

Difficulties in Evaluating Sexual Aggression & Perpetration Potential

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Sexual Aggression Stats

- ▶ Large scale studies suggest over 50% of college women experience sexual assault
 - ▶ Across the lifespan, sexual assault is very common:
 - ▶ 1 in 2 to 1 in 3 females
 - ▶ 1 in 4 to 1 in 6 males
- are victims of sexual assault

Issues holding back the field

- ▶ Vast majority of sex aggression research relies on self-report
 - ▶ retrospective (have you ever...)
 - ▶ intentions (how would you behave given this situation?)
 - ▶ proxy measures, e.g. rape myth acceptance, hostility towards women, traditional gender role beliefs, sex role stereotypes,
- ▶ Attempts at “profiling” known sexual perpetrators to find predictive personality, demographic, or crime stats characteristics
- ▶ Physiological measures: intrusive, expensive, impractical

Issues holding back the field

- ▶ Not being able to measure sexual aggression well means we have difficulties understanding:
 - ▶ how well do prevention programs work?
 - ▶ Is sex offender treatment successful?
 - ▶ How likely is someone to reoffend?
 - ▶ Basic research on sexual aggression is compromised by not being able to adequately assess it in a research lab

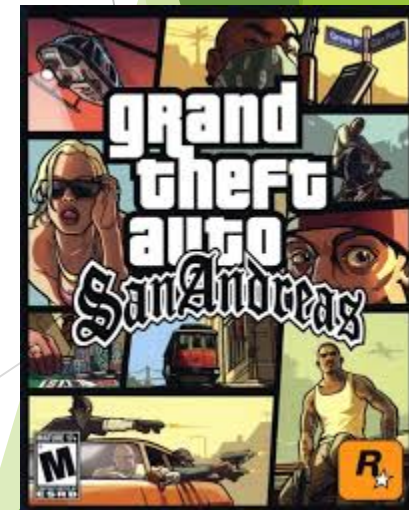
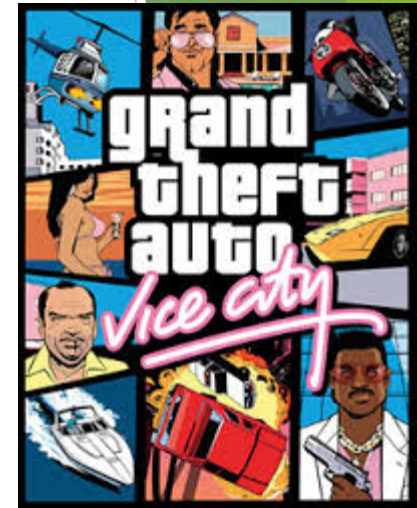
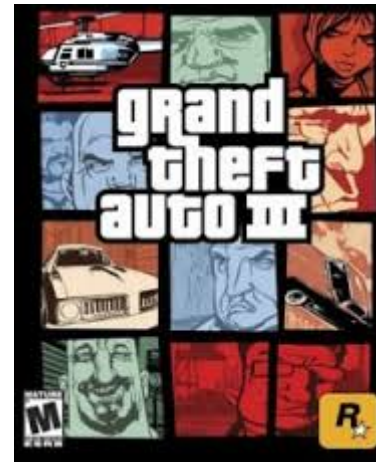
What we do

- ▶ Researching use of video games who depict sexual and physical violence to explore whether observing video gaming behavior might be a useful assessment of sexual aggression



Development Process funded by the College Research Council in Summer 2013

1. Identified potentially suitable games by researching gaming reviews, articles, and soliciting recommendations from gaming insiders
2. Held numerous focus groups, that used different levels of gamers with a background in psychology (non gamer to gaming expert) to play 10 games on 4 platforms and identify sections that might be suitable for our purpose
3. Identified sections had to have both physically violent and sexually violent gaming content presented at different times, of approximate equal difficulty.
4. Game identified as most suitable was GTA III on Playstation 2



Gaming tasks

GTA III: “open world, action adventure video game”, widely available and popular, developed by DMA Design and released in 2001.

Gamer assumes protagonist’s role from first person perspective, navigating an inner city while earning points by running people over, killing cops, beating up people, having sex with prostitutes, killing the prostitute, stealing cars, etc.

We had to identify equivalent tasks in terms of difficulty, opportunity, lengths of time required, etc

Another round of focus groups testing various tasks

Settled on letting gamers earn points by either beating to death people with certain clothing colors, or having sex with and killing a woman.





Current Progress

- ▶ 20 community participants to date
- ▶ Measures: Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss and Oros, 1982 adapted from Forbs and Adams-Curtis, 2001), Conflict Tactics Scale (Strauss et al., 1996), and Hostility Towards Women Scale (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995).
- ▶ One of two procedures:
- ▶ 1) Participants choose between a sexually aggressive task and an equivalent task for equal compensation based on performance for a 20-minute period.

Current Progress

- ▶ 2) Participants to free play for thirty minutes, while a research assistant timed and noted the participant's interactions with prostitutes.
- ▶ Findings:
- ▶ Throughout these observations, we have adjusted the tasks to get more equivalency in terms of confounding variables.
- ▶ Commercially available video games have too little experimental control available



Looking ahead

- ▶ Commercially available games do not allow for enough experimental control.
- ▶ => We are currently contracting with a video game development firm to develop a brief, video game like program



Other novel approaches

- ▶ We are currently exploring ways to modify an established general aggression paradigm (hot sauce allocation) to fit sexual aggression measurements
- ▶ Submitted NIH RO3 grant in the fall based on summer research project funded by EHD
- ▶ Recent SEED money grant will allow for acquisition of physiological measurement equipment, increasing opportunities for validating our novel measurement approaches.
- ▶ Reapply through NIH this June

Thank you

- ▶ To the College of Education and Human Development for providing initial funding
- ▶ To our awesome graduate students who put in countless hours: Kayte Bradshaw, Katie Figuerres, Steve Grey, Josh Kahler, Antonia Forbes, and our undergrad, Loni Muus.