The video game series, Grand Theft Auto (GTA), created by David Jones and Mike Dailly, and then later by Dan and Sam Houser, and video game designer Zachary Clarke, began its reign as one of the most popular violent video games in 1997 and has maintained its popularity to the present day. *Grand Theft Auto,* published by Rockstar Games, has eleven stand alone versions of GTA as well as 4 expansion packs for a select few of its games including *Grand Theft Auto* (1997), *GTA: London 1969* (1999), *GTA London 1961, GTA II* (2001), *GTA III* (2002), *GTA: Vice City* (2004), *GTA: San Andreas, GTA Advance* (2005), *GTA: Liberty City Stories* (2006), *GTA: Vice City Stories* (2008), *GTA IV* (2009), *GTA:* *The Lost and Damned*, *GTA: Chinatown Wars* (2013), *GTA V*). Rockstar Games has sold over 150 million copies of these *GTA*  games as of 2013.  Recurring stereotypes about gender roles and violent crimes are a significant part of this franchise. The plots in the Grand Theft Auto video game franchise, perpetuate negative stereotypes of women by portraying them as sexual and disposable objects, and it encourages acts of violence and objectification against women by allowing the male characters to rob, kill and have sex with any woman they want, whenever they want.

The entire GTA franchise encourages violence, particularly violence against women, by featuring weapons on all of the game covers in the series. Guns are the most important part of the whole game because without them, the men would have very little power over the women and pedestrians they assault. On the covers of all 11 games, men are carrying weapons of some kind and are often glaring straight ahead with a stare of intimidation and violence. The types of guns on the front cover include automatic assault rifles, machine guns, shotguns and handguns. On the cover of *GTA V* (Figure 1), African American and Hispanic gang related men as well as white mafia related men are the prominent figures holding the guns and weapons.  These men are insinuating that they know how to use these weapons by holding them in aggressive stances.

Guns are the most prominent aspect of the covers and stick out even more so than the people. The main message being portrayed by protruding guns is that violence is the way to get what the player wants whenever they want it. The disposal of lives is downplayed when one plays GTA. These guns are positioned in a ready to use stance and are pointing directly at other characters, most often in the direction of women. The men on the cover carrying long guns pointing in the direction of women carry a sexual meaning as well. The men’s long assault rifles can be viewed as penises pointed at the unarmed defenseless women who are going to be gang banged by a group of men.

In addition to promoting violence against women, this game series also situates women as sexual objects designed for male desire and use. Women on the cover of GTA are portrayed the polar opposite of men in terms of power and strength. They are never looking straight ahead, indicating they are submissive to the real life viewer,  and they are not standing in positions of power. Women’s body parts are emphasized throughout the game while their faces are rarely shown. This depiction of women on the cover is stripping women of all power before anyone even plays the game.  Women are portrayed sexually, wearing bikinis, and holding alcoholic beverages. This type of portrayal encourages viewers to spend more time looking at and thinking about women’s bodies rather than their faces (Gervais, 2013, p. 560). Showing nearly every woman like a sexual object perpetuates the stereotype that women always want sex and are dressed for sex all the time.

The sexuality of these women is highlighted through their clothing, facial expressions, and body positioning. These women are wearing red, white, or pink, which are all colors that portray feminine sexuality. On the cover of *GTA IV* (Figure 2), a woman is puckering her lips with red lipstick on while she is holding a lollipop up to her mouth. This scene clearly insinuates oral sex, placing the women in a submissive position to the viewer and to the men on the cover.  Another woman on the cover of *GTA: San Andreas,* (Figure 3) is bent over with her breasts squeezed together and her tongue out completely in a sexual manner. This pose also implies sucking a penis. The woman’s eyes are not shown because she is wearing sunglasses, leading the user to believe that nothing else matters besides her lips and her breasts.  I noticed that the men who wear pink, white and red in GTA are portrayed as pimps and gangsters, but the woman who wear these same colors are depicted as sluts, whores, and powerless individuals.

The entire GTA series encourages the objectification of women by using images of stereotypical straight male fantasy of lesbianism. On the cover of GTA V (figure 1), there is an image of a woman police officer arresting a woman prostitute. The female officer is positioned behind the other woman and has her bent over. This image could be insinuated as lesbian behavior. The video game is playing off of its target demographic, the straight male’s, sexual fantasy of lesbian activity. The woman being arrested has a look on her face of affection and seems to be enjoying the fact that another woman is pressed against her rear end. Her shirt is also slipping off her shoulder and her sunglasses are tilted down so you can see her eyes glaring back at the officer, which could also be her trying to seduce the female officer out of arresting her.

A main theme in GTA is objectifying women. There are no main female characters in the game and as a player; one cannot choose to play as a woman. In addition, almost every woman a player encounters in the game is a stripper or wears revealing clothing. This fact displays an overarching motif of gender inequality starting with the very first phase of the game of choosing who one plays as. The women in the game are portrayed in a very sexual manner. They are normally walking down the street with short skirts on and low cut shirts showing off their cleavage and wearing high heels. The camera angled on these women are either from above them so the viewer can see their breasts or from below them so that the viewer can see up their skirt. This immediately perpetuates negative stereotypes of women and encourages sexual and violent acts against them. There is very little interaction with women unless they are naked in a strip club or the player is punching, shooting or robbing them. The men can pay the women for sex or other sexual favors and simply rob or kill them to get their money back. All of these vivid details carry a distinct connotation of sexuality, but also make it nearly impossible for the women being shot at and robbed to run away from their perpetrator.

By limiting the player’s choice of roles to male characters and by featuring women predominantly as strippers, the game itself encourages real life players to take on the male gaze and see women only as sexual objects. Not only does GTA position women in such a vulnerable way, but it physically depicts women from camera angles of up their skirts and down their shirts emphasizing that it does not matter what a woman’s face looks like or what type of human being they are, but all that matters is that she is sexual and looks promiscuous. “According to objectification theory, women frequently experience the objectifying gaze from others with several adverse consequences” (Gervais, 2013, p. 568). The use of the camera angling of women encourages the “male gaze”. Women are portrayed as weak and helpless in GTA and simply viewed as sexual objects that are for men’s disposal.

The GTA series as a whole also encourages violence through the depiction of ultra masculinity, particularly through the use of high-end and classic cars. These cars are meant to show more masculinity and power throughout the game. The men who steal cars and drive fast throughout the streets with no regard for the law or safety.  Anything or anyone that gets in the way of what these men want results in violence and or death.

             Adultery is another aspect of GTA that is normalized. The main characters, Michael and Trevor, are both middle age white men. Michael has a trophy wife with fake breasts who he talks to like he owns her. He curses at his wife and orders her to do things for him. They clearly have an unhealthy marriage because they never show affection to each other and always are screaming at one another and reference how they cheat on one another frequently. Michael and Trevor both go to strip clubs and often cheat on their spouses. In one scene in the video game, Michael and his wife argue constantly, and he blamed his wife not having sex with him as a reason for why he cheated on her with a stripper. He describes her as “useless other than her fake tits”. Every female character in the game has over sized, perfectly round breasts.  The fact that Michael has a beautiful wife yet degrades her in every way possible, sets a terrible example for those who play GTA.

The stereotype of a trophy wife gets perpetuated and makes it seem that treating your wife like garbage is acceptable. The fact that everyone has sex with everyone in GTA with very little repercussions falsely depicts how society truly is and sends an inaccurate message to those who play and they begin to think these actions are okay.  Michael blatantly mentions strippers as sexual objects and completely disregards them as human beings. He actually justifies him cheating and blames his own wife for not being a sexual object like the stripper. Michael was willing to pay for her fake breasts, and to pay to make her look good, but really wanted nothing to do with her unless it was sex-related.

             There are many strip club scenes in GTA. In the game the strippers are always shown from the neck down. They very rarely show a stripper’s face directly. This is another instance of objectifying women and dehumanizing them. “Even more extreme is an article by Haninger and Thompson 2004, which randomly selected female characters from a set of 80 games that were rated ‘‘Teen’’ (13 years and older) by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). This article found that female characters were more likely than male characters to be partially nude or engaging in sexual behaviors” (Stermer, 2012, p. 527). The men who go to these strip clubs talk to the women as if they are animals. The men call the women whores and sluts and slap their butts. The strippers do not speak; they just dance on top of the men with blank expressions. The men throw money at the strippers and repeat a slew of womanizing remarks towards them.

Another way that GTA demeans women is by their sexuality. There are instances of two very attractive women performing lesbian acts on one another, but there are never any examples of homosexual activity for men.  GTA depicts lesbians as being completely acceptable, but homosexual men as being frowned upon. The plot of the game does not acknowledge such male gay activity, and it is even encouraged to kill gay men throughout the game.

Women are worthless in GTA unless they are performing a service to the men in one-way or another. “In this game (GTA), players can meet with prostitutes to regain health in exchange for money. After regaining health, the player can choose to kill the prostitute to take back the spent money” (Stermer, 2012, p. 527). This feature of GTA perpetuates and reflects why rates of domestic violence in our society are rampant. The concept that women can be used just as a means to an end and are not once treated as human beings in this game says a lot about how our society feels about women and their function in society.

             Sexualized content is in every scene of GTA and many other video games. The advertisements, game content, game covers and sexist behavior all contribute to video game players being faced with sexual portrayals of women. Women in video games fall within a narrow criteria of acceptable behavior. “The stereotypical “Damsel in distress” or as sexualized eye candy who served as cheerleaders for the important male characters. Whether victim or vixen, video games tend to value its female characters for their physical appearance and sexual offerings, rather than for their competencies”(Stermer, 2012, p. 526,27).

Studies on media violence prove that video games have a dramatic affect on those who play them. Whether it is the gun violence or the sexual violence consumers of video games such as GTA are very likely to absorb what they are playing. 385 Italian high school students participated in an experiment concerning the moral disengagement of those who play the video game Grand Theft Auto. Moral disengagement is, “the process of convincing oneself that ethical standards do not apply to one self in a particular context by separating moral reactions from inhumane conduct by disabling the mechanism of self-condemnation” (Wisegeek.com) The findings of the Italian study, “suggest that playing violent video games, namely GTA, may increase adolescents' moral disengagement in real situations. Multiple regressions revealed that, regardless of age, sex, and overall exposure to video games, adolescents exposed to such game reported higher levels of moral disengagement. More specifically, the more recently participants played GTA, the greater their likelihood to justify real-life immoral conducts” (Gabbiadini, 2012). For decades there have been studies on how violence in video games affects our society, but not until recent has there been analysis of how the sexual content and sexual violence play a role in how society perceives, treats and objectifies women as a whole. Video games such as GTA condition our youth to degrade and disrespect women, and that plays a detrimental part in the infrastructure of how society functions.