

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

As we enter the era of the digital age, is it hard to refute how great of an influence the mass media have on people and society nowadays. We can see how mass media influence several aspects of society such as social perception of certain topics, individual opinion on subjects, and the social norm (Noelle-Neumann, 2022). the basic purpose of mass media is to inform, educate and entertain the masses (Edu, 2022). the most common type of mass media people often hears and use is Television, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, and social media.

But one form of mass media that people often overlook is video games. Video games fulfill the basic purpose of mass media to inform, educate and entertain the masses. It is very clear to see that video games do provide a significant amount of entertainment to the individual who plays them but it can also be a source of information and education. An example share is a story by superhero-nerd in her personal Tumblr blog (superhero-nerd, 2019):

This is actually really funny. In high school, my humanities teacher told us a story about one of the Europe trips he had gone on with the school a few summers past. So him and the group of kids were in the middle of Rome and the tour guide had gotten lost. They could figure out how to get to some church they were going to see. All of a sudden one of the students like call attention to himself. He says he knows where to go and just start walking around the streets, taking back roads and side streets and within 20 mins they're at the church they needed to get to. My teacher asks the kid if he has every been to Italy before. He says no, he just knew where to go because he played Assassins Creed Brotherhood. (superhero-nerd, 2019)

As you can see from the story shared, an individual child who has never been to Italy was able to accurately memorize and navigate the road of Italy despite never previously visiting the country due to him playing a videogame called Assassin's Creed Brotherhood.

Before moving further, there is a need to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Which is the everlasting question that parents often ask, "do video games make an individual violent?" If information and education are indeed able to influence an individual, does that mean that they can also turn them into violent individuals? This idea itself that video games make people violent first began surfacing back in 1999 when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold committed a school shooting and attempted bombing which murdered a teacher along with 12 other fellow students. During that time, this event was considered the deadliest mass shooting that is to ever happen in the history of the United States (History.com, 2009).

The reason why this violent tragedy was correlated with video games was that both Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were avid fans of Doom, and Quake, both of which depict shooting and bleeding enemies. It was on Eric's Blog where he posted content about the videogames that he also posted records of his violent activities. This was where people found that video games might cause an individual to be a violent person (Brown, 2011).

The statement that "video games cause violence" is however false. In 2015, the American Psychological Association published the *APA TASK FORCE REPORT on*

Violent Video Games stating that “There is insufficient scientific evidence to support a causal link between violent videogames and violent behavior”. This statement was also again further proven in the *February 2020 Revision to the 2015 Resolution* (Mills, 2020).

Now that it is understood that video games do not correlate to violent individuals, it does not mean that video games do not have any influence on individuals. The article *The Good and The Bad Effects of Video Games On Children* (2022) published by the Institute for Educational Advancement explains that there are several effects on children who play video games. One of the positive benefits that were explained in the article was how video games “Provide children with problem-solving skills and enhance creativity” (2022). In the game “Minecraft”, children are given endless opportunities for creative self-expression through building with blocks and styling their avatars.

The article also explains how certain historically accurate videogames such as *Civilization* and the *Age of Empire* are also able to help teach and inspire children about the history of the world, geography, relationships at an international level, and the culture of older civilizations. This can lead to further interest which parents can help to further explore.

One other positive benefit of video games stated in the article was how video games could “help children make friends”. Video games provide a medium for children to participate in social activities where they could interact and discuss common

interests with other individuals of the same interest. Playing an online video game could also expose children to individuals of different ages and nationalities as they play the game together.

Videogames could also affect a person's psychology. In the article *How Can Video Games Make Us Better People?* Written by João R. R. T. da Silva Ph.D. (da Silva, 2020), João explains that when a person is playing a character, they also embody the character they are playing. This embodiment is what helps them experience the game on a deeper level rather than just passively experiencing it like watching a movie. Because of this embodiment of character, when faced with topics that are not of their social norm, it forces them to think critically and reflect on their situation in real life. An example used by João was from the game *The Last of Us* where the player gets to play a gay character and first-hand experience homophobia from others while also meeting other characters who care for them. This shows how video games are not just about storytelling. But rather a media where players can immerse themselves and reflect upon important issues within their society.

Over the years there have been various video games made that would have a great impact on an individual life and perception of each of their way and values. One game that the researcher would like to discuss is symbiotic meaning and values reflected in a 2D-platformer game called *GRIS*. *GRIS* is an indie 2D-Platform adventure game developed by Indie Game studio, Nomada Studios (Nomada Studios

2018). The game studio, Nomada Studios themselves would describe their game GRIS

as:

GRIS is an experience free of danger, frustration, or death. Players will explore a meticulous designed world brought to life with delicate art, detailed animation, and an elegant original score. Through the game light puzzles, platforming sequences, and optional skill-based challenges will reveal themselves as more of Gris's world becomes accessible. (Nomada Studios, 2018).

In this game, the player would be playing a young female character by the name of Gris, hence the game title. Nomada Studio describes the character Gris as “a hopeful young girl lost in her own world, dealing with a painful experience in her life. Her journey through sorrow is manifested in her dress, which grants new abilities to better navigate her faded reality” (Steam, 2018).

In this game, the player will explore the world within GRIS and achieve the same goal most games have, which is to finish the story. we would be helping Gris path her way to healing while also obtaining several unique skills that would help us along the way.

One aspect that is considerably special about the game is that this game has little to no dialog at all. players are not explained whatever is happening within the game. Everything that the player visually sees or hear is up to each player's interpretation. The only baseline the player knows is from the game description provided by Nomedo Studios when players first purchase the game.

1.2 Identification of Problem

Over the years, video games have slowly integrated themselves into modern culture. According to Statista.com (2023), there are approximately 2.9 billion active video gamers currently all over the world. While this might not be the most accurate estimation, it gives a certain image of just how influential video games are.

However, while video games have become a significant part of various cultures, Videogames still have various negative stigmata that were still carried over throughout the ages. Some people, when told that an individual plays a videogame, would think that that person is lazy and ambitionless. They think that that individual is wasting their life and potentially playing video games instead of doing other more beneficial activities.

Understandably, some people would have the perspective that individuals who play video games are wasting their life and potentially playing video games. The reason for this perspective is that back in the old days, a videogame was indeed mindless games with little educational value that people just played in their free time. This is why some older generations, when being told that an individual plays video games, would think that that individual is wasting their life and potential on a mindless game.

However, video games have come a long way from the videogames the older generation knows, and the videogames being played today. The biggest reason why people have a negative perspective of video games is that they are not familiar with what video games are and what is the actual effect that videogame have on people.

The game GRIS is a great example to show how far the development of video games has come. GRIS was awarded the *Games for Impact Award* for “A THOUGHT-PROVOKING GAME WITH A PRO-SOCIAL MEANING OR MESSAGE” by *The Game Awards* in 2019 (The Game Awards, 2019). GRIS also has won the award “Annie Award for Outstanding Achievement for Character Animation in a Video Game” due to their great character creation and their animation (Annie Awards, 2018).

With both this award validation of GRIS story and Animation quality, the researcher found that this videogame would be the most suitable research subject to analyze and represent what modern videogames is. To further support the choice of Using GRIS as a representation of modern games, the public review for the game is also considerably high. GRIS was reviewed by 55,111 players and 96% of them found gris to be a great game (Steam, 2018).

1.3 Statement of Problem

The question that the researcher would like to answer based on the background of the study, as well as the identification of the problem, is:

How is grief portrayed within the game GRIS?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the narrative and story of the video game GRIS using a semiotic approach. By doing so, the research would be able to evaluate if the videogame GRIS is worthy to be used as an example of how far the development progress of videogame has come or if will it only reinforce the previous negative stigmata that videogame is associated with. People will be able to evaluate if video games are a viable mass media to use to teach others, share information, and contribute toward social and cultural awareness.

1.5 Significance of the Research

Academic

By analyzing the video game GRIS through a semiotics approach, the researcher finds that it would be useful for future research and studies as the video game industry is growing by the year. A new and innovative video game is created every year, and hopefully, this research will help with achieving that.

Practical

By understanding what message and symbols that was present in the video game Gris, we can further understand what is capable the modern video game. This can prove significant evidence for how video games could be a viable media for

education as well as a medium of mass communication as a media of information, education, and entertainment.

1.6 Organization of the Study

CHAPTER I: Introduction

Chapter one focuses more on the background of the topic chosen for the research. This includes an elaboration on the identification of the problem, the purpose of conducting the research, and how useful the research would be for others.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Chapter two mainly focuses on discussing the concept and theories that would be used to help support the research. Chapter two will also be used to further help create a better foundation to answer the research questions from the first chapter. This chapter will include the definition and concept of mass communication, videogame, GRIS, semiotics,

CHAPTER III: Research Methodology

Chapter four will talk about the method that the researcher would use to conduct the research. The research will be following the qualitative research method to semiotically analyze the research. This chapter would be used to explain the method used to collect and process the data, all according to the limited experience of the researcher.

CHAPTER IV: Research Findings and Discussion

The fourth chapter will discuss the data and findings collected and be compared with the literature review. This chapter is where researchers attempt to find the result and answer the researched question asked. It will resemble the dissection of the game GRIS in the hope that it would be sufficient in producing a suitable answer to the question previously asked.

CHAPTER V: Conclusion and Suggestion

The final chapter, chapter five, will provide the overall conclusion of this research. This is where the researcher could reflect on their research and come up with suggestions or notes on what could be improved.

