

# A descriptive-analytical study of the Open-World Game Design “Grand Theft Auto V and online version” with an emphasis on Role-Playing Capabilities

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## Abstract

One of the main features of open-world games is the non-linear process, the existence of multiple ways to achieve goals, the noticeable presence of cultural elements, the impact of the game space on world-famous cities, and the significant use of artificial intelligence. This research after examining the concept of “open world” in digital games and the development of this design model by using of case study and participant observation, with a critical and skeptical look at the realization of the game world of “Grand Theft Auto V and online version”, especially in the context of the existence of multiple paths, seeks to achieve the main goals. The results of this study indicate that the open world of the game “Grand Theft Auto” is limited and enclosed by the design of the structure, storylines, characters, scenarios, rewards, punishments, racial discrimination, and sexual preferences. Despite the definition of normal and common professions and jobs in the game environment, such as buying and selling automobiles, investing in the stock market, medicine, working in the transportation system, and store management, the main goals are only through the income from membership in mafia groups, extensive



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trade in materials. Drugs and organized robberies are attainable, and role-playing in the position of the police is also associated with many obstacles and challenges, limited powers, few initiatives, a high degree of difficulty, and little attraction.

**Keywords:** digital game, grand theft auto, open-world, police, role-playing servers.

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## Introduction

Due to the growing importance of digital games in conceptualizing and configuring collective imaginations, it is important and necessary to study the social capacities and discourse subtleties of this new media industry. Now, digital games have become one of the main, maturing, and culture-oriented media of the contemporary era, and this has made it urgent to analyze the products of this industry from multiple perspectives. Ameli (2015) tells about the necessity of re-organizing the understanding of games in both real and virtual spaces and expressing more precisely in the dual spacizations world. And he believes that the industrial and digital nature of virtual space turns the reality of games into the virtual reality of games. Kousari and Shahghasemi (2009: 2) talked about gamified culture and culture that is played in digital games too.

In the meantime, popular and famous games that are somehow representative of the world and the current events in it have always been prioritized in social studies and communication research, one of the most significant products of this industry is the GTA game (Car Theft). It's big. GTA is an open-world game and a type of adventure game, which was designed by David Jones and invested by DMA Design, which today is known as Rock Star North. It has been published for the first time in 1997. The emergence of this series, which is one of the best-selling video games in history, after MS-DOS and Microsoft Windows, was first based on Sony's PlayStation console, and then Its optimized version was also released for Microsoft's Xbox console. The fifth edition of GTA was released on September 17th, 2013, and within twenty-four hours it could earn 800 million dollars from sales by setting world records in this field, it was able to reach the top 10 in just three years. On the day of the initial release, it is said the figure will cross the border of one billion dollars (Holliste, 2013). The entertainment software classification board, which is one of the most important age classification companies

for digital games, has placed GTA in the category of over seventeen years and adults. As mentioned, GTA is based on an open world in which the player is able to perform several missions in the general direction of the game and at the same time participate in various side activities as you wish. The position of the game and its main places and spaces are modeled after real cities in the United States, and its period often includes the 1960s to the early decades of the 21st century.

Los Santos (inspired by Los Angeles), San Andreas (inspired by California and Nevada), San Ferro (inspired by San Francisco), and Las Venturas (inspired by Las Vegas), some cities and main states were in different versions of the game, each of them has its own special stages and unique features; For example, there are new cars in every city, with new radio stations broadcasting music and news and other specialties, lead to more attraction and diversity of the game.

In spite of all the criticisms that have come from various forums to GTA and especially the violence of it, at different times, this game continued to exist and in different updates, the multiple possibility and numerous characters were added to its space in order to simulate as much as possible the real life in various fields. Because of the development process of GTA, it has received high and significant scores from digital game evaluation databases and institutions, and among other things, it managed to achieve an average score of 97 out of 100 on Metacritic (Sahbegovic, 2021). Criticisms of this game are mainly due to the moral characteristics of its heroes and manifestations of cultural weakness with examples of violent behavior, racial and sexual stereotypes, the logic of unretouched representation of the society by means of game and portraying social realities are answered.

The question of this research is that it seems that despite the conceptual perceptions of open-world design, the structure of this game suggests a preferred way of playing to the player, including the selection of characters, the selection of roles, and the selection of lifestyle and accepting missions and selecting a job. For example, normal, healthy, and ordinary jobs are attractive and fun, but the income from them is not enough for unlocking the superior and main features of the game, and in order to earn more income, it is inevitable to turn to risky and unhealthy jobs such as drug trade, theft and etc; Or in another example, although different characters can be selected in terms of race in some games, but the level of sensitivity of the game about them, encountering with other human elements of the game, as well as the events and dangers that occur for them are not the same. Therefore, the main question of this research is whether there are such trends or similar procedures in

the game “Grand Theft Auto”, which is one of the most prominent and popular digital games in the open-world? In other words, the main question of the current research is the quality and how to use the role-playing capabilities in the GTA game, in terms of the mentioned topics and issues. As a side questions we address to these: is the open world of the game “Grand Theft Auto” limited by the design of the structure, storyline, scenarios, priorities, rewards, and punishments or not? And is the player able to reach the highest level of accessible and defined success by playing the ideal role in the game?

### **Literature review**

Being “open-world” is not considered a subspecies or even a genre; Because it can be implemented in all genres and is not limited to a specific genre. first-person shooting or role-playing, action-adventure, or even racing, is considered as a great and impressive feature in all aspects of the game, including the design of this process and its production line. The main reason for creating the open world structure is the instillation of the concept of freedom to the players. The first time that a game incorporated signs of an open-world was in regard to its necessity. Jet Rocket was released in 1970 for Sega arcades. Due to its simulator nature, this game contained mechanisms in its design that were considered the first signs of the open world in the video game industry. In Jet Rocket, the player was free to travel to any part of the game’s mini-map that he wished.

A few years later, a text-based role-playing game based on Dungeons and Dragons was released, which incorporated another element of today’s “open world” characteristics. In this game, there was freedom of choice and non-linear narrative, which gave the player the freedom and permission to determine the progress of the story; Of course, in a set of predetermined frameworks. In the mid-1980s, open-world mechanics were seen prominently in adventure games (filfre.net, 2017). Games like Lords of Midnight, which first used a “quest-driven” storytelling system in 1984. Giving more freedom to the player was an attractive challenge for both the game makers and an exciting event for the audience; For this reason, the production of open-world games became a dominant trend in the video game industry in those years, and the density of this category of games has been increased greatly.

A few months after Lords of Midnight, the Hydlide game was released, which was in a way that was considered the first product of the game world, which allowed freedom of action in the story, in exploration, and in the development of the main character to an unprecedented

extent. Two years after Hydlide, another work was published, which is considered as one of the turning points in the history of video games. A game based on fantasy role-playing and open-world called *The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass* on Nintendo DS, it feels a lot faster than in the real world as players speed up by tapping the stylus as quickly as they can (Wei et al., 2010). The game that was considered a revolution in its genre when its first version was released in 1986. Nintendo used the new Chemistry Engine in *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. An engine that allowed the realistic and practical implementation of the laws of physics in the game, and besides world-building, it was also used a lot in the design of the stages. Many reliable sources, including IGN, consider *Zelda* as the first complete open-world game in the field of video games because it gave the player freedom of action that was not similar before. In *Zelda*, the player was free to advance the story of the game whenever he wanted and to discover its many secrets by exploring the game environment whenever he was interested. This granting of unprecedented freedom of action was the main factor and element of *Zelda's* success in the market and of course in the history of video games.

Until 1991, many successful games with open-world style were released and entered into the market of cultural industries; Games such as *Wasteland*, *Mercenary*, and *Robin Hood*, which combined open-world elements and 3D graphics, laid the foundation for the entry of 3D open-world games. In 1991, the hunter game was released as the first 3D sandbox game. In this game and in the world that was made up of several islands, the player's responsibility was to search and solve puzzles. Due to the benefits of open-world elements, third-person camera, and components such as shooting and driving, *Shikarchi*, in the opinion of many experts in this field, is the spiritual father of the most famous open-world game in history that is *Grand Theft Auto*.

In 1996, *Super Mario 64* brought Mario's familiar platforming elements to a 3D open world, setting a new stage in platforming and jumping. Apart from this, *Super Mario 64* had another revolutionary innovation and that was the camera control system. In this game, the player was able to move the camera independently of the character; An achievement that was far ahead of its time and became the foundation of other Nintendo innovations. One of the most important games at the end of the 20th century, which became the foundation of many components of today's open-world games, was *Shenmue*. *Shenmue* used urban sandbox for the first time; This means that the player roams in a space that has its own urban life and advances the story of the game. The NPCs were diverse and had voices, and of course the city was full of many and

diverse secrets and things to discover. Determining elements that later prominent games such as Grand Theft Auto, Fallout, and Yakuza used to build their world.

In 2001, Rockstar Company, which released the two successful games Grand Theft Auto 1 and Grand Theft Auto 2 in 1997 and 1999 respectively, made a big change in its third version and changed the top-down camera to 3D third-person conversion. The incident turned Grand Theft Auto 3 into one of the most prominent games in the history of video games. The success of Grand Theft Auto 3 put Rockstar on the circuit of open-world games. The two sequels of Vice City and San Andreas showed that Rockstar has the upper hand in creating urban open worlds by a large margin compared to its competitors. The process of freedom of action reached its peak in San Andreas and progressed to such an extent that it was not repeated even in the later editions of Grand Theft Auto. After that, Rockstar released two other versions, Grand Theft Auto 4 and Grand Theft Auto 5, the fifth version of which is still among the most popular and live games in the world after eight years (vigiato.net). At the end of this section, according to the mentioned historical course as well as the cases and examples in this field, some of the features of the structure of open-world games have been calculated and listed in Table 1.

*Table 1.* Some important features of the structure of open world games

Number	Feature
1	Non-linear process
2	The existence of multiple ways to achieve a single goal
3	Influence of the game space from the famous cities of the world
4	Realism of the game environment
5	Advanced sounding on creatures and objects
6	Perceptible presence of cultural elements of the game place
7	Being long with gravity
8	Significant use of artificial intelligence
9	The presence of diverse and numerous entertainment places
10	complications with the excitement of the game process

Source: Authors

### Research background

Mehrabi (2019) mentioned that researchers have often paid attention to the analysis of the harmful effects of games on teenagers, but they have less criticized the stereotypical representations of ethnic and religious

minorities. In order to fill this research gap, the author has come to the conclusion by analyzing Grand Theft Auto games: San Andreas, Coma War, Cell Splitter: The Blacklist, Delta Force, Nerd: Sandstorm, Total Warrior, and the US Army. They reduce minority groups such as blacks and Muslims to a set of stereotypical images and by influencing the players, they justify the violence in the panicked public places of the city after the 9/11 incident in America.

Goudarzi, Kavand, and Sharifi (2021) have studied the role of video games in the development of Western culture and lifestyle. Their central proposition in this research is that media such as video games are used as a cultural commodity for the cultural transformation of different societies. In this research, the authors have analyzed the popular San Andreas car theft game, which they believe it is one of the main components of the Western lifestyle. From their study, they have concluded that the West is trying to change the values and opinions of the audience by making games with cultural contexts, and with these games, they are expanding the Western culture in different societies.

Haji-Heidari and Akram (2020) used symbolic and structural relationships to describe the gameplaying structure of four games. They have studied the aforementioned along with the analysis of the character, the game world, and their relationship with the player, have answered this question that the characters of these games are formed in response to which semiotic needs. According to the authors, from a theoretical point of view, approaches to computer games are classified into two categories: narratological and dialogical; The first category emphasizes the humanistic and subject-oriented position, which places the roots of computer games in narrative structures that represent meaning for players. On the other hand, the narratological approach believes that computer games create their own independent identity space and the player redefines himself within this context along with other game components. After studying and briefly introducing these theoretical dualities, this article provides evidence to strengthen the ludology approach by exploring the gameplay of the four mentioned prominent games.

Demirbag-Kaplan and Kaplan-Oz (2018) have studied how people in their digital experiences, use the realization of fantasies to give meaning to their daily actions, especially in the field of video games. Their research is actually a qualitative approach to understanding the context of the realization of game consumer fantasies, and its findings show that digital virtual experiences in video games have obvious effects in the material world; Because consumers travel and move in the borders of

reality and the connection between the virtual world of the game and reality is applied.

Poels, Ijsselsteijn, and Kort (2014) described the phenomenon of game-based perceptions and associations. The authors of this article seek to explain how elements of the world of game can stimulate thoughts and images outside of the game world and affect its perception and interpretation. For example, we can mention the inclusion of game elements in thoughts, perceptions, and dreams, as well as the use of special slang words or terms- which are specific to the game world- in everyday conversations. Also, the results of an online survey conducted among World of Warcraft players confirmed the results of this research and confirmed the existence of the mentioned phenomenon. According to Poels, Ijsselsteijn, and Kort (2014), the results of this survey show that the occurrence of these biased perceptions and associations has been strengthened with the increase of playing time and narrative conflict.

Perez Latorre (2015) suggests a study of the social discourse of video games by analyzing the relationships between game design, the transfer of ideological values, and the construction of Social reality. According to the author, considering the increasing importance of video games in the configuration of collective imagination, it is necessary and useful to understand the discursive potential of popular video games that transform social worlds. With this aim, in Latorre's research, an analysis model based on the theory of game design as well as studies on the expressive capacities of video games has been designed. This model is based on three aspects of video game discourse, including (1) character/player representation, (2) the game world, and (3) the main actions performed in it. The basic sources of humorous design and their expressive value are discussed in depth for each aspect. Also, this model has been used for the case study of the car grand theft game.

Mertala and Merilainen (2019) pointed out the fact that although digital games have become a part of young children's lives. There is not enough information about the types of ways children give meaning to games. To cover a small part of this research gap, they have decided to design qualitative research in which 26 Finnish preschool children aged 5 to 7 participated in a game design workshop to answer the research questions; Questions such as what aspects of digital games are meaningful to young children when acting as game designers? And why are these aspects meaningful to young children? The findings of this research indicate that children are not just passive consumers of digital games, but are meaning-makers who are able to critically evaluate digital games. Mertala and Merilainen (2019) also found from observing the performance



of the studied children that they changed the existing effective games by applying several targeted changes and actions such as replacing a female character instead of the main male character or by giving the main role of the game to They modify and personalize an opposing player instead of a hero. According to the authors, these findings show that there are vast and unknown dimensions in the field of research for researchers, which should be investigated in several fields, including the game culture of young children, children's understanding of the content of games, and basic game literacy. And also children's meaning-making in games should be studied and analyzed.

As it is obvious, despite the great research that has been done in the mentioned areas, the design of the open world and its requirements and considerations, as the central themes, has not been the subject of research, and the Grand Theft Auto game has also been evaluated from this point of view. and the analysis has not occurred; These two points are the aspect of innovation and novelty of the present study, which distinguishes it from other researches in this field.

## **Methodology**

Since this research is focused on a game, the case study method, which is one of the usual methods of qualitative research, has been used to do it. According to Ameli (2013: 309), a case study brings the desired phenomenon to life for the reader and creates a space for a better understanding of it. One of the characteristics of this method is the in-depth study of a specific example of a phenomenon, which is called a case. For this reason, qualitative research is sometimes called case research. There are several definitions of case study. Ameli (2013: 309) considers case study as an in-depth study of examples of a phenomenon in its natural environment. The most important part of the case study is the selection of the appropriate case, which is done purposefully. One of the characteristics of a case study is that in this method, case researchers conduct their research for one of these three purposes: a) providing a complete and accurate description of the phenomenon; b) developing possible explanations for it and c) evaluating the phenomenon. According to Ameli (2013: 311), the researcher in a case study tries to describe the phenomenon of study. A good description is a description that provides a rich description of the phenomenon, a description that recreates the situation, and as much as the connection of its themes is possible, this connection is accompanied by the meanings and concepts inherent in that situation in providing a rich description, the researcher is looking for structures that give order to the descriptive data and link them with the findings of other researchers reported in specialized articles. The

researcher can also make a deep description of the evaluated phenomenon and determine its impressive structures, themes, and patterns.

In this research, by using of participant observation technique, the phenomenon of the open world of digital games has been studied in its natural environment, i.e. game, and on a targeted case (Grand Theft Auto game). The different stages of the mentioned game have been followed and played, as well as the videos that the professional players put in the virtual space about the way they play and the way of advancing the stages, can be downloaded, viewed, and shared. related to the topic of the research, have been collected and gathered. In the next stage, the extraction of relevant explanations and analyzes have been obtained from the heart of recreating game situations, as well as the description and explanation of recurring themes and patterns, focusing on the design of the game's open world.

### **Findings**

The world of GTA is a vast world full of tangible textures. A unique feature that makes the game space significantly worthy of discovery, development, exploration, and investigation. Many precise details are included in the design of the game and the reactivity of several elements has added to the aspect of surprise and the resulting attractions for the audience. Buying and selling stocks and cars, cycling and car racing, motorcycling, sailing, sports such as tennis, golf, wrist throwing, high jump and running and other entertainments such as hunting animals are only a small part of the entertainment elements. It is the generator and side feature of the GTA game. In addition to the ability to entertain and surprise its audience, GTA has become a suitable and satisfying combination of famous and popular digital games.

In general, it can be said that GTA is one of the transformative games of the digital game industry, which as a turning point. It has divided the era of video games into the era before and after it. GTA has a central police station in Los Santos, which is modeled after a real police station in the city of Los Angeles. The Los Santos Police Department in GTA is famous for dealing with crimes in the most aggressive way possible, using large and advanced weapons, as well as spectacular chases. In a sense, it can be said that GTA is the representative of modern gangster cinema in the digital games industry. The only reliable way to summon the police in the game is to call 911. There are usually one or two police officers at each station. Also, usually, in the distance of both police stations, two officers are patrolling on foot, and sometimes they talk with homeless people who are walking in the city center.



*Figure 1.* A view of the central police station in Los Santos

The main role of the police is to make it more difficult for the player to commit a crime, who is the number one enemy of criminals during and even outside of it. It makes the game look more realistic when doing criminal activities and their missions. The way that the police deal with the criminals is also different and it is depending on the warning notices and the amount of delinquency and the level of their crimes. This feature in the game is determined by assigning wanted stars to the player. More serious and dangerous crimes increase the level of notification and warning, and the response of the police is also different and it is depending on this level, from chasing to the use of weapons and tactics. Special forces include the armed forces and the call of a helicopter. Some of the crimes defined in the game are related to hitting a police car, shooting citizens and pedestrians, having unrestrained sexual relations, stealing vehicles, entering prohibited places and areas, and participating in group criminal acts such as bank robberies and so on. Police officers in GTA are very aggressive and violent. Police brutality in the game is common and some officers (not all of them) are depicted with corrupt and racist actions. The words and actions of the police often imply killing. For example, during chases and if the suspect does not stop, the police threatened to kill him. Also, after stopping the suspects or criminals, in some cases, it is not enough to injure and surrender the people who resist, are arrested, and are often killed by the police. The noteworthy point is that the behavior of the police in some situations, especially when the wanted stars of the criminals have

reached the number of four or five, is as if violence and aggression are against common sense. It dominates and causes irrational actions, such as damaging one's cars during a chase, standing in open spaces while shooting, or blowing up armored vehicles, which is sometimes a low-intelligence image, relying on tools. It makes the police hastier. In general, the police are represented as a corrupt, lazy, aggressive, fun-loving, and happy person in situations of the game, whose job and professional image is only using advanced weapons and equipment and resorting to violence.



Figure 2. A view of police revelry in Los Santos

In general, it can be said that the performance of the police in the game is not so simply defined and designed, and what is evident is the obvious difference between the structure of the police department and its people. The structure is represented as intelligent, powerful, and well-ordered, but the people and forces working in it are often depicted in a different way as described earlier. Police departments are equipped with trucks full of facilities and equipped with advanced weapons, sometimes the use of civilian cars to chase criminals is on the agenda in order to deprive them of the possibility of identification or tracking. The secret forces are also organized and sent to the regions by the police command center depending on the situation and objectives. Most of these are used for wanted four-star levels and up. But despite this organized and advanced organization, the conditions in the field of human resources do not seem very favorable. For example, when the player is beaten by the police and his weapon is confiscated, he can get his weapon back from the police station by paying a bribe of two thousand dollars to the police officer.



Figure 3. Paying bribes to the police

Another important feature of GTA is providing the relative possibility of fulfilling the dream of some people to join the police force and perform police missions in a simulated format. Many people who face age, physical or sexual limitations consider playing the role of a police officer in GTA as a platform to achieve their interests, dreams, and goals. But there is a noticeable contradiction in this and that is a necessary condition to become a police officer in the offline version is to break the law and commit a crime. In this way, if a player wants to play the role of a policeman in the game you see two paths in front of you and you have to choose one of them. The first way is to go to the police station and steal a police car from the parking of the station, and the second way is to commit a crime such as theft in the city, harming the citizens, or blowing up a place, and then the police go to that place and the possibility of to hijack its car and then escape. In both ways, if the player manages to escape from the danger and thwart the pursuit of the police, he can assume the role of a police officer in the continuation of the game by installing the Rockstar editor plugin and making some additional settings. This unusual and contradictory way and in general the field of choosing and playing a role in the online version of GTA has completely undergone fundamental and substantive changes, which we will explain below.

Playing a role in video games is a concept as old as these games themselves. An experience that in the history of digital games has been moving and progressing towards becoming more comprehensive, personalizing more and more, and making the aspects of the game more interactive. On the other hand, the introduction of the capabilities of virtual space into this field turned

into a motivational element for developers and as a result, a leap forward in the aforementioned evolutionary path. Role-playing in the online space of digital games leads to more immersion in the game, as well as more meaningful, real, and interactive communication with other players.

In the meantime, the growth of live broadcasting platforms and their popularity has made the scope of this interaction not only limited to players and actors in the game but also includes the audience, viewers, and followers of the game. All these capabilities and capacities have caused the games that simulate all aspects of life to have many fans and enthusiasts. The online version of the GTA game, which has attracted a large and significant part of players and is often seen on the platforms of live streaming of digital games, consists of a collection of servers that allow the players to imagine a character in the framework of the game world according to their profession and interests and play it by taking advantage of the designed capacities.

In fact, it can be said that the interest of the audience and players in playing multiple roles and taking on various job duties was such that role-playing servers or GTA role-play appeared. With the launch of these servers by the Rockstar company, the ability to simulate real life in the game was significantly increased and developed; so that players can do many activities of daily life; Role-playing only for things like shooting, explosion, or driving and shopping are not limited, and the purpose of the game is not defined only to perform missions and earn money, but to create a unique character who is connected with other characters in his daily life, and values social relationships. It makes decisions and trusts people in the development of the game's story. This character is not required to be solved in the form of stereotypes such as robbers, policemen, and members of smuggling and criminal gangs and can include other professions such as journalism, nursing, or medicine. Another example of GTA's emphasis on interactivity and real-life manifestations is that the player can communicate with some of his acquaintances and friends through mobile phones, make appointments with them, and arrange entertainment programs such as eating or playing games. It is depending on the financial ability, it is possible for the player to buy complexes such as sports clubs, nightclubs, and cinemas and manage them as a businessman.

Most of GTA's criminal missions in the online version require the gathering of several players and their joint cooperation in organized crimes, which range from robbing a casino to kidnapping a government official is variable. Players can manage a large mafia group in such fields as cocaine trade, car import, or methamphetamine production (crystal or glass) by cooperating and assisting each other. This is despite the fact that the use of drugs in the game is possible and even the mood changes and hallucinogenic effects caused by them are also visible, but it is not promoted or recommended.

In general, in GTA, players are able to do things that they cannot do in real life; And since the game world is a living world, interactive and comparable to the real world, they can create their ideal life and story and gradually transform the game's action type into their desired character. As mentioned, the scope of selection is not limited and includes many jobs and social bases such as fire department, municipal services, aid and treatment, car repair, post office, and government offices. The mechanism of dedicated GTA servers in the online mode is such that the server managers, according to the goals and missions they have defined for themselves in the game, declare their need for some roles through communication channels, and by choosing from among the people who have expressed their readiness from different platforms, after reviewing the goals and the description of the adopted strategies, they assign the desired duties and responsibilities. They are assigned to them. In addition to injecting more excitement, this mechanism causes the social and institutional relations of the real world to become intertwined with the world of the game. The fact that a player behind his system is in contact with a real person inside or outside the borders of his country and receives orders and missions from him and reports to him, leads to the growing intertwining of the game space and the realities of the world which results in double believability, more dynamism, and deeper immersion.

Of course, naturally, some roles, positions, and situations are more sensitive, and for this reason, GTA has taken another revolutionary step in this by designing and providing dedicated servers for its online version, and necessary exams and tests are taken from the candidates to play sensitive roles in the game in order to achieve their technical abilities and information elites. These tests are taken from volunteers by the officials of administrative centers in the game, such as mayors or police chiefs, who are actually real persons appointed by the server managers; For example, applicants for the role of a police officer must go through several rounds of selection. Among them, they should be familiar with the provisions of the rules defined in the game in the fields of military, police, and civil rights. These rules can be changed, edited, and rewritten by the administrators of the servers. Host servers emphasize that the actions and actions of police officers such as patrolling methods, local inspections, arresting people and the process of investigating them should be logical, realistic, and in accordance with the rules in the real world. For this reason, the candidates for this role must, in addition to succeeding in the related exams, also participate in the interviews prepared in the game, the questions and contents of which are designed and adjusted again by real persons, in order to ensure their readiness in Ensure different areas. This level of regularity and strictness has significant consequences, including that it leads some of the players to study the relevant laws and regulations, the

principles of confrontation, and the conditions of police intervention in social crimes. It leads to security incidents, urban conflicts, and criminal operations. Another thing is that the serious mechanisms of selection and acceptance lead to more identity of the players, increasing sense of responsibility, double immersion, the realism of the game space, and deep credibility. All of these components increase the chances of making representations of groups such as police officers and images placed in the text and game world to penetrate and deposit in the minds and thoughts of players and audiences.

The noteworthy point is that with all the mentioned circumstances, the acceptance of playing the role of the police both in the offline version and in GTA Online is in the minority, and what is generally seen on the platforms of live broadcasts. It is acknowledged that most of the players consider the police as an obstacle and disruptor of the role-playing servers and do not have positive and pleasant views and statements about it in online conversations and in-game conversations.

In general, it seems that this idea is partly influenced by the design and process of the game, some of which were mentioned in the previous lines. For example, in the offline version, with the presence of the police in different places and situations of the game, the citizens are dispersed; Ordinary citizens who have neither engaged in anti-social acts nor committed a crime. Naturally, the design of this automatic reaction in the game can in some way induce the social distance of the citizens from the police of their city, which is against the public image of the police and its positive and constructive communication and interaction with the citizens. Other effective factors in this field are the fact that the role of the police is not defined by default in the settings of the official version of the game in offline mode, the difficulty of the role of the police in the game, the need to have higher skills and also the requirement to go through the hierarchy. It is an organization (in the online version) to fulfill it.

The degree of difficulty is considered for the role of the police in the offline version of the game and the special sensitivities in the method of selection and acceptance in the online version cause the failure of average and not very professional players and as a result of other causes of not so widespread and significant luck to play a role in the position of the police and more tendency to walk in The game world is in the position of thieves, criminals or citizens, employees, and business owners.

It is also necessary to pay attention to the fact that although the possibility of playing this role is defined in the game, the range of activities, the variety of missions, as well as the freedom of action of the players in the position of the police, cannot be compared to the roles of criminals. In the position of the police, the players are more in the position of helpers, not managers,



decision-makers, or commanders; They can follow suspects, participate in chases, or in some cases request a search. In general, their duties are very limited and their scope of authority and initiative is also limited. This is another characteristic of the GTA design, which encourages the players to not accept being in the position of the police, as well as creating the images that were explained about them earlier. However, becoming a policeman in GTA is always a possibility that enables the experience of a new style and way of playing. A choice that can be attractive, curious, and at the same time diversifying, especially when the game becomes boring for players.

One of the noteworthy points in GTA is that in the offline version, which is the best-selling product in the history of video games, there is no academy or center for training in order to become a police officer. Although it is possible to take the position of the police officer with the help of the defined plugins- as mentioned- but there is no step-oriented and disciplined path and program to play a role in the direction of law enforcement and work in Criminal circles not defined and have not been added to it in-game updates over the years. This point seems to be considered the most popular simulation game where the police are on one side. that even to assume the duties of a police officer, one must go through illegal routes; In order to keep the law, one must engage in lawlessness, and in order to contribute to the security of the city, one must commit criminal acts. It is the realization of all dreams and goals that depend on passing the law, chaos, and social crimes, and basically moving in the direction of social norms and legal and regular procedures, resulting in concrete results and tangible progress. It is not individualized in life and deprives citizens of the possibility of social mobility.

There are no female policemen or even female firefighters in GTA, instead, there are many women in Los Santos who earn money by prostitution. Throughout the storyline of the game, male criminals are in tension and challenge with male police officers in a city that is dominated by males, and in the meantime, women do not have a special or decisive role and are even part of the bodyguards. They are not mafia groups or enemies either. During the game, no woman prevents the player from progressing or completing his mission; An active role for women in the game is not defined, and the only time women appear in missions is when they have to be saved from danger by male heroes.

In other cases, women are seen either in the role of insignificant and passive side characters, or they are considered as sexual targets. The few women who are present in the streets of Los Santos are often designed with seductive appearances although this depiction represents a part of the social realities of different societies, despite what can be seen in the game space, it is not representative of all of them.

In addition to the gendered design of the city and public places, women who have a secondary presence and a purely fictional role during the missions and the text of the game are also sometimes (and not all) in situations such as betrayal or while playing in Porn videos are seen. Considering the transsexual nature of the increasing interest in digital games and the widespread popularity of this industry among all gender groups, these incomplete and directional ways of representation, in addition to pushing and repelling a crowd of audiences, can lead to the angularization of perception and pushing the mental ideas of a part of the social groups towards some social institutions or job bases such as law enforcement, security, and police officers.

The accuracy and depth of the police's behavior confirm the dominance of racist stereotypes in GTA. For example, when choosing the character of Franklin, who is an African-American born in Los Santos, the possibility that even with a wanted star and in completely natural situations, such as while walking in the city from the area of white citizens reported To the police, there is more than usual. In such a situation, the police, assuming a great threat, send their forces with a large number of people to chase and arrest, and even if the player is not armed, they accuse him of having weapons. In general, and according to the clues in the game, it seems that GTA is somehow reproducing the current racial order and naturalizing it. Most of the main characters in GTA, including Louis and Franklin, are Latinos, who are portrayed as criminals and culturally dominated by well-dressed whites by fueling false stereotypes.



Figure 4. A view of unjustified and racist police performance in the game

### Discussion and conclusion

In general, it can be said that GTA is one of the manifestations of criticizing the dream of developed countries and depicting the dark spots and bitter

realities in capitalist societies. Some of the game spaces and events are similar to American movies, and sometimes the missions and events related to them bring to mind the characteristics of film noir. The city of Los Santos is full of moral challenges as well as situations in which players can engage with the realities that have overshadowed modern life. Los Santos represents a city where young men migrate in search of wealth and to rebuild their lives, leaving behind bad days and memories. The city of failed dreams along with the ideals realized by corruption, a world whose utopian nature is the pleasure of cruelty, wealth caused by crime, and power associated with vice, and its ruined city is full of cowardice, humiliation, hardship, and Misery.

Completing the main storyline missions of the game, which are often required for criminal operations, brings significant economic rewards as well as progressing through stages. This is despite the fact that the income from alternative jobs such as working in city taxis and shopkeeping is insignificant and their impact on the course of the game is also incomparable. In other words, it seems that organized crimes have no alternative to progress in the game, either financially or in terms of stages, and this way of designing the reward and unlocking system, without forcing the player, allows his free choice to commit acts of crime. It leads to criminal and criminal operations.

The interaction of the player, the game world, its components, as well as the pressure he feels on himself from the city forces him that if a person is not rich from the beginning, the only way to achieve economic prosperity and the pleasures of consumerism is through violence, theft, and crime. It is organized and normal and honorable jobs not only do not provide social mobility, but they will not bring anything more than guaranteeing poverty, and no middle ground can be imagined in this duality.

In the end, it can be said that contemporary digital games are ideological structures that need deep and detailed analysis. The culture of games that have a wide and extensive world, and an extensive and complex text can open, invent and create creative and creative ways to interact with social and political concepts. The transfer of desired concepts of digital games is based on interactive dynamics and design language, which includes many and diverse fields from graphics to game rules. A simple example, as mentioned in its examples, can be the design of rules based on the reward and punishment mechanism that exists in most of the common games, and according to the story of the game and the nature of the goals considered in its text, it leads the players towards behaviors. Depending on the narrative structure of the game and its central statements, these behavioral actions can be, for example,

treacherous, cooperative, loyal, individualistic, criminal, benevolent, or a combination of the aforementioned.

But what is more vital and important to pay attention to is that, ultimately, digital games are considered as a dynamic text whose reading and re-reading is a social act through the mutual interaction of the text and the players according to the worldview, cultural contexts, beliefs, and their lived experiences. Many of the represented elements are challenged by the players and the audience, and passive acceptance gives way to reading influenced by background knowledge and the creation of meanings, under social experiences; this is the most strategic and characteristic feature of the game analyzed in this article.

In other words, something along with other components and features, has caused dynamism, audience-friendliness, not getting caught in the cycle of monotony and even fertility of GTA, rather than being influenced by what the game does for the players. It is related to what the players bring with themselves to GTA. It seems that GTA's design is not an open world in the real sense, but it is open to the audience. The audience, regardless of the impact of their choices on the way of the game progress and regardless of unregulated incomes and rewards, sometimes irregular punishments, directional storylines, unpleasant sexual and racial discrimination, and methodical designs, feel that they have authority and power to choose the path of life and They find out that this world doesn't enclose them among the rules and limited laws of a game. This possibility that everyone who is interested in GTA can play GTA, but everyone does it in his own way and style. This is one of the main features of this game, which is designed according to the current age. In fact, it can be said that the Rockstar company has designed a world and atmosphere that the audience, players, and followers are validating it more than critics, analysts, and researchers can discredit it.

### **Ethical considerations**

The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

### **Conflicts of interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

### **Data availability**

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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