

POLITIC IN DIGITAL VIDEO GAMES: A MULTIMODAL GENRE ANALYSIS

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ISLAMABAD**

October 2024

POLITIC IN DIGITAL VIDEO GAMES: A MULTIMODAL GENRE ANALYSIS

BY

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M.Phil., National University of Modern Languages, 2016

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In English

To

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

Title: Politic in Digital Games: A Multimodal Genre Analysis

Despite the ubiquitous use of digital games, there are very few studies on the genre of digital games in the academic scholarship. This study is an attempt to develop understanding of this rapidly advancing genre. This research work is based on a holistic perspective of genre as suggested by Clearwater (2011). For this purpose, the researcher adapted an operational analytical framework. The key focus was to investigate the narrative poetics, the potential of rules and parameters to generate a procedural argument, and the process of framing used in developing perspectives in the narrative of the games. In this regard, this qualitative study selected three games: COD: WWII, COD: Black Ops II and GTA-V. The study investigated the structure of pattern of narrative progression and the role of player agency in structuring the narrative of games. Furthermore, the study also analysed the procedural and visual mode to find out how these modes contribute to meaning making. The study also investigated the process and functions of framing to identify how framing can manifest the underlying ideological constructs. The study indicated a triad configuration narrative pattern: overarching meta-arc, a network of subsidiary arcs and a network of micronarratives. The study reflected that despite a prevailing sense of freedom in micronarratives, the bounded player agency did not allow the player to steer the trajectory of narrative. Furthermore, the study pointed out that being an expressive medium, the selected digital games use the process of framing to emphasize and glorify American military heroism or de-emphasize capitalism. Furthermore, the study revealed the potential of digital games to generate a procedural argument through its system of affordance and restrictions (rules and parameters). The study suggests that digital games should be investigated to explore their various communicative dimensions, specifically the procedural arguments which have not been focused in linguistics and communication studies.

Key words: digital games, genre analysis, narrative, framing and procedural mode

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FPS: First Person Shooter

PC: Playable Character

NPC: Non-Playable Character

COD: BOII: Call of Duty: Black Ops II

COD: WWII: Call of Duty: World War II

GTA-V: Grand Theft Auto Five

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All thanks to Allah who bestowed me strength to complete this work. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Mian Khurram Shahzad Azam for his invaluable guidance and support throughout this research journey. My sincere appreciation goes to the entire Department of for providing a stimulating academic environment that fostered my growth and learning. I would like to especially express my heart felt gratitude to the Head of Department, Dr. Farheen Ahmed Hashmi, and the Dean, Prof. Dr Arshad Mehmood. Moreover, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my friends, Dr Shazia Akther, Dr Shazia Aslam, Masooma Naqvi, Nigar Arif, Aneela Siddique, Maryum Jameel and Shabeena, for their unwavering support and motivation throughout this challenging yet rewarding experience. Special thanks to my colleagues Dr Abdul Qayyum, Dr Azher Habib, Dr Zafar Ullah, and Dr Sabeen for their collaboration, discussions, and shared experiences that enriched my research and personal growth. Most importantly, I am forever grateful to my family, particularly my parents, my mother-in-law and my sisters, for their unconditional love, patience, and sacrifices that enabled me to pursue my academic dreams. Finally, I would like to thank my lovely children, Maryam Waseem and Qasim Waseem, for their love and support throughout my academic journey.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the loving memory of my late husband Waseem Babar, whose unwavering support and encouragement inspired me to pursue my dreams. May this achievement be a testament to his enduring legacy and the impact he had on my life.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a move towards uncovering the dynamics (inner working) of the genre of digital games and contributing to the understanding of how narrative is structured and framed in digital games. Furthermore, the study is also an attempt to reveal the meaning potential of its multimodal ensembles. Because digital games are a new media form and have been around for a few decades, the academic research, particularly the genre-based studies have not been considerable. The present research is a scholarly effort to investigate the genre of digital games. It analyses the structure of narrative patterns, the process of framing and the meaning potential of the procedural and visual mode within the genre of digital games. Undoubtedly digital games have become a dominant form of entertainment, offering a complex narrative experience. There is a significant role of genre in shaping this narrative experience for the player. The multifaceted genre approach of the present study takes into consideration the formal as well as the contextual perspectives of digital games to provide a nuanced understanding of the highly immersive and interactive media that is digital games. The present study is an attempt to understand how digital game function as a narrative genre. By analysing Call of Duty: Black Ops II, Call of Duty: WWII, and GTA V, this research examines the narrative structure and progression, the framing processes and multimodal elements that contribute to the sagacity of crafting video game narratives.

The thesis is titled as Politic of Digital Games: A multimodal Genre Analysis. Here the term "politic" is used to signify the tactfulness and sagacity involved in the creation of digital games, highlighting the thoughtful decision-making required to craft these intricate multimodal artifacts. Digital games are no more merely entertainment media form rather reflect complex compositions of serious narrative, including the embedding of worldviews, visuals, and interactivity, demanding a strategic balance of creativity, technical skill, and audience engagement. Genre analysis, as a comprehensive approach, aids in uncovering the deeper structures and conventions that define the makeup of any genre. This analytical lens resonates with the concept of "politic" by emphasizing the deliberate and tactful craftsmanship inherent in designing games. It is important to distinguish this use of "politic" from "politics," which refers to governance, power structures, or ideological debates. While "politics" centres on

societal dynamics, "politic" underscores the thoughtful ingenuity and strategic choices that define digital game design.

It is important to realise the significance of digital games in the present era and develop theoretical and analytical understanding of the emerging media form. Its significance became more evident during the social movement of Black Lives Matter. While the slogan of Black Lives Matter (#BLM) campaign was chanted by tens of thousands around the globe, in April 2020, the virtual lobby of a Nintendo video game witnessed the appearance of hashtag politics on its pixelated streets. What began as a multifaceted social movement in many major cities around the globe entered the closed digital space in multiple games, such as Call of Duty; Modern Warfare, The Sims, Splatoon, NBA 2K0 and World of Warcraft, it also created digital discourse and posed challenges to capturing and analysing the diverse data for many researchers. Among these researchers, linguists too, with various analytical and theoretical understanding were offered to find their research space.

Digital games have witnessed a long and tedious migration from marginal spare time activity to do-games-induce-violent-behaviours to the acknowledgement of the relevance of this new medium of digital age. Digital games have transformed into a sagacious and sophisticated artifact which provides a rich narrative experience to the player. The current study sheds light on the sagacity embedded in digital games, illustrating the meticulous construction of its multimodal and interactive narrative.

Keeping this in view, the thesis proposes three key reasons to study digital games in the field of academics and particularly for researchers in Linguistics. First, the rapid expansion in digital media and the growing cultural relevance extend both an opportunity and responsibility for researchers to critically engage in digital games. Second, digital games have established themselves as the media paradigm of the current era by surpassing the popularity of cinema and television with the growing potential to impact education, social movements, politics, health care, work and more. Third, particularly for the discipline of linguistics, digital games provide a dynamic linguistic landscape with immense offerings to explore language in a more dynamic context, perspectives and across multiple modalities.

1.1 Digital Games

The word play or game is often referred to as a derogatory term, as being trivial, non-serious and even childish. Similarly digital games are often labelled as mere clones or knockoffs (Newman, 2012) or mere trifles – low art – carrying none of the weight, gravitas or credibility of more traditional media. However digital games defied, challenged, and blurred the previous notion of play. Digital games have emerged from its stigmatised notions and achieved the status of an art form for the digital age. Digital games are more than playthings, and games render players the ability to not only understand themselves but also the actions of others. Games enable the player to comprehend how aspects of reality work and teach them how to imagine.

1.2 Ludo-Narrative Debate and Emerging Trends

Digital games have been approached through two philosophical yet contradicting perspectives: narratology and ludology as the study of digital games gelled into an emerging institutional practice and research. A question of whether digital games are a medium for narrative and a medium which can be studied through traditional analytical methods from the field of narratology. The proponent of the other extreme, the ludologist, focussed their attention solely on mechanics, rules and simulation and rejected the notion of narrative for digital games.

Eskelinen (2001) went a step further in making an overtly polemical comment that in the best cases stories in games are just uninteresting elements or gift wrappings to games. Ludologists were divided on the potential and scope of narrative regarding digital games. This debate was reflective of a lack of shared understanding of narrative—the term often replaced with the word story or fiction or to mean an ornamental function to provide context for digital games (Juul, 2005).

The ludo-narrative debate gained momentum with the seminal work of Murray. Her book *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* asserted the narrative potential of the evolving medium of games in which she maintained that books deliver linear stories while computers are good at telling stories of a distinct kind: spatial, encyclopaedic, procedural, and participatory—stories that are reflective of the digital age, its fractured realities, and complex systems. Murray's work stirred the scholarship advocating the other side (Murray, 1997).

Two years later Frasca in 1999 proposed ludology as a separate discipline which studied games and play activities and emphasised games as simulations having rhetorical possibilities in contrast to narratives (Frasca, 2003). This debate captured the attention of conferences and publications. Researchers from both theoretical considerations vouched to defend their understanding as the only way to approach digital games. The researchers advocating the formalistic rule-based approach included Aarseth (2001), Juul (2001), and Eskelinen (2004) while Murray (1997), Jenkins (2001), King and Krzywinska (2003), and Ryan (2001) were vouching for narrativity in game. However, the debate first experienced an intermediate stage where the reconciliation effort emerged when Frasca (2003) wrote a reconciliatory article entitled *Ludologists Love Stories Too: Notes From a Debate That Never Took Place*.

Though gradually, with the inauguration of the field of Game Studies, conferences and publications on digital games, the heated debate subsided and research around games experienced shifts in opinion, often referred to as hybrid approaches (Mateas, 2002) and a middle ground stance (Jenkins, 2003) began surfacing. Many avid ludologists, such as Juul and Aarseth, stated that (1) games contain both narrative elements, sequences, and structural traits (Juul, 2001) and (2) there is significant overlap between games and narrative (Aarseth, 1997). Perhaps most striking and the expanded definitions of narrative posed by Ryan (2001) included a phenomenological category of narratives that explained how stories are constructed in simulation and games, making both paradigms viable options. Kokonis' (2014) intermediality between games and fiction through semiotics and Aarseth's (1997) cybertext were few studies to steer the research trends surrounding games in new directions.

Apart from ludo-narrative dimension, digital games have been studied with multiple research focus including digital game as literary practice (Steinkuehler, 2010; Steinkuehler & King, 2009), digital game for persuasion and argumentation writing (Dickey, 2011), social discourse about gaming (Paul, 2012), language of gaming and multimedia (Ensslin, 2012), L2 learning and digital games (Butler, 2017), digital games and motivation for L2 vocabulary learning (Butler, 2017), digital game and school curriculum (Deng et al., 2016), social discourse of gaming (Paul, 2012), narrative of game and interactive storytelling (Blakesley, 2012) counter discourse of game and masculinity (Wardaningsih & Kasih, 2022), production of ideology in games (Bulut,

2021), and discourse semantics approach and game tutorials (Wildfeuer & Stamenković, 2022) are few scholarly trends to study digital games.

1.3 Digital Games and Genre Studies

The theoretical debate of narrative vs. ludology has greatly affected the contour of studies surrounding digital games. With overemphasis on claims that gameplay is paramount and the role, the decisions and the actions of the player distinguish games from any other medium. Consequently, the medium was seen as being defined primarily through the concept of interactivity and simulation rather than interpretation and representation and such elements as rules, goals, and outcomes were held to be more important or more central than narrative. This schism in the field (Newman, 2004) has not only consumed the scholarship of digital games, restricted the development of theoretical and analytical tools for digital games but also affected the genre approaches to digital games studies.

Within the studies of digital games, the concept of genre has been slowly evolving. The focus of earlier genre studies on narratives, types of experience, structure, engagement, or support (Herz, 1997; Newman, 2004; Nieborg & Hermes, 2008). Another approach (Wolf, 2002) focussed on ludological elements such as the dominant characteristics of the interactive experience, the games' goals and objectives, the nature of the game's player-character and the player control. This approach provided 42 categories for digital games. Another classificatory approach in genre studies focussed mostly on the mechanics was proposed by Poole (2000). While Whalen (2003) genre approach paid attention to the types of platforms used in games.

A very notable and often discussed way of conceptually framing genre analysis in digital games was provided by King and Krzywinska (2003) which offered Platform, Genre, Mode, and Milieu as broad categories to approach games. Platform referred to the hardware used by a game while Genre was used for the commonly understood categories relating to gameplay (Action, Action-Adventure, Strategy). Mode described how the game-world was experienced by the player and included in-game perspective (first-person, third-person, isometric) as well as options for number of players (single-player, multiplayer) and whether it can be played over a local area network (LAN) or over the internet. Milieu was meant to describe stylistic conventions and narrative content.

Amidst various approaches to the genre, several critics, Huber (2003) called for a wider and more rigorous approach to genre studies in games, specifically in terms of moving beyond a strictly formal or gameplay-centric approach and emphasised the need of a thematic approach to understanding genre as necessity in fully understanding gamed. Similarly, Apperley (2006) has argued that a strictly ludological approach to videogame genre analysis is limited in scope and must be supplanted with considerations such as narratology and the contemporary logics of remediation.

Among these, Clearwater (2011) perspective of genre for games provides a more holistic understanding of digital games. Clearwater theoretical understanding of the video game genre recognizes the importance of narrative (story patterns, structure, character, etc.), game play (rules, mechanics, hardware) and most importantly the discursive context, an inseparable account, in which the genre resides and evolves. The cultural and social aspects surrounding digital games is also emphasised as genres are not produced in isolation and may relate to the medium, aesthetics, ideology, economics, current events, history, education and other aspects of human interaction and behaviour.

The intersection of genre and narrative in digital games represents a significant area of inquiry, particularly in understanding how games function as a narrative genre. Genres in games are not confined to mechanical categorizations like shooter or role-playing but extend to include narrative structures, player agency, and multimodal framing. This dynamic interplay positions digital games as a unique storytelling medium, where the conventions of genre shape the rules, mechanics, and aesthetics, while narratives provide meaning and emotional resonance. Within this context, my study employs a Multimodal Genre Analysis framework to examine how procedural and visual modes contribute to narrative framing in single-player games. By analysing *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2*, *Call of Duty: WWII*, and *Grand Theft Auto V*, this research explores how genre conventions, through their procedural rules and visual aesthetics, enable narratives to frame thematic elements such as conflict, morality, and agency. The study highlights how player actions—constrained by genre-driven affordances and restrictions—play a crucial role in advancing the narrative, underscoring the importance of genre in shaping the storytelling potential of digital games.

1.4 Perspective of Clearwater on Genre of Digital Games

Clearwater (2011) holds that a genre study or a genre conscious approach is critical to game analysis since it is extremely useful to have a shared understanding of the vast output associated with this medium. Clearwater's concept of what necessitates the purpose of genre study aligns with Northrop Frye (1957) argument that, the purpose of genre study is "not so much to classify as to clarify... traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of... relationships that would not be noticed as long as there was no context established for them" (pp. 247-248).

This comprehensive and broad perspective of genre, as suggested by Clearwater, is inclusive of the formal characteristics (rules, mechanics, processes, hardware, game narrative) of games as well as social, discursive, and contextual aspects of the game. These aspects, as outlined by Clearwater, are inseparable owing to the interactive nature of the game. Therefore, the first aspect of the genre considers the ludic and narrative aspect of the game whereas the later provides the social and contextual horizon to the genre of digital games.

Clearwater's concept of genre analysis for digital games has taken into consideration the ludo-narrative debate which is quite common in literary scholarship surrounding digital games. On one hand ludologists argue that gameplay is paramount and emphasises the role of interactivity and player agency in this medium. While those advocating the role of narrative and the presence of diverse representational strategies, the scholars on this side consider interpretation and representation through elements of game narrative as essential aspects of this medium. artificially limiting and restricting the broad concept of genre and genre theory for digital games. (The details of the ludo-narrative debate have been added in the literature review section of this thesis). However, Clearwater does not negate the significance of either in the understanding of genre of digital games Clearwater affirms the co-existence and significance of various elements that form this genre. The ludic elements of game play, interactivity of the game as well as the story, setting and narrative of the game "are tethered to form the larger experience of each game" (Clearwater, 2011, p. 33).

Based on Clearwater's concept of genre analysis, the present research has adapted an analytical operational model to study the genre of digital games. This operational model offers a comprehensive approach to the genre of digital games which

is not only an artistic, cultural, aesthetic, and expressive object, and at the same time a functional and technological construct, hence requires a multi-dimensional analytical approach.

This analytical model is divided into three parts; each part addresses a distinct generic dimension. The first part focuses on the narrative dimensions of digital games and uses Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) Narrative Analytical Framework to analyse the narrative parameters of the selected titles. This framework will analyse the narrative poetics and the role of player (agency) in the progression of the narrative of the selected titles. The second part of this model includes analysis of rules and parameters of the game and uses Hawreliak's approach of Procedural Mode (2019) and analyses the procedural mode focusing on rules and parameters of the game play. This analytical model investigates the meaning making potential of the procedural and visual mode of the game. These two parts of the analytical model relate to the formal and aesthetic consideration of genre following Clearwater (2011) perspective of genre. While the third aspect of the model deals with the discursive aspect of genre and based on the acknowledgment that games communicate meanings and beliefs and offer an understanding of the world and topic they are depicting and simulating (Booth, 2021). For this purpose, the process of framing will be analysed using Entman (2009) and Nygren et al. (2022) approach of framing. This will enable the researcher to analyse the process of framing at the micro and the macro level of the narrative of the selected games. Framing, in a way, is an organizing principle and is used to present the information or issue which highlights certain aspects of a phenomenon and make them salient (Entman, 2009). It is important to remember the fact that the highly interactive medium of games requires the analytical approach which could encompass the wide range of its textual manifestations. The text in the game can be approached through the dialogues and voiceovers during the gameplay and cutscenes. The gameplay also offers instances of text when the player interacts with NPC's and the story world and play the game. The analytical model for framing for this study also includes the analysis of rules and mechanics of the game which structure the gameplay. In this regard, the study will analyse the various operational facets of framing: story, character, game aesthetics, rules and mechanics apart from the framing at the level of words and sentences. Framing captures the dynamic interplay between message and surrounding context. As all forms of media and communication, games inevitably frame the issues that are

portrayed in them (Wicks, 2005). Frames are a way to understand and analyse the world, to create and communicate meanings and beliefs (Goffman, 1974; Laws & Rein 2003; Rein & Schon 1993; Wagenaar, 2011). Like other media forms, through framing the genre of digital games, select certain aspects of a phenomenon and make them salient. Digital games offer interaction with its ludic system and the specific worldviews which are manifested in its organization of text. In this regard, the study aims to investigate how the process of framing functions in the selected games and identify the various manifestation of ideological constructs.

Chen (2024) claims that ideologies are the primary source of ideational material and play a fundamental role in the construction of frames. Similarly, Westby (2002) considers frames to be a symbolic construct which stems from ideology and functions as extensions of existing ideologies. However, frames and ideologies are inextricable, yet distinct concepts. According to Flood, both framing and ideology are inextricable concepts and considers ideology to be “inseparable from the processes of framing” (Flood, 2009, p. 12). As Westby asserts frames to be symbolic constructions that in different ways are a derivative of ideologies. However, the frames are not automatically generated, rather frames entail a process of recasting ideational materials into narrative.

Digital games have increasingly been recognized as an emerging narrative genre, offering rich, interactive experiences that extend beyond traditional storytelling. Clearwater’s perspective of genre analysis gives a broader framework to investigate this evolution, emphasizing narrative structure, player agency, game mechanics, visuals, and framing as essential aspects of the gaming genre. In the present study, genre analysis has been approached through three interconnected dimensions: narrative structure and progression, exploring how players actively contribute to the unfolding of the narrative; multimodal elements, focusing on visual and procedural modes that shape meaning making; and framing, which examines how games construct perspectives in their narrative. This integration of genre and narrative underscores how games engage players in immersive, narrative-driven experiences, establishing their position as a dynamic and evolving medium for interactive narratives. Through this lens, the study highlights the transformative potential of games in the broader context of digital narratives.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Recent years have witnessed the ubiquitousness of digital games. With 3.32 billion active players worldwide (Statista report, 2023), digital games have become a prevalent form of cultural and entertainment phenomenon, encompassing almost half of the world's population of 7.8 billion people. This phenomenal indicator of the widespread use of digital games across diverse demographics and regions establishes digital games as an object well suited for inquiry. Digital games are an exceptional case of computer human interaction, a site which must be explored with a multidisciplinary perspective. However, there are limited theoretical and methodological research efforts in the field of linguistics to explore and investigate “the most influential form(s) of popular expression entertainment in today’s broader culture” (Jones, 2008, p. 1).

Despite the growing popularity of digital games, the linguistic landscape of digital games has been explored with limited perspective. There are very few studies conducted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the genre of digital games. The current body of research in linguistics on digital games reflects the focus on discourse (Thurlow, 2020; Grimes, 2021; Britt & Britt, 2021), language learning (Butler, 2017), gender and identity (Cote, 2020) in digital games. However, digital games have not been investigated with a genre-based approach in our discipline. Furthermore, there is also a lack of analytical approaches to investigate the genre of digital games.

Digital games are designed and produced for human consumption and have socio-cultural dimensions in their make-up. Therefore, it requires a series of systematic and comprehensive investigations for the genre of digital game and gaming as communicative and discursive processes to develop theoretical and methodological understandings. The study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of the genre of digital games. The focus of the study is to unveil the narrative sensibilities and structure, the communicative potential of rules and mechanics and the discursive framework of the genre of digital games. In this regard, the study aims to analyse the narrative of digital games to identify the structure of narrative patterns, the communicative potential of procedural and visual mode and the process of framing in the narrative of digital games to develop a more nuanced understanding of how the genre of digital game operates as an expressive medium which is capable of not only offering ludic engagement but also capable of imparting understanding of the worldviews its narrative contains.

1.6 Research Objectives

The research as set for this study are:

- To find out how the narrative patterns are structured in the narrative of digital games.
- To identify the ideological position as grounded in frames in the narrative of digital games.
- To find out how procedural and visual modes make meaning in digital games.

1.7 Research Questions

The current study seeks to address the following research questions.

1. How are the narrative patterns structured in the narrative of selected digital games?
2. To what extent does the player agency contribute to narrative progression in the selected digital games?
3. To what extent do the frames in the selected digital games manifest ideological constructs?
4. In what ways do the procedural and visual modes contribute to making meaning in the selected digital games?

1.8 Significance of the Study

Genre studies are considered productive across disciplines, as these studies help in developing understanding of any genre, its evolution over time, varieties and above all contribute to theoretical and analytical understanding of any genre. After the inauguration of Game Studies research journal in 2001 and Digital Games Research Association in 2003, research around games began to gain momentum. Despite its rapid expansion, genre studies of digital games are at its evolutionary stage with studies either focussing on classification or theme or gameplay or stories within games.

The present study, in this regard, contributes to the research of genre studies in general as well as to the field of applied linguistics in particular. This thesis is an attempt to develop understanding that the genre of digital games has the potential of academic

offering to the field of Linguistics. There are limited number of studies which focussed on how the narrative of this emerging genre is structured and the role of player in narrative progression. Furthermore, fewer studies have been conducted to find out how any issue is presented in the narrative of this multimodal artifact. Since there is lack of analytical framework which conforms to the generic dimensions as suggested by Clearwater (2011), this study has adapted an operational analytical model. This model combines aspects of narrative (non-linear digital narrative), semiotics (visual and procedural modes) and media studies (framing).

The study investigates the narrative parameters of the digital games with a focus on the pattern of narrative progression. The study also reflects on the role of player (agency) in shaping the narrative of this interactive genre. A significant part of the study is an effort to strengthen the viability of the semiotic mode, both visual and procedural, to have communicative potential and will also add another dimension to existing multimodal studies and Linguistics. Furthermore, the study also investigates the process and functions of frame in the narrative of the game. Frame analysis is a frequently used analytical tool for news media; however, the narrative of the games has not been explored with an approach which can reflect how the process of framing operates both at the micro and macro level of text. As the present study analyses the process of framing of not only the text (words/phrases/sentence) but it also includes the analysis of framing which is done through game mechanics, aesthetics, rules, and parameters of the selected games. The adaptation of an analytical model for genre-based studies on games can significantly impact future research in linguistics, by providing a structured framework for examining how various narrative techniques, player involvement in narrative, and multimodal interactions shape the narrative of games. This analytical framework provides a deeper understanding of genre conventions in games and how they influence storytelling, mechanics, and player experience. Using this approach, future studies can systematically compare games across genres, leading to insights about the evolving relationship between narrative, technology, and player agency. It also opens the door to interdisciplinary research, integrating linguistics, media studies, and game design to explore how games function as complex, genre-driven narrative.

This genre-based study imparts understanding of the potential of the highly expressive medium and this insight will add to the existing body of research on games in addition to strengthening the relationship between language and game studies.

1.9 Scope of the Study

Narrative and multimodal analysis are central to the field of linguistics, as they provide essential insights into how any narrative is structured and how meaning is constructed and communicated across various forms of expression. In this regard, this thesis aims to investigate the genre of digital games by examining several key aspects. The primary objective of this research is to examine the narrative of digital game, focussing on the narrative pattern and the role of player in the progression of the narrative of games. Moreover, it also investigates the process of framing through text and game mechanics, along with multimodal analysis which examines how various modes, specifically visual and procedural mode, contribute to meaning-making process in narrative of digital games. Through the genre-based approach, the thesis aims to develop understanding of the narrative mechanism, the framing process and the multimodal elements that shape the overall narrative experience of digital games. The study employs qualitative approach and adapts analytical model to conduct the genre analysis of three selected games using text analysis and close reading. The research primarily focuses on single-player modes, where fixed narratives facilitate a more controlled analysis. Other modes, such as music, text and haptic feedback, are beyond the scope of this research. Furthermore, while the study identifies ideological standpoints present within the frames, it does not evaluate or interpret these ideologies. Overall, this research aims to provide insights into how narrative is structured and how various elements work together to construct meaning in digital game narratives, enhancing our understanding of this digital genre.

1.10 Contribution of My Work in Linguistics

This research contributes significantly to the fields of linguistics and genre studies by addressing critical gaps in the investigation of games as an emerging narrative and communicative genre. While previous genre studies surrounding digital games were either play-centred, theme-based, classificatory or design specific and lacked a comprehensive approach to genre studies of games which are critical in genre analysis. The present study fills this gap and conducts the much-needed comprehensive multimodal genre analysis of digital games and significantly advances the understanding of this genre.

Drawing from established research traditions in linguistics, especially genre-based studies and multimodality, this thesis conducts a multimodal genre analysis of digital games and investigates the formal (structure and progression of narrative) and discursive dimensions of digital games. From a linguistic perspective, the study shows how language—through sentences, words and phrases, in addition to game mechanics, game aesthetics and narrative mechanics, constructs, frames and shapes player's perception of events and issues in games. Furthermore, the study also demonstrates how visual and procedural modes contribute to meaning making in this narrative genre. In this regard, the study is an attempt to expand the scope of applied linguistics into digital games.

The study also makes a significant methodological contribution by developing the analytical framework for genre analysis to conduct a comprehensive investigation of how the narrative of digital game is structured and organized in a multimodal ensemble to provide rich and immersive narrative experience to the player. Owing to the lack of analytical framework for genre analysis of digital game, this methodological intervention paves the way for future research to conduct a comprehensive genre analysis.

The findings of the study have pedagogical applications. Digital narratives, such as digital games, demonstrate the potential for linguistic analysis, especially within the scope of multimodality and genre studies. By showing the dynamic aspects of the multimodal narratives which involves visual and procedural mode, the current study draws attention to their relevance to linguistic pedagogy. It highlights the need to include the emerging interactive narrative genre of games in linguistic curricula and allows students to investigate and explore the evolving digital narrative in contemporary context.

1.10 Delimitation of the Study

The present study has been delimited in the following aspects. It is delimited to first-person shooter games. Contrary to scrolling shooters which focus on fast-paced action and linear storytelling, the first-person shooter perspective allows more immersive experience of rich narrative of game. The third person shooter perspective, on the other hand, emphasizes visibility of character and environment. As compared to these perspectives of shooter games, first person shooter perspective enables player to

navigate and fully experience the interactive digital narrative through character's eye and make choice that directly impacts the story. Therefore, the study is delimited to the first-person shooter perspective.

Furthermore, the study is also delimited to single player mode which allows a more thorough investigation and experience of narrative structure, micronarrative and narrative progression. As compared to the multiplayer modes which often generate parallel or emergent narratives through player interactions, thus, falls outside the scope of this research. By concentrating on single-player mode, the study allows closer examination of the narrative structures, player agency, and game mechanics without the added complexity of multiplayer narratives. This focus allows for a more controlled and detailed analysis of how framing (linguistic and otherwise) and multimodal elements work together to create a cohesive narrative experience in games.

The study focuses on identifying frames and examining how they are constructed through linguistic elements and game mechanics, particularly in relation to their ideological standpoints. However, the study does not extend to analysing or interpreting the ideologies behind these frames. The emphasis is on the framing process itself, rather than the ideological implications.

The study focuses on analysing the meaning-making process through the two modes that is only the procedural and visual modes of the selected games. Other modes such as background music, colour or intertextuality are beyond the scope of this research.

1.11 Politic in Digital Games

Digital games have evolved into a complex digital artifact whose composition and production reflect the intricacy and intellect involved in its making. The present research is an attempt to underscore the politic and tactics which is involved in producing the digital games and elevated them into a digital artifact that invites serious analysis. Guided by this premise, this thesis which is titled as *Politic in Digital Games: A Multimodal Genre Analysis*, explores how various elements in games work together to construct an immersive narrative for the player and establish themselves as a distinct narrative genre.

However, it is imperative here to develop an understanding on the use of the word politic in general along with its relevance to digital games and to this body of

research. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) the adjective politic may take four semantic equivalents: political, characterised by shrewdness in managing, contriving, or dealing sagacious in promoting a policy and shrewdly tactful.

The word politic is often misplaced with the word politics which is a noun and means the art or science of government or political actions or policies or a political affairs or business. Here the thesis uses this word to refer to the sagacity which is involved in the making of this expressive medium which utilizes the available advanced technologies and the modalities of digital medium. This work does not focus on politics in the narrative of games. The thesis is based on the premise that the digital video games are more than plaything and are not meant to be taken as the product of algorithm and computation alone. Digital games are rich sites for narrative construction. The sagacity in producing the narrative of digital games involves narrative structures, unconventional means to generate arguments and present the (specific) realities of the world which demands, first the realisation of the potential of this medium and second the investigation of the nature of these presentations.

This study firmly aligns with the tradition of Linguistics by engaging in a genre analysis that investigates the narrative structures inherent in digital games, the meaning potential of two key modalities of visual and procedural ensembles and the process of framing at work in the interactive narrative of selected games.

1.12 Definition of Terms

The following are the brief definitions of important terms which are included in this thesis:

- i. First Person Shooter (FPS) is a perspective in which the player-character does not get represented on the screen, and its gameplay involves shooting enemies and other targets in which a player views the action as though through the eyes of the character they are controlling.

- ii. Interface:

This term is used to describe the point where the player interacts with the game, and receives feedback on their interactions, via menus, character health bar, display of number of lives, weapons, map and time.

iii. Playable and non-playable characters (NPC):

A player-character or a playable character or PC is a fictional character in digital game whose actions are controlled by a player. The characters that are not controlled by a player are called non-player characters (NPCs). The actions of non-player characters are typically handled by the game itself in digital games.

iv. Checkpoint:

An area in a level from which the player will start the level from next time they die, rather than having to start the level over. Checkpoints typically remain in place until the player completes the level or gets a game over.

v. Game Mechanics:

Game mechanics are the rules, systems, and interactions within a game that govern how players navigate, strategize, and progress. Game mechanics determine the player's actions, the consequences of those actions, and the overall structure of the game.

vi. Haptic:

In context of digital games, the term haptic refers to touch, and to the interface devices that address the sense of touch through pressure and vibration.

1.13 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter provides an overview of this research providing a brief overview of the theoretical and analytical understandings of my work. The definitions of important terms have also been included to aid the understanding of various terms which are used frequently in this research. The literature review has been organised in terms of the three related yet distinct strands of this work which includes narrative, the process of framing and the multimodality (visual and procedural modes only). The chapter of data analysis includes the analysis of three selected games and their respective analysis using the operational analytical model adapted for this work. Furthermore, it also included findings of the analysis of the selected games. The last chapter provides an overview of the study, its major findings followed by a discussion of research questions of the study. This chapter also includes the implications and recommendation for the future studies of digital games.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“All play means something” — Johan Huizinga,
Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture

Since the launch of the first game, the scholarship around digital games have been expanding. The scholars have identified an array of cultural, social, political, economic, and technological factors that call for reconsideration of the digital game genre by researchers of technology, media, linguistics, culture and media studies. Newman (2004) outlined three major reasons to study games: the scope and the market size of the digital gaming industry worldwide; the booming popularity of digital games; and digital games as an epitome of human-computer interaction. The researcher of the present study adds another reason: the genre of digital games offers an immense scope for linguists to discover the vast potential of the genre of digital games which has gradually paved its way to the field of academics and offers research opportunities to sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and communication studies.

Keeping above mentioned reasons to consider digital games worthy of research endeavour, supporting discussion on each is followed. Kokonis (2014) observes that the rapidly evolving digital technologies and the ubiquitous use of computers are signalling shifting trends in entertainment and popular culture. There is a significant inclination to playing digital games as compared to the decreasing trend of reading books, watching TV or movies. There is a growing number of digital game players around the world. Among every five people, two are found to be gamers. The report by Statista (a popular data platform) estimates 3.03 billion active video gamers worldwide in 2022. According to the PC and Console Gaming Report of Newzoo, global games market revenues in 2022 amounted to \$32.8 billion worldwide. The current market trends and revenue generated by video games and accessories speak of their popularity. Digital games are an exceptional case of computer human interaction, a site which must be explored with a multidisciplinary perspective. The interconnectedness of linguistics and digital game rests on the premise that the genre of digital games have attained the status of the most influential form[s] of popular expression and entertainment in today's broader culture. The understanding that digital games have expressive powers is also reflective of the fact that, like many cultural products, games are not only produced and

consumed by human beings but also designed with tactful intentions. Furthermore, several researchers like Ensslin advocate the acknowledgement of ideological makeup of the digital games and agree with Everett, that the games are “definitely not neutral” (Everett, 2005, p. 323). Therefore, a series of systematic and comprehensive investigations on digital game and gaming as a communicative and discursive processes are required to develop theoretical and methodological understandings. This is in line with the objectives of the study which is to inquire the communicative potential of the procedural mode (game mechanics and rules), to investigate the structure of narrative patterns and the use of framing to identify the underlying ideological constructs.

2.1 Digital Games as Cultural Artifact

This section briefly overviews scholarly consideration to digital games as cultural artifact to strengthen the legitimacy of this digital medium. Jenkins (2005) declared digital games must be accepted as one of the profound art forms emerging in the twentieth century and called them an artform of the digital age and argued for greater attention to digital games like other cultural art forms. Like Jenkins, Koster (1999), also proclaimed earlier to recognize digital games as an art form, though he was aware of the common prevailing perception to consider games as mere clones or knockoffs. Games are more than playthings, and games render players the ability to not only understand themselves but also the actions of others. Games enable the player to comprehend how aspects of reality work and teach them how to imagine. Similarly, scholars like Anthropy (2012) and Westecott, (2013) consecrate digital games as cultural artifacts, i.e., digital objects having wider cultural importance than is being acknowledged to date.

2.1.1 What Defines a Digital Game

Before reviewing major studies, it is important to define digital games. McGonigal's (2011) definition of games regards four traits as requisite for all types of games: goals, rules, feedback and voluntary participation. He includes a broad spectrum of games which ranges from modern digital games to centuries old board-games. McGonigal attempts to encircle what a game is, regardless of its medium or level of reality. The first trait relates to the outcome of the play. What goal the player is striving to achieve? According to McGonigal (2011), goal orientation “provides players with a sense of purpose” (p. 21). The second trait of rules provides structure or sets limits in

achieving the goal and enable the player to unleash creativity and foster strategic thinking. The third trait of feedback is the communication system which shows the progress of the player and provides motivation to the player. The fourth trait of voluntary participation ensures the freedom to the player to begin or end the game and points at the fact that intentionally stressful and challenging work is experienced as safe and pleasurable activity.

Let us consider how game designers consider games. For example, Fullerton (2008) defines game as “a closed, formal system that engages players in structured conflict and resolves its uncertainty in an unequal outcome” (p. 43). Fullerton perception of game is a rule bound closed system, and emphasis is laid on the closed structure of the games. Schell (2008) succinct definition of game makes it “a problem-solving activity, approached with a playful attitude” (p. 37). The players voluntarily participate in games which possess goals and rules. Games are interactive phenomena and have a value system which allows the player to engage in a closed and formal system.

In his classic work, Huizinga (1955) explores the meaning and role of play in the culture and history of mankind. Huizinga views play as a voluntary, free and inherently motivated act which is different from ordinary life and has its own rules and order. Play, for Huizinga, is psychological, biological as well as a cultural phenomenon which can express and shape the spirit of human civilization. Huizinga emphasises the role of play in the faculties of science, law, war, philosophy, poetry and art and says:

Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is “different” from “ordinary life”. (p. 28)

2.1.2 Game and Play

Before we enter into the Magic Circle of games or discuss *Homo Ludens* we need to discuss what is meant by play. Play is undoubtedly an important part of human endeavours. The phenomenon of play has been defined differently: some consider play to be a human pursuit, structured activities carried out to overcome monotony while for others play provides opportunity for expression of emotions. Huizinga (1955), a

renowned Dutch historian asserts in his groundbreaking book *Homo Luden*: "Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing" (p.1).

Digital game experts like Frasca (2003), Salen and Zimmerman (2003), Bogost (2008), and Jones (2008) discussed the meanings of play regarding video games. For instance, Salen and Zimmerman (2003) view of games echo the definition produced by the other scholars: "A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (p. 71).

However, their definition points at the artificiality of the conflict in games, reiterating the significance of the magic circle and its accompanying notion that games establish a borderline from real life. Although the joystick is held by humans in their real life, artificiality cannot be ruled out from the spectrum of games. Unlike Salen and Zimmerman, Juul views games as *Half Real*, in a sense that games have real rules which allows players to interact and win or lose a game as a part of a real event. However, Juul (2005) admits that the player might have won a game by killing a monster, a fictional unreal creature and says, "To play a video game is therefore to interact with real rules while imagining a fictional world, and a video game is a set of rules as well as a fictional world" (p. 1).

In summary, the varying definitions of digital games points out their complexity as both interactive and cultural artifacts.

2.1.3 History of Digital Games

Tennis for Two was the first video game created by William Higinbotham in 1958. It was a matter of three decades that the gamers played the commercial game *Balance of Power* by Chris Crawford in 1985. The game provided a simulation of the geopolitics of the world which gave players a chance to avoid nuclear war. The player through democratic manoeuvres overturns war and maintains world peace. However, the game design provides the chance only to (players) the president of America or General Secretary of Russia to restore world peace.

Other digital games, like *Cold War Sim Crisis in the Kremlin* (Barbu,1991), *Sim Earth: The Living Planet* (Maxis,1990) and *Balance of the Planet* (Crawford,1990) are also a reflection of expansion of the utility of this medium. The 21st century witnessed the games being made on current issues. With the launch of the website,

www.newsgaming.com by Gonzalo Frasca in 2003 a combination of games and current issues surfaced. September 12 was made to create debate on war against terrorism. The player needs to kill terrorists to stop them from shooting missiles. This interactive news game shows that killing of terrorists involves collateral damage, innocent lives are also put at stake in this war against terrorism. The death of innocent people provokes revenge among survivors. The vicious cycle of violence can only be contained by not playing it. Within the next two years video games were legitimised. The U.S presidential candidates (Biden and Trump) and political parties endorsed games to strengthen their election campaign.

Whether it is the matter of Black Lives Matter slogan appearing on the game screen of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare and Warzone (Forbes 2020) or the incidence of launching of an interactive news game Syrian Journey: Choose Your Own Escape Route (BBC., 2015) which evoked debate of choosing a human crisis and turning it into an interactive text adventure, both games give a glimpse of entry of current affairs of the world into gaming discourse. The Syrian Journey begins with the player making gruelling decisions of selling their homes in Damascus for reduced price or fleeing to Egypt or Turkey or taking a cheaper but riskier sea route or air travel. The introduction of such a visual medium communicating the discourse of news evoked controversies. BBC was heavily criticised for the act of reporting human tragedy in a computer game. Rawlings of [Auroch Digital](#), an expert of news games, points out that games emerged as a mature system. A system which is used extensively in the field of education, health, training and in simulation is now embracing topics/news in a range of ways that linear format is less capable of. Beside this phenomenon of presenting human crisis in games, this new system of console, joysticks and sophisticated controls has space for ideology at play too.

The evolution of digital games from Tennis for Two to modern gaming exemplifies the dramatic advancements in technology and design within the gaming industry. While Tennis for Two used oscilloscope for visualizing and side scrolling, the modern games excel in its virtual reality and open-ended features. Beyond these technological advancements and their ability to offer increasingly immersive experiences, digital games reflect meticulous and deliberate design choices that shape their interactive narratives. This sagacity, or "politic," is evident in the thoughtful

integration of narrative elements, player engagement strategies, and multimodal components, all of which contribute to the game's overall impact and resonance.

2.2 Research Trends in Digital Games

This section of study outlines the academic trends to study games. With digital games occupying an integral part of our contemporary society, more scholarly attention was paid to investigate various dimensions of digital games. Frasca (2013) in his profound work on introduction to ludology explains the academic trends to study games. Early research work produced on digital games focussed on games, violence and the behaviour of the gamers: Anderson and Dill (2000) examined relationship of games and aggression, Anderson (2003) studied the myths surrounding video games and Huesmann (2007) analysed the impact of media violence on adolescent health. Gradually the academic interest shifted toward analysis which recognizes the relevance of this digital medium. With the onset of Game Studies, a peer reviewed journal in 2001 and Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) in 2003 research, digital games found their own academic sphere. However, traditionally the digital games were considered as extensions of narrative and drama which was strongly opposed to the ludic dimension of games.

2.2.1 Narratology vs. Ludology

Like research in other emerging fields, the scholarship surrounding digital games has also experienced challenges. Burrell rightly captures:

Established ways of seeing the world are replaced, throughout history, by upheavals in thought. Those changes are so expansive that the old ways of thinking are totally incompatible with the new. To embrace the new is to undertake a conversion experience. By no means are all scientists in the field willing to contemplate this move from a comfortable stability. (Burrell, 1996, p. 646)

The research surrounding digital games has witnessed a significant, yet a critical ludo-narrative debate. McManus and Feinstein (2006) observe that narratologists generally declare gaming and simulations to be closely related to stories or narratives and with this orientation these scholars explain both the inner workings of digital games (Frasca, 2003), and the workings of the gamer's mind (Schank, 1990). The other

philosophical approach in digital games pays more attention to game mechanics, play and interaction in gaming and simulation. For the scholars of this approach immersion and realness of game experience is fundamental and the elements of narrative are least considerable.

Ludology emerged as a discipline in the 1990s (Frasca 2003) which studied games of all kinds: board games, card games and computer games. Frasca necessitated that the lack of a formal discipline for games is one of the reasons that the theoretical tools are borrowed from film industry and narratology. Since then, the academic community has used the term ludologist for those who are not favouring the use of narrative approach in the study of games.

The “Narratology vs. Ludology” dichotomy is significant in the field of digital games and points at the gulf between rule-based highly dynamic games and static and immutable narratives. This perspective was a dominant feature during the inaugural session of Game Studies journal (Aarseth, 2001; Eskelinen, 2001; Juul, 2001). This debate had two fundamental topics: one considering digital games a medium for narrative and appropriateness of using analytical methods from the domain of narratology to the dynamic yet rule-based game. This debate was initiated when Juul announced that the computer game is simply not a narrative medium though later Juul reconsidered his claim (Juul, 1999).

2.2.2 Hamlet on the Holodeck

The ludo-narrative debate gained momentum with the seminal work, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Murray, 1997). Her work asserted the narrative potential of the evolving medium of games in which she maintained that books deliver linear stories while computers are good at telling stories of a distinct kind: spatial, encyclopaedic, procedural and participatory— stories that are reflective of the digital age, its fractured realities and complex systems. Murray's work stirred the scholarship advocating the other side.

Two years later Frasca in 1999 proposed ludology as a separate discipline which studied games and play activities and emphasised games as simulations having rhetorical possibilities in contrast to narratives (Frasca, 2003). This debate captured the attention of conferences and publications. Researchers from both theoretical

considerations vouched to defend their understanding as the only way to approach digital games As Millers from ludology paradigm maintained:

I see this debate as a pointless distraction that has pulled a lot of smart minds into its depths. In effect, there is no conflict between the two camps. The ludology camp is perfectly correct, and how this can be argued is beyond comprehension. (Miller, 2005, p.1)

Similarly, Aarseth (2012) contested narratology in games and rejected narratology altogether and considered narrative theory was not only unable to answer the questions that one should ask about games; it prevents them from asking them in the first place.

Murray (2015) regards the debate between ludologists and narratologists in game studies as a central point of contention, with each side holding distinct views on the study and interpretation of video games. In her view Ludologists, represented by scholars such as Jesper Juul and Gonzalo Frasca, emphasise the unique formalism of games, focusing on gameplay mechanics, rules, and the abstract qualities of games. They argue that games should be studied independently of other cultural forms, such as narrative or film, with the focus solely on the game's formal elements. On the other hand, narratologists, including Janet Murray and Espen Aarseth, stress the importance of narrative and storytelling in video games. They believe that games should be analysed as a form of interactive storytelling, focusing on elements like plot, character development, and thematic depth. The debate between these two perspectives has often been framed as ludology versus narratology, with ludologists rejecting any attempts to link games with narrative and viewing such connections as a form of colonialist intrusion. This perspective is described as game essentialism, which posits that games should be interpreted solely in terms of their formal qualities, separate from other cultural forms. However, the researcher argues against this binary opposition, suggesting that the debate is a product of the ludologists' own creation. The researcher proposes that game studies should adopt a more interdisciplinary approach that recognizes the importance of both gameplay and narrative in understanding and analysing video games. According to the researcher, games are not merely a subset of stories, nor are they separate entities; rather, they are interpenetrating sibling categories, each with elements of the other. Moreover, she advocated for a more integrated and

interdisciplinary approach to game studies, recognizing that both gameplay and narrative are essential components of video games (Murray, 2005).

2.2.3 Middle Grounds

According to McManus and Feinstein (2006) the decades-long debate of ludology and narratology consumed the scholarship of many noteworthy scholars. However, many researchers of different disciplines started realising how this debate had diverted their attention and scholarly productivity. However, this debate was also productive in two senses: first it focussed scholarly attention on non-narrative aspects of the game and led to analytical and theoretical development of these aspects. Secondly the rejection of narratology led the attempts to fill the analytical gaps with studies based on classical perspective, such as, textual analysis by Fernández-Vara 2014 and post classical narrative theory by Ensslin 2014 in their works.

Researchers like Ryan (2001) and Simon (2007) critiqued ludological position. Ryan (2001) asserted that the inability of literary narratology to account for the experience of games does not mean that we should throw away the concept of narrative in ludology. Similarly, Simon (2007) rejected the ludologists arguments against narratology and called them unconvincing and ideologically motivated rather than theoretically grounded.

Similarly, Kokonis (2014) in his effort to resolve this methodological and analytical gap which has parted two extremes discusses the longstanding debate between two camps in Computer Games Studies: narratologists and ludologists. With narratologist focussing on the narrative elements in games, arguing that popular games often have strong narrative components and should be analysed similarly to films or literature. The research dimension in their view included visual representation, movement, and narrative space. Ludologists, however, prioritise gameplay mechanics, downplaying the significance of narrative elements. With a belief that gameplay is paramount and that story elements are secondary to a player's main concern, which is winning the game. This tension has resulted in a divisive debate within the academic community. Ludologists fear that narratologists could dominate the field and introduce a neo-colonial discourse that diminishes the unique characteristics of computer games. For instance, Eskelinen (2001) controversially claimed that narratives in video games are merely uninteresting elements or gift wrappings to games. Conversely,

narratologists argue that games, especially blockbusters, often incorporate strong narrative elements and should be analysed as such. Frasca (2003) attempted to reconcile these opposing views with his article, suggesting that the debate is largely based on misunderstandings and misconceptions. He emphasises that ludologists do not intend to devalue narratives but prioritise gameplay. His study proposed a way forward by advocating for a semiotic perspective that integrates both ludology and narratology. This approach allows researchers to focus on the similarities and differences between games and traditional narrative forms and facilitates a better understanding of the hybrid nature of computer games. Furthermore, the researcher stated that the semiotic perspective offers a wider theoretical framework for studying computer games by focusing on the interpretation and meaning of signs within the game. Drawing from the work of Compagnio and Coppock (2009), this perspective sees the game as a text where interpretation and action are closely coordinated. This approach emphasises the relationship between the game as a text and the user's interaction with it, bridging the gap between narratological and ludological approaches (Kokonis, 2014).

Parallel developments in narratology marked cognitive turn, such as, Herman's *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative Story*, which provided a more nuanced understanding of narrative and introduced a more flexible definition which could be applied to the narrative of digital game that is narrative as a "forgiving, flexible cognitive frame for constructing, communicating, and reconstructing mentally projected worlds" (Herman, 2002, p. 49). The gradual transition of ludo-narrative debate into middle ground paved way to the recognition of genre awareness in digital game scholarship.

2.3 What is a Genre?

The word genre belongs to French and means "kind" or "class". Generally, genre is meant to provide categories, and each genre may show certain characteristics (Wolf, 2002). The term genre is extensively used in literary, media, linguistic and rhetorical scholarship and is also used for emerging artforms. Earlier, the term genre was more commonly used in literature and film studies. According to Allen (1989), genre study primarily creates typology and names these types in literature in a manner similar to a botanist classifying the vast floral into varieties of plants. However, Chandler (1997) regards this analogy between literary genres and biological classification of species as misleading.

In his pursuit to develop understanding of genre, Chandler asks a basic question pertaining to who owns any genre. The answer to the above-mentioned questions is bound to another question: What is a genre? Genres can be taken as entities characterised by formal and aesthetic conventions, and it is defined by different people differently who come into contact with it. Chandler considers genre theory to be fraught with certain uncertainties and continues to outline some important epistemological concerns: Are genres “out there in the world” or are genres the mere construes of analyst? Are genres time bound? Do they have finite or infinite taxonomy? What should be the nature of genre analysis? Descriptive or prescriptive? Chandler points to the lack of undisputed maps of the system of genre within any medium of its existence.

Similarly other scholars have also pointed out the complexity associated with the notion of genre. For instance, Feuer (1992) notes: “A genre is ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world” (p. 144). However, Clearwater attempts to answer some of these concerns. His definition of genre entails: “genre is a conceptual model or tool. The use of genre (as a concept) is to recognize that the field of human expression exhibits certain patterns” (Clearwater, 2011, p. 39).

Genres are owned and used by various people, for instance in the case of a film or a game, genres are used by users (audience, players), producers, marketers, retailers, critics and journalists. Clearwater does not limit genre as a way to classify, rather, genre provides schemas to understand not only the genre but also its surrounding social environment.

As Huber (2003) rightly says:

The purpose of looking at genre... is not part of a project of taxonomy, but rather to discuss how the game as a text generates meaning in reception/interaction, to find a lineage in its tropes and so ground it in the broader field of cultural practice from which it emerges. (para.4)

Unlike Chandler, for Clearwater (2011) genres are not to be found in the outer world. Rather, genres are recognized as a conceptual tool which is not limited to performing classification, it is a theoretical framework which helps in understanding not only the individual (game) genre but also accounts for the social, cultural, historic and other related aspects surrounding the genre.

2.3.1 Previous Genre Approaches of Digital Games

This section provides overview of early genre approaches to digital games which are either fragmented or isolated and reflects their narrow approach in the genre analysis of digital games.

According to Arsenault (2009) genres are means to demarcate likeness between entities. Games are a popular and extensively used digital artform. The number of active video game users is 3.03 billion in 2022 which amounts to 37.875% of world population. The expansion of the gaming community has led Game Studies to establish itself as a distinct field in 2001. According to Arsenault (2009) the gaming community of retailers, producers and players tend to use genres as parsing out the vast landscape of the joystick realm and helped to situate games amongst the vast variety of games with similar patterns.

Lee et al. (2014) used facet analysis for their genre-based study. They employed facet analysis as a method to categorize video game genres by breaking down genre labels into fundamental categories. Their investigation devised a classification scheme with 12 facets and 358 foci to organize and represent video game genres. The methodology in their study had two steps: analysis and synthesis. In the first analysis phase, the study collected over 800 genre labels from various sources and grouped them into categories using card sorting to identify their distinct facets, such as gameplay, theme, and mood. In the second synthesis phase, the categories were further refined by combining terms to simplify the scheme, with feedback from domain experts guiding this process. The approach by Lee et al. provides a systematic framework for understanding video game genres. However, while the study effectively organizes genre labels, it pays limited attention to the narrative and experiential aspects of video games, highlighting a potential gap for further research. The process of facet analysis involves subjective decisions about how to divide the subject field and categorize its essential characteristics. These decisions could introduce bias and limit the comprehensiveness or applicability of the resulting classification. The narrow scope of the present study is indicative of the gap and calls for more comprehensive and broader approach of genre analysis.

Cășvean (2018) in his genre approach to digital games clustered games with similar gameplay features, focusing on combat systems to trace relationships between

subgenres. This study used gameplay design patterns to identify key features, creating 37 subgenre classifications based on 321 patterns. This cluster approach allowed a structured understanding of CRPGs by connecting gameplay elements to specific examples, enabled designers and researchers to develop better analysis and interpretation of combat systems. The study revealed two primary clusters—Action-Oriented RPGs and Tactical RPGs—alongside notable subclusters such as Hardcore Linear RPGs and Real-Time RPGs. The study produced four categories of patterns (ubiquitous, cluster-defining, flavor, and meta) which collectively described the design space of CRPG combat systems. While the research offers a detailed framework for gameplay classification, its focus on combat mechanics limits its scope in addressing broader narrative, player agency, and multimodal dimensions. This highlights the need for further exploration of how gameplay mechanics interact with narrative and multimodal features to construct and frame video game genres more comprehensively.

Goddard and Muscat (2017) in their study of applying the notion of genre point out how genres are perceived in game studies. They point out the existence of various understandings of what patterns are fundamental to the genre of digital games. For many authors the expressions of gameplay are significant while others relate narrative and visual aesthetic as a primary factor, as referred by Apperley (2006). Many scholars have also pointed out the difficulty of systematic classification for genre within the vast realm of games (Clarke et al., 2015).

Goddard and Muscat (2017) discuss how various studies have addressed the issues pertaining to genre in digital games. The significance of cultural aspects and genre has been discussed (Clearwater, 2011), descriptive or prescriptive approach to genre (Arsenault, 2009; Clarke, 2015) genre classification by gaming industry and the focus on differentiation between genre of game and other medium of film, TV and literature (Wolf, 2002; Apperley, 2006; Arsenault, 2009). That is why the early genre studies of games were more about how digital games genre differ from film and literature. This led to approach the concept of genre of digital games differently by the researchers with various methodological and conceptual understandings. This gives rise to various understandings of what specific patterns are fundamental to the genre of digital games. However, these approaches are narrow and isolated in nature and lack comprehensiveness. In this regard the present study has adapted a broader and comprehensive approach in its multimodal genre analysis of the selected games.

2.3.2 Genre of Digital Games and Industrial Approach

Căşvean (2018) provides a description of the early industrial approach to the genre of digital games. Initially the game industry sorted out a number of genres for common use that included labels of racing, action, strategy, fighting and role-playing games. Căşvean, points at the influence of these early categories and their extensive use by the retailers and publishers.

Game industry designed games and publishers made product plans using this early genre taxonomy. Players also developed their preferences over game styles or platform choices. Industry approached the genre with their own lens. Like the product manager of Ubisoft Romania, Vârtosu, emphasized gameplay and suggested adopting the film industry rule of “show, don’t tell”. Another popular Game designer, Sid Meier in his interview suggested the first step in designing a game is to identify the topic and then make them look for interesting ideas and ways and a suitable genre to fit into the game. Tănase (2014, as cited in Căşvean, 2018) finds the same strategy adopted for the design of the game Animal Crossing which started with identifying the game mechanic, followed by addition of historical context and lastly the game world of action-adventure was selected for the game.

Căşvean finds a play centric approach of Cook (2005 as cited in Căşvean, 2018) claiming that the game industry put more emphasis on game mechanics and interface standards and focus less on setting and plot in designing this genre. One of the initial approaches to the genre of games was given by game developer Crawford. His emphasis was on the experience of the player and the set of required activities. His taxonomy had a simple standard and emphasised on the mechanics of games. However, Crawford was aware of the fact that his taxonomy was subject to time and advancement in technology. The industrial approach was player and game mechanics focussed.

Wolf (2002) approach to genre in digital games is often referred to as one of the initial academic approaches to digital games. Wolf introduced an extensive classification in digital games which was in line with the Library of Congress Moving Imagery Genre-Form Guide. Apperley (2006) refers to Wolf’s taxonomy for digital games as “a testament to the diversity of the medium” whereas Clearwater acknowledges its ambitious nature (p.7).

Wolf (2002) found a tendency of analytical analogy of film for games analysis owing to similarity of attributes of both distinct media forms. However, what makes the genre of video game distinct is the role of player and interactivity which is the essence of the game. Wolf admits that owing to the direct and active participation of the audience in the video game genre, the prevailing approaches of genre in the discipline of film studies has limited applicability to the genre of digital games. For instance, theme, narrative structure, social and cultural context and iconography has a significant role in genre analysis of films. However, Wolf points out that the genre of digital video games cannot be approached in a similar manner where player and interactivity marks the medium of games.

Though Wolf admits that few digital games can be classified in a manner similar to film industries. The 42 categories list which Wolf produced does not support hybridity or overlapping as Jarvinen using Wolf's approach analysed the game Halo which showed eight categories of Wolfian taxonomy (Jarvinen, 2002, as cited in Clearwater, 2011). Furthermore, his taxonomy is historic as it fails to account for modern or new games after the 1990s in game ecology.

Apperley (2006) criticises the conventional approaches to the genre of digital games for their lack of consideration to the most fundamental aspect of games that is interactivity, the way games are played. The researcher calls the earlier approaches to genre in digital games as fragmented which fails to depict the uniformity of this emerging genre.

2.3.3 Clearwater's Approach of Genre Analysis:

Unlike Chandler, for Clearwater (2011) the genres are not to be found in the outer world. Rather, genres are recognized as a conceptual tool which is not limited to performing classification, it is a theoretical framework which helps in understanding not only the individual (game) genre but also accounts for the social, cultural, historic and other related aspects surrounding the genre.

While discussing the need of genre analysis in games, Clearwater (2011) points out that the utility of genre analysis is critical to develop a shared understanding of the broader range of outputs related to any medium which include not only shared vocabulary but a common understanding of its formal and aesthetic attributes, the audience, the ideological values, or the economic impact common to any genre.

Clearwater makes it clear that the outcome of genre analysis is not to create mere taxonomies but such an analysis renders clarity to contextualise the conventions, affinities and relationships of a particular game. This would lead to draw historical comparison, recognize the underlying motivation of the game design and the reception of fans.

Genre analysis not only helps in understanding individual games, but it also aids in understanding the evolution of the medium itself and identify patterns pertaining to technological changes within aesthetic, economic and social context. Here Clearwater clearly agrees with Neale's point of view that the repertoire of a genre's features and tendencies can never be fully contained in a single work. However, Clearwater advocates for a cautious approach for genre study of games and suggests avoiding the methodological blind spots which was common in early genre studies of various disciplines, especially film studies which posed artificial restrictions to respective genre studies. Less reliance on handful titles, popular bestselling titles or a single text to form a strict generic list of forms for the genre of games should be. Such practices were observed in studies conducted for TV and film genres.

Clearwater reiterates Mittel's (2001) argument that the textualist assumption must be avoided which was witnessed in the case of early genre studies where a genre was defined only as a textual attribute. His perspective on genre of television studies led him to postulate that genre does not emerge from single isolated text rather genre emanates from interplay of intertextual relations between multiple texts. This interrelation of texts to create a genre, is the outcome of the cultural practice of reception and production. Genres are dependent on intertextualities; textual components alone cannot contribute to an extensive genre analysis. This may involve consideration to cultural, economic, industrial and even political context surrounding the genre. The extra-textual component of fan reception, press coverage, production, and marketing strategies are equally considerable for understanding genre of games. Clearwater admits that these concerns demand an exhaustive and collaborative approach to foster genre studies in games.

While keeping in view how genre study is conducted in television, film and literary studies, Clearwater (2011) proposes following considerations for a comprehensive genre approach to digital games. The first generic consideration is Formal and Aesthetic which have been used extensively for film and TV. Formal and

Aesthetic aspects of the film genre included narrative pattern, story structure, setting, theme, tone, characterization, lighting and mood, iconography, visual imagery and symbolism, design and art direction. Clearwater's Formal and Aesthetic aspect of the genre is inclusive of analysis of game play rules, its mechanics, level design and art, kinaesthetic features of the gameplay, the features of game hardware, design and form, characterization, narrative and pattern of story.

According to Clearwater (2011), the next aspect of Industrial and Discursive Context of Cultural Production includes approaching the genre with consideration to the discursive and industrial context of game's cultural production. This provides a broader lens in analysing the games as it considers the economic background, the audience (players), interpretation and ideology surrounding the genre. Here Clearwater agrees with Kapsis (1991) that the production of culture aspect holds significance in comprehending how a specific genre emerges, thrives and reoccurs. This industrial context approach reveals the complexity surrounding the genre production which involves the network of distributors, retailers, production houses and marketing agencies affecting both the production and dissemination of these genres. Clearwater extends the approach to what Ellis called the narrative image of the product that the publicity efforts required to promote the cultural product.

The other important aspect of the Industrial and Discursive Context of Cultural Production focuses on games and ideology, that is the influence of cultural, political and social context on any cultural product. This approach is based on the idea that cultural products are framed discursively, pointing at the interrelation of genre and ideology. Like any genre which exists, transforms and evolves within political, cultural and economic contexts and not ignoring the fact that genre is subject to the attention of interrelated multiple audiences (producers, designers, players, critics) and demographics, the genre of games get associated with certain worldviews and ideologies. What is important here is not to ignore the interrelation of multiple contexts (political, economic and cultural) and the surrounding marketing and economic activity surrounding the production of games will generate ideological and discursive frames around that genre. The nature of the surrounding context is a variable phenomenon. Each genre is subject to different industrial, organizational and discursive context thus will affect the production of that genre. For instance, the financing institution and

political climate surrounding the production of the genre of serious games will differ greatly from the genre of sports (America's Army vs. FIFA 2023)

The underlying principle of the Cultural and Social Meaning elements of the genres consider games as sites of social interactions and vehicles of cultural expressions. Therefore, this aspect of genre analysis calls for considering demographics, audience, social conventions, fan participation, shared values and ideologies surrounding the genre. This cultural aspect is fundamental for genre analysis of games. This approach highlights the importance of the interactive medium of games; modding, walkthroughs, clan formation, FAQ creation, virtual trading, and archives reflect the social aspects of the genre of games.

Clearwater (2011) in outlining these methodological approaches to genre analysis of games is mindful of the fact that categories are to be considered loose as elements of these categories are tied to each other. For instance, in the case of ideology, it is connected to industrial and discursive context and cultural practice surrounding a genre. For a comprehensive understanding of genre, a contrast between the political and economic contexts (the outside as it were) and the intricate circulation of meanings and values between producers, text and audience should be drawn. The review of other contemporary genre-based studies indicates the lack of a comprehensive approach to digital games. Whereas Clearwater's theoretical understanding of genre emerges as suitable viewpoint which recognizes the multifaceted and interactive properties of this genre. Unlike contemporary approaches which are either play-centric or action-centric or categorical, theory of genre as suggested by Clearwater (2011) offer a thorough understanding encompassing narrative structure, story, characters, rules and game mechanics as well as the discursive dimensions of digital games.

2.4 Linking Digital Games and Communication

Undeniably, the 20th century has been the great era of communication after the experimentation and technical progress of the 19th century. With the development and consolidation of film, radio and television into the mass media industry, the arrival of the Internet at the end of the 90s heralded as a symbol of globalization. All these mediums, including the press, was already the object of study in academia to a greater or lesser extent. However, the research trend of past twenty-five years has shown that one of the most significant communicative, aesthetic, narrative and cultural expressions

has been systematically ignored by academia: digital games. Digital games have an important social impact and have been proved even more profitable than the entertainment industry (film and music). Television has lost its viewership owing to internet as well as the growing consumption of video games by children and adults. Even contemporary action films have been influenced, aesthetically and narratively, by the great productions of Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft.

Regardless of the reasons that have ostracized the study of games, it must be noted that its epistemological standing is currently in a state of remarkable emergency. Both in Europe and the United States, digital games have become an object of essential study to understand communication in the 21st century (Nielsen et al., 2008; Mäyrä, 2008). Due to this contribution, electronic entertainment has gradually started to build a theoretical basis that sheds light on this unexplored and complicated terrain. Within this context of academic emergency, the genre of digital games needs to be approached from communication perspective. Digital games have grown into a powerful medium which can provide highly immersive and interactive experience that engages its player (s) in complex narratives. Narrative, whether taken in its classic narratological notion of a representation of a series or sequence of events or narratives take on an active, performative force in an infinite variety of ways throughout our everyday lives: considers the very broad spectrum between lulling a child to sleep with a fairy tale or (Harter et al., 2006) narrative as the player's own unique story and narrative that arises as a consequence of playing a video game. All narratives are part of communication, regardless of taking the form of a story or a narrative that is the outcome of the player's experience of fighting with a terrorist or monster in a modern digital game.

2.5 Narrative

The history of narrative is long. Barthes (1966) states that narrative begins with the commencement of the history of mankind and narrative has been an inevitable part of human lives. Webb and Mallon (2000) views narrative to be an oldest construct used for understanding and comprehending meaning of the world we live in. Narrative has been dealt with various theoretical understandings.

Gimenez (2010) has pointed out how narrative is used interchangeably with 'story', 'a life story', 'account', 'discourse', 'narration' and 'tale' with little or no

difference in meaning. The term narrative itself also refers to multitude of things: the telling of something, a story or stories and a method of analysis as in narrative inquiry.

This has led to the emergence of various definitions of the term. For Aristotle, a narrative is a whole with a beginning, middle, and an end while Labov and Waletzky (1967) consider narrative as a story which shows chronological sequence. Whereas Fisher (1984) views narrative as a form of stories that we human beings tell ourselves and each other to establish a meaningful lifeworld. Lowe calls it a recounted story while Abbot (2002) views it as a representation of a single or a series of events. Rimmon-Kenan's (2006) holds a three-level idea of narrative consisting of story, text and narration.

2.5.1 Narrative, Linguistics and Digital Games

According to Gimenez (2010) the history of narrative analysis dates to Poetics in which Aristotle outlined the structure of plot of narrative and emphasize that “narrative has established itself as the key focus of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse analysis” (p. 198). Narratives have been investigated in a plethora of studies, covering fields as diverse as accounting (Beattie, 2014), health psychology (Stephens, 2011), language and gender (Lumala & Mullany, 2020) and technology (Macnaghten et al., 2019).

Narrative is undeniably a significant aspect of modern digital games. Toh (2015) considers video game narrative to exist in dialogues, cutscenes and its graphics. In his seminal work, Toh has given an overview of how the scholars of digital games perceive narrative. Toh classifies them into four distinct categories: traditional theories, classical theories, new theories, psychoanalytical theories. The first category includes Aristotle theory of drama to Vladimir Propp's function of story. The classical theory has its roots in Ferdinand de Saussure's theories related to sign and language use. The new theories take the characteristics of new media form into their consideration whereas for the last group player's experience in interaction with the game world to form a narrative.

The researchers, like, Chandler (2007) and Bateman (2007) view the narrative of video games to be predetermined linear story, Vuorela (2007) considers narrative to be an outcome of gameplay and player's own story unlike Crawford (2005) who

consider the narrative of video game to be partially story and partially performance based.

Toh (2015) considers the traditional view of narrative to be limited and inapplicable. A traditional definition of narrative encompasses a predetermined structure and does not consider the reader or player's interaction with the text and modification in the content during gameplay. This traditional view of narrative is limited and ignores the interactive role of the player who performs actions in game play and advances the narrative of video games. Toh claims that the traditional narrow view of narrative fails to account for the active role of the player and lays more emphasis on structural analysis of narrative.

Sylvester (2013, as cited in Toh, 2015) regards player agency as an important and unignorable concept of video game narrative and views the agency as the player's ability to make meaningful decisions for his actions that affect the game play. According to Brün (1990) narrative is not only what constitutes a story but also how it is presented and contextualised. All narratives, including traditional ones, are participatory and interactive. Games have similar narratives, however it is called an interactive narrative that offers an opportunity, to the player, to play out the narratives. Like actors in the theatre, the player has agency within the story. However, the rules of interaction and mechanics of the game are added. Here, digital games part their ways from traditional narrative storytelling and give the player a role of character in the story of the game and provide positional agency to the player within the narrative.

Ostenson (2013) in his study acknowledges that despite the dominance of traditional narrative in the contemporary English classroom, the undeniable value of diverse and new medium which includes films, advertisements, radio, still images, internet and videogames to provide diverse array of narrative cannot be disregarded. In a classroom setting, the focus of his study was to uncover the narrative potential of videogames. The study required students of English classroom to play and recognize the ways the medium tell stories. The study included multiple games ranging from easy text-based games to difficult games, for instance, *Myst*, *The World of Warcraft* and *The Sims*. The gameplay was followed by reflection and revelations which focused on characters, plot and conflict in the story as well as its similarity and difference as compared to the stories of traditional medium like books and films. The study identified the participatory affordance of the medium, branching plots and evolving characters.

The study pointed out the unique potential of games to generate narrative which exists in abundance as the popularity of video game is increasing. This study demonstrates the need to recognize the potential of video games and the utility of this new medium in learning various aspects of language.

However, while Ostenson approach was valuable for classroom discussion, the study lacked a formal analytical framework for systematically examining the narrative structure. In this regard, my study aims to develop a structured analytical framework that integrates narrative analysis and other dimensions of genre based on Clearwater theory of genre.

2.5.2 Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) and Narrative Poetics of Games

Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) embrace Polkinghorne's account of narrative that regards narrative to be an inevitably a fundamental and pervasive phenomenon and its manifestation can be witnessed in different aspects of human lives. However, Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum readily acknowledges that these narrative manifestations are gradually influenced by the new technological trends of computing and networking. This leads to the interactive narrative– the player can exercise his choice in the narrative. The interactive narrative has overwhelmed and occupied the attention of researchers of new media. However, this poses design challenges for the field of digital games and points at the contradiction within the research communities surrounding digital games.

Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum discuss the tension between interactivity and narrative pleasure: the contradiction between the active exercise of choice in narrative and the traditional notion of immersion in a story. Traditionally, narrative is considered to provide a moment-by-moment experience and involves the reader or audience in narrative, following the progression within the story without interrupting it. The idea of willing suspension of disbelief, which lays the foundation of the traditional concept of narrative, that is the ability of the reader to set aside his scepticism and immerse himself in the pleasure of the story. For the player/reader the exercise of choice (interactivity) can interfere with the pleasure of the story. The player/reader becomes aware of his mediated experience rather than fully immersing themselves in the story. This recognition is termed as hyper mediation. Bolter and Grusin (1999) refer to hyper

mediation as mixing of different forms of media within one medium, which can make the player/reader aware of the medium they are using and its layered or combined nature. However, Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) proposed two designed strategies to minimise the potential contradiction. The first strategy was to infuse the broad “narrative texture” throughout the design of digital games (p. 394). The second strategy involved incorporating narrative in the design of interface which is the focus (and point of interaction) of interactive choices (Bizzocchi, 2001; Bizzocchi & Woodbury, 2004). The strategy had been improvised in their later work (Bizzocchi et al., 2011) and proved to substantially address this concern.

This has led to the formulation of an analytical framework for narrative poetics which is inclusive of storyworld, character and emotion which can shed light on the distinct ways narrative texture can be incorporated into the game design and the experience of a game. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum provide a more subtle understanding of the relationship between the demands of the story and the desires of the player/interactor to resolve this contradiction. It is through the pleasures of “bounded agency” through exploring the situations in game which reward and encourage players for “playing along” with the narrative (Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum, 2012, p. 394). They acknowledge that the player finds a pleasure in participating in the digital narrative which is not about authoring an outcome but is instead about submitting to the story that the author wants to tell, the “readerly” pleasure (p. 394). The player experiences pleasure in his submission to the story and following the story rather than attempting to steer its direction. This approach places value to the experience of participation in the story over the ability to alter the outcome. The approach emphasises the negotiation between the player's desires and the modes of participation provided by the game to be significant than the extent to which a player can alter the story's outcome.

Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) show clarity in how they approach and value narrative. Neither do they consider games to be primarily a vehicle for narrative and storytelling nor do they suggest that narrative occupies a central position in every game. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990, as cited in Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum 2012), the real pleasure can be found in the actual winning and losing and the associated state of flow generated through the combination of performance and challenges in the game play. Many researchers have pointed out the modern game platform offers sensory pleasure which appeals to the senses of the player similar to film's long-standing cinema

of attraction. However, some others reflected on popular games' which manifest narrative adding pleasure to the game experience while other successful titles, like Tetris, had no narrative component at all.

The heterogeneity of this phenomenon is evident from the successful titles in the game world. Bioshock 2007 and Metal Gear Solid 2008 is a manifestation of a well-crafted storyline whereas games like The Sims 2000 or Fabula II 2008 provide the player with a toolbox of narrative possibilities from which narrative can be built. These games are challenging to methodologists, analysts, game designers, researchers and extended communities of practice to engage in multitude of research endeavours to better understand the complex medium and its components.

Keeping these phenomena in view the analytical model proposed by Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) rests on the broader view of narrative and design parameters (narrativized interface and story world) which incorporate narrative and narrativity within the game. The Narrative Analytical framework includes narrative arc, storyworld, characters, emotions and narrativized interface while another fundamental aspect of their framework is the micronarrative which provides a structurally flexible storytelling tool.

2.5.3 Arcs, Narrative Progression, and Micronarrative

According to Bizzocchi (2007) narrative arcs describe how the player or recipient typically experience a narrative and referred to it as the framework for the sequence of events that make up the plot we see, and the story we imagine. The causal connections which run throughout the narrative arc is integral to narrative. The recipient of the narrative arcs, of varying length, derives pleasure from the uncertainty as the gap between cause and effect is opened and close and is repeated until the resolution of the story.

Bizzocchi (2007) in describing the structural unit of narrative refers to Propp who categorised the plots of Russian folktales and introduced the principle of functions to describe patterns of events in stories. Propp (1968) considered the grand arc of a fairy tale to commence with a villainy and continues through several functions and terminates in a marriage. For Propp a Function is taken as an act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action. The grouping of such functions to create a unit is called a move which constitutes the subsidiary arc.

Similarly, Barthes' structuralist analysis of narrative and the classification of the components of narrative reveals hierarchical strata. He also points out the presence of micro-sequences where the fine grains of the narrative texture are constructed.

For digital games Jenkins emphasises the importance of enacting stories moments of game as micronarrative as the narratives which enter the games on the level of a localised incident that is what Bizzocchi (2007) call them as micronarratives. Bizzocchi also pointed out that micronarratives are manifested in gameplay and asserted:

One can frame game design as a process that sets the stage and the conditions of a series of micronarrative events that are triggered and completed (or not) by the player's success or failure in the moment of play. (Bizzocchi, 2007, p.7)

By focusing on the use of micronarratives, game design emerges as a process which sets the stage and the conditions for a series of events that are triggered, completed (or not) by the player's success or failure in the moment of actual play. Keeping this in focus, a line which is strictly drawn between game and narrative loses its presence as Bizzocchi says emphatically:

..... we no longer draw a distinction between game and narrative, but we see the two conjoined in an ongoing process of engagement. Insofar as this view is accurate, we have added to the two classic narrative modes of diegesis – the story as told, and mimesis – the story as shown. In moments of micronarrative engagement within an immersive interactive experience, we are engaged in praxis – the story as enacted. (Bizzocchi ,2001, p. 8)

2.6 Frame and Frame Analysis

Digital games offer a highly immersive experience of both gameplay and narrative. The narrative of the game involves how the game world is constructed for the player while he is either part of game action or not part of the action. Digital games provide an arena of social interaction in the form of narrative, feedback mechanisms and rules (Gutierrez-Perez, 2017) at the same time offer encounters with a variety of issues in the game world (Dieleman & Huisinigh 2006). These issues can be social, environmental, political or economic, often, real or fictional. For instance, *Lyla and the Shadow of the War*, a 2D platformer, is about Palestine and the Israel–Palestine conflict, the 2014 Gaza War. The game unfolds the story of Palestinian father who

wants to take his family to a safer place, though inspired by an actual event of 2014 as revealed on the website of the game <https://liyla.org/>, the game frames the issue of Israeli–Palestine conflict. The issues and the topics in digital games have variety and even have novel ideas of time travel or alien invasion. However, what is important here is organisation and structure of these topics and issues in the grand narrative (story and play). Wicks acknowledges that like the other forms of communication, digital games can frame the issues represented in the games (Wicks 2005). Furthermore, the discursive context which surrounds the game production reflects the social, cultural, political context in which the genres are produced and consumed (Clearwater, 2011).

The concept of frame has been a fundamental focus in various disciplines and their sub fields: sociology (Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, 2011; Forstie 2017), psychology (Reali & Rodríguez, 2016), linguistics and discourse analysis (Tannen, 1993; Ahlers, 2006), media studies and mass communication (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Saleem, 2007; Cacciatore & Iyengar, 2016) and political science and policy studies (Daviter, 2007).

There are various research paradigms for frame analysis. Linström and Marais (2012) refer to different methodological approaches to frame analysis. For instance, quantitative content analysis, a qualitative text-based interpretative approach or computer assisted frame analysis. However, Reese (2007) points out that a qualitative frame analysis does not sort the text into containers and mark their frequency and sizes. Reese favours a qualitative frame analysis as it helps in capturing the meanings embedded in the internal relations within a text.

Connolly-Ahern and Broadway (2008) hold that qualitative frame analysis requires repeated involvement with a text and looks more holistically at the text to analyse the framing process. This approach involves close examination of phrase/words/metaphors to recognize what has been emphasised or deemphasized while using or repeating or leaving them. It is through qualitative, holistic frame analytical approach that such an instance can be realised.

Initially frame analysis was used in the discipline of sociology and media studies. Goffman (1974) was the pioneer among other sociologists who initiated the applicability of frame analysis. For Goffman, the use of frame was to find out how people make sense of events, situations and objects based on culturally determined

notions of reality. Keeping in view the Goffman notion of frame, the subsequent frame analysis is examining frames in terms of the organisation of experience. Goffman conceived frames as the product of a large culture which is shared by all, or at individual level, frames are the intentional fabrication of the primary frameworks to gain their ends. Thus, a process of transforming the primary framework of constituting a new reality is entailed in framing a communicative situation.

Since the inception of the idea of framing by Goffman, the notion of framing has been the focus of attention in the field of communication, mass media and sociology. The concept of frame has been viewed with multiple perspectives. For Goffman (1974) it is a schema of interpretation which allows to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences or events. While Gamson and Modigliani (1989) view frame as a “central organising idea for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (p. 3), and for Gitlin (1980) frames provide the way to “process large amounts of information quickly and routinely package the information for efficient relay to their audiences” (p. 7). Entman, on the other hand, considers framing as the way to describe the power of communicating texts. According to D’Angelo and Kuypers (2010) framing has been approached in diverse scholarly traditions, it has been addressed first and foremost as a concept, a theory, analytical approach, a categorization of media effects, a perspective and multidisciplinary research projects.

Entman (2009) has provided an in-depth analytical approach to the framing process in the text. This approach aims at identifying how frames are embedded and manifested in the text. For Entman, framing involves the processes of selection and salience. He opines that

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman, 2009, p. 54)

For instance, the recurrent use of frame the “cold war” in U.S news related to foreign policy, according to Entman, emphasises civil war as problems, recognizes communist rebels as their source and puts forth the moral judgement of secular aggression and presents the solution in terms of giving support to the counterpart. Frames have three identifiable attributes: diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive. The

frame of cold war shows that frame exhibit four identifiable locations in the process of communication. The communicator/producer, the text, recipient and the culture. The communicator makes conscious or unconscious choice of frames with respect to their belief systems and ideologies whereas the text contains the frames which can be manifested through the use or absence of keywords/stock phrases, a stereotypical image, source of information and sentences that can provide thematic reinforcement of facts or moral judgement. These frames guide the receiver of this act of communication; however, the receiver may not acknowledge the intentions of the communicator. Here the culture stands for the stock of these commonly invoked frames or culture can be taken as a set of common frames found in the discourse of the discourse community. It reiterates similar functions of framing process: selection and highlighting, making arguments about the problem, its evaluation and/or solution.

According to Iyengar and Hahn (2009), Entman (2007) and Bovitz et al. (2002) the presented reality is always linked to the interests, characteristics and ideology of the media. The interest of the organising body is a prominent factor in media framing. It must be remembered that the above-mentioned framing is carried out in the news media. However, it may be applied to other forms of media discourse.

2.6.1 Framing and Digital Games

Like the other existing forms of communication, digital games can frame the issues represented in the games (Wicks 2005). Frames, which provide ways to develop and convey beliefs, values and meanings (Goffman 1974).

Nygren et al. (2022) refers to Endman's concept of framing to select certain preferred aspects of a reality and to make them salient in an act of communication. There could be multiple and overlapping frames, and which could be even set in conflict with each other. Nygren et al give the example of the use of a frame of forest which could be discussed as providing a source for timber or a nesting place for birds or a source for building houses. While discussing the use of frame and frame analysis in games, Nygren et al. point at the lack of this analytical and design approach to digital games. Digital games are designed to convey the meaning and understanding of the world. Digital games represent and entail understanding of certain issues, institutions and events (Booth, 2021), they can also be designed to affect players as suggested by Bogost (2007) and De La Hera et al. (2021).

According to Nygren et al., digital games use frames in various components of games: aesthetic elements to narrative of games (character, storyline, mechanics and rules). Therefore, meticulous care is needed in designing a game which involves constructing meanings, and the designers need to find a shared understanding (i.e., framing) of them during the process Biodiversity Off-Setting (BDO) is a program designed to reconcile nature conservation. BDO as a policy is implemented in countries like New Zealand, US and parts of Europe. Like any media, digital games have many designs and communicative choices. It may include highlighting certain aspects of an issue than the other using framing and framing techniques. Nygren et al. (2022) elaborates that serious games may be designed to educate stakeholders to a new environmental policy tool, and the game can also be used to convey research on environmental issues.

The study investigated how framing can be used in a game design and how framing interacts with game design. Their study highlighted the fact that the use of framing in serious games can help in simulating the challenges and intricacies of biodiversity offsetting programs. They also suggest that paying attention to framings is especially important for the design of serious games. The frame analysis conducted in the study revealed that the use of multiple frames helped the game design achieve their multiple goals. For instance, on one hand, representing the central character to have less powers and controlled decision-making roles enabled the designer to frame the stakeholder as bound by the predetermined goal. Thus, providing them with the rigid framing of the possibilities of stakeholders, while on the other hand, the game design and framing helped them to avoid developing an optimistic understanding of the possibilities to reconcile development and conservation, and the outcomes of BDO. The analysis showed the use of intentional framing (development vs. conservation) influenced the design choices (roles with limited actions), which in turn created framing of stakeholders trapped by their goals and a set of actions. However, Nygren et al. (2022) study did not include the analysis of textual manifestation of framing in the narrative of the games. Therefore, there remains a notable gap in the integration of textual framing—specifically, the use of words, sentences, and phrases within games. By incorporating Endman's framing analysis into the adapted framework, my study aims to highlight how framing functions through the in-game elements (story,

characters, game mechanics and aesthetics in the games as well as the textual counterparts (words, phrases and sentences) in the process of framing.

2.6.2 Ideology and Frames

According to Collins dictionary, an “ideology is a set of beliefs, especially the political beliefs on which people, parties, or countries base their actions”. Ideologies and frames are related concepts, however, are often used interchangeably. Many researchers, for instance, like Zald (1996), Fisher (1997) and Oliver and Johnston (2000) asserted the need to clarify the relationship between frames and ideology. Both concepts are distinct. Johnston and Oliver (2010) draw line between the two: “framing points to process, while ideology points to content” (p. 8).

Ideology arose in a revolutionary era from politics as well as the study of politics. Since the beginning it contained politicised and evaluative connotations. The word ideology was coined by Destutt de Tracy, a French writer, for his own "science of ideas" (influenced by John Locke). Very soon in 1803, the word ideology took pejorative connotation when Napoleon Bonaparte suppressed the "ideologues". By the twentieth century, the term ideology evolved and had developed well established meanings in both political and social science. The term ideology, gradually, attained both the pejorative and non-pejorative and even positive usage.

Gerring (1997) pointed out that ideology has taken on the incredible diversity of specific meanings which are often directly opposite to each other. Often political scientists employ the term to differentiate groups/people with structured belief systems from those who have inconsistent belief systems. The term gained more popularity of usage in political science and sociology for social movements. Ideology has always been a central force behind various movements. For Chen (2024), ideology is often considered to link norms, values and theory in an interconnected manner and draws on the content of the entire system of belief, on their various dimensions and on how ideas are related to each other. Often ideology is referred to “as a set of beliefs that are used to justify or challenge a given socio-political order . . . and interpret the political world” (Chen, 2024, p.3). According to Chen ideologies are turned into narrative (various forms) to address situations and events which are problematic—through the process known as framing.

Generally, ideology is taken as a coherent, and durable set of beliefs which transforms orientation to politics as well as everyday life (Benford & Snow, 2000). Regardless of the general, neutral (Geertz, 1973) or critical view (Thompson, 1984) of ideology, the term is seen to sustain the relation of domination (social hierarchy) and existing class structures. In both cases ideology refers to a prevalent and integrated set of values and beliefs which are persistent in a society.

According to Flood (2009), both framing and ideology are inextricable concepts and considers ideology to be “inseparable from the processes of framing” (p.12). Frames are drawn from several cultural resources of society, for instance, religious and political beliefs, traditions and even narratives. For Chen (2024) ideologies are the primary source of ideational material and play a fundamental role in the construction of frames. Westby (2002) asserts frames to be a symbolic construct which stem from ideology and function as extensions of existing ideologies. As Westby asserts frames to be symbolic constructions that in different ways are a derivative of ideologies. However, the frames are not automatically generated, rather it entails a process of recasting ideational materials into narrative.

Goodman and Simkins (2014) in their teaching course at the Rochester Institute of Technology discussed approaches for the design of interactive narrative for games. Digital games, like other media forms, use frames and metaphors to convey intended and designed meanings to their audience-players specifically. For the designer, it is a power vested in them, to use these techniques to suggest these sets of meanings, the way propaganda works, to foster meanings that will change and manipulate the disposition of their users. The faculty of creating certain meanings by the designer is like the power which is shared by writers, editors and journalists. Goodman and Simkins suggest the designers to meticulously select, replace and alter elements and storylines that can lead to a better understanding of an issue reflected in the narrative of the game. The potential of frames and metaphors and their efficacy in cognition and interaction must be realised.

Lune studied the role of framing technique of ritual in creating and fostering cultural nationalism in Irishman. Rituals are symbolic enactment of a repeated and a patterned instance of cultural value or belief. Bell defines rituals as a power which acts itself and actuates beliefs and values. Rituals can take many forms (Bell, 2009, as cited in Lune, 2015). It can be an act of recitation of words, a kind of cultural performance.

It becomes a shared behaviour which is meaningful. Rituals are one of the framing devices/techniques used in communication to achieve certain goals. One of the attributes of framing is challenging existing sets of beliefs and ideology. Rituals can be situational or strategic. Tarrow (2013) states that rituals are created from surrounding cultural symbols of place and time and strategically implementing them and setting them in opposition to existing systems of identity and in a way to create a modified account/version of those things. Lune, with a sociological perspective, investigated the role of rituals in the United Irish men and how they used the ritual of “test” or oath in inculcating nationalism among themselves. The focus of study was the role of agency of rituals to mobilise and integrate a cultural nationalism to succeed over dominant political nationalisms. Here the oath taken for membership takes the form of ritual directly related with collective unity of a nation. Lune analysed how the body of the United Irishman used oath taking ritual for membership in their pursuit of winning legislative autonomy for their country against England in 1971. One of the conclusions of the study affirms the power of organisational rituals. Thus, restating Lune (2015) stance is that the “Ritual repetition of key framing ideas can unite members around the cultural construct of the movement without directly addressing their targets” (p. 3).

2.6.3 Frame Analysis of Modern Media

Wahid and Yakut (2018) used Republika.co.id and Detik.com for comparative analysis of news on LGBT community's massive online platforms campaign in Indonesia by using the framing approach of Entman. Framing analysis can be used to examine the reality frame of an event, individual or group. It is a construction process, meaning that different perspectives are taken to understand and reconstruct reality. According to Wahid and Yakut (2018), news construction which includes headlines, title of the news, point of views, and the selection of the resource person have the critical role in making opinions of the public. Delik.com raises religious law violations in relation to the LGBT community's massive campaign, but they also urge society to treat them with respect. On the other hand, Republika.co.id pays attention to the issue of religious law violations in a country.

Pfliger (2019) examined the origin stories of three video game protagonists to develop understanding of how East Asian crime is framed in video games. He performed a contextual analysis based on the transcripts and categorised the parts of their origin stories that were directly related to the reasons behind their initial illegal

behaviour. These included ideas about motivation, family honour, vigilantism, and morality

Entman (2005) argues that framing can result from the inclusion as well as the exclusion of pertinent information. Information can be framed by adding or removing details, both of which produce prominent images of racialized societies. According to Gans (2017) racialization is a process that can involve a range of cultural components being racialized and can happen formally or informally. Therefore, it was recommended by Pfliger (2019) that people who take their story through video games or other media should exercise critical thinking and recognize the nuanced ways in which the racialized "Other" is portrayed.

Ospina (2017) used the content analysis approach to investigate how Latin Americans see China and to ascertain audience sentiment. He was especially interested in examining and contrasting the ways that Latin American media sources present China (both in those that recognize Taiwan and in those that acknowledge the PRC as part of the One China Policy). A code sheet served as the foundation for his study's content analysis portion. His analysis of the chosen material revealed seven recurrent themes: investor, economic development, opinion, environment, political power, military development, and copyrights. The results were tested following the Holsti reliability formula (Holsti, 1969). According to his conclusion the media in Latin America is gradually changing their perception of China. The fact that a foreign nation's image appears in five national newspapers in Latin America on several levels and created opinions underlining China's significance in the global arena. Ospina (2017) also examined how the media frames parents according to three categories of perception: favourable, negative, and neutral. A country is more likely to be viewed adversely by the target population if it is portrayed negatively in the media.

Different studies have used different theoretical lenses to identify frames and investigate the nature of framing in their works. Perreault et al. (2021) (2022) study of narrative framing in Independently Developed Video Games used the narrative theory as a theoretical lens to examine the ways women are framed in games which released around the Gamergate controversy. The Gamergate Controversy which drew scholarly attention to how women were framed in gaming culture as well as the shifting trends of female representation in indie games.

In their analysis of independent (indie) video games, they explore the representation of women, and the narrative framing employed in these games. The study highlights the historical shortcomings in the portrayal of female characters in larger-budget games, often marked by simplification and over sexualization. By focusing on titles like *Never Alone*, *Gone Home*, and *Her Story*, their study demonstrates how indie games provide a unique platform for multilayered female characterizations and meaningful female-to-female interactions. This shift in narrative framing is contextualized within the GamerGate controversy, suggesting that these games reflect a broader cultural change in the gaming community regarding the treatment of women. Using their analysis, the authors assert that the stories told through female characters serve to challenge traditional stereotypes and offer alternative narratives that resonate with female gamers. Generally, the female representation in game narrative is constructed through narrative of absence as well as absence of agency for female characters. Furthermore, women were framed in terms of the male experience while giving them secondary or tertiary roles. The study identified three narrative frames: a frame of centrality of choice, a frame of crisis of identity and frame of creation of new reality. The result of the study emphasised that women were framed with autonomy and empowerment in indie games as compared to the big-budget games of the 1990s or early 2000s giving insight into the emerging belief system and shifting trends in representation after the wake of the GamerGate controversy.

Building on these insights, my thesis aims to further contribute to the discourse on framing in digital games and the importance of narrative framing in shaping the narrative of digital games.

Fordham and Ball (2019) conducted exploratory case study research on the issue of framing mental health disorders in digital Games. Like other media forms, earlier digital games, such as *Manhunt* and *The Evil* vividly projected a troublesome and stigmatised portrayal of mentally ill patients. This induced a cautious approach for playing such games which typically either trivialise or exploit mental illness which demands a more reverent approach. Their study considered the application of frame analysis for investigating the representations of mental health in digital games. Fordham and Ball's case study research reflected how *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* leverages collaborative design informed by mental health professionals and lived experiences to present a more authentic depiction of psychosis. The study used frame

analysis to reveal how technological innovations, such as visual and auditory along with narrative, allow immersive experience that can help develop empathy and better understanding of mental health issues. This study emphasized the significance of exploring the intersections of narrative and technology in shaping player perceptions of mental health. It also illustrated that the understanding of various issues can be achieved via the medium of digital game narratives.

Building on these insights, my thesis analyses the process of framing by adapting a broader view of framing with the focus on both text (words, phrases and sentences) and game elements (mechanics, game aesthetics, story and characters). Unlike previous approaches to framing in digital games, the adapted model of present study takes into consideration the linguistic elements as well as the game mechanics and play to reveal how framing is used in this modern artifact. Previous studies have limited approach to framing with little or no attention to the role of game mechanics in framing the perspectives within the textual and non-textual elements of games.

2.7 Multimodality

Digital technologies are a key site for multimodal investigation. For instance, *Syrian Journey: Choose Your Own Escape Route* (2015) is an online news-game designed and published by BBC (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32057601>) is also part of the teacher/student online resource in YES! Magazine (2023, July 14) to teach respect, empathy and to understand current social issues. This interactive online game, showcasing the Syrian refugee crisis is a web-based interactive game using images, text, and videos to give options and scenarios to the player. The undeniable utility of various modes in this modern artifact contribute to both its production and consumption. Hawreliak, and Lemieux (2020) acknowledge that digital games are eminently multimodal artefacts. Earlier Gee (2014) points out that “there is no other, more multimodal medium than video games” (p. 49).

Hawreliak points out the (configuration) arrangement of procedural mode with any other mode in a multimodal ensemble: consonance and dissonance or irony. The multimodal consonance is created when multiple modes reinforce one another in many possible ways. It could be thematic, aesthetic or rhetoric modal alignment to craft a holistic message. For instance, it is common in a comedy or a thriller movie that a modal consonance occurs when music compliments a comic scene (visual), or the effect of a

mounting tension is enhanced both through gestures (body movement) and roaring music. Consequently, both modes reinforce each other thematically. Thus, multimodal consonance can enhance or multiply the meaning potential.

On the other hand, modal dissonance is created when the modes within an ensemble contradict each other and may produce various semiotic, aesthetic and rhetorical effects. It works in a manner like irony or juxtaposition. The act of modal dissonance is common in other genres to create comical or other intended ironical effect. Digital games too show instances of modal dissonance, for instance, the game paratextual element might indicate urgency to complete missions, however, nonlinear games have shown patterns of modal dissonance which allows the player to explore or roam around.

2.8 Procedural and Visual Mode

Hawerliak (2019) provides a comprehensive examination of the procedural mode within the context of digital games. Procedural mode, as defined by the author, refers to the set of rules and algorithms that govern the interactive elements of a game, shaping player actions and outcomes. It encompasses the logic behind gameplay mechanics, such as movement, combat, and decision-making processes. The author illustrates how procedural mode is intricately intertwined with other modalities, including visuals, sound, and text, to create immersive gaming experiences (Lemke, 1998). By analysing various multimodal configurations, the author demonstrates the nuanced ways in which procedurality contributes to the overall meaning potential of games. Moreover, the author suggests that the procedural mode serves as a foundational component for digital game analysis, offering insights into the semiotic mechanics of interactive narratives (Chion, 1994). Furthermore, the author highlights the generative potential of modal dissonance, where intentional contradictions between procedural rhetoric and other modes can elicit tension, humour, or thematic resonance (Hocking, 2007; Polansky, 2015). Overall, the author advocates for the inclusion of procedural mode analysis in the study of digital games, arguing that it provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamic relationship between gameplay mechanics and player experience. The Procedural mode is suggested for digital game analysis as it provides a unique analytical framework for examining interactive artifacts like videogames and other computational media. By incorporating procedural expression into multimodal analysis, researchers and critics are equipped with an established

toolkit for dissecting and understanding how meaning potentials are conveyed through games. This approach offers a more focused methodology for understanding the semiotic mechanics of the dynamic relationship between a game's component parts and its impact on meaning. Moreover, it helps in identifying the complex interactions and interdependencies between different modes within the game, thereby enriching our understanding of the construction and interpretation of meaning in digital games.

Valeriano and Habel (2016) studied the framing of international enemies in first person shooter games. They studied the evolution of images during 2001 to 2013 to investigate the identity of enemy and the hero including the context of the game and used the analytical approach of Coleman (2010) which focuses on visual framing through the selection of viewpoint or scene. The study found presentation of Russians as the most common form of antagonist in these games apart from enemies belonging to Latin America, Iran, China, Libya or North Korea whereas the data set of 57 games revealed of majority of the heroes to be American. The study also traced the evolution of enemy in first person shooter games over time. The study revealed the use of contemporary contexts, for instance, issues of conflicts of western countries with Russia and war against terrorism. The study points out the considerable lack of attention to the depiction of rivalry and enemies in digital games to develop understanding of games and the potential of games to affect audience belief and calls for scholarly attention to investigate the popular digital media which has overwhelmed the entertainment industry and household alike.

Building on similar theoretical understanding of this thesis, Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) address the issue of social justice themes, particularly class, race, and gender, in video games employing a Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework in their study with a particular focus on the procedural mode relevant to my research, underscoring the importance of procedural mode. The study examines three games that are *Cart Life*, *Overwatch*, and *Apex Legends* to illustrate how they tackle these issues through various modes of representation. *Cart Life* critiques the dehumanizing aspects of capitalism primarily through its procedural gameplay mechanics, where players experience the tedium and financial precarity of street vending (Alexander, 2013). In contrast, *Overwatch* and *Apex Legends* emphasize diversity and inclusion through their character designs and abilities, with the procedural mode playing a crucial role in shaping players' interactions within the game world. *Overwatch* showcases a diverse

cast of characters, each with unique abilities, challenging traditional norms of representation in the First-Person Shooter (FPS) genre.

While the visual and auditory modes contribute to this representation, the procedural mode, through gameplay mechanics and character abilities, reinforces the idea that identity is not tied to stereotypical roles or abilities. Similarly, Apex Legends expands on this by offering a balanced representation of gender and ethnicity among its characters, with the procedural mode shaping players' experiences of inclusivity and diversity within the battle royale setting (Alexander, 2013). Despite some challenges, such as the risk of reinforcing stereotypes, both Overwatch and Apex Legends utilize the procedural mode to challenge traditional norms and promote inclusivity. In Apex Legends, for example, while characters like Lifeline and Bloodhound may initially seem to conform to traditional roles associated with their gender or ethnicity, the procedural mode allows for diverse gameplay experiences that transcend these stereotypes (Weststar et al, 2018). Ultimately, the analysis underscores the significance of the procedural mode in shaping players' perceptions of social justice issues within the gaming environment and highlights the potential for video games to advocate for a more equitable gaming culture through thoughtful representation and design choices. The study also highlights that procedural mode in addition to auditory and visual in digital games can be used to raise issues pertaining to social justice and morality.

Despite the increasing research on digital games, significant gaps are seen in the exploration of genre-based studies. Earlier studies reflected limited and narrower scopes, focusing on certain aspects such as interactivity, action-oriented gameplay, or the categorization of games into predefined genres. Some studies have been game-centred, they have primarily concentrated on isolated elements like mechanics or player interaction, leaving the broader narrative framework underexplored.

The earlier genre studies, as discussed in this chapter, for instance genre classification by gaming industry with a focus on differentiation between genre of game and other medium of film, TV and literature (Wolf, 2002; Apperley, 2006; Arsenault, 2009), descriptive or prescriptive approach to genre (Arsenault, 2009; Clarke, 2015), the play centric approach (Cook, 2015), the game play features (Casvean, 2018) and facet analysis (Lee et al, 2014) reflect a narrow and limited approach to genre and indicate the presence of a significant gap in genre analytical approach of these studies.

This study addresses this gap by adopting a more comprehensive perspective and conducts a multimodal genre analysis of digital games integrating narrative

structure, player agency, procedural and visual modes, and framing to analyse games as an emerging narrative genre. By examining how these elements collectively contribute to a narratively rich experience, this study moves beyond traditional categorizations and focuses on the meaning-making processes within games. This broader approach not only positions games as a dynamic medium for interactive narratives but also provides a framework for understanding their cultural and linguistic dimensions, creating a distinct niche within the field of game studies.

2.9 Summary of the Chapter

Building on the insight gained from the review of previous studies on digital games, this thesis aims to address the significant gaps regarding the genre analytical approach to games to digital games. In summary, this chapter examined the epistemological transition of research trends surrounding digital games. The key focus of the chapter was genre-based studies, studies linking digital games and communication, studies on narrative, frame analysis and multimodality in digital games. The review of previous genre approaches to digital games indicated the focus of these studies on themes or action or categories of games and identified the need to use a more holistic approach to genre-based studies on digital games. This helped the researcher to select Clearwater (2011) theoretical understanding to digital games which could lead to a thorough investigation of multifaceted digital games. The previous studies also reflected the use of visual or thematic elements of games to develop understanding of digital games and their presentation of viewpoints. Furthermore, the review also suggests that there is considerable lack of research to identify how linguistic aspects (words/phrases/sentences) along with the rules and mechanics are used to frame the issues and topics.

To fill this gap, the present study is set to investigate the narrative of digital games and adapted an operational analytical model which conforms to the understanding of Clearwater theory of genre. Using this model the researcher investigates, first and foremost, the genre of digital games in addition to how the narrative of this genre is structured. The findings of this multimodal study inform how visual and procedural mode construct meaning in digital games, how the process of framing function at textual as well as at mechanical level to depict the chosen issue and renders perspectives to games. The details of the theoretical understanding and analytical models are presented in the next chapter of research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the nature of the study, the research paradigm of the study, the theoretical framework and analytical framework of the study. Furthermore, it also includes the details of data, sampling and the validity of the present study.

3.1 Nature of the Study

The sagacity inherent in digital games lies in their capacity to seamlessly integrate complex elements such as narrative, interactivity, visual design, and player engagement into a cohesive and compelling artifact. This tactful craftsmanship reflects creative, technical, and cultural considerations to produce experiences that resonate with diverse audiences. Understanding this sagacity requires a probing methodological lens, which can unpack the intricate layers of meaning embedded in the game's structure and design and shed light on how this genre is structured. By employing a comprehensive analytical framework, such as multimodal genre analysis, it becomes possible to uncover the nuanced interplay of form, function, and intent within these digital artifacts. Such an approach not only reveals the sophistication of the design choices but also highlights the thoughtful strategies that elevate games as an art form and a medium of communication.

The present study has adapted a genre-based approach to explore the narrative construction in digital games, situating the analysis within the framework of dynamic construct that is shaped by narrative elements, gameplay mechanics, and player interaction. The narrative of the selected game is investigated as an integral and undeniably significant component of genre, including elements such as structure, narrative progression, character development, storyworld, interface and player agency.

By integrating narrative analysis with genre theory, the methodology traces how games construct meaning through multimodal elements, including procedural and visual modes. This dual focus on genre and narrative enables a comprehensive analysis of how games communicate their perspective and engage players, contributing to the understanding of digital games as a narrative-driven medium. This qualitative study aims to investigate the patterns of narrative structures, the ideological grounding in the

framing process and the meaning-making potential of visual and procedural modes. While firmly grounded in linguistics, this research is following the tradition of genre studies. The theoretical understanding for the genre analysis of digital games is based on genre theory of Clearwater (2011) of digital games which proposes two key considerations in genre study: the first is Formal and Aesthetic and the second consideration is Discursive.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Within academic traditions, genre theory and methodology have gradually evolved from early classification schemes describing poetry, prose, and drama to an array of approaches used to understand the rise of modern mass communications and popular culture. Digital games are the emerging media forms. Digital games are multidimensional complex media forms combining diverse elements of digital technology, mechanics, narrative, aesthetics, and interactivity to create an immersive experience for the player. Understanding digital games demand a holistic approach that can take into consideration the various aspects of this digital phenomenon.

Among various theoretical understanding of genre, as discussed in the review of literature in the previous chapter, the genre theory as conceptualised by Clearwater (2011) provides a more holistic approach to genre. Therefore, the study is based on the proposition as suggested by Clearwater.

3.2.1 Clearwater Theory of Genre Analysis for Digital Games

Before discussing the core idea of the genre theory of Clearwater, it is pertinent to know the underlying principles of his genre theory. Clearwater considers genre to be a conceptual model. Clearwater does not limit the function of genre to classify, rather in his view, genre provides schemas to understand not only the genre but also its surrounding social environment. Clearwater (2011) emphasises:

The use of genre (as a concept) is to recognize that the field of human expression exhibits certain patterns, tendencies, and trajectories and that these patterns, tendencies and trajectories may relate to the medium, aesthetics, ideology, economics, current events, history, education and other aspects of human interaction and behaviour. (p. 39)

Clearwater's perspective of genre is comprehensive and broad. This holistic perspective pays attention to the formal and aesthetic characteristics (rules, mechanics, processes, hardware, game narrative, visual) of games as well as social, discursive, and contextual aspects of the game. It is pertinent to consider that these aspects, as outlined by Clearwater, are inseparable owing to the interactive nature of the game.

Clearwater genre approach has taken into consideration the ludo-narrative debate which is quite common in literary scholarship surrounding digital games. On one hand ludologists argue that gameplay is paramount and emphasises the role of interactivity and player agency in this medium. While those advocating the role of narrative and the presence of diverse representational strategies and modalities, the scholars on this side consider interpretation and representation through elements of game narrative as essential aspects of this medium.

However, Clearwater does not negate the significance of either in the understanding of genre of digital games. Clearwater affirms the co-existence and significance of various elements that form this genre. The ludic elements of game play, interactivity of the game as well as the story, setting and narrative of the game “are tethered to form the larger experience of each game” (p. 33).

Clearwater gives examples of two titles: *Outlaw* (1978) and *Combat* (1977). Both games are initial games for Atari 2600 and are about player/character shooting in a single graphic screen with tanks in one and cowboys in the second title. In the case of these two titles and other titles of the same era theme, setting and backstory seem to have little or no relationship to the actual game play. The minor or secondary nature of non-gameplay elements in such cases has led to questions pertaining to interpretation and meaning theorization in such interactive media. However, these highly abstracted games with a set of simple rules belonging to an early era, cannot be taken as a sample to base a broad theoretical position for this emerging and evolving genre of digital games.

Gun (2005) and *America's Army: True Soldiers* (2007) are another set of examples Clearwater uses to bridge the gulf between the two sides. The first title is a third person shooter, a narrative driven with emphasis given to backstory, weapons and gameplay while the second title is both single-player and multiplayer and is the second instalment of U.S army recruitment efforts with teamwork, career-building and stress

tactics as a focal point of the game. While promoted as a recruitment tool for teenagers, the game excels in realism and interactivity and uses less violence and lays more emphasis on squad roles, military tactics, protocols, and military culture. Both are shooter games, however, there is a remarkable difference in the theme, tone and focus of these games. Considering these thematic and semiotic differences as unimportant and subsidiary would mean ignoring details about design, production and their audience reception would be misleading.

Each element from the game can be analysed separately for the analytical purposes, however, Clearwater (2011) rejects their complete separation and calls it artificial to do so. It is the totality of the game which must be analysed in approaching the games as a genre. That is why Clearwater proposes not only a formal analysis as a part of genre analysis but also the social and contextuality of the genre to be an integral part of analysis of the genre of digital games. Clearwater proposes two considerations to be significant in genre analysis of games: Formal and Aesthetic and Discursive.

3.2.2 Formal and Aesthetic Consideration

Clearwater's theory of genre consists of two principal considerations. The first consideration of formal and aesthetics in genre entails the analysis of conventions which are related to narrative structure, characterization, story, visual imagery, game mechanics and rules, and kinesthetics of game play. This aspect of genre study gives an insight into game narrative and game play which constitute the essence of digital game. This formal and aesthetic considerations also entail the interactivity and immersion which is the distinct feature of this digital genre, and which set it apart from existing genres of entertainment industry. For this part of genre approach, the study analyses the narrative poetics which includes narrative structure, narrative, (narrative arcs-meta and micronarrative), narrative progression (role of player agency), characters, storyworld, emotions and interface and is analyzed through the analytical framework of Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012). This analytical framework is aligned with the first aspect of the formal and aesthetic consideration of genre analysis of games.

The second part of formal and aesthetic consideration is inclusive of account of game parameters, rules and mechanics which form the core of gameplay. Another significant part of this consideration focusses on the aesthetics of games via visual

imagery. For the first part, the study is analysing the procedural mode of the digital games which inclusive of game mechanics, parameters and rules of game play and using Hawreliak (2020) approach of procedural mode to analyse rules, mechanics and parameters of games whereas the visual imagery of digital games analyzed through Barthes (1971) denotative and connotative approach for visuals. Both visual and procedural modes are established aspects of multimodality of games. The analysis of formal and aesthetic consideration aligns with the two objectives of this study and provides an account of the structure of narrative pattern and the role of player in structuring and shaping the narrative and the contribution of semiotic modality of procedurality and visuals to generate meaning.

3.2.3 Discursive Consideration

Clearwater (2011) emphasises that genre is part of a human expressions and exhibits pattern and tendencies and states that these patterns may relate to medium, aesthetics, ideology, economics, current events, history, education and other aspects of human interaction and behaviour. The intersection of this human expression to the current events, history, and ideology, in the case of game, is developed through the discursive dimension of games.

Apart from aesthetics and formal characteristics of games, Clearwater highlights the significance of discursive aspect of digital games. Like any genre which exists, transforms and evolves within political, cultural and economic contexts, the genre of games also gets associated with certain worldviews and perspectives. The nature of the surrounding context is a variable phenomenon. Each genre is subject to different industrial, organisational, and discursive context thus affects the production of that genre.

This approach rests on the premise that games are framed discursively and are enriched in social constructs and meaning. Genres can serve as a specific vehicle for interaction and cultural expression. This has been practised in genre studies of films, using ritual approach of Neale (2000) and TV, using Mittel (2001) cultural approach. Such an approach to genre analysis is also significant in the case of digital games.

The context of the genre is an inseparable phenomenon. The nature of this discursive context of genre may vary. It can be political, economic or cultural. The surrounding context which may itself be associated with worldviews and ideologies and

thus get reflected in the genre through various means. A comprehensive genre analysis involves supplementing textuality with its cultural, economic, even political contexts to arrive at a comprehensive genre analysis. The association of specific worldviews and perspectives to the genre is subject to the surrounding context and its manifestations must be identified in the act of genre analysis.

While the first structuralist and formalist dimension of genre reflects the narrative and ludic aspects of games, the second dimension of discursivity of genre provide insight into the context of genre — perspectives surrounding and manifested in the genre. Framing, visual or linguistic or using any other modality of expression is a mean to reflect the worldviews any medium contain. The present research analyses the process of framing in relation to discursivity of genre to understand how framing enables the games to reflect the perspectives, worldviews or even ideologies.

3.2.4 Multimodality in Digital Games

Digital games have been recognized as a highly multimodal artifact (Wildfeuer & Stamenković, 2022; Hawreliak & Lemieux, 2020). Keeping in view the multimodal nature of digital games, the study is based on the theoretical understanding as given by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) views of multimodality which state that the combination of various (semiotic) modes contributes to meaning construction in any artifact. Acknowledging the fact that digital game developers use multiple semiotic modes, Hawreliak (2018) and Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) include the semiotic modes of layout, colour, sound effect, music, text, haptics, moving and still images, gestures, and procedural modes as significant modes in a multimodal analysis of games. However, the present study is limited to the analysis of visual (still image) and procedural mode.

Jewitt (2013) states that multimodality is a multidisciplinary approach, and it is drawn from social semiotics that considers the act of “communication and representation as more than language and attends systematically to the social interpretation of a range of forms of making meaning” (p. 1).

Multimodality provides opportunities to identify, analyse and theorise the various ways in which meanings are made and how meanings are interrelated phenomena. Jewitt (2013) elaborates on four basic tenets of multimodality. The first fundamental principle is parting ways from the traditional notions which consider

language to be the most important mode of communication and its fundamental role in interaction. Multimodality does not deny the utility of language; however, it contains that all modes are capable of imparting meanings equally. Language, in multimodality is one ensemble of modes among the multimodal ensemble of modes. Different modes are integrated to create a multimodal assembly. While analysing any interaction or representation, it is required to consider all available choices of communication, the meanings and purpose of selection of resources.

The second tenant of multimodal approach is based on realisation that all modes of communication have been shaped through their social use. Each mode in multimodality has distinct meaning, different semiotic resources and different communicative potential. Communication is bound to be produced and constrained in a social context.

The third underlying principle of multimodality acknowledges that communicators have the choice of selection and configuration of different modes. Hence, the interaction between different modes is valuable for meaning construction. For digital mediums, the distinct nature of modes, their interactivity and semiotic function of these modes are fundamental. The meaning of any mode is not negligible; the orchestra of meaning is created through the interaction of different modes and their meanings.

Owing to the multimodal nature of the genre of digital games, contemporary researchers opt for a multimodal approach to games. Few of them are Stamenković and Jaćević (2019) who focussed on multimodal analysis of game interface and games screen, Mukhtar (2020) study was also a multimodal approach to video games and the player experience, Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) examined the issues of social justice in games with a multimodal approach and similarly Stamenković and Wildfeuer (2021) conducted a Multimodal analysis of Grand Theft Auto V to investigate the role of diverse multimodal features in game progress and experience.

The current study is conceptually based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) view of multimodality and will focus on the visual and the procedural mode only. For procedural mode, the game mechanics and rules will be analysed and for the visual mode the study will limit it to the visual (still image) of the

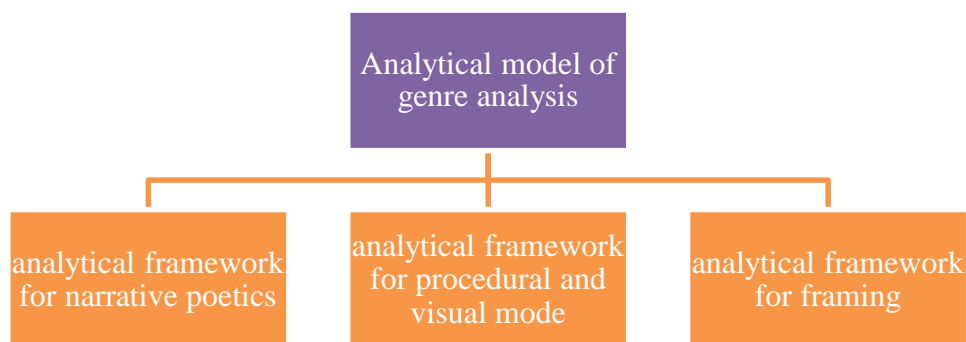
main character. For this purpose, the image of the first and the last on-screen appearance of the hero/protagonist will be analysed only.

3.3 Analytical Framework for Genre Analysis

The conceptual framework of the present research work is based on Clearwater's perspective of genre and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) views of multimodality and requires a multi-method analytical framework. Owing to the lack of analytical framework which can address the generic dimension as outlined by Clearwater which is inclusive of narrative, ludic, aesthetic and discursive dimension of genre of digital games, an analytical framework has been adapted for the present study. The detail of this analytical framework is given in the next section while the following figure illustrates its basic components:

Figure 1

Analytical Framework for Genre Analysis



This analytical model conducts analyse genre analysis of digital games in three parts. The first part includes Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) Narrative Analytical Framework to analyse the narrative poetics of the selected titles. The second part of this analytical model includes Hawreliak approach of Procedural Mode (2019) and Barthes (1971) visual analysis. These two parts of the model relate to the formal and aesthetic consideration of genre following Clearwater (2011) perspective of genre. While the third aspect of the model deals with the process of framing using Entman (2018) and Nygren et al. (2022) approach of frame analysis and relates to the Industrial and Discursive Aspect of genre analysis and it will be used to understand how the process of framing functions in digital games.

Before moving on to the discussion of analytical approaches included in this operational model, it is important to reflect on the relationship between the conceptual

framework of the study and the adapted analytical framework of this thesis. The study aims to conduct genre analysis of digital games. The study triangulated Clearwater (2011) concept of genre and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) concept of multimodality to address the research objectives of the study. Clearwater conceptualization of genre lays the conceptual foundation for a genre analysis of the present study and clearly sets two major dimensions within its framework. One dimension of this conceptualization requires the study to focus on narrative structure, character, story, visual, rules and game mechanics while the other requires focussing on the framing the perspective within the games.

Given the lack of an existing analytical framework which can address the key dimensions which are specified in the conceptual framework of the present study, a new analytical framework was adapted to align with the study's objectives. This adapted analytical framework included Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) narrative analytical framework, Hawreliak approach of procedural mode (2019) and Barthes (1971) visual analysis and Entman (2018) and Nygren et al. (2022) approach of frame analysis which is aligned with the conceptual understanding of Clearwater (2011).

The adapted analytical framework developed in this work provides a comprehensive approach for analysing digital games as a narrative genre. This framework integrates key elements essential to comprehensive genre analysis: the analysis of narrative, the analysis of rules and mechanics through procedural mode, the analysis of visual and the analysis of framing the perspective within the games. Narrative structure is examined to understand the progression and organization of the story, alongside the role of the player in shaping it. The rules and mechanics of games, analyzed as part of the procedural mode, are explored for their role in guiding player actions and constructing meaning. Visual analysis focuses on how imagery contributes to the narrative and emotional engagement, while framing is studied to reveal the perspectives and interpretations embedded within the game's design. By combining these dimensions, the framework offers a holistic perspective, capturing the multimodal complexity of games and positioning them as a distinct and evolving narrative medium.

When interpreting the data considering this analytical framework, it is important to define the key terminologies that anchor the analysis and provide clarity to the findings. These include player agency, rules and mechanics, procedural mode, and narrativized interface. The term player agency is the degree of freedom, choice, and

decision-making power that player is offered within a game. It reflects how player can shape/construct the narrative, outcomes, or progression of the game through the actions and choices.

Rules and mechanics are fundamental in analysing digital games. Rules refer to the predefined systems within a game that determine what players is allowed to do, thus shaping the boundaries of gameplay and player's experience. Whereas mechanics refers to the method and constraints (for instance movement or combat) which govern the player engagement and navigation within the game world. Both rules and mechanics create a system of reward and punishment for the player. It is through analysing the rules and mechanics, parameters and reward/punishment structure of the game that the underlying expressive /representational functions of the procedural mode of games could be explored inn data analysis.

Another important term is narrativized interface which refers to the integration of narrative elements within a game's user interface (UI). This may involve visual cues, on-screen text, or interactive components (icons or bars) that convey narrative information while maintaining the immersion and thematic coherence of the game world.

3.3.1 Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) Narrative Analytical Framework

The traditional views of narrative mechanics in media like literature, film, and theatre emphasize elements such as plot, story, characters, setting, and design. These mechanics function in a linear, pre-determined manner, guiding the audience through a fixed narrative. However, in games, the interactive nature fundamentally transforms narrative mechanics. Digital games offer unique narrative elements such as narrative arcs (grand, subsidiary, and micro), narrative progression shaped by player actions, and player agency as a central component. Characters, the storyworld, and even the game's interface play pivotal roles, acting as both narrative devices and interactive tools.

In this regard, the present study is using Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum Narrative analytical framework for the analysis of game narrative. The proposed narrative analytical framework focuses on several narrative mechanics such as narrative arc, character, story world, narrativized interface, emotion, and role of player in narrative progression. These narrative parameters may also identify the various ways narrative

texture is incorporated through the game design across the experience of the game (Bizzocchi, 2007). Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum are against the rigid scholarly extremes of either considering game as primarily a vehicle for narrative and storytelling or advocating the critical importance of play in the game. They admit that the core pleasure lies in the winning or losing and the associated state of flow prompted by challenge and performance of the player (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum Narrative analytical framework is based on a strong premise that narrative adds to the pleasure of the game experience in significant and powerful ways.

3.3.1.1 Narrative Arc and Player Agency

Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) first narrative consideration is narrative arc. The narrative arc in traditional media follows the sequence of setup, introducing complication in a story, development of the story, resolution of conflict and denouement. However, Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum point out that the adherence to a tight structure might be not strictly followed in digital games. Their framework proposes three arcs that constitute the narrative structure of game that is meta, subsidiary and micro. The largest meta-arc or the primary arc holds a significant narrative level within games – the individual game story that forms the backbone of actual gameplay. The meta-arc is constituted of subsidiary medium-level units, formally represented as levels or missions (or chapters, quests, sub quests) which serve to guide the player through the larger story. These subsidiary arcs may exhibit the poetics of a full narrative arc: setup, complication-development, and resolution.

Within these missions, smaller but still internally coherent sequences then manifest. These narrative units are both dynamic and nested. These smallest units or quantum units are called micronarratives –quantum units of self-contained narrative coherence and flow that are critical to the formation of narrative meaning. These arcs are interconnected and hierarchical in nature. The largest meta-arc of the narrative, from which the subsidiary arcs are revealed, and these subsidiary arcs may derive existence from granular micronarrative gameplay story arcs.

The narrative plot coherence in the interactive medium of digital games is difficult as it is subject to the nature of interaction available in any game. If the interaction is open, it becomes difficult to find narrative flow and progression. In this regard, Bizzocchi asserts that the role of player agency is significant in an interactive medium.

Another aspect of narrative mechanics which Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) emphasize is notion of player agency which refers to the extent the player can influence the narrative at various scales in game narrative. The idea of player agency encompasses how players exercise control over meaningful decisions that influence their gameplay and the narrative structure of the game. This concept is important for analysing how players interact with narrative structures in games. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum includes the analysis of extent of freedom of choice.

They recognize that the player has freedom to express themselves through choices, and engage and construct narrative, however, these options and choices are often constrained to maintain narrative coherence. This dynamic illustrates the balance between player freedom and the overarching story, emphasizing the complexities of engagement within interactive media.

3.3.1.2 Storyworld and Character

The storyworld and character are the significant aspects of this analytical framework. The storyworld provides a space for narrative sensibilities and ludic action to take place. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) consider the design and environment of the game world to attain the position of a narrative act and serve as vehicle for the treatment of time and space in progression of narrative and game play. The setting and design of the storyworld is significant for the ludic challenges and narrative experience for the player.

The world of the game is full of characters: heroes, villains, playable and non-player characters. The characters in the game world are visually designed, rendered in a certain behavioural pattern and are equipped with an underlying psychology which provides depth and strength to their characters. Even non-playable or minor characters are built to show goal-oriented behaviour and contribute to overall narrative progression in the game. It is through character traits, values, and design decisions that the game world depicts the values and ideals that frame the narrative and which the player experiences.

3.3.1.3 Emotion

Another important aspect of narrative poetics is emotions. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum. They suggest two kinds of emotion in the game: ludic emotion and narrative emotion. The former is the outcome of winning or losing the game and the

latter is derived from the narrativity of the game. For instance, empathy and identification with the characters of the game. However, both are analytically separable, their overlap can reinforce the game immersive experience. The narrative emotions depend on visual design of the character, behaviour of the character, design of story world and environment, music, dialogue and plot of the story in the game. The present study is analysing the narrative emotions of the selected games.

3.3.1.4 Narrativized Interface

Game Interface engages player and can be called an epitome of human-computer interaction. A powerful game narrative is built around the entire game and reinforced through every aspect of the game. A narrativized interface can deliver narrative work by reinforcing narrative themes, story world details, emotions and characters information within the design of game interface.

The narrativized interface is achieved in several design strategies. One of the strategies is “the look and the feel” of the interface (Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum, 2012, p. 400). They call it the perfect location where ludic challenge and narrative pleasure conjoin. The look and the feel strategy of interface narrativization can be observed at two levels: interface aesthetics and narrativized game metrics.

The interface aesthetics is a strategy to customise or model the look of game interface to show narrative sensibilities, for instance through character or story world. Digital games reflect the use of various similar strategies to reinforce the narrative themes of the game. Another way of analysing the look and the feel of the interface is through game metrics. Game metrics provide feedback about the performance and state of the player. The narrativized game metrics deal with narratively salient ways through which the interface can be used to let the player know the performance and status of the game and play and incorporates narrative sensibilities in its design. The game metrics keep the player updated and attentive by giving feedback on performance of the player.

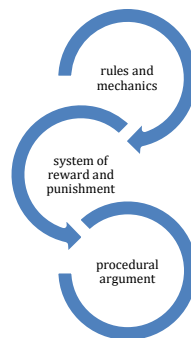
It is pertinent to mention here that the study aims to analyse the narrative considerations and mechanics as suggested by Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012). These narrative mechanics involve element of narrative arcs and their progression, role of player agency in narrative progression, storyworld, characters, emotions and narrativized interface.

3.4 Analytical Framework for Procedural and Visual Modes

From a multimodal perspective, games are semiotic artifacts composed of multiple semiotic modes and have potential for meaning making as different semiotic modes are combined. Hawreliak (2020) emphasize that digital games provide a new venue of expression which is a clearly distinguishable form of representation used in the games that is the procedural mode. According to Hawreliak, the procedural mode is inclusive of the rules, system as well as the parameters of games. Like other semiotic modes of text, music and image, the procedural mode is equally significant and a more unique mode for communication of information and engagement in the case of digital games. Procedurality serves as the means to submerge the arguments in the rules, and how rules are expressed, communicated and comprehended by the users. By the virtue of procedural mode, the player is enabled to perform action in the game world. A visual representation of this aspect is given in figure 2:

Figure 2

Visual Representation of Working of Procedural mode



Hawreliak states that the procedural mode can analyse the underlying argument of the game through these questions: What actions do the game's rules permit or require? What actions are prohibited by the rules? What actions are rewarded or punished?

According to Hawreliak (2020) analysing the rules, parameters and reward/punishment structure can reveal the expressive /representational functions of the procedural mode of games.

Hawreliak (2020) refers to the title Mafia III (by Hangar in 2016), in which Lincoln Clay, a black man, while entering a white-owned shop in 1960s New Bordeaux confronts the shop owner who tells him to leave immediately, though he has not broken

or stolen anything from the shop. However, what he has done is, enter a shop displaying “No Coloured Allowed” posters. Throughout the game, a strictly enforced rule of segregation of white people from black people permeates in the game play mechanics and rules. Lincoln must complete various missions while driving. Often, he commits crime and faces a police intervention, however, interestingly the police response time is shown dependent on the district of crime, a matter of dense white populated district or poorer district of black people. This structured racism interwoven systematically in rules of Mafia III is an instance of an “interactive expression” of white supremacy and structured racism “that is ontologically and semiotically distinct from textual, filmic (audiovisual), or performative expressions of the same systems” (Hawreliak, 2020, p. 228).

However, Hawreliak acknowledges the fact that the meaning potential of a game cannot solely rest on a single mode, rather each mode can say or express something, and each mode interacts with other modes to construct a coherent meaning potential. Keeping this in view, the study also includes visual mode in addition to procedural mode.

For the visual mode, this study uses Barthes' (1967, 1971) concept of denotative and connotative meaning to analyse the visual mode (still images) and find the meaning potential of the images. In semiotics, meanings includes both denotation and connotation. It is used to describe the relationship between the signifier and its signified. Denotational can be taken as the literal, commonsense, obvious or definitional. Barthes suggest denotation to be the first order of signification and at this level a sign is consist of a signifier and a signified. Whereas the second order of signification uses the denotative sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier and attaches it to an additional signifier. Barthes' model holds connotation to be a sign which is derived from the signifier of a denotative sign. It means denotation leading to a chain of connotation. It suggests denotation to provide primary meaning. However, Barthes (1971) acknowledges that separating the signified from the signifier, the literal from the ideological, is complex that is completely separating literal from symbolic meaning. The study analyses the selected visuals (still images) for their denotative and connotative meaning to understand how the visual mode is used in games make meaning apart from other modes.

3.5 Analytical Framework for Framing

The third analytical framework adopted for the present study will analyse the process of framing in the narrative of digital games. According to Goldberg and Strain (1987) technology is never neutral and technology has provided tools or modern artifacts to construct and contain ideologies. Digital games are undoubtedly part of the terrain of technologically advanced apparatuses. Games have acquired the status of an expressive medium and can communicate meanings and beliefs. Games offer an understanding of the world and the topic/issue that is depicted and simulated in their game play (Booth, 2021). Like other forms of media and communication, games inevitably frame the issues that are portrayed in them (Wicks, 2005).

Keeping in view the connection between ideology and games, the current study employs Entman (2018) and Nygren et al. (2022) approach of framing. Entman (2007) defines frames as an act of “culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 164). Frame Analysis is an approach to identify how frames are embedded and manifested in any communication. According to Entman framing involves the processes of selection and salience:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman, 1993, p. 52)

For instance, the recurrent use of frame of “cold war” in U.S news related to foreign policy, according to Entman, emphasises civil war as problems, recognizes communist rebels as their source and puts forth the moral judgement of secular aggression and presents the solution in terms of giving support to the counterpart.

Frames have four identifiable attributes: diagnostic, evaluative and prescriptive. The frame of cold war shows that frame exhibits four identifiable locations in the process of communication. The communicator/producer, the text, recipient, and the culture. The communicator makes conscious or unconscious choice of frames with respect to their belief systems and ideologies whereas the text contains the frames which can be manifested through the use or absence of keywords/stock phrases, a stereotypical image, source of information and sentences that can provide thematic reinforcement of

facts or moral judgement. These frames guide the receiver of this act of communication; however, the receiver may not acknowledge the intentions of the communicator. Here the culture stands for the stock of these commonly invoked frames or culture can be taken as a set of common frames found in the discourse of the discourse community. It reiterates similar functions of framing process: selection and highlighting, making arguments about the problem, its evaluation and/or solution.

The first function of defining the problem includes the action of the causal agent and its consequences, the diagnostic part identifies the causal agent, the next function includes making moral judgments and the last functions may provide treatment of the problem. However, as suggested by Entman these four functions of frame may not be exhibited in the entire text or may be exhibited in a single sentence. As suggested by Entman a frame in a particular text may not perform all the functions.

The second part of the analytical model of framing is based on Nygren et al. (2022) approach to framing which extends the process of framing to the aesthetics, storyline, characters, mechanics, and rules of the games. While acknowledging that games communicate meanings and beliefs and offer an understanding of the world and topic they are depicting and simulating, Nygren et al. assert the significance of game as a media capable of communicating certain frames. According to Nygren et al., framing can be incorporated through multiple means within a game. The design choices, such as, storyline and characterization within the game can serve to sustain certain frames. Similarly, the aesthetics, game mechanics and rules (which create game play) can also be designed to communicate certain messages/frames. The first two relate to how the main story and the characters (PC and NPCs) can be used to convey certain frames. Similarly, the aesthetics of the game involves how the look and feel of the game contains framing and how framing is operationalized through game mechanics and rules. The table 1 illustrates the analytical model of framing which embodies the main tenets of Entman approach (2018) and Nygren et al. (2022) approach of framing to provide a thorough understanding of framing.

This model enables the researcher to analyse framing at a broader level: micro and macro. At the micro level, framing is analysed for the four functions as mentioned above (define, diagnose, evaluate and recommend) at the level of words/phrases/sentences in the text of the game. Whereas at the macro level of text, the

study analyses how framing is operationalized through multiple facets of the game (games aesthetics, story line, characterization and game rules and mechanics). This operational model provides a detailed analysis of the process of framing in digital games and sheds light on the nature of frames. The table 1 illustrates various aspects of this analytical framework.

Table 1

Analytical Model of Framing

Functions of frames (micro) (Entman, 1993, 2018)	Operational facets for framing (macro) (Nygren et al., 2022)
Define the problem	Game aesthetics
Diagnose the cause of the problem	Storyline
Evaluate and make moral judgement	Characterization
Recommend solutions	Game mechanics and rules

In conclusion, the adapted analytical framework equips this study to analyse digital games which have unconventional narrative structures and processes at work as compared to the other forms of media. However, the adapted analytical model can address this diversity, which is inherent in digital games, and offers a systematic investigation of their unique narrative, procedural characteristics and the process of framing in interactive digital games.

3.6 Qualitative Paradigm

The present study is based on the qualitative paradigm which has been established as a systematic, well informed and thoroughly documented research method. According to Nassaji (2020) qualitative research is naturalistic and interpretive in nature and it involves a meticulous process of identifying the problem, collecting, analysing, explaining, evaluating and interpreting the data. It aims at understanding and exploring rather than explaining and manipulating variables. The qualitative paradigm is concerned with structures and patterns and seeks to answer how something is done. Being contextualised and interpretive, it emphasises the process or patterns of development rather than the outcome or the product of the research.

The data in any paradigm occupies a principal stature in any study. Considering the nature of data, Patton (2002) views interviews, documents and observation as the well-established forms of data in qualitative research and adds that this data form is not

crunched easily by statistical software. Furthermore, Patton also emphasises that the thick layered experience of people's lived experience, set of events or situations requires detailed investigation of substantive historical and social context and the significance of emotive content is also appraised emphatically in this paradigm. It enables the researcher to unveil emerging themes, concepts, constructs, understanding and insights.

Wood (2004) asserts the effectiveness of qualitative methods in studies when one wishes not to count or measure phenomena but to understand the character of experience, particularly how people perceive and make sense of their communication experience. This involves interpreting meanings and other unobservable dimensions of communication.

The evolving genre of digital games have been investigated through qualitative and quantitative paradigms. However, Williams (2008) has cautioned the scholars of multiple disciplines approaching digital games not to denigrate or exclude any mode of inquiry that is qualitative or quantitative, a mistake which has affected the academic inquiry of various fields in the past. William (2008) provides a glimpse of the two counterparts and their assumptions. For one the quantification of human experience has no value because the essential quality of experience cannot be represented with a number and the data collection of the quantitative paradigm detracts from the overall goal of understanding human creativity and meaning. Whereas the qualitative research has been criticised for its being frequently unreliable, biased, rigorous and smallness of its scale to be of any real value (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). While suggesting multimethod, multi-theoretical approaches as the best way to advance understanding in the field of digital games, Williams (2008) also asserts the act of playing game of paramount importance for both paradigms. Validity, reliability and generalizability are the most frequent criteria for standard quantitative research whereas research procedures which can leads to trustworthiness for qualitative research have been emphasised Lincoln and Guba (1985) sets the criteria of Trustworthiness and Validity for qualitative research. The table 2 shows the details of quality criteria for qualitative research based on Lincoln and Guba (1985).

This criterion includes credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability as its important constituents. Lincoln and Guba's (1986) criteria, for qualitative studies, often referred as "the Four-Dimensions Criteria" (Forero et al.,

2018, p. 2) for trustworthiness includes credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

1. **Credibility:** This criterion relates to trustworthiness of the work. It may involve prolonged engagement, continuous observations and peer debriefing,
2. **Dependability:** This strategy ensures reliability and replicability of result if the study is repeated under similar conditions.
3. **Confirmability:** This criterion ensures objectivity of the findings of the study through triangulation and audit trails or confirmability audit through independent reviewer peer/colleague.
4. **Transferability:** This criterion involves applicability of the findings to another setting. It may also involve a detailed description of research procedure, sampling and reflexivity which ensures objectivity and reduces biases in a qualitative study.

The table 2 provides an overview of the quality criteria for qualitative research based on Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Table 2

Quality Criteria for Qualitative Research Based on Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Criteria	Description
Credibility	How far are the findings trustworthy and believable to others?
Transferability	To what extent the findings can be applied to a different context or a setting?
Dependability	To what extent the results are consistent over time?
Confirmability	What is the degree of neutrality of a researcher and the interpretation of the findings?

3.7 Text Analysis

The study is following the classic methodology of close reading (Gadamer, 2006) and text analysis of games (Carr, 2009; Carret et al., 2003). Close reading is a

detailed observation of a work, repeated viewing, systematic notation of relevant details to develop a higher order of analysis. Textual analysis of games, on the other hand, is based on the premise that games can be studied as meaningful cultural objects (Archibal, 2009). The close reading and textual analysis will be used to analyse the narrative poetics, framing (micro and macro level of text) and visual and procedural modes of the selected games.

3.8 Purposive Sampling

Etikan and Alkassim (2016) regard data gathering to be crucial in any research and it contributes to a better understanding of a theoretical underpinning of any study. It then becomes imperative to select with sound judgement both the manner of gathering data as well as the source of data. The systematic sampling of data brings credibility to research and ensures assurance of indicative sampling to its community or users. However, it does not aim for statistical representation. On the contrary, the purposive sampling is carried out in qualitative research. Participant selection is done on the premise of generating useful data for any study. It is a non-probabilistic sampling technique which is applicable to qualitative or quantitative studies. Patton (2002) considers purposeful sampling to be a widely used technique in the qualitative paradigm for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. In purposive samples, subjects more readily accessible to the researcher are more likely to be included.

The present study is also using purposive sampling for its data collection which is highly relevant to the context of this work as it allows for the deliberate selection of digital games that align with the study's objectives and analytical framework. This approach ensures that the chosen samples—*Call of Duty: Black Ops II* (2012), *Call of Duty: WWII* (2017), and *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013) and its cutoff date of 2019 (versions)—because these games represent key milestones in the evolution of narrative-driven games before this cutoff. These games were chosen for their ability to highlight the diverse narrative approaches and multimodal features that align with the study's objectives.

- **Call of Duty: Black Ops 2** (2012): This version introduced branching narratives, a groundbreaking feature for its time, allowing for the exploration of

player agency and nonlinear narrative progression, which are significant to this study.

- **Call of Duty: WWII** (2017): It was released closer to the cutoff date, this title offers a strong focus on historical storytelling and emotional depth, particularly through its visual and narrative design, which contributes to the study's emphasis on multimodal analysis.
- **Grand Theft Auto V** (2013): The third title, though released earlier, the game has retained relevance throughout the decade due to its complex procedural mechanics, expansive open world, and socio-political framing. Its enduring popularity and narrative sophistication make it an essential inclusion.

By focusing on these versions, the study captures a wide range of narrative techniques, gameplay mechanics, and visual styles that were prominent and influential in shaping the narrative genre of digital games before 2019. This temporal framing ensures that the analysis remains relevant while addressing the evolution of games as a multimodal narrative medium.

3.9 Unit of Analysis

The study aims to analyse narrative poetics, the process of framing, the procedural and visual as a part of multimodal genre analysis. The narrative poetics involves analysis of the narrative arcs, narrative progression and player agency, storyworld, characters, emotion and interface. For this part of the study, the narrative will be the unit of analysis. For the second part of frame analysis, the unit of analysis is words, game rules, story and characters of the selected games. For procedural analysis, the study uses rules and mechanics to understand the communicative potential of the selected games.

3.10 Data Description

The data of the current study are three digital games. The details of these three titles are given in the following table 3. These games are played in single player mode and can be played in multiplayer mode online. However, the present study is limited to its single player mode only. The researcher played the first selected on play station three while the other two selected titles were played on play station four. The following systematic procedure, which has been mentioned earlier in close reading, was adopted to gather the data of the selected title.

Table 3*Details of Selected Titles*

Ser	Title of Game	Developers	Publisher	Release date	Platforms	Mode	Genre
1.	Call of Duty: World War II	Sledgehammer	Activision	2017	Microsoft Windows, Play station4, Xbox one	Single player, multiplayer	First person shooter
2	Call of Duty: Black Ops II	Treyarch	Activision	2012	Microsoft Windows, Play station 3, and Xbox 360	Single player, multiplayer	First person shooter
3	Grand Theft Auto-V	Rockstar North	Rockstar games	2013	Microsoft Windows Play station (3,4,5) Xbox 360, Xbox One, Xbox series X and serie S	Single player, multiplayer	First person shooter/third person

3.11 Rationale for Data Selection, Player Perspective and Mode

The data of the present study consists of three digital games. These games were released during the time frame of 2012 to 2017. The selected titles are first person shooter and action-adventure games. These games are played in a single player mode. Apart from the common features, these games earned immense popularity and generated huge revenue. The details are Call of Duty: World War II generated US\$500 million in the first three days, Grand Theft Auto V generated more than US\$815 million in twenty-four hours and Black Ops II grossed over \$500 million in its first 24 hours. Furthermore, these games have been selected for their diverse narrative structure and their cultural impact. COD: WWII, COD: BOII and GTA-V reflect on historic event or contemporary issue. Additionally, these titles offer immersive visual realism and rich narrative driven experience.

The study is limited to first person shooter games. Unlike scrolling shooters which focus on fast-paced action and linear storytelling, FPS offer more immersive experience of rich narrative of any game. While the third person shooter perspective emphasizes visibility of character and environment. Among these perspectives of shooter games, FPS enables player to navigate and fully experience the interactive digital narrative through character's eye and make choice that directly impacts the story. The study involves single player mode only which provides more robust, focussed investigation and exploration of micronarrative and narrative progression. Furthermore, multiplayer mode is beyond the scope of the present study.

The present study is conducting a multimodal genre analysis of these titles which includes analysis of the narrative, frame analysis and analysis of selected visuals and procedural mode. To the best of researcher's knowledge these games have not been studied with this analytical approach.

The methodological choices in this study are deliberately designed to align with the research objectives and maintain a focused scope. The analysis is delimited to single-player mode, as it offers a linear and controlled narrative structure that facilitates the investigation of narrative progression, framing, and multimodal genre analysis. While multiplayer modes generate diverse, player-driven narratives, their inclusion would introduce variability beyond the study's scope. The use of game recordings and transcript files is a deliberate strategy to ensure accuracy and consistency in data

collection, allowing for a precise analysis of narrative progression, framing and procedural and visual modes. Although the study focuses on a structured approach, player agency is inherently addressed through the examination of role of player in narrative progression, the procedural arguments and mechanics within the single-player context. These methodological decisions are purposefully aligned to achieve the research goals while ensuring clarity and depth in the analysis.

3.12 Research Validity

The present research used the four dimension criteria of Lincoln and Guba's (1986) to ensure the quality of the research work. First, the research followed the protocols for the close reading process. Secondly adherence to quality criteria was the focus of the research work. The first step in this regard was persistent and prolonged engagement for observation. Furthermore, note-taking and reflexivity were maintained throughout the observation. It added depth to understanding and helped in organising the data systematically. The use of a reflexive journal helped the researcher to avoid bias in data collection and interpretation. Furthermore, peer debriefing was also employed to get independent reviews to avoid biases and retain objectivity in research. The data recordings and preliminary findings were shared with colleagues to get feedback on research procedure.

3.13 Data Analysis Procedure

This study is using a qualitative analysis to investigate narrative progression and the role of player agency, the process of framing (micro through text and via game rules, aesthetics, storyline and character), and visual and procedural modes of the selected games. The study will use close reading and text analysis to address the research questions. Following steps were taken for data collection.

Step 1: Each title was played completely.

Step 2: The video recordings of the gameplay of COD: WWII and GTA-V were made on an in-built recording feature of PS4. While the recording of COD: BOII was made on a recording system. made on an

Step 3: Systematic entries were made in a research journal during and after the gameplay.

Step 4: The accuracy of entries was checked through playing the gameplay recordings.

Step 5: Transcript files for each game were created using the game recordings. The accuracy of transcript files was ensured through watching and matching the transcript files multiple times.

Step 6: The data collection involved extensive note taking and watching video recordings.

Step 7: The research procedure also involved peer debriefing, discussing, and sharing research entries to ensure research validity.

After data collection, the transcribed files, journal entries and video recordings were used to analyse the data using the analytical framework. The data was analysed in three stages to address the research questions which were set for this thesis. The first stage involved the analysis of narrative poetics and the role of player agency in narrative progression for which transcript files and journal entries were used for analysis. For the second stage of visual and procedural analysis, video recordings and notes were used for analysis. The last stage required a detailed analysis of transcript files to make lists of words, phrases and sentences to identify frames and the functions of frames. Furthermore, the last stage also made use of video recordings and notes to analyse the process of framing through game mechanics, the look and feel of the game, storyline and characters.

3.14 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter describes the nature of the present study. It also includes the overview of research methodology, the theoretical framework of this body of research and the details of the analytical framework which was adapted for the multimodal genre analysis of digital games. This chapter also includes data description and data analysis procedure. Furthermore, the chapter also includes a section on how the research validity is ensured by using four dimension criteria of Lincoln and Guba's (1986).

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

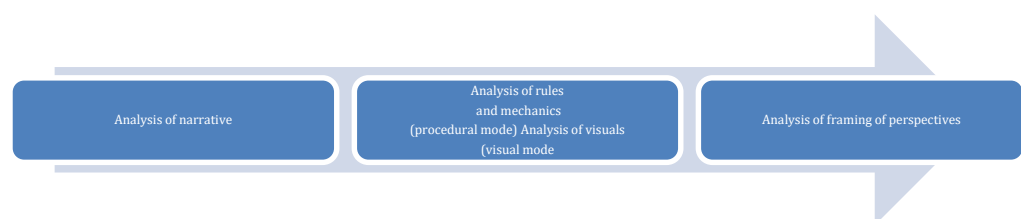
This chapter deals with the analysis of data of the three selected titles. The data analysis begins with an overview of the selected title followed by the analysis of each title using the functional model adopted by the researcher to achieve the research objectives of the study. The conceptual framework of this work is based on Clearwater's perspective of genre and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) views of multimodality and thus requires a multi-method analytical framework. Owing to the lack of analytical framework which can address the generic dimension as outlined by Clearwater which is inclusive of narrative, rules, mechanics, visuals and framing, the study has adapted an analytical framework.

4.1 Reflection

The data analysis is conducted in accordance with the conceptual framework, which informs the overall structure and methodology of the present study. The analytical framework specifically emphasizes the examination of narrative, rules and mechanics, visuals, and framing providing a systematic approach to the genre analysis of games. This analytical model is based on methodological understanding of Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2011) for analysis of narrative, Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020) for rules and mechanics (procedural mode) , Barthes (1977) for Visuals (Visual Mode) and Entman (2018) and Nygren et al. (2022) for the process of framing. The model for this study fulfils the research objectives as well as provides a comprehensive genre based analytical approach to digital games.

Figure 3

Organization of Data Analysis



Considering the conceptualized analytical framework, which requires the analysis of narrative, analysis of rules, mechanics, and visuals, and analysis of framing of perspective, the data analysis is divided into three distinct parts to align with these dimensions. The figure 3 illustrates the organization of the data analysis

Based on the analytical framework, the data analysis is conducted in three parts. The first part includes the analysis of narrative using Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) narrative analytical framework. This framework encompasses narrative arcs and their progressions, role of player agency and narrative progression, characters, storyworld, and narrativized interface. The study is limited to the analysis of these narrative mechanics only. The second part of data analysis includes analysis of rules, mechanics of games and visuals whereas the third part is limited to the analysis of process of framing only.

4.2 Overview of Call of Duty: World War II

The digital game Call of Duty: World War II is a first-person shooter game and first in the Call of Duty Series to be based on World War II. This title is based on the events of World War II and is set in Europe and focuses on 12 campaign missions from 1944 to 1945. The title is about the events in the battle of a squad in the First Infantry Division on the Western Front.

4.2.1 Analysis of Narrative

This section represents the first step of the analytical framework: the analysis of narrative. Here, the focus is on examining how the narrative is structured in this interactive digital medium. In this regard, the narrative analysis includes analysis of narrative mechanics which include arcs, characters, storyworld, emotions and role of player agency in narrative progression and narrativized interface.

4.2.2 Narrative Arc in Call of Duty: World War II

The first element in this narrative analysis is narrative arc. The narrative of the selected title is built around the Second World War. This first-person shooter game is about the events of this global conflict which took place in 1939 and lasted till 1945. This war was fought between two opposing military alliances: the Axis and the Allies. The Allies included the United States of America, the United Kingdom, China and the Soviet Union whereas the Axis included Germany, Italy and Japan. The game is set in

the European theatre, and it deals with the events of Operation Overlord, an allied operation which was a successful attack on Western Europe (German-Occupied) during World War II. The Operation Overlord was a code name for the Battle of Normandy.

The narrative structure and narrative progression of the selected title is seen in terms of narrative arc: meta-narrative, subsidiary arcs and the micronarrative. Another important consideration is the role of players in the narrative progression.

The narrative of the selected title is constructed through cutscenes and the game play. However, this narrative is distributed over various levels of arcs: meta, subsidiary and micronarrative arcs and is developed as the player progresses within the game. According to Bizzocchi the meta-arc relates to the overall narrative which covers the entire game. The meta-arc of the selected title covers the narrative distribution at the scale of missions. The focus of the meta-arc is the American soldiers' heroic combats during the Second World War. The events in this meta-arc span over the time of June 1944 to April 1945. The grand or meta-arc shows adherence to a setup-complication-development-resolution structure. The game involves the actions of the player and non-playable characters (NPCs) in heroic combats to overcome the conflicts within the game. The narrative of the game introduces the German invasion as the conflict while Daniels and his team is introduced as the hero and his accompanying team who resolves the conflict or the war. There are a number of events which contribute to the narrative construction of the meta-arc. This includes the protagonist and his squad mates battling through the vast Normandy beaches of France and retaking the town of Marigny, liberating Paris from German captivity. After re-taking the invaded territories of American Allies, the narrative includes the invasion of the German city of Aachen, marching into the thick forest of Ardennes in Belgium, taking hold of cities of Remagen and Berga Germany. The protagonist travelling on the vast stretches of Europe to Homeland Texas with his squad mates transforms and conquers his own fears along with defeating the Nazi Germany. The narrative establishes a logical sequence of the events and their interconnectedness in the main story of the selected title.

The protagonist and his squad mates dominate the narrative of the meta-arc. Within the meta-arc, the subsidiary arcs in COD: WWII spans over 12 missions/chapters. The narrative in each subsidiary arc manifests a different story, however, these stories are interlinked and logically connected. For instance, the mission D-Day is a subsidiary arc where the First Infantry Division advances to take back the

control of Allied territory from the German forces. The narrative of this part revolves around the heroic efforts to take Normandy beach from the German forces. It involves a series of combats between the two opposing forces. The player must engage in deadly fights which includes killing a lot of German soldiers. The story within this subsidiary arc is revealed through the cutscenes as well as the gameplay. The gameplay is directed through the main objective of the game as well as a series of updated objectives within the game.

These subsidiary arcs have shown varying potential to show the setup-complication-development-resolution structure. For instance, the first subsidiary arc adheres to the above-mentioned structure. With the onset of the second world war, the first infantry division marches to the Normandy beaches and establishes their control after a forceful fight. However, some subsidiary arcs show a different pattern of narrative structure. For example, the second subsidiary arc, Operation Cobra does not end with the resolution of the conflict. The liberation of Marigny is extended to the next subsidiary arc of Stronghold. However, there are only two subsidiary arcs which show such continuation and lack the above-mentioned structure while the other arcs display the similar structure of setup-complication-development-resolution.

Though the entire narrative is the heroic adventures of American soldiers, each arc is meant to manifest the victory of the protagonist and his team. However, the loss of a close squad mate often dominates despite the victory in the mission, for instance Hill 493 ends in completing the mission successfully but losing Sg. Turner, an NPC who has influenced the protagonist. Though his death is tragic, yet it imparts more resilience to the protagonist and his team.

The narrative in each subsidiary arc is connected to the other subsidiary arcs in a logical manner. Each subsidiary arc can progress after the completion of the previous arcs in the case of the selected title. These subsidiary arcs are connected to each other and to the meta-narrative of the game through the series of events. There is a vivid network established between the subsidiary arcs and grand narrative of the selected title. The sequence of these arcs is fixed and cannot be altered.

Furthermore, this network is extended to the micronarrative arcs of varying scale. The relationship between these arcs is maintained through the characters and their actions and completion of the objectives or the resolution of conflicts of secondary

nature. However, it is important to note that these secondary conflicts or objectives serve as a backbone to the resolution of the major conflicts within the subsidiary arcs.

The first subsidiary arc unfolds the narrative of the D-day mission which takes place in Omaha Beach where the hero (player) and his squad mate (First infantry division) establish control in German-occupied territory in Normandy, France. This invasion was part of the efforts aimed to liberate Western Europe from the Axis' control and ultimately defeat Germany in the war. The first subsidiary arc displays a series of micronarrative segments in which actions take place to achieve the secondary objectives in the game. It is through the successful completion of the secondary objectives in the game that the narrative of these smaller arcs is developed.

It is through the series of actions that are performed by the player and the NPCs that these primary objectives are achieved. These objectives involve careful and engaging participation by the player. Through the completion of these primary objectives, the narrative of the game is developed. It is important to note that within the subsidiary narrative, the presence of smaller units of narrative is revealed. For instance, during a mission, the player is given the task to destroy the sea wall. The action required for the secondary objective becomes an instance of a smaller narrative where the character/player experiences a conflict. For example, during the same mission the updated objective requires to destroy the wire which the enemies had built to stop the American soldiers. The action of the player at this part of the narrative can be viewed as a set of following actions:

- Running while taking cover
- Using the banger as instructed by the squad leader
- Taking help from Zussman (NPC) to fix the banger
- Aim and fire

The above-mentioned actions constitute an occurrence of a small narrative which has a setup-complication-development-resolution structure. This micronarrative involves enactment through many characters: Daniels, Zussman, Pierson and many other soldiers of both sides. The voice over of Pierson reminds the hero to engage in combat and destroy the wire. Daniels is baffled by the sheer number of deaths and mutilated dead bodies around. The Axis forces are using the gunners and bombs to stop them. Daniels stumbles and Zussman helps him to fix the banger. Daniels accomplishes

the task and game mechanics proceeds him to the next objective of Ascend the bluffs. Though seemingly a small action, it provides the smallest narrative unit which has the structure of arc in addition to its contribution to the story and action which is part of the narrative of the subsidiary arc.

4.2.3 Storyworld of Call of Duty: World War II

According to Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) another important feature of narrative is storyworld. The player comes across the storyworld in filmic cutscenes and the gameplay. The storyworld of the selected title is inhabited by soldiers taking part in the second world war. It details the historic war fought between the Allied and Axis forces. As the game includes the mission of Operation Overload and events of Battle of Normandy, the storyworld of the game is rich with details of war struck areas.

The game begins with the D-Day speech by President Roosevelt which clearly pronounces Germans and Axis oppression as the reason to summon the courage of the soldiers. The storyworld of the game at this crucial moment matches the speech including details of the German invasion through marching soldiers, rolling of tanks with German flags and plane strikes. It provides war-torn landscape, battlegrounds filled with torn bodies of wounded soldiers and limbs contorted in unnatural angles. It is not only using voice over which narrates the war, casualties and loss of assets but these details are also infused in the physical environment of the storyworld.

The physical landscape including trenches, bunkers and natural covers are part of the storyworld of the game. The data shows that there is balance between the physical and the auditory landscape. The deafening gunfire, explosions, and aircraft noise permeate the air during the game play as well as cut scenes. This binary of landscapes makes the experience of the player more immersive and takes part in the progress of the narrative of the game.

4.2.4 Characters

The next element of narrative mechanics include character, both playable and non-playable character. The selected title has a rich diversity of characters (PC and NPCs) inhabiting the game world. The table 4 provides details of the roles and abilities of NPCs. The main characters are Red Daniels, Turner, Zussman and Pierson. Ronald. Red Daniels, the protagonist of this game, is a Private First Class of the First Infantry

Division taking part in Normandy landing along with his squad mates. There is a significant relationship between these characters. Each of them takes part directly or indirectly in game play as well as in the storyline. These characters have roles and duties apart from their interaction with the main playable characters which is integral in the narrative progression within the game. Their roles and abilities are listed in table 4 given below.

Table 4

Roles and Abilities of NPCs

NPCs	Roles	Squad abilities
Pierson	technical sergeant	Spotting
Turner	team leader	ammunition bag
Col Davis	team leader	
Zussman	friend and squad mate	first aid kit
Aiello	squad mate/technician	mortar strike
Paul Thomas Daniels	Brother	
Hazel Daniels	wife	
Camille Rousseau	French resistance fighter	Spotting
Stiles	Squamate	grenade resupply
Howard	Squamate	machine gunner

The narrative of the game unfolds the success story of Private Daniels as a soldier hero; however, he is not alone in this story. His squad leaders, squad mates and friends within the game are also playing significant roles in the narrative economy of the game.

Each of these NPCs have a significant role in the narrative of the selected title as illustrated in table 4. Their characters have individual traits and depth. With the progression of the storyline, these characters grow as a real human, often fighting inner battles while fighting in war grounds. For instance, the NPC Pierson, a senior officer in the team, after losing his men undergoes a change, he is shown cold, distant and strict, often disliked by the teammates. Pierson, a loyal leader to his teammates is aware of his duties as he talks to Turner in the mission Hill 493: "You think I wanted any of this? We're cogs in a machine, Joseph. We start going our own way, the whole thing breaks down. When did you forget that?"

Though an embittered tough leader, his character's depth pushes him to save Daniels' life in the mission Stronghold immediately after reprimanding him for his disobedience. Similarly, he takes time in allowing wounded Zussman to return to the

battlefield in Operation Cobra, as he does not want him to face the same fate as his men did in Kasserine. Pierson emerges as a dedicated soldier who shows strong commitment to his duties and focuses on defeating Germans with a strategic mindset.

In this selected title, the characters of NPCs are well built and shown in relation to others. For instance, Pierson serves under Lt. Turner, shows respect to his seniors, though demoted by Turner after the loss of his men in a war mission at Kasserine. Lt. Turner, another important NPC, acts as a father to his team, cares about the lives of men working under him and even civilians of opposing Germans and saves their lives. This becomes evident in the mission Hill 493 when he finds Pierson orders to put his men in danger: "To hell with our goddamn orders! These are men! Our men! When did you forget?"

Turner saves German civilians and evacuates them in the mission Collateral damage while risking his own life. His influence on the protagonist is evident. Daniels grows as Turner's guidance who recognizes his potential and gives him responsibilities. While leading his squad in the mission Death Factory, Turner is badly wounded and shot in the rib by a German commander, tells his squad men to leave him while he provides them cover. Before his death, his last word to Pierson reflects his commitment and loyalty to missions: "No sacrifice is too great. Go."

The NPC Aiello and Stile are squamates to the protagonists and have roles in gameplay. Their conversations during the gameplay and cutscenes are reflective of their personalities. For instance, technician Aiello is a Kasserine veteran, and is shown to be racially biased, especially towards Howard, a radio operator from African American regiment. Similarly, he mocks Zussman's Jewish heritage and says, "Ma said never shake hands with a Jew". However, like other characters, he transforms and apologises to Howard for his biased behaviour. The character of Aiello, during the mission of Operation Cobra show that during war, crimes and human right violation becomes inevitable. When Stiles reminds him that they are civilians, Aiello reminds him that they are "fighting Nazi here".

Stiles is another NPC in the COD: WWII and a supplier of grenades in the missions. His love for photography is evident in the narrative. He carries his camera and captures German retreating soldiers on the mission Stronghold and the labour camps in Berga. He is referred to as "College" due to his college degree. Daniels makes

fun of him during the gameplay of the D-Day mission and remarks: “Stiles says he's gonna be a photographer for Life magazine”. Later Stiles accompanies Daniels and the platoon in rescuing Zussman from the German labour camp. His helmet bears a quote from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: “Hell is empty, and all the devils are here”. These supporting NPCs in this title are reflective of how individual traits are sustained during adversaries. It also shows the potential of game narrative to enrich the supporting NPCs with depth and individual traits.

The character of Hazel Daniels and Paul Thomas Daniels are significant for the transformation of the character of the protagonist in the narrative of the game. Since the beginning of the game these two NPCs occupy the imagination of Daniels. The protagonist is reminded of his beloved wife Hazel and his elder brother Paul. Her photograph is held by him many times. There is exchange of letters between the two. During the invasion of Normandy Beaches, he holds her photograph and writes a diary about her. In the mission Ambush Daniels dreams of an honourable discharge from the war and finds solace in the love of his life who says: "From this moment on, I am not letting you outta my sight. You understand me, Corporal?"

Hazel also becomes one of the motivational forces for Daniels to come back as a hero to the homeland. Her character provides emotional depth to the protagonist and aligns the portrayal of his character as a war time hero who has left the love of his life for the sake of duty to the country. The interaction, with the NPC Hazel, is significant in the narrative. As in her case, the interaction between playable characters is restricted mainly to the imagination of the protagonist.

However, this interaction is meaningful for the character, it gives him strength to accomplish his role in the war and stay committed to his goals. Another NPC, Paul Thomas Daniels, is also an integral component of the narrative of the title. Paul is Daniels’ elder brother who exists in the protagonist’s memories. Though very few, yet his conversation is meaningful for Daniels. During Daniels’ childhood hunt for wolves with his brother Paul, he fails to gather his courage to pull the trigger and save his elder brother from the attacking wolf. During their transition to Navy ships, Daniels writes a letter to Paul telling him about the war and the missions assigned to them: “Paul, it's June 6th 1944. Wish you could see this brother. We're invadin' some frog beach I'm not supposed to even know the name of. All so we can take back France from the Nazis. But the waitin's been half the battle”.

Unlike other NPCs, Paul is not part of the gameplay in terms of supply. However, his remembrance in many missions connects him to the narrative of the game. His role is to keep Daniels moving forward, both in war and life. During the mission Stronghold, Paul reminds his baby brother and says: “It's only natural to be scared”, teaching him lessons of life and urging him to move forward to live by their mutual dreams. He has strong impression on Daniels who wants to live up to the dreams of his brother as he shares with Zussman: “From that day on, I swore that I'd never let Paul down again. But now, it's not just him I gotta live up to. It's Pierson”.

During the mission of Death factory when Daniels lacks courage to move forward, Paul emerges in his imagination and reminds him of his strength: “I know you better 'an anyone, so I know you still got fight in ya. You can't give up. Not now, not ever”. The character of Paul gathers momentum when he reminds Daniels that he cannot quit and shows his faith in him and at the same time reminds him that both Hazel and the child (to be born) needs him. Again, in the mission Ambush Paul makes him realise the bigger goals which he has to achieve in his life by serving the country and advises Daniels:” It's the best feelin' in the world, ain't it? Facin' down hell and comin' home a bona fide hero”.

The relationship between Daniels and Zussman (NPC) has significance in the narrative development. On the character's hierarchy, Zussman stands close to the protagonist. Their relationship as friends and as squad mates evolve as the narrative progresses. Their conversations are significant and reflective of their characters as friends and comrades bonded together for national and personal goals. The NPC Zussman stays close to the protagonist (player) and is assigned the duty of medical kit supervision. His role is emphatic for both the player/protagonist to survive and to advance the narrative. He is shown fighting along Daniels throughout game missions. Daniels initial introductory remarks about Zussman are reflective:” I hated Zussman the first week a' basic, but now he's proolly the best friend I have in the world. He's always lookin' for trouble. If there wasn't already a war on he'd be off tryin' to start one”.

The character of Zussman is developed as an anecdote to Daniels, he accompanies him in almost more than half of the war missions. Daniels shares Hazel's memories with him, talks about Paul, discusses Pierson and Turner and shares views on war and assigned duties. When Zussman is captured as a war prisoner in German

camp in the mission Ambush, Daniels stares at his St. Michaels pendant and is mindful of how they vowed to be together till the end. Despite the disagreement with team leader, he is rescued by Daniels who risked his own life and forgoes his discharge for his rescue and fulfils the promise to be with each other. The figure 4 provides a glimpse of the strong bond between the two characters.

Figure 4

Brotherhood Among Teammates



His role is central to the gameplay and storyline. Rather the entire narrative of the game is built through his character. Private Daniels, an unskilled young man, voluntarily joins the army to honour his dead brother and to fight for his country. His decision to join the army shows his patriotism, as knowingly he endangers his life to serve his country in the second world war. There are unwavering brave moments on Omaha Beach of the D-Day invasion when he displays his bravery and puts his life in danger so that Allied forces can advance further. His bravery is coupled with patriotism, and he aspires for “couple medals” on his chest when he reaches home by Christmas. The feeling that he would bring honour to his brother and his country keeps him going.

The narrative of the selected title is weaved through these characters. Living up to one’s ideals and goals become very evident in the case of Daniels as well as other soldiers like Zussman, Aiello and their commanding head Pierson. Daniels and his fellow teammates bravely fought in each mission for the love of their country as well as a thorough commitment to the cause of Allied Forces. Their collective actions are shown to be driven by the sense of righteousness of the cause of war.

The character of Private Daniels and his action shows that the soldier in Allied forces adheres to the Allied ideals: fighting against tyranny and standing against

fascism. And for this noble cause are ready to sacrifice their lives. Turner willingly puts himself in danger and dies and urges the squad mates to leave him. It is not only Private Daniels who puts his nationalistic values and principles before his family, but the rest of the squad has shown moments of bravery and resilience.

The character like Colonel Davies constantly fuels and instils more courage to the soldiers and reminds them that “the fate of Paris is in your hand”. Peirson, never giving them easy tasks always wants more from them. During the mission Stronghold, he wants his platoon to show what they are really made of.

4.2.5 Emotions

Analysis of emotions is another significant aspect of the narrative analysis. According to the narrative analytical framework, narrative emotions depend on visual design of the character, behaviour of the character, design of story world and environment, music, dialogue and plot of the story in the game.

The game relives the experience of war through the First Infantry Division squad. The game consists of various intense moments: declaration of war, combat, decision making, witnessing death, war crimes, human right violations, loss of friends and family and loss of teammates.

The first selected title has a diverse spectrum of characters: the protagonist and his family, friends and squad mates, squad leader and the antagonist (Axis). It is important to note that only the protagonist is playable. However, the other characters have shown the potential to display their emotions implicitly and explicitly. The character depth is manifested through their behaviour in the story and the gameplay.

The narrative of the game shows that the characters, both major and supporting, are shown with depth. The inner conflicts and the personal doubts are felt by them at various stages in the game. For instance, Pierson indulges in self-reproach for the death of his teammates throughout the game. Similarly, Daniels has been shown in constant mental battle with thoughts of not being able to save his brother Paul in his childhood. This work was a driving force for his actions in war missions, he felt obliged to serve for his country and for the love of his brother. However, he overcomes his fears and remorse when he saves his friend Zussman and comes home after heroic actions at the battleground.

The data shows that the speeches have been used at the pivotal moments of game narrative stirring the emotions of the soldiers and instilling a sense of duty in them. This serves two purposes here: showing the emotional state of the players and shaping the emotional landscape of the narrative of the game. The game begins with President Roosevelt's famous D-day prayer which seeks to inspire and cultivate bravery among the soldiers. The speech strengthened the soldiers emotionally and morally. It also set the stage for an emotionally engaging and immersive gameplay. Similarly, Col Davis speeches in the game serve to motivate the soldiers to cope with the challenging situation. On the D-Day mission Col Davis prepares his squad for the noble cause of the war emphasising the higher purpose of the war: "We are all that separates the world from darkness. This so much more than a chance to be heroes in our own lifetimes. If we prevail... our triumphs will be etched into the hearts and minds of a grateful world for untold generations. I'm talking about glory gentlemen. True glory".

Through these characters and their portrayal of their emotional attachment to the cause of war, nationalism and notion of righteousness, the game narrative builds around the emotional experiences of these characters. The soldiers (playable characters) overcome challenging missions, achieved their targets and sacrificed for the cause of freedom from oppression are applauded by their leaders. Colonel Davies says: "When history called, you answered. From all walks of life, you came to defend peace and freedom".

Using flashbacks as a visual, is an also effective way to render emotional touch to the various events in the course of games. Daniels is reminded of his dead brother Paul, who served as an epitome of sibling love and also instilled in him heroism. Daniels was saved by his brother while he was attacked by a wolf. Regrettably young Daniels could not gather courage to fire the same wolf to save his elder brother. This flashback was used to gear up his courage during many missions when he faced challenging situations.

As illustrated above the characters and their dialogues in the game provided an emotional landscape within the game. However, another significant role to enhance the emotive ability of the game was the use of realistic and detailed portrayal of characters (playable, non-playable), the soldiers, the Allied and the enemies. Their uniform, weapons and the entire era of World War II is realistically portrayed. The meticulously designed uniform and their depiction of wear and tear during war is reflective of

visually well craftsmanship as well as fulfilling the demand of the narrative. The game offers a realistic and captivating environment: the beaches of Omaha and Juno, the thick Ardennes Forest in the Battle of the Bulge, the destroyed buildings of Paris and Berlin. The use of sound and music during tense moments of battles amplifies the emotional impact of loss and victory. The heroic music used in various mission which involved teamwork fosters a sense of camaraderie and aligns with narrative focus.

4.2.6 Narrativized Interface

Narrativized interface is the phenomenon of embedding the narrative all over the game. It reinforces and maintains the narrative focus throughout the gameplay. The selected game relives the experience of the soldiers of the second world war. Call of Duty: World War II shows how the heroic combats of the Allied forces led to the defeat of the Axis while focusing on the First Infantry Division and its missions. The game consists of filmic cutscenes and gameplay. The use of cutscenes help understand the story, however the interface design of the game does not let discontinue the narrative flow during game play. The interface design embodies the narrative sensibilities of the game.

As mentioned earlier, the researcher is focusing on the look and the feel of the interface. The interface is the point of interaction between the player and the game. The interface elements serve to reinforce narrative themes, character information and storyworld details. According to the narrative analytical framework which is adapted for the present study, the look and the feel of the interface is maintained at two levels: Interface aesthetics and narrativized game metrics. The first level deals with the audio-visual story of the selected game experience, and the ways in which it can be used to express narrative information. The latter deals with narratively significant means in which the game interface provides significant information to the player about his performance as well as the performance of his squad mates, the weapons and the enemies

4.2.6.1 Interface Aesthetics

One of the salient techniques is to keep the look of interface integrated with the narrative of the game. The close reading of the game shows that the narrative texture is built in interface through audio and visual design of the interface. It is important to note here that the present research does not include the environmental storytelling of the

game through the visuals in the game. As it has been discussed earlier in the analysis of storyworld.

The data shows that there is a similarity between narrative focus of the game and interface design. Visually the interface shows the use of military themed icons as illustrated in figure 5. For instance, the use of grenade icons, helmet and rifle icons. Similarly, the narrative driven prompts as mission briefings, objectives and dialogue prompts during game play and perform many functions: guide the player, help progress the story and keep the player fully immersed in the game. This way it ensures active involvement of the player in the ludic actions. The look and the feel of the interface of the selected title retains the narrative sensibilities and provides narrative clues during the game play.

Figure 5

Narrativized Interface (Collateral Damage)



The figure 6 is a scene taken from the mission Collateral Damage, sixth campaign level when the player is engaged in the Battle of Aachen and rescuing civilians. The player is hit and wounded and is visually represented by blood splashes on the interface. The staining of HUD with blood not only provides an instant encountering of danger but also reflects the war narrative being incorporated through interface. The deteriorating health is indicated red health bar which shows the urgency

to regain health through medical kit. Here through narrativized interface in game play, the player is alarmed and stimulated to take appropriate actions.

As opposed to the previous figure 5, the figure 6 which is taken from the mission Stronghold shows the restoration of the player's health as indicated by a yellowish interface signifying the glow of healing after receiving a hit by an enemy soldier which is also made visible through a red hit marker which prompts health regeneration action.

Figure 6

Restoration of Health (Indicator in Interface)



The green health bar indicator is also reflective of the restoration of health of the player. These interface indicators serve as narrative clues for narrative progression and keep the player engaged in taking meaningful steps to restore his health and contribute to narrative continuity.

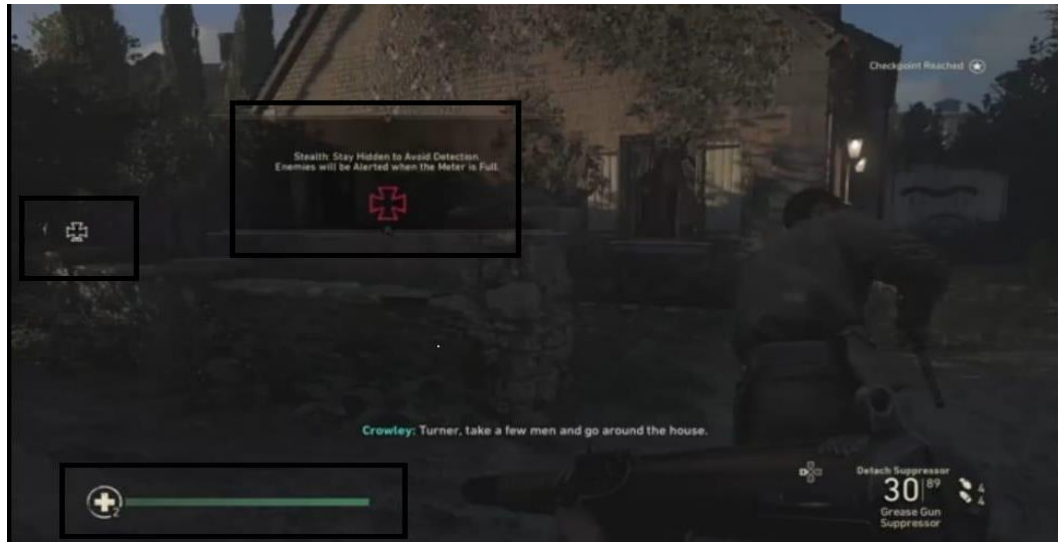
4.2.6.2 Narrativized Game Metrics

During the game play, the interactivity of the player rests heavily on the output (performance) of the game. The close reading of the game shows that the player is provided with the vital and necessary information of his health, weapon count and condition, objective indication markers and teammate indicators. These important indicators in the interface serve as a means to keep the action of the game intact, to aid in the decision making of the player and create a narrative urgency for the player as well as a source of immersion.

For instance, the figure 7 shows the health bar and two cue icons of the enemy point of view. During the fourth mission of S.O.E, this scene clearly states the health of hero, Daniels as he takes part in the assault on a German train, however, the two icons indicate the visibility of his action to the German soldiers.

Figure 7

Use of Health Bar and Cue Icons of Enemy Point of View



These game metrics allow the player to make decisions and stay connected with the story of the game. Through these game-metrics the narrative continuity is maintained as the player gets indication from the screen and can safeguard himself, as in this case. For instance, the figure 7 reflects the use of health bar and cue icons in assisting the player to take meaningful actions.

During the third campaign of Stronghold, the squad is engaged in a struggle to take back the town of Marigny, France by occupying a local church. The game, though played in the single player mode, requires the first-person shooter to be engaged in the attack and to defend himself in the course of capturing the church. The figure 8 is a scene taken during the mission Stronghold which shows that the player can swap his weapon M1A1 Carbine with the enemy weapon MP40 as well as the screen ensures the regeneration of his team-mate abilities. The player takes help from these cues, icons and images and consumes the information during game play. These interface design elements make the player an active part of the narrative construction. The teammate ability icon as shown in the figure 8 provides the information of abilities as well as the

status of their abilities which the player may use in his combat and construct the narrative accordingly.

Figure 8

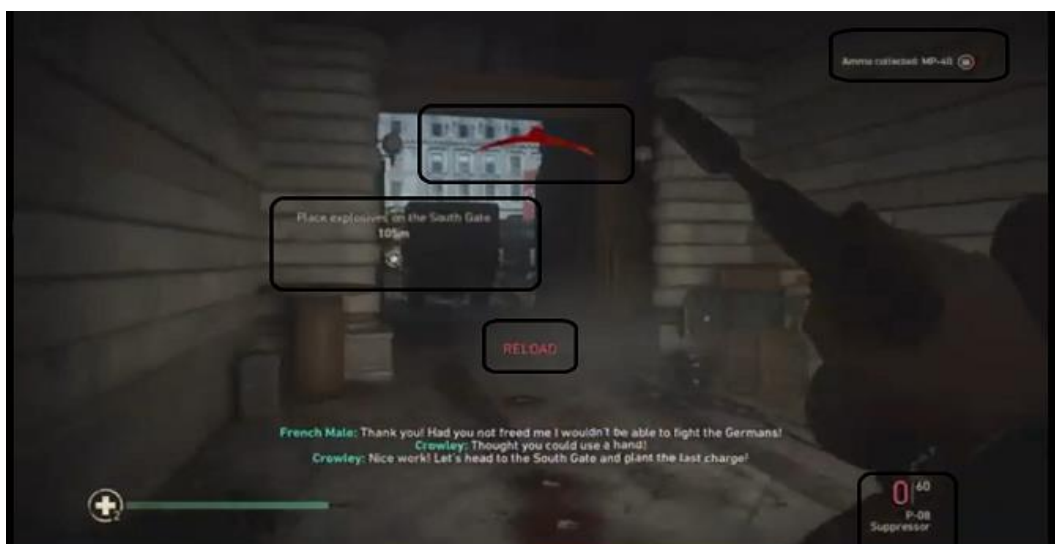
Use of Icons of Teammate Abilities



Similarly, the display of weapon details and status of player on user interface provide clues to the player to enrich his narrative experience and take meaningful course of action. The figure 9 shows the information on user interface which plays a significant role in making meaningful decisions.

Figure 9

Weapon Details and Status of Player



The figure 9 is a scene from Liberation of Paris and the interface provides various information pertaining to player's weapon detail at the top, followed by a red

icon showing that player status as hit by the enemy strike, prompting to place explosive at the South gate and indicating to reload the weapon to strike back the enemy while the last indicator points at the lack of weapon. The series of clues are small narrative cues or prompts to assist the player not only keep him involved in the tense moment of infiltration and engage in narrative building process. It also serves to resume the gameplay and avoid discontinuity of narrative progression. In the mission Liberation of Paris, the player (s) (Camille Rousseau and Crowley) infiltrate a German headquarters and encounter an enemy attack.

For instance, the interface icon of teammate ability and their facial image are in following order:

- Aeilo can provide mortar strike to launch a quick strike against the enemy.
- Pierson has the ability to mark/spot enemies with a glowing white outline.
- Zussman provides first aid kit during or after the fight

The game interface design allows the player to integrate and further the narrative of the game by taking help from these contextual clues.

Figure 10

Objective and Progress Indicator



The objective and progress indicator in the game guide the player for further actions. For instance, the figure 10 taken from the mission of Liberation of Paris provides objective indicator of reloading the weapon and serves as a contextual clue for

the required action in the game as well as a part of progression in the overall narrative of the game. These indicators direct the focus of the player to the critical moments in the story elements while ensuring the engagement of the player with the overarching narrative.

The objective and progress indicator also create tense emotional experience for the player, for instance, the use of objective indicators to disable bomb or helping a wounded teammate, amplifies the emotional experience of the player. These indicators add emotional depth to the narrative experience of the player. As the figure 10 reflects the use of objective and progress indicator to assist the player in making more informed decisions and contribute to play a pivotal role in narrative construction.

The analysis reveals that the interface elements, for instance, the health indicating icons and mission objectives notification are integral to maintaining narrative continuity and enhancing player immersion in COD: WWII. These interface design elements offer critical and urgent feedback which aligns gameplay with the emotional and narrative tone of the story. For example, visual cues health, such as health bars, heighten the sense of vulnerability and danger, reinforcing the stakes in combat-heavy narratives like Call of Duty: WWII. Furthermore, the mission objectives/notifications assist the player through the story, offering avid narrative direction and fostering emotional engagement, as seen in the case of the selected title, where evolving objectives reflect character motivations and personal stakes. These design elements of interface also create impact on pacing and emotional experience—such as the use of visual or auditory cues to signal tension or impending failure—by linking gameplay with narrative shifts. In this regard, these interface elements serve a not only a functional role but also actively shapes the player's emotional journey and deepens their connection to the game's unfolding story.

4.2.7 Player Agency and Narrative Progression

The notion of player agency in narrative is a significant consideration in investigating the narrative of selected game. Within the network of arcs, the player has certain control in approaching the narrative. The player/character has certain abilities to perform actions of varying degree. At all levels of narrative, the player agency contributes to the narrative progression. It is the player's ludic experience/progression which determines the narrative flow within the selected title.

The analysis shows that the meta-arc or the highest-level arc is the outcome of a player's progress within the game. The narrative flow is linked with the player's performance. The player takes multiple decisions to perform actions within the game. The player navigates in the world presented in the game. This world is built on the events of the Second World War. The player undergoes challenges and faces the consequences of his actions. The series of objectives set the course of action for the player. However, it is the player's involvement and responses which determines the narrative flow. The D-day mission presents several objectives which require the player to take necessary actions. For instance, the player is tasked to clear five bunkers to lead his team on the island. To clear the bunker, the player has the choice to approach the bunkers from the direction of his choice.

Similarly in the mission The Rhine, the player must assault the bridge. The game narrative cannot proceed if the player does not assault the bridge. The player has unlimited time at this point to navigate the area ahead of the bridge. The player can choose to approach the bridge from the two directions: approaching from the left by going straight or from the right by going up the hill and approaching the bridge. However, the player cannot avoid the event of assaulting the bridge as it is an important part of the story, and the player must play his part in the game as well as advance the narrative of the game.

The role of NPCs varies in determining the player agency in the game. During the same mission, the player has to secure the tower while his team waits for him to enter the tower. The player may take the time to assess the navigable world of the game. The NPCs/the squad mates are shown waiting for him. Their movement of entering in the tower or following him is dependent upon the player activity towards the tower. The selected title shows moments of narrative plot control over the player's choice. However, the player agency is controlled through intervention of NPCS at various points in the story. For instance, in the second last mission, The Rhine, the player has to rally with Pierson during their attack on German artillery. The player may navigate the available game space and go upstairs instead of rallying with Pierson; however, the player gets the calls from the NPC Pierson to hurry up and rally with him and complete the task.

The player agency is harnessed by the game mechanics which in turn completes the requirement of the narrative. For example, in the mission Death Factory the game

narrative contains moments of German aggression and war crimes. The player and his team find the dead bodies of hanged civilians and gallows. At one point the player must find his squad and join them. While finding his way through hills, the player can see the German soldiers interacting with the Allied soldiers. The Allied soldiers fall back and surrender, however, the German soldiers aim and take the shot. The player at this moment has limited contribution to change the situation. The game mechanics restrict his movement and thus he has minimum agency at this point. Similarly, during the mission Ambush, the player and his team must ambush the German transport. While going near the transport, the player may take the liberty to delay it for some time, however his movement is restricted if he strays for a long time and in the undesired directions. The player gets an in-game prompt to Return to the mission.

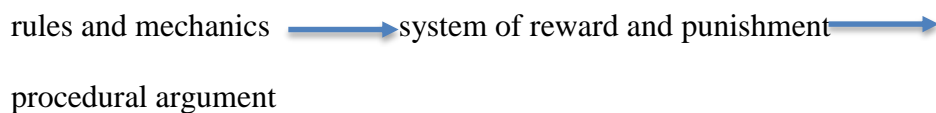
There is more freedom given to the player in the smaller narrative spaces of the micronarrative. These micronarrative generations are dependent on the player's agency/willingness. For example, on a mission to The Rhine, the player and his team have to secure the tower. While securing the tower, the player needs to clear the two floors. Here the player encounters many German soldiers shooting at him. The player kills them using the gun, however at the second floor the player has the choice to give them a chance to surrender the falling soldier or not give them the chance and kill them before they retreat. Apparently, these smaller narratives have no direct implication on the story within the game, however, they contribute to the meta-narrative present American soldiers as heroes and show non-aggression to the retreating enemy soldiers.

During the mission Liberation, the second playable character Rousseau has an important role in the narrative. The French resistance fighter must enter German headquarters. The subsidiary arc in this mission requires her to find Fischer and get the briefcase. While getting the paper checked, the player interacts with many soldiers and has the choice to respond differently. Furthermore, the player is allowed entry at certain points without the knowledge of the German soldiers. Using his choice the player enters a room and finds a woman/child held by the German soldier. The player intervenes and kills the German soldiers. This smaller unit within the narrative can be avoided if the player does not enter the room. However, the player in this enactment contributes to the overall meta-narrative of the game where the Allied soldiers are taken as epitome of sacrifice and serve humanity and save as many lives as they can and even risk their life.

There were many instances in various missions where the player can help the wounded soldier to a safer place or can proceed without helping them. However, the narrative of the game is not affected by these smaller interactions within the broader narrative. The game mechanics provide the ability to regain/restore the health of the player through collecting and using the medical kits which are scattered in the battlefield. The player has the choice to collect them from any point while navigating in the game world.

4.3 Analysis of Rules, Mechanics and Visuals

This part of analysis involves analysis of rules and mechanics of the selected game. It reveals how the procedural mode operates in games, encompassing the rules, systems, and parameters that structure gameplay and shape the player's interaction with the game world. The rules, mechanics and parameters of game establish a system of reward and punishment for the player. It is through rules and mechanics that the procedural mode of the selected game is identified.



The overall narrative of the game is about the American and Allied soldiers' heroic endeavours in the Second World War. The initial analysis establishes that the selected title is capable of communication through its system of rules, mechanics and parameters. The initial objective of the first mission D-Day requires the player-character Daniel to follow the instructions of his squad leader Turner to reach the seawall once their boat hits the beach. Amidst the heavy bombing and gunfire and the loss of his fellow soldiers, it becomes difficult and risky for the protagonist to reach the destination point. Any effort to move away is restricted by the game mechanics and the player cannot change the course of action and gets constant reminders through voiceovers to reach the seawall. Though the game mechanics allow a limited navigation in the game space, however, the heavy bombing continues, and the reminders restrict the player to proceed to complete the objectives of the game. The procedural mode of the selected establishes itself as a mode capable of communication through this system of restriction and limitation. The parameters of the selected title reaffirm the need to indulge in a series of actions risking one's life and obeying the orders.

The analysis of rules and mechanics of the game also reveal that the procedural mode is aligned with the focus of the overall narrative of the game. The game parameters instil heroic actions and work in sustaining these characteristics. During the mission Collateral Damage after the liberation of Paris, the First Infantry Division reaches the German city of Aachen, the first city in Germany attacked by the Allies. The team gets the objective of clearing the city by destroying the German tanks as well as soldiers. One of the objectives of the mission is to clear the buildings. Here it is noticed, like many other instances in the game play, that the player is directed to continue working for the set objectives. The interplay of game mechanics has explicit narrative implications. This enforcement of behaviour via game constraints reflects the key narrative focus of heroism and bravery. The player is bound to indulge in heroic tasks of killing several enemies and destroying their assets. For example, during the first half of the mission, the targets are the tanks and if the player does not hit the target he is limited to move around only. Ultimately, he has to meet his objectives and destroy the tank. The game parameters reiterate and strengthen the narrative focus here and requires player to engage in missions as designed. Not only these constraints ensure narrative continuity as well as contribute to player immersion.

The game parameters structure a nobler frame for the Allied soldiers. They risk their life for humanitarian causes. This noble and humane aspect of the soldiers surface again in the mission Collateral Damage when the game set rescuing German civilians from the basement of the building as the new objective for Daniels and his team. This is followed by a cutscene which shows how they find two German sisters along with other civilians. First the game engages the team in arguing about the need to rescue them. As Pierson objects to it: “We don't have time to be babysittin' civilians”. However, the virtue of saving innocent lives wins and Daniels is allowed to rescue the civilians and shift them to a German truck for their safe passage in the city. It is important to note that during the rescue mission of the youngest girl, the player has limited sets of choice. If the player does not head in the direction to find the girl, the game mechanics do not provide him any activity except to roam around or get killed and restart from the last checkpoint in the game. The rules and parameters of the game compel the protagonist to stick to the rescue of the girl and display the nobility of the cause through his actions. The voice overs of Allied soldiers within the game directs the player to find Anna if the player moves in other directions: “Go find the girl Daniels.

Or Go to the basement and find her”. These voice overs and the parameters of the game restrict the player’s actions, and the scripted heroism or structured heroism is accomplished through the interplay of game mechanics and rules.

Similarly, during the mission Hill 493, Daniels and his team get the task of clearing the hills and destroying the gunners of the German artillery. It is one of the very challenging missions of the selected titles. The protagonist and his team risk their life to achieve the target and display the act of bravery which makes them great and resilient soldiers. However, during their daunting actions the team gets the objective of destroying the guns. If the player delays to accomplish the objective and explores the space or hill in this case, he gets voiceovers of squad mates telling him: “Take those gunners and clear the hill or Take out that gun”. The rules and parameters of the game do not let the player change the course of actions rather compels him to complete the given tasks. The rules and parameters established in the game generate actions in the narrative which imparts bravery to the characters.

While defending Daniels in the same mission, Turner is shot by a German commander. Daniels manages to shoot the commander with Turner’s holstered Enfield No. 2 and drags the wounded Turner towards the trenches. However, Turner orders them to leave him behind as the German soldiers were outnumbered. Daniels is not willing to retreat and leave Turner, but he is dragged away by Zussman and Pierson. The player (Daniels) has no choice, the parameter of the does not let him exercise his choice. During this conflicting moment, there is a transition from intense gameplay to a cutscene as a part of game design and pushes the narrative to a tragic end for Turner who sacrifices his life in the war.

Liberation, the fifth mission in COD: WWII is about a stealth mission in which the second playable character, Rousseau, a French resistance fighter, is tasked to infiltrate a German headquarters. The data at this point indicate that the rules and parameters of the game set a course of action for the player which is engaging as well as restrictive. For instance, the undercover Allied soldier Rousseau has to get the paper checked or get the clearance from the German soldiers on entry into the German headquarter as the first objective of the game. The player can see many soldiers in the hallway. If the player engages in any activity of exploring the hallway, he is restricted through in-game mission focus prompts and a timer is displayed to stay with the mission objective of paper clearance. If the player does not comply with the prompt, the game

mechanics restrict his action with an in-game status notification saying: You left the mission, and the player must resume the play from the last checkpoint in the game. Here the mechanics of the game keeps the player focussed as well as controlled. It is noticed at this point that if the player adheres to the mission objective, he can progress within the game and can continue the course of play. However, in case of non-compliance with the objectives, the player undergoes mission failure consequently.

The game parameters structures strong brotherhood and readiness for sacrifice in the American soldier and specifically the protagonist Daniel. The NPC Zussman is a close friend and squad mate of Daniels and is held in German captivity. Daniels refuses to accept discharge papers and continues to find Zussman in German camps. After clearing the last bridge during mission The Rhine, the team is ordered to wait for orders from Col. Davis for further authorization. Despite the instructions, Pierson tells Daniels to search for Zussman. The protagonist is guided to a forest for possible hideout of German soldiers and Zussman. The game mechanics require the player to find Daniels and display continuous prompts of Find Zussman as indicated in the picture below. The prompts also include the distance to reach Zussman. At this point the player can navigate within the woods, if it does not follow the prompts. However, there is no meaningful action engagement for the player. The procedurality which is structured through following in-game prompts and limitation of actions via game mechanics urges the player to find his friend amidst thick forest and possible attack from the enemy. This procedurality fosters/structures high ideals of bravery and brotherhood for the protagonist.

Turning to the analysis of visual, the sample are the still images of the hero of the selected title. The still images of the hero are taken from the two instances: his first and the last appearance in the selected title. The first appearance of the hero is depicted in figure 11. The visual analysis of these images is carried out at the two levels of signification. First the signified is identified, which in this case are eight soldiers. At the first level of signification, the obvious is determined. At the denotative level of signification, the selected image shows eight soldiers which are recognized as Daniels, Zussman, Pierson and Turner. The other four are not the recognized characters of the selected game. It is important to mention that the focus of this analysis is the image of the hero, who is Daniel. However, the other details are also important especially for the discussion of the second level of signification.

For the first level of signification, the soldiers are wearing olive field jackets and shirts with open colour. The soldiers are also wearing either netted or metal helmets. The shoulder strap of their backpacks is also visible. The figure 11 is a scene depicting the first appearance of the hero in the first selected title.

Figure 11

First Appearance of Hero in COD: WWII



Only the protagonist has a grenade attached to his shoulder strap. At the second level of signification, the image is interpreted for its connotative meaning. For this purpose, the denotative sign is taken as signifier, and additional signification will be noted.

The image shows eight soldiers clad in their tropical uniform standing in a specific manner as shown in figure 11. The image is the first appearance of the hero and soldiers are listening to the speech of Col Davis before their invasion to Normandy beaches. Daniels along with his squad mates is shown ready and prepared for invasion.

There is a sense of duty and clarity of purpose reflected from Daniels' face. The uniform is dusty, yet the image shows determination of soldiers as their preparedness is reflected from their alert standing position. Daniels is holding the front strap of his backpack.

The second image shows two characters, a male army officer hugging a female. At the first level of signification, this image shows the man, the protagonist Daniels hugging a female in his arms while his eyes are closed. Only the posterior of the female

character is visible in the image. Hazel is Daniels' wife wearing white and blue checked frock. Daniels is holding Hazel in his arms after his return from the second world war. Daniel is clad in a US army uniform. At the second level of signification, the image shows the return of the protagonist to his family after the war. This image is the last appearance of the hero in the selected title. Daniels is reunited with his wife Hazel after the second world war is over.

Daniels is embracing his wife; his arms are wrapped around her conveying a deep sense of relief after the exhaustion. The face of the female is obscured, as she nestles herself into arms. The two levels of signification are given in the table 5 as under:

Table 5

Two Levels of Signification

Signified	Signifier		
	First order of signification/denotation	Second order of signification/ connotation	
1. Eight soldiers/characters standing close together	1. Eight soldiers wearing uniform of Allied forces of WWII. 2. The three identifiable soldiers are Daniels, Zussman, Pierson and Turner 3. The first soldier on the right side of image is Daniels, the second soldier on the left side is Zussman, the third soldier behind Daniels is Pierson and the fourth recognizable soldier is Turner	1. Readiness to take part in war as a team 2. They are listening and are attentive 3. Daniels determination and resilience is reflective from his body language	
2. Two characters are hugging each other	1. Daniels is the central character/hero. 2. The soldier, Daniels, is wearing uniform of an officer while the female character, Haziell is held in his arms 2. Daniels' face is visible while the posterior of female is visible	1. A family reunion after the war hero returns victorious from the second world war 2. After the long tedious war, Daniels is finally peace with his wife and ensuring safety to his family	

Her body language is conveying comfort and happiness. There is a serenity in the overall atmosphere, the countryside background is reflective of a soldier's returning to his home and finding peace with his family. These visuals evoke emotional responses associated with the sacrifice, trauma, and heroism of war.

4.4 Analysis of Framing

This analysis is carried in relation to the second aspect of genre as suggested in the conceptual and analytical framework of the study. This part involves investigating the process of framing at macro and micro level in the selected digital games. The micro level of framing involves the use of words, phrases and sentences whereas macro level involves operationalizing the frames through various facets of game.

For this purpose, the analysis is done in two stages. At the first stage the common frames are identified. At the second stage the process of framing is analysed at two levels: macro and micro. At the macro level, it focuses on how framing is operationalized at various facets within the game. This includes analysing framing at the level of the storyline, characterization, game aesthetics, and rules and mechanics. The micro level analysis of framing is done at the level of text generated in the game as voice over/dialogues between playable characters and NPCs.

Table 6

Common Frames in COD: WWII

Frames
Allied forces were framed as saviour of humanity
Germans were framed as oppressor
Axis was framed as complicitly involved in war crime
American soldiers were framed as in opposition to tyranny and fascism
American soldiers were framed as committed to noble cause and high personal ideals
Allied soldiers were framed as exemplars of humanitarian values and constant defenders of human rights.
Allied forces were framed as resistant war heroes
American soldiers were framed as heroes for nation and world

For the analysis of process of framing, the transcription file was created. The table 6 shows the important frames invoked in the narrative of the game.

The frames, as listed in table 4.3 shows that the American soldiers were framed positively. This positive framing is extended to the depiction of Allied forces as well. The frames used for Axis forces and Germans are negative.

4.4.1 Selection and Saliency

The selected title is based on the experiences of soldiers participating in the second world war fought between the Allied and the Axis forces. World War II has been chosen as the subject/issue/conflict in the narrative of the game. The focus of the game is on the soldiers representing the Allied forces in the war. The game is set in the European theatre and is about combat/missions during the operation of Allied forces and clearly depicts the Allied point of view with emphasis on the American sentiments.

A brief overview of the Second World War is included here. According to the Encyclopaedias Britannica (Hughes, Royde-Smith, 2023) the Second World (1939-1945) was fought between the Allied and the Axis military alliances. This global conflict between the Allied forces which included the U.S, the U.K, China and the Soviet Union against the Axis which were inclusive of Italy, Germany and Japan. It is important to understand that prior to this global conflict, most of the Americans thought that participation in international conflicts was a mistake. This led to the adoption of non-intervention and good neighbour policy by the American government and passed the Neutrality Act in 1935 resulting in the embargoing of arms to both aggressor and the victim in the case of conflict. Though the American president Roosevelt followed the policy of his predecessor Hoover, the 31st American president. However, after the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Neutrality Act was revised by the Congress in a special session. The Lend-Lease agreement for the Allied was one of the slow steps to become part of the war. In this regard, the China-Japan war (1935-1945) and Japan's refusal to withdraw, complicated the situation and led to an oil embargo for Japan and loans for China. The Pearl Harbor attack on 7th December, 1941 led Congress to vote the next day in favour of the War against Japan. Three days later, Japan's declaration of war against the United States made the divided American nation and the Congress to be at war unanimously.

Framing operates through selection and salience. Here it is achieved by highlighting the American soldiers as displaying ideals of bravery and virtues. Allied forces were also given the focus and were represented as virtuous defenders working for a noble cause. The overall narrative of the game, which is generated through cutscenes, and the game play framed the American soldiers as saviour of humanity who could save the world from the oppression of Germans and Axis forces. The data shows the inclusion of more details which favour the American viewpoint of justification of taking part in the war. Similarly, during various missions, the Allied soldiers, specifically American soldiers are shown involved in acts of unwavering resilience in the face of Axis adversity. The game focused more on the projection of American soldiers as war heroes. On the other hand, the details of the German soldiers and Allied forces were excluded or were framed negatively, in opposition to the American soldiers.

The game is based upon one of the actual missions of the Allied forces, Operation Overlord, the Battle of Normandy that resulted in the successful invasion of German-occupied Western Europe. The game frames the Second World War as the war against evil at both the textual and game level. It frames the Axis as evil and the Germans as the wrong doers. It also highlights brotherhood and nationalism as the key factor behind the moral strength of the American soldiers. The game is designed from the American perspective and frames the events of the Second World War in a manner to show. Though it was launched in 2017, it serves to justify the military and the participation in the global conflict. It builds a positive moral consent for war and militarism for Americans. Through framing the American and the Allied forces and specifically the American soldiers the game represents the patriotic ideologies inherent in them.

4.4.2 Identifying or Defining the Problem

In this selected title the Second World War and German aggression emerge as a source of problem and conflict. The use of German aggression as a conflict or problem in the game is framing Germany and Allies as a threat to global peace. The choice of framing German aggression as a problem is consistent with the historical context of the Second World War and is aligned with the common and generally perceived narrative of Hitler's expansionism and atrocities. The game reinforces this popular narrative of German atrocities and Allied bravery through framing. The game identification of Germany and the Allied forces is aligned with the orthodox historian's perspective

which considers Germany as invaders and indulgent in war crimes, human right abuses and massacre.

The identification or definition of an issue is a key step in the process of generating and presenting the frame for readers and audience. According to the operational model adopted for this study, at the micro level, the functions of frames are observed using certain keywords/phrases and sentences in framing. In this regard, the table in Appendix A shows the list of words, phrases and sentences which were used in creating the frames in the narrative of the game. For example, the war declaration speech identifies German oppression as responsible for pushing the world into darkness and says; “As we brace for our darkest hour, we must summon our strength to be the bulwark against oppression”. The game narrative shows Germany as the primary antagonist and reiterates the need to defeat them to restore world peace, justice and freedom. This identification through framing serves many purposes here: admiration and glorification of American military ideals and condemnation of German and Allied forces as well as a justification of the Second World War. Through narrative and game play, the enemies or the Axis forces emerge as the problem. The invasion of the Axis forces is seen as evil and merciless. The game portrays the invasion of the European countries and the Pacific as the central problem that the player, representing the Allied forces, must face and address.

For this purpose, the game narrative makes use of certain linguistic choices. The data shows the use of dialogues, speeches and depiction of the Allied and Axis forces in narrative present them as the source of the problem. For instance, the game begins with the radio broadcast of President Roosevelt's speech before D-Day missions which contains the text which identifies the problem confronted in the game, that is Hitler's unjust war against the Allied countries. The use of phrases like “Hitler War Machine”, “unmatched ferocity” and “Nazi onslaught” in the speech are instances of establishing Germans and Axis as the source of the problem and they emerge as a threat to global peace.

4.4.3 Diagnosing the Cause

The data shows that the selected game ascribes the cause of the issue to the totalitarian and militaristic ideologies of the Axis powers, with emphasis on Germany.

The narrative exhibits the aggressive ambitions of the German leader Hitler and their thirst for dominance, leading to the outbreak of the war.

The initial scene of the game depicts the world's freedom and peace at stake which demands the American and the Allied forces to indulge in war and restore peace. The use of voice over of President Roosevelt reiterates that the German invasion and their atrocities has pushed the entire world into “darkness”. This narrative runs in the game and considers Axis as the cause of unrest and brutality which has overshadowed the world. As before the D-Day mission Col Davis addresses the team before their invasion of Normandy Beaches and motivates and prepares the soldiers to take this task of separating the world from the darkness of the German tyranny and aggression and says that it is their responsibility to “separate the world from darkness”.

Nazi aggression and ruthless killing have been framed as the cause of this global conflict. Operation Cobra, Aiello and Perz discusses how Nazi ruthless killing had taken up the lives of almost all soldiers taking part in the mission FUBAR and had changed the mission leader Pierson into cold and callous after losing his men. Perz recalls Nazi’s relentless killing as a massacre and merciless and emphasises; “Nazis had no mercy”.

4.4.4 Making Moral Judgments

The game makes moral judgement about both the forces taking part in the war in its text and presents the actions of Axis power as morally wrong and objectionable and at the sometime frames and justifies the actions of the Allied forces as just and appropriate. The game highlights the war crimes committed by Nazis and the Axis forces.

In terms of making moral evaluation, the data shows the use of words and phrases that elicit a sense of right and wrong. For instance, the Allied soldiers referred to Axis powers as "evil" and "tyrannical" to highlight the moral righteousness of their cause.

The Allied forces are given a softer and a politer reference. They were given a stereotypical image of their heroic military endeavours while the Germans were stereotyped as relentless warmongers. The Allied soldiers were shown to be careful in their actions and handling of the civilians and were not shown indulging in war crimes

or violation of human rights unlike the Axis who were projected as merciless and relentless and shown indulgent in war crimes.

For instance, in the mission Collateral Damage, Daniels refrained his team from attacking the civilians. Unlike the Axis who were framed as responsible for victimising and killing the family members of resistance forces against them. The case of Camille Denis, codename Rousseau, was the French resistance fighter against the Germans, her parents, husband and son were killed by the German officer Heinnich who admits his brutal act of killing her family and relishing the fact that her son's death was source of pleasure for him and admitted that watching her son die under his boot was a source of pleasure for him.

Similarly, the data depicts the Allied forces as morally strong and responsible. In this regard, the game shows a stereotypical representation of the Allied soldiers as heroic and saviour of civilians of the opposite side during the war. In the mission Collateral Damage, the soldiers of 1st Infantry Division were in the German city of Aachen encountering the German troops. During their mission they found the German civilians and they disobeyed their squad leader and evacuated them while risking their lives and the mission objectives.

During the campaigns of Hill 493 and Death Factory, there was a reference to the bravery and high ideals of the American soldiers. These soldiers are shown to risk their life and sacrifice their families for the sake of their service to their country. This stereotypical imaging of the American soldiers' surfaces through the game. During the above-mentioned campaigns, the American soldier shows his commitment and selflessness and asserts; "No mission too difficult. No sacrifice too great. Duty first" while discussing their plan of action. The same is uttered when Turner was severely wounded by the German soldiers and was about to die. At this point Daniel, the protagonist, unwillingly leaves him to carry on the mission. Again, prioritising the duties and commitments of the American soldiers reflects an ideal soldier who is ready to sacrifice his life and friendship for the greater good of the country.

The stereotypical elevated image of the American soldiers is retained in the entire game. During the gameplay, the captive German soldier requests for water. Zussman, another playable character of the game disobeyed his commander and risked his life. In doing such acts, the game laid emphasis on the Americans' treatment of war

prisoners with dignity and fairness reflecting their moral values of empathy and compassion during war.

4.3.5 Giving Remedies or Solutions

One of the functions of framing is to present the preferred reality as the solution of the problem. In this regard the game frames the Second World War and the defeat of the axis power as an ultimate solution to the problem. It is important to note that the selected game includes the narrative depiction of the story through filmic scenes and the remaining narrative progresses through the action of the player. The player plays a fundamental role and becomes instrumental in executing the outlined solution to a global threat. Here the player is made involved voluntarily in the historical battles and contributes to the victory. Here the immersion in game play is outcome of moral judgement and the remedies which the game play endgame design set for the player.

The speech on the D-day mission refers to war as a struggle to preserve civilization which assigns the Allied forces a dignified role of saviour of the entire humanity. The American ideology of militarism also surfaces in the narrative of the game when the soldiers are called “our sons” and their efforts are considered to bring pride to the nation. The war is evaluated as just, and the Allied missions are considered part of the remedy and sacrifice against the German aggression. The data shows stereotyping of the German/Axis as merciless enemies. For instance, in many missions the war crimes by the opposition are highlighted. The trees with the dead bodies of innocent civilians depicts the enemies as ruthless.

Emphasis is laid on the actions of the axis to create a negative image of enemies using words, for instance the Axis actions of killing are referred to as merciless killing whereas the softer words or indirect expressions are used for the actions of the Allied soldiers. There is a frequent use of targets destroyed by the Allied soldiers which is indirect as compared to the use of merciless killing.

4.3.6 Operational Facets of Storyline and Characterization

As shown in the table (Appendix B), the elements of game and story design are also sites for activating the frames. These elements are game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules lay the foundation of framing. Furthermore, the process of framing is also carried out through characterization and storyline. The selected title is about the

heroic combat of American and Allied soldiers against the Alliance headed by Germans. The game narrative, the term is referred in broader sense as inclusive of story and game play, is developed to frame American soldiers as heroes or saviour of the world whereas the German and Axis were the merciless oppressor. The game is about the successful invasion of Normandy beaches, an actual event that took place during the second world war. The choice of an event is an important step in the construction of narrative. Here the choice of Operation Overlord and the subsequent events is the process of inclusion or salience in the act of framing. The narrative of the game is completed through successful completion of eleven missions. Each mission is ultimately tied to the winning of the battle—the Second World War. The game's narrative follows the perspective of American soldiers, depicting their experiences, struggles, and heroic actions during the war. The characters of protagonist and antagonist become the vehicle of framing. The American soldiers

The storyline of the selected title reflects framing within the story of the game. The games are designed for engaging players in the quests or series of combat to win or lose or some games are designed as open ended. However, the story which is included in the games provides more interesting positions to the player. In a role-playing game like the selected title the player takes the role of protagonist, and he must complete all the missions assigned in the game. The actual events which took place on the beaches of Normandy during the Second World War as well as the later events serve as the backbone for the story of the selected title. The perspective of the narrative is distinctly American. The player experiences the events of the war as an American soldier and the story is presented and framed in a similar manner.

As mentioned earlier in the table 4.3, the emerging frames position Germans and Axis as oppressors. The analysis shows that like the post Second World War movies and Literature, the selected title shows the same tradition of presenting the game and its story revolving around American and Allied heroism and brotherhood in juxtaposition to Axis aggression and war crimes. The story which is narrated partly through the cutscenes and partly enacted through the gameplay missions sets the stage for American and Allied forces to display their valour and bravery.

With the Second World War as the backdrop, the story of the selected titles brings forth the German and Axis as the global enemies which pose a threat for the world's peace. The story in the game focuses on the actions of the squad in 1944-45,

the time when the Allied forces gained strength on their march into Germany. The events in the various missions are structured in a way which evokes the frames of bravery, sacrifice and brotherhood for the Allied forces. For example, in the mission Liberation, the Allied forces liberated Paris from the German occupation. Rousseau, is a French female resistance fighter disguised as a German officer who enters the German headquarters to swap briefcases to get information of explosives from their spy in the headquarters. Her bravery, unwavering determination and revenge for her family including her parents, her husband and her son becomes the driving force to kill Heinrich, the German officer, who gloats over his merciless killing of her family once he recognizes her and tells her; “But there is one thing of which I am certain. Watching your son flail as he drowned under my boot gave me the greatest pleasure of all”.

This event put him in a stereotypical enemy frame rejoicing in killing the innocent civilians and not even sparing the children. The projection of Axis forces and specifically Germans as ruthless is significant here. The story presents the Germans as arch enemies who indulge in heinous war crimes and threats to humanity. The framing of Axis soldiers as oppressor and the American and Allied soldier through various events in the story reflect the ideological stance of American nationalism, glorification of war and moral justification of war.

Through the unfolding of various events, the game showcases the Nazi/Germans as prone to war crimes. During Operation Cobra, the team passes by trees having the dead bodies of civilians hanged on them, Stiles laments on the war crime by Germans, however, another NPC reminds him that they are fighting Germans here. Compared to Germans, the events in the story place the Allied forces in a noble frame. For example, in the same mission, the retreating Germans are treated humanely and are spared. COD: WWII includes the events in the story which shows the protagonist and his team risking their lives for the love of their country. Though badly wounded in the mission D-Day, Zussman is eager to join his team in the Operation Cobra to take Marigny back despite Pierson suspecting his recovery.

During the mission Collateral Damage in Aachen Germany, the squad finds German civilians hiding in a hotel. The protagonist and his team leader Turner ignored the danger and risked their own life and led civilians to a safer place. Thus, the game highlighted the nobility of American soldiers while undermining the opposition. It is evident through these examples that these events in the storyline of the game establishes

themselves as instrumental in constructing the intended frames. In the above example the event reiterates the nobler frame for American soldiers and reflect the ideological stance of honouring American military.

Apart from the various events in the game, the characters are also the functional facet in the process of framing. Through these characters and their role in the story and the game mode, the process of framing is activated. The game takes the American perspective and the characters who represent America and Allied forces are framed positively while the antagonists are framed negatively. The characters, playable and NPCs which are part of the protagonist team, are shown as noble, heroic and applaudable.

Daniels, the main playable character in the game, represents American military ideals of bravery, determination, resilience and brotherhood. Daniels participation in the missions exhibits the strength of his character—moral and physical. Daniels volunteers to join the army and willingly takes part in every mission and dreams to return home victorious. For example, in the Mission Cobra he wishes; “Maybe I'll get home by Christmas with a couple medals on my chest, but first we gotta take Marigny”.

Inspired by Band of Brothers, the selected title shows the brotherhood, bravery, sense of duty delved deep into the characters within the game. These soldiers are framed as extraordinarily brave and have noble ideals of bravery. Their love for the country and fellow soldiers safely keeps them on the war front. Daniels’ disobeys his leader and saves German civilians as compared to the Germans inhuman treatment of the war prisoners.

Similarly, the character of Zussman, a close friend and a squad mate of Daniels, also have high ideals of bravery and unwavering determination to be part of war. During Operation Cobra he joins his squad after getting wounded in the first mission of the game and takes pride in showing his wounds to Aeillo and Stile He lifts up his shirt to reveal a scar on his abdomen, as a souvenir of the knife wound, he suffered in D-Day.

Through the protagonist, the game reflects the soldier’s sense of duty and comradeship is associated with war heroes. Daniels and Zussman develop friendship, a true friendship which made Daniels search for captive Zussman and refuses to obey orders and go home to meet his family in the mission Ambush and says, “I want nothin’

more than to be with Hazel when our baby arrives. But I gotta convince Pierson to let me back in the fight. I'm doin' it to find Zuss, cause he'd do the same for me”.

Daniels takes a firm stance to search for his friend in hostile German cities. Through his character the game furthers the frame of heroism to the American soldiers and their undaunting personal beliefs which force them to forgo everything for the sake of their friends and Daniels tore parts his discharge paper and hand them over to his team leader and says, “honourable discharge papers, signed by Davis. My ticket home. (grabs papers) I could have had everything. A hero's welcome. My girl in my arms. Hell, even a Bronze Star”. The data shows that through story and character design the game provides facets to initiate the desirable frames within the game. The frames are established and reinforced through characters and the enactment of their roles reinforces the ideological underpinning of these frames. The ideology of American exceptionalism and just war surface through these frames.

4.3.7 Aesthetics, Mechanics and Rules

In addition to the story and characters, the data of the selected title shows that the aesthetics, game mechanics and rules of the game play their role in the process of framing. The aesthetics of the game includes how the game looks, sounds and feels hepatically. The animation, graphics and the visual aspect of the game contribute not only to the story and an immersive game play but also help in framing the perspective within the overall narrative of the game.

It is through the looks of the game that the game narrative evokes the desired frames. For instance, the following figure 12 (a visual from D-day) mission captures the horrors of the Axis invasion waged on the Allied territory.

Figure 12*Visual Depicting Brutality of War*

Though seen through Daniels/player, the brutality of war is witnessed and felt. The visual and graphics employed in the game highlights how the brutality of Axis forces was encountered during the war.

Figure 13*Graphics and Animation (Operation Cobra)*

The figure 13 illustrates the use of graphics and animation playing a significant role in the process of framing. Through its fluid graphics and animation, the game

provides a closer to real life experience of war brutalities launched by the Germans and its allies.

The narrative of the game reveals that both animation and graphics, in the case of COD: WWII produce synergistic effect which is visually compelling and create immersive gaming experience for the player. The figure 14 reflects the synergy of graphics and animation which is important in keeping the player deeply involved in the game as well as helps to reinforce the frames.

Figure 14

Synergy of Graphics and Animation



The synergy between graphics and animation in depicting the war as well as its trauma enhances the visual experience for the player and makes it more immersive and engaging both in the game play and the story of the game. The use of sound is also important in creating an overall environment of the game. The selected title makes use of multiple sounds: voice overs (dialogues or commentary), music, gunshots, explosions, sound of marching footsteps, vehicles and sounds from the environment. For instance, the opening scenes of the D-Day mission with President Roosevelt's famous D-day prayer includes a number of sounds.

It includes a radio broadcast of the prayer as well as a mounting music with explosions in the background which creates a realistic war experience at the same time supplement the process of framing the heroism and call for display of bravery in the later events to come.

The selected title has many intense moments which are the instance of explicit framing of American heroism in face of adversary and sacrifice. The intensity of these moments is presented through sounds, visuals and graphics. The figure 13 shows the use of visual to frame Germans as indulgent in war crimes.

Similarly, the mission briefings through Daniels voiceovers are not simple statements of the war rather they reflect the resilience and determination of American soldiers who have witnessed the horrors of war and loss of friends, yet they continue their efforts to safeguard world against oppression.

The rules and mechanics of the selected title also contributed to framing. The game mechanics and rules work together to create playing experience for the player and framing is embedded in this juncture.

Brotherhood and camaraderie are the significant frames which are frequently presented in the game. The design of game mechanics and the rules which govern the game are connected to this frame at basic level. As mentioned in table no 4 each squad mate is assigned certain abilities. It is through game mechanics, that the relationship between Daniels and specifically Zussman and the other squad mates is essentially established and retained. For example, Pierson briefly highlights all enemies in the area as well as provide/indicate safer routes. Zusman must stay closer to provide first aid kit in case the player/Daniels is hit. The game mechanics keeps Zussman near the player to keep the game on the move at the same time sustain the framing of brotherhood in the narrative of the game.

One of the frames which is evoked in the game is German soldiers' inhuman treatment with the Allied soldiers and civilians which is narrated through various events and narration within the game. The mission Death factory involves clearing the resistance at the bridge by the Allied forces. During the fight the Germans are shown killing the soldiers who were surrendering. At this point, the player is placed at the distance and is out of his bound. The design of the game activates these frames.

Similarly in the mission The Rhine, the game mechanics of the selected title contribute to a nobler frame for the Allied forces. During the mission, Daniels, while fighting against the German soldiers, aims at him in a closer proximity. The game mechanics and rules allow him to accept his surrender, however, if Daniels kills the German soldier while accepting his surrender the game mechanics does not allow him

and ends in mission failure and takes the player back to the last checkpoint and restart from the last checkpoint. And the game mechanics and rules provide Daniels a flash up statement: killing unarmed combatant will not be tolerated. Here the game instils a more humane frame for the American soldier hero and stops him from indulging in war crimes unlike the German soldiers which are only shown indulging in war crimes. The analysis points out that through in-game elements of rules and aesthetics, the games reinforce the intended frames of bravery and brotherhood in addition to the juxtaposition of good versus evil frames.

The analysis reveal that these in-game mechanics have an important role in shaping the player's perception of heroism and brotherhood by structuring the ways in which players engage with their characters and other allies in the game. Mechanics such as cooperative gameplay, team-based objectives, and character progression work together to reinforce these frames. For example, when the player is engaged in squad-based missions, mechanics which emphasize teamwork—like shared resources, coordinated actions, and mutual support—encourage a sense of brotherhood. The act of helping a teammate or completing a mission together not only aligns with the narrative but also actively builds a perception of camaraderie and solidarity.

Heroism is often reflected in gameplay mechanics that reward selfless actions, such as taking risks for the team or overcoming extreme challenges. Mechanics like saving teammates, sacrificing oneself for a greater cause, or leading a charge against overwhelming odds highlight the player's role as a hero. These actions, embedded within the gameplay loop, reflect a narrative of valour and sacrifice that enhances the player's identification with the heroic protagonist. Additionally, character progression mechanics—such as leveling up or gaining new abilities—often align with the player's journey from an ordinary individual to a heroic figure, mirroring the traditional hero's journey in narrative structure.

By intertwining these mechanics with narrative elements, the selected game use player agency to influence the perception of heroism and brotherhood. When players are empowered to act selflessly or collaborate effectively, they internalize these values, not only as part of the story but as integral aspects of their own gameplay experience, reinforcing a sense of both personal heroism and collective unity.

4.4 Analysis of Narrative of COD: BO II

This part deals with analysis of the narrative of second selected title, Call of Duty: Black Ops II. It includes the analysis of narrative elements namely arcs, player agency, storyworld, characters, emotions and narrativized interface.

4.4.1 Overview of Call of Duty: Black Ops II

The game Call of Duty: Black Ops II is a first-person shooter developed by Treyarch and published by Activision in 2012. This first-person shooter's campaign is the sequel to Black Ops as which features Mason as protagonist and Raul Menendez as antagonist. The selected title provides two timelines in its eleven subsidiary arcs. The location of each arc, time and the choice of playable characters is listed in table 7.

Table 7

Details of Arcs, Location and PCs

Subsidiary Arcs	Time and Place	Playable Character
Pyrrhic Victory	1986, Angola	Mason
Celerium	2025, Myanmar	David
Old Wounds	1986, Afghanistan	Mason
Time and Fate	1986, Nicaragua	Menendez/Mason
Fallen Angel	2025, Lahore	David
Karma	2025, Cayman Islands	David
Suffer with Me	1989, Panama	Woods
Achilles' Veil	2025, Yemen	David/Farid
Odysseus	2025, Yemen	David/Menendez
Cordis Die	2025, United States	David
Judgement Day	2025, United States	David

This games weaves together two interesting stories which are set-in two-time periods: first is the Cold War-era of 1980s (Mason and his team as protagonist while Menedez is antagonist) and the second futuristic era of 2025 (David as protagonist and Menedez is antagonist).

The first storyline of the game features Alex Mason who is covert operator and engages in multiple combats against Russians and their ally Menendez. The tension of this Cold War-era sets the stage for the second storyline of the game which features young David, Mason's son, as a military operator who battles against Menendez, the leader of populist movement Cordis Die, who intends to destabilize the world through cyber warfare. The storylines of these two eras are bridged through Menendez's long-standing revenge.

4.4.2 Narrative Arc

The first aspect in narrative analysis is the investigation of arcs. It is important to mention that there are two parallel time-specific stories in this game. The narrative distribution of the two-time specific stories is logical and coherent. The coherence is retained through flashbacks and narration of experiences through the playable character Woods. These stories are distributed over the eleven subsidiary arcs and events in these stories take place in different regions across the world. The table number 4.4 shows that these two storylines stretched over the grand narrative over different periods of time. The back-and-forth movement of event narration and occurrence take place in the initial seven subsidiary arcs while the later subsidiary arcs relate to the events occurring in the present only. The first storyline includes Woods narrating the several covert missions undertaken by Alex Mason and Woods in their military careers. Woods was being investigated by Section and his partner Harper. In 1986 Alex Mason, the father of Section, was spending his time with 7 years old unhappy son. Here he was approached by Hudson to recover Woods who disappeared during his mission in Angola. Woods and his teammates were helping Savimbi's UNITA rebellion against Angola's Marxist government.

The structure of the meta-arc of the selected title shows loose adherence to setup-complication-development-resolution owing to the interactive nature of the game and the role of player's choice in the narrative. The grand/meta-arc sets Menendez as the antagonist and the American covert operators as the protagonist within the narrative. The two storylines retain the same antagonist, however, the role of protagonist switches between Alex Mason and David Mason—the father and the son.

The role of player's choice in initial missions have a significant impact on the narrative development of later missions. For example, the actions pertaining to playable

character Woods determines the fate of Chloe and Alex Mason (the protagonist of initial arcs). These choices also determine how the conflict within the grand narrative is unresolved or resolved. The table 8 gives an overview of player's choice and their impact on the narrative.

Table 8

Impact of Player's Choice on Game Endings

Game actions	
1 Chloe and Menendez live	1. Ends the war and creates an alliance between the US and China. 2. Player must complete four strike force tasks and will be able to rescue Chloe, kill Harper and spare Menendez and Briggs
2 Menendez killed and Chloe spared	Cyber Attack is prevented by Chloe followed by worldwide riots insured by Menendez followers
3 Menendez and Chloe are killed	Cyber-attack and riots could not be avoided
4 Chloe dies and Menendez lives	Cyber-attack could not be stopped, Menendez flees from custody and brutally kills Woods and finally burns himself near his sister's grave.

The phenomenon of player's choice of action bear narrative consequences. For instance, the first two endings resolve the conflict and the antagonist, and his team are defeated while the player's choice in the third case result in catastrophe and destroys global peace. While the fourth choice allows Menendez to launch a massive cyber-attack and take his revenge and end his life. This example strengthens the significance of player's decision on the meta-narrative of the selected title. The mission Fallen Angel also provide another instance of player's choice and its impact on story's trajectory. The player character Woods gets the chance to shoot the disguised target, who is thought to be Menendez. At this point, the player's choice determines the fate of first protagonist Mason. If the player decides to shoot the target in the head, the tragic mistake could alter the narrative. The second protagonist David could never reunite with his father. Alternatively, the player's choice of not hitting the target in the head spare his own friend and allowing him to live and reunite with his son in later missions.

This emphasizes the impact of player choices on shaping the story and adding complexity to the narrative.

There are eleven subsidiary arcs in the grand meta-arc of the game narrative. These subsidiary arc presents different events and combats for the player. The structure of most of the arcs displays loose adherence to setup-complication-development-resolution. The fifth subsidiary arc Fallen Angel ends with the protagonist bluffed by the antagonist and his team, however, is saved by a Chinese. It shows a loose adherence to the above-mentioned structure.

Similarly, the seventh subsidiary does not end in the resolution of the conflict; rather the trio (Alex, David and Woods) are captured by the antagonist, Raul Menendez. Here the player's choice of action also brings two different endings for the same arc as well as the grand arc. Earlier in the arc, player-character Woods shoots the target in the head, he unknowingly kills his friend Alex and if he shoots him otherwise, Alex is saved and is reunited with his son in the last subsidiary arc. The last three arcs show variation in the structure of the arc. The conflict is not resolved in the ninth subsidiary arc Odysseus and the antagonist escapes. The next subsidiary arc shows partial accomplishment of the objectives. The narrative of the last subsidiary is determined by the player's choice. The four possible endings as shown in the table 4.5 reflects variation in the structure and narrative of the last arc as well as the grand arc. The first ending resolves the conflicts whereas the second arc resolves it partially and the last two endings are tragic. Despite the variation in the structure of various arcs, there is visible connection among these arcs. The events are logically sequenced in these arcs and serve to establish the connection. The characters grow through loss and achievements. The character of the antagonist also underwent transformation—a young lad witnessing the death of his father and loss of his sister takes the revenge from the world. The detail of the character is given in the section () of the same chapter.

Within these subsidiary arcs, there are smaller/granular arcs arising from smaller actions. These micronarratives are significant. The structure of these smaller arcs shows setup-complication-development-resolution pattern to a varying degree. For instance, in the subsidiary arc of Pyrrhic Victory, Mason and Hudson set out to find the missing Sg. Woods. This subsidiary arc is constituted by a number of smaller but complete narrative units. Upon their arrival in Angola, they team up with Savimbi who is leading his UNITA force against the opposing MPLA and engages in a combat

against MPLA and successful achievement of his objectives. This smaller narrative unit in the first subsidiary arc of the selected title contains setup-complication-development-resolution structure and leads to another micronarrative which includes a gameplay based on the successful search of Woods because of the lead provided by Savimbi. This micronarrative bears a separate narrative entity and at the same time takes part in the narrative progression within the subsidiary and grand meta-arc of the selected title. However, like the subsidiary arcs, each micronarrative does not comply with the pattern mentioned above. As the narrative of the selected title is built through loss, betrayal, triumph and defeat for the protagonist and the antagonist. It is through the micronarrative, the smallest unit, that the narrative of the subsidiary arcs is built. The network of the micronarratives structures the narrative of the subsidiary arcs which in turn structures the grand narrative.

The narrative of the selected title exhibits non-linear structure. Initially the game narrative includes flashbacks and memories which is extended to switching between gameplay in past and present. Unlike traditional story structure, the non-linear pattern used in this title through events in two timelines allows player to experience events of different eras through different characters.

The actions carried out in the narrative of various subsidiary arcs have an impact on the narrative of the later missions. For instance, the narrative of Old Wounds involves CIA, Mujahideen and Chinese operatives in Afghanistan. The narrative of this subsidiary arc rests on the player's quest to find intel on Menendez. The player gets hold of Col Kravchenko, a secondary antagonist of Call of Duty Series and interrogates to get information on Menendez. However, the in-game actions may lead to either the death of a Russian captive or information retrieval from him. The narrative which is built at this stage is not only linked to the story which unfolded in later missions but also has a direct impact on choices which players get in those missions. If the narrative at this subsidiary arc ends in the death of Col Kravchenko, the players/characters miss important information on the mole in the CIA who continues to add more problems to the player in the later subsidiaries.

4.4.3 Player Agency and Narrative Progression

Another important element in narrative analysis is player agency. The analysis of the second title reveals that the game offers player agency of a varying degree. The

narrative of several missions provides a limited scale of possibilities for the player. For instance, the first mission of Pyrrhic Victory displays very limited instances of player agency. The player is offered the choice of weapon switch during the mission. The player, assuming the character of Alex Mason, indulges in combat against a Nicaraguan gun runner on the Cubango river on a transport barge. During the fight the player has the availability of switching arms on the deck. However, he can resume the shooting with his own gun and complete the mission. Similarly, he can skip/use many Access points in the gameplay.

The narrative of COD: BOII allows the player to structure the narrative through choices in performing the action and bring variation through his actions at a small scale. For instance, in the first mission after finding the wounded Woods in the container on the barge, the trio (David, Harper and Woods) pass by a jungle which is full of Cuban soldiers. Here the player's action can bring variation at a very small scale. For instance, if the player gets spotted by Cuban soldiers as they hid under the fallen tree log can engage in an early fight with the soldiers or in the other case they can continue in a stealth manner and engage in a fight later. However, both choices have the same narrative outcome despite the different set of actions required in each choice of action.

Throughout the game, the Access points serve as optional resources for the player which may invoke additional narrative moments, which may not affect the meta-arc, however, render more involvement and action by the player. For instance, the use of animal traps is optional which can be obtained through access points, however its use makes the play more interesting for the player and aids him in gameplay. Similar access points are seen in the second subsidiary arc of Cellarium where the player can access Optical Camouflage suit from the crate using the Access Kit perk and kill the enemy without being noticed or engage in direct confrontation with the enemy team. These Access points bring variation in the ludic actions and empowers the player with more freedom to perform the action and play his part in structuring the narrative at a small scale within the subsidiary arcs and bring a localised variation in the subsidiary arcs. The impact of the consequences of these localised variations is limited or insignificant on the overall or grand narrative.

The narrative of the game also allows the player to modify his actions and manifests instances of player discretion. The second mission Cellarium provides players chances to modify his actions. For example, during the fight with the Menendez

army at the temple, the player has the freedom to engage in open combat or stealth kill to destroy the first wave of enemy troops. During the same mission after killing the last wave of enemy troops, Section and Harper gather around the temple gate to find a secondary underground structure. The player has the choice to drop Titus-6 to explode the structure or blow the gate with Titus-6 to approach the underground Cellarium Lab. Here these choices bring variation in the ludic action and their subsequent narrative structure as well as keep the player deeply involved in decision making.

The data shows that the player has the freedom to perform or delay the action and can create a different narrative outcome through these choices. The third mission of Old Wounds situates the player in a more engaging and powerful position when David interrogates Kravchenko, a Russian rival, now working with Menendez. Here the player's choice of action could affect dialogue and later game actions. The player has the choice to kill him or resist the urge to kill him and get the intel on moles in the CIA. This mission also provides player's choices at a smaller scale of accessing various kits. For instance, the player may unlock a secret room to get access to mortars and use them later. Similarly, the player is also given liberty to pick the Mines from the cache and lay them on the path of the vehicles for the enemy and easily explode the BTR or leave them.

The next mission of Time and Fate again provides the player a control of a small degree. The player assuming the role of Mason encounters soldiers attempting to burn down Menendez's Compound. Woods shouts at Mason to stop the soldiers, here if the player (Mason) delays his action he cannot find the file which provides Menendez's links within CIA. The choices availed/not availed by the player do not affect the ending, but does affect later dialogue in the mission, Suffer with Me.

This mission also provides several access kits to the player to modify their actions or use the default weapon opted in the beginning of the mission. For instance, the player can unlock a crate to get a Molotov Cocktail. Similarly, the player can unlock rooms to get Mortar shells from the crate. This mission also provides a chance for the player to use machetes which are used by Menendez and his soldiers.

The mission Fallen Angel requires the player and his team to record Menendez's Conversation with the ISI leader in Lahore at Anthem. Depending upon the player's decision and actions, the mission may have different outcomes. For instance, if the

player gets all the recordings he can learn about Zhao and Menendez collaboration in procuring the missing US downed drone and the player gets Strike force mission Dispatch in which the player can kill Zhao which leads to China's aid later in the game.

During the same mission the player's choice in saving Harper from a major injury is important. While driving the jeep if the player avoids the fire, he can save Hudson from a permanent disfiguring of his face. His actions otherwise lead to serious injuries to his teammates. The player's decision affects the health status of his teammate.

The sixth mission Karma of the selected title offers more choices to the player. Furthermore, these choices and the outcome of the player's action affects the ending of the game in various ways. The main objective of this mission is to spot and capture Karma/Chloe in Solar club while DeFalco, a territory antagonist and military leader of the Cordis Die movement is also on a hunt to take Chloe. Once the player spots Chloe, DeFalco arrives and tries to take her and escape from the building. At this stage the player's actions gain significant impact on the game and consequences. If the player lets DeFalco catch her and escape, Chloe's expert computer abilities cannot be sought to fight against cyber-attack in the game and DeFalco continues to pose more threats to the protagonist team. This also leads to provision of an optional Strike force mission called Second Chance where the player can secure Chloe and take her to USS Obama and get her abilities. However, DeFalco cannot be taken down in the Second Chance.

The player is assigned the ability to avert these circumstances and can kill DeFalco and secure Chloe in the first place. The player's encounter with DeFalco can be dealt with in two ways. DeFalco can be approached when he is escaping the mall and can be shot or before he boards his plane and gets killed. One of the important access perks that the player can get at this stage is hacking the identity markers for civilians and enemies except DeFalco to ensure zero non-combatant casualties.

The mission Suffer with Me comes up with choices which are hard, and the consequences are (unknowingly) tragic. The mission is about Mason and Woods capturing Noreiga and escorting him to the army checkpoint. While Mason is in the north building, Hudson directs Woods to kill a Nexus Target held captive by allied soldiers. Following his orders, he kills the target and later learns that has hit his friend Mason. The player is not given a choice to hit the target at any particular spot like other

situations in the same mission. It is through player's action which determines the fate of David as well as the later course of actions in the narrative of the game. David reappearance in the last mission depends upon the player's shot aiming at head or the body of the Nexis target.

Unlike a hidden choice in the mission *Suffer with Me*, the player gets an open choice to shoot Harper or Menendez in the mission *Achilles' Veil* as illustrated in figure 15.

Figure 15

Illustration of Choices for Different Endings



Here the player, assuming the role of CIA undercover operative, has been asked by Menendez to shoot captive Harper to confirm his loyalty. The player's action creates a ripple effect here; if the player chooses to kill Harper, Farid is spared and left devastating over Harper's death. The action of the remaining mission is carried out by Section who takes Menendez to the ship *Obama* for interrogation with the help of the Navy Seal. Choosing to shoot Menendez spares Harper, but Farid is killed by Menendez who easily avoids the fire. The player's choice has a significant role in the narrative in terms of variation as well as progression.

The narrative of the last two missions manifests more choices to the player as well as show the consequences of player's earlier choices and their subsequent actions. The beginning of the mission unfolds the consequences of previous actions taken in campaign missions as well as the cannon missions of Strike Force in the game. The player's actions, here, sets the direction of this mission. For instance, if the player has successfully completed all Strike force missions, China would be a US ally against the

populist movement of Cordis Die across the globe. However, otherwise the player's action leads China to be armed against the US.

Similarly, an outcome of the previous actions (decisions) for DeFalco in Karma is also seen here. DeFalco reappears if not killed previously, gets replaced by another armed Cordis Die soldier. There are at least six more significant outcomes of player's choice observed in this mission and are listed in table 9.

Table 9

List of Player's Choices of Previous Actions and Their Possible Outcomes

Previous actions/missions	Outcome
1 (If) Chloe rescued and DeFalco in killed /Karma and Farid survived the events of Achilles' Veil	Salazar tries to shoot Chloe/Farid dies
2 (If) Chloe rescued in Second Chance and Farid survives	DeFalco gets shot by Farid Farid gets shot by Salazar
3 (If) Chloe rescued in Second Chance but Farid got shot in Achilles' Veil	DeFalco kills Chloe
4 (If) Chloe rescued in Karma but Farid died in Achilles' Veil	Salazar kills Chloe
5 (If) Chloe captured but not rescued in Second Chance and Farid survived in Achilles' Veil	Farid and DeFalco killed
6 (If) Chloe nor Farid are present	Salazar kills sailors

The role of player's choice is important in this mission resulting in various outcomes. The player's actions are key factors in shaping the story: SDC helps the US against the terrorist's attack or refuses to help against attack on USS ship Obama.

The player's choice and its outcome are more visible in the narrative of the last mission, Judgement Day. The presence of Chloe, Harper, Salazar and Mason in this mission is subject to player's decisions taken in various missions. The player's action determines the fate/geopolitics of the world which is subject to Menendez death and cyber-attack. In this mission the player has a chance to shoot or arrest the antagonist, Menendez, the leader of Cordis Die to save the world. The choice of player has a

significant impact on the narrative and contributes to render emotional depth to the narrative.

4.4.4 Storyworld of Call of Duty: Black Ops II

The next element in narrative analysis is storyworld. The data shows that the story world of the selected game is rich and captures the attention of the player. The design of the game world and the environment where the action takes place convey narrative information. The world where the player and other characters of Call of Duty: Black Ops II are engaged is in-line with the overall story of the game. Being a sequel, the selected title creates a storyworld which sets stage for the second cold war and the emerging geo-political map of the world.

The storyworld of the selected title is rich and expansive. The table 10 lists all the important countries which were part of the storyworld of the selected titles.

Table 10

List of Missions and Their Locations

Country	City/place	Missions
United States of America	Los Anglos	Cordis Die
Panama	Fort Clayton Panama Canal	Time and Fate
Angola	Cubanga River Jamb	Pyrrhic Victory
Afghanistan	Khost	Fallen angel
Nicaragua	-----	Suffer with Me
Singapore	Keppel terminal	Time and Fate
Yemon	Socotra Island	Pyrrhic Victory
Pakistan	Lahore	Fallen angel

The storyworld is expansive in the second selected title. The action which takes place in the cutscenes, and the gameplay is extended to various countries of the world. These settings within the storyworld have their significance in the narrative of the game. These locations become the narrative landscape where the bigger narrative of the game unfolded. The table 10 lists the locations where various campaign missions took place.

The setting in the story world is diverse and meaningful. Each choice has an explicit and implicit narrative significance. For instance, the choice of the United State

as a location where all major missions take place have unsaid narrative implications. The first mission Pyrrhic Victory takes place in Angola, Africa, however, it is a prelude to a cutscene where the protagonist meets Woods in the Vault in the United States. Whereas the last mission of the title takes place in Los Angeles (United States) in the year 2025 where a culminating battle is held against Cordis Die who is attacking the city and planning to take control of the world. The choice of location is self-revealing, and it manifests that the underlying narrative which makes the United State emerge as a centre or hub of world's safety, jeopardising the country would mean creating unrest in the rest of the world. All the major events taking place in the United State make it a geopolitical landscape where the game takes place. The cities like New York, Los Anglos and Washington in mission Achilles become the potential targets of Menendez.

The use of major cities of America as well as China as a part of the storyworld reflect how the selected title associates the significant landscape of geopolitics of the world. Similarly, Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong in the same missions as a potential target has narrative relevance. This mission is important in storyline as Cordis Die plan to take control of the world by attacking these major cities of the world.

Figure 16

Mission Fallen Angel in Khost (Afghanistan)



Similarly, inclusion of Asian countries, for instance, Pakistan and Afghanistan is again a meaningful choice. For instance, the mission Old Wounds, as shown in figure 16, Mason and his team begin tracing the involvement of Menendez's in selling firearms,

however, ends up in helping Mujahideen against Russia in Afghanistan. Similarly, during the Strike Force mission, I.E.D, Menendez and J.S.O.C encounter each other in Afghanistan at a significant point in the story.

Similarly, the mission Fallen Angels take place in Lahore, a major city of Pakistan. The mission has a significant role in the storyline of the game. The mission description includes: "David Mason's team heads to Pakistan to spy on Menendez, who has co-opted rogue ISI leaders to reverse engineer a downed US drone."

These diverse storyworld bring realistic and immersive experience to the player and it also serves to establish the global scope of the conflicts and the interconnectedness of events within the game. Black Ops 2 takes players on a global journey, featuring a variety of real-world locations such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Los Angeles, and Singapore. The attention to detail in recreating these environments helps immerse players in the game's world, making the experience more realistic and believable.

4.4.5 Characters

Both playable and non-playable characters are significant aspect of narrative of any game. There is a significant number of characters inhabiting the world of the selected title, including playable, non-playable, minor and major characters contributing to the narrative of the game. The minor characters provide context and advance the storyline. These characters inhabit the story world and make it richer and create a more immersive experience for the player. For instance, the NPC Josefina, the villain's sister and her backstory creates the melodrama as well as serves as the reason for the revenge and even the creation of Cordis Die movement.

Similarly choosing NPC belonging to Asian countries makes the narrative richer but is also reflective that this choice has underlying meanings. Mullah Rehman, a Mujahideen leader makes a deal with Hudson that if his team helps him defend his base, he gives them intel on Menendez, however, after the successful defence of Mujahideen base he betrays them and leave them tied up in the desert to die. His role is crucial, and it represents how Afghans are known for betrayal.

Similarly, Chao, Zhao and ISI leaders are non-playable minor characters, however, their characters are significant for the overall narrative of the game. These non-playable characters often engaged in conversation with the protagonist, or the

antagonist is revealing. The ISI leader, an ally of the antagonist, during his conversation with Menendez discusses the government being corrupt and insensitive to the problems of the country and claims that these governing bodies care for their own interests only and are insensitive to the suffering of the common man.

Table 11

List of Characters in COD: BO2

Playable characters	Woods, Mason, David, Harper, Briggs, Savimbi
Non-playable characters	Mullah Rahmaan, Farid, Salazar, ISI leader, Tian Zhao
Major characters	Woods, Mason, David, Menendez
Minor characters	Josefina, Reznov, Chao,

These non-playable characters often provide aid and support to the major characters in the game play. The table 11 shows the list of characters which inhabit the storyworld of Black Ops II. For instance, Savimbi, Chao and Chloe have their significant role in various combats within the game play. Chloe, known as Karma, an MIT graduate in robotics, invents Cellarium worm which was responsible for cyber-attack and has a crucial and decisive role to play in the storyline of the game. It is important to note as indicated in table 11, the several game endings are dependent on her survival in the game. Chloe has a key role in saving the world in the mission the Judgement Day from massive destruction as planned by Cordis Die.

The most important character of the villain, Menendez, is also a non-playable character. The entire game is about missions against him and his fellow mercenaries. The data analysis shows the attributes, values and the design decision pertaining to his character as follows:

It is through his character that certain values and common ideals are depicted in the overall narrative of the game. “Come, my friends. Tis not too late to seek a newer world”, Menéndez often refers to the poem Ulysses, defining his own character of strong determination and resilience. Retaliated by the CIA against his family, Menendez becomes a drug lord, and a charismatic leader of Cordis Die, a terrorist organisation which plans a massive attack against the USA.

The close reading of the game shows that his character is driven by the tragic loss of his sister Josefina in a military operation. Her death fuels revenge and induces

strong determination to wage war against those responsible for her death. He is resilient and strong headed and achieves his targets. It is important to note that the physical appearance of the antagonist matches the important traits of his personality. The figure 17 reflects the visual representation of Menendez playing a crucial role in reinforcing his narrative as a powerful and intimidating antagonist.

Figure 17

Visual Framing of Antagonist Body



While driven by revenge, his character is designed to show his personal growth. His character develops from a young boy witnessing their family warehouse set ablaze by the American owner and seeing the horrors of Contras rebellion in Nicaragua backed by America to a grown-up drug lord escaping CIA and indulging in arm supply in Angola and especially in Afghanistan to establish his own private army.

Menendez 'character is shown to be an epitome of anti-American sentiments. His personal trauma and the suffering afflicted by foreign intervention to his family and other countrymen made him create Cordis Die so that he could take revenge for the suffering and empower marginalised nations.

The character of Menendez has been designed to depict various facets of his personality. His visual appearance, dialogues, clothing, facial expressions and animation are consistent with the role assigned to him. His visual appearance shows his charismatic yet formidable personality, his well-groomed beard. He is shown wearing tailored suits or military style clothing that matches his dominating and powerful

personality. His facial expression and dialogues correspond with his personality and his role as an antagonist who is eager to upset the world order. "I will build a paradise from the ashes of the world", showcases his resilience to take revenge and control the geopolitics of the world.

Despite the collaboration of the world's best intelligence and military teams, his defiance; "You can't kill me! You can't kill me!" echoes in various missions and he resurfaces after every major combat. Though being a non-playable character, Menendez's character is designed to pose intense and strategic combats for the playable characters. The game mechanics, challenges and encounters relating to his characters are meaningful and involve the player. The events and conflicts in the narrative of the game are shaped by the decisions and outcomes of combat pertaining to Menedez. As mentioned earlier in the table no. 4.6, the ending of the game is dependent on what happens to Menendez in the last combat in the game.

The playable characters of the game include the character of protagonist David Mason codename Section. The close reading of the game shows that Frank Woods, Harper and Hudson are the significant playable characters of the game. Like the other two important characters, Menedez and David, Woods' role in the story of the game is also strong and meaningful. From the beginning of the game till the last mission of the game, Frank Woods contributed to the narrative progression within the game through. The story of the first part which is the recollection of past events and missions regarding Alex Mason, David and Menendez is narrated in part by Frank Woods. He has a supporting role in the storyline: a friend and teammate to his fellow CIA operative Alex Mason and a caretaker to David Mason. Though he assumes playable character in *Suffer with Me*, his muscular well-built body with many scars on his face and body reflects his combat experience. His fearless, loyal and resilient nature is evident in missions and the backstory. His loyalty for his friend Mason and sense of duty to the country is evident during various missions in Angola, Vietnam and Panama. However, his guardianship to David after his father's death (assumed) and mentorship to David during his JSCO operations and guidance in capturing Raul Menedez makes his character supportive and crucial to the storyline of the game.

David Mason codenamed Section served as a Lieutenant Commander of JSOC and a member of Navy Seal team, is the protagonist and main playable character in the selected game. David had a souring relationship with his father due to harsh upbringing

after the death of his mother. However, like an ordinary child, he wanted to spend time with his father who had his military commitments even after his retirement from the military. His physical features, sharp intellect and analytical skills make him a strong and influential character. The character of David Mason has been designed in a way that reflects that American military personnel are ready to sacrifice their life for the sake of their country as well as the world's betterment and peace. Initially it was Alex Mason, later on David Mason demonstrated their dedication to military service. Both Alex and Mason's life demonstrated that they recognized their duty to protect not their country as well as the global peace at large. It is evident through the participation in dangerous missions throughout the game that they can risk their lives and family for the sake of their military ideals. Their characters also show that the American government and military had a greater duty to save humanity and the world from the threats. Through the characters the military is glorified, and its ideals are projected.

Through the characterization of major and minor characters, the narrative of the game is built. The backstories of characters, for instance, Menendez and David, help to understand the narrative of the game. Menendez's individual trauma is revealed through his backstory which becomes motivation for his revenge. His character is built to stand for oppressed and marginalised individuals.

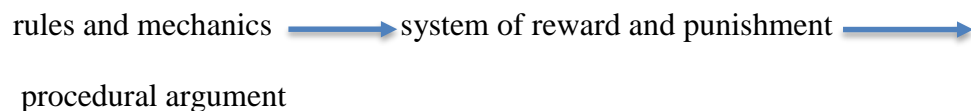
4.4.6 Storyworld

According to Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) narrative analytical framework, storyworld constitute an important aspect of narrative. The setting and the design of the storyworld of selected title captures the narrative focus and aligns with futuristic warfare which has been a key element of the storyline as well as the ludic action. The storyworld of the game also makes use of visual clues which have their significance in the narrative of the game. The use of visuals of bar graphs to show economical and marketing upheavals in China, clips of twitter, you tube and other social media trends to highlight the growing popularity of Cordis Die and its increasing number of followers around the globe are an important aspect of the story of the game. Without the dialogue and a commentary these visuals take part in storytelling within the game. This can be a narrational process of distributing information in the storyworld. Illusive and rich in evoking narrative potential

The story world of the game exhibits narrative potential. The use of objects or props, audio-visual elements, setting and environmental details of the selected title depicts narrative sensibilities. For instance, the opening scene shows David's body in a pool of blood while young Section expresses how his father has left them for the sake of the country and mercenaries like Menendez. Here the story world or environment of the story creates melodrama not through words but through a fire seen outside the window providing insight into the emotionally devastated state of a child's mind whose father was killed in front of him. The setting of the game environment and the story are consistent with each other.

4.5 Analysis of Rules, Mechanics and Visuals

This part of analysis involves the analysis of rules, mechanics and visual. It is important to mention that the analysis of rules, mechanics and parameter of the game reveal how the procedural mode operates in the game. In Call of Duty: Black Ops 2, the rules and mechanics of gameplay construct a procedural argument that valorises the ideal of American bravery and its covert operator's ability to curb global threats.



There are various missions in this selected title, such as Old Wounds, Suffer with Me and Fallen Angel, which rely on clear rules which reward decisiveness, tactical efficiency, and unwavering heroism under pressure. For instance, these missions put the player-character in dangerous life-threatening situations where success rests heavily on skilfully navigating dynamic combat situations, adhering to the chain of command, and eliminating threats in rapid succession. These game mechanics reiterates the procedural ideal that American covert operators possess the discipline, resourcefulness, and moral resolve to face complex global crises, thus perpetuating the narrative of the soldier as a heroic saviour of the world at large. In this regard, the design of missions, the parameters of the game and the punishment and reward system of the selected title further add the brave ideal into the gameplay experience, situating the player as an extension of this narrative. The rules and mechanics of the game devise a punishment and reward system for the player. For instance, during the first mission when the protagonist was told to join the team to find another squad mate and leave his only son behind. The parameters of game did not provide any choice at this stage. The game

cannot proceed further if the player does not join the team. The code of brave and heroic conduct was laid through the interplay of game mechanics and rules.

The data analysis shows that through the interplay of rules and mechanics, the game generates a procedural argument which cautions alliance with stereotypical enemies, such as the Mujahideen, Pakistan, and Russia, and suggest that such alliances are inherently unstable or doomed to fail. There are various missions in which these alliances are created often involve moments of betrayal, chaos, or moral ambiguity, framing these entities as unreliable or even duplicitous partners. For instance, during the mission in Afghanistan, Fallen Angel, the alliances with the Mujahideen were shown to serve American interests temporarily but ultimately collapse due to ideological and cultural differences. The mechanics of betrayal—through scripted enemy reversals or sudden narrative twists—reinforce the procedural notion that alliances with such factions are not viable for long-term strategic goals. Similarly, the game's parameters often force the player to assume an American perspective, implicitly framing other factions as antagonistic or expendable, which strengthens the narrative that American unilateralism is preferable.

The rules and mechanics in *Call of Duty: Black Ops* structure a procedural system for the player. It is important to mention here that the selected title shows the embedment of ideological arguments into its rules, mechanics, and parameters, subtly guiding the player toward specific conclusions. In this regard the objectives of missions, the placement of enemy in the game, and conditions for victory work together to convey the futility of depending on "the other" while emphasizing the reliability and strength of American autonomy. Parameters such as limited control over allied forces or the constant need to intervene directly to achieve objectives portray these alliances as ineffective or requiring constant supervision. These systems mirror real-world geopolitical narratives, reinforcing the procedural message that American soldiers and leadership must take primary responsibility for global security. By juxtaposing the heroism of American soldiers with the perceived flaws or failures of allied factions, the game constructs a procedural argument that aligns its gameplay mechanics with broader ideological narratives about power, loyalty, and global threats.

The next part of the analysis involves analysis of visual. There are three visuals/still images which have been selected for this purpose. The selected title has four different endings, however only one ending has a different setting for the central

character. The details of signified and the signifier of the selected image are given in table 12.

Table 12

Details of Signified and Signifier in the Selected Image of COD: BOII

Signified	Signifier	
	First order of signification/ denotation	Second order of signification/ connotation
1. Two male characters, one standing at the door of a military vehicle while the other is standing on the ground	1. The two white male characters are David and his squadmate Harper 2. Harper is fully equipped as a covert operator 3. David is about to get down from the military vehicle	1. Harper is shown to ensure the safety of David and is vigilant and well-equipped 2. David has more authority and is about to join his squadmate to complete the given military assignment
2. A young male character is pushing a wheelchair of an old male through a row of headstones in a graveyard	1. David and Woods are visiting the graveyard of Alex Mason 2. Woods is crippled and is dependent on David for his mobility	1. David and Woods are paying homage to David's father 2. Mason has sacrificed his life while Woods has sacrificed his mobility while he was part of CIA 3. Woods will be taken care of by David like Woods has done for him when he was left without his father. 4. Military (covert operators) are bound to sacrifice their lives
3. A face of male character	1. A young white male character 2. A focus on his face and eyes	1. The young David's face has been focussed 2. He is a little fatigued with a little unshaved hair on his jaws and cheeks 3. His watery eyes are reflective of his emotional state

The figure 18 shows the first appearance of the hero. The first image shows two male characters, the central character David and his teammate Harper. David is standing inside the military vehicle whose back doors are open while Harper is standing on the ground, and only half of his upper body is visible.

Figure 18

First Appearance of Hero in COD: BOII



Harper looks vigilant and active and seems to prepare for David's safe arrival. At the second level of signification, the image can be taken as reflection of David's authority and Harper's alertness. As the scene is part of the prologue when David is visiting Woods (his father's teammate) and suspecting the presence of the terrorist, Menendez. The image reflects team effort as well as the superiority of young military operative David.

Figure 19

Last Appearance of Hero in COD: BOII



The next image shows young David pushing the wheelchair among the rows of white headstones in the graveyard as shown in figure 20. This image is taken from the last mission.

Figure 20

Last Appearance of Hero of COD: BOII



Though crippled, Woods is wearing his military uniform while the young David is dressed casually. At the second level of signification, the image shows that the characters are moving out of the graveyard as they are in the opposite direction to the headstones. This image is part of the last scene when David and Woods have paid homage to Mason. The white headstone and the rows are reflective of the number of people who have sacrificed their lives for the noble cause of world's peace and national security.

4.6 Analysis of Framing

The data analysis reveals the process of framing at work in the text of the second selected title. The first step in analysis of framing includes identifying the common frames in the third title at both micro and macro level of the text. The second step involved the analysis of the process of selection and salience followed by analysis of functions of framing namely: defining the problem, identifying the cause, making moral judgement and giving recommendation on the issue. For the micro level, the list of words/key phrases and sentences were identified which depicted these frames while at macro level, the operational facets were analysed to find out how framing is operationalized through these facets in the text. The text of the selected title revealed the following common frames. The following analysis reveals how these frames are evoked through selection and salience within the text and how these frames function within the text of the selected title. The table 13 shows the common frames which were identified in the text.

Table 13*Common Frames in COD: BOII*

Frames
American military forces were framed as heroes
American CIA and Navy Seals were framed as noble and willing to sacrifice their lives to protect their country
American Military forces can avert the threat to global terrorism.
American Military forces can help prevent rebellion in different countries
Russia, Pakistan and Afghanistan were framed as allies to terrorist activities
American alliance can prevent new cold war
China's alliance with America can save the world

4.6.1 Selection and Salience

The data analysis of the text of the selected title reveals that the American military forces were framed as embodiments of heroism, nobility and sacrifice. The American military forces, namely CIA operatives and JSOC's (Navy Seal) are depicted as capable of combating terrorism and averting global catastrophes. The narrative of the selected title generated nobler frames for the American forces, highlighting their sacrifice and bravery. Furthermore, the Americans were shown to work for global peace, help curb rebellion in many countries and avert the next cold war.

Framing involves highlighting certain aspects of an issue more emphatically. The text of the selected title chooses to emphasise the heroism of the American military forces and their abilities to avert global disaster. Menendez represents terrorist groups/individuals who take their personal revenge and take help from various countries, like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Russia. While the text presents American military forces as miracle workers (Mission Time and Fate) and it is only the American or anyone who can form alliance with them can restore or establish peace and avert global threats. It is through the presentation of events and their textual framing that the American military forces are presented as capable of resolving the issues. For instance, in the Second chance, Briggs informs his team; "China has lost control, and they've

asked for our help”. The text explicitly places them at a higher pedestal and shows them capable of combat such catastrophic situations.

4.6.2 Define the Problem and Identify the Cause

The text of the selected title reveals that through framing the game explicitly frames Americans as heroes who are able to combat any situation/issue. The text presents a threat of global terrorism which can destroy the world, launch a massive cyber-attack and create a riot across the world. The antagonist Menendez launches a successful populist movement Cordis Die. However, the American intelligence is able to identify it and has the potential to curb it. It is important to mention that though Menendez has been shown “as the most dangerous terrorist since Osama Bin Laden” in the mission Pyrrhic Victory, however, his alliance and assistance from various parts of the world is also emphasised. For example, the antagonist gets help from groups/organisations/people from Panama, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Russia. The text highlights the vulnerability of the above-mentioned countries to aid the antagonist in his activities. For example, after faking his death he reappears in Panama as Woods discusses his past in the mission Suffer with me and works with the dictator Noriega as Woods says; “about a year later, he shows up in Panama with that piece of shit Noriega”.

The problem which has been emphasised through framing is not only the antagonist and his team which is the real threat. The text of the selected title clearly frames certain countries to develop alliance to such movements and be potentially a threat to global peace. As the text of the mission FOB Spectre reiterates Russia to have alliance with such movement and could result in a global catastrophe as Sg Section mentions; “If Russia caves in and joins SDC, they'd be the largest military force on the planet. Which is precisely what Menendez wants, setting up the superpowers to wipe each other out. Right now, Iran and India are both under threat. SDC's making their move. Time for JSOC to step up”.

Similarly, the dictator Noriega of Panama, initially aids the CIA in his operations but eventually saves and helps Menendez (Mission Suffer with Me). Another country Pakistan also protects Menendez and assists him against the operations of the CIA in the mission Fallen Angel. The data reveals that these countries and groups are shown to help Menendez on the same principle of dissatisfaction and outrage by their

respective political systems. The ISI leader speaks against the government of his own country to be selfish and corrupt and says, “They care. They care for their own interest, nothing more”. The antagonist fuels such sentiments and exploits them for his own schemes and claims; “They care nothing for the suffering of their people. Neither do the Americans, or the Chinese”.

While the protagonist and his team is trying to record the conversation of Menendez and ISI leader to get intel on their plans in the flooded city Lahore in Pakistan, Harper points out the lack of governance in such a situation; “What a fucking mess... Obviously, these folks weren't prepared for the flooding. Looks like they've just been left to fend for themselves. Not good... Not good”.

Similarly, Afghan mujahideen were also framed as vulnerable partners to such crimes. The text of the selected title does not use fake locations/people/groups to identify them as enemies or allies to the antagonist. The text of the selected title reveals that terrorism and alliance of these groups can dismantle world’s peace. During the mission of Achilles Veil, the teammate of the protagonist points out how the populist movement had brought the new Cold War between the superpowers, as Section points out; “Menendez's network... All countries getting fucked by the new Cold War”. The game explicitly frames the American military forces as capable of averting global threats through their heroic abilities. However, the other superpowers are shown lacking farsightedness, and it is only American forces which can respond to call of duty and save the world.

4.6.3 Make Moral Judgement and Give Recommendations

Framing is both evaluative and prescriptive in nature. The data clearly affirms the positive framing for American forces and highlights their superiority by framing them as heroes and the saviour of the world who can confront and counteract any global threat. It is important to understand that Menendez, the antagonist in the selected title, has been offended by the CIA and American businessman. His family business was ruined by an American businessman and his dear sister became a victim during operations of CIA operators. This is what had made Menendez to emerge as the deadliest terrorist after Osama Bin Laden and who wants to **see this world burn** the Russian captive and an old ally of Menendez gives intel to interrogating Woods and Mason. However, using selection and salience and de-emphasizing the real cause of

rebellion, the text only highlights the American forces as capable of resolving the conflicts. It is important to note that through deemphasis, the cause of the revenge has been ignored. Menendez gives them the real reason behind his outrageous plan to destroy them and says, “She was taken from me. Do you know what that feels like yet?... An American torched the warehouse for insurance money. 11000 dollars, that was the value they placed on her life. She was the reason for me to live.... Your father, and his people, took Josefina from me”.

The data reveals that the text explicitly generates a morally nobler frame for American forces and presents them as the saviour against the ones who want to spread tyranny in this world and evoke new cold war and set the superpowers against each other. The frames also function to offer remedies for the issue at hand. Here the text emphasises that it is through the alliance of China and America that the global conflicts can be resolved as Admiral Briggs announces in the mission *Odysseus*; “SDC is finished, Secretary Petraeus. America and China joining forces truly marks the beginning of a new era”. This is the key focus of the selected title that whether it is new cold war or technologically advanced warfare or any global threat it can be resolved through the Alliance of China and America.

One of the functions of framing is to make recommendations about the issue which has been framed. The text of the selected title emphasises the bravery of the American forces in every combat such as “You fight bravely, American”, in the mission *Old Wounds* and “The only way they'll find out is if they take us down. You know that ain't gonna happen”. The frames assert the unlikelihood of American defeat of any kind as the protagonist Woods makes a claim in the mission *Old Wounds*; “The only way they'll find out is if they take us down. You know that ain't gonna happen”.

The claims and solutions which are emphasised through framing reject the possibility of any other organisation's viability to offer protection from global threats. For instance, SDC which was the alliance of the Asian countries is shown to lose its significance in the midst of global catastrophe. As Briggs makes a claim in the mission *The Second Chance*; “This is the beginning of the end of the SDC, people. You keep this up, and they will be finished”. The solution, as suggested in the text of the selected title, cannot be found in any other organisation or alliance as Briggs asserts again; “Russia's foreign minister has officially denounced the SDC, and has declared it a belligerent threat to the peace and stability of the civilised world”.

The restoration of world's peace, as emphasised through framing, rests with the American Military forces and any other solution loses its significance which are made evident through the various endings which shows the riots and cyberattacks across the world if the alliance is not made with America.

4.6.4 Operational Facets of Framing

At the macro level, framing is operationalized through storyline, characterization, game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules. The frames are activated and embedded in the text at these points.

4.6.4.1 Storyline and Characterization

The main story of the selected title is about the abilities of the American military forces to avert threats of global riots and catastrophes. The story of the selected title revolves around the playable-character David whose father and his team had already risked their lives as CIA operators for their country. The game presents revengeful drug dealer Menendez as a threat to global peace and capable of manipulating the superpowers and engaging them in a new cold war.

Menendez took three decades to launch the populist movement of Cordis Die with two billion followers across the globe. There are people and organisations around the globe in various countries who were aiding him to make his movement and action successful. The Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, ISI in Pakistan, Noriega a dictator in Panama and many others assist him in executing his plans in many missions. It is through the main story and the subsequent events which evoke nobler frames for American military forces, for instance, the CIA operatives like Woods, Mason and Hudson were ready to risk and sacrifice their lives for their assigned missions. They show matchless team spirit and friendship and have strong ties which make them sacrifice their lives for friends and teammates.

During the mission Pyrrhic Victory, Mason after retiring from the CIA, leaves his son to rescue his teammate and friend Woods whom he expects to do the same for him. Similarly, Hudson, another teammate, sacrifices his life for young David. Through major events in various missions, the game points out the potential allies of the terrorist. Menendez, the leader of Cordis Die takes help from ISI Pakistan, Mujahideen in Afghanistan and Noriega, a dictator from Panama and Russia. The selected title does not use fictional enemies/countries as antagonists or allies of antagonists. Menendez, a

Nicaraguan drug dealer, who is offended by the CIA and an American businessman, wages war against the west. The selected title explicitly frames these countries as partners to his plans to terrorise the world. The storyline evokes negative framing for Russians who can conspire against America and can help the antagonist initiate a new cold war and destroy world peace.

The characters become strong sites to activate the frames which are affixed to the American military forces. The character of protagonist Alex Mason, his son David Mason and Woods served to exhibit the heroism and nobler ideals associated with the military forces. Through their characters, the game manifests bravery, sacrifice and brotherhood among squad mates. The protagonist, Alex Mason in the story of the 1980's forsakes his family to rescue his squad mate. Similarly, the characters of Farid, Hudson and Harper sacrifice their lives to save their country from disaster. Similarly, the characters of the antagonist and his team also evoke the negative framing. Both the characterization and the main story serve to trigger these frames in the text. It is through these operational facets that these frames are made functional via the sequence of events and the characters who are involved in these acts.

4.6.4.2 Game Mechanics, Rules and Aesthetics

The data analysis reveals that the framing at the micro level of the selected title is further strengthened at the macro level through game mechanics, rules and aesthetics. The aesthetics of the game involves how the game looks, sounds and feels hepatically. There is a significant contribution of visual aspects, graphics and animation in structuring the story and rendering an immersive ludic experience as well as strengthening the frames within the overall narrative of the game.

The data reveals that visually, the selected title, reinforces the frames which are identified at the micro level. The heroism of the American forces is clearly depicted through the visuals showing the bravery, sacrifice and prowess of the American military forces. The visuals showcasing Sg. Woods badly wounded and barely recognizable from the wounds and a burning man trapped inside an upturned buffel in the mission Pyrrhic victory truly underscores the horrific enemy encountered by these brave commanders and their team. Despite the hostility which is emphasised through the visual depiction, the JSOC team is shown to be resilient and steadfast in the face of adversary. The character design matches the strength, resilience and preparedness for

any combat. The physical appearance of protagonist David, his teammate Harper as well as Briggs, the in charge of the Navy Seal team conforms to the collective frames of strength and valour.

The physical appearance of both the protagonist(s) and the main antagonist aligns with the frames established for them in the text. For instance, the muscular built and physically fit appearance of David speaks of his heroic strength and capabilities as shown in figure 21. Through the physical appearance a reinforcement of physical preparedness for the rigors of war and possession of stamina for endurance is established. The uniform, the gears and the tactical vests worn by the JSOC team reinforces their professionalism and readiness which is aligned with the frames evoked at macro level of the text. Similarly, the visual details of the antagonist with a prominent facial scar help to establish him as a formidable adversary. These details parallel the frames evoked for the ruthless and extreme force of enmity faced by the protagonist and his team.

Figure 21

Alignment of Physical Appearance of Hero with Frames Elicited in Text



The physical appearance of the protagonist aligns well with the common frames. The figure 21 reflects the physical portrayal of the hero which aligns with the frames of strength (both physical and moral) evoked in the text.

The animation and graphics of the intense combats in the valleys of Afghanistan, flooded streets of Pakistan, thick forests of Angola and sky rocketing building of Los Angeles aptly captures the contrast that exists between the formidable

enemy forces and the brave American military forces. The synergy of animation and graphics create an immersive portrayal of combat scenes and ensures complete involvement of the player in the narrative of the game. The graphics of the selected title effectively captures the futuristics and technologically advanced warfare scenarios. The animation of high-tech drones, optical camouflage, concussion grenade, the shock charge, claws and numerous modern weapons and vehicles reinforces the extremity and intensity of the adversaries as well as the preparedness of highly skilful and brave American military forces. Apart from the use of visuals and animation, the role of sound is also fundamental in initiating and sustaining the frames evoked at the micro level. The sounds of voice overs, explosives, gunshots, drones, claws and the other modern weapons makes the narrative more impactful.

The game mechanics which creates the ludic experience for the player also serve to operationalize the frames which have been identified at micro level. It is through game mechanics that the player is allowed and restricted to perform certain actions in the game. The game mechanics and parameters perform the same function which the text at the micro level carries out. For instance, living up to the ideals of brotherhood and risking one's life for friends and teammates is a common frame. While the ex-CIA operative Alex Mason leaves his embittered son and risks his life to find his missing friend in Angola, there are very few choices given to him during his search for his friend. Firstly, he must assist Savimbi in the Civil war in Angola and then through his assistance he manages to find Woods in a container on a barge. While they are fleeing from the Cuban forces, Hudson and Mason indulge in intense combat and have to protect the wounded partner, Woods. The player-character encounters difficulty in lifting and indulging in fighting against the huge number of enemies. However, the game mechanics restrict the player to carry wounded Woods and continue the fight. The game mechanics sustain the heroic deed of the player-character.

4.7 Analysis of Narrative

This part of analysis includes the analysis of narrative of the third selected title that is GTA-V. The analysis will include exploring the narrative through arcs, characters, storyworld, role of player agency in narrative progression and narrativized interface.

GTA-V is an action-adventure game, a seventh sequel to the Grand Theft Auto Series, developed by Rockstar North and published by Rockstar Games in 2013. It is set in the fictional state of San Andreas, like Southern California. The player takes the role of criminals performing different jobs which are provided by contractors. The single-player story features three protagonists—Micheal, Franklin and Trevor. These characters have distinct roles in GTA-V, each contributing significantly to the main story of this title. The interplay between the trio has dual function; it adds depth to the narrative at the same time allow players to explore various aspects of morality, ambition and crime through the ability of character switch. The player can switch between these characters in this open-world game which offers 69 main missions and a number of side quests/missions. There are certain missions which are character specific and mandatory apart from the realm of interesting activities. The game is a multi-layered narrative which relates the complexity of morality and crime while commenting on contemporary American society and offer a compelling and immersive storytelling experience.

4.7.1 Narrative Arcs and Narrative Progression

The first aspect of narrative analysis involves investigation of narrative arcs and their role in the overall narrative progression. The grand/metanarrative narrative of the selected title spans over main 69 subsidiary arcs and several optional arcs can be built to complete side quests. The open-world nature of GTA-V provides the player the chance to explore the vast city, complete the main and side missions while immersing in the rich and complex narrative of the game.

The narrative unfolds the story of three playable characters: Micheal, Franklin and Trevor. However, Micheal is the central character and most of the narrative is built around him and his family. The game introduces Trevor being betrayed by his crime partner Michael who fakes his death with the help of a corrupt government law enforcing agency. Franklin considers Michael as his mentor who can teach him to excel in his criminal career. The union of the trio strengthens their robbery execution. However, the situation gets complicated as the corrupt agencies and private militia trap them to rob banks and depositories to make more money for them. Michael has a strong urge to live a normal life with his family and wants to pursue his career in film making. However, his past does not let him live the life he wants for himself. The corrupt government agents and his mistakes push him back to rejoin the world of thefts and heists. The meta-narrative includes major heists which involve the three protagonists,

though unwilling, Michael teams up with Trevor and Franklin. The corrupt government and private agencies trap them and force them to work for them. However, Michael decides to leave it after the last assigned heist. The interactive narrative provides a chance to the player to select the ending of the story within the grand narrative through the player-character of Franklin. The provision of three choices lead to three different outcomes/endings for the overall narrative: the trio gets rid of corrupt agencies or Franklin kills Michael as an assignment by the agencies or Michael kills Trevor. Each ending results in a different structure for the overall grand narrative and it shows a very loose adherence to the setup-complication-development-resolution structure.

It is important to note that the selected title is a single-player game, however, the narrative can be built through three protagonists through character switch ability by the player. The partial ability of character switch leads to variation in the narrative to certain extent. The ability of character switch is often player-determined or auto-switch.

The meta-arc of the game is constructed through 69 main subsidiary arcs which are activated in a certain sequence. Each arc contributes to the narrative progression of the grand narrative of the selected game. Furthermore, many subsidiary arcs have complete mini story which is connected to the grand narrative. For instance, the subsidiary arc, Daddy's Little Daughter, is about Micheal's relationship with his kids and his efforts to save them from the trouble. The beginning of the subsidiary arc shows that Micheal after smashing Jimmy's TV plans a bicycle ride at Vespucci Beach with him to restore ties with his son. During their ride, he discovers that his daughter is meeting men from the prom industry. His efforts to save her from the trouble includes swimming to the yacht, stealing a Sea shark boat and getting rid of the chasing owner of the boat and safely taking her home. The narrative of these arcs shows the potential of these arcs to exist as a complete narrative entity on their own as well as a connected narrative to the meta-arc.

The main story within the grand narrative keeps all subsidiary arcs well connected. Some heists are carried out in more than one subsidiary arcs. The heists are long and involve planning and execution in a number of missions. For example, the Merryweather heist includes three preparatory arcs and a fourth arc for the completion of the heist. This heist is completed in four subsidiary arcs: Scouting the Port, the Minisub, the Cargo bob and the Merryweather Heist. This interconnectedness of

subsidiary arcs makes player's action feel impactful, ensures player's participation and involvement.

In this way these subsidiary arcs become sequential and connected. The first subsidiary arc requires the player to plan the mission and gather necessary information. In this case Trevor has the choice to plan the heist and later on the other two characters join him and the character switch takes place as required. The second subsidiary arc requires the player to acquire the mini submarine from the port of Los Santos and the third subsidiary arc involves stealing a Cargo bob from the Fort Zancudo military base and flying it to the Sandy Shores Airfield and landing the Cargo bob. The heist is completed in the fourth subsidiary arc of the Merryweather Heist. In this way these subsidiary arcs are well-knitted and are connected through the ludic action and continuity of the same focus of the story.

Completing a single heist in number of missions also serve to fully immersive the player in narrative and experience the outcome of the player's choice. For instance, the preparatory arcs allow player to plan the heist and make selection of team members, weapons, vehicle and nature of heist. For example, Casing the Jewel Store, offers two preparatory missions for the smart approach and one preparatory mission for the loud approach.

The narrative of subsidiary arcs also show variation in its structure. There is a loose adherence to setup-complication-development-resolution pattern. The structural pattern within these arcs does not exhibit a strict compliance to the structure mentioned above. For example, the twenty sixth subsidiary arc Did someone say yoga involves Michael trying hard to be with his family. First, he practises yoga with his unhappy wife then gets betrayed by his son Jimmy who drugged him and shoved him off the car. Finally, Michael hallucinates and when he reaches home barefooted, he realises that his family has left him. Though this arc has a significant contribution to the grand arc reflecting Michael's unhappy family life, it bears a different structure. However, this loose structure and sudden ending of this arc and many other subsidiary arcs reflect the true nature of real-life unpredictability in crime and conflicts. The non-linear structure of these arcs also serves to provide quick transition to the next mission while keeping the player fully engaged in the narrative.

The data analysis also reveals the network of micronarratives or smallest unit of arcs within the subsidiary arcs. During any mission in these subsidiary arcs, the player must complete several objectives to complete the mission assigned in any subsidiary arcs. The micronarrative formation occurs through these objectives and bears a loose structural compliance to setup-complication-development-resolution pattern. For instance, one of the objectives in the narrative of the subsidiary arc of Reuniting the Family includes Going to the Bean Machine as a reconciliation effort to amend his relationship with his wife. The micronarrative of Going to the Bean machines includes Michael's meeting with Jimmy, driving to the coffee bar with him, interacting with the yoga trainer and his wife and re-establishing the broken ties with his wife. These smallest units of narratives are complete units in themselves and are connected to the narrative of their subsidiary arc.

There is considerable impact of micronarrative on the overall story within these games. These smaller micronarratives provide room for character development. As seen in the case of previous example, the micronarrative involves Micheal to display his concern for his family, amends ties with his wife, confronts Fabien and reassert his presence in Amenda's life. This micro narrative provides deeper insight into protagonist motivation and relationships with other characters while contributing to the overall story and narrative progression. Through these smaller narrative unit, the player can experience the emotional beat which might be part of some of characters and is rarely reflected. For example, Michael was shown in police protection after being disloyal to his criminal friends, provide reflection of intimate moment of characters in moments of such micro narrative.

The narrative of these smallest arcs could be built in various ways, thus result in variation in narrative. For instance, many objectives within a subsidiary arc can be accomplished in many ways. In the subsidiary arc of Casing the Jewellery Store, the planning requires Micheal to dress-up decently and change his casual attire. The direction of the narrative can be altered if the player decides to visit a nearby Clothing Store and buy a dress (if his credits allow) or head home and directly change and engage in a dialogue with his available family members and continues his mission. These choices can create variation in the narrative of these smaller units.

Furthermore, in the same arc of Casing the Jewellery Store, the player has been given the ability to play the game in many possible ways. For instance, the player has

a choice to rob the bank in a stealth and loud mode. Both choices involve different series of events. The player opting for any mode requires planning and their execution in a different manner. Thus, these choices can create different narratives within the micro-narrative. These micronarratives offer more immersive and engaging experience to the player. The player observes the consequences of the choices, gets more chances to explore the diversity of the game world and interacts more frequently with NPCs. It is important to mention that the player has greater freedom in micronarratives. This smaller narrative allows player a greater sense of freedom where he can perform the action/combat in his more personalized style. However, the variations through these micronarratives have less meaningful impact on the overall story within the game. The impact of these micronarrative is limited and restricted. The overall story remains unaffected by these smaller moments of freedom and choice.

The selected title is a single player game; however, it has three protagonists. The narrative of the selected title can have variations through the partial control of character switch which enables the player to assume the role of any of the three protagonists. However, this ability is partially controlled by game mechanics and often the player is given freedom to choose the character.

The narrative of the selected title is non-linear. The open-world structure enables the player to indulge in actions/events at his choice of times and makes it non-linear. For instance, the game design allows the player to switch between three playable characters. It is noted that the switching of the characters within the game is partially structured phenomena. However, once the switching/swapping is enabled, the player determines the choice of the characters. The character switching in GTA-V allows player to switch between Franklin, Micheal and Trevor. Each character is given special ability which serve as an advantage during the game play. Franklin has precision driving ability which allows him to slow down time while driving. This ability provides player a chance to navigate corners easily and tactfully and by-pass hurdles during high-speed chases. Similarly, Trevor rage ability allows player to be more effective in tense combat with his ability to dominate the battlefield and reduce the risk of self-damage. While Michael special ability of bullet time allows player to aim and shoot more precisely by slowing down the time. The use of unique abilities and character switching provide diverse gameplay experience and greater sense of free will to the player. Through character switching, the player avoids monotony, experience multiple

perspectives and remains involved in extended gameplay of GTA-V. Both element of non-linear story structure and ability of character switch allows player to experience the dynamic and engaging gameplay. For example, the ability to switch between the three protagonists Trevor, Michael and Franklin offer variation in gameplay styles and increases engagement. Franklin street level crime can be swapped with more chaotic, yet thrilling perspective played through Trevor. However, the ability of character switch is partially available and can be activated on number of occasions. Furthermore, certain missions are partially character specific.

The lack of traditional structure in subsidiary arcs also serve to enhance player's experience. The unresolved conflicts or objective completion are extended through non-linear structure within these arcs. In this way, the nonlinear structure and loose adherence to traditional structure serve to establish narrative continuity in the meta-arc and also impact's player's experience by providing more flexible and player-driven exploration of themes like freedom and morality. The narrative of GTA-V displays basic narrative structure that is beginning, middle and end, however, its noncompliance to traditional structure is furthered through the character switch which leads to multi-layered storytelling experience where players are not simply passive recipients of a fixed narrative but active participants who influence the pace and direction of the story.

By loosening the traditional structure, GTA V introduces a sense of unpredictability and freedom that enhances immersion. Players can engage with the story at their own pace, choosing when to advance in the main narrative or pursue side activities, such as heists, races, or personal character development. This flexibility often results in a more personalized experience, where the player's choices, actions, and even distractions shape how the story unfolds, giving them a sense of ownership and agency within the game world.

However, this loose adherence also impacts the coherence of the overall narrative. While the traditional arc of rising action, climax, and resolution remains present, the fluidity of switching between characters can create a fragmented experience. The player may find it challenging to form deep emotional connections with the characters, as the constant shifts between perspectives can reduce the focus on any single protagonist's journey. This, in turn, might dilute the sense of linear character development typically seen in more traditional narratives, though it allows for richer

exploration of different aspects of heroism, morality, and conflict, making the game feel more like a complex mosaic rather than a single, unified story.

In sum, the impact of loose adherence to a traditional narrative structure in GTA V results in a more open and flexible gameplay experience that enhances player agency, yet potentially compromises narrative coherence and emotional connection, creating a distinctive, multi-faceted experience that reflects the game's themes of choice and consequence.

4.7.2 Player Agency and Narrative Progression

The next step in narrative analysis is the analysis of player agency and its impact on the narrative progression. Bizzocchi (2012) concept of (bounded) player agency refers to the role of player on the narrative of the game. It investigates how far the player can influence the narrative.

The data analysis reveal that GTA-V has open-world feature which allows the player to experience the narrative of the game at his terms at varying scales in the game. The main ludic-actions and the side quests provide multitude of possibilities for the player to engage in actions to proceed within the game. This enables the player to play his part in structuring the narrative of the selected title. The overall narrative (main storyline missions) of the game shows that the player is given several choices of varying degrees. The game narrative allows the player to build certain aspects of narrative in the main story missions. The player can shape the narrative through the choices which are offered in the game.

The table in appendix D shows the impact of player-character choice on the narrative of the mission. The four heists provide the player with the freedom to choose a plan of action/approach for the heist. Each approach, as evident from the table, has a different narrative outcome within the same mission. For example, during the Heist of the Big Score, the player opting for subtle approach vs. obvious approach has a different set of actions and outcomes. The subtle approach involves stopping the Union Depository Van under the bridge and taking control of vans. It is followed by providing a safe passage to the van and later on defending the crew from the attack of Merryweather squad safely whereas the loud approach requires the player to break the wall inside the bank which alerts the guard and later on the cops wanted level is raised for the player and the player has to dodge the police in order to complete the mission.

These choices bring variation at various levels: the objectives, the ludic action and the narrative.

These choices also affect the number of preparatory missions as the subtle approach in the Big Score requires four set-ups and subsequent actions and three set-ups for the obvious approach for the same mission. It is important to note that each approach requires a different course of action. For example, opting for a subtle approach requires the player to use a car till the acquisition of the bank's vans whereas the obvious approach involves cars and planes.

Similarly, the player has the freedom to choose crew members for a particular heist. Depending upon the approach and the actions required in the heist, the player is required to select crew members of varying ability. For instance, gunman, hackers and drivers are required in the major heists performed in the selected title. In the case of the first heist, the Jewel Store, the player may select Eddie, Talina or Karim as one of the drivers for the heists. It is important to note that the choice of approach also affects the provision of crew members. Similarly, the player can select any hacker from the available choices. For example, Paige, Christian or Rickie are the hackers with varying abilities and charges. It is important to note that many approaches may not require certain crew members. In the case of The Bureau Raid, selecting a covert approach does not require hackers whereas the ludic action of a roof approach requires the services of a hacker to complete the mission.

However, it is important to note that the overall narrative is not affected by these choices and these choices bring variation on a small scale. The case of approaches for instance, may change the course of action during the mission, however, does not impact the overall narrative. These choices may bring variations at the level of interaction with NPC's or can increase or decrease the number of objectives within a specific mission. The player's choice has a limited or no impact on the ending of the missions. The table in appendix A clearly shows that each approach may have a different set of actions, however, the mission gets completed and achieves its final objective of either securing the money or the device or any other fulfilment of the final requirement. For example, the Jewel Store heist narrative outcome is the same for both approaches that are successful stealth.

The player is given considerable freedom in developing the narrative of the game through the certain number of choices given in the ludic action of the game. These choices impact the narrative in a meaningful way. The narrative of GTA-V is mainly about five grand heists that the three playable characters must perform. The narrative of these heists provides the player the opportunity to alter the course of action to a certain extent. The Jewel Store Job, The Merryweather Heist, The Red Bureau and The Big Score heists offer a number of choices for the player which.

The Jewel Store Job requires Micheal and Franklin to steal jewels from the Vangelico Jewel Store. The player, here, has been given to choose from the two options to perform the heist: the Smart approach and the loud approach. Each of the approaches has different narrative requirements which the player fulfils through the selection of these approaches. Each approach requires a different set of preparatory missions which the player has to go through, consequently bringing about a change in the narrative of the heist. For instance, the smart approach has two preparatory missions, and their subsequent different narrative as compared to the loud approach which requires only one preparatory mission. Depending upon these variations through preparatory missions, the narrative pertaining to the beginning of the actual mission shows variation as it affects how the stealth will take place in the ludic action of this missions. Certain missions involve planning and executing the heists and require extra crew members. Here the game narrative allows the player to exercise his choice in selecting the crew members from the given choice.

The player has the agency to influence the narrative of the game through the ability of character switch. The ability of character switch allows the player to change his role/character among the three characters—Micheal, Franklin and Trevor. The player has the choice to switch to the character of his choice within the game and play the available missions. This leads to variation in the narrative at the level of sequence of events in the main story of the game.

However, the player bounded agency surface in the narrative as there are several missions which are character-specific, and the character-switch ability cannot be activated. For example, missions pertaining to Micheal's personal matters and Franklin's cannot be switched. The missions Daddy's Little Daughter and Family Reuniting are played through the character of Micheal only whereas Scouting the Port, Minisub and Cargo bob are restricted to Trevor.

However, the game limits the player agency through a controlled character switch mechanism which is observed in many missions. The character switch option is either disabled. /Deactivated and the player has to resume the ludic action through the available character only. Similarly, the player agency is also controlled through auto-character switch in the game/ludic action. For instance, the mission Pack Man is played through the player-characters of Franklin and Trevor Philips. The mission can be started as player-character of Trevor or Franklin as there are instances of limited agency within the narrative of the game.

The main ludic action of the game is based on reaching destination points through driving vehicles. The narrative of the game renders a certain degree of freedom to the player in these situations. The player-character can drive his own car or steal any vehicle parked near him. The player can also stop a slow-moving car and carjack it easily. The game mechanics often allows the player to buy the car of his choice online using his phone. The player-characters have their primary vehicle which is usually parked in the garage of their safe houses and the player-character can access it. For instance, Trevor has a red Canis Bodhi which is only driven by him. However, often the player can steal the car and usually drives it without getting into any trouble. During the mission Daddy's little Daughter, Micheal wants to reestablish his relationship with his son Jimmy and plans a bike ride on the beach. Micheal may drive the car which is parked in his house. Or the player can steal any car and drive to the destination.

One of the features of the game enables the player to use the mobile for various purposes which has an impact on the narrative of the game. Through the mobile phone the player gets scripted calls, however, the player can access the phone for the various apps as well as calls. The player can get his in-game progress through the phone. The narrative of the game progresses as the player gets updated objectives. The player's access to the phone and its app enables the player to find and access those objectives. However, the player has the choice to use the phone or opt for any other means. For example, the player has to get the fire truck as a part of Heist set-up for the Bureau Raid. The player can get it through many ways: calling 911 or going to the station and stealing it. The player may use his phone for fake fire breakout and steal the truck from the driver and use it during the heist. The player's choice of using the phone to receive and write emails contribute to the narrative at a small scale. For instance, after Micheal's family leaves him, the player may receive or decline the calls from his

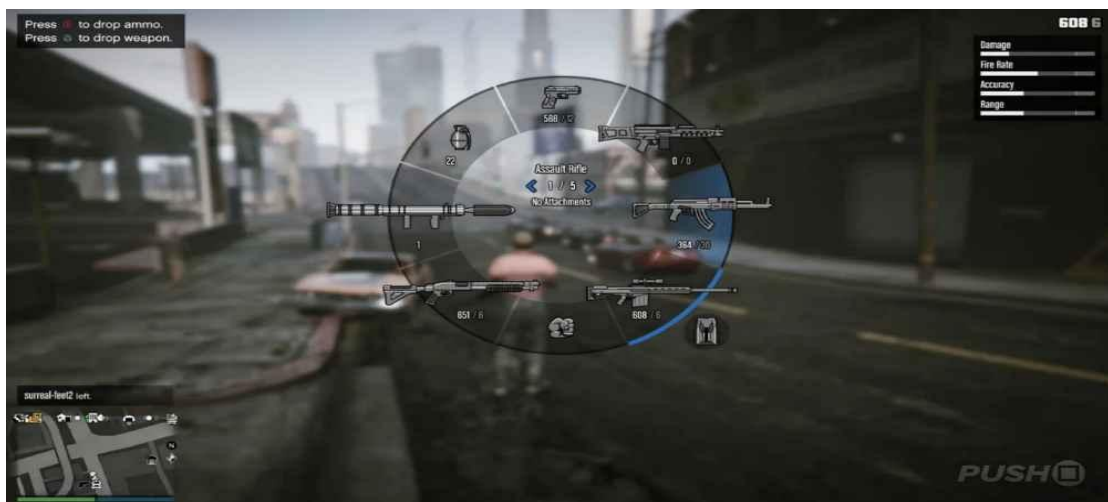
children Jimmy or Tracey. If the player picks the call from Tracey who gets in trouble, the player has the choice to help her save from the stalker (side mission Doting Daddy) or does not pick and resume the ongoing mission.

These small choices and their subsequent course of actions contribute to the overall narrative progression of the game. The player has the freedom to perform or not perform any action. For instance, responding to emails and calls. Franklin gets a call from Amanda to find out how Micheal is doing before their reconciliation. During any mission the player has also the liberty to act in various ways. For example, Doting Daddy requires the player to find the stalker who was creating a problem for Tracey. However, the player-character gets the option of sparing or killing the stalker. These small choices have a minor impact on the narrative of the mission.

The open-world feature of the game provides immense freedom to the player to navigate through the game space. The player can drive for hours, visit places, beaches or clubs, get tattoos, repair vehicles, visit saloons and nightclubs, go parachuting or swim under sea and explore.

Figure 22

Choices to Switch or Buy Weapons



The player can buy cars, clothes and purchase stocks. However, it is important to note that these choices and player's decisions have little impact on the overall narrative. The game enables the player to select, switch and buy weapons according to the requirement and choice of the player as shown in figure 22. The Ammu-Nation (weapon store) keeps the player updated through text messages on new weapons which are available at the store.

Furthermore, the player can activate the weapon wheel during missions or wanted levels to select the weapon and use them. The figure 21 shows the weapon wheel which offer choices. The game allows the player to switch the weapons. no impact on the narrative of the game. However, it renders a sense of freedom and choice to the player at the same time provides the player an opportunity to indulge in the realm of virtual activities.

For example, while rescuing Floyd during a mission, the player may use the gun/pistol of his choice and may also use throwables like grenades or Jerry cans to effectively combat during the mission. There is a wide range of weapons available in the weapon wheel such as handguns, machine guns, throwables, assault rifles, sniper rifles, shot guns and grenade launchers. The player has the freedom to choose among the weapons and use them during the ludic action to complete the mission.

Apart from manifestation of player's agency through character switch, selection of approaches and other aspects producing variation in narrative and its progression, GTA-V's endings provide another freedom for the player to structure three different endings. The player is given agency to end the game as he/she appropriates. After the mission The Big Score, it is through the character of Franklin, the player may choose from the three choices and structure the narrative in different ways. The table shows three choices player-character Franklin gets and the outcome of these choices. After the last grand heist, it is through the character of Franklin, the player decides the outcome and ending for the game. Franklin is visited by Steve Haines (FIB agent) and Devin Weston (a manipulative billionaire). The interaction with both put Franklin in a position to kill Trevor or Micheal. The narrative of the game places Franklin in a decisive position by killing or sparing any of the two or even both and opting for the third way—killing the enemies and sparing friends.

Here the player-character can select any of the three options and steer the narrative and direct it to a certain ending. However, each option presents a different narrative through a specific mission. The player gets these choices through the cell phone screen as A: Kill Trevor, B: kill Michael or C: Death Wish. Each of the choices contain a different set of actions in their subsequent missions.

Each choice engages the player in a different mission and has different outcomes which shape the narrative differently. The player gets the chance to save any

of the characters or kill the archenemy. The third choice seems to bear a morality of its own kind: killing all who sets you against your partners/friends/mentor. The first two choices are the hardest one, however through cutscene and interactions among characters each choice is justified. However, these choices are predetermined, and the player has to select any of the three to complete the ludic actions. Through these choices, the game provides a great degree of freedom to the player. The player weaves a different narrative in each choice and contributes to a different narrative.

The player agency in terms of choice of endings is not very straightforward. For instance, the two choices which are about killing Michael or Trevor are not easy for the player. GTA-V can be played through first- and third-person perspective in the open world and is highly immersive and the player is fully involved in all three playable characters. The auto and player-character switch ability enables the player to fully adopt the character and immerse in the story-world. Here, both choices are difficult for the player-character of Franklin, who considers Michael his mentor and teacher and is also not willing to betray (like Michael) his new friend. The third choice saves all of them, the trio puts an end to capitalist mercenaries and corrupt government and private agencies.

However, it is noted that despite the open-world feature of the game and a varying degree of player agency, the concept of bounded agency is observed. Despite the choices and possibilities, the player is bound to surrender to the possible outcomes.

4.7.3 Storyworld

Another important aspect of narrative analysis involves storyworld, as a significant constituent of narrative. The storyworld of GTA V is rich, dynamic and full of NPC's. The world inhabited in GTA-V is set in Los Santos and the areas of San Andreas which reflects inspiration from the region of Los Angeles. The storyworld of the selected title offers a multitude of activities and interactive narrative building capacities. The storyworld of GTA-V is expansive in magnitude for the ludic challenges and the narrative experience for the player. It is big and full of details for gameplay and narrative sensibilities to progress. The scale of navigation for the player is immense in the open-world of GTA-V. The gameplay in a rich and elaborated canvas of GTA-V is engaging and immersive. It is through the storyworld that the players are introduced to missions, side quests and interact with NPCs and switching of the characters take place.

The design of the world of GTA-V is dynamic for driving the vehicles and occasional shootings which are required in certain mission objectives. The player can walk on foot, drive vehicles of (available) choices. The player can engage in multitude of activities in this world. The player can indulge in scuba diving, darts, tennis, golf, triathlon, swimming, parachuting and flying. The design of this open world provides infrastructural requirements for these activities to take place. The player is free to run, jump, swim or use any vehicle to navigate in this world.

The setting and design of the virtual world of the selected place is appropriate to the storyline, missions and side quests. Apart from these, the free navigational space provided here is rich in detail. Most of the ludic action takes place on roads, driving vehicles and committing various heists. The design of the storyworld accommodates these actions. For example, the vast networks of roads that stretch across the fictional setting of Blaine County and Los Santos provide an immersive virtual space for players to navigate. Majority of the missions include driving to the destination through a variety of vehicles. The visual roads of the selected game are navigated with the help of Global Positioning System (GPS). The waypoints are either plotted by the game mission or by the player's own navigational choices, in both cases, the mini maps and GPS system work well within the virtual roads of the GTA-V. There is a vast variety of the vehicles which the player uses to traverse in the virtual space of the selected title. The total number of vehicles is 738 which includes boats, cars, motorcycles, helicopters, planes, and special vehicles that the player can buy or steal in the game. The scope of selection provides a more real-life engaging experience. The player gets fully immersed in choices which the storyworld of GTA-V offers.

The setting of the storyworld replicates the city of Los Angeles and the world of GTA-V resonates the lifestyle of modern Americans. The free navigational space within the rich storyworld recreates a sense of liberty and choice which the player-character assumes while performing the ludic action. However, this free navigational space is less relevant to the actual story and serves only to create player-character illusion of choice and freedom.

4.7.4 Characters

The playable and NPCs have a critical role in the narrative. The virtual world of GTA-V is inhabited by male (three playable and NPCs) and female (NPCs)

characters. Micheal, Franklin and Trevor are the three playable characters, a major shift from a single protagonist to three main characters. Micheal DeSantos is a 48-year-old bank robber trying to adjust to suburban life and his past in Rockford Hills in the city of Los Santos.

Micheal is characterised as hot-tempered yet has a complex personality with his actions fluctuating between family and criminal community. The mission The Prologue shows a tentative alliance between Michael and FIB agent Dave Norton and fakes his death who gets the glory of shooting the most wanted man in America and in exchange providing Micheal a chance to have a new life with his family.

The narrative of the game shows various shades of his complex personality. Though living away from criminal life and spending a family life, he gets frequently angered by Jimmy being lazy and jobless and Tracy's social life. He has a hot temper which makes him take impulsive decisions which are evident in the narrative. Furthermore, his rage and strained relationship become evident when he smashes his son's TV screen when he shows no remorse on what he did to his yacht and tells him to leave the room in the mission Daddy's Little Girl. Micheal's boils up when he finds Amanda cheating on him with her Tennis coach. His rage leads him to destroy the mansion where he finds the Tennis coach after following him. Only to learn it belongs to a cartel leader, Martin Madrazo. Though torn between the family and urge to re-enter the criminal community, Madrazo's demand of \$2,500,000 for the house damages and threatening violence pushes him back to dirty business.

The narrative reflects the compassionate side of Michael, who always puts his family's safety above anything else. It is evident from the deal with FIB to ensure safety for his family. Furthermore, the narrative of the mission Fame and Shame shows that Micheal's desire to protect his family is overpowering. Trevor suddenly enters their home, Micheal is afraid to confront the man he has cheated years ago, tries to hide his son Jimmy behind himself so that Trevor could not harm him. In the same mission, upon learning that his daughter Tracey was auditioning for a reality show Fame or shame at the Maze Bank arena, Micheal heads up for the show to stop her from her indecent and unacceptable activities.

There are nine female characters who appeared in 27 missions in the narrative of the selected title. Out of these, two female characters are significantly portrayed in

the virtual world of GTA-V. Amanda and Tracy are related to the main protagonist in the narrative, Micheal's wife and daughter respectively. It is important to note that none of the female characters are playable characters in the game and it replicates the real-world narrative which gives women a territory role to play which is limited to complaining about and creating problems for the active male-counterparts. Both are positioned negatively in the narrative of the selected title.

The visual appearance of Amanda and Tracy fits to the beauty standards of having a thin and curvy body with long hair and often found clad in revealing apparels. Amanda is an ex-stripper who screams at Micheal most of the time or makes him leave the house. Micheal's entry into the heists is not only out of his boredom from his disappointing family life but also as an outcome of Amanda's relationship with a tennis coach. In the mission Marriage Counselling, Micheal discovers her disloyalty and takes revenge by destroying the expensive house where he finds the tennis coach to punish him. However, later, he discovers the reality and must pay-back a huge amount through robbery and grand heists. Furthermore, his rage and strained relationship become evident when he smashes his son's TV screen when he shows no remorse on what he did to his yacht and tells him to leave the room in the mission Daddy's Little Girl; Now that I'm almost famous and have stalkers and shit, this psycho-over-protective-dad routine is finally starting to pay dividends! Love you, Pop. — Tracey on Michael's Life Invader page, about their relationship.

The narrative of the GTA-V involves multiple NPCs which play a fundamental role in the main story of the game. Lester Crest, one of NPC's, is an old friend of Michael and mastermind behind the major Heists the trio performs in the GTA-V. Though Lester has physical disability, his genius-level intelligence and expertise in technology makes him an excellent planner and fulfils the role of a crime partner who works behind the desk. It is through Lester that Micheal re-enters the life of heists and theft in the mission Life invader after doing a favour to Lester. Dave Norton and Steve Haines are the two corrupt FIB agents who play a significant role in the narrative of the selected title and are responsible for many of the troubles Micheal encounters in his life. Both are manipulative, corrupt and do not hesitate to exploit any means to earn money or advance in their career. GTA-V reflects on the corruption which seeped into the high-profile government officials through these characters. Whether it is faking Michaels's death in the first mission, the Prologue or the Deadman Walking, Micheal

is trapped by FIB agents for their vested interests. Later, through the NPC's Dave and Steve, Micheal and his team are set against IAA (another Federal Agency) in the mission Boiler Suits to rob IAA to bribe corrupt officials in FIB. The narrative of GTA-V shows that NPCs function to communicate the content of the story.

Dave Norton is the FIB agent credited with "killing" Michael in North Yankton 9 years ago. He is a corrupt FIB agent, although not to the extent of his boss Steve Haines. Dave struck a deal with Michael, setting him up with a new life in Los Santos, while he received the recognition of killing the highly sought criminal. Unlike Haines, he is portrayed as a reasonable and polite man, preferring to solve problems amicably instead of using violence. However, he is more than capable of breaking the law if it means maintaining or advancing his career.

4.8 Narrativized Interface

Unlike traditional narrative genres, digital games involve unique elements in their narrative. In this regard, the interface of games provides unconventional and unique mean to effectively impact the narrative. The interface is the nexus of the player's connection with the narrative of the game. The interface of the selected title reflects its proximity with the main story of the game. The narrative of the selected title is mainly about three playable characters (Micheal. Franklin and Trevor). The focus of the game narrative is robbery, stealth and wealth accumulation by these characters. The narrative of the selected title replicates the modern world with virtual and technological advancement. The interface of the title is in line with the main actions and story of the game. Apart from the ludic action and cutscenes which shows various missions performing heists and stealth, the interface is well equipped with the information which is required to perform the action and keeps the player involved in the narrative progression. The interface of GTA-V reinforces the focus of the narrative through the look and the feel of its interface design elements.

4.8.1 Look and Feel of Interface

The design of the interface is a significant factor for creating an immersive ludic experience for the player and keeping the player intact with the on-going narrative. There is a spontaneous flow of information which is needed for the ludic action and the narrative progression. In this regard, the interface aesthetics and narrativized game-metrics are analysed.

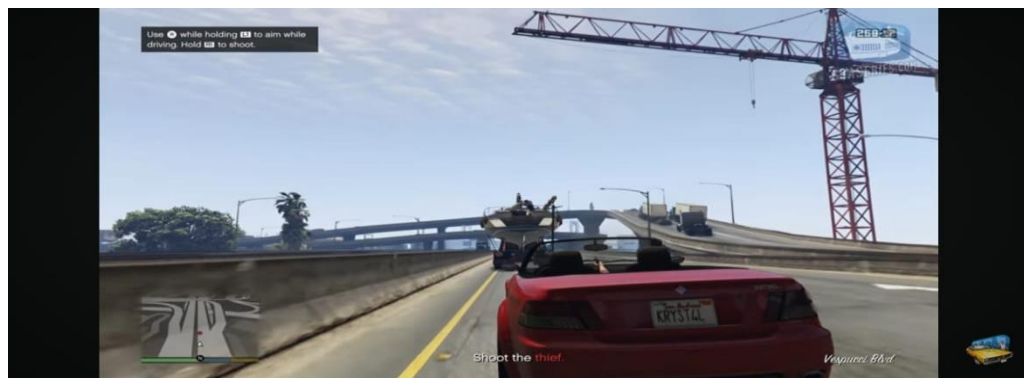
The aesthetic design of the interface of the selected title reveals that it is designed to equip the player to fully immerse in the world of GTA-V through its visual and audio design of the interface. The interface of the title is designed to facilitate the player to complete the assigned tasks. There are a number of interface design elements which enable the player to perform the ludic action with ease and at the same time keep the narrative focus intact for the player. The interface of the selected title provides the player two kinds of maps. A mini map with GPS which remains visible on the screen as the player moves and it guides the player once the player sets his target and mission. The provision of mini-map in GTA-V helps the player to navigate in the game space of all kinds. Whether the player is driving any kind of vehicle on the road or flying a chopper or operating a minisub in the Pacific Ocean. The use of min-map helps the player carry out the ludic action and fill the requirement of the narrative progression. The accessibility of the map is significant in the completion of missions and in sustaining player's complete involvement in the game. It is not only the objectives which pushes the player to build the narrative of the game but the navigational guidance through mini maps that the player's progress or digression, intentional or unintentional, gets visible on the interface. It also helps to exercise the player's agency in navigating the game space.

The second map in the interface is a large screen map which can be accessed from the user interface menu bar and is used to get information on available/unlocked missions for the player. The design of this map facilitates the player to take part in the narrative. The missions are indicated on the map through the initials of the character's name, for instance, F, T and M for Franklin, Trevor and Micheal as shown in figure 23. Each of these characters/missions are highlighted through the assigned colour for them: Apart from these indicators, there are indicators for shopping areas for clothing, ammunition and clubs.

These places can be visited as part of mandatory/side missions or player recreation as the player can do many activities in the open-world of GTA-V. The colours of the map indicators are as follows: orange for Trevor, blue for Michael, and green for Franklin. These indicators appear larger based on the character currently in play.

Figure 23*Screen Map Indication Missions and Playable Characters*

The figure 23 illustrates indication of missions and available characters. For example, while playing Franklin, the green icons for missions appear larger than the orange or yellow icons. Once the player marks the destination point on this map, the mini map guides the player to the destination.

Figure 24*Use of Mini Map and Mobiles Phones Through Interface*

The figure 24 depicts the use of interface to guide in timely completion of the missions. In this regard, these indicators and icons provide clues to the player to build the narrative within the game. Furthermore, the interface design keeps the attention of the player focused and the player timely completes the mission objectives. The interface of the selected title provides player notifications at any point in the game. It involves providing the objectives of the missions, mission failure or completion and giving the player hints to guide the ludic action within the game. For instance, during the mission

Father/Son, while Micheal is chasing the truck carrying his stolen yacht, he is guided through on-screen notification to guide him on how to aim and shoot while driving the vehicle.

It is through the visual design of the interface here which leads the player in navigation within the game and at the same time he gets narrative clues which guide him to build the narrative of the game. For instance, the interface of the selected title provides access to mobile phones with numerous options which may include messaging, calling, using the internet, like the actual mobile. Often the player gets reminders of the objectives/missions through text messages from contractors, family and friends. The player can also get information of his in-game status through this mobile. As the narrative of the game is mainly built through completing the mission/objectives, often the player is not given the objectives through notification or conversation. Here, the player may call his family/friends/contacts and get the narrative clues to progress within the game. The table 14 lists various visuals in interface of GTA-V.

Table 14

List of Visuals in Interface of GTA-V

S. No	Visuals in interface of GTA-V
1	Notifications: mission objective, hints
2	Maps: mini-map, screen map
3	Radio wheel
4	Mobile phone
5	Character-switch icon
6	Weapon wheel

The player can switch/change/turnoff the radio depending upon his choice.by selecting from the radio channel wheel options. The number of choices on interface keeps the player involved in the narrative of game. Similarly, the use of mini map on interface assists the player in taking meaningful actions and build the narrative. the figure 25 shows the visual of mini map on user interface.

The narrative of the game requires the player to switch between characters. This switching is handled by game mechanics and partially by the player. The character-switch icon is visible on the screen and can be accessed easily. The use of character-switch is both narrative driven and player's choice. In addition to visuals in interface, the interface has a main game user interface which offers several functions relating to the game for the player

Figure 25

Visual of Mini-map on User Interface in GTA-V,



It includes brief map, game, statistic and online options which further facilitates the game play as shown in figure 25. The visual design of the interface is closely linked to the narrative focus of the GTA-V. The focus of the ludic action is various heists and driving (reaching the target) to the location and performing the heists. Keeping this in view, the entire look and the feel of the interface matches the narrative focus. It becomes easy and interesting to navigate and drive on the long stretches of the roads of Los Santos while taking help from the interface design.

The audio design of the interface elements of the selected title supports the storyworld of GTA-V. The world of GTA-V is marked by thefts and stealth missions and often chased by the police/cops. The sound of police car sirens and their conversation transmitted through wireless systems is audible through the controller which makes the ludic action more realistic and immersive. As the narrative is mainly built through reaching destinations via several vehicles, the audio support of the interface reinforces the narrative sensibilities. The interface sound effects include bumping, honking, colliding and the other sound effects related to driving the vehicle.

These sound effects are extended to footsteps, weapon and environmental sounds create a sense of agency and give a realistic experience to the player.

4.8.2 Game-Metrics

The narrative of the game depends on the ludic action performed by the player. The progress of the player while completing various missions is critical for the player. The interface is designed to keep the player informed on how he has navigated within the game space and his in-game status through various elements in the interface design. The game-metrics in the case of

GTA-V indicates the status of the avatar/character, his progress in the gameplay and the condition of the story world. It also informs the player about the course of action the character may take in the overall narrative of the game. These game-metric indicators are listed below in table 15.

Table 15

Game-Metric in GTA-V

Game-Metrics in GTA-V
Health bar
Ammo bar
Number of guns
Destination map
Special skill bar
Wanted level
Missions' notification/passed/failed/character's death

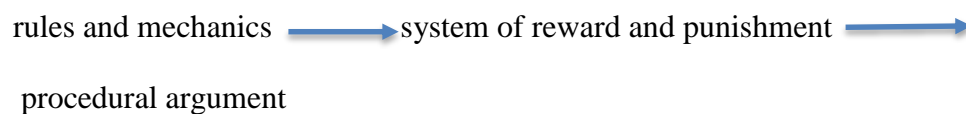
The heads-up display (HUD) of the interface of GTA-V matches the ludic action and provides related information which the player uses to navigate in the narrative space of the game. The game-metrics of GTA-V provides relevant information and uses minimum space and does not create visual distraction as shown in table 4.10. For instance, the use of GPS directions through a map keeps the player vigilant in his action and at the same time informs him about the time he might need to complete the mission. These maps serve the purpose of contextual clues: as the story within the narrative of the game proceeds with the competition of these missions. There is a bar beneath the mini-map and has green, yellow and orange which correspond to health, armour and

special ability. These indicators are helpful to the player during the ludic actions, as he can redeem his health once the green colour gets dim through actions which are informed through interface notifications. Here, the interface elements integrate to create an immersive storyworld for the player.

One of the important interface elements is the wanted level indicator on the interface which alarms the player of the chasing police. The game requires the player to stay away from the police vans/chasing cops to complete the narrative requirement of not getting caught and complete the mission and arrive at a safe destination. The interface keeps the player notified through the wanted level as well as the red and blue light emission (resembling) from the controller. The wanted level induces urgency in the player's action and serves to keep the player to work to complete his ludic action to fulfil the narrative requirement. The design of the wanted level, the sound effect from the interface and controller produces the desirable effect and lead the player. The notifications of mission passed/failure/death of game metrics serve as a signal to replay or begin the new mission for the player. The overall design of game-metrics provide ease in ludic action a

4.9 Analysis of Rules, Mechanics and Visual

The analysis of rules and mechanics which activate the system of punishment and reward is central in understanding how procedural mode work in games.



A brief introduction is provided here to comprehend how any action is performed in the selected game. The game rules and mechanics allow the player to indulge in multiple tasks including driving, flying, reaching destinations, planning, meeting and making phone calls to achieve the objectives of the gameplay and interaction in the open-world game. The basic actions which the player can perform are jumping, climbing, rolling, kicking, punching and shooting. The player performs these actions according to the objective assigned in any mission as a part of main storyline missions.

The game mechanics require the player to initiate the mission through selecting the character and his available missions on the game map. The character selection

involves selecting the initial of any playable-character initial in the map, for instance M for Micheal. Once the character selection is done, the available missions are activated. Each character has certain missions to complete which usually have a number of objectives which are provided to the player through notifications on the interface screen. It is important to note that the game can be played from first-person or second-person perspective.

The game has a particular character switch feature which enables the player to switch among the three playable characters. Furthermore, the open-world feature of the game provides the free navigational game space and multitude of activities to perform while completing the main story missions in the narrative of GTA-V.

The narrative of the game is about the protagonist Micheal who has left his criminal past activities and crime partners to live a normal life with his family. The protagonist, however, later succumbs back to the world of theft as his greed as well as circumstances do not let him live peacefully. The player assuming the role of Micheal (later switchable characters of Trover and Philip) has to perform small and grand heists as a favour or forced by the corrupt government officials of FIB or IAA.

The analysis of rules and mechanics of the third selected affirms the faculty of communication through the procedural mode. The selected title is an open world game which allows free navigational space apart from its main ludic action. The player can drive vehicles and explore the vast landscape provided in the game space. These activities can be performed before the beginning of major action in the game. These playful activities do not bring any reward or punishment or progress to the player.

Similarly, the game mechanics require the player to indulge in crimes and rarely give a chance to player to engage in activities which are moral and ethical. There are optional missions which can be completed as a personal choice. These activities are reward less, though not punishable. For instance, during various missions while the player is walking or slowly driving, he may get the call for help. The game mechanics do not provide any incentives for any ethical activity. The game mechanics, here, through its procedurality reveals that socially approved activities or ethical behaviour are not rewardable whereas crime, theft and exploitation activate reward systems. Through the system of game rules and mechanics the game generates an argument which entails a paradox of the existing system of values. These activities are

undervalued in game, what matters in game is breaking the law and indulging in criminal activities both in the mission or free navigational space. The game mechanics offer the player to steal the vehicles, drive them recklessly to reach the destination point, meanwhile the player-character can maim the pedestrian or the drivers and even cause collisions which may destroy any public property or others with a little or no penalties.

The game parameters allow and disallow certain actions of the player-character. It is through the system of restriction, limitations and otherwise that the game can communicate. The first mission Prologue features Micheal, Trevor and Brad at Bobcat Security cash storage facility in Ludendorff. Apparently, the trio must rob the cash storage and run away in a getaway vehicle driven by another crew member. However, a seemingly simple robbery is planned by a FIB agent and Micheal, who wants to end his criminal career, however, betrays his friends and partner with little or no regret. During the mission, Micheal is taken hostage by the guard and is held at gunpoint. The game parameter structures no moral boundaries for the main characters rather it compels the character to indulge in guilt free killings of those who prevent them from looting 180,000 \$ from the cash storage. The game does not provide any other actions except killing the guard. If the player-character avoids killing the guard, the mission ends with no achievement for the player and the game cannot proceed further without the player-character taking a human life to successfully complete the mission. The game mechanics and parameters restrict the player and leave very limited choice for the player. If the player tries to find any other way to save Michael from the guard and not kill the guard, the mission fails, and the guard kills Micheal. The game is not designed to save any human life rather it is aligned with the material pursuit of the protagonist.

After securing the money, the team is on the run to reach their safe point. The getaway vehicle driver is killed, and his body is pushed outside ruthlessly in the cutscene. Similarly, Brad getting hit and Micheal faking his injury and death to escape from his crime partner-cum friend is managed with the same ease.

It is through the rules and mechanics that the game set wealth accumulation as the goal of the inhabitants of the storyworld of GTA-V. The three playable characters are like-minded criminals, and the game parameters provide them ease in their heist and thefts. For instance, while being exploited by the billionaire Devin and stealing cars for him in the mission Eye in the Sky, Franklin gets hold of the escaping car owner Chad. Here the game provides him the choice of sparing or killing him. However, if he spares

him, the game mechanics and parameters activate his wanted level and law enforcing agencies will be notified. On the other hand, killing the owner is an easy choice with a swift escape from the crime scene and mission completion. The path to success and ease is breaking the law and taking human lives. The role of governance is minimised and individualism risk taking is maximised. Furthermore, the punishments /penalties are not bothersome while individual self-drive is at the peak. The player-characters may damage hit or loot to achieve one's goals and little or no-emphasis is laid on the moral boundaries which abound such actions.

The player-characters are not bound to any strict governance and can easily avoid penalty. During the drive he could drive at full speed and collide and damage other cars. The pedestrians/passengers may get hit and the game poses the penalty of wanted level activation. Money matters more than human lives. The game mechanics require the player to kill anyone who gets in the way during robbery. While robbing the bank in the mission Prologue, Micheal is held at gunpoint by the security guard and the player assuming the role of Trevor points his gun at the guard. The game mechanics and parameters restrict the player and leave very limited choice for the player. If the player tries to find any other way to save Michael from the guard and not kill the guard, the mission fails, and the guard kills Micheal.

The data analysis of the selected title shows the game mechanics and parameters reflect how the pursuit of individualism as well as self-governance has led the society to be corrupt and self-centred. The narrative of the selected title, like any other game, is built through the actions which are permitted and allowed through game mechanics and rules to create meanings. In the case of the selected title the data shows that it develops a critique of capitalism through the three playable characters and their missions. Overall, the narrative which is built through the given story and later the ludic actions as required through game mechanics and parameters is about pursuit and accumulation of wealth which is rarely a happy end for the characters. It is not the story of hard-working middle-class protagonists who spend their life earning a decent living for themselves rather it is the story of three characters—three individuals who spent their entire life in pursuit of personal happiness and individualism exhausting all possibilities otherwise. The title of the game *Grand Theft Auto-V* is self-reflective of the main focus of the game—thrift, robbery, ill-legal wealth and blind pursuit of self-interest drives the player throughout the narrative of the game. The procedural mode constituted through

game mechanics and rules also reinforces the same focus. The player-characters are engaged in a series of activities which are rarely socially acceptable: thefts and robberies. There are, special, however, optional missions of helping others.

For the visual analysis of the selected title, four images have been selected. As the selected title has three different endings, so three last appearances and one first appearance of the hero's image is taken. At the first level of signification, the denotative meanings are deduced. At the denotative level, the image shows a white bald headed security guard holding the protagonist Michael as his captive and pointing a gun at him as shown in figure 26.

Figure 26

First Appearance of Protagonist in GTA-V



The background reveals that there is a security breach as the wall is broken. The red colour dominates the background. Though Michael is held, his left hand is gloved and is in the air. For the second level of signification, the image is reflective of how Michael has been held captive by the security guard after they breached into a cash storage factory. The figure 26 shows he struggle between law enforcing personnel and criminals. Though Michael is held captive, his left hand which is in the air shows he has not given up. The broken wall (of vault) and the red colour signifies dominance of evil or crime. Michael's face reflects calmness and his strength while he is held at gunpoint while the guard's face shows he is exerting power to control a strong and cool-headed criminal.

As there are three possible endings and each ending has a different course of action for Michael, three last appearances of the central character have been taken and are analysed in a sequence of A, B and C.

For the first level of signification (image A), the scene depicts the dead body of the white middle-aged man lying on the floor and his own blood is spread on the floor as shown in figure number 27.

Figure 27

Last appearance of hero in the First Possible Ending



His left hand is resting on his body while his marriage ring is visible on his hands. His eyes are wide open, and his nose is bleeding. For the second level of signification, the image shows the death of hero Michael, and his dead body is sprawled on the floor. It shows his tragic and accidental death.

Figure 28

Last Appearance of Hero in the Second Possible Ending



The figure 28 shows two male characters bumping their fist. At the first level, the image shows the two characters have completed their task and are celebrating the completion as illustrated in figure 28. These two characters are Michael and Franklin. Michael has teamed up with an African American to finish the task. Both successfully ended the task. At the second level of signification, the image reflects that there is a strong bond between the two characters. Both have formed an alliance to finish the task. Michael being an elderly man is calm while the African American clad casually is happy to finish the task. This scene is the last appearance of the central character after he betrays his old friend Trevor for the last time and kills him with the help of young Franklin. The lack of light is reflective of moral ambiguity which is part of GTA-V.

Figure 29

Last Appearance of Hero in the Third Possible Ending



The third image, as shown in figure 29, at the first level shows the central character Michael seated in his car with the front door about to be closed. The image shows his face and upper body seated behind the wheel of the vehicle. At the second level of signification, the details of the setting are important. It is pre-dawn and Michael's face is focussed while outside the car the environment is not well lit. This image is taken when the trio has killed their enemy who has been exploiting them and are leaving for their destination separately. This is part of the last scene of the game when Franklin decides to kill him and pushes him down from the tower. After living the life of crime and betrayal Michael meets his fate. His dead body is soaked in his

own blood. His treacherous life has come to an end in the same manner which he adopted for others.

Table 16

Description of Signified and Signifier of Visuals (GTA-V)

Signified	Signifier	
	First order of signification/ denotation	Second order of signification/ connotation
1. A male character is holding another character and pointing the gun at him	1. Two middle age men are shown 2. One is wearing the uniform of a security guard 3. Michael is held at gunpoint by the security guard 4. a broken vault is seen at the backdrop	1. A show of struggle between authority/ law enforcement and criminals 2. Broken vault points at strong efforts of criminal 3. The red colour dominates in the background is a symbol of prevailing evil and treachery
2. A dead body of a male on the floor	1. Michael is lying is dead on the floor 2. there is pool of blood under his head	1. Michael is lying dead with eyes wide open and is soaked in his blood, 2. Michael has himself become victim of treachery and betrayal
3. Two male characters are bumping their fists	1. Two male characters, the white middle age, Michael with balding hair in grey business suit is bumping his fist with a young black African American character, Franklin 2. The meeting place is a hilly area and it is night time	1. The two forged an alliance to kill their crime partner Trevor 2. The deserted hilly area and the night time is reflective of moral ambiguity
4. A male character is sitting in a car.	1. The white male character is seated on the driving seat of a car while the front door of the car is about to be closed 2. It is pre-dawn	1. Michael has accomplished killing a mercenary and leaving 2. He is not in a haste and a sense of relief can be vividly seen pre-dawn is reflective of something new and ambiguous

The details of the signified and the signifier of the selected visual are given in the table 16. Michael's body language reflects the calmness, which is part of Michael's personality, however, the pre-dawn shows ambiguity of their future as well as points out the nature of the work which has been performed in darkness or pre-morning.

4.10 Analysis of Framing in GTA-V

The text of the third selected title shows the process of framing at the micro and macro level of text. Initially the data analysis identified the common frames which are evoked in the text of the selected title and are listed in table 12. These frames are mainly about American capitalist society. Through emphasis on the consequences of pursuit of Capitalism, the narrative of the selected title reflects those excesses of capitalism has led to a society which is governed by materialism. Though the focus of the game is the pursuit of wealth through all means—mainly ill-legal involving robbery, stealth and killing.

Table 17

Common Frames in GTA-V

Common frames
Capitalism has fostered individualism
Capitalism has promoted consumerism and materialism.
The pursuit of maximum profit has consolidated power and monopolies to corporations/individuals.
The pursuit of the American Dream and capitalism has led to economic disparity.

The common frames are listed above in table 17. The narrative of the game depicts the story of three protagonists: Michael, Trevor and Franklin. These three protagonists represent the various fractions of American society. The narrative of the game frames capitalism as a source of economic disparity and has given rise to inequalities instead of social mobility. The drive for maximum profit has created financial instability and concentration of power in the hands of large corporations and wealthy individuals. Both capitalism and the aspiration of the American dream has promoted self-interest and individualism in the ordinary middle class (represented through three protagonists), created social inequality and blurred moral boundaries.

4.10.1 Selection and Salience

The first step in framing is selection and salience. The narrative of the selected title clearly frames Capitalism as a source of a number of problems in American society such as individualism, materialism, consumerism, and corruption. Apparently, the narrative of the selected title revolves around the lives of three criminal minded

protagonists. However, the game explicitly reflects on the consequences of capitalism on American society.

The narrative of the selected title frames capitalism negatively and highlights the negative outcome of the pursuit of capitalistic drive which dominates modern society. The prescriptive and evaluative nature of framing within the narrative of the selected title posits capitalism in a critical position. The game manifests that the relentless pursuit of wealth captivates individuals and rips off morality from them and makes them vulnerable to crime. The focus of the trio (Michael, Trevor and Franklin) is to make money and protect their self-interest. Similarly, the corrupt government agents of FIB and IAA operate on the same principle—self-interest and exploitation.

It is important to note that the narrative of the game highlights the negative aspect of capitalism which conforms to the process of selection and salience in framing. The game targets it directly and frames it in the narrative explicitly. For instance, during the mission Father and Son, Michael suggests mockingly to Franklin; “to go to college. Then you can rip people off and get paid for it. It's called capitalism”.

The key tenets of capitalism such as self-interest, profit maximisation and individualism are highlighted and evaluated through framing in the narrative of GTA-V. Through the three protagonists, the narrative of the game points out the self-interest and individualism to be the reason behind their actions.

The narrative of the selected title highlights that the drive for profit maximisation pushes the companies for competition and innovation. Innovations and technology which are hyped in GTA-V, such as Life invader and Bleet, which are identical to social networks of Facebook and Twitter are as damaging to privacy and data as the modern-day Facebook and twitter.

The text of the selected title clearly frames capitalism as a root cause of prevailing situations in the society. It points out how capitalism has led companies and businesses to exploit through offshore companies and outsourcing for cheap labour. The minimal role of state is evident through weak law enforcing agencies which can be easily evaded through simple ludic actions by the player. The narrative of the selected title highlights the growing social inequalities instead of upward social mobility as claimed by the advocates of capitalism. The playable character of Franklin and Trevor reflects the struggling class and their failure to achieve upward social mobility. Through

NPCs, for instance Wade, Stretch, Lamar and his family as well as the crew members which are hired during various missions show the hard quest for upward mobility which is met with failure and widening gulf between poor and rich stratum of the society. It is important to note that de-emphasis can also be seen in the case of presenting capitalism responsible for the self-centred and corrupt society. The narrative of the game does not provide the other side of the coin.

4.10.2 Identifying the Problem

Identification of the problem is another key step in framing. The narrative of the selected title identifies various problems as the narrative progresses within the game. Beginning with the betrayal among friends and conspiring with a corrupt government agent in the first mission, the game sets the focus of the game. The game centres around what Brad, a crime partner of the protagonist, says in the same mission; “Every man for himself”. This is what permeates the inhabitants of the world of GTA-V. Materialism, individualism and working only for self-interest becomes essential traits of playable as well as NPC’s. Lemar is an NPC and in his interaction with Franklin justifies their efforts to earn money through street robberies, killing and kidnapping and admits being “highly motivated, results-driven motherfuckers with an entrepreneurial mindset” in the kidnapping sector”.

What governs the society of GTA-V is money and its pursuit. It becomes inevitable to avoid money-making at all costs. Micheal betrays his friends to secure a safe future for himself and family and continues to do so till the end. His betrayal in the first mission Prologue is evident when he betrays Trevor and his crime partner Brad, risks their lives and fakes his own death while conspiring with the corrupt government agency. The self-interest and individualism make him oblivious of the rest. Michael opts for any crime – murder or theft to secure money and safety for himself. It doesn't matter if his crime partner gets killed, he is remorseless. Trevor reveals his true nature in the mission Three’s company and calls him “snake who eats his own kids”. Micheal, during the mission of Franklin and Lemar, admits his “opportunist” nature, however, blames the society too. During his session with his psychologists, he admits how has been vulnerable to crimes and says, “I’d already been in prison twice. I robbed banks. I ran whores. I smuggled dope”.

It is not earned solely for survival but for embracing a luxurious lifestyle. American while the protagonists are framed materialistic, the law enforcing agencies are easily evaded. For instance, every mission is designed to conduct robbery or planning for a major heist, it involves the danger of getting caught by the police which is easily avoidable through driving fast enough to be out of their sight or simply getting a cut from his bank account and restarting the mission. The role of minimum government/law enforcing agencies are visible while each playable character and NPC is prone to crime.

Through the narrative of GTA-V, it is revealed that the government bodies which are meant to sustain law and accountability are found indulgent in the same course of actions. The text of the selected title clearly frames government bodies to indulge in crime instead of maintaining law. During the mission Paleto Score, Trevor points out; “the local law enforcement extorts money from all the weed farms, whore houses, meth kitchens in the area. They keep their cash in safe deposit boxes. Then there's all the normal small town payroll stuff”.

The higher government bodies in the selected title exploit the criminals for their own vested interest. For instance, the corrupt employees of FIB and IAA (mimicking FBI and CIA) are fraudulent and exploit the protagonist to indulge in crimes and generate capital for them. During the mission Wrap Up, the two government agents and a private militia try to arrest Michael and his friend to cover up their frauds and ill-legal offences. It is through the protagonist Trevor that the narrative of GTA-V shows their true face and call them “just the friendly face of a corrupt government agency looking to further his career by dealing with an equally corrupt and full to the fucking brim with bullshit low rent hood”.

The drive of self-interest and individualism corrupts society and blurs the boundaries of morality. The game is replete with instances of planned robberies by criminal-like minds and corrupt agencies pushing them further for their vested monetary interests. The result is social inequality and corruption. Instead of upward mobility, each protagonist has exceeded the moral boundaries.

4.10.3 Identify the Cause

Framing involves identifying the cause of existing problem(s). In the case of the third selected title, it is done explicitly as well as implicitly. It is through the protagonist

Michael the game highlights and frames capitalism who considers college education/higher education as a means to learn and legitimise skills of exploitative practices within the framework of capitalism. The first lesson Michael gives to Franklin as a mentor in the mission Father and Son is about understanding the truth about capitalism. Michael advises him to get education and equip himself with the modern ways of exploitative practices; “Go to college. Then you can rip people off and get paid for it. It's called capitalism”.

During the mission The Third Way, Michael refers explicitly to the evils which prevail in American society and leads to economic disparity and economic exploitation and the root cause is American Capitalism. The dialogue between Michael and Trevor while they were murdering the billionaire who had ordered the assassination of the two reflects how the narrative of GTA-V views capitalism, Michael says; “two great evils that bedevil American capitalism...”. It's not only capitalism but the consequences of this prevailing ideological economic construct which has given rise to outsourcing and offshore companies which let the corrupt businessman exploit those working for them.

The narrative of GTA-V clearly holds capitalism and the pursuit of the American dream responsible for Michael while sharing his experiences with his psychologists admits that the pursuit of the American dream has led to further chaos in their lives, the end of the road! With a big house and a useless kid, and I'm stuck talking to you because no one else gives a shit! Oh, I'm living the dream, baby! And that dream is fucked!

Individualism and materialism govern the criminal and fraudulent life of characters of GTA-V. There is no bond which connects the family except money. It is evident in the father and son relationship of Michael and Jimmy in various missions like Father and Son, Repossession and Fame and Shame. Michael is called an asshole and failure by his own children who hold him responsible for ruining their lives. (Mission Fame and Shame).

4.10.4 Making Moral Judgement and Providing Remedies

The narrative of GTA-V makes moral judgement about the system which operates within its storyworld. The text of the selected title makes moral judgement about capitalistic society and reflects on its shortcomings. The government bodies, agencies and private militia are framed as corrupt and malicious, and their ultimate goal

is to increase their stock of wealth while exploiting the weak. The narrative of the selected title makes explicit statements about these agencies and through the protagonist points at how these agencies could be dealt with. For instance, during the preparatory mission for the Merryweather Heists, Trevor does not hesitate to treat them in the same coin; “You don't. Merryweather are employed by the richest, greediest scum on the planet to shit on the poorest and the neediest. So We are going to enjoy shitting on them”.

The data analysis reveals that there is no direct or explicit solution which is given through framing. However, one of the three endings (if the player chooses) makes the player kill those who exploit the trio and do not let them live their life. The two operatives of the law enforcing agencies, a military organisation and corrupt billionaires are exterminated. Apart from this ending, the other two endings reflect the consequences of a capitalistic society.

4.10.5 Operational Facets of Framing

The third selected title clearly shows the use of framing in its text through multiple means. It is important to note that framing is activated/operationalized at various levels. At the macro level, framing is operationalized through characters, storyline, aesthetics, game rules and mechanics whereas framing at micro level is carried out through text (words, sentences and phrases).

4.10.5.1 Storyline and Characterization

Apart from the framing at micro level, the main story and characterization of the selected title exhibit instances of framing. The storyline of the third title is mainly about the shortcomings of capitalistic society. The focus is the self-interest driven, materialistic and exploitative society. The major events as well as the side quests are about performing heists and escaping from the police. The story of the selected title is about three characters who are crime partners. Michael being the central character betrays his friends but later on becomes victim of exploitation of corrupt agencies. The characters of Franklin and Trevor, like Michael and his family, are framed materialistic and selfish. Trevor does not hesitate to kill or harm anyone while getting his things done as evident in the mission Merryweather Heist and kills Floyd and his girlfriend Debra after taking help to complete the heist set-up. Franklin takes part in gang fights and later joins Michael as his crime partner.

The rise of individualism which promotes ill-legal and corrupt measures to procure wealth. The story clearly frames materialistic drive and consumerism as an outcome of capitalism. The protagonist Michael succumbs to the urge of making money and saving his own life. The first mission, the Prologue, clearly shows Michael's betrayal to his friends. One of his partners dies as he fakes his death and makes a deal with the corrupt FIB agent who earns promotion through this deal.

The main story of GTA-V spans over more than 69 missions. The story of each mission is designed to generate money through thefts or planning for them. There are very few missions which are designed to resolve family matters or help others. Everyone is on a make: Michael, Franklin, Trevor, government agents and corporations. It is through the characters and their stories; the narrative of the game creates a negative frame for capitalism. Each character is shown selfish, greedy and has no or little morality. The main missions are designed to accomplish these hideous crimes for these characters.

Helping others is rarely a focus, it is through individual struggle an upward mobility can be attained. This principle sits at the heart of capitalism and the playable as well as the life of NPCs which is mainly centred around individualism and materialism. The members of Michael's family share the same characteristics. His unhappy wife cheats him and sleeps with the tennis coach and then leaves with her yoga trainer. His son Jimmy does not hesitate to put Michael's belongings at stake and calls him an asshole. He does not hesitate to mix anaesthetic in his drink and later on kick him off the car.

The corrupt government agencies exploit these criminals and use them for their own vested interests and trap them. As Trevor clearly points out in the mission Minisub; Do some research on Merryweather Security Consulting, friend. They'd be on trial for human rights offenses if the US government didn't protect all its contractors from any kind of suit - military or civilian. They're immune from prosecution, and they behave like they are. Murdering, stealing, high on power, guns, and anabolic steroids. Lucky bastards.

4.10.5.2 Game Mechanics, Rules, and Aesthetics

The game mechanics, rules and aesthetics also contribute to the process of framing. The framing at the micro level is strengthened further at the macro level of

text in the narrative of the selected title. The ludic action which is performed through the system offered by game mechanics and game rules also evoke certain frames. The protagonist/player-character is required to complete mandatory story missions apart from side quests. Each mission requires the player to complete the assigned objectives. It is important to note that except for a few missions of helping or rescuing family members, the prime focus of ludic action is planning the major heists and executing the robbery which involves guilt free killing and looting.

The game requires players to engage in these actions through the game mechanics and rules. Being an open-world game, the game mechanics also allow the player to perform various actions of his own choice. The player-character can buy vehicles, visit clubs, race and ride along beaches, buy clothes, do yoga, write email or use life invader or bleeter on the social media platforms.

The game mechanics allow the player to experience the shortcomings of the capitalistic society. The player is bound to indulge in the pursuit of making money and ignore the moral and ethical code of conduct. The ludic action is controlled through game mechanics and rules which requires the player to indulge in guilt free crimes and the player is provided ease through parameters of games in performing these actions. However, the player experiences the failure of such a system and becomes a victim of the exploitation which is also presented as the shortcoming of capitalism. The game mechanics foster a system which is prone to failure.

4.11 Findings of Analysis of COD: WWII

Using the analytical framework, the findings from the first title reveal how the interplay of narrative, mechanics, visuals, and framing shapes the understanding of games as a narrative genre.

- The analysis of the first title showed the narrative arcs are an important aspect of narrative in case of games. The narrative of the selected title is structured in a pattern of arcs: the grand meta-narrative, the subsidiary arcs and the micronarrative.
- The grand meta-arc forms the broader overarching narrative structure which contains subsidiary arcs of varying length. The meta-arc is about the heroic and brave American and allied soldiers and explicitly conforms to the setup-complication-development-resolution structure. The meta-arc begins with the

setting of the Second World War and gradually challenges are built up through hostilities of Axis forces. The protagonist and his squad work toward his goals and build the narrative of the grand arc. The focus of the narrative arc is the heroic adventure which the player-character has to successfully go through to complete the ludic actions.

- There is a logical sequencing among the subsidiary arcs. These subsidiary arcs are well connected to each other. The events unfolded in these arcs are interlinked to each other. These arcs cannot be approached randomly.
- The narrative progression in these arcs depends upon the successful completion of ludic action in these arcs. There is a network of granular arcs/micro narrative which constitute the narrative of subsidiary arcs. The structure of the micronarrative arcs resembles the structure of the subsidiary arcs. Though the micronarratives form the smallest arc on the scale, their significance cannot be undermined. These micronarrative arcs become, first, the building blocks of subsidiary arcs and later the grand meta-arc of the selected title.
- The data analysis shows a significant relationship between player agency and narrative progression in the case of COD: WWII. Whether it is a grand challenge of defeating the Axis forces or moment to moment actions in the micronarrative within the subsidiary arcs, the role of player agency is important in the narrative progression of the first selected title.
- The ludic experience of the player determines the narrative flow within the grand narrative of the game. The challenges which the player faces provide him the chance to exercise his choice. The player is given freedom to approach the enemies or the destination in multiple ways. During many missions the player may approach a destination point taking any route of his choice. Furthermore, the player can bring variation in the combat style. This freedom of choice help player to take meaningful actions in the games and sustain his engagement in gameplay. However, the completion of mission objectives rests with game mechanics and design. The player can bring variation in the narrative at a smaller scale through his combat style.
- The player has greater freedom of decision making in the ludic action of smaller arcs or micronarratives. The player can impact the micro narrative through his

decisions of sparing an enemy or killing the enemy. However, this choice of killing/sparing the enemy is limited to a smaller number of micro narratives. Through these micro narratives the player can either affirm or contradict the focus of the narrative. For example, through sparing an enemy, the player strengthens the noble ideal of American soldiers at the same time the player has the freedom to save a woman from a German soldier or may not intervene and focus on the primary objective of the mission.

- Similarly, the player is given a choice to help the wounded soldier and accept the retreats of the enemy at certain points in the selected title. The player's sense of freedom or choice is strengthened through decisions at such moments in the narrative. The player is empowered to behave or treat the enemy on his own will.
- The data analysis reveals that the player is allowed a minimal navigational freedom. The game provides a free but limited navigational space. The player can explore combat areas and some parts of buildings, however, this free movement in navigational space does not contribute to narrative. Though it reinforces immersion and helps the player to understand the ludic space of the game.
- The ending of the selected title is predetermined, and the player does not get any alternate endings. The player agency is bounded and restricted by storyline and the game mechanics.
- The rich and dynamic storyworld of the first title embodies the focus of the story and the ludic action. The player finds intense battle grounds, vast Normandy beaches, dense forests, rubble-strewn cities of France and Germany and face challenging combats. The design and setting of the game render an immersive experience to the player through its realistic and breath-taking experience of open battlefields as well as covert operations in bombed-out buildings. The close binary between the physical and auditory landscape in the storyworld of the selected title keeps the player fully immersed in the narrative flow.
- The vast storyworld of the selected title manifests striking parallelism between the realistic design of the brutal battlefields and the horrors of war as narrated by the characters.

- There is a limited navigational space in the storyworld of the first selected title. The player can perform various actions in this limited but rich space of forests, beaches and even the captive German buildings. However, the navigational space of this storyworld is restricted.
- The playable and the non-playable characters inhabiting the world of COD: WWII are diverse and fully formed characters. The NPCs exist in dialogue as well as in ludic action. These characters are assigned roles and squad abilities to assist the primary playable character in the selected title. The characters are crafted to show emotional affinity among the squamates. The NPCs have emotional depth and are shown to be capable of personality growth and transformation. Pierson, though embittered by his earlier experience, transforms into a stronger and committed diehard soldier.
- The narrative focus is strengthened through NPCs. Turner, Zussman, Pierson and Camille Rousseau Denis become epitome of duty, sacrifice and heroism. These NPCs play a crucial role in complimenting the narrative of the selected title. These characters provide context and depth to the war-stricken world of COD: WWII. Camille Rousseau Denis, a French resistance fighter, transcends herself from personal revenge for her family to embracing a higher cause of liberation from German tyranny.
- The NPC Turner strengthens the ideal of brotherhood and camaraderie through his actions and supports the efforts of the protagonist to save German civilians. He sacrifices his own life and sets high standards for his teammates.
- It is not only the antagonist but through NPCs of the protagonist that the narrative of the selected title reflects the harsh realities of war. The character of Aeillo shows the biased nature of human beings. His hatred for Jews and callous nature for war crimes and death of German civilians reflects the cruelties of war. The NPC Hazel and Paul have a strong influence on the protagonist and make him stronger. These characters exist in his memory but serve to provide him the motivation and support in harsh battlegrounds during the war. The NPC Zussman has a significant role in the narrative of the select title. His close tie with protagonist reflects how the ideal of brotherhood and sacrifice

- The character of the protagonist in the first title is a manifestation of the noble ideal of heroism and determination of American soldiers. The character of Private Daniels and his action shows that the soldier in Allied forces adheres to the Allied ideals: fighting against tyranny and standing against fascism. And for this noble cause are ready to sacrifice their lives. Turner willingly puts himself in danger and dies and urges the squamates to leave him. It is not only Private Daniels who puts his nationalistic values and principles before his family, but the rest of the squad has shown moments of bravery and resilience.
- The narrativized interface has a crucial role in narrative progression and player's involvement in the ludic action in the narrative of the first title. The interface design of the selected title reinforces the narrative focus and ensures an immersive experience for the player. The look and the feel of the interface of COD: WWII keep the narrative and ludic action related and connected. The military themed visual icons maintain the active engagement of the soldier (player-character) with the story as well as the ludic action.
- The narrativized game metrics of the selected title serve to develop a narrative urgency for the player. The interface design elements contain indicators for player's health, weapon count and objective indication marker and provides narrative cues and creates urgency for the player. The interface keeps the player updated on his moment-to-moment performance and keeps him fully immersed in the ludic action.
- The frame analysis of the selected title was conducted in two steps. The first involved analysing the framing process at micro level (word/phrases/sentences) whereas the second investigated framing at macro level of the text (storyline, characterization, game aesthetics, rules and mechanics).
- At the micro level, the text of the game evokes positive framing for the American soldiers whereas the Axis and Germans were framed negatively. The micro level frame analysis was carried at the level of words, phrases and sentences of the text. The frame analysis showed that the nobler frames were created through emphasis on American perspective on the second world war. For instance, the text uses the frame of "mighty endeavour " the hour of great sacrifice" for the declaration of war by the American and Allied soldiers.

- The analysis of framing reveals that American heroism is selected as the key narrative focus. Through selection and salience, the text emphasises the nobility of American soldiers and frames them as heroes of their own nation as well as the entire world. Whereas the Germans were framed as oppressors and responsible to dismantle the peace of the world.
- The frame analysis shows that German aggression was identified as a threat to global peace. The Allied soldiers and specifically American soldiers were framed as war heroes and saviour of humanity against the tyranny of Germans. The text shows that the narrative of the selected title makes moral judgement about Germany and explicitly frames them as oppressor, evil and inhuman violators of human rights during war. Through framing the war against the axis forces is justified and the American are framed as saviour of humanity and heroes of civilizations.
- The framing at macro level strengthens and reinforces the process of framing at micro level. The prominent frames are operationalized through three important facets: game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules, and storyline and characterization. The narrative of the selected title emphasises the German brutality and oppression using visuals, graphics and animation. The synergy between graphics and animation in the text depicts the horrors of war and aggression of Axis forces. The sound of music during intense moments, for instance, the declaration of war, witnessing war brutality and losing squad mates and friends in battle grounds supplements the prominent frames regarding brotherhood and heroism of American soldiers and oppression of the Germans.
- The game mechanics and rules which create ludic experience for the player and serve to operationalize the prominent frames. For instance, American soldiers were framed as saviour of humanity and virtuous war heroes refraining from war crimes. Through the ludic action, which is controlled through game mechanics and rules, the game places them at a high pedestal and engages them in nobler actions and even restricts them to the same course of action. For instance, during the mission The Rhine, the American soldier/player is set at a proximity to a surrendering German soldier and is restricted not to kill him and accept his surrender. Unlike in another mission, the player is restricted to witness the death of a surrendering Allied soldier, and his actions are restricted.

- The frames which are evoked and reinforced, both at micro and macro level of text, point at their underlying ideological stance: American exceptionalism, moral just of war and American supremacy.
- The story and the events in the narrative of the selected title revolves around the heroic combat, sacrifice, and bravery of American soldiers. The storyline serves as a backbone to the ludic action. The story operationalizes these frames (listed in table) through the events, the playable and non-playable characters. The storyline of various missions is structured to invoke and strengthen the frames. For example, the frame of heroism entails brotherhood and sacrifice among soldiers. The protagonist risks his life to save German civilians and evacuate them to a safe place despite disapproval from his squad mate. Similarly, Daniels is shown willing to risk his life and refuses to get discharged from his duties in the battleground and vows to rescue his friend Zussman from German captivity. As mentioned earlier, the narrative of the selected title lay emphasis on the projection of Axis forces as embodiments of high ideals and bravery. The character of the French resistance fighter strengthens a nobler frame as her determination to take revenge for her family instils a driving force.
- The analysis of rules and mechanics affirms the potential of the procedural mode within the games communicate and reinforce the focus of the overall narrative of the selected title.
- The procedurality generated through the system of restriction and limitation ensued obedience and bravery in the player-character of protagonist. The game mechanics restricted the actions of the player and required him to follow orders which were life threatening and risky.
- The analysis of the selected titles reveals that the game mechanics and rules set the highest ideals of humanity for the protagonist and lead the actions of the protagonist who is required to protect the lives of German civilians and risk his life. The several playthroughs of the same mission of Collateral Damage revealed that the actions of the player were restricted, and the player had little or no navigational space and could not be engaged in any other sort of action except saving the lives of civilians of opposing forces and risking his own life.

- Similarly, the course of saving the life of NPC Zussman reflects that the procedurality of the game reinforces the brotherhood which was a dominant trait of the protagonist character. The game mechanics guide and assist him in finding his friend and saving him from German brutality.
- The examples of various missions which were mentioned in the data analysis revealed the existence of structured valour, bravery and resilience for the in-game characters. Through procedurality the player is engaged in actions like killing the enemy soldiers, saving the lives of German civilians and risking their lives for the noble cause. The game parameters construct a rigid and fixed set of actions for the player. The deviance from the set course of action results in failing the mission or restarting from the last checkpoint. The player is bound to risk his life and save the lives of his squad mates and civilians.
- The analysis of selected visuals revealed the duality of meaning in interpreting the image. The first and the last appearance of the hero conveyed both denotative and connotative meaning. The analysis revealed that visuals have the potential to convey the obvious and the hidden meanings.

4.12 Findings of Analysis of COD: BOII

The major findings of the analysis of COD: BOII under the three broad categories of narrative analysis, rules, mechanics (procedural mode), visuals (as a mode) and analysis of framing are listed below:

- The meta-narrative arc of COD: BOII displays a loose compliance to setup-development-complication-resolution structure owing to the non-linear story and the player's choice. The non-linear storytelling, and lack of conventional structure adds emotional depth and ensures more engagement of the player. The intertwining of two timelines, the Cold War-era and future setting of 2025 allows player to experience events from various perspectives and eras. This adds depth to narrative complexity while sustaining the involvement of the player.
- The progression of the narrative and the ending of the game depends upon the decisions taken during the ludic action. There are four possible endings for the selected title. Each ending is different and has a different narrative outcome. The conflict is resolved in only one ending whereas the other three endings are tragic with no resolution of the conflicts.

- The variations of the endings are determined by the ludic actions of the player and the outcome of player's choice of action. Each ending, reflect the choice of player and its significant impact on the overall narrative.
- The eleven subsidiary arcs are logically connected and have potential for character growth and transformation of the protagonist as well as the antagonist. However, these subsidiary arcs show very loose adherence to setup-development-complication-resolution structure.
- There is a network of smaller granular micronarrative arcs which are the building block of the narrative of the subsidiary arcs. These micronarrative arcs bear a separate narrative entity and contribute to the narrative progression of its principal arc. These micro narratives provide greater sense of freedom and involvement to the player.
- The limited number of choices enable the player to modify his actions and structure the subsequent narrative respectively. The choice of alternate weapons, stealth or open combat mode of action and using or not using access points offer the player a freedom to build the narrative in his own way in the subsidiary arcs. The player can modify his action and has freedom to use weapon of his own choice. However, these choices result in changes in narrative at a limited scale or localized level within the subsidiary arcs. The impact of these choices has no impact on the overall grand narrative or does not impact on the next missions. These choices, however, render a sense of freedom of choice at a small level.
- The data analysis reveals that the player's decision to refrain, delay or engage from certain action has the potential to alter the ludic experience and narrative progression of the selected title. It is important to note that the impact of these decisions can be seen in the later missions of the game. The consequences of these decisions have an impact on the narrative of next missions. However, these choices do not create a major change in the grand narrative. The player agency here, can produce specific and localised alterations and lead to nuanced narrative variation at a smaller scale.
- The data analysis reveals that the player agency can influence the narrative progression and storyline as the selected title reaches its culminating point. The

alternate choices can produce ripple effects in the narrative of the subsequent missions.

- The player agency gains more momentum during the decisions which affect/alter the ending of the selected title. The player's decision can prevent a catastrophic cyber-attack and establish ties between the U.S. and China and the antagonist is killed. Another choice can avert the cyber-attack but riots across the world cannot be prevented. The third choice can be devastating and cannot stop cyber-attacks and riots. The fourth possible ending can also not stop the disastrous cyberattack and the antagonist burns himself alive. The impact of player agency on the narrative becomes meaningful and decisive.
- The impactful player agency at this stage renders a deep sense of involvement to the player. The prospects of multiple endings require the player to indulge in narrative and explore various dimensions of the narrative.
- However, it is important to mention that the player is given several choices pertaining to the endings of the game. The player is bound to select from available choices. Whether the player wants to kill the antagonist or let him live to become a global threat to peace of the entire world.
- The storyworld of the selected title is diverse and has narrative significance. The storyworld of Black Ops II is expansive and is full of details in terms of ludic actions and narrative enrichment.
- The design and the setting of the storyworld of the selected title has narrative implications. The choice of real-world locations is both self-revealing and manifests the focus of the narrative. For example, choosing Los Angeles in the last mission as the target of destruction is making the United States emerge as a centre of world peace and jeopardising it would lead to global unrest. Similarly choosing locations in Pakistan and Afghanistan for the antagonist to seek help has its explicit narrative implications.
- The characters, including both playable and NPCs, inhabiting the world of Black Ops II, are dynamic. The characters of NPCs serve to provide context and work as a catalyst in the narrative progression. The backstory of Josefina, the sister of the antagonist, is the driving force for the revenge which is the focal point of the main story. Similarly, the character of the Mujahideen, the ISI

leader and the Russian Col have their own narrative significance. Not only do these characters make the ludic action more diverse but their presence has embedded narrative enrichment. Similarly, the character of Chloe, though an NPC, plays a vital role in the narrative progression. The actions of the player pertaining to her survival determines the course of actions and the ending of the game.

- The most important NPC, Menendez, the antagonist of the selected title, is the focal point of the narrative. Though an NPC, his strong character resurfaces frequently to pose intense and strategic combats for the playable characters. The NPC Menendez is outraged by the suffering afflicted by the CIA and an American businessman and becomes an epitome of anti-American sentiments. The interaction of each playable character with Menendez brings variation in the narrative. His character is built to impact the endings of the game. Though determined through the player's actions his survival/death can either restore the world's peace or destroy the world.
- The secondary playable character in the selected title has their own significance in the narrative progression. It is their recollection of past events and their meaningful interaction with protagonist as well as antagonist which make the narrative progression smooth and coherent.
- The interface of the second title keeps the player connected with the narrative through design elements used in its interface. Furthermore, it showed a proximity with the main story and the ludic action of the game. The look and the feel of the interface captures the essence of futuristic warfare technology. Furthermore, the game-metrics provided a spontaneous flow of in-game progress, and its design elements incorporated the narrative clues and created a sense of agency.
- The procedural mode in the selected title displayed meaning and showed communicative potential. The game mechanics and rules structured a heroic course of action for American covert operators. The procedural argument generated in Call of Duty: Black Ops II reinforced the focus of the narrative that the American military forces were capable of averting threats to peace. The procedurality within the game forces the player to make alliance with

Mujahideen and Russian ex-military, later to learn through another procedural argument that alliance with stereotypical enemies is not possible.

- The visual analysis revealed that the visual mode offers a meaning potential. The hero's image reflected the strength of young David who can work as a team member while retaining his superiority. Similarly, the image of his last appearance reflected the transformation and strength of his character.
- The data analysis of the second selected title reveals framing at both micro and macro level of the text. The narrative of the second selected title exhibited the positive framing for the American military forces by emphasising their heroism, nobility and sacrifice to eliminate threats to global peace.
- The narrative of the selected title explicitly selects the American perspective. The game reflects framing American intelligence (CIA and Navy Seal) being capable of averting global threat of terrorism. Furthermore, through framing the game also emphasises that the alliance of other superpowers with America is the only solution to avoid global catastrophes.
- Another important function of frames highlights that the organisation/people of Asian countries, like Pakistan and Afghanistan can be vulnerable partners to terrorist groups.
- At the macro level, frames are operationalized through strong storyline and characterization. The storyline of the selected title explicitly frames the American perspective and the events in the story are sequenced in a way that highlights that the world can be saved only if the superpowers can make alliance with America. This is made evident through various endings of the selected title. Apart from the first ending in which the world is saved, the other three endings are the outcome of non-alliance of superpowers with America which resulted in the riots across the world.
- The events in the story of COD: BOII reinforces both the negative and positive framing. For the first case, for instance, Alex Mason, further strains his relations with his child David when he plans to find his partner in Angola in the mission Pyrrhic Victory and strengthens the ideals of heroism and sacrifice. While on the other hand the events involving Russians, Pakistanis and Afghan

Mujahideen in the mission Old Wounds and Fallen Angel strengthen the negative framing for them.

- Another operational facet of framing at the macro level is the aesthetics of the game, that is the look and feel of the game. The synergy between graphics and animation reinforces the frames identified at the micro level of the text. Apart from these facets, game mechanics of the title also reinforce the similar frames of nobility and heroism for the American forces. The game mechanics structure a heroic course of action for the protagonist(s). The data analysis reveals that framing at micro level strengthens the frames identified at the micro level. The events and characters in the storyline as well as the ludic action reinforces the frames evoked through words/phrases/sentences in the text.

4.13 Findings of Analysis of GTA-V

The major findings of the analysis of the third selected title under the categories of narrative, analysis of rules, mechanics and visuals and analysis of framing are listed below:

- The meta-narrative of GTA-V indicates a tendency of loose conformity to the structural pattern of setup-complication-development-resolution. The player's action plays a decisive role in shaping the overall structure of the meta-narrative of the selected title.
- There is a network of 69 subsidiary arcs within the grand meta-narrative. These subsidiary arcs exhibit a logical connection to its proceeding arc and often are sequential in nature.
- The network of subsidiary arcs shows variation in their structure. There is deviation from the structural pattern, however, each arc establishes its narrative entity and contributes to the overall grand narrative.
- Within these subsidiary arcs, a network of granular or micro narrative has also been identified. The micronarrative or granular arc is structured while completing the objectives within the subsidiary arcs.
- This network of micronarrative has its own narrative significance. These micro-narratives show variation in their structure. These granular arcs show a loose compliance to the setup-complication-development-resolution pattern.

- The data analysis reveals that there are various ways to build the narrative of these granular arcs. Each arc has multiple ways to complete the objectives within the arc, thus can have different narrative details. These micronarratives make game play more engaging to the player.
- However, these variations in the micronarrative have no impact on the story within the subsidiary arcs. As the variations within the micronarratives correspond to how the action is done within it. However, these variations are reflective of the role of the player in the navigation and the nature of action the player wants to perform to complete the instance of micronarrative.
- The analysis of player agency of the third selected title reflects the role of player on the narrative of the selected game. The narrative of the title offers freedom of play/action of a varying degree. There were multitudes of possibilities for the player to impact the narrative of GTA-V.
- The player agency can be determined through the number of possibilities/choices available to the player. The narrative of the selected title provides several possibilities and freedom of action to the player to impact the narrative progression and its structure.
- Firstly, the third selected title creates a sense of freedom through the player's freedom to indulge in a few activities. These activities range from leisure activities to investing in stocks and are extended to guilt free vehicle theft. These leisure activities are walking, jogging, running, swimming, exercising, playing games, parachuting and boating. It enables the player to indulge in activities of his choice which inculcate a sense of freedom in the player and can bring variation in the narrative at a small scale.
- One of the pivotal elements in producing and sustaining this freedom and player agency is the freedom to navigate the sprawling open-world environment of the title apart from driving as a part of mission completion. The player can drive through the diverse landscape of Los Santos and its surrounding areas. The player has the liberty to drive his own car, or he can easily steal any car/bike or even fly planes. During missions he also has the liberty to drive any vehicle of his choice. The free navigational space of the title renders freedom and empowerment to the player who can navigate freely and immerse in the

dynamic landscape of the GTA-V. The navigational freedom makes the narrative richer, though does not lead to any major change in the narrative.

- The player agency is further strengthened through his ability to choose weapons of his choice during missions. The player-character can pick any weapon from the weapon wheel as well as a new weapon can be bought through ammu-nation. The player can use his mobile to call, check or write emails, buy or sell online, use life invader, tweet and invest online. These accessibilities create an impression of freedom and choice, and the player can engage in multiple activities both for the mission completion or random playfulness.
- The player-character switch also renders a greater sense of empowerment to the player. The analysis shows that the narrative of certain missions can be built by any of three characters. Through the character-switch ability, the player can switch to any preferred character which suits the mission requirement. For example, Franklin driving focus ability enables the player to slow down time while driving. Similarly, Trevor's Red Mist ability can help the player to engage in a more lethal attack whereas Michael's ability to create bullet-time-like effect slows time yields more advantage in shooting. It enables the player to effectively complete the narrative as well as exercise his own choice. The ability of character switch has direct impact on player's experience. It keeps the gameplay for engaging for the player, allowing player to adapt their actions based on distinct abilities of the selected character. The switching of characters, specifically at the decisive moments of gameplay, can impact narrative outcome as well as create more immersive experience to the player.
- Apart from the above-mentioned ability, the narrative renders a set of choices in terms of selection of approaches and selection of crew members during major heists which are the key narrative events in ludic action of the selected title. During major heists the player is allowed a greater agency through selection of approaches. It is important to note that each approach has a different set of actions and their narrative outcome. Similarly, selection of crew members also creates different narrative structures within the mission. Through selection of approaches and crew members, the player gains more freedom to perform ludic actions of his choice. However, it is important to note that these variations are localised in nature. It means these variations can impact the course of action

within a mission. The player agency gets bound as each variant narrative has a similar ending for these missions.

- However, a very profound impact of player agency is created in the case of different endings of the narrative of GTA-V. The player gets three different choices, and each choice has a different narrative outcome. Each ending has a different course of action and different outcome. For instance, one ending keeps the three protagonists alive and together, the second ending shows betrayal of friends and the third ending shows one protagonist succumbing to vicious demands of the criminal world and killing another protagonist. These choices for the endings retain the impression of freedom. However, selecting any of these choices is a hard decision for the player. Each choice not only leads to a different but a tragic ending. Here, through player agency the player is kept involved and immersed in the narrative as the player becomes aware of consequences of his choices.
- This freedom to dig deep, however never puts the player in a position to contradict or undermine the dominant narrative: by limiting the player's options to only those which deepen or enrich the story in some way.
- The setting and design of the storyworld is dynamic and embodies narrative information. The setting and design of the virtual world is appropriate to the storyline, missions and side quests. The navigational space and vast network of roads which stretch across the fictional setting of Blaine County and Los Santos render a more realistic and immersive experience to the player. The navigation in the narratively rich storyworld is eased through GPRS available on the game's interface. This free navigational space contributes to both the diversity and illusion of freedom within the storyworld. The player navigates on the vast roads with any vehicle of his choice (bought or snatched), however, this navigation does not contribute to narrative progression.
- The interface of the title serves as the nexus between player and the narrative of the game. It shows a proximity with the main story of the selected title and is in line with the ludic actions and the story of the game. The interface provides the relevant and necessary information to perform the action.

- The narrativized interface serves two functions: keeping the player immersed in the game and reinforcing the focus of the narrative through its design elements. The look and the feel of the interface is a significant factor for creating an immersive ludic experience for the player and keeping the player intact with the on-going narrative.
- The interface aesthetics and narrativized game-metrics ensure a spontaneous flow of information which is required for the ludic action and the narrative progression. The audio-visual design elements of the interface render an ease to perform the ludic action as well as keep the narrative focus intact for the player. The visual elements of the interface including maps, weapon and radio wheel, notifications, mobile phone accessibility icon and character switch icons guide the navigation within the storyworld of the game while providing narrative clues and create a sense of agency and render a realistic experience to the player.
- Another important interface design element which keeps the player intact with the narrative progression is the game-metrics. It keeps the player updated on the scale of navigation within the game space and his progress in the game and condition of the storyworld through health bar, ammo bar, destination map, special skill bar, wanted level and mission notifications. The game-metrics provide contextual clues and relevant information to complete the mission as well as create a sense of agency in the player.
- The data analysis reveals framing at both the micro and macro level in the text. At the micro level, through words/phrases and sentences, the text of the selected title generates the frames that reject capitalism which governs the political-economic system of modern (American) society.
- Through the process of selection and salience, the text of the selected title develops focus on capitalism as a source of many problems such as individualism, materialism, consumerism, and corruption. Furthermore, through framing, the selected title presents capitalism as a source of economic disparity. Instead of social mobility, capitalism has given rise to social inequalities. The evaluative and prescriptive nature of framing the selected title posits capitalism in a critical position.

- The game manifests that the relentless pursuit of wealth captivates individuals and rips off morality from them and makes them vulnerable to crime. Through the evaluative function of framing, basic tenets of capitalism are denounced. The negative outcome of individualism, self-interest, profit maximisation and minimal role of government are emphasised.
- One of the functions of framing is making moral judgement about the issue which is presented in the text. Through framing the text makes moral judgement about the capitalistic society while reflecting on its shortcomings. The government agencies and private military agencies are framed, and their ultimate goal is to increase their stock of wealth while exploiting the weak.
- The emphasis of capitalism on profit maximisation and market competition leading companies to engage in outsourcing and offshoring has also been negatively framed and its repercussions have been condemned through framing.
- The framing at macro level is found to be substantial. The text of the selected title reveals that frames are very effectively operationalized through characters and storyline, game aesthetics, rules and mechanics. The main story within the text is primarily about the failings of capitalistic society. The prime focus of the story is the exploitative and self-interest driven materialistic society.
- The story revolves around criminal minded characters who later become victims to the exploitation of corrupt agencies. The characters attain the status of agents of frames whereas the storyline becomes the platform for frames where these frames are activated. These frames are reinforced through game mechanics and rules which
- Firstly, the data analysis of the selected title confirms the ability of game to communicate via procedural mode. Not only do the game mechanics and rules regulate the ludic actions of the player but also communicate and structure a procedural argument. It is through the system of permission and restrictions which is governed through rules and mechanics of the game that procedural arguments are structured in the selected title.
- A principal procedural argument generated here is that the ethical activities and behaviour are not rewardable whereas theft, exploitation and crime activate the reward system which imply a paradox of the existing system of values. The

ethical behaviour is shown to be undervalued in the game, what holds significance is the breaking of law and engaging in criminal activities and is shown the only way to progress in the game. This paradox mimics the real-world practice of non-appreciation of ethical or moral behaviour rather than participating in criminal activities and violating the law is shown as rewarding.

- The game mechanics offer free navigational space and many leisure activities to the player, however, unlike criminal activities, the leisure activities do not produce any effect. These activities are as meaningless as optional ethical actions such as helping others which can be performed in the game depending upon the player's choice.
- The procedural mode blurs the moral boundaries in the ludic action. The ultimate choice for the player is to kill the enemy/guards/police to progress in the game. The game mechanics restrict the player, any other action could lead to a failed mission or zero progress or restarting the mission from the last checkpoint. The system of rules and mechanics does not allow to save any human life, rather it is aligned with the material pursuit which is the key focus of the story within the game as well as the world we live in.
- The game parameters provide more ease if the player opts for killing rather than sparing while escaping from the crime scene. The game mechanics activate the wanted level if the player spares the car owner whereas it provides him an easy escape and mission completion if he kills the car owner.
- The visual analysis reveals the potential of visual mode to convey meaning. The images of the hero's first and last appearance were interpreted at the two levels of signification. At the denotative level, the analysis reveals that visuals can convey the obvious meaning. For instance, the first appearance of Michael reflected his calmness while he was held at gunpoint by the security guard while at the denotative level, the same image reflected the lack of law enforcing agents to protect the vicinity while the destroyed vault and use of red colour conveyed the overpowering capacity of criminals. This is in-line with the later scenes where Michael was freed from captivity while the guard was killed by Trevor. Similarly, the last appearances of the central character have been interpreted at both levels of signification. At the first level, the image shows the death of the

protagonist while at a connotative level it reflects that Michael is paid with the same coin. His efforts to live a happy life with his family while betraying his criminal friends ends with a betrayal at the hands of his partner. Another image shows Michael celebrating victory with his crime partner while at the second level of significance the image reflects that his alliance to betray his old friend has proved successful again. The image from the third ending reflects Michael completing his task while connotatively the image is reflective of the moral ambiguity of actions as well as his future.

CHAPTER 5

MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the study, major findings, conclusions, implications of the study and recommendations of the study. In the conclusion section, a discussion on the research questions of the present study is included. This section synthesizes the findings, relating their relevance and contribution to the existing body of research. This section aims to encapsulate the study's key insights and demonstrate how they enhance the comprehension of the genre of digital games.

5.1 Overview of the Study

Investigating digital games shed light on the "politic" nature of their design—the sagacity and tactfulness that underpin the creation of this digital artifact. The games are not merely technological achievements but carefully constructed works where every element, from narrative structure to interactive mechanics, reflects deliberate and strategic decision-making. This "politic" sensibility is evident in how games negotiate player engagement, embed worldviews, and balance aesthetic and functional considerations. A thorough investigation of these artifacts, through analytical frameworks such as multimodal genre analysis, reveals the intricate interplay of form and intent that defines their unique character. Such an approach reaffirms the thoughtful craftsmanship behind games, framing them as not only immersive experiences but also profound expressions of creative ingenuity.

Digital games have occupied a central and challenging position in the realm of expanding digital media and have attracted the attention of media practitioners and academics alike. However, genre-based studies of digital games are less frequent in academic scholarship. This thesis is a scholarly endeavour to develop an understanding of the genre of digital games. The present study is firmly grounded in the field of Linguistics and follows the tradition of genre and multimodal studies in analysing the selected genre of digital video games. Based on a conceptual understanding of Clearwater (2011), the present study aimed to understand, first and foremost, the genre of digital games. According to Clearwater, the purpose of genre is not to develop a

system of taxonomy; rather genre represents a framework or schematic with which we can not only understand the individual title that forms a part of genre but also the larger social environment in which that title resides. Clearwater's genre theory encompasses the ludic, the narrative and discursive dimensions of digital games.

To develop a nuanced understanding of digital games, the study has adapted an analytical operational model to study the three selected titles with the focus as outlined in the theory of genre as suggested by Clearwater (2011). There are two distinct, yet broad aspects of his genre theory for digital games. First, the formal aspect takes narrative (arcs, player agency, storyworld and interface), rules, mechanics, visual aspect and kinesthetics of games into consideration. While the second aspect of his theory focuses on the discursive and social dimensions of the genre. For Clearwater these elements are interlinked and inseparable, the ludo-narrative and contextual dimensions of genre are intrinsic to a critical analysis of digital games.

Keeping in view the two generic considerations, the study was set to investigate the structure of narrative patterns, the potential of procedural modes (rules, mechanics and parameters) to generate procedural argument and the process of framing which operates within games. The first two parts of this research relate to the formal consideration of genre and takes the narrative elements (including arcs, character, story, emotions and interface), rules and mechanics of game into consideration. In this regard, the first objective of the study was to explore the structure of narrative pattern in the digital games and the role of player agency in the progression of narrative of the games. The second objective was to analyse the potential of rules and mechanics to generate procedural arguments. The third objective of the study was to identify the ideological positions as manifested in the framing process in digital games. This part of the study is related to the discursive and contextual dimension of genre. The study analysed the functions of framing, and it also identified the ideological constructs via framing in these games. It is important to mention that the study is limited to identify the frame, analyse the process and function of the frames only. It did not include the analysis of ideology in this context.

For this purpose, three titles were selected, and an analytical framework was adapted which included Narrative Analytical Framework (Bizzocchi, 2007; Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum, 2012), Analytical Framework for Procedural Mode Hawreliak (2019)

and Visual Mode (Barthes,1976) and Analytical Framework for Framing (Entman, 2018; Nygren et al., 2022).

This study examines the intricate relationship between gameplay and storytelling, focusing on how digital games utilize various narrative mechanics to construct and deliver their narratives. Elements of narrative mechanics such as arcs and their progression, player agency, character arcs, storyworld design, emotional resonance, and interface functionality are analyzed as integral components of this process. By situating these elements within the broader framework of genre analysis, the research demonstrates how games create dynamic storytelling experiences and rich narratives. This approach not only highlights the interactivity inherent in video game narratives but also emphasizes their potential to frame complex perspectives and evoke emotional engagement, positioning games as a sophisticated narrative medium.

5.2 Major Findings

This section includes the major findings of the study which reveal how the narrative is constructed in the selected games. The analysis reveals that the COD: WWII, COD: BOII and GTA-V are excellent example of rich narratives. The narrative in these games is constructed through myriads of arcs of varying scales.

5.2.1 Structure of Narrative Patterns and the Role of Player Agency

The findings of the analysis of the structure of narrative patterns and the role of player (agency) in the genre of digital games are summarised as under:

- The narrative of digital games showed the presence of three different kinds of arcs. The narrative progression within these arcs exhibited certain patterns within these arcs. The narrative of the selected games exhibited the overarching meta-arc of varying lengths in the selected titles. The structure of the meta-arc showed loose adherence to setup-complication-development-resolution structure in its progression.
- The narrative progression in the grand meta-arc took place through a network of subsidiary arcs. This network of arcs manifested logical sequences among them and were well-connected to each other. The events unfolded in these arcs were interlinked to each other. These arcs could not be approached randomly. The network of subsidiary arcs showed variation in their structure. Furthermore,

there was a deviation from the structural pattern, however, each arc established its narrative entity and contributed to the overall grand narrative.

- These subsidiary arcs showed the potential for character growth and transformation of the protagonist as well as the antagonist. However, these subsidiary arcs showed very loose adherence to setup-development-complication-resolution structure.
- It is noteworthy that the narrative progression in these arcs depended on the successful completion of ludic action in these arcs. There was a network of granular arcs/micro narrative which constituted the narrative of subsidiary arcs. Though the micro-narratives were the smallest arc on the scale, yet their significance could not be undermined. This micronarrative became the building blocks of the narrative.
- This network of micro-narrative has its own narrative significance. These micronarratives showed variation in their structure. These micronarratives were structured in a manner like their subsidiary and grand meta-arc and showed a loose compliance to the structural pattern.
- It was interesting to note that there were various ways to build the narrative of these granular arcs. Each arc had multiple ways to complete the objectives within the arc, thus could manifest different narrative details. However, the variations in the micronarrative had no impact on the story within the subsidiary arcs. Therefore, the variation in micronarratives were localised in nature. These variations failed to produce a substantial impact on the grand narrative. As the variations within the micronarratives correspond to how the action was accomplished within it. However, these variations were reflective of the role of the player in the navigation and the nature of action the player wanted to perform to complete the instance of micronarrative.
- Turning now to the question of player agency and the role of player in the case of narrative progression. It is noteworthy that it was the ludic experience of the player that determined the narrative flow within the grand narrative of the game. The challenges which the player encountered provided him the chance to exercise his choice.

- The finding of the study had outlined the following dimensions of player agency in the narrative of the selected titles. The narrative of the selected title manifested player agency in various forms such as the ability to approach the enemy or destination in many ways, bring variation in the combat style, choose/change weapon of choice, freedom to navigate in the game space, ability to structure the narrative of micro arc, make decisions to change the course of action and ability to impact or alter the endings.
- The player's ability to bring variation in combat style and freedom to choose the weapons of his choice made the ludic experience more engaging and rendered a sense of freedom to the player. Similarly, the freedom to navigate within the game space allowed the player to traverse and explore the virtual environment as well as created a more dynamic ludic experience where the player feels empowered to explore the game space. However, the freedom to navigate in the game space varied among the three selected titles. The navigational space was more limited in the first two titles whereas the third title being an open world game allowed the player more freedom to traverse the vast game space.
- The role of the player in structuring the granular arc or micronarrative is significant. The player had a greater freedom to impact the structure of the micronarrative. The player could structure the granular arc in multiple ways and could bring variations in narrative details. However, this impact was localised and restricted to the granular or subsidiary arcs and could not be extended to the narrative of the meta-arc.
- The most interesting findings pertaining to the narrative progression and role of player agency was the freedom of decision making which could alter the narrative of the subsidiary and grand arc. It is important to mention that the player was given greater freedom of decision making in the ludic action of certain smaller arcs or micronarratives. For instance, in the first selected title the player could impact the micro narrative through his decisions of sparing an enemy or killing the enemy. However, this choice of killing/sparing the enemy was limited to a smaller number of micro narratives. Interestingly, through these micro narratives, the player can either affirm or contradict the focus of the narrative. For example, through sparing an enemy, the player strengthened the

noble ideal of American soldiers at the same time the player had the freedom to save a woman from a German soldier or may not intervene and focus solely on the primary objective of the mission. Similarly, the player was given a choice to help the wounded enemy soldier or otherwise and accept/reject the retreats of falling enemy at certain points in the same title. The player's sense of freedom or choice was strengthened through decisions at such moments in the narrative. The player was empowered to behave or treat the enemy on his own will which ultimately either construct or bring variations in the granular arcs. However, the occurrence of such micronarrative was found only in one selected title.

- Another significant finding was the impact of player's decision making on structuring the endings of the selected titles which varied across the set of selected titles. The first title did not provide any choice to the player whereas the second title, *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* exhibited more freedom for the player to impact the narrative. First the player's decisions during the initial subsidiary arcs created a ripple effect for the later subsidiary arcs. Secondly the outcome of the player's actions in the last subsidiary arc could produce four different narrative outcomes. Each ending had different narrative details and different consequences for the protagonist(s) and antagonist(s). The third title *GTA-V* also reflected the ability of the player to create impact through his choice of actions. The last subsidiary arc provided three clear choices for the player, each choice had a different narrative outcome: exterminating all villains or killing of primary protagonist or betrayal of primary protagonist and death of the secondary protagonist. The impact of player agency on the narrative became meaningful and decisive. The impactful player agency at this stage rendered a deep sense of involvement to the player. The prospects of multiple endings required the player to indulge in narrative and explored various dimensions of the narrative. These forms of choices provided a sense of empowerment to the player, and he could bring variation in his course of actions.
- It is important to note that the various forms of player agency discussed above, except the last one, failed to produce any substantial impact on the narrative of the selected title. The choices, like free navigational space and freedom to alter his course of action, could serve to deepen the narrative arcs and enrich the

narrative experience of the player, however, did not allow the player to steer the trajectory of the narrative.

- The most important aspect of player agency which led to variations in the narrative outcome was the impact of player's choice on the endings which shaped the overall narrative of the game. However, it is important to note that the alternate endings were also predetermined and structured. While the player felt empowered to bring variation in the narrative, the structured outcomes revealed the true nature of agency which was controlled and bounded.
- One of the major findings of this research is that the digital games, as a narrative medium, construct and evolve narratives through dynamic interactions between narrative patterns, arcs, and player agency. While the mechanics of narrative construction are not the central focus of the analysis, the present study reveals how the structure and progression of narrative arcs are influenced by player's choice, rules, and interface cues. By focusing on the narrative patterns and their progression, the study reveals how games offer a fluid, evolving narrative experience that is distinct from traditional storytelling. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how games create meaning, with particular emphasis on how narrative arcs progress in response to player interactions. In this context, the construction of narratives is explored through the lens of how they unfold within the gameplay experience, reinforcing the central argument that games are an emerging narrative genre. The findings illustrate that narrative construction in games is not a static process but one that is continually shaped by the interplay of narrative mechanics, procedural, visual, and player-driven element.

5.2.2 Storyworld, Characters, and Emotions

- The three important narrative elements such as storyworld, characters and emotions are integral in narrative construction. The rich and dynamic storyworld of the selected titles embodied the focus of the storyline. The close binary between the physical and auditory landscape in the storyworld of these titles kept the player fully immersed in the narrative flow. However, the navigational space within the storyworld was subject to the nature of the game. The open-world game like GTA-V offered more navigational space as

compared to the other two titles. However, this free navigational space contributed to both the diversity and illusion of freedom within the storyworld.

- The design and the setting of the storyworld of the selected titles manifested narrative implications. The choice of real-world locations is both self-revealing and emphasises the focus of the narrative. For example, choosing Los Angeles in the last mission as the target of destruction is making the United States emerge as a centre of world peace and jeopardising it would lead to global catastrophe. Similarly choosing locations in Pakistan and Afghanistan for the antagonist to seek help has its explicit narrative implications.
- The characters were designed to reflect emotional affinity among the squad mates. The NPCs had emotional depth and were shown to be capable of personality growth and transformation. NPCs, like the central playable characters, could manifest the noble ideal of heroism and determination of American soldiers that were used to strengthen the focus of the overall narrative.
- The characters, including both PC and NPCs, inhabiting the world of Black Ops II were dynamic. The character of NPCs serves to provide context and work as a catalyst in the narrative progression.

5.2.3 Narrativized Interface

- The narrativized interface has served two functions: keeping the player immersed in the game and reinforcing the focus of the narrative through its design elements. The look and the feel of the interface was found to be a significant factor for creating an immersive ludic experience for the player and kept the player intact with the on-going narrative.
- The interface aesthetics and narrativized game-metrics ensured a spontaneous flow of information which was required for the ludic action and the narrative progression. The audio-visual design elements of the interface rendered an ease to perform the ludic actions.
- Another important interface design element which kept the player intact with the narrative progression was the game-metrics. The game-metrics provided contextual clues and relevant information to complete the mission as well as created a sense of agency for the player. The interface design element had

narrative relevance and kept the reader intact with the narrative and guided the player to actively participate in ludic action and narrative progression.

5.2.4 Findings of Frame Analysis

The qualitative assessment of frames in the genre of (selected) digital games exhibited the process of framing at both micro and macro level of the text. The identified frames were ideology driven constructs and were not neutral. The major findings of frame analysis are given as under:

- The text of the selected titles generated specific frames through words, phrases, and sentences. These frames were also activated through the story, events, and characters. Furthermore, the game aesthetics, mechanics and rules served as the operational facets for these specific frames.
- Through the process of framing, the text acquired an explicit perspective and manifested clearly defined ideological standpoints. The first two titles, Call of Duty: World War II and Call of Duty: Black Ops II exhibited the frames of American heroism. These games positioned American military and covert operators as heroes who could avert the threats to global peace and terrorism. The first title centred around the narrative about the soldiers who participated in the second world war and embodied the heroic characteristics of sacrifice, valour, and camaraderie. Whereas in the second title the CIA and Navy Seal operatives exemplified heroism through their unwavering commitment to duty and were presented as an epitome of bravery, unmatched skills and sacrifice.
- The evaluative and prescriptive functions of frame in the case of the first title positioned the opponent as tyrannical, evil and oppressor. Whereas the second title presented its adversary as terrorising and evil and regarded them as a mounting threat to global peace. The juxtaposition of heroic frames for the American forces and negative frames for the adversaries emphasised the key focus of the narrative. It is important to mention that these selected titles did not use any fictional adversaries, rather pointed out German and Allied forces as enemies in the case of Call of Duty: World War II. While the Nicaraguan dealer was presented as the source of chaos and tyranny in the second title, it also exhibited the marginalised countries such as Yemen, Angola, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and to have the potential to become partners with the enemy factions

in the game. Whereas China and Russia, were both casted as possible adversaries, however, their alliance with America was projected as the only solution to avert global catastrophes.

- The third title, GTA-V exhibited anti-capitalistic frames which denounced capitalism that governs the political-economic system of modern (American) society. Anticapitalism, as an ideological disposition critiques the capitalist system and its associated values, asserting that it leads to inequality and exploitation. Through the process of selection and salience, capitalism was presented as a source of problems, such as individualism, materialism, consumerism, and corruption.
- The evaluative and prescriptive nature of framing posits capitalism in a critical position. Through the evaluative function of framing, basic tenets of capitalism were denounced. The negative outcome of individualism, self-interest, profit maximisation and minimal role of government were emphasised. Through framing the text made moral judgement about the capitalistic society while reflecting on its shortcomings. The game manifested that the relentless pursuit of wealth captivates individuals and rips off morality from them and makes them vulnerable to crime.
- At macro level, framing reinforced the focus of the narrative and strengthened the frames which were identified at the micro level of the text. The prominent frames were operationalized through three important facets: game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules, and storyline and characterization. The PC and NPCs attained the status of agents of frames whereas the storyline became the platform for frames where these frames were activated. The first two titles retained the positive perspective for American heroism through the main story and the characters. The events in these titles were aligned to strengthen the positive framing for American military and covert operators while the negative frames were reinforced for the adversaries. The aesthetics, that is the look, and the feel of the game was aligned with the specific frames of the respective titles. The synergy between graphics and animation reinforced the positive perspective of American heroism.

- The game mechanics and rules are fundamental aspects of the ludic action. The game parameters structured and operationalized the nobler and heroic frame for the American military. Through the ludic action, which was controlled through game mechanics and rules, the game placed the American military at a high pedestal and engaged them in nobler actions and even restricted them to the same course of action.
- Similarly, the main story, events and characters served to operationalize the anti-capitalistic frames. The main story of the third title was primarily about the failings of capitalistic society where the player-character experienced the shortcomings of the ideological socio-economic system of capitalism. Initially the game mechanics allowed the player to be part of this system and provided him with ease. However, the later part of the game made him experience the shortcomings of capitalism.
- The frame analysis reveals two important findings: first the process of framing in digital games does not solely rely on textual element such as words and phrases it also involves game mechanics, game aesthetics and element of story to reinforce the frames. Secondly, the frames have explicit ideological dispositions such as nationalism, American militarism and anticapitalism. It is important to mention that the analysis did not involve investigation of these ideologies as it goes beyond the scope and focus of the study.

5.2.5 Procedural Mode and Visual Mode

- In the first place, the three titles affirmed the potential of the procedural and visual mode to have communicative and meaning-making potential which reinforced the key focus of the overall narrative of each selected title.
- The rules and mechanics of the game determined the ludic actions of the player. It was through the system of affordance and restrictions during the ludic action that a procedural argument was structured in the selected titles.
- By the virtue of procedural mode, the high and noble ideals of humanity were set and led the actions of the protagonist in the first and the second title. The parameters of the game structured a path of desired actions, such as valour, risk-taking and sacrifice, and did not allow any deviation from these actions in the first two titles. The deviance from these set courses resulted in failing the

mission or restarting from the last checkpoint. The player was bound to risk his life and save the lives of his squad mates/civilians/other nationals/countrymen. There was no other option rarely available to him in terms of meaningful ludic action.

- A principal procedural argument generated in the case of GTA-V was that the ethical and moral behaviour is not rewarding. The ethical behaviour was shown to be undervalued in the game, what held significance was breaking the law and engaging in criminal activities and was shown to be the only way to progress in the game. This paradox mimicked the real-world practice of non-appreciation of ethical or moral behaviour. Furthermore, the participation in criminal activities and violation of law were shown as rewarding.
- By the means of procedurality, GTA-V, implied a paradox of existing values: progress in the world can only be attained through material success or money. The parameters of the game blurred the moral boundaries for the player-character. The ultimate choice for the player was to kill the enemy/guards/police to progress in the game. The game mechanics restricted the player, any other action led to a failed mission or zero progress or restarting the mission from the last checkpoint. The system of rules and mechanics did not allow to save any human life, rather it was aligned with the material pursuit which was the key focus of the story within the game as well as the world we live in.
- The game parameters provided more ease if the player opted for killing rather than sparing the human lives while escaping from the crime scene. The game mechanics activated the wanted level if the player spared the car owner whereas it provided him an easy escape and mission completion if he killed the car owner. Thus, through its procedurality, the game generated a value system which supported materialism, crime and exploitation and presented them as the only way forward. The success for the player-character rested in crime not in moral code of conduct.
- The visual mode (selected images of hero's first and last appearance) was analyzed using Barthes' concepts of denotation and connotation. The denotation reveals each character's physical state and context at critical moments, while connotation deepens the player's understanding of their transformation or fate.

The juxtaposition of initial and final images underscores the evolution of each hero, symbolizing key thematic elements like conflict, loyalty, or tragedy, which enhances the meaning-making process in the game's narrative. This visual evolution is central to the player's immersive experience.

- In sum, both modes, visual and procedural modes in games, offer significant potential for meaning making by enhancing the narrative focus and deepening player engagement. Visual elements, such as character design and imagery, convey story progression and emotional tone, while procedural mode—defined by the rules, mechanics, and interactions—enhance the immersive experience within the game's narrative framework.

5.3 Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to study the genre of digital games. Following Clearwater's theory of genre which considered the formal and aesthetic aspect of the genre in addition to the social and discursive aspect, three games were analysed using an operational analytical model based on this holistic approach to the genre of digital games. The present study focussed on the structure of narrative patterns, the role of player in narrative progression, the process of framing and the meaning potential of visual and procedural modes in digital games.

The narrative of the game was analysed for the structure of narrative patterns and the role of player agency in the narrative progression using Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2012) Narrative Analytical Framework. This framework was used to address the two research questions: first was identifying the structure of narrative patterns within the genre of first-person shooter games and the role of player agency in narrative progression. The research indicated that there were distinct narrative patterns. The progression of narrative within the digital games manifested a triad configuration pattern. This triad configuration included the meta-arc which operated as the core structural arc. The structure of the meta-arc showed variation and loose adherence to setup-complication-development-resolution structure. Beside the grand arc, a network of subsidiary arcs constituted the second level of arcs. The subsidiary arcs showed variation in their number, length and structure. There was a lack of conformity to the traditional structure in these arcs. However, there was a degree of interconnectedness among these subsidiary arcs. These arcs cannot be approached randomly. Furthermore,

these arcs have the potential for character growth and transformation of the protagonist as well as the antagonist.

Each subsidiary arc displayed dual functionality. Firstly, it established itself as a separate narrative entity, therefore, it maintained its own narrative significance. Secondly it worked as a bridging narrative and maintained its connection to the meta-arc as well as its subsequent and preceding arcs.

The third level of arc was structured through the network of micronarrative arcs. Though the micronarratives were the smallest arcs on the scale, yet their significance cannot be undermined. This micronarrative functioned as the building blocks of the narrative and showed variation in the structure and number like their parent arcs.

The micronarrative arcs were found significant in many respects. First the micronarratives served as the building block of narrative. Second, these micronarratives were complete self-contained narrative structures. Third, these micronarrative arcs were the point of engagement with the ludic action and narrative initiation. Fourth, these micronarratives were also a source of providing a sense of freedom and free-will. The player could structure the granular arc in multiple ways and could bring variations in narrative details. However, this impact was localised and restricted to the granular or subsidiary arcs and its impact could not be extended to the narrative of the meta-arc. Despite this negligible impact on narrative structure, the micronarrative provided a more immersive ludic experience and rendered a sense of freedom and free will as compared to following a structured course of action in the subsidiary and grand arcs. The overall structure of narrative pattern in the selected games reflected the triad configuration.

The narrative progression within these selected games showed a systematic progression in this triad configuration pattern. The core arch showed a network of subsidiary arcs and within this network the narrative progression was not random. Each subsidiary arc had its core dual functions: first retaining its own narrative significance and second bridging the narrative of the grand arc with the network of subsidiary arcs, while the third, granular micro-arc was the building block of narrative, where the action took place. Within each subsidiary arc there was a network of micro or granular arcs.

The significance of micronarrative lies in the fact that apart from their contribution in narrative construction and progression, these micronarratives rendered

a sense of agency and empowerment through providing freedom to make decisions based on personal (available) choices. These micronarrative arcs served to fully immerse the player in the game by providing them choices at important stages within the game. The micronarrative arc established itself as the self-contained arc which was significant in the longer development of narrative of subsidiary as well as the grand meta-arc.

Having established the triad narrative configuration, the next finding of the study relates to the role of player agency in shaping the narrative of the genre of digital games. The second research question was to find out the role of the player agency in contributing the narrative progression in selected games. The study reflected the various dimensions of player agency in the narrative. The player could bring variation in approaching the enemy or destination point, modify his combat style, use weapons of his choice, structure and shape the micro narrative in his own way, freedom to navigate the game space, make decisions to change the course of action and ability to impact or alter the endings. However, *Call of Duty: World War II* exerted greater control over player's freedom, thus limiting their range of personalised actions. The controlled player agency did not allow the player to make many changes in the narrative. Though a sense of empowerment was created through multiple choices in *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* and *GTA-V*. The free navigational space and the alternate endings created an illusion of free will. Despite offering multiple endings in both games, fixed outcomes of predetermined though multiple endings reveal the true nature of agency which was bounded and controlled. These choices served to deepen the narrative arc, however, did not allow the player to steer the narrative trajectory on his own. Even though these choices allowed the player to explore the various dimensions of narrative but did not allow the player to undermine or contradict the key focus of the narrative. The study revealed that the player can enrich his narrative experience through the number of choices given in the games, however, these choices were also structured and did not allow the player to steer or construct narrative on his own terms. Hence, the (bounded) agency of the player allowed the player to enrich his narrative experience, however, the player was denied the authorial control.

Another important focus of the study was to investigate the extent procedural and visual modes contribute to impart meaning in digital games. The study affirmed the potential of procedural and visual mode to communicate and reinforce the key focus of

the narrative of the three selected games. By the virtue of procedural mode, these games generated procedural arguments which were aligned with the central focus of the narrative. Through procedurality, *Call of Duty: World War II* and *Black Ops II* embodied the ideal of heroism and bravery for American military forces. The procedurality determined the ludic action of the player. It was through the procedurality that the player experienced the sacrifice and bravery of American soldiers. The procedural argument embraced high and noble ideals of humanity for American military forces.

Similarly, a fundamental procedural argument generated in *GTA-V* was that ethical and moral conduct has no value. The parameters of the game blurred the moral boundaries for the player-character. Furthermore, ethical activities and behaviour were not rewardable whereas theft, exploitation and crime activated the reward system which implied a paradox of the existing system of values. The procedural argument of the third title asserted that the single route to progress was making money, regardless of the course of action. This paradox mimicked the real-world practice of non-appreciation of ethical values as compared to appraisal of morally approved practices.

Finally, the research investigated the process of framing in the genre of digital games. Framing operated at both the macro and micro level of the narrative. At the micro level, the text generated specific frames whereas at macro level these frames were activated and reinforced through characterization, storyline, game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules. Through the process of framing the text acquired an explicit perspective and manifested clearly defined ideological standpoints. These frames were based on the ideology of American military heroism. *Call of Duty: World War II* and *Black Ops II* repeatedly asserted a positive and powerful framing for American military forces with emphasis on their heroic characteristics of sacrifice, valour and comradeship. While the Germans and Allied forces were framed as oppressor and evil in the case of World War II. The juxtaposition of heroic frames for the American forces and negative frames for the adversaries emphasised the key focus of the narrative. Similarly, the framing in *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* projected the exemplary heroic and unwavering commitment of CIA and Navy Seal operators. A very significant result was that these games did not use fictional enemies. The second title framed Nicaragua as a source of threat of terrorism. Furthermore, it also framed the marginalised countries such as Yemen, Angola, Afghanistan and Pakistan to have the potential to become

partners with the terrorist groups. In the same vein China and Russia, were both casted as possible adversaries, however, their alliance with America was projected as the only solution to avert global catastrophes.

The study revealed that these two games used the American military ideology as the ideational resources for framing. The evaluative functions of the frame provided a negative perspective to the potential adversaries as well as generated a positive perspective for the American military. The frames which are evoked in these titles clearly manifested the underlying ideological standpoints of military heroism.

The third title GTA-V incorporated anti-capitalistic frames. The anti-capitalistic frames are reflective of the ideological standings of the selected game which is anti-capitalism which itself as an ideology opposes the ideology of capitalism. Through the evaluative function of framing, basic tenets of capitalism were denounced. The blind pursuit of capitalism and its consequences were manifested through extreme individualism. Furthermore, the outcome of this drive was witnessed through over-emphasis on self-interest, profit maximisation and minimal role of government. Through framing the text made moral judgement about the capitalistic society while reflecting on its shortcomings. To sum up, the narrative of the game displayed anti capitalistic frames. Through the evaluative function of the frame, it rejected the notion of capitalism. Through framing, the narrative offered a critique of the pervasive system of capitalism, however, it does not offer any solution to the existing problem or system.

At macro level these frames were operationalized through various facets: game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules, and storyline and characterization. The PC and NPCs attained the status of agents of frames whereas the storyline became the platform for frames where these frames were activated. It was through these operational facets that the focus of narrative was reinforced and strengthened. The game mechanics offered the player-character a chance to activate the frame of bravery and heroism for the American soldier in Call of Duty: World War II and Blac Ops II whereas in the third title it allowed the player to experience the shortcomings of a capitalistic society. These operational means of frame explicitly reiterated the underlying ideological assumptions. In the case of Call of Duty games, the ideological disposition of supremacy of American military forces were reinforced through game mechanics and narrative counterparts of character and storyline. The storyline and character never deviated from the display of heroic endeavours of the American military force. In the

case of GTA-V, capitalism, a socio-economic ideological construct, was critiqued through presenting the paradox of the modern value system which has its roots in anti-capitalistic ideology. The storyline clearly rejected capitalism and built its critique through the challenges, exploitation and ultimately the tragic end the characters encounter (in case of the two endings). In doing so, the anti-capitalistic standpoint was reflected in the operational facets of selected games.

5.4 Implications of the Study

The present study provides insight into the genre of digital games in following ways:

- The genre of digital games has distinct narrative patterns. The narrative progression is instantiated through a triad configuration pattern in the genre of digital games: meta-arc, subsidiary arc, and micronarrative.
- The subsidiary arcs, the second level arc, manifested dual functionality: establishing their distinct/separate narrative entity while bridging the narrative of subsidiary arcs to the meta-arc.
- The third level arc in this triad configuration, that is, the micronarrative arc functions as the building block of the narrative. Though the micronarratives are the smallest arcs at the scale, however, the player can bring variation in narrative (details) through them. Despite the negligible impact of these localised variations, the micronarrative provided a more immersive ludic experience and rendered a sense of freedom and free will as compared to following a structured course of action in the subsidiary and meta-arcs. These micronarratives enrich the narrative experience and allow the player to explore the narrative potential of the narrative.
- Digital games reflect various dimensions of player agency and its role in narrative progression. The player can bring variation in narrative details through modifying his combat style, using his choice of weapons, making decisions to alter the course of actions and altering the endings in semi-structured and open-ended games. It greatly influences the experience of the player and offers more immersive exploration of game narrative.

- These choices may have served to deepen the narrative arc, however, does not allow the player to steer the narrative trajectory on his own. While the player may feel empowered to bring variation in the narrative, the structured outcomes of games reflect the true nature of agency which is controlled and bounded. Even though these choices allow the player to explore the various dimensions of narrative, but do not allow the player to undermine or contradict the key focus of the narrative.
- The player has clearly defined bounded agency, though the player can explore the extent of narrative logic, however, the authorial control rest with the game design. The narrative is enacted and experienced in various dimensions, however, cannot be directed by player.
- The genre of digital games can contain and manifest ideological standpoints through framing. Apart from words, phrases and sentences, frames are operationalized and reinforced through game mechanics, game aesthetics, storyline, and characterization. These facets of framing offer meaningful insight into the ways frames could be operationalized.
- The genre of digital games, like any other media form or text, may not be neutral. The process of framing in digital games may serve to incorporate certain perspectives and ideological dispositions. The narrative of the digital game can be used to construct critical perspectives which can affirm or reject an existing viewpoint.
- The genre of digital games is not arbitrarily designed. Through framing it can endorse or critique an existing system of values, such as appraisal of American military heroism or rejection of a system governed on the principles of capitalism.
- The procedural mode in digital games impart meanings. The genre of digital games shows the potential to generate procedural arguments. These procedural arguments reinforce the focus of narrative. By the virtue of procedural arguments, the game guides and communicates to the player. This unique attribute of the game to generate arguments does not involve the traditional means/modes of communication. The rules and mechanics of the game create a system of affordance and restrictions to offer an argument: the American

military ideal is to be pursued to save the world from evil and tyranny. The only way to save the world is to kill those who oppose the superpowers or do not have alliance with the superpower.

- The procedural argument generated in the games can also juxtapose the existing value systems such as capitalism. Similarly visual mode

5.5 Digital Games as Narrative Genre

The study of digital games has demonstrated their capability to serve as rich narrative forms, offering players immersive experiences that go beyond mere gameplay mechanics and State-of-the-art technological elements. As this medium continues to evolve, understanding games through the lens of genre and narrative becomes crucial for both scholars and practitioners. The study employed an analytical framework to analyse narrative structure, role of player agency in narrative construction, the multimodality and the process of framing in digital games. Through findings of this analytical framework, it is reflected that digital games possess distinct narrative patterns, a triad narrative configuration. It also became evident that games do not only involve merely play and tell stories; they engage players in a dynamic process of narrative construction that reflects complex social, cultural, and ideological dimensions. The findings of this study also reveal the framing processes at play within various game genres create distinct narrative perspectives that may shape player interpretations and expectations. Consequently, this research concludes that digital games should be recognized as a narrative genre.

The structure of narrative exhibited triad configuration patterns. The narrative progression, within the network of subsidiary arcs and through granular micronarrative, reflected the strength of narrative design which retained the narrative connectivity despite player's personal choice in changing the route to destination, using various weapons, killing or sparing the enemy and above all choosing the endings of the game, in case of GTA-V and Black Ops II. The structure of these arcs showed very loose compliance to setup-complication-development-resolution structure. However, there was a manifestation of sequential connectivity retained in a network of subsidiary arcs of varying length. The core meta-arc held these networks at its centre allowing character-player to indulge in ludic action and experience the illusion of freedom or choice in the smaller micro narratives. This illusion of freedom was created through a

myriad of choices which enabled the player-character of COD: Black OPs and GTA-V to decide the destiny of the protagonist or himself or his close friends. Though these choices serve to deepen the narrative arcs, enable the player-character to experience the ludic and narrative potential of the selected titles, yet in the end render a realisation of the real nature of sense (illusion) of freedom. The bounded player agency gets evident in the structured alternate endings.

There was a significant diversity of playable characters and NPCs in the narrative of selected games. The playable characters were fully developed to display the strength of their characters and the ability to struggle with inner conflicts along with the heroic actions needed in the narrative. Though the category of playable and non-playable differ considerably, however, NPCs were fully fleshed characters capable of rendering their support to the protagonist or assume the role of strong antagonist. NPCs in these games were instrumental in communicating the content of the story, added richness and details about the world they inhabit and more importantly their narrative provided a structure, context and often motivation for the player throughout the game. The storyworld was designed to provide a suitable canvas for ludic action in each game. However, the controlled navigation within the navigational space during combats in Call of Duty: WWII and Black Ops II were reflective of both controlled and bounded agency and design limitations of this genre.

The potential of the procedural argument to strengthen the focus of narrative was also evident. Through the system of affordance and permission, the selected title structured and voiced a code of conduct for the player. On one hand, the evil and tyrannical forces needed to be killed and not negotiated. On the other hand, the procedural argument could make the paradox of our existing values apparent. The genre of digital games reflected the potential of digital games to generate arguments through unconventional means of communication which could challenge the existing values or may reflect the depth of heroic values of valour and sacrifice.

Lastly, the process of framing demonstrated that this narrative genre employs conventional and unconventional means to evoke frames and render perspective within the narrative of the games. Apart from traditional linguistics means of text, namely words, phrases and sentences, the unique characteristics of game like game aesthetics, game mechanics and rules also reinforced and strengthened specific perspectives.

5.6 Contribution of the Current Study

The present study makes contribution by advancing the understandings of digital games. This study makes a significant contribution by developing the analytical framework for genre analysis of digital games as guided by the conceptual insights of Clearwater (2011). This framework integrates narrative analytical framework (Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum, 2012), analytical framework for procedural mode Hawreliak (2019) and visual mode (Barthes, 1977) and analytical framework for framing (Entman, 2018 and Nygren et al., 2022). This analytical framework enables this research to conduct a comprehensive investigation of how the narrative of digital game is structured and organized in a multimodal ensemble to provide rich and immersive narrative experience to the player. By doing so, this study bridges the gap between linguistics, game studies and digital humanities, and offers a structured method of analysis for future studies. This study also paves the way for the pedagogical application of games in linguistics, suggesting new digital tools for teaching narrative analysis and frame analysis.

5.7 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, several potential areas for future research are recommended.

- Research Application: The ubiquity of digital games necessitates the need for multidisciplinary research projects, such as game studies, digital humanities, media studies, and communication.
- The findings of frame analysis of this work demonstrate that the narrative of digital games is structured to reflect certain intended perspectives, it is recommended that future research investigate how digital games from various regions (e.g., Middle Eastern and Western games) frame narrative differently. A comparative approach can reveal how linguistic and socio-political differences shape narrative construction across cultures.
- Pedagogical Applications: The insight from this research work can be applied to teaching linguistics in dynamic ways, particularly using digital games for linguistic analysis.
- The present study demonstrates that digital games can be a well-suited object of inquiry for linguistic analysis and hence can be used in teaching linguistics. In

this regard digital games can be used as interesting case studies to investigate language in interactive settings.

5.8 Future Research

- The study points out that the genre of digital game offers opportunities for collaborative projects between discourse analysts, linguists, and game designers. These multidisciplinary endeavours can lead to a more nuanced and effective narrative construction for games.
- The study was limited to the genre analysis of three titles only, therefore, a larger sample of games could further strengthen the findings of results.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

List of words/phrases/sentences for functions of frames (COD: WWII)

Key words/phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
Nazi onslaught	D-Day (mission)/Roosevelt speech	With Unmatched ferocity, Hitler's War Machine has launched its blitzkrieg against Western Europe...	D-Day(mission)/Roosevelt speech
A mighty endeavour	Same as above	As we brace for our darkest hour, we must summon our strength to be the bulwark against oppression.	D-Day(mission)/Roosevelt speech
Our sons	Same as above	A struggle to preserve our civilization and to set free a suffering humanity	Same as above
Pride of our nation	Same as above	Lead them straight and true.	Same as above
unparalleled importance	Davis	Men's souls will be shaken with the violences of war	Same as above
rollback the German aggression	Davis	In this hour of great sacrifice, we shall prevail.	Same as above
Terrorized Europe	Roosevelt speech	Their road will be long and hard.	Same as above

Key words/phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
	Roosevelt speech	We're invadin' some frog beach	Roosevelt speech
	Roosevelt speech	Everybody's scared as hell, but nobody's lettin' on.	Roosevelt speech
Turner: Target destroyed.	Turner/Operation Cobra/gameplay	Aiello: Ma said never shake hands with a Jew	Roosevelt speech
Turner: Nice shot	Turner/Operation Cobra/gamepla	We are all that separates the world from darkness. This so much more than a chance to be heroes in our own lifetimes.	Davis
		If we prevail our triumphs will be etched into the hearts and minds of a grateful world for untold generations	Davis
		I'm proud to lead you fellows into battle.	Turner/game play/D-day mission
		: Alright, give em hell, boys!	Aiellor/game play/D-day mission
		Nazis had no mercy	Perz/Operation Cobra/gameplay

Key words/phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
		Clean up the rest!	Zussman:/Operation Cobra/gameplay
		From that day on, I swore that I'd never let Paul down again. But now, it's not just him I gotta live up to. It's Pierson.	Daniels/mission Stronghold/cutscene
		Good work, men. You gave it everything you had	Turner:Operation Cobra/gameplay
		Daniels: I understand that, believe me. A man has to fight his own battles.	Zussman/Daniel/Stronghold/cutscene
		Davis: The fate of Paris is in your hands.	Davis/S.O.E/cutscene
		Rousseau: Tonight everything we've lost, everything we've fought for, will mean something. Tonight, we take back our city.	Rousseau/Liberation /cutscenes
		Heinrich: Watching your son flail as he drowned under my boot gave me the greatest pleasure of all.	Heinrich:/liberation/ cutscene
		Vive la résistance.	Rousseau/Liberation/ cutscenes

Key words/phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
Bloodbath	Robinson/Collateral Damage/game play	Nothing has ever stopped us, nothing ever will!	Davis/Death factory/cutscene
babysittin' civilians	Pierson//Collateral Damage/game play	Lieutenant, tell 'em what we're all about.	Davis/Death factory/game play
		No mission too difficult. No sacrifice too great. Duty first.	Turner/Death factory/game play
		Turner: No sacrifice too great. (wounded and wanted to be left)	Turner/Hill 493
comin' home a bona fide hero.	Paul/cutscene/ Ambush	They had 'em livin' worse than animals	/Daniels The Rhine/gameplay
		Daniels: (narrating) The Nazis had murdered our boys in cold blood.	Daniels/the Rhine /gameplay
		And, no fire in hell could burn away the stain	Daniels/the Rhine /gameplay
		Daniels: (narrating) They'd slaughtered the weakest	Daniels/the Rhine /gameplay
		And, that's havin' your brothers beside you.	Daniels/the Rhine / cutscene

Key words/phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
		From all walks of life, you came to defend peace and freedom.	Davis/epilogue/cutscene
		And, the world thanks you. You will always be amongst a brotherhood of heroes.	Davis/epilogue/cutscene
		You will always be amongst a brotherhood of heroes.	Davis/epilogue/cutscene

Appendix B

Words/Sentences/Phrases for Identifying Functions of Frames COD: BOPs II

Words/ phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
		Mason: It's Uncle Woods, son. He'd do it for me...	Mason/Pyrrhic Victory
		Menendez(He is merely a puppet... as are you. Do as I instruct.)	Pyrrhic Victory
		Menendez: The Americans know nothing about loyalty. Maybe we should show him.	Pyrrhic Victory
		Woods (voiceover): You can't kill me... thanks to your old man. He put it all on the line for me... for honor and friendship. Yeah. He's just like you, kid.	
		Section: Alright, you little bastard. You work for Uncle Sam now.	Celerium
		Menendez: They care nothing for the suffering of their people. Neither do the Americans, or the Chinese. ISI Leader: They care. They care for their own interest, nothing more. Menendez: Believe me, my friend... Your help will ensure the complacency of the Imperialists comes to an end.	Pyrrhic Victory
		Mason: Woods! You in there, brother?	Pyrrhic Victory

Words/ phrases	Source	Sentences	Source
		Menendez: The Americans know nothing about loyalty. Maybe we should show him.)	
		While we're fucking around in the Middle East, the Russians and the Chinese are getting real cozy. Now the politicians, they want you to think this is about ideology. That's a lot of horseshit.	Woods/Celerium
		So while Corporate America's kissing China's ass...	Woods/Celerium
		Woods: After all the dirty shit the US Government has gotten away with, this time they're innocent. And no one fucking believes them.	Woods/Celerium
Hudson: They're just kids	Phyrric victory	Hudson: They're just kids	Phyrric victory
no experience	Woods/Old wounds	Woods (voiceover): You can't kill me... thanks to your old man. He put it all on the line for me... for honor and friendship.	Celerium
Woods/Corp orate America's kissing China's ass	Woods/Old wounds	You're gonna build an entire military based on a mineral element that's wholly controlled by China?	Woods/Celerium
Trust the Chinese?	Woods/Old wounds	Mason: No one likes the Russians, huh?	Woods/Celerium

Key words/ phrases	Source	Sentences	Phrases
		Woods: You believe in "an eye for an eye" ... huh? This is the Mujahideen, baby. They'll bury you up to your neck, peel your eyelids back and leave you to fry in the desert.	Woods? Kravchenko/Old Wounds
		Kravchenko: The Soviet Union is dying. Money is all that matters.	Kravchenko/Old Wounds
		Kravchenko: Menendez wants to see your world burn.	Kravchenko/Old Wounds
Two faced piece of shit!	Rehman/Old wounds	Kravchenko: Cuba... Angola... The third world.	
our true enemy	Rehman/Old wounds	No. No, you are, and always will be, our true enemy	Rehman/Old wounds
Terrorists	harper/karma To chloe	What we did in Nicaragua... that was an accident. We don't target civilians.	Woods/Old Wounds
		Menendez: They care nothing for the suffering of their people. Neither do the Americans, or the Chinese.	Fallen Angel
		ISI Leader: They care. They care for their own interest, nothing more.	
		Section: Alright, you little bastard. You work for Uncle Sam now.	Celerium

Key words/ phrases	Source	Sentences	Phrases
		Mason: The Russians wanna give us one last display of brute force... Let's give them one last display of courage	mason/ Old wounds
		Woods: Check your fire! We got civilians!	
		Harper: Sergeant Woods! Raul Menendez is the leader of Cordis Die, and the most dangerous terrorist since Osama Bin Laden.	Pyrrhic Victory/Harper Terrorism
		Menendez: (faintly) You suffer with me	Pyrrhic Victory Terrorism
		David: Go back to the army, like you did when mom died.	Pyrrhic Victory
		Mason: It's Uncle Woods, son. He'd do it for me...	Pyrrhic Victory
		Our dog in the fight was a guy named Jonas Savimbi	Pyrrhic Victory Third world countries derogation
Just kids	Hudson/Pyrrhic 'Victory	friend from above	Pyrrhic Victory
no experience		Kravchenko: The Afghan rebels are unwilling to co- operate. Mullah Rahmaan is not easy to deal with.)	Pyrrhic 'Victory
Brother	Hudson/Pyrrhic 'Victory	Woods: The only way they'll find out is if they take us down. You know that ain't gonna happen	Woods/Old Wounds Americans superior than Russians

Key words/ phrases	Source	Sentences	Phrases
Their saviour/'s not	Woods	ISI got us pinned down	Fallen Angel/Harper
known terrorist	Harper/Celerium	Salazar: Menendez is here. Main courtyard, with ISI Leader.	Fallen Angel/Salazar
hated America	David/Celerium	Zhao: You fight bravely, American	Zhao/old wounds A as h
		Half of fuckin' Pakistan's outside that damn door	Fallen Angel
		Harper: What a fucking mess... Obviously, these folks weren't prepared for the flooding. Looks like they've just been left to fend for themselves. Not good... Not good.	Harper /Old Wounds
		Woods: About a year later, he shows up in Panama with that piece of shit Noriega.	Woods/Suffer with me
		Mason: The bastards don't treat civis any better than in Nicaragua. Woods: They're amped outta their minds on drugs.	Woods/Suffer with me
Hudson: Fuck! Okay... ME! DO IT! DO IT!!!!	Woods/Suffer with me	Woods: That's not how it is. Chain of command's fucked. I'm a soldier. I take orders and I get shit done	Woods/Suffer with me
Taking out both superpowers at the same time.	Section/Achilles Veil	Section: Menendez's network... All countries getting fucked by the new Cold War.	Achilles Veil

Key words/ phrases	Source	Sentences	Phrases
The beginning of a new era	Briggs/Odysseus /SDC is finished	Menendez: For those souls who have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me... Some work of noble note may yet be done.	Odysseus
		Menendez: Opulence is sinful and we all pay for it	Odysseus/Section
		Einstein once said the economic anarchy of capitalism is the real source of evil.	Menendez/Odysseus
		Salazar: You said no unnecessary killing!	Menendez/Odysseus Killing Briggs
		Menendez: I decide what is necessary.	
		pawns of Raul Menendez	President/Cordis Die
		Menendez: Today, two billion people exist in abject misery, tyrannized by war.	Judgment day
		Section: If Russia caves in and joins SDC, they'd be the largest military force on the planet. Which is precisely what Menendez wants, setting up the superpowers to wipe each other out. Right now, Iran and India are both under threat. SDC's making their move. Time for JSOC to step up.	FOB Spectre

Appendix C

List of words, phrases and sentences for frame analysis in GTA-V

Words/phrases/source	Sentence/ source
the opportunities Michael/Franklin and Lamar	Every man for himself. Brad/Prologue
Apart from paying taxes. Lester /Casing the Jewel store	The end of the road! With a big house and a useless kid, and I'm stuck talking to you because no one else gives a shit! Oh, I'm living the dream, baby! And that dream is fucked! It is... fucking fucked! Michael /Franklin and Lamar This shit is legit business. Lamar/Franklin and Lamar
	Money isn't an issue Jimmy/Franklin and Lamar
Slippery snake/ Trevor/fame and shame	Liquidity is a bitch Simeon /Repossession
	Go to college. Then you can rip people off and get paid for it. It's called capitalism. Michael / Father and Son
	Lamar Davis: Man, 'cause we are supplementing our income. Lamar /Chop
	Lamar Davis: Exactly. We two highly motivated, results-driven motherfuckers with an entrepreneurial mindset. Franklin Clinton: Oh, yeah, yeah. Highly motivated self-starters, huh? Chop/
	Lamar : by outsourcing all the jobs/ Friend Request
	Lamar /Friend request repulsive pseudo-messianic life

Words/phrases/source	Sentence/ source
	Jay Norris: Now you can dock your Life invader to an iFruit or any other device, and it'll take all the data off and reformat it into life invader-friendly information. Jay Norris/friend's Request
Fate snake and eat his own kids Trever/Three's company	(Eddie Toh) *Whoa, one step closer to retirement! *Whoa, I might just be able to send my kids to college! The Jewel Store Job/Driver
Make asshole happy Micheal/three's Company	If any goes wrong, you can fake your death and start all over again I love help government wage war against especially with itself We all like our federal government open and transparent threes company/Michael You expense this ride to a taxpayer Three's company/Michael. The government and media would have us believe that torture is a good thing Do some research on Merryweather Security Consulting, friend. They'd be on trial for human rights offenses if the US government didn't protect all its contractors from any kind of suit - military or civilian. They're immune from prosecution, and they behave like they are. Murdering, stealing, high on power, guns, and anabolic steroids. Lucky bastards. Minisub/Trevor
The Bean Machines, and the bankers? /Trevor/Paleto Score	You don't. Merryweather are employed by the richest, greediest scum on the planet to shit on the poorest and the neediest. So We are going to enjoy shitting on them Minisub/Trevor

Words/phrases/source	Sentence/ source
	Local law enforcement extorts money from all the weed farms, whore houses, meth kitchens in the area. They keep their cash in safe deposit boxes. Then there's all the normal small town payroll stuff. We should do well.
	Paleto Score/Trevor
Yeah, well, what if it gets gentrified?	Trevor:
Trevor:	Sandy Shores, you precious ass. I'm sorry there ain't a place nearby for you to get your colonics.
/Paleto Score	Michael: Right. But why
Then I'll fucking move.	Are you out here?
	Trevor:
	It's off the grid. We're away from it all. It's somewhere real and authentic. This is America, and real people aren't been priced out yet.
Michael:	There are two great evils that bedevil American capitalism of the type that you practice. Number one is outsourcing. You paid a private company to do your dirty work for ya, and then you underpaid that company because you thought you were big enough and bad enough that you didn't have to play by the rules. Oh, number two: offshoring your profits.
Ooh, hypocrisy, Franklin. Civilization's greatest virtue.	Trevor:
	Offshoring?
	Michael:
	Oh, it's horrible. You wouldn't want to be sent offshore just to save a little money, would you, T? The third way/
Traitors Trevor/the Time's come	He's just the friendly face of a corrupt government agency looking to further his career by dealing with an equally corrupt and full to the fucking brim with bullshit low rent hood. Trevor/the Wrap up
	Solomon:
	Michael! They're fucking us! The suits! And they don't even wear suits! Wolves in turd's clothing! Legal Trouble

Appendix D

Selection of Approaches and Player Agency

Heists	Approach selection	Number of preparatory missions	Approach selection and subsequent narrative variation
1 The Jewel Store Job	1. Smart approach	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car gets destroyed. • Car gets abandoned. • Franklin abandons the heist • Entry into the Jewel store before the gas is activated • Creating disturbance before the gas is active • Using tear gas or grenades at the air vent • All five BZ Gas cans don't hit the air vent • Franklin throwing BZ Gas onto the street • Van is abandoned • Van gets destroyed • Entering the store with a wanted level • Security guard escapes (if a bad gunman was chosen) • Cops are called the manager (if a bad gunman was chosen)
	2. Loud approach	One	

Heists	Approach selection	Number of P preparatory missions	Approach selection and subsequent narrative variation
2. Merryweather Heist	Freighter	One One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get in a vehicle. (Trevor) • Driving to the bridge. • Going to the vantage point. • Guarding Michael while he is planting the bombs. • Planting the first bomb at the bow pillar • Planting the second bomb at the first mast. • Planting the third bomb at the second mast.
	Off-shore	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching the ship's stern entrance. • Detonating the bombs. • Locating the device amongst the wreckage. • Reaching the device. • Returning the device to the safe area. • Finding a four-seater vehicle. • Driving to the airstrip. • Entering into the Cargo bob. • Using the grappling hook to lift the submersible. • Flying to the site. • Releasing the submersible near the site. • Locating the device using the tracki-fy app. • Reaching the device. • Ascending to the surface level. (Trevor) • lifting the submersible. (Michael) • Flying to the airstrip. (Michael) • Defending the attack from Merryweather. • Varying your position to the rear of the Cargo bob. • Flying to the airstrip. • Flying low over the airstrip and releasing the submersible.

Heists	Approach selection	Number of preparatory missions	Approach selection and subsequent narrative variation
3 The Bureau Raid	Covert	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lester dies. • The FIB gets alert. • The fire truck was destroyed. • The fire truck was destroyed in public. • The fire truck got stuck.
	Roof	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran out of explosives. • Out of explosives • The server terminal was destroyed. • The hack device was destroyed. • Failed landing on the FIB building rooftop • Failing to deploy chute in time. • The FIB was alerted. • The helicopter cannot be flown. • The helicopter was destroyed. • The helicopter is unable to take off. • The getaway vehicle gets destroyed. • The getaway vehicle gets stuck. • The crew is discovered at the NOOSE facility. • The crew were left behind. • The crew does not take out the Buzzard and they get spotted by NOOSE. • Lester died. • Death of a crew member • Crew member failing to land on the FIB building rooftop

Heists	Approach selection	Number of preparatory missions	Approach selection and subsequent narrative variation
4 The Big Score	Subtle	Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting into the car. • Reaching tunnel entrance before 8:00am. • Deploying the stinger. • Getting away from the stinger and waiting for the vans to arrive. • Reaching Union Depository. • Following the manager. • Entering the Securicor. • Following Trevor. • Keeping the roads clear for the vans. • Defending the crew from Merryweather.
	Obvious	Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the rest of the crew. • Going to Michael's house. • Getting into the car. • Reaching the bank. • Drilling through the wall into the bank vault. • Parking the cutter out of the way by the wall. • Placing explosives on the vault doors. • Standing back and detonating the charges. • Defending the gunman from the NOOSE team. • Defending against the NOOSE team. • Flying out of the city. • Escaping with the second gunman. • Reaching the car. • Losing the cops. • Following the getaway driver. • Dropping the gold on the train car. • Landing at the airfield.

Appendix E

Player's choice of ending and subsequent narrative details

Player's choice of ending	Mission	Player	Narrative
First ending: Kill Trevor	Something Sensible	Franklin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls Trevor and tells him to meet at El Burro Heights • Franklin calls Michael to assist. • Trevor escapes and drives to oilfield. • Trevor crashes into Michael's car • Trevor gets killed by Michael or Franklin
Second ending: Kill Michael	The Time's Come	Franklin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Franklin calls Trevor for help • Trevor refuses to help • Franklin meets Michael and tries to overcome his guilt by praising Michael as a mentor. • Franklin tries to shoot and chase Michael to Palmer-Taylor Power Station • Michael shares his disbelief and retaliates. • Franklin kills Michea
Third Ending: The Third Way	Death Wish	Franklin, Trevor and Michael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Franklin takes help from Lester. • Lester plans a trap for FIB and Merriweather • Trevor kills Steve Haines • Michael kills Stretch • Franklin kills Wei Chang • The rio pushes Dave's car off the cliff at Chiliad Mountain State Wilderness

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Third Ending: The Third Way	Death Wish	Franklin, Trevor and Michael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Franklin takes help from Lester. • Lester plans a trap for FIB and Merriweather • Trevor kills Steve Haines • Michael kills Str@h • Franklin kills Wei Chang • The rio pushes Dave's car off the cliff at Chiliad Mountain State Wilderness