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A Semiotic Deep-Dive of Video Games:

More than just a game.

Abstract: This paper attempts to use 30 terms to describe some aspects of video games with a semiotic spin on them. Most of the terms used, I try to relate to games that most people from most age groups have either heard of or played with before in their lifetime. Some terms are related to each other and such is reflected in this final draft.

Intro: In this final draft, I will mention a few terms that relate videogames and semiotics in very similar and different ways. As you read through this final draft, you will come to realize that there are so many terms/concepts/theories in semiotics that have wiggled their way into videogames without most people even batting an eye. They just think "oh that just a cool feature" or a "quirk" of the game that makes it so "niche". There may be more to videogames that do that than what meets the eye. Videogames touch more aspects of our lives than we like to think and can even lead to dangerous consequences.

The codes [[2]] in video games are used to drive a plotline in many games such as Tomb raider. Throughout the game Lara Croft who is the main protagonist of the game, she is constantly navigating through new environments, trying to decipher puzzles in her environment including machinal and more primitive like sides of cliffs(trying to climb them). The codes unlocked allow Lara Croft to move further on in the game. Haptics in videogames such as a small vibration if you are attacked in a game such as star wars (Droids attack you and your armour temporarily turns red and you lose a life (heart) or Sonic the hedgehog (specifically when users try to jump over the spiky portions of metal in the game when trying to collect coins. Haptics[[15]] can soft create a muscle memory to know when you reach that certain part of a map you know to try to jump over the obstacle or your controller will possibly vibrate. Symbols [[58]] are used in videogames to indicate how much life a user has before they die (In star wars there is a part where Han solo and luke are walking around finding droids to kill and their lives (hearts) are beings shown on the top of the screen above their heads and how many coins(with a gold coin symbol) they have collected collectively. A sign is used in that video game after you kill a certain amount of droids to move to the next level. Signs are also used in non action games such as Rocket League. In this game users control their car movements/speed with "boost" (sort

of like rocket fuel) which can be used to help the gamer get closer to the ball faster whether it be in the air or on the ground. There is a small overlaid boost gauge in the right corner of your screen at all times when a gamer is playing in a match or practicing in a training session .

Signals [[54]] used in videogames are used in order to get certain gestures [[16]] A good example would be in the MLB based game (MLB the show) where the catcher points down with a certain amount of fingers to signal what type of pitch the pitcher should throw based on the previously known gestures about the batter at the plate. One finger down is a fastball, two finger downs is a curveball, three fingers down is a slider, and four fingers down is a change-up. Another good example would be the game series by EA sports called Madden, a football game which has a playbook with many different plays. Right before the center on the offensive team hands the ball of the QB, the qb may yell out some phrases and signal to the people he may want to pass to before they run a certain route on the field.

The Poetic function (of communication) [[38]] is very apparent in videogames such as The Legend of Zelda : Breath of the wild. This term is especially present in the opening part of the game when the voice actor (Bill Rogers) guides Link (Kengo Takanashi) through the shrine of resurrection. An example of Parole [[36]] in videogames would be in COD warzone usually when the characters in the match start yelling out curse words or danger words if the enemy is close by or they are being shot at. Myths [[30]] in videogames such as Never Alone by Matt

Swanson is based of the traditional Iñupiaq tale "Kunuuksaayuka" is the reason why the game takes place in a cold climate and why the main character has an artic fox by her side. From the tale based videogame unlimited semiosis [[65]]could arise from signs such as the climate (chilly weather, covered in snow), which leads to more signs being revealed such as people probably living in the climate (such as fire) and so on and so forth.

Modernism [[29]] in videogames has run rampant in many popular videogames such as Dark Souls, which was originally released in 2011, and last released in October of 2018 on the Nintendo switch. The games embodies a few characteristics such as ambiguity in terms of the character (you) in the game in the sense that "he's never really sure, and yet he hopelessly follows some shallow and ambiguous prophecy, offered a choice whose consequences aren't even clear" . Another example of it in the game is that "There's no clear sense of right and wrong; everybody is doing what is right in their own eyes for their own goals". Keeping that term in mind narrative [[31]] is a theme in these type of action role-playing games and in some other genres of videogames as well. They want you to think that the game is morally subjective, and right and wrong are relative to the player. Some games may just want you to think that you are isolated and alone due to the sense that the environment in the videogame world looks kind of bland and desolate(mostly seen in GTA 3 and 4). Kinesics [[26]] in video games such as inde sports tennis where the gamer uses a tennis racket to hit a ball (moving your arm in the way would if you were holding an actual tennis racket) or in wii tennis where a baseball bat can be

used to bunt the ball or smash a home run hit out of the park(moving your arm in the way you would if you were holding an actual baseball bat).

When playing through a game such as rocket league, the gamer can "demolish" opponents in order to gain an advantage to get to the ball faster. After the demolition has occurred, a small cloud of dark smoke and the word "boom" above the cloud was an index of an explosion that recently happened. There are a few examples of the phatic function (of communication) in videogames such as Pong™ based arcade game called "PainStation". In this game two gamers play against each other with their hands on the Pain Execution Unit which gives feedback to gamers to know what is going on with their opponent. In games like Bully or really any open world type of game making any path or movements in the game is not necessarily objective or subjective, because there are no defined "rules" which a trait of post structuralism. Also games like that have tons of signs and symbols which usually lead to more signs and symbols, like infinite semiosis[[25]] as the gamer tracks further and further along from where you started on the map to get the gamer thinking about what certain things mean.

Hyperreality [[19]] is so apparent in the VR videogame Richie's Plank experience. You put on a headset and take an elevator to a floor that is 480 feet above the ground and try to walk the

plank! Or games such as GTA(Grand **Theft Auto**) which allows gamers to steal cars with virtually no repercussions. Some people will steal school buses, crash into a whole bunch of innocent bystander cars and still keep going thinking that they can "get away" with absurd behavior. The Paradigmatic [[35]] shift of going outside back in the days before most people could have a gaming console is real. According to earth.com "A new poll from the market research firm OnePoll surveyed 2,000 British parents and children in order to assess the recreational habits of kids ages six to 16. They found that the average child spends just seven hours a week outside, and over twice that amount of time playing video games inside". Kids now think they can just as much, if not have more fun inside laying on the couch playing their favorite videogame instead of getting vitamin D.

Firstness [[14]] in videogames is like one of the small things that keeps players returning to the game day after day, day in and day out. A personal example of a videogame like this would be Right after the game Rocket League ™ does an update, there is usually a new song that plays on the home screen while you are in the queue waiting for a match to join. Or when a gamer is in game and scores a goal they have the option to have their player anthem play during each goal for about 6 seconds in the replay. Negative connotations for videogames such as COD: Warzone or Halo Reach or Minecraft include "These games are rotting your brain", "Videogames make you violent" or "antisocial" run rampant through parents minds before they consider their child having a better/new gaming console. Discursive symbols [[12]] in videogames occur in the sense

that puzzle pieces are given to the gamer to put together at the end to finally see the whole picture. A good example of this would be "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego".

Diachronics in video games can be seen though lots of videogames. In the game Wild Gunman from 1974, the sign into the bar reads "Saloon" which is a modern day bar. Another example would be in the game called "Boot Hill" where opponents shoot at each other with a buggy from a horse and buggy as protection from gun-fire. Today a modern day, bunker or trench would be used to protect people from gun-fire. Another game called High Noon from 1984 has a building named "Rig Mortis Undertakers" which in modern day terms is probably a funeral home. The videogame Red Dead Redemption (2010) is a good example of secondness[[46]]. In the video I am referencing, the outlaw shoots a person walking up some stairs and immediately a "wanted: Bounty $645" icon pops up in the upper right hand corner of the screen. Bounty which was a term used way back in the 1700's hundred to describe the modern-day term for a reward given to find the suspect of a crime.

Some conative function (of communication)[[3]] examples includes from videogames such as Mortal Kombat, Star fox and in Overwatch. For the first example, in the videogame Mortal Kombat, right before an opponent is about to die, the narrator shouts in a booming voice "FINISH HIM". For the second example, in the videogame Starfox (1997) peppy the donkey

shouts "Slippy, watch out! Bogey on barrel roll" right before a barrel roll takes place in the sky.
It is important to have context [[7]] within videogames or gamers will have to search the internet
to find possible hidden things in games in order to connect the dots themselves. Some games like
to do this such as NBA 2k with the MyPlayer mode. They give the player, a high school story
and sometimes the player even has a social media presence. The player eventually gets signed to
a G-League team (Almost like the Amateur NBA). After the G-league, the player hopes some
scouts would be looking at him to see if he was a good fit for their professional team (NBA) or
not.

**Conclusion: In conclusion, some ideas from videogames and real life may have more in
common than you think. For most people, videogames and the rest of the world will always
and forever be separated. Most people don't see that videogames are not meant for just
leisure, they are also meant to connect generations of people from the past, present and for
the future. Videogames, also show over the years that some ideas/ concepts/ theories don't
change but only get more visibility due to people on the internet that do certain analyses on
certain games.**