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NARRATIVES IN VIDEO GAMES AND WHY THEY ARE RELATABLE TO GAMERS

- **What is narrative? What are the primary elements in narratives (e.g., character, setting, etc)?**

"Story in a game is like story in a porn movie: it's expected to be there, but it's not that important." - John Carmack, founder of ID Software
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/australia-culture-blog/2014/feb/21/writing-video-games-can-narrative-be-as-important-as-gameplay

"A film will often elicit curiosity, because a viewer is aware that vital information concerning narrative past or present events is withheld." ... "A central factor in playing video games is to remember information from previous games, slotting information into cognitive maps." ... (pg.206) "Contrary to film narrative, which shows all aspects of the narrative world in the first viewing, because its narrative is based on a linear space-time, a video game often supports many different ways of proceeding through the game-world". - Zillmann, D., & Vorderer, P. (2000). *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal*. Routledge Communications.

- **Connecting of story structure and themes of rising action**

-Rising action and story structure allow players to compete in games the way they always had dreamed in real life; most notably in sports games. Sports in which the players had competed in during their childhood are quite a bit more likely to be the videogames that they play, compared to others.

Crawford, G., & Gosling, V. K. (2009). More Than a Game: Sports-Themed Video Games and Player Narratives. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 26*, 50-66. Retrieved from http://usir.salford.ac.uk/2713/1/16853.pdf

- **Embedded vs. emergent narratives**

Example: **NBA 2K '17**

Embedded Narrative - Your journey starts in High School and are recruited by Colleges, needing to continue building your skillset to become an NBA star eventually.

Emergent Narrative - Your journey through the Basketball ranks will consist of a few factors in which you need to navigate that will affect your ability to get to the top: choosing the right college for you, injuries along the way, and being drafted or going undrafted.

The emergent narrative I believe leads to the assumption that your performance in a space outside the gaming field of play will determine how good you are at the game itself. For example, if you do not sign with the right team based on your skillset, you will not perform as well as you might have hoped while actually playing.

Irrational Games (Ed.). (n.d.). Thread: Embedded Narrative vs Emergent Narratives. https://forums.2k.com/showthread.php?758596-Embedded-Narrative-vs-Emergent-Narratives-(ref-Narritive-legos)

- **Unique characteristics of narrative in the game space**

"The dynamic constructed by the game occurs via the simulation of a "cyberquotidian" in which ordinary activities of daily life are reenacted, such as working, paying bills, dating, sleeping and shopping. Technically, there is no way of winning the game; the goal is to evolve, overcome obstacles, achieve goals and dreams. The player can create avatars, scenes, social relations, in addition to having the power to halt, save, and accelerate the pace of action. " - Marcos Braga, Regina Helena Silva, *The Game of Narratives: Narratological Chaining in The Sims Game,* 29 September, 2010.

In this example of the sims, the player is able to manipulate the narrative of the game in many different ways. The player is able to create new objects, go to different places, create new friends (real or not), and change the pace of the "life" they are living in order to interact with the virtual world they are in. Players will find that they have no real way to win the game, but the continuous narrative that is set-forth and increasingly customizable keeps players interested. In a way, people find that playing in a virtual world as someone other than themselves can be much more enjoyable.

- **Subtopic - Player to Sports Team Identification**

Narrative element - Assuming the role of something (a sports team) a player most likely wouldn't be able to assume in real life develops greater, immersive narrative.
      -Choosing a specific professional sports team
            >Makes stakes higher
            >Heightened emotions compared to real life play
      -More real and established rivalries

> >Player can take part in existing real life sports history
> -Campaign mode
> >>Over time story for player and chosen team
> >>Creates own story

Source: Crawford, G and Gosling. (2009). "More than a game: sports-themed video games & player narratives". *Sociology of Sport Journal.* Retrieved from http://usir.salford.ac.uk/2713/.

Source: Pasch, M. (2009). "Movement-based sports video games: Investigation motivation and gaming experience". *ScienceDirect.* Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187595210900007X.

Source: Rath, R. (2014). "Do Sports Games Need a Story". *the escapist.* Retrieved from http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/columns/criticalintel/10972-Do-Sports-Games-Need-a-Story.

- **Immersive Storytelling:**

Immersive storytelling is a type of narrative in which the narrative influences the players cognitives and could potentially affect the health of a player. This creates a more suspense of disbelief, as well as makes the personal connection with the character more personal and more affectional.

Reference: Lu, A. S., Baranowski, T., Thompson, D., & Buday, R. (2012). Story immersion of videogames for youth health promotion: A review of literature. GAMES FOR HEALTH: Research, Development, and Clinical Applications, 1(3), 199-204.

How do you know when a story is immersive?

Basic examples include: empathizing wih characters, becoming unaware of your surroundings, time passing unnoticed, etc…. But those are basics that should probably go without say. Going deeper into what makes a story immersive is set design, or telling a story through background details. Another example of a good story telling immersive mechanic is the reaction of characters through subtle/human clues.

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/gamesblog/2010/aug/10/games-science-of-immersion

"Interactivity is almost the opposite of narrative; narrative flows under the direction of the author, while interactivity depends on the player for motive power" --Ernest Adams (2)

"There is a direct, immediate conflict between the demands of a story and the demands of a game. Divergence from a story's path is likely to make for a less satisfying story; restricting a player's freedom of action is likely to make for a less satisfying game." --Greg Costikyan (3)

Baranowski, T., Buday, R., Thompson, D. I., & Baranowski, J. (2008). Playing for real: video games and stories for health-related behavior change. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *34*(1), 74-82.

- **What are the primary elements in narratives?**
1. Setting
- "Setting in games is so uniquely expressed that we can say with certainty that narrative in videogames is at least different from other art forms.(P. Holleman)"
  - In another world, the setting creates the style of the game. A good setting can let people immediately know what this game is after they see the setting.
- "setting—the world in which a game takes place—is where the fundamental principles of game design and game narrative come together.(P. Holleman)"
  - The setting is able to add shading around the narrative to make the player actually feel the game.

  2. Character
- "Video Game characters can be customized.(P. Holleman)"
  - The character behavior and decision are depended on the player so that every player is able to experience their unique adventure.
  - "character designs are coming closer to being pulled straight out of the player's imagination. And this is not just true of the appearance of a character, but also the behavior of the character.(P. Holleman)"
  3. Challenge
- "It is difficult in other media to express the difficulty and drama of an action when both we and the writers know that all the characters are going to survive because of their actors' contracts.   (P. Holleman)"
  - People can be satisfied, if they can overcome the trouble. Just like you finally solve a hard math question, but the game has more fine and possibility.

The narrative can create a video game world, which means the game world is independently existed.
  - The player can experience an unreal world in the game.
    - "This world is created, controlled, and sometimes populated by continuous and discrete artificial intelligence. The player is a guest in that world, the central participant in its mechanics.(P. Holleman)"
      - The designer offers a story background to enable the players to experience something that the player cannot do in the real world.
      - The player is able to do something or have some skills, which is impossible in the real world.
  - "The player is presented with a world that can be accessed largely at their own discretion.(P. Holleman)"

- ■ The player become the character, who has to follow the rules and narrative in the game world . If the game world is mostly about the narrative, it can bring the player into the game world.

Holleman, P. (n.d.). Narrative in Videogames.

http://thegamedesignforum.com/features/narrative_in_games.html