*. However, Murray's (2006) and Buckingham's (2006) affinity to representation and culture in games is the most fitting characterization of games in terms of the study's research questions and its view on games; gameplay, rules and spaces are essential in games but the focus in the study is on game content, i.e. the characters.

2.2. Digital game terminology

Game terminology needs to be looked more closely in order to understand the present study since game studies contain many field specific terms and thus it has its own register. The present chapter defines and clarifies the key concepts, such as protagonist, avatar and third-person perspective used in the analysis and discusses features and terminology typical for games and digital games in particular.

Usually the term "electronic games" is used as an umbrella term for all games, which require electricity to play out as designed. Electronic games do not need to be visual, for example, they can be audio games. Thus, "digital games" or "video games" are not synonyms for electronic games since they offer a visual experience. However, all digital and video games are electronic games, and digital games and video games are often times used as synonyms. In the present study both terms are used based on the source that is referred to but the term digital games is preferred, since many of the prominent game

scholars such as Aarseth (2001, 2003) and Mäyrä (2008) favor it over other terms. Digital games are games, which require interaction between the player and the user interface thus generating visual feedback trough a display device such as a monitor or a television screen. *Grand Theft Auto V* is a digital game but it is also a console game, in other words a game played on a specific device called a video game console, such as PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360. The console typically produces images, video and sound and is connected to a television or to some other display device. The game is controlled by a handheld device, a controller.

Digital games, like movies, have a variety of different genres. Naturally different genres can have overlapping features but according to Krawczyk and Novak (2006: 27-28), the only hybrid to differentiate itself as genre as such is the action-adventure genre, which *GTA V* belongs to. Action-adventure games allow the player to follow the storyline, familiarize oneself to a character and immerse into the surrounding world. Action-adventure games combine the best of both worlds, thus keeping the experience interesting for the player. Krawczyk and Novak (2006: 28) also underline this by saying: "Since action-adventure uses both the reflexive response of action games and the reflective thought of adventure games, this hybrid can be used quite effectively when it comes to storytelling." This is realized in *GTA V* to the letter, since missions require fast-paced action and even reflexive responses to on-screen commands also known as quick time events, but respectively the gamer can roam freely and immerse oneself in the world of Los Santos without any sense of urgency. Moreover, on the one hand *GTA V* is heavily constructed on the basis of the story and its three protagonists, but on the other hand one can play *GTA V* as much as one desires by completing only the first introductory mission.

In addition, various character types must be defined in order to understand what is actually analyzed in the present study and how video games work in terms of roles and narration. Krawczyk and Novak (2005) define many character archetypes found in video games. The *avatar* in a game is basically the character, which the player controls in the game world. The player can control only one avatar at a time, for example in *GTA V* the player can only control one of the three possible protagonists at a time but the avatar in this case is interchangeable. *Protagonists* are the main characters in a movie, book or in this case in a

game. The protagonist has the leading role in the story. A protagonist usually has two different problems in a game: conscious and unconscious. The conscious issue is the driving force in a game, the goal that the protagonist wants to achieve and that drives the story onwards. The unconscious problem is more psychologically inclined. If oversimplified, in *GTA V* the protagonists, or more specifically the *co-protagonists*, want to get rich but at the same time they need to find true comradeship or distinguish friends from enemies. Consequently, the co-protagonists team up to achieve a common goal. However, it is possible that the co-protagonists end up being *antagonists* to each other making them *enemies* also. Enemies are controlled by artificial intelligence and try to stop the protagonist from reaching his or her goal. An antagonist is the opponent for the protagonist. They have the same needs and this composition results in conflict. Trevor, Michael and Franklin are often described in game reviews and other game-related texts as *antiheroes*. Antiheroes are morally ambiguous characters but still they are protagonists. In *GTA V* there is a fine line between a *hero* and an antihero but usually the characters end up being antiheroes according to some gaming sites and reviews (Sullivan 2013). However, since heroes are the main characters in a story and the player needs to bond with the main character to experience the story to the fullest extent, the co-protagonists in *GTA V* can be defined as heroes as well. It all depends on the perspective and ethics of the player.

An *archetype* is a universal character type found, as an example, in many myths and other stories. All of the aforementioned character types can be seen as archetypes. However, *GTA V* strives to stir traditional archetypes by creating less stereotypical characters and taking the different characters to the gray area, for example, in terms of moral decisions. Heroes become antiheroes, protagonists turn into antagonists and *sidekicks* become *lackeys.* Sidekicks are the protagonist's companions, whereas lackeys are the equivalent for the villain or the antagonist (Krawczyk and Novak 2006: 109-122). In *GTA V* sidekicks offer precious information about the protagonists in their discussions between each other. In addition, a protagonist can fill a number of different archetypes. However, this creates a paradox, since a character is no longer an archetype if he fills many roles all at once. For example, Michael can be the player controlled avatar, a protagonist or an antagonist (depending on the player's choices), a *mentor* for Franklin and if the player decides to switch between the characters, Michael becomes a *non-player character* controlled by

artificial intelligence. Different character types are important to define if one wants to understand what roles the different characters fulfill in order to get a thorough understanding of their identity construction. One might even argue that a character type significantly contributes to a character's identity – and vice versa. The approach depends on how the character is designed and what goals the character needs to achieve.

The point-of-view of a game changes how information is received in the game and thus affects how the narrative of the story is experienced and how one might relate oneself to the avatar. In other words, the point-of-view alters the way in how the characters identity and personality can be observed and analyzed. *GTA V* played on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, the platforms the game was initially developed for, is presented mainly from a third-person perspective as opposed to a first-person perspective, which is used in many other action-adventure games. However, it is worth mentioning, that in *GTA V* one can toggle between third-person perspective and first-person perspective while driving or flying a vehicle, such as an automobile, a bicycle or a helicopter. Moreover, the game can be played entirely from a first-person perspective, excluding the cutscenes, on PlayStation 4, Xbox One and PC.

The first-person perspective creates a feeling that the player is inside the virtual game space (Krawczyk and Novak 2006: 146), thus creating a sense of urgency, for example, in high-speed pursuits. The third-person perspective offers a cinematic feel, which is not as intense as a first-person perspective but it enables the player to fully see the avatar and according to Krawczyk and Novak (2006: 28-29), this helps the player become more attached to the avatar, in this case to Michael, Franklin and Trevor. Krawczyk and Novak (2006) continue by saying that the appearance of the character in a game has an effect on the story and typically the looks of a character are affected by the character's history, which in turn contributes to the character's story. It is worth noting that the "cycle" explained above also contributes to the characters identity construction and persona. Third-person narrative is also convenient in the preordained cinematic cutscenes, which are used extensively in *GTA V* to carry out the storyline as well as to introduce and develop the different characters, particularly the protagonists, in the game.

2.3 Approaches to game studies

As shown in the introduction, the digital game market value has increased considerably in the last few years. Indeed, Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2012: 7) as well as Rutter and Bryce (2006: 4) state that this has piqued the interest of academics to research digital games. However, Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2012: 7) note that the sheer size of the digital game industry should not be the sole reason to study digital games, even if the scale of the game industry warrants it. The ever developing games should also be studied for their cultural impact and aesthetic elements. Buckingham (2006:2) concurs and underlines the cultural significance of games and their effects noting that qualitative research on digital games is equally important as quantitative research.

Game studies is still a relatively new discipline and there has been debate whether game studies should be considered as a discipline on its own or as multidisciplinary research focused on games, as acknowledged by Buckingham (2006: 11), Mäyrä (2008: 4) as well as Rutter and Bryce (2006: 7) among many others. For instance, Aarseth (2001) and Eskelinen (2001, 2004) argue that game studies should be regarded as a separate discipline focusing on the interactivity and gameplay aspects in games accusing other fields of study such as literary, theater, drama and film studies of colonizing digital game study. Opposing view on game studies have been presented by Fernández-Vara (2014) and Kücklich (2003, 2006) who see games as textual objects, since they entail meaning and create fictional worlds very much akin to novels, claiming that literary theory is well suited for the study of games.

Consequently, Mäyrä (2008: 8-10) states that ludology-narratology debate took place in the beginning of the 21st century. Supporters of ludology based game studies argued that games are first and foremost structure based systems focusing on rules and gameplay, whereas supporters of narratology underlined the potential for storytelling and narratives in games (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2012: 11, Mäyrä 2008:10). However, scholars such as Consalvo (2013: 421), Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2012: 11-12) and Mäyrä (2008: 8) have come to the conclusion that ludology-narratology debate has ended, if it ever happened in the first place, and the field of digital game studies is multidisciplinary by nature.

In fact, Aarseth (2003: 1), who could be considered as one of the supporters of the ludology approach, states that "When faced with the rich and varied world of digital games, it is hard to think of a subject or discipline that *could not* in some way be used to study the field." Moreover, Aarseth (2001) notes that games should be studied within the fields of media studies, sociology and English but stresses that game studies should exist as a separate field of study. Aarseth (2003: 3) refers to his tripartite model in terms of game research perspectives as follows: 1) Gameplay is studied in the fields of sociology, ethnology, psychology and so forth; 2) Game rules are a matter of interest to game design, business, law and computer science; 3) Game worlds are an area of study for aesthetics, history, cultural/media studies and economics. Aarseth (2003: 3) acknowledges that the approach or discipline is in correlation with the prevalent aspect of the game.

In addition to specific fields of study, Aarseth (2003: 3-7) stresses the importance of methodology in analyzing games. Again, he introduces the methods in three parts: 1) interviews (e.g. the game developers); 2) observe others play or read their reviews and 3) play the game. Aarseth (2003) argues that sometimes playing the game is the only way of thoroughly understanding the game in question. However, he also notes that a hermeneutic approach is the most ideal solution, in other words the best way to analyze a game is to gather insights from developers, observe others play and read reviews as well as play the game by oneself. Moreover, he states that in order to be able to produce a thorough game analysis, drawing on others' experiences of the game is not only helpful but crucial (Aarseth 2003: 5-7).

Mäyrä (2008: 6) defines game studies as "a multidisciplinary field of study and learning with games and related phenomena as its subject matter." He also notes that game studies is closely linked to digital games in particular but is not tied to any medium or technology. Mäyrä (2008) and Aarseth (2003) have a similar view on approaches to game studies. Mäyrä (2008: 11) mentions that disciplines such as history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, educational sciences, computer sciences as well as literary and art studies are suitable disciplines and approaches in studying games. However, Mäyrä (2008) regards games as culture above all else, even though he acknowledges that gameplay and intervention by the player is pivotal in games.

Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2012: 10) base their approach on Salen and Zimmerman's (2004) perspective on game analysis but make some additions and alterations to it. Salen and Zimmerman (2003) talk about rules, play and culture, whereas Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2012: 10) introduce five main elements: 1) The game. In this approach one or more games are analyzed in the manner which takes an interest on the game itself, for example player presentation in the game world; 2) The player. This approach favors the player over the game. Player focused studies aim to find out how players use games as a medium or social space; 3) The culture. In this approach, games are studied in broader context, for example, different subcultures of gaming and games can be of interest; 4) Ontology. Studies focusing on a philosophical approach on games are ontological research. Ontological studies aim to find resemblances between games, and thus help one to understand, for instance, the relationship between rules and the player; 5) Metrics. This approach focuses on quantitative research, for example about the relationship between player behavior and game mechanics. Table 1 below sums up the different characteristics, methods, fields of study and interests in digital game studies echoing not only Salen and Zimmerman (2004), but also drawing on Aarseth's (2001, 2003) and Mäyräs's (2008) views on game studies.

Table 1. Main types of digital game analysis (adapted from Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2012: 10)

Type of Analysis	Common Methodologies	Theoretical Inspiration	Common Interest
Game	Textual analysis	Comparative literature, film studies	Design choices, meaning
Player	Observation, interviews, surveys	Sociology, ethnography, cultural studies	Use of games, game communities
Culture	Interviews, textual analysis	Cultural studies, sociology	Games as cultural objects, games as part of the media ecology
Ontology	Philosophical enquiry	Various, e.g. philosophy, cultural history, literary criticism	Logical/philosophical foundations of games and gaming
Metrics	Statistical analysis of logged data	Software development, behavioral psychology	Game design

However, Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2012: 11-12) note that in reality studies do not always follow such a categorized approach. Also, similarly to other scholars such as Aarseth

(2003), Mäyrä (2008) and Malliet (2007), Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2012: 12) encourage game scholars to play games themselves and not just rely on secondary sources. Moreover, scholars seem to have reached an agreement that game studies is a multidisciplinary field, which combines different approaches and methods since digital games form such a multifaceted medium. In other words, the difference in genres, the scale of games, multiplayer or single player, visuals and so forth must be taken into account when analyzing a game since those elements will affect one's approach and consequently one's findings (Consalvo 2013: 422, Malliet 2007). For instance, Fernández-Vara (2014) and Kücklich (2003, 2006) see digital games as text whereas Aarseth (2003) regards them as processes and therefore the basis of the study, and thus research questions will be formed differently. Additionally, Rutter and Bryce (2006: 12) note that one must decide which part of a game one wants to analyze and what questions to answer and then select the approach accordingly.

The present study is focused on game content, and more specifically on the fictional main characters in the game particularly in the cinematic cutscenes. However, the present study's approach cannot be labeled under one specific category. That being said, the game is regarded as a cultural product and also considered as a text, since it is a fictional world. However, its specific digital game qualities, such as interaction and gameplay, are taken into account in the analysis. In terms of Aarseth's (2003) view on approaches, the present study is focused on the game world making use of cultural/media studies. Moreover, reflecting on Egenfeldt-Nielsen's et al. (2012: 10) five elements of game analysis, the present study's type of analysis is 1) the game itself. Consequently, the present study makes use of literary means, particularly characterization, to analyze the fictional characters and meanings attached to them. Moreover, the field of English, more specifically linguistics, is present in the study since language is an important part of one's identity and the protagonists' language is English and therefore their English is analyzed to a degree.

2.4 Games and identity

Identity is one of the key concepts in the study. Therefore this chapter discusses the definition of identity, as well as some relevant studies on identity related to digital games

are introduced. According to online Oxford Dictionaries (2015), identity can be defined as "the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is". However, there are many different, specific and broad identity theories. Identity is a rather problematic term to define, since it varies from one discipline to another and there is also variation within disciplines. Terms such as social identity, personal identity, group identity, cultural identity and sexual identity are all part of one's identity since ethnicity, gender, class, culture and age all affect one's identity construction and expression (Clark 2008).

Identity is a recurring theme in game related articles and studies but there is great variation from which perspective identity in video games is studied. For example, player identity has been and is being researched in an increasing manner as mentioned in the introduction. Quite a few of the studies on digital games and identity focus on gender representation. For instance, Brenick et al. (2007) studied how American adolescents perceived gender stereotypes in video games, coming to the conclusion that males are more prone to find stereotypes acceptable than females. Bryce and Rutter (2002) explored how computer games represent gendered game content, spaces and activities and highlighted that games could be used as a potential medium to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes stressing that an increasing number of female gamers have emerged. Cassell and Jenkins (2000) take a feminist approach to digital games arguing that games objectify women and claim that the games industry uses gendered content as a marketing device. McMenomy (2011) studied identity and representation of female gamers in digital role playing games. She came to the conclusion that gaming offers a place of power to female players, contradicting the popular belief that game environments are dominated by males. Moreover, Pallit (2013) also studied gender identities but she focused on how children interpret gender in digital games and, for example, found out that children preferred less-strongly gendered digital games.

A number of the studies and articles concerning identity in digital games focus on how the player's identity is constructed or altered when subjects play games, for example, how violent games affect the identity of children and teenagers, who are in a delicate age in terms of identity construction. As an example of such a study, Salokoski (2004) refers to several studies on violence in videogames, and based on the meta-analysis she concludes that children and teenagers who are exposed to violent games are susceptible to acquire

pro-violent attitudes, which might have an effect on their identity construction. Hand and Moore (2006) discuss the roles of communities and identity in digital gaming. They propose that digital gaming as a collective activity can create different types of communities such as virtual communities besides more traditional communities. Additionally, digital gaming offers players a space where they can rewrite their social identities in a virtual setting, thus creating a virtual identity of themselves.

Some of the studies on identity in video games revolve around the idea how players construct their avatars' in-game identity. Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) are perhaps the most suitable ground for the aforementioned type of studies on identity construction, for example *GTA V*'s online mode, *GTA Online*. These are games where the player must create a character and adjust the characteristics, appearance, skills and features of his or her player character. For instance, Corneliussen and Rettberg's (2008) study on *World of Warcraft*, which is a MMOG, discusses gender construction in-game but also the player's identification with their in-game avatars. Additionally, Boudreau (2007, 2012) has examined the relationship between the player and her avatar in a MMOG called *EverQuest*. Her findings suggest that the player's real-life identity has an impact on the avatar, if the genre of the game permits it.

The player characters exist in a virtual game world, although in the case of *GTA V* in a very similar world as ours, but fictional nevertheless. This creates problems, since the characters are very life-like and believable but at the same time they are not bound by real life moral restrictions reducing the believability of otherwise quite believable characters. Moreover, it needs to be remembered that in the end the meaningful actions and body language of the characters are scripted in advance in the cutscenes. The protagonists are written, animated and all in all so well developed and produced that it is, indeed, possible to analyze their identity construction in the game.

As mentioned above, there are many different identity theories, which all approach the concept of identity from a different perspective. The focus, for example, can be on personal identity, group identity, cultural identity or sexual identity to name but a few. However, in game studies, one must decide a suitable approach to identity analysis; should one analyze

the player's identity or the avatar's identity or perhaps both? In the present study the focus is to analyze how the player characters identities, in other words the avatars' identities, are constructed and expressed during the story in *GTA V*. Kücklich (2006: 108) argues that interactivity and identification are intertwined; a player can identify with the protagonist or avatar because they interact with the game world through him or her, and respectively the game world interacts with the player through the protagonist or avatar. Consequently, there is a relative balance between the player's control over the game/character and the game's/character's control over the player.

Boudreau (2012) approaches identification in a similar manner as Kücklich (2006) but uses the term "hybrid-identity" in her doctoral thesis. The basic idea of hybrid-identity is that there is a combination of identities or an intermediate form of identity between the player and the player character or avatar. Here is how Boudreau (2012: 84) defines it:

> Defined at its most basic level, hybrid-identity is an identity between the played avatar (or player-character) and the player but that does not originate from or reside in either. It exists in a form that is sometimes (but not always) acknowledged by the player. When recognized by the player, it is often a sense that there is something more between themselves and the player-character than its role as a vehicle for their gameplay choices and more than the sum of its affordances designed into the game.

The concept of hybrid identity is helpful in the present study, at least to a certain degree, since even though the avatars dialogue, body language and actions are scripted in the cutscenes, the player can control their avatar's actions outside the cutscenes. In addition, the player can alter the appearance of the avatar in terms of hairstyles, beard styles, tattoos and apparel. The player has a choice in what weapons to use, which car to drive and which radio station to listen to. Moreover, the player can choose a few times which mission shall be carried out during the story and in some occasions the player has to decide what kind of approach will be applied in some specific missions, for example the player has to choose between a stealthy approach or a loud approach in some heists. These choices are superficial story wise but the choices contribute to the overall experience of the game and character, and to some degree how the avatars identity is expressed. Nonetheless, nearing the end of the story, the player has to decide between three different endings a, b and c, which will have a significant impact on the plot of the story, and in this case perhaps most importantly how the player perceives the protagonists. However, it must be remembered that the contextual information received in the cutscenes during the story will probably

affect what the player will choose and, moreover, after having made the decision the view on the protagonists has been altered even more.

However, the main focus of the study is on how the protagonists' virtual identities are constructed and expressed in the world of Los Santos and particularly in the scripted cutscenes, where the player has no control over the characters. However, it is worth noting that virtual identities in this context mean the characters' identities in-game – not the player's rewrite of his or her social identity in a virtual setting. Boudreau (2012) acknowledges that without the social aspect, as in MMOGs, hybrid-identity might be a less significant factor in single-player games such as *GTA V*. Thus, the focus cannot be solely on the hybrid-identity theory, since the primary focus is on avatar/avatar relationships and more heavily on coded personality of the semi-scripted protagonists. The relationships between avatars are constructed only within the game's environment (Boudreau 2012: 97). In other words, one must acknowledge that hybrid-identity plays a role when analyzing the data, i.e. how the protagonists' identities are constructed, but the essence of the study is on the analysis of protagonists' identities within the game environment without major input from the player.

Hand and Moore (2006: 174) also explore the concept of identity in digital games. Even though their approach is on the player, and not the game or avatar itself, their definition of identity is adaptable to virtual characters as well. They state that identities are molded by social structures and norms such as social class, gender and ethnicity. However, people also participate in constructing their own identities. The way people consume goods and services, for example vehicles and apparel, is a way of constructing one's identity. Therefore, identity can be seen as ascribed and reflexive. Ascribed identity refers to the socio-economic, national, ethic and gendered aspects, in other words how people see one another and themselves. In turn, the reflexive aspect of identity is that a person or character can intentionally influence their ascribed identity and sense of self (Hand and Moore 2006: 174). The above conceptualization of identity by Hand and Moore (2006) forms the basis of how identity is seen in the present study; identity is seen as ascribed and reflexive. Ascribed aspects of identity can be found in the group membership and the social role category, e.g. gender, ethnicity and kinship. Appearance, to an extent, and personal category, e.g.

preferences and goals, all contribute to reflexive identity construction. These three social categories as well as appearance are features of characterization, which is discussed in some detail in the next chapter.

3 CHARACTERIZATION

In this chapter the process of characterization and the various literary means used in characterization are presented and discussed. Characterization could be described as a literary device used to analyze and describe, and in some cases, to create a person in a story. However, the present study will focus on the analysis process of a character (i.e. the output), not the creation process (i.e. the input). Characterization process varies depending on the theorist but the present study applies Culpeper's (2001) multi-disciplinary approach for analyzing a digital game. Culpeper (2001:1) discusses characterization extensively, and the approaches he discusses combine theories from fields such as social and cognitive psychology, linguistics and stylistics. He introduces a number of specific approaches to characterization such as the humanizing approach, the de-humanizing approach, the social constructivist approach or different linguistic approaches. However, the present study does not follow a specific approach directly; it uses a mixed approach which is specifically tailored for the present study. Moreover, Culpeper himself combines different theories and thus uses a combination of approaches refined by linguistic theories in his characterization process. That being said, due to the scope of the present study, the use of different theories and approaches to the same extent as Culpeper, is not possible.

Constructs such as schema, the three social categories, basics of pragmatics as well as linguistic features and appearance are spelled out by Culpeper (2001). He discusses theories regarding fictional characters, which are represented in various texts, mostly plays, but also movies and newspaper excerpts as well as soap operas in television. Even though Culpeper is an expert on Shakespeare and plays in general, he states that plays and movies are not very far apart, only the medium is different but the dynamics of dialogue are similar (Culpeper 2001: 255). Due to the movie-like nature of the cutscenes in *GTA V*, the present study applies the approach presented by Culpeper to analyzing characters in digital games and in this case specifically to character centered *Grand Theft Auto V*. In addition, as

mentioned in chapter 1.1, the present study explores the possibilities of applying a literary based theoretical framework to analyzing virtual characters in digital worlds.

The chapter first explains the differences between implicit and explicit characterization. Then the concepts of schema and impression formation are briefly introduced. Subsequently, the three social categories, which are prominent in the analysis, are presented. Moreover, the definitions of flat and round characters are provided. The chapter will be concluded by discussing visual, linguistic and paralinguistic features in characterization in their respective orders.

3.1 Implicit and explicit characterization

There are two types of characterization: explicit or direct and implicit or indirect characterization. Explicit characterization means that another character or the narrator directly tells the audience, in this case the player, about the character or alternatively the protagonist can tell about him- or herself in soliloquies and monologues. Implicit characterization means that the audience makes inferences about a character, for example by observing his or her communication, appearance, values, idiolect and interaction with other characters to form a heuristic image of the character in question. (Literary Devices 2015).

The present study consists of both implicit and explicit characterization, since they supplement each other quite well. However, implicit characterization is used more often, since while analyzing the data one constantly observes the protagonists, whereas explicit characterization occurs only when the developers feel the need to spell out information about a specific character. However, it is worth noting that explicit characterization does happen in *GTA V*. The characters are built in a manner that makes the protagonists reveal information about themselves in monologues, discussions or soliloquies. One can gain the most explicit information from Trevor, since he has soliloquies or random ramblings about himself the most often. Michael uses monologues in discussions with his therapist, where he explicitly reveals his thoughts and information about his past, while self-reflecting with the help of his therapist. Franklin discusses his past with his sidekick Lamar, who reveals

information about him during these talks. Additionally, the three protagonists together share thoughts during missions and reveal their past to each other especially during the transitions in the missions. One can form a heuristic picture of each protagonist by using explicit and implicit characterization throughout the game, i.e. while analyzing the data.

3.2 Schema and impression formation

A schema is a well-organized structure of concepts, usually about some social entity such as a person, group, role, or event (Michener, DeLamater and Myers 2004:107). Basically schemas are formed through experience and activated through cues; in other words relevant information activates different schemata. However, culture and personal experiences play a role in schemata formation, thus different individuals potentially have different schemata. Moreover, people who share the same cultural background typically view characters similarly, but some impressions may vary, for example due to different gender schemata (Culpeper 2001: 64-68, 110). Different schemata are constantly used, for example, in evaluation, role playing, identification and prediction. Michener et al. (2004:107) define these schemata in the following manner:

> **Evaluation**. When we evaluate individuals occupying a certain role (e.g., doctor, accountant, actor, artist), we compare their behavior to our culturally derived role schema for that role.
> **Role playing**. In assuming a certain role, the role schema often becomes our scripts as to how to behave.
> **Identification**. We often identify and categorize individuals by the role they assume. We use these role schema to help us place individuals into a certain category by matching their observed behavior with our role schema.
> **Prediction.** Once an individual is placed into a category (role) we tend to assume he or she will behave in accordance with the role schema and use this as basis to predict future behavior of this person.

Impression formation is multi-layered implicit process but Culpeper (2001: 83) argues that people tend to categorize other people into specific groups. He states that people perceive other people as members of different social groups rather than as individuals. However, he also notes that a person can form an impression of a group based on character alone. Moreover, Culpeper (2001: 109-110) states that knowledge, i.e. schemas, about real-life people is important in analyzing characters, however, he stresses that it is not the only knowledge used in analyzing fictional characters. Dramatic role knowledge is also important in categorizing and ultimately analyzing characters in plays and other fictional

texts (Culpeper 2001: 87-88). He also explains that dramatic role knowledge is not isolated from the information, which is used in perceiving real people. Dramatic role knowledge is often genre specific, thus different genres activate different genre schemata resulting in specific dramatic role knowledge activation, which in turn might affect how the characters are perceived (Culpeper 2001: 87).

As an example, *Grand Theft Auto V* is regarded as an action-adventure game and thus this information might influence how the protagonists are perceived. Culpeper (2001: 87) gives an example of dramatic role knowledge based on a Western. According to him, if a character performs good deeds, one might presume that he or she is a "hero". Based on dramatic role knowledge the audience knows that the hero character is probably not going to get killed. Additionally, other types of inferences can be made; for example, the hero is likely to be male, a lover and brave. Consequently, the perceiver is most likely going to infer the characters' different social categories.

3.3 The three social categories

Culpeper (2001) introduces three main groups of social categories: group membership categories, social role categories and personal categories. Group membership categories include knowledge about different social groups. These groups are relatively easy to perceive and include matters such as: sex, race, class, age, nationality, religion and so forth (Culpeper 2001: 76). Social role categories include occupational roles (e.g. doctor, shop assistant), relational roles (e.g. colleagues, friends, partners, lovers) and kinship roles (e.g. parents). Consequently social role categories offer information about people's social functions. Many of the social roles can overlap each other and one can change from one role to another with relative ease or even create new ones. Personal categories include information about people's preference and interests, habits, traits and goals (Culpeper 2001: 75-76). Culpeper gives examples such as liking Chinese food (preference), being late for appointments (habit), being brave (trait) and seducing somebody (goal). In addition, Van Dijk (1987: 192-193) explains that appearance as well as group membership and social role categories such as gender, age, class, occupation etc. which organize knowledge about people may also organize attitudes towards people belonging in those particular categories.

3.4 Flat/round distinction in characterization

The characterization process also includes the concept of flat/round distinction. Even though the division to flat or round characters was first used for analyzing characters in written texts such as novels, it is also a viable tool in analyzing the protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V*, since the scripts of the protagonists are thorough and intricate enough.

Forster (1927: 6, 48) was the first to introduce the flat/round distinction. He defines flat characters as caricatures or types, which are constructed around a single idea or quality and when more factors come into play, the characters curve towards the round. Round characters are capable of being convincingly surprising characters, whereas flat characters never surprise the audience. Unconvincing characters are flat pretending to be round (Forster 1927: 55). Moreover, Culpeper (2001: 93-94) lists three main elements of the flat/round distinction expanding on Forster's (1927) work on the flat/round distinction and the three dimensions are as follows:

> 1) Whether the character is simple or complex
> 2) Whether the character is static or undergoes change
> 3) Whether the character 'surprises' the reader or not

Simple characters' traits and features can be organized under one category, in other words the number of different attributes is irrelevant in determining whether the character is simple or complex; what matters is the type of relation the attributes have to each other. Complex characters have more features and traits, which do not bear resemblance to each other and can be even contradictory forcing the reader/player to assess the character as an individual, who cannot be easily categorized as opposed to a simple character. Moreover, categorized characters by definition remain static because their attributes can be organized into one category only but personalized, complex characters with varying traits and features by definition imply change (Culpeper 2001: 95). As an example, a ruthless, vile and mean person who stays the same throughout the story can be defined as a simple and static character but if the character's defining traits and attributes change, for example due to changing circumstances, the character is no longer static. However, it is worth mentioning that circumstances may trigger change within a character but changing circumstances per se

do not necessarily mean that a character undergoes change (Baker 2000). Regarding the surprise dimension of a character, a surprising character does not fit an existing schema, whereas a character lacking the surprise dimension fits a schema (Culpeper 2001: 95).

Concerning characterization and thus the present study's research questions, the flat/round distinction relates to the aforementioned schema formation process. According to Culpeper (2001: 95), typically flat characters are schema reinforcing and round characters are schema refreshing. In other words, player's/reader's schemas play a pivotal role in the process of determining whether a character is flat or round. Although the flat/round distinction is subjective, it is still a justified and useful tool in the characterization process.

3.5 Visual features

Culpeper lists a number of other linguistic and cognitive means needed in the process of characterizing fictional characters. For example, appearance is mentioned as a matter which should be taken into consideration. This includes visual features, which can be dynamic such as facial expression and posture or static such as sex, body type and attractiveness (Culpeper 2001: 221). In addition, Solarski (2012: 31) points out that especially in video games, character details lose importance over long distances, thus characteristic shapes and proportions which make the silhouette of a character, are more import in identification. As an example, he describes Nico Bellic's – the protagonist in *Grand Theft Auto IV* – characteristic silhouette consisting of his hairstyle and clothes typical for him.

Appearance cues are important, salient cues in the process of forming impressions on people. According to Culpeper (2001: 221-222) there are two types of visual features: kinesic features and appearance features. Kinesic features relate to body motion and also include spatial distance between characters, which roughly correlates to social distance; intimates tend to be closer to each other while strangers are further apart. Moreover, spatial distance may reveal information about power relations, since equals are closer to each other but subordinates usually maintain a distance. Kinesic features also include facial expressions. When facial muscles are relaxed, there is no information to be gained because the face is neutral. However, different facial expressions reveal information about a person

or a character. If facial expressions are analyzed, one can identify different emotions including sadness, anger, happiness and surprise. Even though emotions often change rather rapidly, mindsets vary and thus some people or characters can be characteristically happy, sad, angry and so forth. In addition to spatial distance and facial expressions, Culpeper (2001: 222) adds that social and physical power can be perceived from gait; e.g. sluggish gait reflects inferiority.

Culpeper (2001: 224) argues that people associate positive characteristics to physically attractive people and respectively negative characteristics to unattractive people. Therefore appearance features such as body sizes, facial features as well as hairstyles and stature all convey information about the character. However, although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, there are basically some universally acknowledged features which are considered as attractive or unattractive. One can claim that disproportional features, such as round or long face, are considered unattractive and thus negative, whereas symmetrical features are viewed as positive.

In addition to the aforementioned somewhat static attributes, clothing also plays an important role in characterization. Clothing is not a kinesic nor an appearance feature per se but nonetheless an important visual cue, which contributes to the overall appearance of a character. The way one dresses is influenced by factors such as social status, age, occupation and income and consequently is an implication of one's social group and thus can trigger schematic expectations about the character. Moreover, according to Culpeper (2001: 225) specific items might have strong connotations, for example a walking stick implies old age. Overall appearance is a major part in characterization and serves to reveal information about one's social role category as well as group membership category.

3.6 Linguistic cues in characterization

Language is quintessential part of personality and thus a person's identity. The style of speech may reveal a great deal of a person, for example: socioeconomic background, sociability and intellect among others (Culpeper 2001: 13, 23). Therefore, language analysis is vital in comprehensive characterization. Linguistic tools used in characterization

include the analysis of idiolects, dialects, accents and speech-acts, which includes impoliteness and politeness (Culpeper 2001). These all are viable means in analyzing the protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V*, since during the story the protagonists frequently engage in conversational action. Culpeper (2001: 144-146) explains that all actions performed by a character are acts of communication between the scriptwriter and the audience, or in this case the player, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that any character behavior has additional relevance. The behavior and dialog between the characters are meant to be overseen and overheard by the audience/player. Since the conversations between the protagonists and other non-player characters reveal a great deal of information about the protagonists, linguistic cues must be under close scrutiny. The following paragraph and subchapters define the core elements of the different linguistic tools, starting from idiolects, dialects and accents and the moving into pragmatics, speech-acts, politeness as well as impoliteness and concluding with face-threatening acts.

'Idiolect' is the sum of all the vocal characteristics of an individual person, "individual linguistic thumbprint" and 'dialect' is a "linguistic thumbprint" of a specific speech community or a group of people (Culpeper 2001: 166). Dialect and 'accent' are not to be used interchangeably; a dialect is a variety on language consisting of pronunciation, grammar and lexis, whereas accent refers to pronunciation only (ibid.). In terms of accent, Culpeper (2001: 206) concludes, based on various studies, that regional accents are usually related to "personal integrity and social attractiveness" and standard accents are typically connoted to self-confidence and industriousness.

3.6.1 Pragmatics and speech-acts

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which examines how speakers use and understand language in interaction, including the interpretation of speakers' intentions in a particular context. Consequently, the emphasis in pragmatics is in the user itself but also the context in which the language users communicate. (Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan 2010: 3-5). Moreover, according to Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2010) speech acts are the most relevant branch of pragmatics. The speech act theory was introduced by Austin (1962) who coined the idea that language is used to do things, not just to say things. Thus, language is more than just statements, in fact, people perform actions using language; for example

priest announcing husband and wife in the marriage ceremony, the process of coronation or betting something (Austin 1962: 5-7). Moreover, he suggested that utterances consist of three types of acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts are basically the actual words uttered, referring to the literal surface structure of the utterance (Austin 1962: 94-95). Illocutionary acts refer to the intentions or real meanings behind the words, in other words what is done *in saying* words (Austin 1962: 98-99). Perlocutionary acts refer to the outcome, the actual consequences of the words uttered to the audience, that is, what is done *by saying* (Austin 1962: 101-102)*.*

In addition, according to Austin, certain felicity conditions must be met, if the speech act is to be successful. Basically necessary conditions, such as proper circumstances and accepted procedures must be in place. Unless the sufficient conditions are met, infelicities occur (Austin 1962: 14-16). For instance specific people need to be in a specific environment in order to consecrate a Christian marriage, i.e. a husband and wife, the priest and a church. Moreover, the balance of power between the participants and the environment may affect what speech acts are used. In addition, speech acts may be determined by the social roles, personality and objectives a person has. For example, a parent usually issues many orders to one's child but a bossy personality might issue frequent commands also (Culpeper 2001:235-236). Culpeper adds that the analysis of speech acts reveals a great deal about how a person manages social context, what their goals are and how they act in interpersonal relationships. However, a detailed analysis of different speech acts used by the protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V* is well beyond the scope of the present study. Consequently, general observations about the protagonists' speech acts are represented but with the emphasis on the concepts of politeness and impoliteness, since they are closely related to speech acts and are important in characterization.

3.6.2 (Im)politeness and face-threatening acts in characterization

Culpeper (2001: 238) regards politeness as "the strategic manipulation of verbal and non-verbal behaviour in the pursuit of social harmony" and considers it important in the characterization process. Culpeper (2011: 57) also states that there are politeness cultures, where a group of people share politeness attitudes, thus forming a politeness ideology.

Politeness effects are achieved by using the appropriate politeness strategies in a particular context. In essence politeness is about maintaining functional and amicable social relations by catering to each other's face needs. A concrete example of such an act could be a situation where two people meet and greet each other; their face need of being acknowledged is accomplished.

The concept of face is essential when discussing linguistic politeness, which in turn is important in characterization. Brown and Levinson (1987) divide the concept of face, the public self-image, into two parts: positive face and negative face. The concept of positive face is that every member hopes that his or her wants are desirable by at least some other members, whereas the concept of negative face is that members want their actions to be unimpeded by others (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62). Culpeper (2001: 239) gives clarifying examples on the concepts of positive and negative face; positive face entails the idea that people want their existence approved (e.g. receive greetings), they want admiration (e.g. receive compliments) and they want approval on their opinions. Negative face needs include the will to express one's opinions and freedom to go and to do what one desires. However, Culpeper (2001: 238) criticizes Brown and Levinson's theory by stressing that interactions do not take place in a vacuum; the manifestation of positive and negative face is context sensitive. In other words, cultures, individuals, different situations and so forth have an impact on how positive and negative face are perceived and consequently what is considered a face-threatening act.

Insults, criticisms, disagreements, orders or even giving advice can potentially damage one's face, thus they are considered as face-threatening acts. Any action, which threatens one's face in social interaction between the speaker and the hearer, is a face-threatening act. However, enhancing face, for example complimenting is possible, as well as deliberate attacks on face such as name calling, insults and sarcasm (Culpeper 2001: 239). Face-threatening acts vary in severity and depend on three factors: 1) the social distance between the speaker and the hearer; 2) the relative power of the speaker and hearer and 3) the absolute ranking of imposition in a specific culture (Brown and Levinson 1987: 74-78). To put theory into context, asking a new acquaintance for a glass of water is more face-threatening than asking a longtime friend (the distance variable); asking one's professor for

a glass of water is more face-threatening than asking a fellow student (the power variable); and asking for a glass of Dom Pérignon champagne is more face-threatening than asking for a glass of water (the ranking variable).

Face-threatening acts may happen unintentionally but as mentioned above, one can use language to attack face deliberately in order to strengthen face threat, which is called impoliteness. Culpeper (2001: 246) stresses that the most important difference between politeness and impoliteness is a matter of intention; if the speaker's intention is to support the hearer's face it is considered as politeness but if the speaker intentionally attacks the hearer's face it is considered as impoliteness. However, mock impoliteness is also a possibility, which is in fact used to support solidarity. Once again, it is a matter of context or politeness culture, whether mock impoliteness or impoliteness is in question. Culpeper (2001: 247, 261) states that aggression has been a source of entertainment for thousands of years and modern day drama continues to include a great deal of verbal conflict. Moreover, Culpeper claims that politeness and impoliteness are central elements in characterization and argues that impolite behavior in fact furthers the development of the characters as well as the plot.

Regarding the present study, the plot as well as character development in *GTA V* revolves very much around impoliteness, aggression and verbal conflict. One could argue that the main story really starts after Michael destroys the house of an infamous gangster in a fit of rage after having a heated discussion with his wife. This act leads Michael back to the life of crime because he has to repay the damages. Eventually Trevor finds Michael after a heist, which was performed to recompense the demolished house, which in turn leads to heated discussions between Michael and Trevor because Trevor thought Michael was dead. After this the two are practically in a state of verbal conflict throughout the story while Franklin acts as a negotiator but still has his own debates with his sidekick Lamar. The dialogue between the characters is impolite at best but, indeed, furthers the development of the characters as can be seen later in the analysis. The protagonists in *GTA V* barely maintain functional and amicable social relations, since their politeness culture is quite distorted and includes a great deal of banter, in the form of mock impoliteness, which can quickly turn into intentional face threats meant to offend the character in question.

3.7 Paralinguistic cues in characterization

The way one speaks can tell a great deal about a person and specifically about one's group memberships, for instance sex and age, but it can also reveal information about the character's personality. According to Culpeper (2001: 215), a number of studies indicate that non-content cues are more important in social evaluation situations than the content of speech. In other words, the way of speech is more important in revealing information about the person/character than what the person/character says. Brown (1990: 112) defines paralinguistic features as "phonetic features of speech which do not form an intrinsic part of the phonological contrast which make up the verbal message."

Slow speech indicates seriousness, ponderousness and pretentiousness whereas fluent faster speech suggests extroversion, competence and likeability. Culpeper points out that hesitation and non-fluency features convey a meaning in plays, which is also true in games, since the context is different in the sense that the scriptwriter has included hesitation and other non-fluency features on purpose, thus such features have a meaningful function (Culpeper 2001: 216).

Pitch range is a good indicator of sex; males usually have a lower pitch range than women. Men whose pitch range is close to women's pitch range can be considered as weak, effeminate or emotionally instable. Culpeper (2001: 217-218) states that there is lack of research on pitch range but suspects that men with lower pitch range are associated with features such as responsibility, sadness or sexiness. Moreover, variation in pitch range may also reveal information about a character. A character with a varied pitch may be an indicator of extroversion and dynamism (Scherer 1979: 187 cited in Culpeper 2001: 218), whereas a low variation could be associated with masculinity, coldness and withdrawal (Addington 1968: 502 cited in Culpeper 2001: 219).

Loudness of one's voice suggests strong feelings and conversely lower volume suggests calmness or humility. The quality of one's voice indicates a person's age. A thin, weak voice indicates old age, whereas a strong breathy voice indicates youthfulness. Nasal voice

is associated with many different undesirable characteristics (Addington 1986 cited in Culpeper 2001: 219).

4 METHODOLOGY

The present thesis is a qualitative study based on empirical data, i.e. *Grand Theft Auto V* gameplay footage on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. As mentioned in chapter 1.2, the data consists of the movie made of cutscenes and YouTube video-footage. The cutscene movie of *Grand Theft Auto V* by NRMgamingHD (n.d.) and the additional gameplay clips by MKIceAndFire (n.d.) provide an abundant amount of data for the scope of this study, and thus there is enough data to answer the research questions.

As noted in chapter 2.3, quite a few game scholars (Aarseth 2003, Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2012, Malliet 2007, Mäyrä 2008) usher game researchers to play games themselves. Also Aarseth (2003) suggests that researchers should watch others play the game in question as well as interview the developers. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that I have played *Grand Theft Auto V* for roughly 100 hours; I have read countless reviews on the game as well as included a developer's description of each protagonist in the analysis chapter in order to receive a thorough understanding of *GTA V* and its characters. Moreover, I have watched others play *GTA V* in person as well as online, besides watching the cutscenes of the game on YouTube. However, cutscenes were chosen as the primary data because they form a solid, reliable entity, which can be accessed by anyone. In order to analyze the data and particularly the language of the protagonists, the cutscenes and gameplay footage were transcribed and the transcription process, i.e. which dialogues were transcribed, for what reason and how accurately, are explained in the next subchapter (4.1). The method of analysis is more closely described in 4.2.

4.1 The transcription process

As stated before, *Grand theft Auto V* is a large game by many standards. According to Dan Houser, who is the co-founder and Vice President of Creativity for Rockstar Games as well as *GTA V*'s writer, the single player part of the game is roughly 100 hours long (Hill 2013).

For this reason, the focus here is on the cutscenes. Another reason is, as stated above, that the story cutscenes reveal much of the characters' personalities and how they act in different situations. Therefore, all the dialogue from the *GTA V* cutscene movie has been transcribed for the purpose of the study. However, the movie does not include transitions between different places during missions and during those transitions the protagonists tend to indulge in dialogue. While these dialogues mostly revolve around how to execute the mission at hand, the protagonists also tell a great deal about their personal history and share their worldviews on different matters. The discussions are thus crucial as they provide additional information about the protagonists and consequently help answer the research questions of the study. Out of the 23 hours of gameplay, however, only those interactions that provide additional, yet important information not mentioned in the story cutscenes, have been transcribed. These include information about a protagonist's group membership category (e.g. social group), social role category (e.g. occupational role, relational role, kinship role), personal category (e.g. preference, habit, trait) or some defining moment in their past.

All the transcriptions are quite general and rough since the research questions focus on the characters' personality and identity, not so much on phonetic nuances. In *GTA V* one can select to show or hide in-game subtitles from the settings menu. The cutscene movie, which forms the majority of the data, has subtitles enabled and also the additional gameplay clips have them enabled. However, the in-game subtitles do not cover ambient sounds effects or accent variation etc. fully. To clarify, for example African American Vernacular English/slang is only partly transcribed into the subtitles. As an example, in the beginning of the mission "The Long Strech" Lamar says "Bidness, nigga. Bidness" but in the subtitles it reads as "Business, nigga. Business." Even though phonetic subtleties are not the focus of the study, accents are meaningful data in terms of character identity, therefore accents and slang need to be acknowledged. For this reason and for the sake of clarity, the cutscenes have been transcribed to include such details as the different forms of African American Vernacular. The subtitles offer a base on which the transcriptions have been built after listening to the interactions in order to fully capture the speech in the manner it is spoken out. A sample of such a transcription of the mission "Repossession" is provided in APPENDIX 2.

4.2 Method of analysis

Characterization, as introduced by Culpeper, was used extensively in the analysis of the data in the present study. Since the process of characterization is always more or less subjective, the combination of multi-disciplinary approaches used in the study have been selected carefully in order to be able to form a heuristic picture of the protagonists in *GTA V*. The study does not focus on specific identity construction such as gender or cultural identity, on the contrary, it aims to draw a cross-section of the main characters' identities in the game taking into account both ascribed and reflexive identity construction as presented in chapter 2.4. Moreover, language has not been the sole focus of the study, since many non-linguistic cues contribute significantly to identity construction. However, since the aim was to form a general picture of the protagonists, all peculiarities could not be taken into account.

 In order to analyze the data and thus answer the identity focused research questions, an appropriate method of analysis was selected. Due to the character centered nature of the study, characterization was chosen as the main method of analysis. However, characterization is not a single entity, on the contrary, it is an umbrella term which includes a set of different theories and methods used in analyzing characters. Thus approaches specifically suitable for a digital game analysis where chosen. AAA titles, which *GTA V* is, are games with the biggest budgets, detailed graphics, realistic animations, professional voice acting and expansive storylines with multiple characters involved (Fernández-Vara 2014: 246). Therefore the approaches in characterization focusing on visuality, sound, language and social roles were selected. Visual elements analyzed include different aspects of appearance, kinesic features and clothing. Visual elements were analyzed exclusively implicitly by observing the protagonists' appearance, clothing and movement in the cutscenes.

The cutscenes include a great deal of spoken dialogue and thus sound and different aspects of language were analyzed implicitly. Language analysis focused on the protagonists' speech and pragmatics; more specifically on accents, and the use of politeness and

impoliteness strategies. In addition to linguistic features, paralinguistic features, such as voice quality and loudness, were included in the analysis. Additionally, music is an important element in *GTA V*, since it sets the mood and helps build the characters' identity. However, music is not analyzed extensively, since it is included in the personal category in terms of the protagonists' preferences. In other words, the favorite radio stations and genre of music listened by the protagonists are acknowledged but more in depth analysis of the lyrics or instruments is disregarded.

GTA V features a host of characters. Thus, many quirky personalities are introduced during the story. As a matter of fact, the story forms around these personalities and their interpersonal relations. Therefore, the protagonists' social relations and personalities were analyzed. Culpeper's (2001:75-76) approach to characterization includes three different social categories: group membership category (e.g. sex, age, nationality etc.), personal category (e.g. traits, habits, goals etc.) and social role category (e.g. occupational roles, relational roles, kinship roles etc.). Cutscenes and gameplay during missions were analyzed in order to categorize the protagonists in their respective social roles. In other words, some of the information was observed from the data by observing them implicitly and making inferences about them, whereas some information was gathered explicitly by listening to the protagonists talk and thus revealing meaningful information in the process. As an example, one can deduce the sex of the protagonists by just looking at them but one has to listen as Trevor explicitly tells the other protagonists of his military past (occupational role).

It is worth noting that not every aspect of the protagonists' personality, social roles, group memberships or other details are possible to analyze due to the scope of the thesis. In *GTA V* there are 78 missions (some are mutually exclusive and some are optional) plus three different ending missions, of which the player has to complete 69 missions in order to finish the story. Additionally, there are 42 hobbies and past times missions, 20 strangers and freak missions, 14 random events and 16 miscellaneous missions. Also, the protagonists can spend time together in the free roam mode and, for example, go to the movies or visit a bar. Furthermore, *GTA Online*, which is the multiplayer mode of the game, features Trevor as one of the employers of one's online avatar. During these

aforementioned missions and events, potential information is given about the protagonists of *GTA V*. Therefore, some of the information about the protagonists is undoubtedly not acquired, since the focus is on the main story. In the following chapter, the analysis of the present study's data is presented in more detail, using the various means provided by characterization.

5 ANALYSIS

In this chapter the protagonists are analyzed by using various characterization approaches introduced by Culpeper. The chapter includes analysis on all three different social categories as in characterization as well as s discussion of visual cues. In addition, it also features analysis on the language the protagonists use in-game. First each protagonists' group memberships, e.g. sex, age, nationality, is listed to give a basic outline of the characters (chapter 5.1). After group memberships, visual features are explored (chapter 5.2). Appearance is a significant factor when forming impressions on characters and thus needs to be explained in detail. Thirdly, the characters' personalities and personal categories are discussed (chapter 5.3) in relation what the protagonists' key characteristics are. Following personalities and personal categories, the main characters' social role categories e.g. interpersonal relations with other in-game characters are explored (chapter 5.4). The chapter concludes with a discussion on the protagonist's language (chapter 5.5). Additionally, their respective voice actors are also introduced, since their contribution to the protagonists' language and overall feel is significant.

5.1 Group membership category

The protagonists are part of many different groups or communities in the game. Some group memberships are naturally more explicitly shown or mentioned (i.e. ethnicity, sex) than others (e.g. nationality, specific age) but the most important defying memberships that the protagonists exhibit are presented below. These include age, ethnicity, sex, nationality and social class among other protagonist-specific groups. Group memberships are mainly observed implicitly from the cutscenes but also explicitly from the dialogues during missions.

5.1.1 Michael's group memberships

Middle-aged, Caucasian, male and U.S citizen – these are probably the most salient, easy to recognize group memberships of Michael De Santa. His actual birthdate is not explicitly mentioned, yet throughout the game various clues about his age can be found. *Grand theft Auto V* was released on the 17th of September 2013 and at that time Michael is considered to be 45 or 48 years old – depending on the source. During the game Michael's partner in crime Trevor Philips, Lester Crest (a supporting character in the game and the mastermind behind the heists in the story) and Jimmy De Santa, his son, all state that Michael is 45 years old but Michael's tombstone (in the plot Michael's death was faked) states that he was born in 1965, which means that he would be 48 in 2013. However, since Michael lives under witness protection with a false identity, it is plausible that Michael De Santa is 45 years old but Michael Townley is 48 years old, meaning that Michael's real age is 48 years. Be as it may, he is in his mid-forties, as stated in an interview of Dan Houser (Simmons, Miller and Lynch 2013).

Michael lives in Rockford Hills, which is the equivalent neighborhood of real-world Beverly Hills. Rockford Hills is a high-class area, where rich people live and do business. Based on this, Michael's class is upper class. However, he lacks certain sophistication and comes from a working/lower class background; consequently Michael's class categorization is not as straightforward as it initially seems but he could be described as a social climber, since he has acquired wealth and moved into a better neighborhood. Michael is the only protagonist, who can join a religion/cult called the Epsilon program and after completing eight Epsilon program missions, he can become a full member, i.e. an epsilonist. The Epsilon missions are organized into a story arc of its own outside the main storyline missions. The epsilonists follow certain paradigms, such as: the world is 157 years old, dinosaurs are a lie that people believe because they are weak, we all come from the same tree, aliens exist and are present on earth, and so forth. However, Michael can become a member but he can also choose to destroy the cult. It is up to the player to decide, if he or she wants Michael to be a cult member or the nemesis of the Epsilon program. It is susceptible that Epsilon satirizes scientology, since they have a great deal in common. The

Epsilon program's in-game webpages have the same light blue color theme as the official scientology webpage, similar fundamental truths are presented and the style in general bears resemblance to scientology. For instance, real world actors such as Tom Cruise and John Travolta are known supporters of scientology and also Epsilon has in-game celebrities e.g. actors listed as members. Additionally, the largest church of Scientology is located in Hollywood and incidentally Michael lives and operates in Vinewood, in other words the equivalent of Hollywood (Scientology n.d.)

5.1.2 Franklin's group memberships

Franklin is an African-American male. According to Dan Houser (Simmons et al. 2013) Franklin is in his mid-twenties but his exact age is also susceptible for speculation. A loading screen of Franklin in the game shows him posing next to a black convertible with the plate reading "27MCH87X". This could stand for 27th of March 1987, which would make Franklin 26 years old in 2013, the year *GTA V* was initially released. However, in-game Franklin personal vehicle's plate is "FC1988", which could mean "Franklin Clinton born in 1988" meaning he would be 25 in 2013.

In the beginning of the events in *GTA V* Franklin lives with his aunt in Strawberry, an area consisting of industrial areas and lower class dwellings. Based on this, Franklin belongs to the lower class. However, as the story unfolds, Franklin will eventually move to a house located in Vinewood Hills, where only celebrities and the super-rich live, thus in the end Franklin has improved his socioeconomic status – at least on the outside in terms of wealth and a fancier neighborhood. However, one can only but wonder, if an ex-gangbanger who has lived his entire life in a poor gang afflicted neighborhood can change on the inside.

5.1.3 Trevor's group memberships

Similar to Michael, Trevor is a middle-aged Caucasian male but unlike Michael, he is of Canadian descent. As with the two other protagonists, Trevor's specific age is also unknown. He has been involved in robberies in the past with Michael and based on his appearance, he looks to be in his forties. In addition, Game Informer (2012), which is an American digital game website and magazine, states that Trevor is in his early forties.

Trevor lives in his trailer in the poor town of Sandy Shores in Blaine County, which locates outside of Los Santos. Thus, Trevor belongs to the lower class. However, Trevor takes over a strip club later in the story and resides in the back quarters of the club when he is not spending time at his trailer. In addition, similarly to the other protagonists, Trevor acquires massive amounts of money from the heists they perform but his social class is debatable. In terms of wealth he could be regarded as upper class but he lacks the social prestige, even more so than Michael or Franklin.

5.2 Visual features

This chapter discusses the appearance features of the protagonists as well as kinesic features. First their physical appearance is analyzed, including race, hairstyle, and level of fitness and then various kinesic features, i.e. features related to movement are analyzed. Lastly the protagonists' taste in clothes and accessories are discussed. Culpeper states that visual cues play a pivotal role in perceiving people and in characterization in general (2001: 221).

5.2.1 Michael's visual features

Michael is a fair-skinned middle aged male with grayish black hair and he is possibly Irish-descent, since many of the tattoos available for him to take are Irish-themed, for example, shamrocks, Celtic figures and so forth. In-game he has light green eyes but in many of the official artworks his eyes are blue. Michael is a burly man – he has sturdy legs and arms and he is more heavily built than Franklin or Trevor. Michael's burliness shows in his gait, which is not as fluent as Franklin's or Trevor's. Moreover, Michael is called fat by Trevor and occasionally he calls himself fat, but he is robust, not obese. During the mission "Pack Man", Trevor tells Lamar Davis, who is Franklin's longtime friend, that when he met Michael for the first time, he was "kinda fat, but strong underneath." Michael has changed relatively little from the heist in 2004, which is the prologue to the game. Basically the only difference is that he has shorter hair. Normally he is seen with a clean-cut medium length hair and stubble. Michael can visit a barbershop and change his hairstyle for a slightly

longer version of his default hair or alternatively he can revert back to his short hair or even have a clean shaven head. He can also grow a thick beard. Michael's face is relatively symmetrically proportioned.

Michael's face muscles are often flexed resulting in a tense look on his face. One could argue that for the most part of the game Michael's disposition is stressed, but naturally his moods change reflecting the events in the story. The spatial distance between Michael and other characters in the game could be described as normal, in other words not too intrusive but not overtly courteous either. However, Michael and his family members as well as the other two protagonists are quite near to each other in social situations, which indicates familiarity.

Every protagonist has a wardrobe and the player can customize his or her avatar by changing the protagonists' clothes and accessories. All the protagonists have a default set of clothes in their wardrobe in the beginning of the game and later the player can buy new clothes and accessories. However, the protagonists favor specific clothing stores and disapprove others. For instance, Michael favors Ponsonby's clothing brand, which sells high-class clothes such as expensive suits. Michael's taste for expensive clothes is evident, since he starts with a gray two-piece suit without tie but he also has some casual clothes such as shorts, sandals and polo shirts. Michael is usually portrayed in his grey suit in concept art, which is shown during loading screens in *GTA V*. Michael's wardrobe suggest that he is a man of stature and wealth.

5.2.2 Franklin's visual features

Franklin is a relatively young male with dark skin and short hair, even though he can change his hairstyle and beard style in a barbershop. Alternatives include an afro or corn rolls and he can also choose to have a bushy beard or stubble. Franklin is physically fit and his frame is muscular even though he is sometimes called fat by his sidekick Lamar. Franklin's face is relatively symmetrical and his face is neutral at times but then again occasionally tense and frustrated. Franklin's gaze is focused, evaluative or even judging. Franklin is perhaps the most mindful of other people's personal space and thus does not

invade it as easily as his fellow protagonists, making him the most reserved of the three but his gait could be described as confident. However, he greets his old friends and acquaintances with embraces and handshakes, indicating familiarity and evidently shared gang history.

Franklin has no default tattoos but he can visit tattoo parlors, where he can get various gang-related tattoos, Los Santos-related tattoos and other more traditional tattoos such as dragons, angels and women. Franklin typically wears street wear such as button-up shirts, sweaters, tank tops and blue loose jeans or black cargo pants with brown boots. His default wardrobe also includes a basketball jersey, baseball caps, shorts and various colorful t-shirts. The apparel store Sub Urban sells clothes, which resemble Franklin's wardrobe the most. All in all Franklin's style is casual, street credible and youthful.

5.2.3 Trevor's visual features

Trevor is a weather-beaten male with fair skin and a receding hairline resulting in baldness on the sides of his head. Similarly to Michael and Franklin, Trevor can visit the barber and change his hairstyle and grow different styles of beards. One alternative is a mullet, which he has in the prologue nine years before the actual story in *GTA V* and another alternative is spiky hair with receding hairline. Trevor can also acquire a long beard, a moustache or a "biker style beard".

Trevor is the only protagonist to have tattoos as default. One is located on his left shoulder, which depicts a cross and Michael's name on it (Trevor thought Michael was dead). Another goes around his neck as a dotted line and it reads "CUT HERE". He also has a blazing skull on his left hand and the words "FUCK YOU" inked on his knuckles. Trevor can also buy new tattoos in the various tattoo parlors across Los Santos. The tattoos available for him are usually quite anarchist in nature such as tattoos against police and pictures of crazy clowns but also more "traditional" tattoos are available such as flames, skulls and weapons. Trevor also has a scar across his belly and he has numerous sores around his body. Trevor is taller than Michael or Franklin and his composition is slender but not skinny. Trevor is not generally considered attractive and he is reminded of this, for

example by pedestrians and both Michael and Franklin during missions. Trevor's facial features could be described as rough-cut.

Trevor is the most expressive of the three making exaggerated gestures and facial expressions constantly. Even while laughing, Trevor has a menacing look in his eyes and he is arguably dispositionally angry. Furthermore, Trevor has no respect whatsoever for people's personal space and habitually invades it by poking and pushing people as well as generally acting in a defiant and threatening manner. Even Trevor's gait could be described as confrontational. However, Trevor is capable of behaving well or even tenderly towards people he appreciates but such occasions are rare.

The clothes used by Trevor are usually dirty and/or torn. The default shirt for him is a V-necked smudgy white t-shirt but he occasionally also wears a light blue jean jacket or a red flannel shirt. Blue or gray jeans are typical for Trevor and he usually wears black boots. When switching characters in-game, Trevor is sometimes wearing a dirty white dress or alternatively he is wearing only his once-white underwear. During the game Michael notes that Trevor's clothes are never clean and do not fit and Franklin complains that Trevor smells and his clothes are dirty. In the mission "The Paleto Score Setup" Trevor himself acknowledges that "I don't give a shit what I wear." However, during the same mission Michael implies that Trevor actually does care about his looks, stating that Trevor's style is thought-out because Trevor is a hipster. Naturally Trevor vehemently denies Michaels claim and adds that he hates hipsters. Be that as it may, Trevor likes to buy his clothes from Binco, which is basically a flea market or a discount store and its slogan is "More trash for less cash". Unsurprisingly, Trevor does not enjoy buying clothes from Michael's favorite apparel retailer Ponsonby's.

5.3 Personality and personal category

The protagonists in *GTA V* share some overarching goals, interests and preferences. Occasionally their traits complement each other but at times the protagonists' goals and preferences end up causing major contradictions. The following subchapters contain every protagonist's typical traits, goals and values drawing out a general sense of their personality

as depicted in the game.

5.3.1 Michael's personality and personal category

The leading idea by the developers when creating the protagonists has been that the characters are flawed making them interesting but at the same time not completely obnoxious, and thus enjoyable to play (Simmons et al. 2013). In other words, the characters resemble real life people with their shortcomings. It is safe to say that Michael has his share of them. Firstly, Michael's short temper is discussed. Secondly, Michael's insecurities and hypocrisy are discussed; he wants to be seen as a capable family man but on the other hand he has difficulties in filling that role. Thirdly, his longing for the good old days as well as his personal preferences are explored. Lastly, Dan Houser gives his view on Michael.

Like all the protagonists in the game, Michael exhibits both flawed and good characteristics. Michael is having a therapy session with his psychiatrist when he is introduced to the player. During the session he tells the doctor how his life is in shambles even though he is rich and he survived after years of dangerous criminal life. Right from the beginning, during the therapy session, Michael loses his nerves as so many times during the cutscenes throughout the game. In other words, Michael is short tempered and thus he has anger management issues, which occasionally result in bursts of self-hatred and at other times result in Michael scolding people around him or even worse repercussions. For instance, in the mission "Marriage Counseling" Michael finds out that his wife is cheating him with her tennis coach. After a chase, he pulls down a mansion built on the edge of a hill, belonging to a drug cartel leader, where the tennis coach was hiding. This costly incident forces Michael to work for the drug cartel in order to pay back the expenses and eventually leads him to take part in the first major heist in the game. Moreover, Michael forces Franklin to drive through the shop window of Simeon Yetarian's car dealership in the mission "Complications" because Michael disapproved Simeon's repossession terms and conditions, and after that Michael physically abuses Simeon. In the aftermath, Simeon holds Franklin responsible for the incident and therefore Simeon fires Franklin from the job. However, even though Michael is violent and capable of murder he is more compassionate than for example Trevor and wants to avoid unnecessary violence towards

law enforcement and unfortunate eyewitnesses as seen, for instance, in the mission "The Big Score". In the mission Trevor wants to kill an armored truck's security guard but Michael decides to bribe him with a gold ingot and lets him live, much to Trevor's dismay.

Michael wants to give an impression of being confident, capable and resourceful – which he usually is. For example, Michael is a very capable marksman and thus his special ability is "bullet time", which slows down time in firefights making tough, potentially deadly situations easier. Since Michael usually handles dangerous situations with confidence, he has a habit of being egocentric and at times a hypocrite. Even his wife calls him "a murdering, cheating, hypocrite" in the cutscene of "Fame or Shame". On the one hand Michael is a man who loves his family, mentors Franklin as he was his own son and is thorough but on the other hand, Michael has a habit of neglecting his family, mentors Franklin in criminal activities and is thorough especially when planning robberies or other heists. He is quick to judge other people's values and decisions, especially Trevor's and his family's, but he always finds an explanation for his own questionable actions and tends to think that his way of doing things is the right way. Moreover, if Michael receives criticism he tends to resort to sarcasm in his dialogue to counter the critique.

Movies and especially older classic movies are dear to Michael. When Michael and Franklin have a conversation in the cutscene in the beginning of the mission "Father/Son" Michael says in one instant that "I was just lost in an eighties movie fantasy" after Franklin inquires about a quote Michael said before. Later in the story Michael even has missions revolving around movies and he is seen watching movies at his house at times. Incidentally, after Michael has completed the movie centered missions, he becomes a co-producer in a retro-movie, which was a longtime dream of his.

Michael also likes to listen to old rock music, since the default stations in his personal Obey Tailgater car are Los Santos Rock Radio, Vinewood Boulevard Radio and Radio Mirror Park. Los Santos Rock Radio plays progressive and classic rock mainly from 1970's and 1980's. The playlist includes tracks such as "Hollywood nights", "Lonely is the night", "Too late for goodbyes", "What a fool believes" and "I don't care anymore". Many of the tracks can be heard during the story's cutscenes when Michael is the main protagonist in

the mission, for example in the aforementioned mission Father/Son Michael listens to "I don't care anymore" by Phil Collins. Vinewood Boulevard Radio's slogan is "The soundtrack of your broken dreams and unspent potential" and features indie rock from the 21st century, similarly to Radio Mirror Park. Consequently, Michael is nostalgic (e.g. movies, music) and he is often reminiscing about his youth but at the same time he also regrets his past mistakes.

Even though Michael regrets some of his decisions in life and longs for the good old days in the past, he seems to welcome the riches he has acquired over the years. Keeping up appearances is important for Michael and he could be described as materialistic. Michael is clean-cut and he favors expensive clothes such as suits. He lives in a mansion costing millions of dollars in an expensive area with facilities such as a swimming pool and a tennis court. In addition, he drives a black Tailgater, which is loosely based on an Audi A8, which is an expensive premium car, and he also owns a luxurious yacht. Michael smokes cigars as well as cigarettes and enjoys a glass of whiskey now and then.

All in all, Michael is a multidimensional character; he is not a saint by any means but he is not a heartless psychopath either. Dan Houser defines Michael in the following manner:

> "One of the advantages of the three-character system is you can have characters who, if they were the only protagonist, would be far too flawed for you to find appealing. With other equally flawed protagonists, but flawed in different ways, I think it gets more understandable. His flaws are certainly his large ego, an inability to control his temper, and his willingness to make large moral compromises. To me, that's a very interesting character. A guy who's in his mid-40s and on the cusp of middle age who doesn't know what to do, but made a bunch of money and does not know what to do with it. He's theoretically won, but the spoils of victory aren't necessarily what he imagined. For us that's a very interesting character, unlike what we've done in the past or what we've seen in much entertainment in general, let alone any video games. That was interesting." (Simmons et al. 2013)

5.3.2 Franklin's personality and personal category

The present chapter discusses the most defining features of Franklin's personality as well as his goals, traits and habits. Firstly, Franklin's sense of responsibility in terms of helping others as well as his stoic approach on matters is explained. Secondly, Franklins aim to be successful and wealthy is explored. Franklin seems to be a man of his word who does not shy away from challenges. Thirdly, Franklin's preferences in music and vehicles are listed.

Nearing the end of the chapter, Franklin's changed economic status and shifting loyalties are discussed. He wants to cut ties with his old gang related acquaintances and move onward in his life, which in turn creates friction between his longtime associates. The chapter concludes with Dan Houser's take on Franklin's personality.

Franklin is perhaps the most levelheaded of the three protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V*. Franklin is logical and practical but at the same time he can be callous and skeptical. However, he is loyal to people he considers friends even though sometimes he is unwilling to help them out at first but ultimately he usually makes the effort to help. For instance, Franklin reluctantly helps his crack addicted friends Tonya and JB in five towing jobs in the "Pulling Favors" mission series. In addition, Franklin spontaneously helps Michael in tearing down Martin Madrazo's house in the mission "Marriage Counselling" and subsequently helps Michael in a jewel store heist called "The Jewelry Store Job". Moreover, Franklin and Michael help Trevor to vanquish Trevor's rivals in the mission "Predator" and Franklin, with the help of Michael and Trevor, saves Lamar from the hands of a rival gang in the mission "Lamar Down". He does this due to their long lasting friendship even though Franklin and Lamar do not always agree on how to handle matters. In addition to concrete help provided by Franklin, he offers advice and opinions on how to manage life, especially to Michael.

Franklin is an ambitious young man and even though he helps his friends in various issues, Franklin does not always do it from the kindness of his heart. Franklin is eager to be successful and he usually favors a hands-on approach to different matters since he tends to be practical and logical to some extent. Franklin feels he is capable of becoming rich if he works hard enough and he does not want to be "a small time dealer" anymore; he wants to leave the streets and the gangbanging life behind him. As an example, he tells Lamar in the beginning of the mission "Chop" that he wants "no more gangbangin' retro-vengeance bullshit." Moreover, in a cutscene with Simeon Yetarian in "Repossession" Franklin tells Simeon that "I gotta move forward in my life. It seem like all I do is let people tell me what to do and I do it and nothing changes." Franklin is eager to accumulate wealth and thus he eagerly participates in various jobs, where there is profit to be made. For example, in the beginning of the story Franklin actively pursues Michael to accept him as a partner and to

take part in high profile heists such as the "Jewelry Store Job". Later in the game, he becomes a fully-fledged criminal, not a petty dealer anymore, doing missions with Michael and Trevor. In addition, Franklin's practicality combined with his desire to make money is evident in five assassination missions offered by Lester Crest. Franklin accepts, without any moral reflection, to work as a contract killer for Lester as long as he gets paid for the jobs. However, it should be noted that Lester describes the targets as "assholes" and "turds", even though Lester himself could be described with similar names. With his voyeuristic tendencies and appetite for scheming, he is the definition of a creep. The targets are portrayed by Lester as people who oppress others to gain money and according to him Franklin is doing a favor to the world, and to Lester, by assassinating them.

Different vehicles with wheels are dear to Franklin and thus he enjoys driving cars and motorcycles. Consequently his unique ability in the game is slowing down time while driving making it considerably easier. Franklin is also competitive and he is the only protagonist who can take part in street races. Franklin owns a white Bravado Buffalo, which is based on Dodge Charger, and a green Western Motorcycle company's Bagger. Franklin's favorite radio stations are West Coast Classics and Radio Los Santos, both which play gangster rap music. Radio Los Santos features such track titles as "Smokin' and Ridin'", "Too Hood", "Slow Down" and "Hood Gone love it". Many of the lyrics tell about gangster life, drug dealing and other topics familiar to Franklin. Radio Los Santos plays new rap tracks but West Coast Classics plays tracks mostly from the 1990's; tracks include "So You Want to be a Gangster", "Gangsta Gangsta", "Appetite for Destruction" and many other gangster rap classics. Radio Los Santos is always playing in the background in his mansion and usually in his vehicles too, if West Coast Classics is not playing.

During the story of *Grand Theft Auto V*, Franklin turns a new page in his life. He tries to leave his old life behind him and for that reason some of his old acquaintances consider Franklin disloyal. For instance his friend Lamar and especially Franklin's aunt Denise accuse Franklin of being disloyal to the Families, the street gang. In addition, Franklin's ex-girlfriend Tansiha accuses Franklin of leaving his old life and people behind him even though she left Franklin and married a rich doctor at the end of the story. Tanisha insults Franklin by saying "You a phony fuck" referring to Franklin's new neighborhood and new

acquaintances in the introductory cutscene of "Lamar Down". Perhaps Franklin is going through an identity crisis of some sort because from time to time he seems unsatisfied with his life. Franklin has a habit of smoking marijuana at his mansion and during these sessions he often remarks how empty he feels. Franklin looks muscular but he is hardly health conscious because besides marijuana, he smokes cigarettes as well.

Franklin seems to enjoy his new more luxurious life at the latter half of the story but he is not depicted as being as materialistic as Michael, even though his old friends such as Lamar and Tanisha mock him for forgetting his roots and showing off his money. Tanisha accuses Franklin of being materialistic in "Lamar Down". Also at the end of the same mission, Lamar calls Franklin "Mister Gold Card" and makes several mocking remarks about his newly gained wealth. Lamar also accuses Franklin for being an "old flossin' ass nigga", which means "a showoff" in this context in the ending cutscene of the mission.

Overall, Franklin is practical and has somewhat a serious personality, who usually does what needs to be done. Dan Houser's take on Franklin:

> "The idea with Franklin was someone stepping outside their comfort zone and their normal way of doing things, because that way, even though they're still in their mid-20s or whatever, that hasn't worked. That world that they thought they'd be in and be able to make a success of has, thanks to the modern world or the changes in the economy or whatever it is, just failed. It doesn't really exist. They're now looking for something new. A new opportunity. They've gotten their qualifications and gotten all their experience and all they're good at is driving and robbing. How do actually go forward and who do you get to a kind of mentor you? That was a good contrast. The gang-banger in the post-gang-banging world." (Simmons et al. 2013)

5.3.3 Trevor's personality and personal category

This chapter presents the analysis on Trevor's disturbed personality and also personal category elements such as Trevor's traits and goals in the game. The first three paragraphs discuss Trevor's volatile nature; he can commit atrocious crimes without remorse and without prior warning. After this, Trevor's twisted sense of humor is analyzed and moving on from there, his self-destructiveness and substance abuse is discussed. Even though Trevor could be called a psychopath with good cause, he has a softer side to him as well.

Therefore, his sense of loyalty and friendship is discussed next as well as his insecurities. Also Trevor's aims and preferences are explored, including his preferred vehicles and music. Trevor aims for freedom, which is also a central concept in Dan Houser's characterization of Trevor at the end of the chapter.

Trevor is the most irrational of the three protagonists. He is very unpredictable, impulsive, careless, explosive and prone to violent outbursts that make him a serious threat to the people and environment around him. Trevor's special ability, where he enters a rage mode causing extra damage but receiving minimal damage in return is quite representative of him. Consequently, when Trevor is introduced to the player in "Mr. Philips", he shows his most atrocious characteristics; after Trevor learns that Michael is in fact alive, while at the same time having sexual intercourse with Ashley, the girlfriend of Johnny Klebitz, who is the Lost Motorcycle Club's president, and after this Trevor brutally kills Johnny in a fit of rage in front of Ashley and his sidekicks Wade and Ron. All this because Trevor was in an agitated state and Johnny was angry with Trevor for having sexual intercourse with his girlfriend. To add to the insult, Trevor mocked Johnny before the homicide and threatened him with sexual intercourse between Trevor and Johnny. After the homicide, Trevor storms off to wage war against the Lost Motorcycle Club in an agitated state of mind.

Trevor seems to be able to kill people without remorse and during the story murders committed by Trevor happen often. Moreover, Trevor seems to be fascinated by fire and destruction. For example in the mission "Crystal Maze" he sets the house of the O'Neil brothers on fire which later causes the house to explode. In addition, during the story Trevor reveals that when he was a child his father abandoned him in a shopping center, which he later burned down in order to cope with the mistreatment. Clearly Trevor has suppressed and unsuppressed anger inside him.

Even though it is never explicitly mentioned in-game, Trevor shows signs of Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED). IED is an impulse-control disorder which may result in acts of aggression such as verbal and physical abuse towards self, others and the surrounding property. Social threat or frustration triggers impulsive aggression that is explosive and blatantly out of proportion to the situation at hand. Clinical studies suggest that IED is

linked with other disorders such as substance use disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2013: 466-469). Examples of Trevor showing symptoms of IED are mentioned in the above paragraphs (i.e. physical abuse), in the following paragraph (i.e. verbal abuse) as well as in chapter 5.5.3 Trevor's language (verbal and physical abuse).

Trevor likes dark humor and sarcasm but then again he is so unpredictable that his sadistic jokes and sarcasm can be in fact sometimes factual information or remarks based on the truth. For example, Trevor makes a number of remarks about him being bisexual and cannibalistic but one cannot be sure, if Trevor actually means the things he says. However, Trevor has ties to a cannibalistic cult calling them "friends", which gives reason to believe that Trevor has cannibalistic tendencies. Moreover, Trevor evidently enjoys making people uncomfortable around him and he also likes to show dominance especially over weaker males such as his "friends" Wade and Ron. He often threatens them, especially Wade, with violence or sexual abuse. Additionally, Trevor is the only protagonist who can throw insults to pedestrians while Michael and Franklin can greet people in a friendly manner. Trevor's taunting may result in fights or alternatively he scares people away. However, it should be stressed that Trevor's straightforward and unpretending approach on matters creates comical effect throughout the game.

Trevor is not usually a nice person and he is even capable of torture. In the mission "By the book", after a series of events Trevor is ordered by two corrupted agents of the Federal Investigation Bureau (FIB) to torture a man in order to get information of an alleged terrorist, whom later is assassinated by Michael. Despite Trevor's dislike for authorities, he complies with the order stating that "Torture's for the torturer... or for the guy giving orders to the torturer. You torture for the good times – we should all admit that." However, later Trevor helps the tortured man to safety even though an FIB agent implied that Trevor should kill him. Trevor acts based on his instincts and tends to follow his own agendas, which are occasionally quite inconsistent and random. The only heist "The Merryweather Heist" planned by Trevor ends up in failure, even though the mission is completed successfully in the game; the main trio steals a super weapon, which cannot be capitalized as noted by Lester and after all the hard work and encountered dangers, they have to return the stolen weapon back. The idea of heists is to gain money and since they cannot sell it to

anyone because it is too risky, the heist is considered as a failure. The mission shows that Trevor is not as logical and thorough as Michael in planning heists and in the end of the mission Trevor bashes his own head against a wall in frustration.

Trevor causes destruction to his surroundings but he can also be self-destructive. His recklessness causes him to take arms against unsurmountable odds, such as the Lost MC, the O'Neil brothers and Aztecas, which all are competing gangs against Trevor Philips Industries, which is his own drug and arms trafficking business. However, his violence and unpredictability make him a feared enemy and in the end he is triumphant. Moreover, Trevor vehemently opposes all sorts of authorities favoring anarchy. Trevor hates institutes such as the FIB and the Los Santos Police Department (LSPD), which often result in clashes between Trevor the FIB and LSPD during the story. Sometimes the character transition cutscene features Trevor in a pursuit with the LSPD and having a two-star wanted level without the player being responsible for it. Trevor's self-destructive mentality is evident in his substance abuse as well. Trevor is a habitual methamphetamine user; he also smokes cigarettes and consumes large quantities of alcohol. In addition, while visiting Trevor's trailer Michael remarks how spoilt the food in the refrigerator is but Trevor seems not to care, even though the food makes him sick at times. Additionally, Trevor's self-destructive and reckless behavior is evident in the transition cutscenes, since Trevor is sometimes found sitting on the edge of rooftops or other high places, such as mountain cliffs, heavily intoxicated.

At first glance Trevor seems to be a one dimensional mass murdering psychopath exhibiting only evil characteristics but there is another side to him as well. For example, Trevor has strong principles and he hates hypocrisy with passion, thus being very honest himself. He hates the fact that Michael made a deal with the FIB and now lives comfortably in a mansion; thus he often calls Michael a hypocrite and his life a lie. However, Trevor seems to value selected friendships and feels hurt after he learns Michael made a deal with the FIB. Trevor also cares about Michael's children Stacy and Jimmy and during the story he also becomes friends with Franklin and rekindles his friendship with Michael, (if the player chooses to keep all the protagonists alive in the end). Moreover, Trevor can be sentimental on different occasions. Especially older women seem to attract Trevor's

attention and particularly Patricia Madrazo, who is the wife of the mafia boss Martin Madrazo. In one phase of the story, in the mission "Caida Libre", Trevor kidnaps Patricia and surprisingly Trevor and Patricia develop feelings for each other. Trevor becomes very protective of Patricia; he confesses his love to her and in the end, when Trevor has to return Patricia back home in the mission "Monkey Business", Trevor sobs that "for some reason, everyone I love, abandons me." Trevor also threatens Martin with physical abuse were he to mistreat Patricia. The feelings are mutual for Trevor and Patricia, since she calls and sends e-mails to Trevor later in the story and states that she had a wonderful time but she made vows to her husband so she has to go back home and wishes all the best for Trevor calling him "a beautiful man".

Trevor has abandonment issues and evidently mother issues in particular. In the mission "Mrs. Philips", Trevor's mother comes to visit him in his trailer. Trevor, usually fearless and defiant, is visibly afraid of his mother and obediently complies with her wishes even though she scolds Trevor for not being a worthy son. Soon after this Trevor steals a truck full of drugs, as his mother ordered him to, but after Trevor finally returns to his trailer, Mrs. Philips is nowhere to be found and Trevor starts to cry uncontrollably. Trevor also acknowledges during the cutscene of "Hang Ten" that "I had a tough upbringing. My daddy was not nice to me!" Perhaps Trevor's insecurity during childhood has made him susceptible to criticism because Trevor has no tolerance whatsoever, excluding critique from his mother, of insults or anything remotely reminiscent of criticism. Trevor becomes particularly touchy if people make fun of his Canadian accent. All rampages, which are arcade style killing spree missions, start when Trevor thinks he is being mocked and the majority of the five rampages start because his Canadian accent is mentioned. The rampages are only accessible by Trevor and during these missions Trevor wipes out all his offenders, whom are for example gang members or military personnel, while at the same time taunting them.

Nearly all Trevor's actions and attitudes imply that he wants freedom; freedom from society's constraints, freedom from moral bounds and even freedom of movement. Hence Trevor enjoys flying various aircraft and driving different off-road vehicles. For example, Trevor's collection of vehicles includes a black scooter, a black van Vapid Speedo, a black

all-terrain vehicle and perhaps his most used car a red off-road vehicle Canis Bodhi based on the Land Rover Defender. Additionally, Trevor owns a black Frogger, which is a helicopter he impounded from the FIB as payment for a job he completed for the agency.

Trevor also enjoys rebellious music; his favorite station is Channel X, which is the default channel in his Canis Bodhi. Channel X features punk rock mainly from the 1980's and features tracks such as "My War", "Pervert", "Life of Crime" and "Abolish Government/Silent Majority". The tracks played on Channel X reflect Trevor's outlook on life. Similarly to Michael, he also likes to listen to Los Santos Rock Radio, which can be heard in Trevor's trailer. Usually the player can choose his or her desired radio station but sometimes, while playing as Trevor and switching the radio station Trevor overrules the player decision and switches back to Channel X.

Trevor is a character of extremes; he can be very violent and cause mayhem but then again he can be very sincere and loyal. The saying "expect the unexpected" fits quite well with Trevor's personality. Dan Houser shares his thoughts on Trevor:

> "Trevor was the other side of the GTA coin, I suppose. He's the person who's driven purely by desire, resentment, no thought for tomorrow whatsoever, completely id rather than ego-driven. Constant partying, constant madness. The only thing he doesn't want to do is stop. He wants to keep going and ride it all to the end. Won't take an insult from anybody. Kills without remorse, like a true psychopath, but very sentimental for the right reasons when it suits him. That seemed like another side of the kind of GTA coin or the GTA world, but very rarely as the protagonist. That seemed an interesting guy to have as a protagonist. Very unlike anyone we've had in a game before. If you began to develop him and Michael and their previous relationships... We wanted this feeling where you start off thinking one's good and the other's awful. Then you get spun the other way. Then you get spun back the first way, until you can't decide." (Simmons et al. 2013)

5.4 Social role category

Different social roles are important when analyzing how the roles between the protagonists evolve, how identities are created and how they fit into the story of *Grand Theft Auto V*. Culpeper (2001: 76) states that characters can have many different social roles and that one is in a strong position to make deductions based on the information provided by social roles. Culpeper (2001: 225-226) also notes that a person's surroundings, both physical and human, tell a great deal about the person in question. Occupation, kinship and relations are all meaningful social roles. In this chapter the most important social roles, which are

evident in the data, for each individual protagonist are presented and elaborated accordingly. However, it is noteworthy that although Michael, Franklin and Trevor manifest a multitude of social roles during the game, their biography or family relations are not divulged at any point of the game and thus they have to be deducted from the cutscenes dialogues and during gameplay. The protagonists share some social roles while at the same time they have unique social roles. All of the protagonists are criminals, ex-convicts and partners or even friends to each other. Michael's unique social roles include being a father, a husband, a mentor and a movie producer. Franklin is a nephew, an orphan, an ex-boyfriend, a gang member, a dog owner, a repossession man, a chauffeur, a tow-truck driver, and a hitman – all of which are unique roles to Franklin. Trevor also has many unique social roles: son, "uncle", arms and drugs smuggler, methamphetamine producer, ex-soldier, pilot, CEO, and bounty hunter. The following chapters will elaborate on each of the protagonist's social roles.

5.4.1 Michael's social roles

Michael is undeniably a family man, since a number of Michael's missions in *GTA V* revolve around his family. Michael cares for his family but the family life of the Da Santa's could be described as troublesome. Michael himself acknowledges this and during a session with his psychiatrist he says that "Half the time, my kids can't stand me. The other half, my wife is cheating on me." Michael also mentions to his psychiatrist that he had a tough childhood and he was already a criminal when he was in his early twenties. Michael's wife is Amanda, an ex-stripper he met in his youth, and even though their marriage is not perfect by any means, they still have feelings for each other and they want to remain together. However, Michael is not a committed husband and partly due to this, Amanda has a few lovers during the story. Nevertheless, Michael wants to be with his wife. A strong indication of this is that in some of the missions Michael has confrontations with his wife's lovers and he sometimes resorts to extreme acts of violence and destruction to cast them off. Examples include Michael tearing down a house where Amanda's tennis couch/lover was seen and assaulting Amanda's yoga instructor/lover with a laptop.

Being a husband is one thing but being a parent, and in Michael's case a father, is another

thing. As noted above, Michael is not a very good father either. His kids, Tracy and Jimmy, are spoilt young adults who do not respect their father. Jimmy smokes weed and plays digital games all day long while Tracy wants to be a reality-TV star and gets mixed up with rather questionable people, who work in the adult entertainment industry. Michael, as a father, wants to do the right thing when the situation at hand concerns his family, and thus he strives to protect his children even though they do not always get along well. Opposing views on how to handle things and life in general result in heated arguments on a regular basis between Michael and his family members during the first half of the main story. However, Michael still wants to be a caring father for his children and there are a few pivotal moments in the story, when Michael plays the role of the savior, for example, in the mission "Father/Son" Michael rescues Jimmy from a group of criminals, who kidnapped him while stealing the Da Santa's yacht after Jimmy foolishly tried to sell the boat to some suspicious buyers without Michael's consent. In the mission "Daddy's little" girl Michael brings Tracy home from a boat, owned by armed and dangerous adult movie producers, even though Tracy is not thankful for her father because she thinks he ruined her possible future career. Be that as it may, Michael values his role as a father, and for example when entering their home he often shouts "daddy's back" or other daddy-related exclamations.

Michael does his best to keep his family together but during the story Michael has a break-up with his family, because of his criminal activities and erratic behavior, and they move from the house leaving Michael to live alone for some time. Eventually they reunite after a number of events in the mission "Reuniting the family" and Michael's relationships with his family members improve considerably. After the reunion, in the mission "Meltdown", Michael again plays the role of the savior when he fights a group of mercenaries sent by one of the game's antagonists to kill off Michael's wife and children. In the end Michael manages to rescue his family after a blazing gunfight at their house, and consequently the dangerous experience brings the family closer together. Michael's social role as a family man is emphasized after finishing the story (depending on the player's choice of course) in the in-game character transition cutscenes.

Overall, the cutscenes regularly feature Michael with one of his family members having a relatively friendly dialogue or alternatively Michael is doing yoga, which is Amanda's

hobby, by their house. At the beginning of the story Michael despised yoga, partly perhaps because Amanda was cheating Michael with her personal yoga instructor, but in the end Michael seems to be taking up on yoga as a way of calming down. Other examples include, Michael giving Tracy some money after dropping her off saying "at least pretend you love me", Michael watching some old classic movie at their house with his children and as he leaves he pats them lovingly or Michael leaving a cafeteria and telling Amanda "Darling, you just stick that on the credit card. I've got to run. Love you."

In other words, Michael is a husband and a father but he also has many other defining social roles. Michael is a criminal, which is one of the most important social roles for him, at least game-wise. At first, he is portrayed as a retired criminal but he is feeling miserable for not doing anything exciting and thus in the introduction of Michael during a session with his psychiatrist he even tells that "The only way I'm content and competent is with a gun in my hand or a price on my head." During the story Michael ends up going back to his old ways and continues his criminal activities, which form the basis of the game. Consequently, the illegal actions performed by Michael bind him to many other social roles besides being merely a criminal. He becomes a partner for Franklin and Trevor and also to other non-player characters in the missions. However, in the end Michael is an extremely dangerous criminal, who commits a number of homicides and other atrocious crimes, such as robbing two banks, a jewelry store, an armored vehicle, a train and causing death and destruction in many other ways.

Michael is also a long-time friend of Trevor and their difficult friendship shapes the plot of the game. In the beginning of the game Franklin is a new acquaintance to both Michael and Trevor. However, Franklin and Michael become friends quickly and they also form a type of father-son bond or a mentor-apprentice relationship during the story. Michael teaches Franklin about the life of crime and Franklin gives Michael advice on how to manage life in general. Michael even tells Trevor that Franklin is "the son I never had" during the mission "Three's company". In addition, Trevor and Franklin become friends eventually. In addition, all the protagonists have been in prison and thus are ex-convicts adding a shared experience between the three characters, despite their many differences.

In one of the game's many subplots, Michael is introduced to a movie producer, who happens to be Michael's idol. Michael is an avid fan of old movies and he gladly jumps at the opportunity to be a part of the movie industry alongside with his idol Solomon Richards. Thereafter Michael performs various missions connected with movies and he is engulfed in the dirty business of movie production in Los Santos. Eventually, after a number of missions and dramatic turns, Michael ends up being a movie producer himself (if the player decides not to kill Michael in the final mission). After the completion of the main story, Michael is often located at the film studio, when the player switches to Michael in-game.

Overall Michael has multiple social roles; however there is certain bipolarity in the division of his roles and he even acknowledges this himself during a therapy session contemplating that "You know, one minute I'm one person, and the next minute I'm another person." For example, Michael is a family man but also a criminal, he comes from a poor background but lives the life of a rich man, he acts as a father figure even as he neglects his own children and lastly he despises the vain lifestyle of Vinewood (Hollywood) but is proud of being a movie producer himself and clearly likes to show off his wealth and expensive style.

5.4.2 Franklin's social roles

Franklin is generally portrayed as work oriented but his kinship relations are equally important when defining Franklin's identity. In the beginning of the main story Franklin lives with his aunt Denise in the same house, which was probably left to them by Franklin's deceased grandparents, who took care of Franklin after his drug addict mother died. Franklin's mother was abused by his father, whom he never met. Denise and Franklin may be family, but their relations are not in good terms. Denise constantly scolds her nephew and accuses him of being a "goddamn freeloader" in the mission "Franklin and Lamar". Moreover, Denise openly admits that she wants Franklin to move out from their co-owned house and in the mission "Chop" Franklin tells Lamar that his aunt want's Franklin "dead anyway, so she can get the fucking house." Eventually Franklin, much to the pleasure of both parties involved, moves to live on his own to a house provided by his associate Lester Crest.

Franklin's broken childhood possibly pushed him to join "The Families", which is a street gang operating around Franklin's neighborhood. Franklin became a "hustler", a "gangbanger" and a "dope dealer" working for the gang and he also committed other crimes such as robbing a bank with his friend Lamar. Eventually Franklin got arrested for various crimes and was sentenced to jail. After he was freed, he started thinking about leaving the "street life" behind him, and for instance in the mission "Chop" Franklin tells Lamar that he does not want to get involved in gang activity any more. Later he enlisted to work for Simeon Yetarian as a repossession man. However, ties to the gangs are not easily forgotten, especially since Lamar is still living the life of a hustler and thus Franklin gets pulled back to gang business from time to time. For example, Franklin has to save Lamar in the mission "Lamar down" after he is kidnapped by a rival gang called the Ballas and held hostage. Franklin is upset that Lamar always gets himself into trouble but his ex-girlfriend Tanisha Jackson convinces Franklin to help Lamar one more time. Tanisha, Franklin and Lamar knew each other from high school and still were in contact as adults. Tanisha left Franklin before the events of *Grand Theft Auto V* because of his affiliation with gangs. Franklin tries to rekindle the relationship with Tanisha by promising to change his ways through the course of the story but at the end she informs him that she is getting married to a doctor and Franklin accepts his fate.

Lamar is Franklin's long-time friend but the men also co-own a pet, or more specifically a hefty Rottweiler dog named Chop. Technically Chop is Lamar's dog but Lamar asks Franklin to take care of the dog after the mission "Chop" and henceforth Chop resides at Franklin's house. Franklin is very fond of Chop and he talks to Chop more enthusiastically than normally and calls him a "good boy". Franklin can take Chop for walks and he can throw a ball for Chop to fetch, which increases Chop's happiness level. Chop also protects Franklin against hostile non-player characters when Chop and Franklin are in the same space, for example during walks. Franklin is the most animal friendly of the protagonists, since if he drives over an animal he responds to the situation by saying "sorry little dude" or other compassionate remarks and he also has a set of side missions where he meets a talking dog. One may suspect they might have been hallucinations but the missions show that Franklin reacts compassionately to animals, especially dogs.

In the beginning of the story, Franklin is portrayed as a repossession man working for a man named Simeon Yetarian, who runs a car dealership as already mentioned. His business idea is to sell overpriced cars at exorbitant interest rates and when the buyers fail to deliver all the required funds, Simeon dispatches Franklin and/or Lamar to repossess the cars. Franklin is introduced to the player in a repossession mission. However, eventually Franklin leaves the repossession job, since he does not consider the occupation of a repossession man to be worthy of him. He also feels that Simeon does not listen to his requests, even though Simeon says to Franklin in one of the cutscenes at the beginning of the mission "Repossession" that "I never had a black son, but if I did I want him to be just like you." In addition, Michael Da Santa induces an incident with Franklin at Simeon's car dealership, which leads to a permanent parting between Franklin and Simeon.

Franklin is capable of handling different cars and consequently he can also fill in the role of a tow truck driver. Franklin's friend pleads him to help her in the towing business and Franklin agrees to help her but rather reluctantly. Consequently, later in the game Franklin can buy the whole tow truck impound, becoming the manager of the towing business, and he can carry out an infinite number of towing missions to earn some extra money. Moreover, Franklin can also purchase a taxi company and work as a chauffeur taking VIP customers, who usually have bizarre requests, to their desired location. Franklin is a hard working entrepreneur, who uses his expertise in logistics to his advantage.

Lester Crest is the partner in crime to Michael, Franklin and Trevor. He is the mastermind behind the more complex missions in the game, including heists. Michael and Trevor share criminal history with Lester but Franklin is a new addition to the team. However, Lester and Franklin form a deadly partnership around midway of the story, as already mentioned in chapter 5.3.2. Lester provides Franklin with certain commissions, in other words five separate assassination jobs, which involve assassinations of stock market company managers in order to make a profit in the stock market. Consequently, Franklin is a hitman among other roles. Franklin's colleagues and new friends Michael and Trevor also perform murders but Franklin has the most missions centered on assassinations of a specific non-player character. Lester rewards Franklin after the mission "Hotel Assassination" with a

luxurious mansion at Vinewood Hills, which Franklin willingly accepts.

Of all the three protagonists Franklin and Michael share the closest relationship, a mentor-apprentice type relationship as mentioned earlier. Trevor notices their "father-son bullshit" in the mission "Three's company" but later Franklin and Trevor get along well enough. In general, Franklin plays the role of a negotiator between Michael and Trevor, when the two indulge themselves in arguments about Michael's faked death and hypocrisy as well as Trevor's chaotic lifestyle. Franklin usually plays it cool and brings an objective opinion on Michael and Trevor's many disputes. Of the three protagonists, Franklin is possibly the most eager to change his social circle and thus create new social roles and forget his former roles.

5.4.3 Trevor's social roles

Trevor, much like Michael and Franklin, has gone through a broken childhood. In the mission "Mrs. Philips", Trevor's mother comes to visit Trevor unexpectedly and the dialogue between the mother and the son reveal that Trevor's mother worked as prostitute and he never really had a father figure. In addition, Trevor's mother seems to be harsh and judgmental towards him. However, Trevor considers his mother as an authority figure and Trevor clearly acts submissively around her. Trevor also had a brother, Ryan, but he was killed in an unspecified accident.

Even though Trevor has mother and father issues, he is usually the dominant figure among his friends. Trevor's closest friends are Ron Jakowski and Wade Hebert. Ron is a paranoid man, who believes in conspiracy theories. He helps Trevor in many different situations and acts obediently on Trevor's orders. Wade is relatively simple minded and he follows Trevor blindly. Trevor calls Ron and Wade as his friends but in reality he uses the two men to achieve his personal goals, thus practically acting as an abuser. Moreover, Trevor's volatile temper subjects Ron and Wade to acts of violence and other outbursts by Trevor. For instance in the cutscene of "Friends United" Trevor punches Wade twice straight in the face and "congratulates" Wade for a job well done by saying "You're a genius you moron!" and Wade just apologizes for no particular reason when Trevor scolds him. Additionally,

Trevor addresses Ron by shouting "Ron you little bastard" in the same cutscene. These types of encounters between Trevor, Wade and Ron are typical and happen often in the game. Trevor seems to have such a hold on the two men that they keep on following Trevor willingly. However, Trevor provides protection and employs them, therefore their relationship is not as one sided as it first seems. The only exception is Chef, who cooks the methamphetamine for Trevor: he is the only one close to Trevor, excluding the other two protagonists, and relatively equal in terms of rights to Trevor. In addition, Chef can be recruited to join some of the big heists in the story accompanying the protagonists in the complex missions.

TPE, Trevor Philips Enterprise, also known as Trevor Philips Industries is Trevor's own drugs and arms smuggling business run by Trevor and his three friends Chef, Ron and Wade. At times in the story Trevor refers to himself as CEO as in chief executive officer in the Trevor Philips Industries even though the corporation is only run by four individuals. Trevor tells Wade in "Friends United" that he enlisted in the military because he had talent for flying but just before graduating he got discharged since he was deemed unstable in psychological evaluations. However, Trevor operates the Trevor Philips Enterprise from an airfield and often times operates as a pilot dropping arms and drugs to drop-off points using an airplane. TPE fights against several other gangs and their main buyers are Mexican drug cartels. Trevor personally destroys few of the rivals during the story, as noted in chapter 5.3.3.

As mentioned earlier, Michael and Trevor share history since they used to be friends and partners in crime prior to the events of *GTA V*. However, in the epilogue of the game a bank robbery goes wrong and Trevor witnesses as Michael gets shot at and thus Trevor believes that Michael was killed. In truth, Michael had made a deal with the FIB which would give Michael witness protection and a considerable amount of money once every month. The purpose of the deal was to lead the FIB on Trevor's tracks and arrest him. However, the operation was unsuccessful because Trevor managed to escape. Nevertheless, the FIB kept their part of the deal and Michael's family is now in the witness protection program living in Los Santos in an expensive neighborhood. Trevor learns about Michael's schemes during the story and this causes considerable tension between Michael and Trevor. However,

Trevor is fond of Michael's children Tracy and Jimmy and even calls himself uncle or Uncle Trevor around them. In addition, Trevor, alongside with Michael prevents Tracy from humiliating herself in front of TV-cameras in the mission "Fame or shame" and beats the producers for trying to lure naïve girls into compromising situations saying that "Well, that little girl sat on my lap when she was two years old, and I swore the god that I would rip the fucking skin off anyone who fucking wronged her." However, Trevor dislikes Michael's wife Amanda and the feeling is mutual. In other words, Trevor's relationship with the Da Santas or ex-Townleys is complicated at best.

Trevor is pictured as the most violent and chaotic of all the protagonists and this is reflected in the story. He is career criminal capable of murder, torture, arson and other despicable criminal acts. He is a drug abuser but also a methamphetamine producer. In addition, he takes part in many heists and takes over and purchases many different properties making him a property owner. Despite Trevor's dislike for authority and law, he can complete bail bond missions, where Trevor will act as a bounty hunter. Trevor will receive a portfolio of each criminal from a contractor and he will deliver the wanted criminals dead or alive to the contractor Maude, who will reward Trevor accordingly and hand over the criminals to the authorities. To make matters even more complicated, as mentioned in chapter 5.3.3, during the latter half of the story Trevor kidnaps Patricia, the 57- year- old wife of a well-known mafia boss, after witnessing that she is being ill-treated by her husband. Trevor soon develops feelings for her and treats her respectfully – contrary to his typical behavior. However, eventually Trevor has to return Patricia home but they keep contact till the end of the story.

Trevor's quirkiness is reflected in his social roles: a friend, colleague, uncle, son, CEO but also a criminal, killer, ex-convict, drug dealer and abuser. Trevor's social roles are a reflection of his personality, just as Trevor's personality is complicated but overshadowed by a violent nature, so are his social roles varied but still embroidered by violence and criminality.

5.5 The protagonists' language in *GTA V*

Conversations and dialogue play a key role in the game in telling a story and consequently language is vital in the analysis of the protagonists' identity. *Grand Theft Auto V* is full of spoken and written text and all the protagonists are fully voiced, meaning that every line of speech in the game is spoken out loud. The voice actors contribute significantly to the characters' personalities and perhaps most importantly shape the protagonists' communication and delivery of speech, including their accent. Thus, the voice actors require an overview alongside with their respective protagonists.

Based on the review of the voice actors and their characters' idiolects one can see a pattern: the producers have aimed for authenticity regarding the language of the protagonists. The voice actors and their respective protagonists have similar backgrounds and/or come from the same geographical areas, and to a certain extent naturally have the same accents as their characters which make them sound authentic and believable. In the following subchapters the protagonists' as well as their respective voice actors' use of language is described with examples.

5.5.1 Michael's language

Michael and Michael's voice actor, Ned Luke, have a few things in common concerning origin and language. Ned Luke is a professional actor and he was born in Danville, Illinois (IMBD Ned Luke n.d.). Illinois is situated in the Midwest region of the United States and Luke's character Michael performs his criminal activities before the events of *GTA V* in North Yankton, which is possibly the real life equivalent of North Dakota, also located in the Midwest (Labov, Ash and Boberg 2005: 28). Consequently, the fictional character Michael was probably born and raised somewhere in the Midwest, similarly to Ned Luke. In other words, Illinois and North Dakota are relatively close, both dialectically and geographically, adding a sense of authenticity to Michael's persona and speech.

Despite the similarities in the dialect of Illinois and North Dakota, it is worth noting that Illinois belongs partly to the general northern dialect area, whereas North Dakota belongs to a transitional area, the North Central region, which is located between the West dialect area

and the North dialect area (Labov et al. 2005: 133-134). The North Central dialect differs from North dialect area, for example in the strong use of the low back merger of /o/ and /oh/, resulting in similar pronunciation with a short *o* in words such as Don vs. Dawn and sock vs. talk (Labov et al. 2005: 60-61, 122, 141). The differences between dialects can be intricate and thus cannot be fully analyzed due to the scope of the present study. However, it is important to point out that there is a connection between Ned Luke and Michael in terms of dialect and origin. In addition, Labov et al. (2005: 60) remark that the low back marker is a characteristic of large parts of Northern America, including the West where Los Angeles/Los Santos is located. Moreover, Wells (1982: 470-471) spells out that General American, which is for example spoken in the Midwest and West, is a concept without eastern or southern elements. This makes Ned Luke a convenient choice to voice Michael, since Michael is thought to have lived in the Midwest as well as the West including North Dakota and California.

As noted in the above paragraph, Michael's character is from North Yankton, which is a state in the Midwest. To an outsider, Michael's accent is very close to General American, which is typical for a Caucasian male from the upper Midwest. Michael's speech is rhotic, which means he pronounces the /r/ sound after a vowel if present in the written word, as explained by Mugglestone (2012). Rhoticity as a characteristic in speech is widespread in North America and the /r/ sound is audible in many Northern American accents (Mugglestone 2012: 389).

As mentioned in chapter 3.6.2 on impoliteness, politeness and face-threatening acts, Culpeper (2001: 247, 261) argues that impolite behavior including verbal conflict can supplement or even further character development and plot. Indeed, this can be seen in *GTA V*, since the plot centers on Michael's and Trevor's conflict. Michael and Trevor have heated arguments throughout the story and those arguments not only advance the plot, but also develop the characters as new information arises in the arguments about the characters whether told explicitly by themselves or by another character. Face-threatening acts especially deliberate attacks on face, i.e. impoliteness, are very common occurrences in these arguments. Taboo words, such as "fuck" among many others, occur frequently in Michael's speech. In the preparing cutscene of the mission "The Paleto Score" Michael

uses sarcasm to ridicule Trevor and utters "Oh, you're fucking A-right it's sarcasm! You fuck!" adding an insult to the end after Trevor asks Michael if his words were sarcasm. Deliberate attacks on face such as these are nothing out of the ordinary in Michael's speech. Michael attacks positive face, for example by calling people by derogatory names and using taboo words as well as negative face, for example by telling people to shut up. In addition, taboo words are used frequently in Michael's "normal" speech, as in discussions, which are not arguments. However, due to his short temper and his dissatisfaction to life in general, he resorts to shouting and yelling quite often. Michael's pitch is quite varied, also when he speaks with a normal voice, perhaps suggesting extroversion. Even when Michael is not agitated or shouting, Michael's voice is strong and audible indicating vigor and masculinity.

Michael is not afraid to be impolite and use taboo words around people, who are not close to him in terms of social distance or among people who in theory have more power than him, for example high ranking special agents. For instance, Dave Norton is an FIB agent, who gives orders to Michael, but in "Dead Man Walking" Michael says "Fuck you. You ungrateful prick" as well as other similar crude comments to Dave during the story. In addition, Devin Weston is one of the antagonists in *GTA V* and a billionaire who employs and extorts the protagonists but still in the ending cutscene of the mission "The Blitz Score" Michael can be heard saying "I don't give a fuck what you want, pencil neck" to him among other derogatory remarks later in the game.

Michael also uses obscene language among people close to him, for instance his family and his partners in crime. One could argue that the protagonists and later the culprits who are closely associated with the protagonists have a politeness culture of their own. Their politeness culture is two-folded since intentional face threats are made constantly; sometimes in order to offend the hearer but sometimes to create a sense of comradeship by using mock impoliteness. Examples of mock impoliteness include the conversation between Michael and Trevor while driving during the mission "Paleto Score Setup"; the men talk in a friendly manner but still throw insults at each other. During the transition, Trevor says "you precious ass" to Michael and makes sarcastic comments about Michael's expensive taste, while Michael teases Trevor by calling him a hipster, even though Trevor

hates hipsters. Moreover, later in the mission's cutscene, Trevor throws pebbles at Michael while waiting for a bus and Michael responds to this by yelling "I'm going to break your fingers if you don't knock that shit off" but Trevor shrugs off the threat by responding "Well, please, alright. You'd alleviate the boredom" nonchalantly. After the dialogue, both men seem to be calm and there is no noticeable hostility between Michael and Trevor for the remainder of the mission. The characters know each other well enough to understand when the other person is serious, and when he is just using mock impoliteness. Also sometimes Michael, Trevor or some of the culprits greet each other by referring them as "ladies". Obviously referring to someone as the opposite sex could be considered insulting but usually such notions are regarded as a friendly way of greeting each other because their social distance is not too far apart and the tone of voice is not hostile.

However, occasionally the protagonist's insults can be considered as intentional face threats meant to offend the other character. Michael and Trevor have many heated arguments where both attack each other's face, for example in the mission "The Paleto Score". In the beginning cutscene Michael and Trevor have an argument, where they shout at each other. Michael says that "It's another one of your fucking disasters" when referring to Trevor's relationship with Patricia. Michael effectively attacks Trevor's face by insulting him. Later in the argument Trevor attacks Michael's face by saying "Oh, you're full of shit!" Both insults are intentional face threats, which are attacks on the positive face. Furthermore, the face threats are strengthened by a taboo word and they are personified through the use of "you" making the attack on face even more powerful. Michael and Franklin are clearly angry at each other; their voices are loud suggesting strong feelings, their body language is agitated and their eyes are burning with anger. The argument stops only when Franklin intercepts it and shifts their attention to the mission at hand. In conclusion, in order to differentiate intentional insults meant to offend and mock impoliteness, one must acknowledge the context and paralinguistic features in addition to the content of the conversations.

Overall, Michael's speech-acts are quite similar throughout the game. He wants to gain recognition and sometimes evade responsibility with his illocutionary acts. Michael is eager to be in control but the perlocutionary acts as intended by Michael's illocutionary acts do

not always meet. In other words, even though Michael uses words to display authority or twist the truth, his words do not always have the desired effect among the other characters, especially not with Trevor.

5.5.2 Franklin's language

Franklin is voiced by Shawn "Solo" Fonteno, who is a Los Angeles native and has a history of crime such as "gangbanging" and drug dealing almost identically to Franklin (Hip Hop TV 2014). Fonteno has also been a rapper and he has performed some minor roles as a gangster in the movie *The Wash* and in another Rockstar's game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (IMBD Shawn Fonteno n.d.). In Hip Hop TV's (2014) video *Life Behind The Game - The Story of Shawn Fonteno (Documentary) voice of Franklin from GTA V* Fontana talks about his character Franklin describing their background with phrases such as "did they research me?" and "it felt just like me." Overall, the real life of Shawn Fonteno and the fictional Franklin Clinton have a noticeably similar background, taking into consideration that Franklin is not based on Fonteno's life. Franklin's authenticity, as an "ex-hustler" is sealed by Fonteno's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), which is the variety of English both Fonteno and Franklin use. The African American Vernacular English, sometimes also called Ebonics, is a defining aspect of Franklin's personality, and thus it will be discussed next in some detail.

Franklin was born and raised in Los Santos among the African American community and naturally Franklin himself is African American and as noted above speaks AAVE. Franklin's use of AAVE is so defining of him that many characters during the story mimic his way of speech, when addressing him. For example, Trevor, Michael's son Jimmy and many of the villains greet Franklin differently compared to other characters, for example calling him "homie" or "bro" and so forth. Smitherman (1999) and Rickford (1999) outline some phonological and grammatical key features of AAVE. Some of those key features are evident in Franklin's language and are thus presented in this study. However, Rickford (1999: 12) notes that like most English varieties, AAVE also varies inherently and not all speakers of AAVE speak in the same manner. The following examples aim to show Franklin's extensive use of AAVE.

Franklin has a great deal of phonological aspects typical of AAVE in his speech. As an example, the realization of the final *ng* as *n* in gerunds (Rickford 1999: 4) is used constantly in Franklin's speech as in fuckin', shootin', lookin' and so forth. Additionally, the initial voiced *th*, for example in "that", is realized as *d* (Smithermann 1999: 24) in Franklin's speech regularly throughout the game. Examples include "Yeah, dat's (that's) the place, man" in "Complications" and "Man, I come by for dat (that) drink you offered. Dat's (That's) all" in "Father/Son". Moreover, also the final *th* can be realized as *f'*, *t* or *d* (Smithermann 1999: 24) and this feature is present in Franklin's speech quite often, for example in "Repossession" when he utters "Man, fuck this employee of the mond (month) shit homie." In the mission "Chop" Franklin's utterance "'Cause maybe we doing our own *thang* (thing)" includes the realization of *ing* as *ang*, (Rickford 1999: 5, Smithermann 1999: 24) and is used extensively by Franklin. Lastly, the word stress shifts to the front of some words relatively often in Franklin's speech, for example 'BUL-shit' in "Chop" and 'PO-lice' in "The Long Stretch"; a phonological feature typical of AAVE (Smithermann 1999: 25).

Franklin's use of African American Vernacular English extends beyond phonological features; also grammatical structures typical of AAVE can be heard constantly in his speech. For instance, Franklin rarely uses the copula *is* or *are* to describe present tense actions. Examples include "You Ø calling them on cellphone, you dumb motherfucker? They Ø going to trace this shit in a sec!" in the mission "Chop" and "I mean what the hell Ø going on here?" in mission "The Long Stretch". The omission of the copula is and *are* in present tense actions is a typical feature of AAVE (Rickford 1999: 6, Smithermann 1999: 23). Moreover, the use of *done* used to describe a completed action (Rickford 1999: 6, Smithermann 1999: 23) as in "You done finally fuckin' lost it" in "Reposession" and "What the fuck you gone done?" in "Chop" occurs constantly in Franklin's speech. Additionally, the use of *ain't* as a general preverbal negator and also multiple negation are features of AAVE (Rickford 1999: 8) and present in Franklin's speech. Examples include "I ain't thought about your ass in years" and "No, I ain't missed ya", both uttered by Franklin in the mission "The Long Stretch". Lastly, *finna* is a grammatical marker of immediate future in AAVE (Smithermann 1999: 23). Franklin uses *finna*, for example twice in the mission "Blitz Play" uttering "So we really finna do this shit? We're finna risk

our lives to rob some motherfucking government killers again?'"

Overall, Franklin's speech is full of phonological and grammatical features typical for African American Vernacular English and the aforementioned examples are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of AAVE features in Franklin's speech. In the ending cutscene of "Dead Man Walking" Franklin's utterance "I ain't finna let no motherfucking cat think he so motherfucking crazy run me up a tree. Fuck dat (that)" includes a number of AAVE features such as the use of *finna*, the use of *ain't*, multiple negation, omission of copula *is* and the realization of *th* as *d*.

Franklin is fairly composed, at least compared to Michael or Trevor, and his speech is somewhat long-winded, indicating a sense of seriousness. Franklin's pitch is relatively stable and he uses the least volume while speaking, suggesting calmness, seriousness and even withdrawal. However, Franklin is also capable of outbursts but they are not as violent or frequent as Michael's or Trevor's tantrums.

Franklin, similarly to the other protagonists as well as many others in the game, uses taboo words and impolite language in general in his speech. Franklin uses abusive terms of address (e.g. motherfucker, asshole, fucking moron, fool, lanky son of a bitch, stretch mark-ass bitch etc.) attacking positive face needs, especially in conversations with Lamar and other former gang affiliates, quite possibly to distance himself from them. In addition, he attacks Michael's and Trevor's negative face by ordering them to stop arguing a number of times during the story, for example in the missions "Monkey Business" and "Paleto Score". In "Monkey Business" Franklin stops the argument between Michael and Trevor by extending his arms between the two and attacking their negative face by restricting their free will to continue the quarrel by saying "Ho-ho-hold on man. Can y'all knock that shit off?" Respectively, in "Paleto Score" Franklin expresses his weariness to Michael's and Trevor's arguing in the following manner: "Hey! Hey! Enough! You got me out here. You roped me into your crazy world of bullshit. If it was lies, New Age shit and arguments about how good life used to be, I could have stayed my ass in Los Santos" swiftly ending the argument. Franklin's social distance to Michael and Trevor is possibly greater than his social distance to Lamar, which could explain the difference in these kinds of face-

threatening situations, since Franklin rarely attacks Michael's or Trevor's positive face.

African American Vernacular English is the predominant feature in Franklin's locutionary acts. Franklin is relatively frank in his speech and even though he could not be regarded as charismatic, he has a certain aura of authority around him. Therefore his illocutionary and perlocutionary acts match most of the time, i.e. intentions behind the words match the outcome of the utterance. For instance, if Franklin expresses that he wants an argument to end (illocutionary act), the argument will most likely end (perlocutionary act).

5.5.3 Trevor's language

Trevor Philips is voiced by Steven Ogg. He is a Canadian actor, born and raised in Calgary, who has appeared in numerous movies and TV-shows (IMBD Steven Ogg n.d., Steven Ogg n.d.). Similarly to Luke and Fontana, Ogg has various aspects in common with the character he plays. Both have spent their early life in Canada and then afterwards moved to the United States. In addition, they have the same accent – a slight Canadian accent. Throughout the game Trevor is reminded of his nationality based on his accent, which Trevor does not take kindly to. In reality, according to Labov et al. (2005: 216) the Canadian English is basically a variety of North American dialects spoken in Midland and Western regions of the United States, for example Canadian English and almost all American dialects are rhotic. However, there are two characteristics in Canadian English which distinguish it from its southern counterparts across the border.

The first characteristic is the "Canadian raising". It can be defined as "the centralization of the nuclei of /ay/ and /aw/ before voiceless consonants. This produces higher nuclei in words like right and out than in words like ride and loud" (Labov et al. 2005: 221). However, despite its name, the Canadian raising is not thoroughly spread across Canada nor is it only used in Canadian English (Labov et al. 2005: 221). Additionally, Labov et al. (2005: 221) remark that Canadian raising is the most popular stereotype of Canadian speech among Americans, especially when applied to /aw/, as can be seen in *Grand Theft Auto V*, when Trevor is mocked of his accent.

The second characteristic typical for Canadian English is the Canadian Shift, which is explained by Labov et al. (2005: 19, 303) in the manner that the low back merger of /o/ and /oh/ trigger a chain shift among the front short vowels, resulting in short /o/ turning into a long /oh/. Labov et al. (2005) also offer a table to visualize the process (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Canadian Shift (adapted from Labov et al. 2012: 19)

	V		Vy		Vw		Vh	
	−back	+back	−back	+back	±back	+back	−round	+round
high	i	u	iy		iw	uw		
mid	e	ʌ	ey	oy		ow		oh
low	æ	o		ay		ɑw		

Even though Canadian English differs from other Northern American dialects in a few ways as discussed above, it still is relatively similar, especially when compared to English spoken in the western parts of the United States. Labov et al. (2005: 217, 279) describe the process of distinguishing English used in the west from Canadian English as "problematic" and stress that a "complex definition" was required to differentiate them. They came to the conclusion that people in the West use the "low back merger, where /uw/ is fronted much more than /ow/" but nevertheless lack the Canadian raising and the Canadian Shift (Labov et al. 2005: 279, 284). Consequently, it is understandable that Trevor is displeased when his accent is mocked, since there seems to be little difference in the language used in the West and Canada. Moreover, Canadian English is quite homogenous despite its vast area and the accents are very much alike. Only east of Ontario, particularly in Newfoundland, dialects have more regional variety (Labov et al. 2005: 217, Wells 1982: 491-492). Therefore Ogg's origin from Calgary (located relatively close to the American border) and Trevor's origin from the "Canadian border region of America" as he calls it in "Friends United" does not matter in the sense that the English spoken in the aforementioned places is virtually the same, which is a positive factor when analyzing the authenticity of a character's language.

As mentioned above, Trevor was born in Canada and thus he has a slight Canadian accent even though in one of the Rampages (Rampage four against soldiers) he denies that he

sounds Canadian to some soldiers who make fun of his accent by exaggerating the Canadian dialect, particularly the Canadian raising. The soldiers address Trevor in the following manner: "You're clearly a tourist. From our friends from up north, eh, aboot (*laughter*)" to which Trevor responds "We don't even say it like that" but the soldiers continue to mock him stereotypically, by saying "There's a moose loose aboot the hoose" (There's a moose loose about the house). Trevor is not entertained by their mocking and replies "Fuck's sake. It's a faint fucking accent!" and enters his enraged state and starts a gun fight with the soldiers.

As shown above, Trevor's impulsive nature is present in his speech as well. Trevor is usually very impolite to people around him and he intentionally (verbally) abuses people around him in the most creative of ways, attacking their negative and positive face. Consequently, Trevor uses profane language and taboo words excessively and perhaps his most used word is "fuck". Other profanities used by Trevor include: fucker, shit, shitbag, cunt, pussy, bastard, dipshit, bullshit, cocksnot, dick and the list goes on. Trevor also has a habit of including many taboo words into one utterance, for example "You motherfucking fuck", "You fucking pussy" or "Fuck, screw this". Trevor's use of language in terms of speech-acts is mostly quite straightforward. His illocutionary acts imply submission to Trevor's will, as well as scaring people around him. Trevor wants to do as he pleases and usually characters around him produce the perlocutionary acts as intended by Trevor's illocutionary acts. In other words Trevor's impolite, profanity riddled speech aims to create confusion or fear and usually Trevor succeeds in doing so.

As an example of Trevor's impoliteness, in the mission "Nervous Ron" Trevor's friend and assistant Wade tries to do a task, which was given to him by Trevor but he is not happy with the results and shouts to Wade that "You are fucking useless!" successfully being impolite to Wade's positive face. Firstly, Trevor uses a taboo word "fucking", secondly he personalizes the insult by using "you" and thirdly he uses the absolute ranking of imposition by calling Wade "useless". However, it is worth noting that Trevor seems to have certain culture of (im)politeness with his "friends" Wade and Ron, since he constantly threatens and insults them but they do not seem to be shocked – even though occasionally they do show signs of fear but still continue to help Trevor in various ways. Their social

distance is small and Trevor is clearly the authority figure and has power over Wade and Ron. As mentioned before, the co-protagonists also have their own politeness culture but the chemistry between them is different compared to the chemistry between Trevor, Wade and Ron. The protagonists are more equal in power, thus their use of language is more equal as well. Trevor uses mock impoliteness quite often, especially with Michael. For instance he uses the terms "sugar tits" and "fat snake" to greet Michael. However, when communicating with Wade or Ron, Trevor's speech is more sinister and threatening and verbal abuse can escalate to physical abuse, which does not happen with Michael or Franklin.

Trevor's impoliteness is lexical but he also uses paralinguistic elements to enhance his message, which is usually quite unpleasant. His language is theatrical and he uses exaggerated intonation, thus he has varied pitch in his speech. He speaks rather quickly but varies his pace of speech occasionally, for example to emphasize specific words. He also has a loud, breathy voice and he often yells at people just to make a point or because he is angry at them or himself. For example, in the beginning of the mission "Fresh meat" Trevor trips in front of Franklin and Franklin starts to laugh, Trevor gets angry and yells insults such as "Well, fuck you!" and "You little jumped-up motherfucker!" at Franklin but in the end he is angry for himself because he was "a fuckin' asshole" and punches a random pedestrian and shouts "Everybody! Assholes!"

Even though Trevor is impolite most of the time, he is also capable of being polite if he deems the recipient worthy of such speech. For instance, Trevor treats Patricia Madrazo well which is reflected in their dialogue. Trevor speaks to her with affection and calmly and very politely in general. As an example, Trevor calls Patricia beautiful and when he has to return Patricia back to her husband in the mission "Monkey Business", Trevor sobs "I've never been so happy and so sad in my life" and continues "For… for some… for some reason, everyone I love, abandons me" implying that he loves Patricia. Additionally, he speaks respectfully, even submissively to his mother in the mission "Mrs. Phillips".

6 DISCUSSION

In the following subchapters the main findings of the study are discussed and the limitations of the study are acknowledged. Additionally, conclusions based on the main findings are presented and lastly suggestions for further research on *Grand Theft Auto V* are proposed.

6.1 Main findings

The aim of the study was to analyze the protagonists of *GTA V* and present what elements contribute to their identity construction and whether or not the protagonists' identities develop during the main story of *Grand Theft Auto V*. The protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V* are so well developed that their backgrounds, movement and all the little details including gestures and mannerisms give a sense of verisimilitude not often found in digital games. Michael, Franklin and Trevor are constructed in such a manner that at times the player might think they are actual people. Naturally this is not the case. The protagonists are well fleshed out characters, including the use of highly sophisticated motion capture technology (Corrie 2013), in a big budget digital game but, for example, the lack of moral consequences makes the world of *GTA V* very different compared to real Los Angeles.

The protagonists' identities are constructed in a multitude of ways. Since the characters have been motion captured the (voice) actors bring their own personality to the game. This is most notable in the protagonist's language, as shown in chapter 5.5. The protagonists use authentic, street credible language and gestures to accentuate their speech. Most likely contributing factors to the language authenticity are that the voice actors are more or less from the same geographical locations and partly share similar history as their respective characters. Additionally, the protagonists use extremely explicit language riddled with profanities – nothing is censored. However, explicit language use does not feel forced or out of place – after all, the protagonists are professional criminals who commit terrible crimes. Therefore, when one evaluates the protagonists, the main characters reinforce existing schemas of how criminals use language and express themselves.

The use of language is closely connected to politeness and impoliteness and when discussing *GTA V*, more to the latter. The protagonists, among many of the other characters in *GTA V*, use strong language which often results in impolite utterances. Michael, Franklin and Trevor deliver face-threatening acts repeatedly, whether in order to insult someone intentionally or as mock impoliteness. As presented in the chapter discussing language, the protagonists have a very tolerating politeness culture. The protagonists' speech is rife with grave insults and offensive language but it is often meant as banter in the form of mock impoliteness, which in fact strengthens their bond and creates comical effect. Even the loudest arguments rarely lead to more than shouting and hollow threats among the three protagonists. However, this is not the case with other non-player characters; arguments particularly with Trevor can lead to fatal outcomes. Especially Michael and Trevor attack each other's positive and negative face but also other characters are at the receiving end too. Franklin mainly attacks negative face in conversations with Michael and Trevor, for example by asking the other two to calm down or "shut up" but attacks positive and negative face needs in the company of Lamar and other gang affiliates. This is most likely due to the difference in social distance; Michael and Trevor have known each other for years but Franklin is a relatively new addition to the posse. Conversely, Franklin has known Lamar and other gang member since childhood, thus Franklin is more prone to attack positive face needs, for example insult them, among people he has grown up with. It must be stressed that the difference of intentional insults meant to offend and mock impoliteness are a matter of context. The use of language can be related to the situation at hand or social distance but it can also be a matter of personality.

The protagonists' personalities are built thoroughly in *GTA V*. The story is built around the conflict between Michael and Trevor, who have some traits in common, such as impulsiveness, but overall they are mirror images of each other. As Culpeper (2001: 247, 257) argues, verbal conflict may further the development of characters and he continues on to say that contrast helps define characters. Consequently, Michael and Trevor are contrasting characters whose verbal conflict draws out their personality and furthers the story. Michael is a rich, sleek family man who lives under a false identity in an expensive and prestigious neighborhood and in contrast Trevor is a rugged unpretentious man living alone in his shabby trailer who values honesty above all else. The men came from similar

backgrounds and had much in common in the past but during the years they grew apart, which affects their relationship in the game. Franklin acts as a neutral character who keeps the other two protagonists under control, if the situation is in danger of getting out of control. However, Franklin also has conflicts of his own with his former acquaintances and associates. It is during these conflicts when the protagonists "let it all out", in other words bluntly express their true feelings and express their personality, thus constructing the protagonists' identities.

In addition to the conflicts and dialogue, the protagonists' identity is built through more concrete means. In particular, different group membership categories include ascribed aspects of the protagonists' identity. For instance their sex, nationality, age, ethnicity and social class construct their identities. All protagonists are masculine men, which is realized in their reckless outlook on life. Michael and Trevor are Caucasians, while Franklin is Afro American. Franklin's and Trevor's ethnicity is reflected in their language use as well; Franklin speaks Afro American Vernacular English while Trevor's slight Canadian accent is in the spotlight too. However, none of the protagonists are foreigners to American culture, as Nico Bellic was in *GTA IV*. Michael and Trevor are in their mid-forties while Franklin is in his twenties. This implies that two of the protagonists have already experienced what life has to offer but one of them is starting to find his own way in life. Consequently, Franklin being the youngest of the three is the most ambitious and climbs the social ladder, for example by moving to a better neighborhood during the story. Michael has a midlife crisis despite his wealth and yearns for the good old times. Trevor still lives alone in a trailer in a poor neighborhood and continues his life of madness. All in all, group membership roles certainly affect how the protagonists' identities are constructed.

Social role category, such as kinship and occupation, also includes ascribed elements of identity. Retiree Michael's role as a father and husband, albeit a poor one, is not left unnoticed by the player. Ex-gang member Franklin's unfriendly relationship with his aunt, who is his only relative, is also evident. Methamphetamine producer Trevor's dominating presence among his friends Wade and Ron creates a stark contrast to his relationship with his mother, whom in turn seems to have a tight grip on Trevor. He seems to be a classic example of a victim of maltreatment who in turn later victimizes others. However, perhaps

most importantly game-wise, all the protagonists are criminals. These social roles contribute how the protagonists are perceived, which consequently affects their identity formation.

Reflexive identity is realized in the protagonists' personal category and appearance excluding skin color and body structure. The protagonists' aims and preferences in terms of goods such as vehicles and housing are reflexive aspects of one's identity. For instance Michael's preference for expensive attire, premium cars, luxurious housing and clean-cut appearance in general construct his identity. Franklin is also happy to live more lavishly than in the beginning of the story and dress fashionably. Trevor continues to live in his trailer even after acquiring considerable sums of money. He also makes a point about dressing in dirty and inexpensive clothes stating that he wants to avoid hypocrisy at all costs, creating a contrast to Michael; after all, Michael has received the money from the government, lives in witness protection with a false identity but still continues his life of crime but at the same time tries to keep up appearances and assimilate into the American upper class.

The data consists of digital game footage meaning that the content is fixed. Moreover, the protagonists resemble real people so real-life knowledge is applied to them when making impressions in addition to dramatic role knowledge, e.g. genre specific schemas. However, one is inclined to argue that reflexive aspects of identity are artificial in the game. As an example, the attire, hairstyles as well as certain other elements regarding the appearance of the co-protagonists can be altered but the characters in the cutscenes do not treat the protagonists differently, nor do the protagonists react to the changes. Therefore, the reflexive aspects of identity are in fact ascribed aspects of identity. In other words, all the different aspects of the protagonists are given in advance. In *GTA V* reactivity is only found in the ending mission. In the end of the story Franklin is given the task of deciding whether to kill either Michael or Trevor or alternatively pick a third option and fight together with Michael and Trevor against all the main antagonists and their lackeys in the game. In deciding the final outcome of the story, Boudreau's (2012) hybrid- identity and Kücklich's (2006: 108) idea about the protagonist affecting the player and vice-versa most likely contributes to the decision the player has to make. The fate of Michael and Trevor is in the

hands of Franklin superficially but ultimately the player makes the decision.

As described above, a number of factors contribute to the co-protagonists identity construction, and ultimately their persona may shape their fate in the game. However, the protagonists' identity is built as the story progresses. Not everything is revealed in the beginning, partly because their identities are developed during the cutscenes and side missions alongside the story, and partly due to the amount of information about the characters. Therefore, the protagonists go through an arc during the game. Occasionally aspects contributing to their identities are revealed by some external event and occasionally by the protagonists' internal conflicts such as Michael's dissatisfaction with his stale life. Eventually Michael returns to his criminal ways inspired by Franklin through a coincidence, which leads to Trevor finding out that Michael is in fact alive. This pattern of internal conflict leading to an external event and vice-versa is repeated throughout the story. In other words changing circumstances trigger change within the characters but also change within the characters lead to changing circumstances. Examples of changing circumstances leading to internal change in character include Michael's family leaving Michael for a period of time and thus Michael becoming a better family man and Franklin being fired from the job he never liked leading Franklin to become more determined to change his life in other ways too. An example of internal change leading to change in circumstances is Michael being dissatisfied with his life in the witness protection program and therefore returning to the life of crime. During the cycle of internal conflict and external circumstances more and more information is revealed about the protagonists and thus their identity is constructed as well.

Every protagonist, in varying degree, has different personalities or more specifically different roles among different people during the story. As in real life, people alter their behavior in different situations, so do the protagonists in *GTA V* too. Particularly Trevor seems to have almost a total change of personality depending on surrounding people and context. He is normally abusive and dominant but for example he is the opposite with his mother and Patricia. Another example of his sudden change of personality is when he spares the man he just tortured even though an FIB agent implied that the man should be killed. Although I have abundant dramatic-role knowledge about action-adventure games

and especially knowledge about *Grand Theft Auto* games, Trevor was full of surprises and contradictions throughout the story. At first Trevor seemed to be a vile psychopath, i.e. a flat character, but as the story progressed, more traits and features such as compassion, fear and loyalty were revealed about him. Trevor could no longer fit one archetype and he no longer was a caricature of a psychopath. Moreover, the fact that Trevor could be killed by the player via Franklin's avatar was surprising. Therefore Trevor can be considered as a round character because he is schema refreshing since he is a complex character, who undergoes change during the story and repeatedly surprises the player.

Michael also tends to have shifts in his roles. For instance Michael is more respectful to Franklin and his idol Solomon Richards than to Trevor or his family members, perhaps due to social distance. At first Michael seems to be the sensible protagonist compared to Trevor but as his hypocrisy is exposed, he no longer feels as one dimensional. He is flawed, similarly to the other protagonists, but believes he is doing the right thing. Even though Trevor and Franklin are in many ways at the opposite side of the spectrum, they also share similarities especially on a literary level. Both characters undergo change, Michael even more so than Trevor, both characters are complex and do not fit an archetype and both surprise the player. As an example of change in Michael, his behavior changes during the story. In the beginning Michael disregards his family members but after they leave him and end up in life-threatening danger and eventually return to their house, Michael starts to treat them more respectfully. Admittedly Trevor is the most surprising protagonist but Michael has an element of surprise as well. For instance, as is the case with Trevor, Michael can get killed in the end which is quite surprising since usually the protagonists do not die during the story in an action-adventure game. Consequently, Michael can also be regarded as a round, schema refreshing character. In the beginning of the story Michael is a stressed, retired criminal disregarding his family but at the end of the story he is more of a family man, a co-producer of a movie and happy with his life in general – given that he is not dead.

Franklin seems to be the most static in regard to personality shifts. One could argue that Franklin is the least schema refreshing of the protagonists; an ex-gang member aiming for something higher in life. However, he cannot be considered as a flat character since he

clearly goes through change and manages to surprise the player during the story. Franklin starts as a repossession man living in a poor neighborhood with his despised aunt and at the end of the story he lives in a prestigious area in a two-story mansion as a millionaire. At times Franklin seems distant and even callous but during the game his empathy for animals, especially dogs, is presented to the player. Although Franklin is ambitious and hardworking, his practical approach to assassinations is somewhat surprising. One should also bear in mind that Franklin (via the player) decides how the story of *Grand Theft Auto V* ends by choosing whether to kill Michael or Trevor as ushered by two separate antagonists or by choosing the third option and eliminate all the enemies left in the story together with Michael and Trevor. In other words, the player has a choice to make whether Franklin becomes the most cold-blooded of the three or the white knight, who once again saves his friends from peril.

Overall the identities of the protagonists in *Grand Theft Auto V* are constructed to be believable but yet fun to play as. The protagonists are different from each other but all three are engaging and entertaining because they are round and well-constructed characters. The present study used characterization to analyze the protagonists' group membership, personal and social role categories as well as their personalities, visual features and language. Evidently, great care has been taken to construct each category thoroughly and authentically. Ultimately the protagonists are even more than the sum of their parts forming a heuristic identity for each protagonist.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Identity construction is a complex process and people value different aspects when forming impressions about real life people as well as virtual characters. Additionally, one must acknowledge that qualitative analysis is intrinsically subjective. Also Culpeper (2001: 95) notes that the flat/round distinction is based on schema formation, which is subjective and depends on a number of factors such as age, experiences and cultural background. Similarly the process of characterization cannot be strictly objective; it involves observations and therefore the findings of the study cannot be extrapolated directly to other studies on fictional characters in digital worlds. Nevertheless, the present study's findings provide a

baseline or reference material for future studies on *GTA V,* and also to some extent for other studies on fictional characters. However, one has to acknowledge the relative subjectivity of the methodology (qualitative analysis) and theoretical framework (characterization) used in the study when evaluating the results of the analysis.

Additionally, *Grand Theft Auto V* is a large game both geographically and story-wise. Completing the story and the side missions can take up to a hundred hours or more. Moreover, *GTA V* has over 160, 000 lines of dialogue (Webb 2014) and the script of the game is over 3,500 pages when an average script for a movie is around 70-120 pages (Growcott 2014). Therefore every line of the protagonists' speech could not be analyzed and thus the cutscenes were chosen as the primary data in order to keep the data somewhat manageable.

GTA V was already impressive in scope when it was released in September 2013 but Rockstar Games has provided more downloadable content (DLC) for the game since its release. The various DLC packs have added weapons, vehicles, clothes, hairstyles and beard styles into the game which can be used to alter the characters' appearance and thus the characters potentially end up being slightly different than in the vanilla version of the game. However, no additional story content has been added for now.

Lastly, research on virtual identities in digital games is still sparse. Therefore linking the present study to already existing studies is difficult at best. Boudreau's (2007, 2012) studies on identity formation and hybrid-identity touch on the subject of avatars' virtual identities in fictional worlds but still the primary focus is on the player. One reason for the lack of studies focusing on virtual character's identities is possibly the fact that games have not contained intricate enough characters in order to study them until quite recently.

6.3 Conclusions and suggestions for further research

In conclusion it can be stated that *GTA V* is a massive and ambitious entertainment product and arguably the characters are the essence of the game. The present study considers digital games as texts and therefore a modified approach on characterization based on literary

theory has been used to analyze the protagonists of *Grand Theft Auto V*. The findings demonstrate that an approach, which was originally intended for analyzing literary texts, provides valid means for analyzing fictional characters in a virtual world. In fact Culpeper's (2001) applied theoretical framework is ideal for analyzing characters in digital games, since for example the character's visual features as well as the use of voice and accent can be analyzed more accurately than in literature. Therefore, one can justifiably state that digital games can indeed be regarded as texts.

The main characters are fleshed out in a manner which exceeds many other fictional texts. The protagonists' identities are built thoroughly including the smallest details, such as unique gaits, facial expressions and personal histories among many others. The protagonists are interesting enough to make one simply watch their endeavors without playing with the avatars, even though the essence of digital games is gameplay and interaction. In fact, the protagonists are so lifelike that at times they could be mistaken for real people. However, the lack of moral consequences and the pure absurdity of their actions during the story rule out that possibility. Additionally, reactivity in the cutscenes is not present. However, even the main story besides the actual mission gameplay includes elements typical for a digital game such as player intervention, i.e. choosing the approach and henchmen for an upcoming heist. Especially the ending involves player agency. Ultimately the player decides what happens to Trevor and Michael. The fact that *GTA V* has three protagonists makes this scenario plausible.

The present study is by no means exhaustive. There is no denying that digital games and gaming have proven to be a major cultural force and the industry will continue to grow and evolve in the future (Gartner and Gartner 2013). Therefore, more research on digital games as a whole is required in order to better understand this form of entertainment, which blurs the lines of different media cultures. Moreover, *GTA V* is a giant among games and thus provides ample ground for further interdisciplinary research from a variety of perspectives.

Further research on *GTA V* could include an in-depth analysis on the language used by the characters along the lines of characterization. Culpeper (2001) employs literary devices such as turn allocation, lexical richness, word frequency in his research on fictional

characters. Such means would require a quantitative approach in addition to qualitative perspectives, which could supplement the present study. Furthermore, the other half of *GTA V*, *GTA Online* could be studied. Boudreau's (2012) idea of hybrid-identity could be applied to the analysis, since *GTA Online* includes a social element because it is a multiplayer game and the in-game avatar requires more input from the player. Moreover, since *GTA V* is such a widespread cultural product, a sociological approach could be applied to it. For example *GTA Online* includes the possibility of creating a female avatar but in the story of *GTA V* all the protagonists are male. Cassel and Jenkins (2000) have argued that digital games objectify women and some reviewers of *GTA V* have come to the same conclusion. According to some reviews, *GTA V* is misogynist depicting women as stereotypical strippers, prostitutes, feminists and irritable wives (Campbell 2014, Hoggins 2013, Parfitt 2013). Be that as it may, *Grand Theft Auto V* is a phenomenon and the possibilities for further research are literally endless.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

NRMgamingHD. (n.d.). GTA V cutscene HD Movie.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXQjmslRpvY. (12 November, 2013).

MKIceAndFire. (n.d.). GTA 5: Season 1. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=ELJ58FooV6tJk.
(27 January, 2014).

Secondary sources

Aarseth, E. (2001). Computer Game Studies, Year One. *The international journal of computer game
research* [online] 1 (1), n. pag. http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/editorial.html (6 June,
2015).

Aarseth, E. (2003). Playing research: Methodological approaches to game analysis. [online].
http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/dac/papers/Aarseth.pdf. (25 June, 2015).

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*
(5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baker, L. A. (2000). Critical Concepts: "Static" and "Dynamic" Characterization. [online].
http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english287/cc-
static_vs_dynamic_characterization.htm. (20 November, 2014).

Bertz, M. (2012). What We Know About Grand Theft Auto V: The Overview. [online].
http://www.gameinformer.com/games/grand_theft_auto_v/b/xbox360/archive/2012/11/12/
what-we-know-about-grand-theft-auto-v-the-overview.aspx. (18 November, 2013).

Bora, K. (2013). GTA 5: How 'Grand theft Auto 5' Broke 7 Guinness World Records. [online].
http://www.ibtimes.com/gta-5-how-grand-theft-auto-5-broke-7-guinness-world-records-
1420152. (15 November, 2013).

Boudreau, K. (2007). *Pixels, Parts & Pieces: Constructing Digital Identity*. Germany: VDM
Verlang. http://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/975805/1/MR34684.pdf.

Boudreau, K. (2012). *Between Play and Design: The Emergence of Hybrid-Identity in Single-Player Videogames.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Montreal, Department of Sociology and Anthropology. https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1866/8713/Boudreau_Kelly_2012_these.pdf;jsessionid=D705CF9112BFB5397BCB29298A9C2E80?sequence=4.

Brenick, A., Henning, A., Killen, M., O'Connor, A., and Collins, M. (2007). Social Evaluations of Stereotypic Images in Video Games: Unfair Legitimate or "Just Entertainment"? *Youth & Society* [online]. 38 (4) 395-419 http://yas.sagepub.com/content/38/4/395.

Brown, G. (1990). *Listening to Spoken English (Applied Linguistics and Language Study)* London: Longman.

Brown, P. and Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brustein, J. (2013). Grand Theft Auto V is the Most Expensive Game Ever – and It's Almost Obsolete. [online]. http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2013-09-18/grand-theft-auto-v-is-the-most-expensive-game-ever-and-it-s-almost-obsolete. (14 November, 2013).

Bryce, J. and Rutter, J. (2002). Killing like a Girl: gendered gaming and girl gamers' visibility. [online]. 243-255 http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/05164.00312.pdf. (25 June, 2015).

Buckingham, D. (2006). Studying Computer Games. In C. Carr, D. Buckingham, A. Burn and G. Schott (eds.), *Computer Games: Text, Narrative and Play.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1–14.

Campbell, C. (2014). Grand Theft Auto 5's misogyny is a problem its creators must finally address. [online]. http://www.polygon.com/2014/12/10/7364823/gta-5s-vicious-misogyny-ought-to-be-addressed-not-ignored. (24 June, 2015).

Cassell, J. and Jenkins, H. (2000). *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and computer games.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Child, B. (2015). Audiences in raptor: Jurassic World hits billion-dollar milestone in record time. [online]. http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jun/23/audiences-in-raptor-jurassic-world-hits-billion-dollar-milestone-in-record-time. (14 July, 2015).

Clark, S. (2008). Culture and identity. In T. Bennet and J. Frow. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis.* London: Sage, 510–529.

Consalvo, M. (2013). Game, Text, or Something Else? In. A. N. Valdivia (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies* (1st edition). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. 406-425. https://www.academia.edu/1561516/Videogame_Content_Game_Text_or_Something_Else.

Corneliussen, H. G. and Rettberg, J. W. (2008). *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Corrie, A. R. (2013). Mo-capping GTA 5's torture scene was 'another day at the office,' says Trevor's actor. [online]. http://www.polygon.com/2013/10/15/4840428/mocapping-gta-5s-torture-scene-was-another-day-at-the-office-says. (24 June, 2015).

Culpeper, J. (2001). *Language & Characterisation: People in Plays and in other Texts.* Essex: Pearson education limited.

Culpeper, J. (2011)."It's not what said, it's how you said it!": Prosody and impoliteness. In Linguistic Politeness Research Group (eds.), *Mouton Series in Pragmatics: Discursive Approaches to Politeness.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J. H. and Tosca, S. P. (2012). *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Eskelinen, M. (2001). The Gaming Situation. *The international journal of computer game research.* [online] 1 (1), n. pag. http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/ (6 June, 2015).

Eskelinen, M. (2004). Six Problems in Search of a Solution: The challenge of cybertext theory and ludology to literary theory. [online]. http://www.dichtung-digital.org/2004/3/Eskelinen/index.htm. (6 June, 2015).

Fernández-Vara, C. (2014). *Introduction to Game Analysis.* New York: Routledge.

Forster, E.M. (1927). Aspects of the Novel. *New York: Rosetta Books* [online]. http://ell.ibu.edu.ba/assets/userfiles/ell/Aspects%20of%20the%20Novel.pdf. (19 November, 2014).

Game Informer. (2012). Grand Theft Auto V: Go Big or Go Home. [online]. http://imgur.com/a/8zTzP. (6 May, 2015).

Gartner, R. M. and Gartner, J. R. (2013). *Gartner Says Worldwide Video Game Market to Total $93 Billion in 2013*. [online]. http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/2614915. (11 June, 2015).

Grand Theft Auto V Limited Edition Strategy Guide. (2013). Indianapolis, IN: BradyGames.

Growcott, M. (2014). Grand Theft Auto V's script was 3500 pages Long. [online]. http://www.gamesreviews.com/news/07/grand-theft-auto-vs-script-3500-pages-long/. (24 June, 2015).

Hand, M. and Moore, K. (2006). Community, identity and digital games. In J. Bryce and J. Rutter (eds.), *Understanding Digital Games* London: Sage, 166-183.

Hill, M. (2013). Grand Theft Auto V: meet Dan Houser, architect of a gaming phenomenon. [online]. http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/sep/07/grand-theft-auto-dan-houser. (8 May, 2014).

Hip Hop TV. (2014). Life Behind The Game - The Story of Shawn Fonteno (Documentary) voice of Franklin from GTA V. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Y7AgNeO7g. (10 October, 2014).

Hoggins, T. (2013). Grand Theft Auto V is designed deliberately to degrade women. [online]. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10355275/Grand-Theft-Auto-V-is-designed-deliberately-to-degrade-women.htm. (24 June, 2015)

IMBD Ned Luke. (n.d.). Biography. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0902623/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm. (10 October, 2014).

IMBD Shawn Fonteno. (n.d.) Biography. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1062259/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm. (15 October, 2014).

IMBD Steven Ogg. (n.d.). Biography. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1476804/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm (15 October, 2014).

Interactive Software Federation of Europe. (2012). Video games in Europe: Consumer study. [online]. http://www.isfe.eu/sites/isfe.eu/files/attachments/euro_summary_-_isfe_consumer_study.pdf. (9 February, 2014).

Juul, J. (2005). *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Järvinen, A. (2003). Making and breaking games: a typology of rules. [online]. http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/05163.56503.pdf. (6 June, 2015).

Krawczyk, M and Novak, J. (2006). *Game Development Essentials: Game Story & Character Development*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning.

Kücklich, J. (2003). Perspectives of Computer Game Philology. *The international journal of computer game research.* [online] 3 (1), n. pag. http://www.gamestudies.org/0301/kucklich/ (6 June, 2015).

Kücklich, J. (2006). Literary Theory and Digital Games. In J. Bryce J. Rutter (eds.), *Understanding Digital Games.* London: Sage, 95-112.

Labov, W., Ash, S., and Boberg, C. (2005). *Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change.* Berlin: Walter De Gruyter.

Latva, S. (2004). Pelisuunnittelun tematiikka. Lapsille tarkoitettujen digitaalisten pelien sunnittelun lähtökohtia. In M. Kankaanranta, P. Neittaanmäki and P. Häkkinen. (eds.), *Digitaalisten pelien maailmoja.* Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopistopaino, 33-50.

Literary Devices. (2015). Characterization. http://literarydevices.net/characterization/. (25 June, 2015).

Lynch, K. (2013). *Confirmed: Grand Theft Auto 5 breaks 6 sales world records.* Guinness world records. [online]. http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2013/10/confirmed-grand-theft-auto-breaks-six-sales-world-records-51900/. (14 November, 2013).

Malliet, S. (2007). Adapting the Principles of Ludology to the Method of Video Game Content Analysis. *The international journal of computer game research* [online] 7 (1), n. pag. http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/malliet (6 June, 2015).

Martinez-Flor, A. and Uso-Juan, E. (2010). *Speech Act Performance: Theoretical, empirical methodological issues.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

McMenomy, E. R. (2011). *Game on girl: identity and representation in digital rpgs.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Washington State University, Program in American Studies. https://research.wsulibs.wsu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2376/2866/McMenomy_wsu_0251E_10094.pdf?sequence=1.

Metacritic. (2013). Grand Theft Auto V. http://www.metacritic.com/game/playstation-3/grand-theft-auto-v. (25 June, 2015).

Michener, A., DeLamater, J. and Myers, D. (2004). *Social Psychology.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Mugglestone, L. (2012). *The Oxford History of English.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Murray, J. (2006). Toward a Cultural Theory of Gaming: Digital Games and the Co-Evolution of Media, Mind, and Culture. *Popular Communication* [online] 4 (3), 185–202 http://lmc.gatech.edu/~murray/PC0403_Murray.pdf

Mäyrä, F. (2008). *An Introduction to Game Studies*. London: Sage.

Oxford Dictionaries. (2015). Identity. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/identity. (15 July, 2015).

Pallit, N. (2013). *Gender identities at play: children's digital gaming in two setting in Cape Town.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Cape Town, Faculty of Humanities. https://www.academia.edu/7018339/Gender_identities_at_play_childrens_digital_gaming_in_two_settings_in_Cape_Town._PhD_thesis.

Parfitt, B. (2013). Gamers petition for sacking of GameSpot writer who criticised GTAV for misogyny. [online]. http://www.mcvuk.com/news/read/gamers-petition-for-sacking-of-gamespot-writer-who-criticised-gtav-for-misogyny. (24 June, 2015).

Rickford, J. R. (1999). *African American Vernacular English: Features, Evolution, Educational Implications.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Rutter, J and Bryce, J. (eds.) (2006). *Understanding digital games*. London: Sage.

Salen, K and Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Salokoski, T. (2004). Onko väkivallalla vaikutusta? Väkivalta osana pelimaailmaa. In M. Kankaanranta, P. Neittaanmäki and P. Häkkinen. (eds.), *Digitaalisten pelien maailmoja.* Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopistopaino, 191-204.

Scientology. (n.d.). http://www.scientology.org/david-miscavige/churchopenings/church-of-scientology-los-angeles.html. (5 May, 2015).

Simmons, A., Miller, G. and Lynch, C. (2013). Grand Theft Auto 5: Meet The Cast. [online]. http://uk.ign.com/articles/2012/11/13/grand-theft-auto-v-meet-the-cast. (8 September, 2014).

Smitherman, G. (1999). *Talkin that Talk: Language, Culture and Education in African America.* New York: Routledge.

Solarski, C. (2012). *Drawing Basics and Video Game Art: Classic to Cutting-Edge Art Techniques for Winning Video Game Design.* New York: Watson-Guptill Publications.

Steven Ogg. (n.d.). Official Website. http://www.stevenogg.com/. (15 October, 2014).

Sullivan, L. (2013). Trevor is the first GTA character that makes sense. [online]. http://www.gamesradar.com/trevor-first-gta-character-makes-sense/. (12 February, 2014).

SuperDataResearch. (2015). SuperData begins coverage of digital console market with top 10 rankings. [online]. http://www.superdataresearch.com/blog/top-10-digital-console-games/. (27 February, 2015).

Take-Two Interactive. (2014). Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Reports Strong Results for Fiscal Second Quarter 2014. [online]. http://ir.take2games.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=86428&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1869835&highlight. (14 November, 2014).

Take-Two Interactive. (2015a) Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Reports Strong Results for Fiscal Third Quarter 2015. [online]. http://ir.take2games.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=86428&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=2013202&highlight. (27 February, 2015).

Take-Two Interactive. (2015b) Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Reports Strong Results for Fiscal Third Quarter 2015. [online]. http://ir.take2games.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=86428&p=irol-newsarticle&ID=2049380. (18 June, 2015).

The Nielsen Company. (2014). Multi-platform gaming: for the win!. [online]. http://www.nielsenbookscan.com.br/us/en/insights/news/2014/multi-platform-gaming-for-the-win.html. (14 July, 2015).

Theatrical Market Statistics. (2012). Motion picture association of America. [online]. http://www.mpaa.org/resources/3037b7a4-58a2-4109-8012-58fca3abdf1b.pdf. (14 November, 2015).

Van Dijk, T.A. (1987). *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Webb, D. (2014). GDC 2014: Grand Theft Auto V Had Almost 160,000 Lines of Dialogue. [online]. http://www.xboxachievements.com/news/news-17642-GDC-2014--Grand-Theft-Auto-V-Had-Almost-160-000-Lines-of-Dialogue.html. (24 June, 2015).

Wells, J. (1982). *Accents of English: Volume 3: Beyond the British Isles.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX 1

Character wheel in *Grand Theft Auto V*

Figure 5. Character wheel in *Grand Theft Auto V*

APPENDIX 2

Transcription sample from the mission "Repossession"

Setting 11: Franklin goes to meet Simeon at the dealership
Participants: Franklin Clinton (F), Simeon Yetarian (S), Lamar Davis (L)
1 F: Hey, what's up, Simeon?
2 S: My dear boy. So good to see you. So good. Hehe. Hold me (hugs Franklin).
3 F: Yea, look, man… (Breaks away from the embrace)
4 F: Look, we've been workin' together for about a few months now, right?
5 S: Which is why I am very honored to announce to you… That you… Are Employee of the Month. Huh? (Shows him a picture of Franklin on the wall) Anyway, congratulations! It wasn't easy picking up a winner. (Grabs Franklins hand to shake it)
6 F: yeah, me, Lamar, you nephew Sacha with the twitch. Look, man, it's been a real honor, homie, but I gotta move forward in my life. It seem like all I do is let people tell me what to do and I do it and nothing changes.
7 S: I tell you what, my boy, you tell me exactly what you want, and I will very carefully explain to you why it cannot be.
8 F: What?
9 S: Today is repossessing vehicles that fools have purchased at exorbitant interest rates. But tomorrow… Together! I never had a black son, but if I did I want him to be just like you.
10 L: Knock, knock, niggas!
11 S: Aaaah. Hello Lamar!
12 L: Haha. What's up Simeon? What's up, homie? What's happening, homie?
13 F: Sup, dog? (greet Lamar with handshake)
14 S: Franklin here has been awarded Employee of the Month.
15 L: You fucking with me, right?
16 F: Man, we both being fucked with, dog.
17 L: Man, knock it off, man. For real? After all the motherfucking work I put in, huhu?
18 F: Man, fuck this Employee of the Month shit, homie. I'm sittin' up here trying to get us…
19 L: Whatcha mean, "fuck this Employee of the Month shit", man? When there's some shit to be won, goddamnit, I want it. I don't give a fuck what it is. You know what I'm talkin' about? I take no prisoners. I go hard doing this shit. Big dog. Big nuts. When names is on a motherfuckin' board I want to see my name at the top of that motherfucker and next to it, it need to say "winner".
20 S: Maybe next month, huh?
21 L: Man, fuck next month, Simeon. What about today? I-I demand a re-trial.
22 S: Today is nothing, just a bike. Hasn't made a payment at all. Some kid at Vespucci beach. He's name is Esteban Jimenez.
23 F: Is he in a gang?
24 D: Curiously enough, I did not inquire when he bought the bike. Heh.
25 L: We got work to do, err… Employee of the Month.
26 F: Man, fuck you, and come on.
27 L: Man, you's about a "yes master"-ass nigga.
28 L: What are we waiting for? Magellan Ave., nigga. Vespucci beach.

underline = word stress
[] = Overlap
italics = body language
CAPS = Shouting