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**Fake the Dawn: Digital Game Mechanics and the Construction of
Gender in Fictional Worlds**

by

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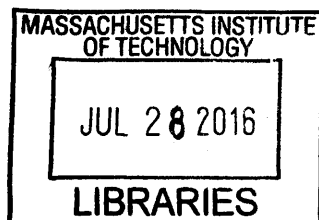
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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the ways in which digital game mechanics (interactive inputs) contribute to games' worldbuilding. In particular, this work is concerned with the replication and reinforcement of problematic gender roles through game mechanics that express positive ("warm") interactions between characters, namely healing, protection, and building relationships. The method used has been adapted from structural analysis via literary theory, as informed by game studies, media studies methodologies, and feminist epistemologies. Game mechanics are analyzed both across and within primary texts (consisting of Japanese-developed games from the action and role-playing genres) in relation to characters' representation. Through this analysis, I found that characters who are women and girls are often associated with physical weakness, nature-based magic, and nurturing (or absent) personalities, whereas characters who are men and boys often protect women through physical combat, heal through medical means, and keep an emotional distance from others. Relationships built through game mechanics rely on one-sided agency and potential that renders lovers and friends as characters who exist to support the player character in achieving the primary goals of the game. Through these findings, I conclude that even warm interactions in games carry negative, even potentially violent and oppressive, representations and that there is thusly a need for design interventions on the mechanical level to mitigate violence in game worlds and the reinforcement of negative real world stereotypes.

Thesis Supervisor: Edward Schiappa
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This degree has been quite the ride. I know absolutely that my time on this ride was made much better, more beautiful, more inspiring, more exciting, more restful, more fascinating, more doable, and many other paradoxes and weighty adjectives by a handful of really incredible people. I still have stars in my eyes thinking about how I not only know such awesome people but also that these people have cared about me enough to help get me through this epic, intense, silly, phenomenal (and a bit tiring!) thing I/we have done.

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I Introduction

1.1: A Light in His Hand

Armored men travel on horseback through a sun-dappled forest, a small boy with horns protruding from his head sitting amongst the cargo of a hooded man (fig. 1). As they arrive at a chasm above a great body of water, a stone castle comes into view. The sound of the wind carries deeper, melodic tones, and shapes form out of the sunlight: "ICO." A copyright message appears, along with the text "New Game" highlighted, ready for a quick press of the "X" button.

In 2001, the video game *Ico* was released in Japan and North America, with Europe's release following in 2002.¹ Although the game found relatively few sales, despite being one of the first major releases for Sony's then new PlayStation 2, the game did enjoy proliferative and very positive coverage from games journalism outlets and critics. The game became a cult hit, and even well over a decade after its release, *Ico* is commonly cited (along with its successor, *Shadow of the Colossus*) in the rather circular debates around whether or not video games are art.²

It was one of the first games my brother and I received for our PlayStation 2, and even as children, the game (and the coverage in the magazines we read) struck us as unlike anything else we had played. Light bounces off the stone walls, sunlight settling into multihued grass and firelight creating dramatic, flickering chiaroscuro (fig. 2). The sounds range from a quiet, almost antiquated mandolin melody to the eerie echoes and the atmospheres of the wind, from a lush, cheery ambient piece in the "Save" menu to a young boy's aria at the game's conclusion. The gameplay is simple, pensive, and haptic, using the rumble feature of the Dualshock 2 and awkward, boyish

¹ Team Ico, *Ico HD*, Sony PlayStation 3, original Sony PlayStation 2 release: 2001 (Sony Computer Entertainment, 2011).

² See, for example: Joel Lee, "5 Games That Remind Us That Video Games Are Art," *Make Use Of*, February 3, 2014, <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-games-that-remind-us-that-video-games-are-art/>.

animations to give player character Ico (the boy with horns) presence as he uses his body to solve puzzles and fend off shadowy enemies.

There is, however, another key character throughout the game: a girl, whose white clothes appear to cloak her in light and grant her an ethereal, featherlike presence (fig. 3). Ico finds Yorda in a cage, and, after freeing her, leads her through his journey to escape the stone castle. The shadowy enemies come for Yorda, meaning to drag her into shadowy pits and return her to imprisonment via a larger shadowy figure, a woman, the queen of the castle. The connection between Ico and Yorda is formed without words, as they do not share a common language, and is thus maintained through a button press that calls Yorda over when at a distance and holds her hand when she is close. The latter function, required to lead her through the castle and to prompt her to sit down with Ico on loveseats that act as savepoints (fig. 4) for players to save game state progress, is marked by an animation and short rumble that, according to many critics and fans, is the crux of how the game elicits emotional involvement.³ Through being "fragile," "helpless," and "timid"⁴ and needing constant supervision (to save her from the shadowy beings) and help (to get through environmental puzzles), Yorda "isn't just a character in *Ico*[:]; she's a crucial element to the structure of the game,"⁵ acting as "a metaphor for the goal" of the game through an "embodiment [that] tries to elicit feelings of empathy and the desire to nurture" as well as "the fortunes-of-others type of emotions."⁶

³ See, to name a few: David DeRienzo, "Ico / Shadow of the Colossus," *Hardcore Gaming 101*, October 3, 2007, <http://www.hardcoregaming101.net/icosotc/ico.htm>; Aki Järvinen, "Understanding Video Games as Emotional Experiences," in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. Bernard Perron and Mark J. P. Wolf (New York: Routledge, 2009), 85–108; Chris Kohler, "The Obscure Cult Game That's Secretly Inspiring Everything," *WIRED*, September 12, 2013, <http://www.wired.com/2013/09/ico/>; MrSensible, "ICO (Game)," Wiki, *Giant Bomb*, (March 15, 2016), <http://www.giantbomb.com/ico/3030-9638/>.

⁴ Järvinen, "Understanding Video Games as Emotional Experiences," 98.

⁵ DeRienzo, "Ico / Shadow of the Colossus."

⁶ Järvinen, "Understanding Video Games as Emotional Experiences," 98.

Yorda would seem to have an esteemed role, one related to care and love across communicative boundaries, in this celebrated game; yet, that role exchanges any unique characterization and any even semblance of agency with her emotional utility for the male player-character (and perhaps assumed male player). The feminization of her embodiment is less discussed by fans and critics until it seems almost a given that such a character would be feminine; the formula is "the hauntingly simple story of a boy who rescues a girl,"⁷ with no room for the girl saving herself, saving the boy, not needing or inviting saving at all, or being able to define what saving is. The beauty to be found in the simplicity and minimalism of the game and the interactions between Ico and Yorda is more important, in the writings I have cited, than the presence of a feminine character who is allowed to be just that: a character. Visually, she is rendered feminine; in the gameplay, she is rendered as an object to be literally dragged from point A to point B.⁸

1.2 Definitions and Delineations

Fading are the days in which it could be claimed that video games are only a shallow and mostly violent pastime for children's summer vacations. Venerated institutions such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum and New York's Museum Of Modern Art have accepted video games into their collections as formal educators at several levels have begun accepting video games into their curricula. Through their writing, game critics take up the authority and the poetics of film and art critics, penning odes to the works of the industry's auteurs, who tackle those mainstays of the human condition: war, loss, love. The artistic merit of games has been measured in coffee table

⁷ Lee, "5 Games."

⁸ According to the replies to a 2012 tweet from Feminist Frequency, the gendering of this was still a novel thought to be argued for or against 11 years after the game was released: Feminist Frequency, "ICO Really Is One of the Most Irritatingly Sexist Games I've Ever Played #EscortMission #ResearchReplay #TropesVsWomen," microblog, @femfreq, (August 27, 2012), <https://twitter.com/femfreq/status/240232261180588032>.

books and tears alike, always with the argument that such beautiful images and such manifestations of human emotion can only be the product of an art on par with those with a longer history.

Although certainly not always the case, so often in mainstream games journalism (a highly visible part of game criticism), these poignant moments and beautiful expressions happen in the parts of games that are most recognizable from other media, the story and the audiovisual assets. However, crucially, the medium also, at least in most cases, requires a player whose interactions shape how the game unfolds and without which the game cannot proceed. Thus, the ways in which the player is able to interact with the system are a defining part of the potential experiences of a game (even, arguably, spectator experiences). This is more often noted and treated in non-mainstream and academic game criticism, but it is not uncommon for this treatment to operate through the language and current aesthetics of software design. For example, beauty in game design is found in deep simplicity and clarity, or ease of use, and can be separated from the story or art assets, where beauty may instead be found in emotional complexity, or diegetic twists and turns, or the blending of many lines and colors and forms or sounds.

Here one runs into game studies's narratology/ludology debate— should games be understood as a narrative medium, readable through techniques in the styles of literary criticism, or a ludic, rules-based medium, readable through techniques of design criticism? That debate has been mostly⁹ laid to rest with the understanding that the medium is both, with both the narrative/fictional and ludic/interactive parts of a game contributing to the experience of it and meaning-making of that experience. Both contributions could be readable separately, but what I

⁹ See Gonzalo Frasca, "Ludologists Love Stories, Too: Notes from a Debate That Never Took Place.," in *Proceedings of the 2003 DiGRA Conference: Level UP*, vol. 2, 2003, http://www.ludology.org/articles/frasca_levelUP2003.pdf; Gonzalo Frasca, "Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology," in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003); Celia Pearce, "Theory Wars: An Argument against Arguments in the so-Called Ludology/narratology Debate," in *Proceedings of the 2005 DiGRA International Conference: Changing Views: Worlds in Play*, vol. 3, 2005, <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/218>.

find more interesting is parsing what Jesper Juul calls "the interplay between rules and fiction" in terms of representation.¹⁰ That is, I am interested in how a game's rules and fiction interact with and affect each other, especially (but not exclusively) where they conflict and may present meaning-making opportunities in discord with the other's.

1.2.1 Research Questions and Thesis Statement

To introduce my research questions and topic of study, I move back to my original point around poignancy, affect, and beauty to be found in games, those popular measures of the medium's artistic merit. How does one "read" (in the literary theory sense) a game that presents such beautiful affect in either its narrative or rules when those conflict? Or, how does one read rules that consistently conflict with particular games' narratives, even when the latter are praised for being poignant and reflective of progressive social ideals? Indeed, games' fiction and worldbuilding increasingly contribute really interesting and important critiques of social systems. Yet, what happens to these critiques when games' rules conflict in such a way to perpetuate problematic social systems? Or when a set of rules that has problematic implications is considered successful from a gameplay design perspective and is thus reproduced without any particular social critique in the fiction— perhaps even eliciting tenuous claims that a game is free of "politicized" content? Or when both fiction and rules do match, but in, again, the perpetuation of socially problematic implications?

This project identifies and investigates a particular site in which these conditions exist, a site I name "warm interaction," which I will define presently. In order to reach towards a greater understanding of how representation functions in the overlap between games' rules and fictions, in this thesis I aim to analyze how "warm interactions" are reflected in game mechanics and how

¹⁰ Jesper Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 195.

those procedural modes reproduce problematic schema of interpersonal interaction, emotional states and emotionality, and stereotypical and problematic conceptions of gender, even if these mechanics are rethemed within socially innovative or otherwise rewarding narratives and built worlds. First, however, I will specify what I mean through the use of contested and/or multivalenced terms thus far.

1.2.2 Key Terms

"Warm interaction" refers to interactive modes around positively-valenced affective acts of empathy, namely caretaking and building relationships, between player characters and non-player characters. "Positively-valenced" leans on terminology from neurological and social psychology, referring to emotional states, moods, and responses that are considered and associated with good things (e.g. happiness and prosocial behavior¹¹). Although the boundaries between affect, feelings, and emotions can be murky, especially across fields, I use affect in reference to affect theory, a part of literary theory that examines how affect appears in texts, either representationally or through responses elicited (or at least sought after) by the text and its creator(s). Even with that particular frame in place, affect and "emotion states and emotionality" are slippery terms even within literary theory and its connections throughout the humanist disciplines. Thus, here I am going with a shorthand of how feminist/gender studies has critiqued longstanding perceptions of what emotions are (physically oriented responses that occur as a direct, immediate response to stimuli), how they "affect" the people having them (take control over thought so as to exclude and quiet the "rational"), and how those people can interact with them (mainly suppress them or let them pass if rational thought is to be done). In a case for taking affect/emotion seriously as an epistemological frame, Alison Jaggar (via philosophy) characterizes emotions as "intentional" and as "social

¹¹ See, for example, Lisa A. Cavanaugh, James R. Bettman, and Mary Frances Luce, "Feeling Love and Doing More for Distant Others: Specific Positive Emotions Differentially Affect Prosocial Consumption," *Journal of Marketing Research* 52, no. 5 (October 2015): 657–73, doi:10.1509/jmr.10.0219.

constructs"¹² (2008); as Eugenie Brinkema (who works in philosophy-leaning, literary film theory) puts it, "Affect is not the place where something immediate and automatic and resistant takes place outside of language. The turning to affect in the humanities does not obliterate the problem of form and representation. Affect is not where reading is no longer needed."¹³ If that is so, the way a created text constructs representational and elicited emotional responses to interpersonal interaction is a fruitful site for understanding how certain modes of social interactions are structured and maintained.

Empathy is an affective state, or perhaps act, based on interaction, being "the natural capacity to share, understand, and respond with care to the affective states of others," as one neuroscientist describes it.¹⁴ I, coming from a more social constructionist stance, take issue with the idea of empathy being "natural," i.e. innate or pre-socially formed, but the definition given is helpful in the emphasis on care for others, which I have extracted to discuss in terms of caretaking. I mean caretaking as a specificity within empathy, in that caretaking is amongst the practices and acts of empathy but connotes a specific power relationship, one that "recognizes the vulnerability of people and the essential asymmetry between the caregiver and the caretaker,"¹⁵ a definition from pastoral care research that speaks more broadly to the feminist research ethic of care, in which the researcher structures her interactions with her research participants/informants/community of practice through an active process of caring for them via respect, reciprocity, and the avoidance of

¹² Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 380-381.

¹³ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham; London: Duke University Press Books, 2014), xiv.

¹⁴ Jean Decety, "Introduction: Why Is Empathy So Important?," in *Empathy: From Bench to Bedside*, ed. Jean Decety, Social Neuroscience Series (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), vii.

¹⁵ Annemie Dillen, "Power, Justice, Asymmetry and Relationality in Pastoral Care and Parent-child Relationships," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14, no. 2 (January 2011), doi:10.1515/ijpt.2011.016, 215.

exploitative practices and means.¹⁶ Although caretaking in that sense aims to minimize the detriments of asymmetrical power dynamics, those power dynamics still remain and have interesting implications for what kinds of interaction are possible in the frame of caretaking. The idea of "building relationships" is less specific in its locating of power, yet relationships and love are not free from power structures that are upheld through socially hierarchizing systems like gender, race, and class, and as a large part of interactions between people, especially so-called warm interactions, relationships and love are a crucial site for considering how those power dynamics show themselves even when associated with positively-valenced emotional experiences.

To return to and further explore my above thesis statement, I make a case for studying interaction in particular, rather than affect as situated otherwise, such as inspired in an individual through stimuli. There are many approaches to interaction, which might be described as a space in which people navigate their own contexts in ways to meet another person at/in/towards theirs, with varying levels of success. As is a common theme in the many other interdisciplinary terms in this work, the goals of studying interaction vary with the approach, whether that's in order to make something that is then usable in people's lives, à la interaction design; or understanding how communities are built and maintained, à la social psychology, sociology, anthropology; or studying dialogue and/or studying through the process of dialogue, the use of language to convey and challenge ideas and feelings, à la literature and philosophy. Regardless of the approach, interaction is a rich site of analysis for any scholar interested in human activity, and in light of my own approach, it is a particularly rich site for investigating where making meaning through created artifacts can be informed by social scientifically grounded thought.

¹⁶ Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, T.L. Taylor, *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 129-131.

Yet, there are many kinds of interaction, and like emotions, not all are positively-valenced. However, what can be interesting and useful about studying positively-valenced interaction, warm interaction, is that that positivity and the impressions left from it can hide less obvious elements that are not so positive. Take, for example, the idea of romance mentioned previously: by thinking about the appeal of a beautifully told, maybe very emotionally resonant love story, one might not think about the ways in which such stories can go badly, or that they are structured the way they are through potentially oppressive social systems in place, such as placing people into gender roles or heteronormativity.

This leads me to another term in my thesis statement, "stereotypical and problematic conceptions of gender." These are foundational concepts in feminist studies of representation, making them not only important but also somewhat slippery as the concepts are taken up in various projects. I here refer to Sandra Bem's work¹⁷ on the subject via Edward Schiappa's text on *Beyond Representational Correctness*.¹⁸ In the latter work, Schiappa summates Bem's "gender lenses" into "the triad of prejudice," or "a triad of beliefs that informs the discriminatory attitudes, behaviors, and policies involving other social groups" and consisting of, in the case of gender, "gender polarization," "androcentrism," and "biological essentialism," or the notions that men and women are unalterably different, that men are the default or the standard of understanding and hierarchizing gender and gendered differences, and that differences in gender exist and can be assigned due to "natural" biological sex features, respectively.¹⁹ I return to the content of such stereotypes (Bem's Sex Roles Inventory and others' inventories) later, but for now I note that I, like Bem and other scholars since, am critiquing media representations of gender along this triad of

¹⁷ Sandra L. Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Edward Schiappa, *Beyond Representational Correctness: Rethinking Criticism of Popular Media* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

prejudice. Schiappa complicates such undertakings by arguing that "representational correctness," or the challenging of all three parts of the triad of prejudice, is impossible to achieve in one representation; I also return to this argument later.

With the broader terms of this work thusly framed, I move into those more specific to digital game studies. In particular, that interactive element often known in gaming as game mechanics has appeared through terminology that has been defined, redefined, tweaked, corrected, replaced, and aggregated several times, and it is no small wonder why; interactivity is extremely important, perhaps even central, to games as a distinct medium, and the form interactivity takes in games does not have an exact correlate in other media forms, but what exactly that interactive element is or why it is important varies with each approach to the interdisciplinary study of games. Thus, with the understanding that there are many other ways to define this element, I am here leaning on Miguel Sicart's use and definition of game mechanics as "methods invoked by agents, designed for interaction with the game state," to speak to what that interactivity is and how to understand it enough to attempt to study it.²⁰ I use this definition because it reflects how game mechanics as a term resonates across several communities around games (namely scholars, critics, journalists, and players). Also, my use of Sicart's definition is a shorthand, in a sense, for the analysis he has done, and whereas his may not an exhaustive analysis, it is one that draws upon and was intended for use in the disciplines/methods I am using.

Likewise, my use of the term "procedural modes" is a nod to Ian Bogost and his work on the possibility spaces for actions in games. This is very much related to mechanics, and will be here nearly interchangeable, though this term also brings with it Bogost's emphasis on rhetoric, which (to put very simply) is an argument that can be read, a use of a form of communication (here

²⁰ Miguel Sicart, "Defining Game Mechanics," *Game Studies* 8, no. 2 (December 2008), <http://gamestudies.org/0802/articles/sicart>.

procedurality) "to make claims about the cultural, social, or material aspects of human experience."²¹ There is certainly more to what Bogost has to say on this, let alone what others have to say as well, but again, this is shorthand to draw upon the connotations of well known terms in game studies that were expounded upon in analyses that I am not able to fully cover here.

Moving towards the last part of my thesis statement, although I have referred to fiction/narrative and worldbuilding without much of a gloss, I do not mean to assume one common, known understanding of them, even within more literary approaches to game studies. Indeed, there has been much written about how narrative is built, functions, and can be read in interactive, procedural, and branching texts, including digital games. Juul discusses games' fiction as narrative by way of several definitions, from the act of delivering a story, chronologies, archetypical chronologies and/or prescribed events, themes, fictional worlds, and the process of meaning-making.²² Juul's elaboration on fictional worlds is of particular interest, as that idea (known and studied elsewhere as worldbuilding²³) includes modes of creative storytelling and story interpretation that are well suited to the affordances, design archetypes, and player literacies of digital games. Those modes include a game's graphics/visual information, sound/aural information, text/written information, cut-scenes (film-like clips that do not allow for or allow for more limited player input), paratext (the objects and materials around a game, such as its title/subtitle, packaging, written guides like manuals, fan discussions, media coverage, etc.), haptics/tactile information (particularly controller vibration in Juul's definition, but also potentially including the more general feel and physicality of mediating

²¹ Ian Bogost, "The Rhetoric of Video Games," *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*, 2008, 117–40,

http://www.arts.rpi.edu/public_html/ruiz/EGDFall10/readings/RhetoricVideoGames_Bogost.pdf, 123.

²² Juul, *Half-Real*, 156–157.

²³ See Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

devices like controllers, keyboards, and mice), rules/systemic information, and player's contributions of time and effort.²⁴

Furthermore, Juul contends that these aspects are how games "cue a player into imagining a fictional world,"²⁵ suggesting that although the game itself (via its encoded data and the result of the game platform mediating that data) contains much and many forms of information, the "text" (in a literary sense) of a game's fiction (or narrative experience) lies in the interplay between that information and the player. Gordon Calleja²⁶ digs into this deeper, breaking that interplay down into the intertwining aspects (or "dimensions") of player involvement, which he describes through a model (shown in figure 5) with two levels ("phases") upon which a player interacts with a game, micro- (specific choices and management within particular sessions of a game experience) and macro- (lasting impressions of the overall game experience) involvement. The dimensions are all inseparably part of both phases, although because they are different, meaning is made differently amongst these dimensions. These dimensions are labeled as kinesthetic (avatar movement and control), spatial (setting), shared (interaction between characters and players), narrative (pre-written/scripted), affective (drama/emotional arcs), and ludic (rules and constraints) involvement. These dimensions and the player's involvement within/around them comprise what I am considering the "text" of a game.

Lastly, that I am considering the text of a game as located across its code, mediating technologies, written text, aesthetic elements, etc. and a human player connects my understanding of this text to figurings of people within mediated systems. This has certainly been established in

²⁴ Juul, *Half-Real*, 134-139.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁶ Gordon Calleja, *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

game studies, as seen in T.L. Taylor's application of the assemblage to gameplay²⁷ and Brendan Keogh's discussion and literature review on the "player as *posthuman*, a subject distributed and emergent" (emphasis in original), who "embodies a hybridised body, incorporating flesh, hardware, and virtual objects and beings into their corporeal schema" and thusly exist as a component of a game text.²⁸ Although I do not linger long on potential corporeal shifts and emergences in this project, I will be performing literary analyses of the aforementioned aspects of games' fictional worlds with an acknowledgement of and attention paid to the player. In this case, that player is the author of this work, a "me" from different parts of my gameplay history and chronology of supporting experiences (perhaps more simply known as my life as someone who plays games). This is not an autobiographical nor an autoethnographic work and the subject/object of "me" will not be explored in depth, but through this work I do aspire to locate me as the player and thus textual contributor of these games as well as me as a games scholar making meaning of those experiences in the attempt to coax a larger understanding and critique from those experiences. It is my intention that this element of this project serves both to treat the medium in accordance to how it is experienced and to continue the work of feminist scholars from many disciplines who have endeavored to locate the scholar in her/his work and displace the positivist image of the researcher as an objective and detached expert whose work reveals truth (rather than subjective, emotionally involved, informed but not omniscient interpretation).²⁹

With my key terms and my area of and approach to analysis staked out, I turn to the literature, and thus the people, who have built the foundations upon which this work sits.

²⁷ T.L. Taylor, "The Assemblage of Play," *Games and Culture* 4, no. 4 (October 1, 2009): 331–39, doi:10.1177/1555412009343576.

²⁸ Brendan Keogh, "Across Worlds and Bodies: Criticism in the Age of Video Games," *Journal of Games Criticism* 1, no. 1 (2014), <http://gamescriticism.org/articles/keogh-1-1/>, 15.

²⁹ See Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge," 383–385; Roberta Spalter-Roth and Heidi Hartmann, "Small Happinesses: The Feminist Struggle to Integrate Social Research with Social Activism," in *Feminism and Social Change*, ed. Heidi Gottfried (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 210.

2 Literature Review

In order to explore warm interaction in digital games more fully, or at least to shed light on what I can and give credit where I cannot, there are several bodies of literature on which I rely and of which relevant works thereof are discussed below. This literature review is structured to reflect how each body of literature concerns different methodologies and content, as well as to present how these bodies of literature intersect, although it must be noted that the boundaries between each body is more fluid and complex in actuality than can be represented here. In addition, I have sought out literature to map out (and that which does already map out) the relevant histories and lineages of the fields at hand so as to consider and build upon work, debates, and standards that have preceded my own work.

I begin with my theoretical grounding via the interpretations and interpretative lenses offered by scholars in the fields in which my thesis is located and/or draws inspiration, namely game studies, media studies, feminist studies, emotion/affect studies, performance studies, and political economy/critical theory. My theoretical backdrop is based on both humanist (i.e. of the humanities disciplines) and social scientific work, especially ethnographic and other qualitative, phenomenological, interpretive accounts of people, cultures, and systems, in this case around games. I then provide literature that underlines, supports, or otherwise guides my methods and writing style, which are more traditionally humanist, as learned via my backgrounds in art historical and literary approaches to media.

It also must be noted that not all of this literature appears in quotes, citations, or even explicitly at all in the rest of this thesis. This is a matter of sheer scope, as there is much more relevant work than there is space for me to treat it. However, the works that appear here (even if not elsewhere) have in some way informed my thinking around my topic and the disciplines and ideas that intersect with it. In that vein, this literature review collects all the previous work that has

been synthesized into this thesis more than it suggests a particular gap to fill in that literature. This is consonant with my purpose in writing this thesis, which is to bring ideas, methods, and goals from various disciplines and approaches into one interdisciplinary, exploratory project that recognizes and attends to the different vocabularies needed to make sense of, express, and extrapolate broader claims from analyzing digital games as a medium.

2.1 Theoretical Background: Main Fields

2.1.1 Game Studies

I find it an interesting challenge to consider games as a text that is imbued with meaning through player experiences, design work, and media histories and ecologies. Thus, I am interested in interpretative textual work both on games themselves and on the accounts of players' and designers' approaches to those games. This leaves my game studies literature feeling somewhat patchwork, with many different styles and ideas mashed together, a result of the complexity of digital games, the ways in which they are studied and applied to research, and of the particularities of my project's topic (e.g., affect, interpersonal/mediated interaction). There is much there to consider, but those intersections leave ripe sites for blending the different kinds of theory informing the thesis while also blending its methods and content around affect.

In game studies, that includes play and pre-digital game studies;³⁰ philosophical, rhetorical, and other interpretative approaches;³¹ ethnographic and other player-based approaches;³² games as

³⁰ Roger Caillois, "The Definition of Play and the Classification of Games," in *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 122–55; Linda Hughes, "Beyond the Rules of the Game: Why Are Rooie Rules Nice?," in *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 122–55; Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955); Casey O'Donnell, *Developer's Dilemma: The Secret World of Videogame Creators* (MIT Press, 2014); Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters, Playful Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014); Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

³¹ Ian Bogost, "The Rhetoric of Video Games," *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*, 2008, 117–40,

http://www.arts.rpi.edu/public_html/ruiz/EGDFall10/readings/RhetoricVideoGames_Bogost.pdf; Timothy

a unique narrative medium and their technological (and expressive) affordances;³³ game design studies;³⁴ and games for learning and learning sciences.³⁵

Crick, "The Game Body: Toward a Phenomenology of Contemporary Video Gaming," *Games and Culture* 6, no. 3 (May 1, 2011): 259–69, doi:10.1177/1555412010364980; Jesper Juul, *The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games*, Playful Thinking (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); Jan H. G. Klabbers, "Tensions Between Meaning Construction and Persuasion in Games," *Game Studies* 11, no. 2 (May 2011), http://gamestudies.org/1102/articles/klabbers_book_review; Peter McDonald, "For Every to There Is a Fro: Interpreting Time, Rhythm, and Gesture in Play," *Games and Culture* 9, no. 6 (November 1, 2014): 480–90, doi:10.1177/1555412014549192; James Newman, "The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame: Some Thoughts on Player-Character Relationships in Videogames," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 2, no. 1 (July 2002), <http://www.gamestudies.org/0102/newman/>; Bernard Perron and Mark J. P. Wolf, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2009); John Sharp, *Works of Game: On the Aesthetics of Games and Art* (MIT Press, 2015); Miguel Sicart, "Defining Game Mechanics," *Game Studies* 8, no. 2 (December 2008), <http://gamestudies.org/0802/articles/sicart>; Miguel Sicart, "Against Procedurality," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 11, no. 3 (December 2011); Greg M. Smith, "Computer Games Have Words, Too: Dialogue Conventions in Final Fantasy VII," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 2, no. 2 (December 2002), <http://www.gamestudies.org/0202/smith/>; Rowan Tulloch, "The Construction of Play: Rules, Restrictions, and the Repressive Hypothesis," *Games and Culture* 9, no. 5 (September 1, 2014): 335–50, doi:10.1177/1555412014542807; Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

³² Mia Consalvo, *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Mikael Jakobsson, "Playing with the Rules: Social and Cultural Aspects of Game Rules in a Console Game Club," in *Situated Play, Proceedings of the Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) Conference, 2007*, <http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/07311.01363.pdf>; Jesper Juul, *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/casual-revolution>; C. Steinkuehler, "The Mangle of Play," *Games and Culture* 1, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 199–213, doi:10.1177/1555412006290440; Jason C. Thompson and Marc A. Ouellette, eds., *The Game Culture Reader* (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2013).

³³ Gordon Calleja, *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Bobby Hoffman and Louis Nadelson, "Motivational Engagement and Video Gaming: A Mixed Methods Study," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 58, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 245–70, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40603176>; Tony Manninen, "Interaction Forms and Communicative Actions in Multiplayer Games," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 3, no. 1 (May 2003), <http://www.gamestudies.org/0301/manninen/>; Michael Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces: Image, Play, and Structure in 3D Game Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

³⁴ Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture," in *Media Studies: The Essential Resource*, by Sarah Casey Benyahia, Abigail Gardner, Philip Rayner, Peter Wall (Routledge, 2013); Amy Scholder and Eric Zimmerman, eds., *Re:play: Game Design + Game Culture*, New Literacies and Digital Epistemologies, v. 18 (New York: P. Lang, 2003); Steve Swink, *Game Feel: A Game Designer's Guide to Virtual Sensation* (Amsterdam; Boston: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers/Elsevier, 2009).

³⁵ Konstantin Mitgutsch, "Digital Play-Based Learning: A Philosophical-Pedagogical Perspective on Learning and Playing in Computer Games," *Human IT* 9, no. 3 (April 2008): 18–36, <http://libproxy.mit.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aci&AN=36097594&site=eds-live>; Kurt Squire, "Cultural Framing of Computer/Video Games," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research*, <http://www.gamestudies.org/0102/squire/>, 2, no. 1 (July 2002); Kurt Squire, "From Content to Context: Videogames as Designed Experience," *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 8 (November 1, 2006): 19–29, doi:10.3102/0013189X035008019.

2.1.2 Media Studies

I am approaching games studies through the lens of and as assumed to be part of media studies (as also inspired by the spirit of my department). Thus, I am pulling in sources from elsewhere in media studies in order to inform my work and ground it in media studies more broadly. In particular, I am considering media content transitioning between dominant media forms³⁶ or transforming across media forms;³⁷ how media content and forms are contributed to, taken up, and interpreted by fans;³⁸ media as forms of art and cultural production;³⁹ and media as a part of economic systems.⁴⁰

Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*,⁴¹ a work rooted in the philosophical and speculative, is generally outside of my approach. However, his theories are central to at least the shared vocabulary of media scholars. As my terminology of "warm interaction" may evoke McLuhan's "hot and cool media," it is fruitful to make distinct these two ideas and approaches through referencing this seminal text. That is, warm interaction speaks to the affective dimension of "warm," not to the level of intensity, frequency, or laboriousness of engagement that a media form might demand from its audiences.

³⁶ Susan J. Douglas, "The Turn within: The Irony of Technology in a Globalized World," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2006): 619–38, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/aaq/summary/v058/58.3douglas.html>.

³⁷ John Edward Campbell, "It Takes an iVillage: Gender, Labor, and Community in the Age of Television-Internet Convergence," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 19, <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/531>; Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Henry Jenkins, "Rethinking 'Rethinking Convergence/Culture,'" *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (March 4, 2014): 267–97, doi:10.1080/09502386.2013.801579.

³⁸ Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998); Dorothy C. Holland, ed., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Douglas Atkin, *The Culting of Brands: When Customers Become True Believers* (New York: Portfolio, 2004); Hector Postigo, "America Online Volunteers: Lessons from an Early Co-Production Community," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12, no. 5 (September 1, 2009): 451–69, doi:10.1177/1367877909337858.

⁴¹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Critical ed (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2003).

2.1.3 Feminist Studies/Theory

The goals and concerns of feminism, particularly intersectional feminism, are part of what is at stake for me in thinking about and through the process of writing this thesis. I have been both horrified and inspired to action by the recently spotlighted (but long present), intensely vitriolic reactions to feminism and other social justice critique and activism in game cultures and the game industry. Through this I have developed an academic interest and personal passion for feminist scholarship and activism, especially via the intersectional feminist work that emerges from the assumption that parts of one's identity—gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, etc.—cannot be separated in one's experience of oppressive institutions, rhetorics, and the like. This form of feminism considers gender as a system amongst other systems of oppressive normativity, connecting gender studies with critical race studies, queer studies, and critical theory, amongst others. Thus, those communities of scholarly and activist practice and their goals can be put into productive, often mutually engaged conversation, and I wish my thesis to be within that.

This conversation has seen many threads, disagreements, resolutions, movements, changes, and directions, so it is far too ambitious for this project to tackle the whole of feminist discussions in social/cultural studies, or even in media studies or game studies. However, there are elements of feminist theory that are central to developing and defending my argument, whether through defining and interrogating gender as a social concept;⁴² considering gender as intersectional to other identities;⁴³ examining gender and gendering in social structures, institutions, and systems;⁴⁴

⁴² Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519, doi:10.2307/3207893; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1989).

⁴³ Michele Tracy Berger and Kathleen Guidroz, eds., *The Intersectional Approach: Transforming the Academy through Race, Class, and Gender* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Mimi Marinucci, *Feminism Is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (London; New York: Zed

investigating gender in science and technology studies;⁴⁵ or through evaluating and adding to academic discourses around gender.⁴⁶

2.1.4 Emotion/Affect Studies

This literature lends a common and understandable vocabulary for discussing emotion and affect, particularly the positively valenced ones that are my focus. However, work on emotion and affect is somewhat chameleonic; different disciplinary approaches define emotion and affect quite differently, making a general look at emotional and affect rather slippery. Thus, the multiple disciplines represented here have helped me gain an understanding of how the terminology involved are used in different spaces, and which formulations (including hybrid ones) are most useful to my own research. These disciplines include insights from philosophy,⁴⁷ psychology,⁴⁸ sociology,⁴⁹ and overlaps between these.⁵⁰

Books, 2010); Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*, Contemporary Sociological Perspectives (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).

⁴⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 1st ed (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003); Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikó Imre, and Áine O'Healy, eds., *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Angela McRobbie, "Reflections On Feminism, Immaterial Labour And The Post-Fordist Regime," *New Formations* 70, no. 1 (January 13, 2011): 60–76, doi:10.3898/NEWF.70.04.2010; Mimi Schippers and Erin Grayson Sapp, "Reading Pulp Fiction: Femininity and Power in Second and Third Wave," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 1 (April 1, 2012): 27–42, doi:10.1177/1464700111429900; Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, eds., *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2007).

⁴⁵ T.L. Ebert, "Rematerializing Feminism," *SCIENCE & SOCIETY* 69, no. 1 (January 2005): 33–55, <http://libproxy.mit.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,sso,ip,uid&db=eds-swss&AN=000226687100004&site=eds-live>; Donna Jeanne Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁴⁶ Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, eds., *Conflicts in Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Susan Archer Mann and Ashly Suzanne Patterson, eds., *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Maria do Mar Pereira, "'Feminist Theory Is Proper Knowledge, but ...': The Status of Feminist Scholarship in the Academy," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 3 (December 1, 2012): 283–303, doi:10.1177/1464700112456005; Fionnghuala Sweeney, "'Beautiful, Radiant Things': Aesthetics, Experience and Feminist Practice A Response to Kathy Davis," *Feminist Theory* 16, no. 1 (April 1, 2015): 27–30, doi:10.1177/1464700114563244.

⁴⁷ Denise Riley, *Impersonal Passion: Language as Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Jean Decety, ed., *Empathy: From Bench to Bedside*, Social Neuroscience Series (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2012).

⁴⁹ Rom Harré, ed., *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Oxford, UK; New York, NY, USA: Blackwell, 1986).

2.1.5 Performance Studies

In my previous research projects, I have found performance studies to be a helpful link between social practices like ritual and cultural communication/artistic forms like theatre and games. This particularly benefits my approach to game studies through connecting the work done in games (figured as unique to other media forms like film and literature) to established realms of cultural production, participation, and the scholarship thereof. Anthropologist Victor Turner's work on ritual⁵¹ has been an important pivot point for this in my previous projects, but here I am also considering newer and interdisciplinary/comparative figurings of performance studies as well.⁵²

2.1.6 Political Economy/Critical Theory

Although a jarringly large field, my brushings with critical theory and theories of political economy for this thesis serve mostly to give context and lend credence to my uses of the term and concept of "labor" as mentioned above, and how political/economic/political economic systems intersect with cultural systems like gender. Pieces like Ouellet's⁵³ help provide a more general understanding of critical theory and political economy so as to understand how it is applied to these more specific contexts.

2.2 Theoretical Background: Intersections between Fields

2.2.1 Game Studies and Media Studies

The difference between these works and those in the broader game studies category (already assumed to be a part of media studies) is blurry indeed, but here I highlight how they

⁵⁰ Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie, eds., *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199539956.001.0001>.

⁵¹ Victor W. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors; Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Symbol, Myth, and Ritual (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1974); Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1966 (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995).

⁵² Bryan Reynolds, ed., *Performance Studies: Key Words, Concepts and Theories* (London; New York: Palgrave, 2014); Richard Schechner, Willa Appel, and Victor W. Turner, eds., *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁵³ Maxime Ouellet, "Revisiting Marx's Value Theory: Elements of a Critical Theory of Immaterial Labor in Informational Capitalism," *The Information Society* 31, no. 1 (January 2015): 20–27, doi:10.1080/01972243.2015.977628.

intersect even more deeply with media studies, whether they are drawing upon film studies or engaged with new media as defined more broadly than games, such as virtual worlds. These works come in both critical⁵⁴ and ethnographic⁵⁵ flavors.

2.2.2 Game Studies and Feminist Studies

This section is perhaps most important in my plan for putting my thesis to work for my career and activism, as I am interested in situating my work in feminist game studies in particular. Also, work in this intersection is experiencing a sort of renaissance at the moment, bolstered by the work already done by (still active) scholars in the area. The intersection seems to have gotten renewed attention after the high-profile attacks on women and feminists in games (including GamerGate, as I alluded to previously), and although it is still a toxic environment for feminist scholars, critics, and personalities, I think only good can come from more voices and more strong work, both to assert a place for feminist game scholars in the academy and for women (and other under- and/or misrepresented groups) in games. Like game studies overall, the voices already sounded in this particular area come from different backgrounds and disciplines and focus on different parts of feminist game studies, from definitions of gender as applied to games and gameplay,⁵⁶ how to create and participate in academic discourses of feminism in games and vice

⁵⁴ Jesper Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Graeme Kirkpatrick, "Controller, Hand, Screen: Aesthetic Form in the Computer Game," *Games and Culture* 4, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 127–43, doi:10.1177/1555412008325484; Aaron Trammell and Anne Gilbert, "Extending Play to Critical Media Studies," *Games and Culture* 9, no. 6 (November 1, 2014): 391–405, doi:10.1177/1555412014549301; Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, eds., *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, eds., *Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ Tom Boellstorff et al., *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*; T. L. Taylor, *Play between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

⁵⁶ Rachael Hutchinson, "Performing the Self: Subverting the Binary in Combat Games," *Games and Culture* 2, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 283–99, doi:10.1177/1555412007307953; Laine Nooney, "A Pedestal, A Table, A Love Letter: Archaeologies of Gender in Videogame History," *Game Studies* 13, no. 2 (December 2013), <http://gamestudies.org/1302/articles/nooney>.

versa,⁵⁷ representations of women and under-/misrepresented groups,⁵⁸ and the social structures and cultures around games.⁵⁹

Adrienne Shaw's *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*⁶⁰ is particularly useful, as it provides a rigorous qualitative account of how women, LGBTQ-identifying people, and racial/ethnic minorities respond to representations (and the lack thereof) of their intersectional identities in games. The work challenges notions of how identification and representation work that are often taken for granted, making it a valuable addition not just to game studies, but to media studies broadly. It also moves across the boundaries of textual analysis and representation, traditionally considered humanist domains, and qualitative methods from the social sciences.

⁵⁷ T.L. Ebert, "Ludic Feminism, the Body, Performance, and Labor: Bringing 'Materialism' Back into Feminist Cultural Studies," *Cultural Critique*, no. 23 (1992): 5, doi:10.2307/1354189; David J. Leonard, "Not a Hater, Just Keepin' It Real The Importance of Race- and Gender-Based Game Studies," *Games and Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 83–88, doi:10.1177/1555412005281910.

⁵⁸ Diane Carr, "Ability, Disability and Dead Space," *Game Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 2014), <http://gamestudies.org/1402/articles/carr>; Howard D. Fisher, "Sexy, Dangerous—and Ignored An In-Depth Review of the Representation of Women in Select Video Game Magazines," *Games and Culture* 10, no. 6 (November 1, 2015): 551–70, doi:10.1177/1555412014566234; Patrick W. Galbraith, "Bishōjo Games: 'Techno-Intimacy' and the Virtually Human in Japan," *Game Studies* 11, no. 2 (2011), <http://gamestudies.org/1102/articles/galbraith>; Sun-ha Hong, "When Life Mattered The Politics of the Real in Video Games' Reappropriation of History, Myth, and Ritual," *Games and Culture* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 35–56, doi:10.1177/1555412014557542; Esther MacCallum-Stewart, "'Take That, Bitches!' Refiguring Lara Croft in Feminist Game Narratives," *Game Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 2014), <http://gamestudies.org/1402/articles/maccallumstewart>.

⁵⁹ Diane Carr, "Contexts, Gaming Pleasures, and Gendered Preferences," *Simulation & Gaming* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 464–82, doi:10.1177/1046878105282160; Todd L. Harper, "The Art of War: Fighting Games, Performativity, and Social Game Play" (Ohio University, 2010), http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ohiou1283180978; Yasmin B. Kafai, Carrie Heeter, Jill Denner, Jennifer Y. Sun, eds., *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); Kathy Sanford and Leanna Madill, "Resistance through Video Game Play: It's a Boy Thing," *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de L'éducation* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 287–306, doi:10.2307/20054157; Adrienne Shaw, "Do You Identify as a Gamer? Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Gamer Identity," *New Media & Society* 14, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 28–44, doi:10.1177/1461444811410394; Nicholas Taylor, Jennifer Jenson, and Suzanne de Castell, "Gender in Play: Mapping a Girls' Gaming Club," *Situated Play*, 2007, 302–8, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.126.3283&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

⁶⁰ Adrienne Shaw, *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

2.2.3 Game Studies and Emotion/Affect Studies

Although in many ways recurring in the strands of game studies seen above, emotion and affect are centralized as either content or method in this section, with the latter especially prevalent among the design approaches represented. I am including ethics in emotion and affect, as in my estimation, both engage with realms of human experience other than that which is driven rationally, economically, or otherwise. Arguably, ethics are historically a part of what has been attributed to rational thought, but I am interested in seeing what kinds of parallels can be drawn between ethics and emotion/affect as applied to game design and interpretation. That being said, there have been various ways to approach ethics in games,⁶¹ and beyond that, to understand how emotion and

⁶¹ Mary Flanagan and Helen Fay Nissenbaum, *Values at Play in Digital Games* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014); Karen Schrier and David Gibson, eds., *Ethics and Game Design: Teaching Values through Play* (Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2010); Miguel Sicart, *Beyond Choices: The Design of Ethical Gameplay* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); David W. Simkins and Constance Steinkuehler, "Critical Ethical Reasoning and Role-Play," *Games and Culture* 3, no. 3–4 (July 1, 2008): 333–55, doi:10.1177/1555412008317313; Garry Young, *Ethics in the Virtual World: The Morality and Psychology of Gaming* (Durham, UK: Acumen Publishing, 2013).

affect appear in and around games as designed objects,⁶² social and cultural objects,⁶³ generic and literary objects,⁶⁴ and art objects.⁶⁵

Game Love: Essays on Play and Affection,⁶⁶ edited by Jessica Enevold and Esther MacCallum-Stewart, is a collection of essays focusing on love, one of the often positively valenced (but complex and nuanced) emotional/affective interpersonal experiences. Some of the essays consider love at the representational level, but most of them explore love as it moves into the game text and out off/around it, into players' lives. The scholars, critics, and designers who contributed to this book are relatively young scholars who are now firmly a part of the newer conversations around game studies and feminist variations thereof and are thus a good group to know, reference, and

⁶² James Ash, *The Interface Envelope: Gaming and the Logics of Affective Design* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc, 2015); Jonathan Belman and Mary Flanagan, "Designing Games to Foster Empathy," *International Journal of Cognitive Technology* 15, no. 1 (2010): 11, <http://www.maryflanagan.com/wp-content/uploads/cog-tech-si-g4g-article-1-belman-and-flanagan-designing-games-to-foster-empathy.pdf>; Claire Dormann, Jennifer R. Whitson, and Max Neuvians, "Once More With Feeling: Game Design Patterns for Learning in the Affective Domain," *Games and Culture* 8, no. 4 (July 1, 2013): 215–37, doi:10.1177/1555412013496892; Mary Flanagan, *Critical Play: Radical Game Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

⁶³ Christopher Moore, "Hats of Affect: A Study of Affect, Achievements and Hats in Team Fortress 2," *Game Studies* 11, no. 1 (February 2011), <http://gamestudies.org/1101/articles/moore>; Brad E. Sheese and William G. Graziano, "Deciding to Defect: The Effects of Video-Game Violence on Cooperative Behavior," *Psychological Science* 16, no. 5 (May 1, 2005): 354–57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40064229>; Jonas Heide Smith, "Tragedies of the Ludic Commons - Understanding Cooperation in Multiplayer Games," *Game Studies* 7, no. 1 (August 2007), <http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/smith>; Jodi L. Whitaker, André Melzer, Georges Steffgen, Brad J. Bushman, "The Allure of the Forbidden: Breaking Taboos, Frustration, and Attraction to Violent Video Games," *Psychological Science* 24, no. 4 (April 1, 2013): 507–13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23409254>.

⁶⁴ Diane Carr, "Play Dead: Genre and Affect in Silent Hill and Planescape Torment," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 3, no. 1 (May 2003), <http://www.gamestudies.org/0301/carr/>; Barry Ip, "Narrative Structures in Computer and Video Games: Part 2: Emotions, Structures, and Archetypes," *Games and Culture* 6, no. 3 (May 1, 2011): 203–44, doi:10.1177/1555412010364984; Daniel Johnson, "Animated Frustration or the Ambivalence of Player Agency," *Games and Culture* 10, no. 6 (November 1, 2015): 593–612, doi:10.1177/1555412014567229; Tanya Krzywinska, "Gaming Horror's Horror: Representation, Regulation, and Affect in Survival Horror Videogames," *Journal of Visual Culture* 14, no. 3 (December 1, 2015): 293–97, doi:10.1177/1470412915607924; Toby Smethurst and Stef Craps, "Playing with Trauma Interactivity, Empathy, and Complicity in The Walking Dead Video Game," *Games and Culture* 10, no. 3 (May 1, 2015): 269–90, doi:10.1177/1555412014559306.

⁶⁵ Carlos Mauricio Castaño Díaz and Worawach Tungtjitcharoen, "Art Video Games: Ritual Communication of Feelings in the Digital Era," *Games and Culture* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 3–34, doi:10.1177/1555412014557543; Brian Upton, *The Aesthetic of Play* (MIT Press, 2015).

⁶⁶ Jessica Enevold and Esther MacCallum-Stewart, eds., *Game Love: Essays on Play and Affection* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015).

with whom to converse. Shira Chess has produced a similarly concerned work outside of the collection.⁶⁷

Notably, Katherine Isbister's *How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design*,⁶⁸ was published during the writing of this thesis. This design-centric work discusses many of the same mechanics and possibilities for game design as the present work. However, where it differs is where it ends. Isbister's work makes a strong case for the ways in which features of game design can create opportunities for emotional investment in ways unique to the medium; this case is made through both readings of mechanics (similar to this project) and through design research. Isbister's argument is where mine begins, in that the present project *assumes* that games do "move us" for all the reasons that Isbister evidences (and more). From that assumption, I make the case that a focus on the positive, meaningful, inspirational, educational, etc. possibilities of emotional responses to games can obfuscate the power structures in place that undermines this positivity, and thus this focus runs the risk of reinforcing systems of oppression that limit how much this positive emotion and affect can be helpful or meaningful to combat such power structures.⁶⁹

2.2.4 Game Studies and Japanese Studies

For the most part, my thesis is not interacting deeply with global area studies. However, all of the games I have considered for use as case studies are Japanese, due in large part to my own play history. As such, grounding in the cultural specificity of Japan,⁷⁰ its game industry,⁷¹ and Japanese

⁶⁷ Shira Chess, "Strange Bedfellows: Subjectivity, Romance, and Hidden Object Video Games," *Games and Culture* 9, no. 6 (November 1, 2014): 417–28, doi:10.1177/1555412014544904.

⁶⁸ Katherine Isbister, *How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design*, Playful Thinking (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/how-games-move-us>.

⁶⁹ For an investigation of this kind of critique, here in the context of American narratives around economic opportunity and personal trauma/illness, see: Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*, 1st ed (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

⁷⁰ Mia Consalvo, "Visiting the Floating World: Tracing a Cultural History of Games Through Japan and America," in *Situated Play: Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference*, 2007, 736–42, <http://lmc.gatech.edu/~cpearce3/DiGRA07/Proceedings/096.pdf>.

game players⁷² is an important piece in using those case studies alongside my methods and theories, which situate games amongst players and cultural contexts. This also includes gender and the connotations, expectations, and structures that accompany gender as a social construct (an assumption explored in the feminist literature cited elsewhere).

Joseph Jay Tobin's edited volume *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*⁷³ considers *Pokémon* as a rich, multi-/transmedia text with global reach that has inspired interesting gender dynamics in its fan reception while maintaining fairly wide inclusivity. The book also incorporates my particular content focus, in this case caretaking of animal-like pets in a Japanese video game franchise, and acts as a model of sorts for bridging literary and sociological forms of analysis.

2.2.5 Game Studies and Political Economy/Critical Theory

Throughout this literature search, I have found that "labor" is a prevalent word at the intersection of games, feminist cultural studies, and emotion/affect studies. In game studies, this word primarily evokes ideas around how playing games are a form of labor,⁷⁴ the labor that goes into making games,⁷⁵ and fan/hobbyist labor around creating/promoting/critiquing/participating in

⁷¹ Mia Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda: Japan's Videogames in Global Contexts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016); Martin Picard, "The Foundation of Geemu: A Brief History of Early Japanese Video Games," *Game Studies* 13, no. 2 (December 2013), <http://gamestudies.org/1302/articles/picard>.

⁷² Mizuko Ito, "Gender Dynamics of the Japanese Media Mix," in *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming*, ed. Yasmin B. Kafai, et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 97–110; Hyeshin Kim, "Women's Games in Japan: Gendered Identity and Narrative Construction," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2009): 165–88, doi:10.1177/0263276409103132.

⁷³ Joseph Jay Tobin, ed., *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁷⁴ Aaron Chia Yuan Hung, *The Work of Play: Meaning-Making in Video Games*, *New Literacies and Digital Epistemologies*, v. 48 (New York: Peter Lang, 2011); Simon Parkin, "How Video Games Make You Work," *The New Yorker*, June 8, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/how-video-games-make-you-work>; Nick Yee, "The Labor of Fun How Video Games Blur the Boundaries of Work and Play," *Games and Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 68–71, doi:10.1177/1555412005281819.

⁷⁵ Ergin Bulut, "Glamor Above, Precarity Below: Immaterial Labor in the Video Game Industry," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 32, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 193–207, doi:10.1080/15295036.2015.1047880; F. Ted Tschang, "Balancing the Tensions between Rationalization and Creativity in the Video Games Industry," *Organization Science* 18, no. 6 (November 1, 2007): 989–1005, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25146154>.

games.⁷⁶ I do explore other relationships between labor and games, primarily via gendered labor, as seen in Chapter 6.

2.2.6 Media Studies and Feminist Studies

How media studies intersects with the other bodies of literature in my survey, like and beyond feminist studies, is crucial for thinking through how such theories and methods can be applied to games in ways related to but developed differently or sometimes further than has been done in game studies' short history with these theories and methods. Feminist approaches here include gender in media technology,⁷⁷ gender as a factor in media design and production processes,⁷⁸ and representation of gender (and other intersectional identities) in media.⁷⁹

Edward Schiappa's *Beyond Representational Correctness: Rethinking Criticism of Popular Media*,⁸⁰ as cited also in the introduction, emerges from a communications approach to media studies and as such argues for a blend of methods for understanding how media can be interpreted, including textual analyses but also including social psychological empirical work. The book introduces and applies theories like that of uses and gratifications and audience reception studies, offering another way to connect my methods with the benefits of audience-driven research.

⁷⁶ Hector Postigo, "From Pong to Planet Quake: Post-Industrial Transitions from Leisure to Work," *Information, Communication & Society* 6, no. 4 (December 2003): 593–607, doi:10.1080/1369118032000163277; Olli Sotamaa, "'Have Fun Working with Our Product!': Critical Perspectives On Computer Game Mod Competitions.," in *DIGRA Conf.* (Citeseer, 2005), <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.98.7776&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

⁷⁷ Sam de Boise, *Men, Masculinity, Music and Emotions*, First Edition (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Theories of Representation and Difference (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); J. Wajcman, "Feminist Theories of Technology," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 143–52, doi:10.1093/cje/ben057; Mary Wyer, ed., *Women, Science, and Technology: A Reader in Feminist Science Studies*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁷⁸ Nelly Oudshoorn, Els Rommes, and Marcelle Stienstra, "Configuring the User as Everybody: Gender and Design Cultures in Information and Communication Technologies," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 29, no. 1 (2004): 30–63, <http://sth.sagepub.com/content/29/1/30.short>.

⁷⁹ Gail Dines and Jean McMahon Humez, eds., *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*, Fourth edition (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2015).

⁸⁰ Edward Schiappa, *Beyond Representational Correctness: Rethinking Criticism of Popular Media* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

2.2.7 Media Studies and Emotion/Affect Studies

Similarly to feminist media studies, emotion and affect in media studies apply the forms, content, theories, and history of media studies to the interdisciplinary understandings of emotions and affect. Some texts are more critical and theoretical,⁸¹ whereas others consider people's emotional engagement with media and the impact that kind of engagement may have on participants,⁸² as well as how media creation and interpretation can be acts of care.⁸³

The Forms of the Affects,⁸⁴ a rich, dense text by Eugenie Brinkema has been inspirational to me in a few ways, first in its blending of embodied, even visceral interpretations of the film medium through the lenses of a vast pool of cited works from literary and philosophical traditions. Secondly, this book is a stunning work of prose itself, acting as both scholarly and aesthetically beautiful criticism, a model for the blending of styles and goals that has been an interest of mine for some time.⁸⁵

2.2.8 Media Studies and Japanese Studies

Lucy Glasspool's chapter "From Boys Next Door to Boys' Love: Gender Performance in Japanese Male Idol Media"⁸⁶ deftly and concisely connects theories of gender (especially masculinity), a specific cultural context, media ecologies, and fan consumption and production practices, making it a very useful resource for those intersections and relevant literature/theories

⁸¹ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory And Multisensory Media*, 1st edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2002).

⁸² Henry Jenkins, *The Wow Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Kevin Roberts, *Lovemarks: The Future beyond Brands*, 1st ed (New York, N.Y.: PowerHouse Books, 2004).

⁸³ Robin Stoate, "'We're Not Programmed, We're People': Figuring the Caring Computer," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 197–211, doi:10.1177/1464700112442646; Anne Whitehead, "Reading with Empathy: Sindiwe Magona's Mother to Mother," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 181–95, doi:10.1177/1464700112442645.

⁸⁴ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham; London: Duke University Press Books, 2014).

⁸⁵ Kyrie Eleison H. Caldwell, "Digital 'Fayth' and Ritual 'Play': A Study in Religious Participation and Audiovisual Affect in Contemporary Video Games" (Bachelor's, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2013).

⁸⁶ Lucy Glasspool, "From Boys Next Door to Boys' Love: Gender Performance in Japanese Male Idol Media," in *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, ed. Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), <http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doi/10.1057/9781137283788>.

thereof. Other pieces along these lines include the production and maintenance of certain kinds of fan consumption in and outside of Japan⁸⁷ and gendered, Japanese creation of media and technology.⁸⁸

2.2.9 Feminist Studies and Emotion/Affect Studies

Due to the prevalence of ascribing emotions and emotional responses to gendered reasons (hormones, women's domestic roles, etc.), feminist studies frequently work with emotion and affect as ways of being, knowing, and understanding while challenging those gendered associations. Thus, feminist works drawing on emotion and affect seek to use feminist lenses to make meaning from emotions and affect,⁸⁹ often marrying activism/practice and scholarship,⁹⁰ which are goals to which I will return in this chapter's methodology section.

2.2.10 Feminist Studies and Japanese Studies

Akiko Takeyama's *Staged Seduction: Selling Dreams in a Tokyo Host Club*,⁹¹ which was my inspiration for delving into the use of and literature on affective methodologies and epistemologies. Thus, not only is the content relevant for my thesis (that is, how emotional work appears in relation to gendered interactions in Japanese host clubs, in which men are paid to flirt with, court, and show affection for usually female customers, and how/why emotional labor has risen amongst young

⁸⁷ Anne Allison, "The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2009): 89–111, doi:10.1177/0263276409103118.

⁸⁸ Jennifer Robertson, "Gendering Humanoid Robots: Robo-Sexism in Japan," *Body & Society* 16, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 1–36, doi:10.1177/1357034X10364767.

⁸⁹ June Crawford, ed., *Emotion and Gender: Constructing Meaning from Memory*, Gender and Psychology (London; Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications, 1992); Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (Cambridge, U.K.; Malden, M.A: Polity Press, 2012); Margaret E. Toyne, "Towards a Poethics of Love: Poststructuralist Feminist Ethics and Literary Creation," *Feminist Theory* 11, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 39–55, doi:10.1177/1464700109355212.

⁹⁰ bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000); Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen, eds., *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences*, Reprint edition (London: Routledge, 2012); Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead, "Affecting Feminism: Questions of Feeling in Feminist Theory," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 115–29, doi:10.1177/1464700112442635.

⁹¹ Akiko Takeyama, *Staged Seduction: Selling Dreams in a Tokyo Host Club* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

people trying to get by in Japan's current economy), but the methods are as well, through affectively sensitive and driven ethnography. Returning to the performative element in the ethnographic content of this work, this presentation of gender as a set of learned, performed markers (and thus potentially more fluid than, say, biological assignment) appears in other Japanese contexts like theatre.⁹² Other approaches include cross-cultural and intersectional histories, movements, and moments in Japan.⁹³

2.2.11 Performance Studies and Game Studies

The link between performance studies and game studies has been often traced through anthropological play studies via ritual and theatre⁹⁴ but has also been treated through more philosophical understandings of performance and performing in the world, in performance art, and games.⁹⁵ Both are rich areas and are, again, strong links to other topical fields, like feminist definitions of gender and certain understandings of emotions and affect.

⁹² Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁹³ Mark McLelland and Katsuhiko Suganuma, "Sexual Minorities and Human Rights in Japan: An Historical Perspective," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 2–3 (2009): 329–43, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13642980902758176>; Laura Miller, "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan: Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan," *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 20, no. 1 (November 2011): 18–29, doi:10.1111/j.1475-6781.2011.01145.x.

⁹⁴ Richard Schechner and Mady Schuman, eds., *Ritual, Play, and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/theatre*, Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1976); Victor W. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982).

⁹⁵ Cindy Poremba, "Performative Inquiry and the Sublime in Escape from Woomera," *Games and Culture* 8, no. 5 (September 1, 2013): 354–67, doi:10.1177/1555412013493134; Emma Westecott, "The Player Character as Performing Object," in *Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory: Proceedings of the 2009 Digital Games Research Association Conference*, 2009, <http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/09287.43252.pdf>.

2.2.12 Political Economy/Critical Theory and Feminist Studies

When drawing upon political economy theories, especially via critical theory and Marxism, I am considering how gender acts upon the terminology and idea of "labor," including the exclusion or marginalization of women in the workforce and other political and economic spaces.⁹⁶

Some work concerned with the terms emotional labor and affective labor has been explored elsewhere in this literature review, situated (as is the aforementioned tendency of emotion and affect work) in area studies and thus the specificity of cultural contexts (such as Japanese host/hostess clubs). The more generalizable sense of that work ties directly into feminist studies, as emotional/affective labor is often linked to gendered occupations, particularly in the service and care industries, or fan labor.⁹⁷

2.3 Methodology

My methodological inclinations and methods align with those of game criticism, in which scholars and critics read games as texts and follow a literary tradition of close reading practices, comparisons between texts, rhetorical analyses (i.e. interpreting texts as arguments for how things do or should work), and a blending of these textually-based readings with interpretative theoretical lenses. However, in addition to that approach, I am interested in games as assemblages. In this approach, games are argued to be partially encoded (if digital) and/or delineated by rules, but that code is mediated through hardware, which is activated and performed upon by the player, who draws on their context in order to interpret the game. Thus, although I have not been conducting my own qualitative studies on human subjects, I am drawing from the ideas and practices from that

⁹⁶ Kylie Jarrett, "The Relevance of 'Women's Work': Social Reproduction and Immaterial Labor in Digital Media," *Television & New Media* 15, no. 1 (2014): 14–29, <http://tvn.sagepub.com/content/15/1/14.short>.

⁹⁷ Lorna Heaton and Serge Proulx, "Paradoxical Empowerment: Immaterial Labor Translated in a Web of Affective Connections," *The Information Society* 31, no. 1 (January 2015): 28–35, doi:10.1080/01972243.2015.977629; Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

kind of study, especially as has been conducted in game studies and as discussed in my introduction. Thus, some of these methods/methodological texts are specifically methods handbooks or methodological critiques, and others act as models and/or framing for my approach.

For a key example of the latter, T.L. Taylor's proposal for thinking about games and game studies history, "The Assemblage of Play,"⁹⁸ connects games studies to the broader cultural studies idea of assemblages, serves as a quick literature review of the narratology/ludology trend in game studies, and (importantly) highlights a watershed moment in game studies, wherein a new approach arose that focused on players, player experience, and the structural/social contexts of games. Beyond that, it connects game studies to related theories known to media studies, such as actor network theory,⁹⁹ and, along with other texts in the same vein¹⁰⁰ situates the study of games in their dynamic, shifting, multifaceted contexts, which is interesting from a social scientific approach and fruitfully challenging for the humanist methods I am using.

Those methods are more deeply rooted in other figurations of game analysis, from the critical¹⁰¹ to more taxonomic and comparative.¹⁰² Clara Fernández-Vara's *Introduction to Game*

⁹⁸ Taylor, "The Assemblage of Play."

⁹⁹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Thomas M. Malaby, "Beyond Play: A New Approach to Games," *Games and Culture* 2, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 95–113, doi:10.1177/1555412007299434.

¹⁰¹ Espen Aarseth, "Playing Research: Methodological Approaches to Game Analysis," in *Proceedings of the Digital Arts and Culture Conference*, 2003, 28–29, <http://www.bendevane.com/VTA2012/herrstubbz/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/02.GameApproaches2.pdf>; Diane Carr, "Textual Analysis, Digital Games, Zombies," in *DiGRA 2009 Conference: Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory*, London (Citeseer, 2009), 1–4,

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.190.1577&rep=rep1&type=pdf>; Mia Consalvo and Nathan Dutton, "Game Analysis: Developing a Methodological Toolkit for the Qualitative Study of Games," *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 6, no. 1 (December 2006); Olli Tapio Leino, "Death Loop as a Feature," *Game Studies* 12, no. 2 (December 2012), http://gamestudies.org/1202/articles/death_loop_as_a_feature; Christopher A. Paul, *Wordplay and the Discourse of Video Games: Analyzing Words, Design, and Play*, Routledge Studies in New Media and Cyberculture 10 (New York: Routledge, 2012); Bart Simon, "Beyond Cyberspatial Flaneurie: On the Analytic Potential of Living With Digital Games," *Games and Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 62–67, doi:10.1177/1555412005281789.

*Analysis*¹⁰³ is a particularly useful text, as it is clear, approachable, and broad, extensively referencing others who have applied this or parts of this approach to the study of games and what sorts of gains and limitations they have found. Although I have developed my own approach to doing close readings of games (through trial and error as well as coaching from various moments and disciplines in my academic career), Fernández-Vara's text also also gives tips for working with games' tendencies towards unwieldy length and branching possibilities, as well as different kinds of critical and semi-critical writing on games.

As a summative text, Brendan Keogh's previously cited "Across Worlds and Bodies: Criticism in the Age of Video Games"¹⁰⁴ considers the lineage of thought and work in textual approaches to game studies (and that as a branch of media studies), most notably the figure of the posthuman player as a part of the game text. Although the social scientific literature in game studies is missing for the most part, Keogh is amongst the newest generation of games scholars, making this piece both historically grounded (though not exhaustively) and forward-facing simultaneously.

2.3.1 Methodologies in Feminist Studies

Feminist methodologies and, in particular, epistemologies and the possibilities they offer for subverting, evaluating, and refiguring academic practices are crucial to my thesis. Although the game studies methods above are central to how I am working with the texts of my analysis, these feminist methods are central to how I am hoping to distinguish and ultimately use my thesis, and thus even the abovementioned methods have been evaluated, tweaked, and/or amended along

¹⁰² Steven Malliet, "Adapting the Principles of Ludology to the Method of Video Game Content Analysis," *Game Studies* 7, no. 1 (August 2007), <http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/malliet>; Susana Pajares Tosca, "Reading Resident Evil-Code Veronica X," in *Proceedings of the 2003 DAC Conference, Melbourne, Australia*, 2003, <http://www.hypertext.rmit.edu.au/dac/papers/Tosca.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Clara Fernández-Vara, *Introduction to Game Analysis*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Keogh, "Across Worlds and Bodies."

those here.¹⁰⁵This is also a space in which the products of scholarship are put to use towards activism within and outside of the academy,¹⁰⁶ which is a goal of mine, at least in future work. Much of this work is done through evaluations and disruptions of traditional epistemologies.¹⁰⁷

Alison M. Jaggar edited *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*,¹⁰⁸ which has been a foundational text for my considering how feminist goals and epistemologies can be woven into and affect scholarly methods and how to apply such lenses to my own work, which pulls from interdisciplinary methodologies. Of particular interest is the chapter on emotions and affect (which I cited in my introduction) as reflexive epistemological tools that have been excluded from Enlightenment-inspired scholarly methods and are now to be reclaimed in such spaces.¹⁰⁹This is of great interest and fascination to me, and thus this thesis in some ways reflects my still early musings on somewhat more radical methodologies and epistemologies.

3 On Methods

Although I have outlined how the work of other scholars has been infused into my methodology, I have yet to explicitly outline and examine my methods. However, I have, in a sense, demonstrated them. In my introduction, I take a given passage of text (here, my thesis statement: "I aim to analyze how 'warm interactions' are reflected in game mechanics and how those procedural

¹⁰⁵ See Helen W. Kennedy, "Lara Croft: Feminist Icon or Cyberbimbo? On the Limits of Textual Analysis," *Game Studies: International Journal of Computer Games Research* 2, no. 2 (December 2002), <http://www.gamestudies.org/0202/kennedy/>.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook, *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research* (Indiana University Press, 1991); Clare Hemmings, "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 147–61, doi:10.1177/1464700112442643.

¹⁰⁷ Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo, eds., *Gender/body/knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (New York: Wiley, 1978); Johanna Oksala, "How Is Feminist Metaphysics Possible? A Foucauldian Intervention," *Feminist Theory* 12, no. 3 (December 1, 2011): 281–96, doi:10.1177/1464700111417667; Joey Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* (Rowman Altamira, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ Alison M. Jaggar, ed., *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge."

modes reproduce problematic schema of interpersonal interaction, emotional states and emotionality, and stereotypical and problematic conceptions of gender, even if these mechanics are rethemed within socially innovative or otherwise rewarding narratives and built worlds."), break it into smaller pieces, and parse what each piece means in order to gain new insight into a whole, whether that "whole" is a slightly larger passage in a text, a whole text, or a whole pattern seen across texts.

This method is informed by structural analysis and its roots in semiotics and Russian Formalism. Through this, I collect instances of discourse, i.e. moments or fragments of meaning-making, to then contextualize these elements in the structure of the text and amongst taxonomic precedents across texts, as modeled after methods used by Roland Barthes¹¹⁰ and Umberto Eco.¹¹¹ These methods have been described, cited, and adapted to games by Diane Carr,¹¹² along with the closely related but different approaches of textual analysis and inter-textuality, in an article written as "a contribution to ongoing debates about the value and limitations of textual analysis in digital games research," debates that still haunt humanists in games studies.¹¹³

In exploring my case studies, I turn more specifically to some of Eco's methodological terminology, which serves as the backbone of this work. Eco describes the "archetype" in film, specifically cult classic film, as "a pre-established and frequently re-appearing narrative situation that is cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts," going on to note that these

¹¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 1st American edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981); Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, 1st American edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

¹¹¹ Umberto Eco, "'Casablanca': Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage," *SubStance* 14, no. 2 (1985): 3, doi:10.2307/3685047.

¹¹² Diane Carr, "Textual Analysis, Digital Games, Zombies," in *DiGRA 2009 Conference: Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory*, London (Citeseer, 2009), 1–4, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.190.1577&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

archetypes are beloved by fans of films that have achieved a cult status.¹¹⁴ I extend his definition from narrative situations to mechanical ones in games, which can have both and even overlapping narrative and mechanical archetypes. The archetype is here a system that arises from multiple elements interacting with each other predictably and meaningfully in the texts, much like how game mechanics interact with each other to produce a system of rules and thus create a world through limitations and delineations.

I use this method for the strengths that it has in answering the questions I pose. This approach is able to isolate a pattern from otherwise long, complicated, sometimes branching, and otherwise unwieldy texts, as games can be, allowing me to address breadth across texts as well as limited depth within specific ones. This method is also helpful for thinking about games as structural systems, particularly of rules that become generic conventions, which could then be pinpointed, revealed, and broken down. Through that process, these systems and rules can be opened to critique in ways that consider games' narratives but focus on the aspects of games other than text or chronology and the like, similar to language play in literature and visual/aural techniques in film. As Carr notes, "structural analysis relates to game design and form,"¹¹⁵ and so through structural analysis, I can reasonably consider how a particular theme is designed into the form of a game.

In addition, critique built on the interpretation of game design (as compared to game narratives or art directions, for instance) is relatively underserved in mainstream games journalism and fan analysis, which form much of the wider public's engagement with games criticism. Both rely on the understanding and recalling of a large corpus of games, leading to many gameplay analyses reading like "[this game] plays like [another game] and [yet another] put together." Both of those forms of criticism also have significant power to shape future game development through the

¹¹⁴ Eco, "Casablanca," 5.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

notion that games are developed to be purchased by a community that enjoys them. The possibility of game design intervention is important for scholarship aimed at changing games through critique, which is an interest of mine and can be linked to other forms of activist scholarship, like much of feminist scholarship.

All this being said, this method is certainly not without its limitations. Of key concern is what, or rather who, is erased in such methods and methodologies. Notably, game players are absent, and even in the textual analysis Carr describes, which "relates to signification and to the game as actualised by play,"¹¹⁶ the player is almost always the scholar herself. Even if the scholar is located as an important part of both the scholarship and the game as a readable/read text, that reading is then offered as an "expert" reading, leaving little room for considering other players' readings, be they normative, subversive, or otherwise. Indeed, some scholars have questioned whether such readings around, say, representation, which is a key site for feminist work in game criticism, including mine, actually matters to players. Some of this questioning comes from earlier days of games scholarship, such as from Espen Aarseth, who claims, "When I play, I don't even see [Lara Croft's] body, but see through it and past it."¹¹⁷ But where that may suggest different assumptions about the enactment of a game text than those to which I adhere, a more recent and troubling challenge for feminist game scholarship is Adrienne's Shaw's work, in which she has conducted qualitative research efforts that have found that subjects (many of whom are people of color and/or subvert gender and sexual norms) were not necessarily as invested in diverse representations in games as might be suggested through reading interpretative research.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁷ Espen Aarseth, "Genre Trouble: Narrativism and the Art of Simulation," in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, eds. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 48.

¹¹⁸ Adrienne Shaw, "Do You Identify as a Gamer? Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Gamer Identity," *New Media & Society* 14, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 28–44, doi:10.1177/1461444811410394; Adrienne Shaw, *Gaming at*

Although Shaw still makes a case for such diversity through her data, the ways in which people interact with media and feel about diverse representation are more complex than the critical model of finding a pattern that can be critiqued and then arguing that it ought to be changed in order to better serve such diversity.

This connects to broader criticisms of interpretative, humanist research, which has a reputation for being heady, opaque (even obfuscating), and of importance only to the scholar rather than the people in the world outside the scholar's "ivory tower." Both humanist and social scientific disciplines need such reflexive maintenance, so to speak, to ensure that claims to knowledge are broad enough to be interesting and relevant but not so broad as to be overstated or to misrepresent data. However, humanist methods also do not have so integral a means of connecting to others as social scientific methods do and thus require near-constant reflection to connect to other kinds of knowledge and perspectives.

This need for reflexivity is of especial importance when considering the "canon" of such theoretical work. Both the humanities and the social sciences (and all other academic fields) arise from a historical privileging of white, Euro-American, cis/heterosexual men's work. Whereas this is changing throughout all academic disciplines, sadly, this is still often the case in humanist games studies. There are scholars like Diane Carr, Helen Kennedy, and others, but the key theorists to reference in textual/philosophical/interpretative games scholarship are those like Espen Aarseth, Jesper Juul, and Ian Bogost, all of whom do absolutely important work for game studies but do not alone reflect the perspectives of the diverse people who interact with and study games. This is not to say there are not women in formal games studies—quite the contrary, in fact. Yet, many of those women have published more work via social scientific approaches, and diversity in race, class, and

the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

other spheres of identity have been less present still. Even as such diverse scholars gain traction, the persistence of the white, male, cis/heterosexual, etc. canon persists in who is deemed to be "must have" citations.

Lastly, my method may raise concerns around innovation. As this is not an experimental method, nor an exploratory design method, structural analysis can only investigate existing cases and tropes and does not have the tools on its own to suggest alternatives, ways to "make things right," which is already a frustration for developers who are cognizant of such critique but less economically able to freely experiment with speculative design. For instance, Anita Sarkeesian's work with *Feminist Frequency*¹¹⁹ (which has featured primarily less formalized structural analysis) has gained substantial exposure and has thus inspired many game developers and fans to respond to the critiques leveled. However, when not simply abusive, these responses often convey puzzlement as to how to change their work in games to mitigate such critique and/or how to more deeply recognize what does not (as can be revealed through structural analysis) and does (less so revealed) constitute positive representation.¹²⁰

Yet, I would argue that different kinds of scholastic and research labor contribute crucially to gaining insight, producing knowledge, and effecting change, including social scientific, humanist, and design methods, and that one has strengths where the others have limitations. If my tone has ventured towards the apologetic, it is due to the uneasy recognition that I am an early career scholar in a relatively new, small, and yet visible field, as well as a woman of color who engages video games, a media form with a wider community that has shown itself unwelcoming of such people and outright hostile to those who would be activists for inclusivity in that media form.

¹¹⁹ Anita Sarkeesian, "Feminist Frequency: About," *Feminist Frequency: Conversations with Pop Culture*, 2012-2016, <http://feministfrequency.com/about/>.

¹²⁰ This characterization of these responses is one I make anecdotally, as instances of this discussion are somewhat ephemeral in the venues in which and speeds with which this conversation has occurred.

However, through describing in detail the strengths and limitations of this work, I advocate for its being taken seriously for what it does rather than what it does not, as well as call attention to the extent to which I have investigated my area and thus how I claim that my argument is worth making.

4 To Heal

Having defined my area, my questions, my theoretical and methodological underpinnings, and my method, I now finally turn to actually making my argument. As previously discussed, representation in games occurs across several layers of the game text, and it is through that full context that representations are readable and meaningful. Thus, I make my argument by turning my theoretical lenses towards case studies or primary texts that carry the caretaking mechanics that are the object of my study.

Perhaps the most widespread of these caretaking mechanics in video games is healing systems, wherein characters (player and non-player alike) use actions, skills, spells, items, or time to restore other characters' health (often in the form of depletable health or hit points) or status (removing an incapacitated or hindered state). Related to healing systems are support systems, through which characters use actions, skills, spells, or items to make an ally more powerful (referred to as a "buff") or an enemy weaker (a "debuff"). Support systems allow a character to indirectly contribute to a combat situation by offering strategic advantages or disadvantages.

Healing and support systems in games frequently draw on real world associations of healing and nurturing with motherhood and femininity. By doing so, games and cultures around games often load this kind of labor on female characters and players, as well as the design tropes that accompany healers and support roles: low health and defensive stamina, leading to the need for protection, and low potential for the offensive power that is prescribed as most crucial for succeeding in games' combat scenarios (à la the martial strategic sentiment that the best defense is

a good offense). These combined traits limit the work available to female characters and players, who are then tasked with the important (and usually difficult) job of keeping a combat group healthy enough to succeed but are unable to or must overcome other barriers to contribute directly to combative situations. Meanwhile, when men take up the work of healing, that work is reframed as the application of medical expertise in martial situations with an emphasis on physiology and emotional sterility.

In this section, I introduce examples of how healing systems, as a semiotic frame, is recreated in different game genres, and in specific games within those genres, and how the mechanisms of play in these patterns create tensions with narratives, audiovisual elements, and other gameplay mechanisms. I explore real world comparisons and theoretical critiques of this frame later in this chapter, where this frame can be put into dialogue with the frame to be introduced subsequently.

4.1 Genre: Narrative, Aesthetics, and Mechanics

My genres of interest are two of gaming's biggest: action games and role-playing games (RPGs). As these genres focus on combat, wherein the player's goal is to destroy enemies and keep her/his character(s) alive, healing systems have emerged as one of the feedback mechanisms and sites of strategic tension that make combat-centric genres possible and, arguably, much of what makes them enjoyable, even through failure.¹²¹ In games that use health point (also known as hit point) systems, whether through bars/gauges, numbers (fig. 6), or through other visual/aural feedback such as color desaturation (fig. 7), character animations (such as will be described below), or sounds such as heartbeats that increase in intensity, player characters lose health points when attacked by enemies. The enemy's potential to deal damage versus the player characters' potential to do the same often manifests as a process of managing time, either through shortening the time

¹²¹ Wouter van den Hoogen, Karolien Poels, Wijnand IJsselsteijn, Yvonne de Kort, "Between Challenge and Defeat: Repeated Player-Death and Game Enjoyment," *Media Psychology* 15, no. 4 (October 2012): 443–59, doi:10.1080/15213269.2012.723117.

spent in battle through eliminating enemies before they can destroy the player characters, or elongating that time by healing player characters or placing buffs and debuffs that mitigate damage dealt by enemies.

Both action games and role-playing games (and, indeed, action role-playing games) with health point systems feature that same time management tension; however, the aesthetics around that process have developed in different directions in these genres. In fact, I am staking out these genres through mechanics, as game genres are often defined, but with the recognition that these genres share common origins and underlying systems and that their differences also very much lie in their aesthetic presentation.¹²² Action games are partially characterized through their "twitchy" mechanics, which require quick reflexes to dexterously perform tasks (such as jumping, crouching, or shooting, via pressing the specifically mapped buttons on a controller with precise timing) in order to respond to situations presented by the game. Alternatively, role-playing games centralize strategic thought and planning rather than that "twitchiness," a focus inherited from the predecessor of many RPGs, *Dungeons & Dragons* (also known as *D&D*).¹²³ However, action role-playing games (e.g. *Kingdom Hearts* in figure 8) as I mentioned previously carries both, as does the flip of this, the role-playing action game (e.g. *Overwatch* in figure 9). These subgenres blur the boundaries between the genres and incorporate both, and yet each is associated more strongly with one genre than the other. Arguably that association relies on representational/aesthetic aspects that can broadly be traced through genres shared by media forms: The action genre shares tropes and aesthetics with action films (modern military or militarized combat with explosions and lone-

¹²² This is a point that assumes genre as understood and referenced more broadly by those who interact with games—the game industry, critics and journalists, and consumers—to be meaningful to the communities using them, and that the representational aspects of that understanding are thus not "superficial," as instead argued in this article (which presents now outdated arguments in game studies): Thomas H. Apperley, "Genre and Game Studies: Toward a Critical Approach to Video Game Genres," *Simulation & Gaming* 37, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 6–23, doi:10.1177/1046878105282278.

¹²³ Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, *Dungeons & Dragons* [role-playing pen and paper game], original edition (Lake Geneva, WI: Tactical Studies Rules, 1974).

wolf leading men), whereas role-playing games recall fantasy and science-fiction via the Tolkien-esque and the Asimov-esque, respectively.

4.1.2 Introducing Primary Texts

To illustrate these differences and move into my other arguments, I now consider my primary texts, divided and compared by genre as I have outlined; for action games, these will be *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*,¹²⁴ *Killer7*,¹²⁵ and the *Resident Evil* series, and for role-playing games, I will use *Persona 3*¹²⁶ and *4*,¹²⁷ *Fire Emblem: Awakening*,¹²⁸ and the *Final Fantasy* series. Many of these texts I will revisit in later chapters, so as to best show how these mechanics interface with one another within as well as across texts.

4.2 Healing in Action Games

Metal Gear Solid 3, *Killer7*, and the *Resident Evil* series all give the player direct control of a character at any given time, and usually that character is the or a hero of the narrative. *Killer7* differs in that it allows the player to switch between one of several characters, who manifest facets of the main character's split personae, the Smiths of the assassin group *killer7*; yet, the character of interest here, Garcian Smith (fig. 10), is the dominant of these personae. Garcian uniquely wields a power that allows him to revive the other Smiths after they have been killed in battle. This revival serves as the main site of healing in the game, with the addition of items dropped by enemies that return small amounts of health. In gameplay, character revival sees the player switching to Garcian,

¹²⁴ Konami Computer Entertainment Japan, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, Sony PlayStation 2 (Konami Corporation, 2004).

¹²⁵ Grasshopper Manufacture, *Killer7*, Sony PlayStation 2, Nintendo Gamecube (Capcom, 2005).

¹²⁶ Atlus, *Persona 3 Portable*, Sony PlayStation Portable, original Sony PlayStation 2 release: 2006 (Atlus, 2010).

¹²⁷ Atlus, *Persona 4*, Sony PlayStation 2 (Atlus, 2008).

¹²⁸ Intelligent Systems, *Fire Emblem: Awakening*, Nintendo 3DS (Nintendo, 2013).

which is done in a checkpoint¹²⁹ room, and then moving him to the spot where the previous character died. There, Garcian kneels, picks up the character's head (in a brown paper bag marked with a red "x"), and places it in his long suitcase. The player moves Garcian back to the checkpoint room, wherein they trigger a sequence seen through the character select screen (which resembles an old television set), in which they must "press the A Button rapidly to infuse with life" by expending serum (purchased from items that enemies drop upon defeat) to raise the fallen character's "vitality" gauge (fig. 11). When performed successfully, the fallen character becomes selectable again. Notably, if Garcian dies along the way or at any other point, the game ends and the player must reload from a saved game.

In *Metal Gear Solid 3*, the player controls Snake, the series's mainstay main character (although he appears as slightly different versions/reincarnations in each game, this one being "Naked Snake"). Set in the Cold War era, Snake is an American agent deployed to infiltrate the Soviet Union to avert nuclear war. His top secret mission has him moving through jungles and other terrain with no support in the field except by radio. In order to heal himself when he is injured through combat or environmental hazards, Snake is trained in resourceful medical procedures. To simulate this, the player accesses the "Cure" menu, in which the player chooses expendable tools and supplies for Snake to medicinally and surgically mend his wounds so that he can recover his health after taking damage (fig. 12). The player gains access to this process early in the game, as well as the ability to hunt and eat food to restore Snake's health and maintain his stamina, which affects his durability against damage as well as his aim stability, lung capacity underwater, and other physical effects.

In the *Resident Evil* series, the player assumes control of a character in an official position of power (usually a soldier or police officer) who is responding to the threat of mutations caused by

¹²⁹ Checkpoints are preset places where the player can save their game, perform tasks such as strengthening their character(s), and restart if their character loses a life. Many games use these, ranging from just a point in space that is not indicated to the player to a fully separate, safe/noncombative space, such as in *Killer7*.

mysterious viruses that transform humans and other animals into zombie-like creatures. The series is known for limiting resources available to the player, from ammo to health items. The latter serve as the only means of recovering health and come in the form of herbs, first-aid sprays, tablets, and (occasionally) food (fig. 13). Herbs can be mixed to increase their potency, raise maximum health points, and to create tablets, a process done in the field, like finding and consuming these objects. In the series's later entries, *Resident Evil 5* and *6*, the player character is paired with a partner (either computer- or second player-controlled) who adds another healing mechanic: when a character is on the brink of death, his or her health gauge begins flashing red and the character begins limping (fig. 14). During this time, the remainder of his or her health drains until either he or she dies or the partner comes close enough to administer a health item; first aid sprays heal both characters, and if no health items are in the partner's inventory, he or she instead administers presumably an adrenaline shot that lifts the "dying status" but does not restore health.

4.3 Healing in Role-Playing Games

Although healing in role-playing games also includes the use of specific items, these game have the player rely far less on items by introducing more efficient heals via magic.¹³⁰ In all of my primary RPG texts, the main character is the player's avatar outside of battle, but combat is performed in a party, usually of three but occasionally more or less. Healing items are made available as soon as combat begins, but healing magic usually comes later via an addition, depending on the way in which skills become usable. For some, particularly the *Final Fantasy* series and *Fire Emblem*, characters can take on classes or jobs that allow them to change their ability sets and combat

¹³⁰ It must be noted that my case studies are all Japanese role-playing games, which is less a demarcation of their origins (although that is true in these cases as well) and more a subgenre unto itself. So-called "Western RPGs" are often quite different from the pattern I outline below.

statistics (henceforth "stats"),¹³¹ as well as other traits (such as riding horses or winged mounts in *Fire Emblem*). These classes/jobs can be changed by the player mostly at will, ranging from using a limited item to do so, not permanently but as a significant decision (*Fire Emblem: Awakening*; fig. 15), to switching between them at nearly any point during combat (*Final Fantasy X-2*; fig. 16); notably, in *Fire Emblem: Awakening*, some classes can only be accessed by those of a certain gender. For other RPGs, the player has many of the same classes/jobs available to her or him, but they are tied to particular characters who either cannot or cannot for the majority of a game's playthrough take on the abilities or attributes of a different class/job.

Amongst these classes/jobs are healing classes that have access to healing (also known as white) magic. There are usually two types of healing magic wielders. The white mage (fig. 17; also often known as cleric or priest) features stats that promote excellence in healing but little else, including low health and defense and low capacity for physical or magic damage. The paladin (fig. 18), war monk/cleric, or the like¹³² is better able to weather and deal physical damage (though not as well as physically focused, warrior-type classes) and can provide adequate healing, although not as effectively as white mages. However, in games like *Persona 3* and *4*, character classes are not as distinguishable. The main character can swap his or her active Persona, a being that manifests the powers of one's soul (fig. 19), whereas the other characters only have one Persona. Thus, the player's available characters are locked to a preset ability and stats progression, with the exception of the main character, who has access to many Personas and their individual ability and stats sets.

¹³¹ Combat statistics are a deeply established system in games that still look very much like the "ability scores" in *Dungeons & Dragons*. These statistics, tied to categories like strength, dexterity, intelligence, wisdom, constitution, etc., to use the *D&D* terms, influence what kinds of skills characters can wield effectively, such as swords via strength and damage-dealing magic via intelligence. However, unlike in *D&D*, these statistics do not have an effect on a character's personality, appearance, and cognitive abilities and can often shift significantly in various circumstances.

¹³² Some action games, particularly multiplayer ones like *Team Fortress 2* or the *Battlefield* series, have a similar character type in the form of the "medic," a term which draws on martial medical practice.

Several of the other characters gain access to healing magic, although their efficacy in wielding it depends on their stats.

4.3.1 To Support

Support systems work very similarly in both action games and RPGs. In action games, where present, support usually comes from the player character's tools, which allow the player to do more damage and/or take less damage.¹³³ In RPGs, there are likewise skills and classes/jobs dedicated to support, and although support skills are preventative rather than reactionary like healing, they often appear together in the same skill set or have similar stats. Examples include the Saboteur and Synergist of *Final Fantasy XIII* (to be discussed further in the next section) and Marakukaja and Marakunda in *Persona 3* and *4*, which temporarily raises the party's defense stat and lowers all enemies', respectively.

4.4 Discussion: Healing in Action and Role-Playing Games

So far, I have described the systems underlying healing in these games, abstracted from the representational aspects of their characters and narratives and thus little resembling warm interaction. Real world connotations of the term "healing," particularly from psychotherapeutic perspectives, connects individuals with each other and with "the collective organism of society itself,"¹³⁴ underlining the "dialectic at the heart of healing" between the "care giver" and patients that becomes a "rare opportunity for moral education."¹³⁵ That relationship rests upon empathy, as I

¹³³ Multiplayer action games have a more defined support system, though, again, it works similarly to medics and is often included in the medic's skill set.

¹³⁴ Norman Cousins, "Foreword," in *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy*, by Jerome D. Frank and Julia B. Frank (JHU Press, 1993), xi.

¹³⁵ Arthur Kleinman, "Preface," in *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, And The Human Condition*, Reprint edition (New York: Basic Books, 1989), xiv.

defined in my introduction, indeed such that one would claim that care givers, medical or otherwise, "without the empathic response fail to promote healing."¹³⁶

These game systems that borrow the term "healing" often do so along with the connotations it brings, as well as other associations, such as that of gendered caretaking. However, how much a game will embrace that term and its implications lies along generic differences, those discussed previously. Action games and RPGs take different approaches to healing that reflect their general aesthetic presentations, the former presenting healing that is medicalized, militarized, and masculinized, and the latter healing that is mystical, emotional, and feminized.

4.4.1 Action Games

Killer7's stylized look and feel allows it flourishes that leave little to subtlety. Garcian, who describes himself as "a cleaner," is an assassin who does not show remorse in the taking of life (often uttering "son of a bitch" as he defeats enemies) and likewise does not pay much regard in the restoration of it. During the character revival sequence, Garcian can be heard saying, "To me, it's merely cold, rotting flesh," while the game urges the player to "Give it life!" Sound effects bleat like arcade machines, signaling progress and success in the revival. Even characters' deaths are given this hyperstylized, over-the-top feel: the character's silhouette is overlaid with graphics before an explosion; his or her floating head flashes on screen with a ghastly expression, which is in turn covered by a white screen with the Japanese character for "dead" in bright red, splattered writing (fig. 20). The emotional complexity of death is obliterated along with the character's body even before Garcian comes through to clean up what is left. The tone does little to consider death and "healing" as anything but a means for continuing gameplay after failure and to consider Garcian as much more than a cool, collected, efficient, and dangerous aesthetic of masculine power.

¹³⁶ Charles R. Figley, "The Empathic Response in Clinical Practice: Antecedents and Consequences," in *Empathy: From Bench to Bedside*, ed. Jean Decety, Social Neuroscience Series (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 263.

Metal Gear Solid 3 overall carries much more nuance than *Killer7*, even offering points within the game for reflecting on the player's and avatar's combined actions.¹³⁷ Its healing system recognizes Snake as a human body that breaks down in specific ways when injured. To introduce this system near the end of the tutorial mission, Snake is thrown from a bridge during a cutscene. His wounds are so numerous that he is barely able to move and retains little health. Thus far, much of the information provided both to Snake (narrative exposition) and to the player (gameplay instructions) has been relayed by radio transmissions from Snake's commanding officer, codenamed "Major Zero," and the support officer "Para-medical" (fig. 21), who can be contacted throughout the game to save the player's game progress (and exchange flirtatious banter with Snake about watching movies). During the tutorial, Snake lies collapsed under the bridge when Para-medical calls to guide him (and the player) through the "Cure" process. Para-medical's first words during this scene are softly spoken ones of care and encouragement: "OK, Snake. Just relax and it'll all be over before you know it... Stay with me! I've seen people in worse shape before. Think you can handle it?" The ubiquity and severity of the wounds are apparent in the on-screen text during the Cure process and after through a cutscene showing Snake suffering as he tends to his wounds. Thus, the game does allow a space for empathy not seen in *Killer7*, as well as vulnerability for its male protagonist. Yet, in the on-screen interactions, it is a woman who shows care towards a male protagonist so as to help him tend to himself, a soldier on a solitary mission.

¹³⁷ One particularly notable scene for this is when facing the boss enemy The Sorrow, who is a ghost. The Sorrow appears before Snake in various parts of the game, but only if the player takes the invitation to press a button during cutscenes and view them through Snake's eyes. In his boss "battle," The Sorrow floats before Snake as the latter walks down a river. The Sorrow cannot damage Snake, and Snake cannot damage The Sorrow, but all the enemies Snake has killed, both bosses (who must be killed) and otherwise (who the player can choose to kill, tranquilize, or sneak past), now spirits, walk past and through Snake menacingly. At the end, Snake collapses as his health bar suddenly drains fully. The game notes that it is over, as it does with Snake's death at any other time, but the player still has (hidden) access to Snake's inventory and the military-issued fake death revival pill within it, which is the key to progressing beyond this point.

The *Resident Evil* series does feature a few female protagonists, but the use of items for healing mirrors *Metal Gear Solid 3*'s without the benefit of making sense within the given situations. Herbs are found in boxes or dropped by enemies (who cannot or do not use medicines themselves), and there are no sequences that show the player characters being trained on their usage. The items simply appear and simply make better any character who uses them, which is usually the main player character him- or herself. The exceptions to this are escorted characters (who will be discussed in the next chapter) or second protagonists playable by a cooperative second player, who also benefit from healing items found by either player.

However, as noted by Sabine Harrer and Martin Pichlmair, even when the two protagonists Chris and Sheva are equally present in *Resident Evil 5*, Chris is marked as the primary of the two through as the default single-player character who is also the focus of the narrative and visual framing, the latter as shown in figure 22. Even when playing with two human players, only Chris, as the first player character, has access to the purchasing and trading items through the inventory, a large part of the resource management system that is crucial to the game's genre.¹³⁸ Although Chris and Sheva can equally rescue each other from "dying" status— a mechanic new to the *Resident Evil* series along with the co-operative play or computer-controlled partner dynamics— and use healing items on themselves and each other, Chris controls what Sheva can access and what role she plays in battle, from that of an arsenal to a healer. That dynamic between Chris, a white, American man who has appeared earlier in the series, and Sheva, a black (but relatively light-skinned) African woman who only appears in *Resident Evil 5*, suggests both gendered and racial dimensions to the game's hierarchy, one that is maintained through narrative and gameplay alike.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Sabine Harrer and Martin Pichlmair, "Black Skin White Guns: Becoming Colonizer in Resident Evil 5" (The Philosophy of Computer Games Conference, Berlin, 2015), https://pure.itu.dk/ws/files/80594879/HarrerPichlmair_PCG15.pdf, 7.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, 14.

4.4.2 Role-Playing Games

It seems appropriate that one of the ways in which these masculinized games have given any space for female characters is through the care represented by healing.¹⁴⁰ RPGs are less associated with a mainly masculine player community and tend to feature far more female characters, often with central roles in the narrative and more complex, diverse personalities and emotional lives. However, in most of the RPGs in my primary texts, the characters who can first or most famously access healing and/or support magic are women or girls. In *Fire Emblem: Awakening*, there is Lissa (fig. 23), the princess and Cleric; in *Persona 3*, Yukari, and the support-only characters Fuuka (*Persona 3*) and Rise (*Persona 4*; fig. 24); and across the *Final Fantasy* series, there are the White Wizard (*FFI*); Rosa, child Rydia, and Porom (*FFIV*); Aeris (*FFVII*); Garnet and Eiko (*FFIX*); Yuna (*FFX*; fig. 25);¹⁴¹ Penelo (*FFXII*);¹⁴² and Ovelia and Alma (*Tactics*). Even when classes/jobs are not tied to a particular character, fan speculation and casting as well as official promotional materials tend to specify healers as women and vice versa, such as the White Mage in *Final Fantasy I*¹⁴³, Lenna in *Final Fantasy V*,¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ I would note here that one of the seven Smith assassins of *Killer7* is a woman. She does not figure into the game's healing system, but she occupies another space for women in such games, that of the sexualized character whose personality is mostly based on being a woman. Indeed, the official *Killer7* website characterizes her as "the only girl in the killer entourage" who "on a personal level [is] very passive and tends to keep her distance from others," but in battle "knows how to use them legs." "Killer7," Promotional website, *Capcom*, (2005), http://www.capcom.com/killer7/main/menu_e.html. For the full text, see: "KAEDE Smith," *Wikia, Suda51 Wiki*, (May 4, 2016), http://suda51.wikia.com/wiki/KAEDE_Smith.

¹⁴¹ Yuna can also be a White Mage in *Final Fantasy X-2*, but that game uses a job system with an all-female party and thus sees the women take on all available jobs, not just healing and other magic-based ones.

¹⁴² Although in *Final Fantasy XII*, Penelo, like the other characters, has some flexibility in class/job progression, she is set as a White Magic user in the sequel, *Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings*. A debate on the use of her as a White Mage in the *International Zodiac Job System*, a special version of *Final Fantasy XII* that has clearer class/job distinctions, can be found here: "Most Canonical Class Choices? - Final Fantasy XII International Zodiac Job System Message Board for PlayStation 2 - GameFAQs," Original Post and Comments, *GameFAQs*, (2014), <http://www.gamefaqs.com/boards/939426-final-fantasy-xii-international-zodiac-job-system/68699054>.

¹⁴³ The *Final Fantasy* wikia notes that "the gender of the White Mage class is never specified," but that "fans have typically asserted over the years that the character depicted is female." "White Mage (Final Fantasy)," *Final Fantasy Wiki*, accessed May 30, 2016, [http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/White_Mage_\(Final_Fantasy\)](http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/White_Mage_(Final_Fantasy)).

¹⁴⁴ For examples of fan casting of Lenna as a White Mage, see the following guides and suggestions, which usually claim to draw on a character's stats for assigning strategies, including classes/jobs: ginja_ninja, "Playing FFV for the First Time. Any Tips before I Delve into This Classic?," Comment, *Reddit: r/FinalFantasy*, (2014), https://www.reddit.com/r/FinalFantasy/comments/1lef2v/playing_ffv_for_the_first_time_any_tips_before_i/;

and characters who stand in for player-created characters in the *Final Fantasy* massively multiplayer online (MMO) games, *Final Fantasy XI* and *XIV*, as seen in promotional material for the latter (fig. 26).

The women listed above share not only many abilities and stats distributions but also personality traits. They are usually gentle, soft spoken, and kind, though often strong in will, especially when it comes to the safety, wellbeing, and the growth of moral character of those around them, which are arguably motherly characteristics, although few are or become mothers. Instead, many of them are (or can be, to which I will return later) young romantic leads and present a stereotypical construction of femininity, with soft, pale features and pastel coloring in their clothes, and/or they are spunky but ultimately deeply dependent on the men in their lives, like *Persona 4*'s Rise, *Fire Emblem: Awakening*'s Lissa, or *Final Fantasy IX*'s Eiko. In addition, magic in the fantasy settings of these women usually draws upon natural energies, which are channeled through the user into the spells they weave, true of both healing/support and damage-dealing magic. Some of these women are also capable of summoning great beasts that manifest spirits or these same natural energies, and through this magic or these beasts, they are able to wield great power both in combat and narratives. Yet, the relegation of women to magical classes (again, often through the "base" stats with which they first appear in the game) also threatens to associate them with a close, innate connection to nature, a criticism explored by feminist critics broadly that is particularly a point of contention within and around the ecofeminist movement.

KholdStare88, "Final Fantasy V Advance Jobs Strategy Guide for Game Boy Advance (Version 2.1)," Fan-made game guides and forums, *GameFAQs*, (March 26, 2016), <https://www.gamefaqs.com/gba/930369-final-fantasy-v-advance/faqs/49839>; Sanji-kun, "[Final Fantasy V] Comprehensive Job Strategy Guide (All Versions Compatible)," Original Post, *Square Forums*, (September 3, 2007), [http://ffx2.com/forum/showthread.php?89784-Final-Fantasy-V-Comprehensive-Job-Strategy-Guide-\(All-versions-compatible\)](http://ffx2.com/forum/showthread.php?89784-Final-Fantasy-V-Comprehensive-Job-Strategy-Guide-(All-versions-compatible)).. This one notes, however, that "inherent character stats are only small advantages that need not influence how a player distributes jobs between characters": "Lenna - Final Fantasy V Characters," Wiki, *Caves of Narshe*, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.cavesofnarshe.com/ff5/characters.php?character=Lenna>.

The archetypes seen in these women and in the men discussed via the action game texts derive from essentialist ideas of gender and the roles that are prescribed by those ideas of gender. I do not claim this abstractly; the real world occurrences of these gender roles and stereotypes have been studied by a number of social scientists, including the aforementioned Sandra Bem. Bem developed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) to study public perceptions of how personality traits are gendered and to posit the understanding of gender as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy.¹⁴⁵ What resulted is a list of such personality traits that participants sorted by the gender with which they associated each trait as well as how the participants valued these traits in terms of “social desirability” and viewed themselves in relation to these traits. Bem’s work was seminal, prompting other scholars to build upon that work since. James Mahalik, et al. considered the extents to which study participants thought they personally conformed to such gender roles (or norms) while also updating the list of traits for the contemporary, local dominant culture: white, middle- to upper-class, heterosexual, cisgendered Americans.¹⁴⁶ For women, the main personality traits tested, as chosen systematically through a literature review and two rounds of focus groups, were “Relational, Sweet and Nice, Thinness, Put Others First, Look Young, Sexy, Modesty, Domestic, Caring for Children, Romantic Relationships, Sexual Fidelity, and Invest in Appearance.”¹⁴⁷ For men, these traits, chosen through a similar process, were “Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence,

¹⁴⁵ Sandra L. Bem, “The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42, no. 2 (1974): 155–62.

¹⁴⁶ James R. Mahalik, Benjamin D. Locke, Larry H. Ludlow, Matthew A. Diemer, Ryan P.J. Scott, Michael Gottfried, Gary Freitas, “Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory,” *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 4, no. 1 (2003): 3–25, doi:10.1037/1524-9220.4.1.3; James R. Mahalik, Elisabeth B. Morray, Aimée Coonerty-Femiano, Larry H. Ludlow, Suzanne M. Slattery, Andrew Smiler, “Development of the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory,” *Sex Roles* 52, no. 7–8 (April 2005): 417–35, doi:10.1007/s11199-005-3709-7.

¹⁴⁷ Mahalik, et al., “Development of the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory,” 419.

Dominance, Playboy, Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, Power Over Women, Disdain for Homosexuals, Physical Toughness, and Pursuit of Status.”¹⁴⁸

Although not all of these occur in the representations seen in my primary game texts, many of them do and do so consistently, from the youthful, attractive, self-sacrificial, nurturing women of the *Final Fantasy* series to the cold, violent solitude of Garcian and Snake. These characters’ conformity to these norms, or their “adhering to societal rules and standards about how to be feminine [or masculine, which] is demonstrated in the individual woman’s [or man’s] behaviors, feelings, and thoughts,”¹⁴⁹ recreate dominant real world gender roles in these fictional worlds unnecessarily. Such representations often appear without any satirical or meditative comments that might allow these games’ representations to challenge the triad of prejudice described by Schiappa. Instead, all three dimensions (biological essentialism, androcentrism, and gender polarization) are reinforced.

5 To Protect

As I have argued, much of healing in games lies within the domain of female/feminine characters, and so to further examine how masculine norms emerge in caretaking mechanics, I turn to the masculinized form of caretaking: protection. Protection systems allow players to preventively manage the damage that would otherwise need to be healed through the mechanics previously discussed.

Like in healing and support systems, protection systems in games, although generally more masculinized than healing, present within that frame a masculinized mode and a feminized mode. The latter is, actually, the aforementioned support systems— the spells and actions that mitigate damage taken from and boost damage given to enemies. These are often used by female or and/or

¹⁴⁸ Mahalik et al., “Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory,” 6.

¹⁴⁹ Mahalik, et al., “Development of the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory,” 418.

young characters, allowing such physically weaker (by design) characters to participate in battle by magically or otherwise indirectly shielding and strengthening physically stronger characters. In the masculinized protection systems, characters, most often male, act benevolently through, oddly, violence, using physical power to protect those considered weaker, namely the women and children who might be supporting or healing them (if these others are able to fight at all). The protected character is often thusly weakened, like the aforementioned healer and support characters, through limited available actions and low health and defensive stamina. Protecting characters are the ones tasked with drawing and maintaining enemy aggression and/or the swift enough destruction of enemies to keep those weaker characters from being harmed by enemy attacks.

Escort missions are a subset of protection mechanics in which the player's main task is the safe passage of a non-player character in the player character's charge through certain sequences of challenges, like waves of enemies or crossing treacherous terrain. Many of these escorted characters can only contribute to the game state through their death or abduction, placing all the productive agency, i.e. valuable work, on the player character. Notably, these escort missions are most likely to appear in action games, such as the ones discussed in the previous section, that cast players as physically powerful male characters and physically weak female characters as the escorted ones.

In this chapter, I describe specific instances of escort missions and other protection mechanics, especially what is known as the tank-damage dealer-healer triad, and place them in dialogue with healing systems to consider the gendered differences between these systems, both in terms of game mechanics and what the player is expected to do and in terms of game narratives and what the characters are doing within their world. Then I examine these differences in relation to the real world themes mentioned previously, including natural, ethereal, emotional femininity versus concrete, scientific, empirical masculinity; motherhood and nurture versus protectiveness and

breadwinning; and the unequal valuation of different kinds of labor that arises from these dichotomous and essentialist figurings of gender. In order to better understand how healing and protection systems interact with each other, the case studies in this section are primarily drawn from the same series discussed in the previous section, specifically *Resident Evil 4*,¹⁵⁰ *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*,¹⁵¹ and *Metal Gear Solid 3* for action games, in which escort missions will be the main form of protection considered, and the *Final Fantasy* series, particularly *Final Fantasy XIII*,¹⁵² for RPGs. I also return to the game I discussed to introduce this thesis, *lco*.

5.1 Protection in Action Games

In all three action games discussed here, the male player character, employed as an agent of the United States military, leads a female character through dangerous areas towards safety. The player character is responsible for healing the escorted character (via the items previously mentioned), navigating, and taking care of enemy threats. In *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Resident Evil 4*, the escorted characters, who are both young relatives of important men in their respective games, are never shown as capable of fighting, and both have health gauges (and oxygen gauges, when underwater) much smaller than the player character's (fig. 27). Although the escorted woman in *Metal Gear Solid 3*, EVA, is a capable fighter who has helped Snake numerous times throughout the game, during the escort mission, she has been wounded and needs healing through the player-controlled Cure menu (fig. 28), help traversing obstacles, a slower pace, and extra food, as her stamina drains very quickly due to her wound (and despite Snake's healing efforts). Emma Emmerich, the escorted character of *Metal Gear Solid 2*, also requires strong management and literal hand-holding (fig. 29) from the player character, Raiden, for a number of reasons: she has

¹⁵⁰ Capcom Production, *Resident Evil 4*, Nintendo Gamecube (Capcom, 2005).

¹⁵¹ Konami Computer Entertainment Japan, *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, Sony PlayStation 2 (Konami Corporation, 2001).

¹⁵² Square Enix 1st Production Department, *Final Fantasy XIII*, Sony PlayStation 3, Microsoft Xbox 360 (Square Enix, 2010).

been drugged, numbing her legs; she suffers severe aquaphobia due to childhood trauma and thus struggles to cope with the water the two characters must swim through in order to escape; and she is also wary of heights and insects, as found when the two encounter both. Ashley, the escorted character in *Resident Evil 4*, does respond to the player character, Leon, so as to make the player's work in protecting her easier, including taking commands ("wait," "follow," and "hide," the latter of which sees her hiding in a lidded container until Leon fetches her), walking behind him when his weapon is drawn, and ducking to avoid Leon's gunfire (fig. 30). Yet, when she is left on her own, she does nothing to defend herself and instead begins to scream, "Leon! Help me, Leon!" until rescued or taken.

Ico is not an action game, instead combining elements from adventure, puzzle, and platforming games, thus limiting combat and lending a closer focus on story, problem solving, and the game's environment. Despite this, *Ico* is almost entirely an escort mission resembling those of action games, involving a more capable, masculine character engaging in combat and manipulating the environment to defend and rescue a less capable, feminine character. As I explored in the introduction, the relationship between the two characters as presented in the mechanics is more personal and intimate than that between, for example, *Resident Evil 4*'s Leon and Ashley; whereas Leon can verbally instruct Ashley by barking commands with the quick efficiency and authority that befits a government agent, *Ico* softly calls Yorda to him and holds her hand in order to lead her. These commands are shown through quiet, slow, almost pensive animations but are still very much commands, with the unequal power dynamic implied by the word. However, unlike with Leon's martial skill and vast arsenal, fighting enemies with *Ico* feels like a struggle, like the player is always on the brink of losing Yorda when she goes out of view when *Ico* is chasing after an enemy, or when the stick he wields seems impossibly weak against the shadowy creatures (fig. 31). Yet, as vulnerable as *Ico*'s protagonist feels in relation to the Solid Snakes, Leon Kennedys, and Garcian

Smiths of action games, Ico is still much less vulnerable than Yorda, who is utterly dependent on Ico's commands and his combative efforts. Although her ethereal light can actually destroy the shadowy creatures, the animations of her surprise when this occurs, which only occurs during cutscenes, suggest she does not control that power, and thus she has no tools of her own to wield in self defense.¹⁵³

Narratively, all four women are keys to the men's mission objectives (and the boy's attempt to escape): Raiden needs Emma, the only person capable of installing a complex computer virus in order to thwart nuclear disaster; Snake needs EVA to help him pilot a two-person vehicle paramount to completing his mission; Leon's entire mission is to extricate Ashley alive; Yorda's latent power to open otherwise magically sealed doorways makes possible Ico's escape. The men all have a vested interest in the women's safe passage that is entirely outside of, beyond the control of, or otherwise much more important than the women themselves. Yet, in addition, all three women in the action games convey a romantic interest in the men guiding them, who range from disinterested, flirtatious, and (at least eventually) fully interested sexually and romantically. Meanwhile, Yorda and Ico's "boy meets girl" tenderness towards each other has served as a keystone in the game's emotional reception, as analyzed in this work's introduction. The player's need to save these women mechanically is thus narratively supported, with the additional motivation of the player character enjoying (to varying extents) the romantic and/or sexual attention of the beautiful woman in his charge.

5.2 Protection in Role-Playing Games

In RPGs, which tend to have parties (i.e. groups of characters) rather than single characters under a player's control, protection mechanics serve to keep the party alive as the enemy is

¹⁵³ The ending cutscene shows her with a different power, one strong enough to allow her to carry Ico for some distance, but this does not affect the gameplay.

dismantled, which requires capable healers and damage dealers. These damage dealers also often specialize in stats much like healers do, forgoing fortitude for the ability to cast strong offensive magic. Thus, in order to balance these specializations, there needs to be at least one character able to weather powerful attacks, lest the party should "wipe," in which case the whole party is killed or otherwise incapacitated. Such well fortified characters, known as tanks, are usually physically powerful and sometimes can deliver a fair amount of physical damage, but in more clearly defined job/class systems, protective characters tend to specialize in defensive stats, leaving physical damage stats such as strength to physical damage dealers.

For a representative example, *Final Fantasy XIII* implements a battle system in which each party member uses one class, or role, at any given time. These roles work much like classes/jobs from other *Final Fantasy* games by limiting the abilities available to their users and changing the users' stats; here they are the physical damage dealer Commando, the magical damage dealer Ravager, the defensive Sentinel, the healer Medic, the buff support Synergist, and the debuff support Saboteur. Of particular interest here are the Sentinel and the support roles, the Synergist and Saboteur. The Sentinel draws enemy attention by Provoking (less reliable but usable on groups of enemies) or Challenging (more reliable but with a single target) and then weathers those enemies' attacks with high health points, high defense, counterattack capabilities, and abilities that strengthen all of those (fig. 32). The Synergist (fig. 33) can temporarily boost party members' strength, magic, defense, magic defense, action speeds, and the like, whereas the Saboteur does the opposite to enemies (fig. 34).

Although the game's mechanics are fairly automated in the early stages of the game, the player eventually gains access the ability to customize the party's paradigms. Paradigms are sets of roles that the player can switch between in battle, but these paradigms must be set outside of battle in accordance to the roles available to the characters in the party (fig. 35). Thus, the player

can switch from an offensive paradigm with a Commander and two Ravagers to a defensive one in which, after taking a powerful blow from an enemy, a Sentinel guards a Medic who heals and a Synergist who mitigates further damage by minimizing the party's defensive weaknesses; then the player might switch to a more balanced party, with perhaps a Sentinel guarding a Ravager, who is supported by a Saboteur whose actions allow the Ravager's attacks to hit a weakened enemy harder. This role-driven party system clearly defines how each role works, including how it needs the others and the party's strengths and weaknesses as a whole when using certain roles.

Again, these roles and their interactions are not unlike those seen in earlier *Final Fantasy* titles. Also like previous titles is the allocation of these roles to the game's characters. Each *Final Fantasy XIII* character is introduced with a predetermined set of roles they can use, which can only be expanded after the main story is completed. Characters have different aptitudes for each role that are determined by their base stats as well as the abilities they learn as they progress through that role; that is, not every character is able to learn all of or even all of the most useful abilities a role can offer, and some characters can thus never be as well suited to a role as others. These fall along familiar lines: the three starting Medics are two women and a young boy; the Synergists are the young boy and a middle-aged man, with two women as the Saboteurs; the Sentinel is a burly young man and, in a twist, a woman, who I will discuss below.

As with the protective roles, there are narrative justifications for each character's available roles and aptitudes, mostly through characterization that both adheres to and subverts the gendered expectations seen in healing systems. Lightning, the main character, is a trained soldier and well rounded fighter, and thus she is amongst the best Commandos and Ravagers but is also a solid Medic, an aesthetic assumption akin to *Metal Gear Solid 3*'s Snake's ability to administer medical care. Snow, the man who is the best Sentinel in the game and is also a strong Commando and Ravager, is stubborn and reckless, preferring to attack with his fists in order to protect those around

him, including his group of friends, his fiancée, civilians caught in battles, and those also in the player's character party. Hope, the young boy, harbors immense rage towards the situations he encounters early in the game, such as the loss of his mother, but his young age prevents him from wielding physical strength, resulting in low health but immense magical capabilities as a Ravager and Medic. Yet, once he recognizes his reliance on the others in his party, he also serves as a strong Synergist. Sazh is a middle-aged father who wishes to prevent others from suffering the same uncertain fate of his son; Sazh is best as support as a Synergist, though with solid damage dealing potential. Vanille is an outwardly cheery young woman who suffers from deep feelings of fear and guilt and is one of the two characters who hail from another world than most of the party; like Hope, she has low physical capabilities and high magical ones, though hers are not as high as his. She also has some unique damage-dealing abilities and is the Saboteur to Hope's potent Synergist. Interestingly, the last woman, Fang, is the best physical damage dealer in the game, serving as the strongest Commando and with high enough health and defense to serve as the second best Sentinel. She comes from the same world as Vanille and shows a stubbornness and recklessness that rivals Snow's.

5.2.1 Gendered Subversions in *Final Fantasy XIII*¹⁵⁴

Snow and Vanille (as well as Snow's non-playable fiancée, Serah) perhaps most represent stereotypical gendering, in which men are physically powerful (or at least capable of being so), "hardworking and stoic," whereas women have "delicacy and gracefulness, strength of spirit" but

¹⁵⁴ In this section, I shift from referring to Bem's and Mahalik, et al.'s (conformity to) gender role inventories to studies pertaining to gender that are culturally situated in Japan. This is an albeit incomplete acknowledgement that my case studies are all Japanese-made games and that, whereas the American gender role inventories are helpful for framing my analysis, contemporary Japan's relationship to gender and gender politics is different than America's. Attempting to understand the former through the lenses of the latter is bound to miss important aspects that are given some space here but, unfortunately, are not given full due in this thesis overall.

also "modesty and reticence" to lead or assert themselves.¹⁵⁵ Many of the other characters do not fully fit, however, from Lightning's stoic soldier persona to Hope's fragility, Sazh's sensitivity, and Fang's brash, headstrong, dominant brawn.

Yet, as Yuneun Ysela Mandujano-Salazar considers of Japanese soccer in recent years, even subversion of gendered expectations can serve to legitimize those expectations in other ways. As mentioned, Hope is visibly youthful and emotionally immature; Sazh is older than the typical Japanese RPG hero and, notably, black. Lightning follows the personality mold of earlier *Final Fantasy* heroes, particular fan favorites Cloud and Squall from *Final Fantasy VII* and *VIII*, respectively, but with the addition of an abandoned femininity. Lastly, it is often speculated by fans that Fang and Vanille are a couple,¹⁵⁶ and although positive representation of queer relationships and characters, which are rare in Japanese RPGs, is of potential benefit to LGBTQ+ media fans and consumers, it has never been confirmed as "canon," or part of the official storyworld, for the characters, which could also be an ambivalence precedent in Japanese media production.¹⁵⁷ More troublingly, Fang's taking on of traditionally male characteristics (indeed, she was first conceived of as male)¹⁵⁸ and Vanille's taking on of traditionally female characteristics reinforce heteronormative constructions of relationships, despite being a queer one, and in Fang's case, conflate nonnormative gender presentation with nonnormative sexual orientation.

¹⁵⁵ Yuneun Ysela Mandujano-Salazar, "Gender Stereotyping for the Re-Naturalization of Discourses on Male and Female Traditional Ideals in Japanese Media: The Case of Samurai Blue and Nadeshiko Japan.," *Scientific Journal of Humanistic Studies* 8, no. 14 (2016), 6.

¹⁵⁶ Jaydra Dawn, "Final Fantasy XIII Is Still Queer as Hell: Jaydra Discusses 'Lightning Returns,'" *Resonance Frequency*, March 31, 2014, <http://resonancefrequency.net/2014/03/31/lightningreturns03/>; About the Author: Doop, "Top 10 LGBT Video Game Characters: #9 – Oerba Yun Fang and Oerba Dia Vanille," *Gay-Nerds.com*, May 20, 2011, <http://gay-nerds.com/site/videogames/top-10-lgbt-video-game-characters-9-oerba-yun-fang-and-oerba-dia-vanille/>.

¹⁵⁷ Lucy Glasspool, "From Boys Next Door to Boys' Love: Gender Performance in Japanese Male Idol Media," in *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, ed. Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doi/10.1057/9781137283788_120-123.

¹⁵⁸ John Tanaka, "Final Fantasy XIII Update," *IGN*, October 21, 2009, <http://www.ign.com/articles/2009/10/21/final-fantasy-xiii-update>.

Thus, the characters who might subvert gendered expectations instead fall neatly into precedented "alternative masculinities," namely sensitivity, youthfulness, and same-sex desire,¹⁵⁹ that other them from heroes and heroines typical to *Final Fantasy XIII*'s genre; these are flawed characters, as seen in their emotional turmoil throughout the game, but also in their failure to adhere to gendered expectations. However, arguably, this could be a very successful incorporation of mechanics into the game's narrative, including its characterizations, as the characters are meant to be misfits, people who are othered by the society in which they once lived, forced to band together and deciding to change that society rather than hate and destroy themselves, which they, to some extent, do achieve. As Glasspool muses:

"Yet, these 'alternatives' to the hegemonic norm [...] can be co-opted and manipulated for consumerism and the maintenance of that same hegemonic masculinity, which embraces useful aspects of subordinate masculinities and sexualities when under threat, in order to ensure the continuation of male dominance."¹⁶⁰

This concern is also raised by Mandujano-Salazar around the use of media entities, like national sports stars, in serving political ideologies that preserve patriarchal, hierarchical modes of economic production. Indeed, despite a long development history and a mixed critical and fan reception in North America, *Final Fantasy XIII* has since spawned a franchise with two sequels, plenty of merchandise, promotions that include a Louis Vuitton fashion modeling and endorsement deal, and claims from those involved with making the franchise that Lightning is amongst the most popular characters of *Final Fantasy*, an extremely popular, character-driven series.¹⁶¹ Perhaps, then, Lightning finds popularity despite, or even because of, her and her team's subversion of gendered

¹⁵⁹ Glasspool, "From Boys Next Door to Boys' Love," 117.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 128.

¹⁶¹ Cheng Kai, "Lightning's Story Is Truly Over, But She May Be A Guest In A Future Final Fantasy," *Siliconera Singapore*, February 14, 2014, <http://www.siliconera.com/2014/02/14/lightnings-story-truly-may-guest-future-final-fantasy/>.

expectations, but that popularity is shaped by and continues to feed male-dominated game development models as well as male-dominated fan cultures, where gatekeepers work to push certain people, narratives, readings, and critiques out of spaces in which fans converse about and build upon the games they play.

However, if I am to fully engage Schiappa's work, I must note that what I am troubled by here is a lack of "representational correctness." Schiappa contends that "a single representation *cannot* undercut all three sources of prejudice at once" (emphasis in original) and that the triad as a whole can only be fully addressed through the coalescence of many representations, each of which may only challenge one or two parts of the triad.¹⁶² Indeed, according to my reading above, *Final Fantasy XIII* might reinforce androcentrism, but it also deftly critiques both gender polarization and biological essentialism. By doing so as a part of a prominent and often genre-leading series, it provides an invaluable step towards complicating problematic but normalized representational modes in the role-playing genre and games more broadly.

5.3 Discussion: Protection in Action and Role-Playing Games

Final Fantasy XIII is a rich text for analyzing such representations through the close connection between its mechanics, even those that are generically recognizable, and its narrative and world. The ways in which the player can use characters in battle are consistent with their characterization and allows for the dynamic range within the player party that the game and its genre's style of play require. In games like *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *3* and *Resident Evil 4*, this is also often true; just as Leon undergoes little character development, his role in battle changes little more than increasing his arsenal. Similarly, Ashley has few avenues for action and even fewer for revealing more about or deepening her character. This is not true for many *Final Fantasy* characters, as one of the best-known series in a genre known for character development. Yet, often times, that development

¹⁶² Schiappa, *Beyond Representational Correctness*, 23.

works on two levels in two separate ways: the push and pull of moving forwards and looking backwards that characters do in their lives as seen in cutscenes and heard in dialogue, and the linear progress in leveling up. Job/class systems do allow for some of that rhythm, in that through them, characters may start from scratch on something new even as they become stronger in other pursuits.

5.3.1 Discussion: Gender in Healing and Protection Systems

However, even with the flexibility and potential for growth that jobs/classes and similar leveling systems might allow in game narratives and gameplay alike, characters are yet limited in that growth by their gender and/or gender presentation. In action games, this limitation is highly visible; women have so few potential roles, composed mostly of the protagonist's love interest, protectee (akin to and including children), sexual object, or nurturer, i.e. roles that support, affirm, and motivate the male player character. Yet, even with the expanded emotional range and lives of the female characters in RPGs, these archetypes linger in gameplay. Healing and magic are still mostly practiced by female or non-traditionally presenting male characters, and men otherwise are charged with protecting those characters as well as acting as primary (non-magic) damage dealers. Thus are non-masculine people in these games relegated to limited kinds of work that can only help the party in certain situations. They cannot perform the work that propels the party forwards and completes the player's goals, the work that traditionally masculine characters can.

The well-established feminist sociologist Joan Acker speaks to this separation and valuation of labor through the term "gendered institutions." Although Acker's text on the matter is older and discusses organizations like governments or corporations, it is a helpful framework for considering how gender, especially exclusion and limitation founded on gender, is constructed at systemic levels, where "gender is present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies and distributions of

power in the various sectors of social life."¹⁶³ She further specifies the division between "production" and "reproduction," fairly literally, as the production of commodified goods and the reproduction of human bodies that supply capitalist modes of production. These spheres of labor are, respectively, masculinized and feminized, privileged and "relatively invisible and devalued, unless it fails to function, when it may become the focus of criticism."¹⁶⁴

Healing in the games I have discussed, between the associated motherly conceptions of nurturing and its necessitating healers' contribution from behind the frontline, illustrates this feminized, reproductive, devalued labor. Indeed, protection similarly resembles the masculine production spaces Acker describes, both "portrayed as aggressive, goal oriented, competitive, efficient, but rarely as supportive, kind, and caring"— protection is a design necessity to address the shortcomings of healers rather than an attempt to look after the healers'/protectees' wellbeing.¹⁶⁵ In Acker's analysis, gender in these institutions is performed and maintained in four ways: through exclusionary procedures (such as how healing and protection systems are built and the stats distributions that accompany that), "ideologies" and narratives that justify and legitimize these (the personalities and other narrative situations that present women as fragile and/or nurturing and men as physically powerful and protective), the interactions between individual people and groups that manifest gender (the interplay between healers/protectees and protectors), and individuals' own internal constructions of their gender (which, arguably, might occur when the player chooses how to use or perceive their characters).

Acker's conceptualization of feminized and masculinized institutions and spheres of labor are consistent with the personality traits of the gender norms inventories discussed previously, namely

¹⁶³ Joan Acker, "From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions," *Contemporary Sociology* 21, no. 5 (September 1992): 567.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 568.

“Relational, Sweet and Nice, Thinness, Put Others First, Look Young, Sexy, Modesty, Domestic, Caring for Children, Romantic Relationships, Sexual Fidelity, and Invest in Appearance”¹⁶⁶ for women and “Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence, Dominance, Playboy, Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, Power Over Women, Disdain for Homosexuals, Physical Toughness, and Pursuit of Status”¹⁶⁷ for men. I reiterate these to turn to the traits less explored through my discussions of healing and protection, particularly Relational, Domestic, Caring for Children, Romantic Relationships, Sexual Fidelity, Invest in Appearance, Playboy, Primacy of Work, and Disdain for Homosexuals. These traits revolve around relationships between people, especially those in Acker’s “reproduction” sphere: romantic and sexual relationships and the family life that can result from those. Thus, I move next to mechanics that allow player characters to build such relationships with non-player characters and how those systems interact with gender norms.

6 To Love and Care For: Building Relationships¹⁶⁸

Games’ representations of love and relationships as an emotionally nuanced and significant theme have presented a range of love stories, which can be profoundly moving and sometimes challenging, even progressive. However, when used as the framing for game mechanics, love has primarily been either absent (shown in a story, but not in a game system) or drastically simplified. I

¹⁶⁶ Mahalik, et al., “Development of the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory,” 419.

¹⁶⁷ Mahalik et al., “Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory,” 6.

¹⁶⁸ This chapter has been adapted from multiple works I have written and published in order to explore the ideas within in preparation for this thesis. The first version was written for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology course CMS.796 as taught by Eugenie Brinkema, and the subsequent versions are as follows: Kyrie Eleison H. Caldwell, “A Thousand Words, A Thousand Embraces: Discourses of Love in Mainstream Games” (Conference presentation, Digital Games Research Association Conference, Lüneberg, Germany, 2015); Kyrie Eleison H. Caldwell, “Love Is a Battlefield: A Comparative Analysis of Love as a Game Mechanic and Sartre’s Being and Nothingness,” in *Games + Learning + Society Conference 11 Proceedings* (GLS 11.0, Madison, WI: ETC Press, 2015); Kyrie Eleison H. Caldwell, “Love Is a Battlefield: A Comparative Analysis of Love as a Game Mechanic and Sartre’s Being and Nothingness,” *Well Played: A Journal on Video Games, Values, and Meaning* (ETC Press), DiGRA and GLS Special Issues, 5, no. 2 (2016): 87–99. Some of the text from the published articles, which are licensed by publisher ETC Press under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NonDerivative 2.5 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>), has been reused in this work; rights for creating a derivative work are retained by the author through the policy of ETC Press.

look here at case studies primarily from Japanese role-playing games that have roots in the dating simulation genre: *Fire Emblem: Awakening* and *Fire Emblem: Fates*,¹⁶⁹ *Persona 3* and *4*, and the *Harvest Moon/Bokujou Monogatari* series (I am using one of the latest titles, *Story of Seasons*,¹⁷⁰ as a representative text, but henceforth I shall use *Bokujou Monogatari* collectively for the series), the latter of which revolves around building the player character and their farm. Although other games do use love as a mechanic (and arguably also adhere to the proposed archetype of love), the current case studies were chosen due to love's pivotal role within each game's or series's narrative and mechanics, as well as for the sake of consistency with my previous chapters.

In *Fire Emblem*, the pairing of characters (units) during battle results not only in much stronger and more resilient units, but these pairings also result in marriage and, at a certain point in the game, in the appearance of their children, who have traveled from the future to rectify devastating events before they can occur. These children become some of the most powerful units in the game, thus imbuing them with great mechanical as well as narrative power. In *Persona 3* and *Persona 4*, the main/player character teams up with groups of fellow high school students to solve mysteries and fight evil entities in worlds connected to but apart from the characters' own. The conceit is that the power to fight these entities is gained through the strength of heart found through close bonds of friendship (including romance), and the game consists mostly of players balancing spending free time with people in the main character's life and battling alongside those people. In *Bokujou Monogatari*, the player is an up and coming farmer who restores a farm from some sort of ruin, building a role for him- or herself in the neighboring village and in the romantic life of a neighboring villager. Player characters must marry to produce a child (which occurs automatically after

¹⁶⁹ Intelligent Systems, Nintendo SPD, *Fire Emblem: Fates*, Nintendo 3DS (Nintendo, 2016).

¹⁷⁰ Marvelous AQL, *Story of Seasons*, Nintendo 3DS (XSEED Games, Nintendo, 2015).

marriage) for the game to consider play successful and thus allow the player to progress past deadlines for these actions.

Although in games with different themes, goals, and other mechanics, the love/friendship mechanics share an archetype that consists of the four stages of the template outlined above. In these games, love-as-mechanic can be reduced to a simple template: the player character has a choice of potential love-objects; the player character initiates courtship via time spent with or goods given to the chosen love-object; the love-object falls in love with the player character; and the love-object produces benefit for the player character. This template posits a system of love that revokes subjectivity and agency from the (usually non-player) characters who are objects of love for the player character, who gains power over others without repercussions or resistance from any agent other than the player. To further analyze this pattern, I consider it in relation to both philosophical and sociological instances of violence as it interacts with ideas of love and care, namely Jean-Paul Sartre's work on love, the self, and "the Other" in *Being and Nothingness*¹⁷¹ and research on domestic violence, respectively.

6.1 Exploring the Archetype

The first stage of the archetype is the choosing of the love-object. During this stage, the player is often at the mercy of the game creators; few games have the capacity for players to choose any other character or object in the text as an object of performed love, likely due to the manual work needed to materialize such actions through dialogue (written or spoken), animations, and narrative branches. Thus, the player's scripted choices of love-object tend to reflect the cultural assumptions and norms of the developers, which usually limits players to heteronormative in-game relationships,

¹⁷¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, Reprint edition (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993).

although this has been broadening in recent years. However, if this is accepted by the player, the love-object shows no resistance.

In *Fire Emblem: Awakening*, certain character pairs have the option to achieve S-Rank Support, or the last of four potential ranks, achieved through interactions during battles and demarcated by narrative interludes in which the characters involved converse with one another (fig. 36). As long as that S-Rank Support is achievable (marked for the player as present or absent on a menu, as shown in figure 37), eventually reaching it guarantees that the characters will declare their mutual love and marry. Though the narrative between each pair was written by the game's creators, the mechanical choices are those of the player: which characters to pair, how to achieve higher rankings, and whether or not to watch the scenes between those characters.

In *Fire Emblem*, these choices are repeatable until each marriageable character is paired, and as such, repetition is the key to courtship in every in-game relationship that follows the archetypical love-as-mechanic. Indeed, the archetypical courtship is in totality the repeated performance of specific actions in the "right" way. For *Fire Emblem*, the player repeatedly pairs the intended couple in combat so they might break through the enemy ranks together, thus raising their own Support ranks with each other. The *Persona* games require players to choose how to spend their in-game time, so as long as the player chooses the right timeframe to spend, in which the love-object is "available" for spending time with the player character, then that relationship (in the games' terms, the Social Link) will succeed, climbing from Social Link Rank 1 to Rank 10 (fig. 38). In *Bokujou Monogatari*, player characters give material goods to the love-object, who has a scripted set of liked and disliked goods. As the player character continues to regularly give the love-object his/her favorite goods, the interactions between the two characters become more amorous, and the love-object's "heart levels" rise along a given scale until reaching maximum; in *Story of Seasons*, this appears as a flower that changes color according to the character's heart level (fig. 39). Usually

during this time the player character needs to make adjustments to their farm and farmhouse in order to accommodate a spouse and family.

When the courtship succeeds, there is a moment that love is declared, leading either to dating (*Persona* games) or marriage (*Fire Emblem* and *Bokujou Monogatari*). This pairing is an end goal of sorts, as there are rarely scenes and conversations between characters after their declaration, and those scenes that do exist suggest that all is well in their perpetual garden of love. In *Bokujou Monogatari*, the beloved character is in large part defined by their relationship with the player character, moving from bachelor/ette, spouse, and finally to the other parent of the player character's child; the spouse's homebound presence after this transition is illustrated in figure 40. *Fire Emblem* labels characters as bound to one another, marking the beloved's name in the same space that marks the character's statistics as used for deciding their role and power in battle (fig. 41). During certain scenes amongst the Social Links of *Persona 3* and *Persona 4*, the player character can enter a relationship with characters of the opposite gender, as is happening in figure 42. Indeed, the player character can enter multiple relationships. In *Persona 4*, this can be done with no mechanical consequences (i.e. losing Social Link points), but *Persona 3* does allow Social Links to drop rather than rise if the beloveds discover each others' relationships, but this too can be remedied. Thus, the player character in these games are bound to some extent to the love-object once love is declared, but not to the same extent to which that the love-object becomes a facet of the player character's existence rather than any independent existence.

In these case studies and as seen in previous chapters, love-as-mechanic is only one amongst other mechanics in each game's system of rules. In all three cases, love-as-mechanic is a secondary, sometimes even optional, mechanic that serves to provide some benefit to the player's experience of each game's primary mechanics. In *Fire Emblem* and the *Persona* games, this is strength and efficiency in battle; in *Bokujou Monogatari*, this is running your farm into perpetuity. Thus, love-as-

mechanic provides the means in each game to the best and fullest experience of the game's key dynamic systems. The children from the future of *Fire Emblem*'s main characters are amongst the most powerful units of the game, and the children of *Bokujou Monogatari* continue the legacy begun by the main player character as the latter ages and eventually dies, now with an heir in place. For the main characters of the *Persona* games, their inner strength is somewhat literally boosted by each friendship or love, as higher Social Links with each character results in better battle statistics (e.g. strength, magic, and defensive power) for the player character's Personas, or the collectible beings that manifest the power to fight evil. In these *Persona* games, love does not achieve anything more mechanically powerful than friendship does, but in *Fire Emblem*, love and marriage, the S Rank, is a step beyond the boundaries of friendships, which can only achieve A Rank. *Bokujou Monogatari* games provide indications of progress in achieving romantic relationships, whereas friendly ones exist but are not as important and thus not as clearly marked in the information available to the player.

6.2 The Archetype through Sartre's Metaphysics

When the love-as-mechanic archetype is examined through the lenses developed in philosophical texts on love, such as sections of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, serious problems and tensions emerge. In Part III, Chapter 3, "Concrete Relations With Others," Sartre discusses how love structures the interactions (physical and metaphysical) between the lover and the beloved, or the self and the Other. The relations laid out in Section I, "First Attitude Toward Others: Love, Language, Masochism," around the subjective freedoms of the self and the Other as engaged by "the look," is most useful for my purposes.¹⁷² Here Sartre dives into the problem posed by love, namely that there is conflict between a lover's retaining the freedom to be a being-for-itself, a consciousness (for a person is fundamentally not a being-in-itself or an essence) and that lover's

¹⁷² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 365-372.

attempt to sublimate and possess the beloved's own freedom, by means of the beloved's freely chosen allowance of this. Were this possible and the ideal of love reached, then the lover (the self) becomes transcendent, safely, and ultimately free/conscious. The problem, Sartre continues, is that the Other is also a being-for-itself, whose consciousness and subjectivity posits the original self as an object, thus alienating his/her freedom.¹⁷³ Now the ideal of love is shown to be impossible, since the attempt to sublimate the freedom of the lover/beloved is circular, and thus both lovers' freedoms are alienated.¹⁷⁴ The question that I pose in relation to love-as-mechanic in games, then, is how the work of love would change when freedom is unequal, when the beloved can be reduced to a being-in-itself, for the beloved has no agency or consciousness of its own. That the archetype of my case studies' love-as-mechanic allows an unproblematized experience of love is a metaphysical problem of power dynamics, especially when enacted repeatedly for the player, as is shown in my close readings of the case studies and their archetypal construction.

Sartre's conceptualization of choice in relation to others is the choice of the beloved, in that the self is the one who is to be "freely chosen as the beloved." To be so is to assimilate the beloved's freedom, or, in other terms, the ability to make choices. But in the archetypal love-as-mechanic, the choice is always that of the self, the player/player-character. The only look (objectifying, reductive gaze) that is present is that of the player towards the love-objects. In this way, the player does indeed "escape the *look* of the beloved," or at least is met with "a look with another structure," which allows the player to transcend the status of "a 'this' among other 'thises.'"¹⁷⁵ This passage has fascinating implications for the medium of gaming, as the player's presence and interaction is the contingent upon which the game world relies. Although the written code of the game is present regardless of the player, as discussed in my introductory chapters, the

¹⁷³ Ibid., 375.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 376.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 369.

game world and the characters within are only rendered and only perform their functions when the player chooses to engage them. In this sense, "the world must be revealed in terms of" the player. Sartre continues, "In fact to the extent that the upsurge [i.e. the meeting of consciousness and the world] of freedom makes a world exist, [the player] must be, as the limiting-condition of this upsurge, the very condition of the upsurge of a world."¹⁷⁶ Here I have replaced the referent "I" with the player (which, in this case, is indeed my usage of the personal pronoun "I"), the self that is involved when a game is undertaken, but the meaning is merely contextualized rather than modified. The player's choice not only in a love-object but indeed to play a game at all creates the world within, including the love-object, which is ultimately a being-in-itself, which little complexity outside of a predetermined, prewritten, and preanimated personality, even in the case of seemingly life-like/plausible characters.

In all of these games, it is guaranteed that if all requirements have been met, the love-object will be successfully courted, or in Sartre's words, seduced. In Sartre's figuration, seduction is a response to the beloved's look, which "apprehends the lover as one Other-as-object among others" and is thus able to transcend and use the Other, or the original self.¹⁷⁷ But as discussed above, the beloved in my case studies cannot have a look and can only be subject to the player's look. Thus, the love-object is just that— the "Other-as-object." Whereas in Sartre's discussion the process of seduction is meant to bring nothingness into the consciousness of the Other and recognizable fullness into the consciousness of the self, as the self "present[s] the world to the beloved and [...] constitute[s] itself] as the necessary intermediary between [the beloved] and the world" through acts that are "infinitely varied examples of [the self's] power over the world (money,

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 371.

position, 'connections,' etc.)."¹⁷⁸ This correlates with the presentation of objects or the decision to spend time in one place rather than another that effectively makes the player character's beloved "feel"— or, better yet, trigger prewritten and preanimated expressions of feeling— special in the eyes, the look, of the player character. Through the repeated actions of courtship within love-as-mechanic, the player is held above the game characters, or in Sartre's terms, "through these different procedures [the self] propose[s itself] as unsurpassable."¹⁷⁹ Although normally this would not have value without being authorized by the freedom of the Other, even if made to be nothingness, in the love-as-mechanic archetype, the freedom of the Other does not exist, and there is no resistance to the self's proposal of its "plentitude of absolute being."¹⁸⁰ Thus, the player character's courtship must succeed, for there is no resistance to it.

As noted above, that courtship leads inevitably to a declaration of love and a binding of two characters, sometimes through a marriage. This binding is, for the most part, unbreakable, as it does not need further attention to continue. Instead, love-as-mechanic is soon shifted from the site of work to the site of reward; it achieves its maximum status long before other struggles are resolved, becoming a tool to leverage towards those struggles rather than itself being a site of work, tension, and navigation of the self and the Other. Love here is thus indestructible, as there is no "deception and a reference to infinity" that comes from love as the relation between two being-for-themselves, nor can the Other ever render the self as a love-object, and there is no other agent to disrupt love "as an absolute axis of reference" and to shame the self by making the self relative.¹⁸¹ This is a love that rewards without the consequences of work, insecurity, or shame, which would seem to be the perfection of love's ideals. However, it only that embodies that perfection for the one, the self, the

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 372.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 372.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 377.

player/player character who is able to assimilate the Other, who has no agency and consciousness or even bodily presence. This would be a problem indeed for Sartre's metaphysics. When the self "experiences himself in the face of the Other as pure transcendence," as the player does, the result is a need to use the love-object as simply an object while also seeking to validate the self's transcendence through the non-existent transcendence of the Other.¹⁸² This paradox leads to the use of sadistic methods to resolve it via the effort to incarnate the Other through violence, and this incarnation "by force" must be already the appropriation and utilization of the Other."¹⁸³

6.3 The Archetype through Sociological Lenses

Where Sartre's philosophical approach may seem opaquely abstracted from reality, there are related theories in sociology that provide some socially observed evidence for the kinds of power imbalances and the violence arising from them that Sartre philosophizes. One key concept is that of social exchange theory, which indicates that people exchange positive interactions, especially via favors or gifts, for advancements in social status, as discussed in summary by Karen S. Cook and Eric R.W. Rice.¹⁸⁴ Notably, that exchange, according to Cook and Rice's summation of the work of sociologist Richard Emerson, can carry imbalanced power relations, in which one party is more powerful than and less dependent on the other. Although this imbalance can be rectified if the exchanged gifts or favors shift in value, or if the less powerful party gains access to alternative exchange partners or sources of value, these rectifications are not always possible, in which case that power imbalance becomes built into all social exchanges between those parties.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Ibid., 399.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Karen S. Cook and Eric R. W. Rice, "Exchange and Power: Issues of Structure and Agency," in *Handbook of Sociological Theory*, ed. Jonathan H. Turner, 1st softcover edition, Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research (New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media, 2006), 699–719.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 705-706.

As argued above through my engagement with Sartre, there are clear imbalances in power between the player character and non-player characters in my video game case studies. That imbalance of power often coincides with gendered identities, with, for instance, the *Bokujou Monogatari* and *Persona* games all originally featuring only male player characters.¹⁸⁶ In these scenarios, and even when the player is presented with a (binary) choice of avatar gender, such as in both *Fire Emblem* case studies, *Persona 3 Portable*, and several *Bokujou Monogatari* games, the game continuously affirms the player as "special," different from other characters and uniquely powerful through that difference, giving them powers and natural excellence that other characters usually admire and follow. Indeed, game critics and even developers often use the term "power fantasy" to describe and question the ubiquity and effects of this narrative and mechanical mode.¹⁸⁷ Through this mode, only the player character tends to recognize his or her full potential and have that potential be recognized by others. The non-player characters who support that character through the relationship system are often sidelined with flaws and/or limited potential, written in each game as belonging to these particular individuals. Yet, when so many of these characters are written similarly, to defer to the potential of the player character, these characters become roles, ones that are defined by their limited potential and full dependency on another's, specifically the player character's.

¹⁸⁶ This only changed in the *Bokujou Monogatari* series with the 2005 release of *Harvest Moon: Another Wonderful Life*, the female avatar version of the previous game *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life*, eleven years after the series began in 1996. The player characters of both *Persona 3* and *Persona 4* are male, and only with the release of *Persona 3 Portable* were players given a choice of avatar gender, a feature that was not repeated for the similar portable rerelease of *Persona 4*, titled *Persona 4 Golden*.

¹⁸⁷ See: Brian Crecente, "From Dragon Age to Games That Foster Behavioral Change," *Games Journalism, Polygon*, (June 27, 2016), <http://www.polygon.com/2016/6/27/12039582/dragon-age-hepler-talk-bullying>; Jessica Hammer and Meguey Baker, "Problematizing Power Fantasy," *The Enemy*, May 19, 2014, <http://theenemyreader.org/problematizing-power-fantasy/>; PBS Game/Show, *Do Games Give Us Too Much Power? | Game/Show | PBS Digital Studios*, accessed July 1, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9COt-_3C0xl.

In real world examples, that power imbalance, as it becomes a permanent or semi-permanent part of such social exchanges and especially when it detrimentally affects almost all or all aspects of a person's life, is known as structural violence, a term often used in social justice research and peace and conflict studies. Johan Galtung, a sociologist and seminal peace researcher, defines violence as "when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations,"¹⁸⁸ a broad description that he then fragments into several binary forms (shown as a model in figure 43): intended or not, manifest or latent, physical or psychological, with or without objects, and personal or structural. Though I do not cover each element specifically, the differences between them represent the ways in which violence can be either easily observable or not, in that, for example, "personal violence shows. The object of personal violence perceives the violence, usually, and may complain— the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this at all."¹⁸⁹ This is the violence that is embedded into systems in ways that are difficult to perceive and the mechanisms thereof must be drawn out by broader, contextual, sociocultural analysis, the sort of violence done to marginalized people who are politically disenfranchised, economically impoverished, culturally silenced, and misconstrued through negative stereotypes.

The case studies I present deal little with (i.e. do not represent differences in) race, class, sexual orientation, and other such marginalized identities and/or identity markers and thus do not show the complexity and intersectionality of structural violence that exists in the world outside of the game world. However, the power imbalances still exist within the game world and would within that world constitute, according to Galtung's definition, a form of violence, one that is, again, often gendered. Physical violence (or at least, irreversible, emotionally consequential physical violence)

¹⁸⁸ Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969), 168.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

against the player character's social exchange partners is not possible in the game worlds of my case studies, but non-player characters also do not have any recourse to shift imbalances in power. Though by no means are the situations exactly the same, there are parallels between the power imbalance between such game characters and between people in abusive relationships in the real world. Structural and physical violence are indeed very real for many who have been battered, a situation that has been researched at length by sociologists and others. As Christina Pratt and Natalie J. Sokoloff assert in their introduction to part of their anthology on domestic violence research, "in discussing domestic violence, it is essential to address societal arrangements that foster oppression and violence by those with more power against those with less," for as marginalized identities stack and intersect, people are more and more vulnerable to violence at personal, local, and systemic/structural levels.¹⁹⁰

I maintain that, rather than through Sartre's internal, metaphysical causes of violence done by the Self unto the Other, the manifestation of violence such as in abusive relationships arises from cultural realities, assumptions, practices, and allowances; that is, I take a social constructionist approach to understanding how people interact with one another, including through violence. I also maintain that media, like the games I analyze here, are both constructed by and help to construct those cultural realities, assumptions, practices, and allowances that can create an environment encouraging certain kinds of violence. That is not to say that media artifacts like digital games directly cause violence, a claim that has seen much debate and likely will not ever be provable, nor need it be for such violence to be meaningful. Rather, media artifacts that glorify, uncritically represent, or require participation in violence, explicitly or implicitly, are a part of shaping cultures that suggest that certain kinds of violence, such as intimate, gendered, racialized, or otherwise, are

¹⁹⁰ Natalie J. Sokoloff and Christina Pratt, "Introduction to Part I: Frameworks and Overarching Themes," in *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Natalie J. Sokoloff and Christina Pratt (Rutgers University Press, 2005), 19.

recognized, normalized, and thus acceptable. The forms of violence that are difficult to see and discuss are neither less present nor less important; indeed, these qualities give them the potential to even more deeply normalize problematic and unnecessary cultural assumptions, as they are more difficult to pin down for critique. This claim aligns with media effects theories arising out of social learning theory and similar ideas¹⁹¹ that suggest that such effects are indirect, as they are mediated through an individual's various social contexts,¹⁹² but also that there is potential for media representations to affect how much and what kinds of prejudice people hold towards people unlike them and people they know, as is suggested by the parasocial contact hypothesis.¹⁹³ If many representations show the same violence, it is possible that parasocial contact can reinforce rather than complicate prejudicial assumptions.

7 Conclusions and Further Directions

The violence I discuss might seem to be an overly dire result of archetypes that, when again particularized in the originating games, are surrounded with uplifting, sweet, and otherwise extremely positive textual, visual, and aural discourses of love, or the reassurance of a strong body standing up to face threats for a smaller, weaker one, or with words about kindness and support accompanying a healing spell. Yet, as I have argued, it is crucial to the study of games to probe the assumptions, assertions, and arguments carried not just in games' text or images, but in their gameplay as well. In games, which currently have less developed and visible avenues of criticism, it is fruitful to recognize not only narrative but also mechanical archetypes, included in many games for the convenience of their design and their legibility to players, as possible vehicles for stereotypes.

¹⁹¹ Albert Bandura, "Social Learning Theory" (General Learning Corporation, 1971), http://www.esludwig.com/uploads/2/6/1/0/26105457/bandura_sociallearningtheory.pdf.

¹⁹² Patti M. Valkenburg, Jochen Peter, and Joseph B. Walther, "Media Effects: Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Psychology* 67, no. 1 (January 4, 2016): 315–38, doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-122414-033608, 324-325.

¹⁹³ Schiappa, *Beyond Representational Correctness*, 92-101.

These systems may hide issues that are being perpetuated by their ubiquitous inclusion, by the repetition of negative representations, even if they appear with more innovative, socially aware approaches to narrative and audiovisual art in games.

As such, and to answer my research questions, the worlds that games build are not just built in those narrative and audiovisual layers, but also in how a player interacts with a game, chooses options for its characters, and responds to its scenarios, which all occur through the interface of game mechanics. When those mechanics carry violence, that violence is brought into worlds that may otherwise not have violence, or into parts of violent worlds that aim to be a respite from other violence. Both mechanics and narratives, either through alignment or contrast, need to challenge at least one and ideally two (but notably not three) parts of the triad of prejudice for a game text to present overall positive representations. That need requires both narrative/writing interventions, which are happening frequently, and design interventions, which are happening somewhat less frequently.

However, the claims I have made bring many more questions. How can mechanics free of violence be designed and incorporated at all, let alone in games that are developed to be sold to and enjoyed by the consumers of current cultural contexts, those who expect and demand more of the experiences they have come to recognize through their experiences of games? How can one be sure that represented violence, especially hidden forms, actually affects people who play games? Why should this reading of these texts, one of many possible readings, be met with action on the part of game creators with the urgency of the call this work puts forth? Are games a storytelling and expressive medium that even allows worlds without violence?

These questions, amongst others, could be addressed by further research down the threads woven by this work. Specific media audience reception research and design-based research (which could include the design interventions mentioned previously) would perhaps serve best in

strengthening the claims made and moving towards the changes in game design for which I have called. Indeed, the rise of the independent development scene has provided a space for such design interventions, and though this thesis has focused on mainstream, “triple AAA,” big-budget games, similar dives into independent, small studio productions might actually yield design-based answers to some of my questions.

One particular area that I think could lend richly to representational research is massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) like *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*,¹⁹⁴ which rely heavily on consistent, expansive worldbuilding that incorporates story and in-game lore and histories; environment (both in the game and outside of it); mechanics (which borrow from and lend to, but always differ from, single player experiences); the needs and wealth of player interactions; and some unusual instances of paratextual, intertextual, and metatextual elements. Such games are able to deeply connect player choice to character representation, allowing for women serving as tanks and men as white mages in combat situations that construct healers as just as valuable as tanks and women as just as capable as men. I suspect that robust customization options like those (and going beyond those) available in today’s MMOGs greatly expand the range of representations that challenge gendered prejudices. As worldbuilding in MMOGs tends to function quite differently than that in single player games, the analysis thereof would require more space than can be devoted in the current project, though it would make for fascinating next steps.

Also, although there were attempts at cultural specificity in this thesis, the relationship between games and the cultures surrounding their development warrants deeper analysis. For the case studies of this thesis, it would be constructive to further consider how gender is performed and reproduced broadly in Japan; how gender is considered and/or discussed by Japanese developers, fans, feminists and social justice activists, and scholars; and how games are perceived

¹⁹⁴ Square Enix, *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, version 3.35, Sony PlayStation 4 (Square Enix, 2013).

and constructed as part of Japan's media ecology. This could also be a comparative project through the inclusion of games from multiple cultural contexts, such as America, Europe, Korea, China, and elsewhere, as game development is now a thriving and increasingly accessible, but still often localized, international industry.

Like game development, game criticism that is meaningful beyond the academy and able to bring about real changes in games, the cultures they shape, and the cultures that shape them require coordinated effort from critics and scholars trained in various backgrounds and with various foci. It is my hope that this literary approach is one taken seriously as able to speak to how culture, the mechanisms and manifestations of human interaction and communication, is brought into and created within games, and how games act as reflections of and thus tools to better understand the construction of culture more broadly.

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Illustrations

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I Introduction



Figure 1. *Ico*: Ico on horse.

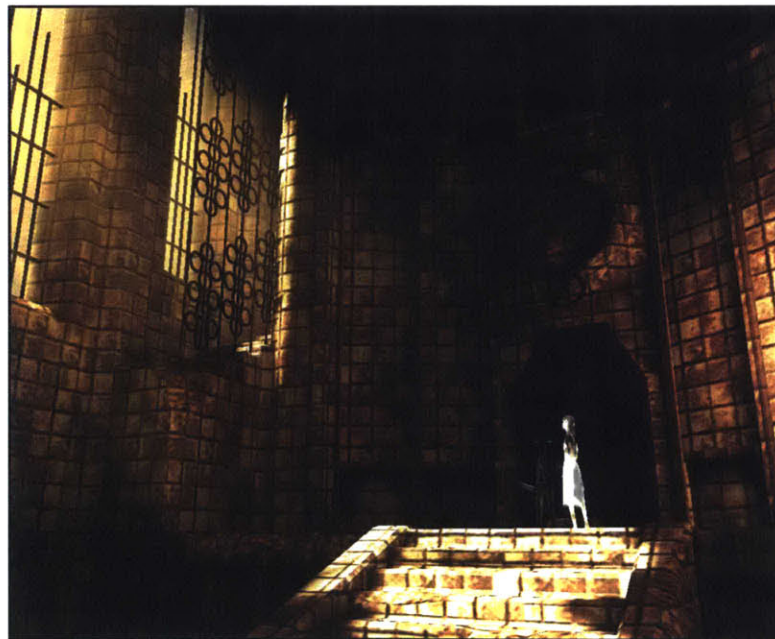


Figure 2. *Ico*: Chiaroscuro.



Figure 3. *Ico*: Yorda.



Figure 4. *Ico*: Save couch.

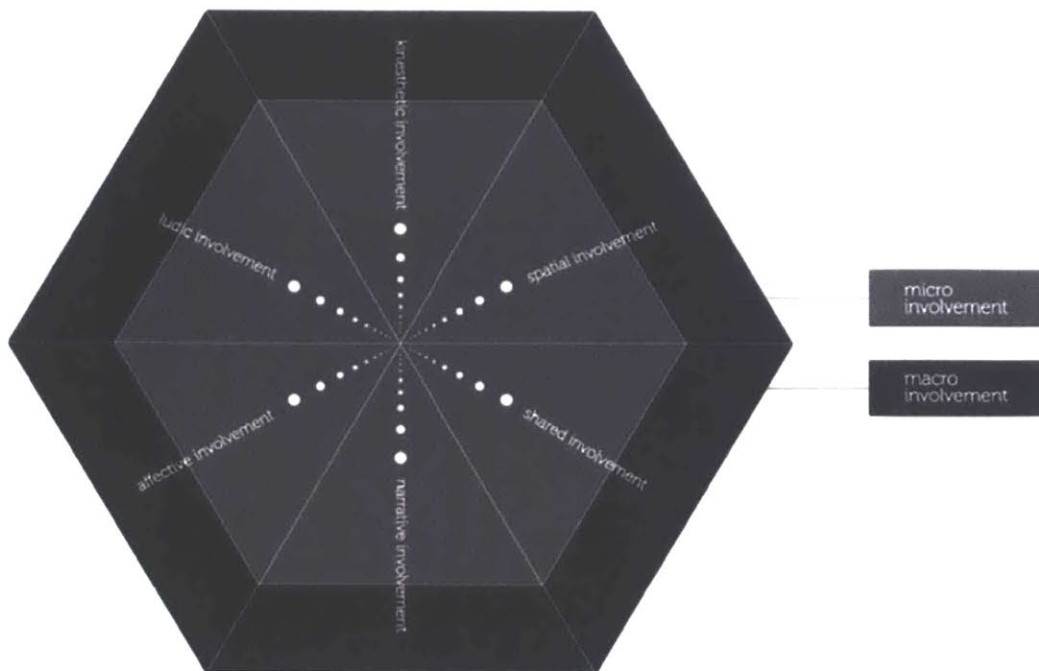


Figure 5. Calleja's Player Involvement Model.

4 To Heal



Figure 6. *Final Fantasy XII*: Heads-up display.



Figure 7. *Uncharted 2*: Health feedback.

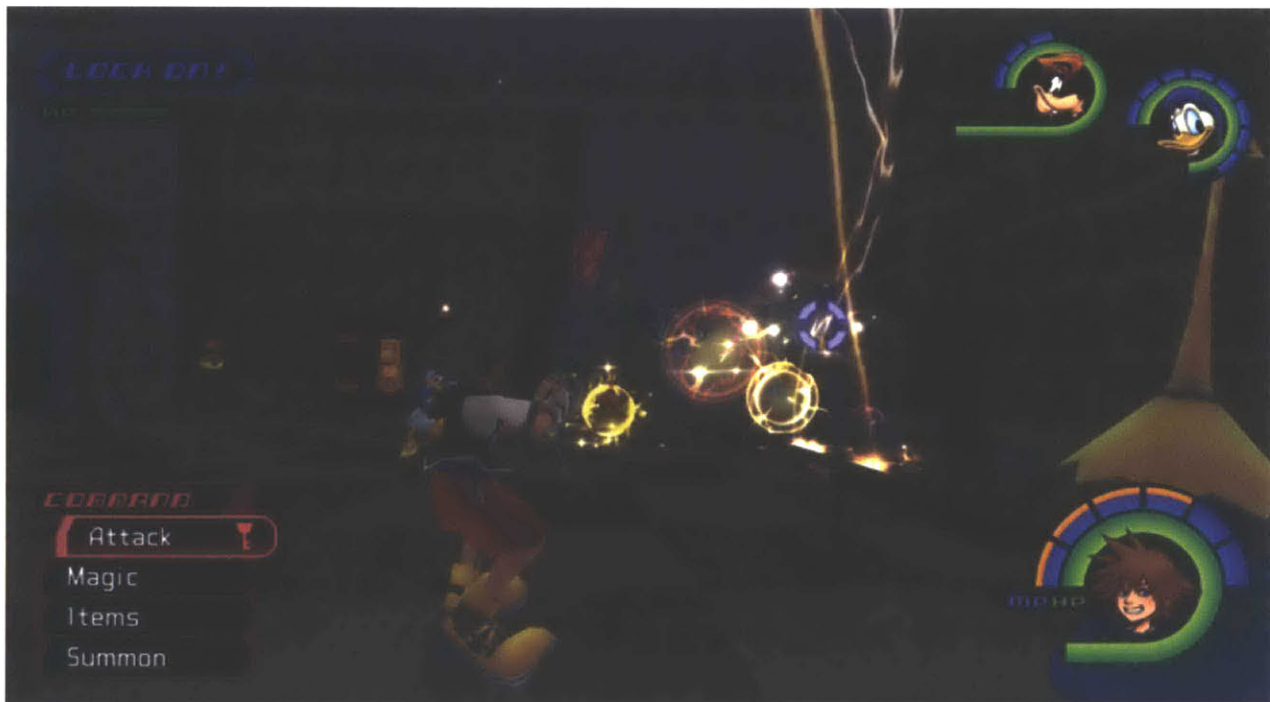


Figure 8. *Kingdom Hearts*: Gameplay.



Figure 9. *Overwatch*: Gameplay.

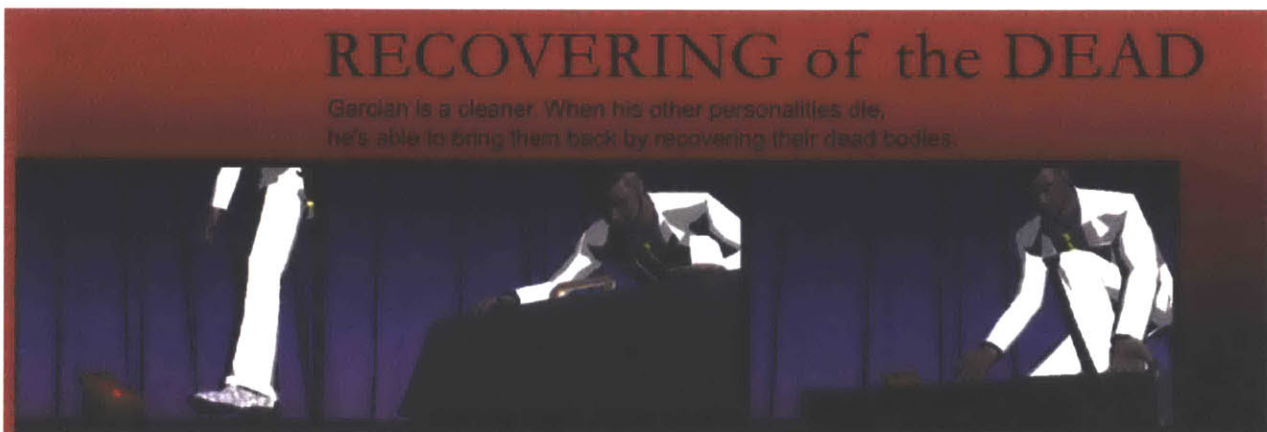


Figure 10. *Killer7*: Garcian with suitcase.

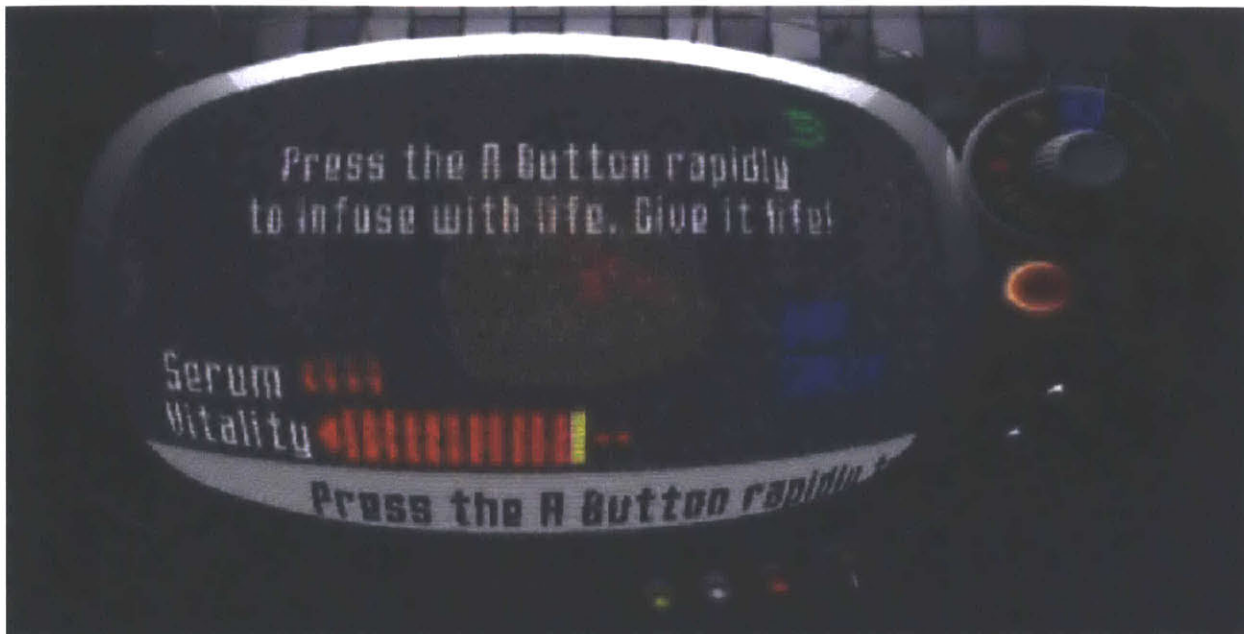


Figure 11. *Killer7: Revival*.



Figure 12. *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*: Cure screen.



Figure 13. *Resident Evil* series: Herbs.



Figure 14. *Resident Evil 5*: Dying status.

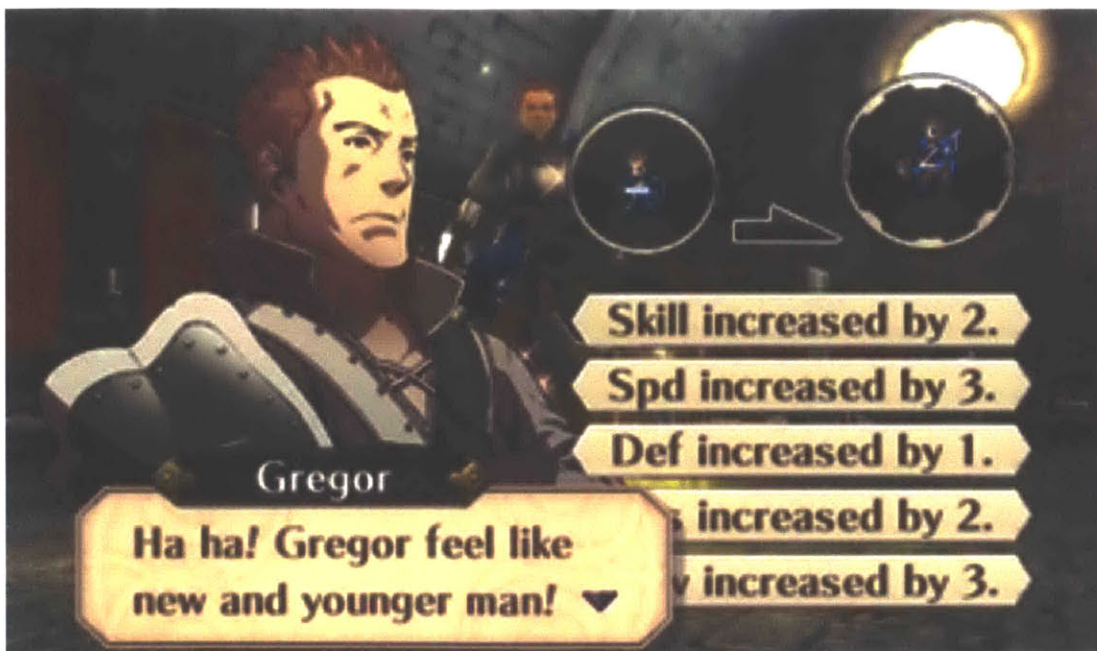


Figure 15. *Fire Emblem: Awakening*: Class change.



Figure 16. *Final Fantasy X-2*: Spherechanges.



Figure 17. *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*: Paladin.



Figure 18. *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*: White Mage.



Figure 19. *Persona 4*: Persona status screens.



Figure 20. *Killer7*: Death screens.

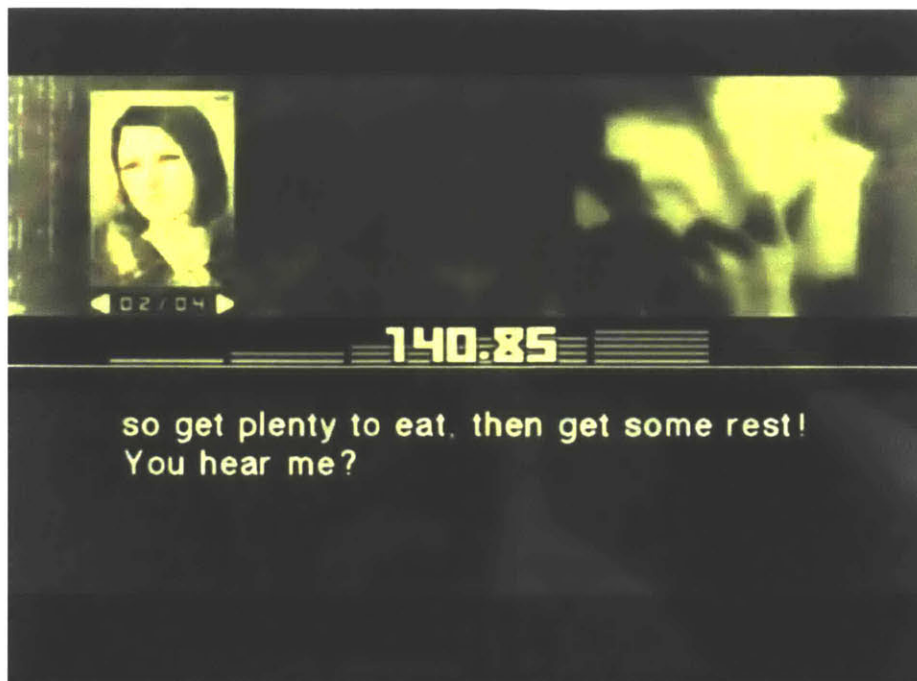


Figure 21. *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*: Para-medic.



Figure 22. *Resident Evil 5*: Chris and Sheva.



Figure 23. *Fire Emblem: Awakening*: Lissa healing.

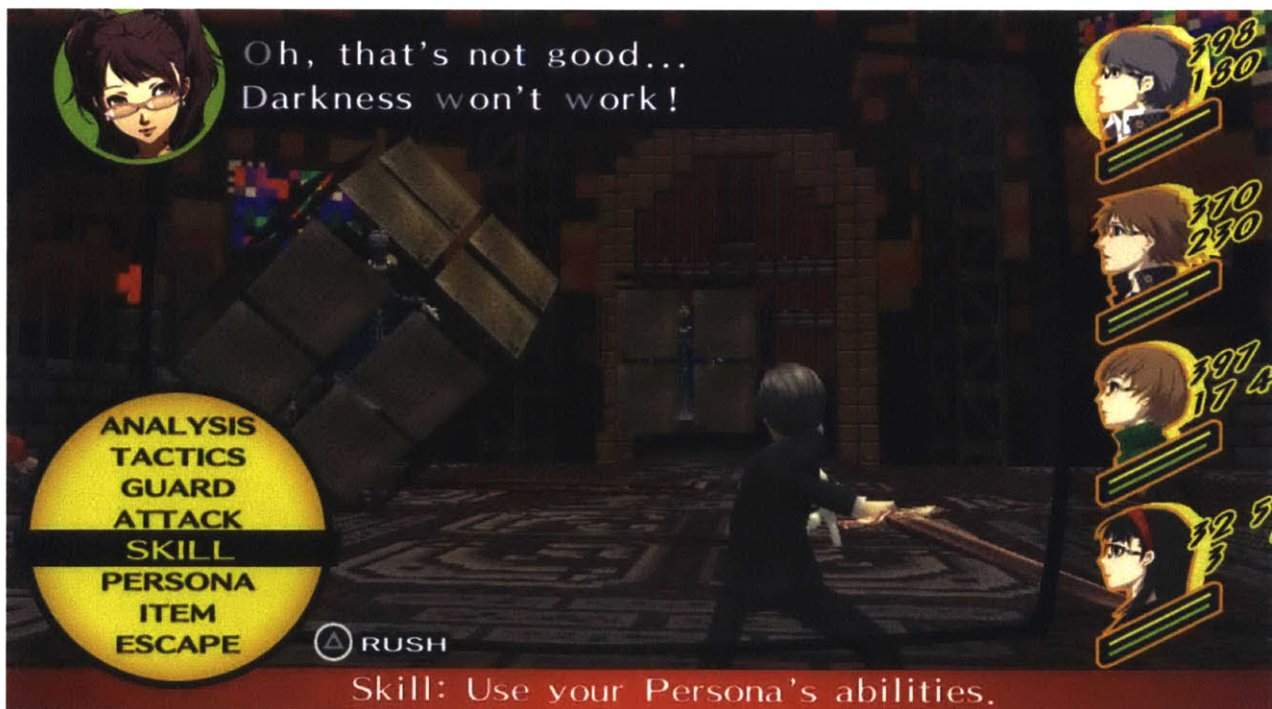


Figure 24. *Persona 4 Golden*: Rise (upper left corner) supporting.



Figure 25. *Final Fantasy X: HD Remaster*: Yuna healing.



Figure 26. *Final Fantasy XIV*: Healing.

5 To Protect



Figure 27. Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty; Resident Evil 4: Escorting.

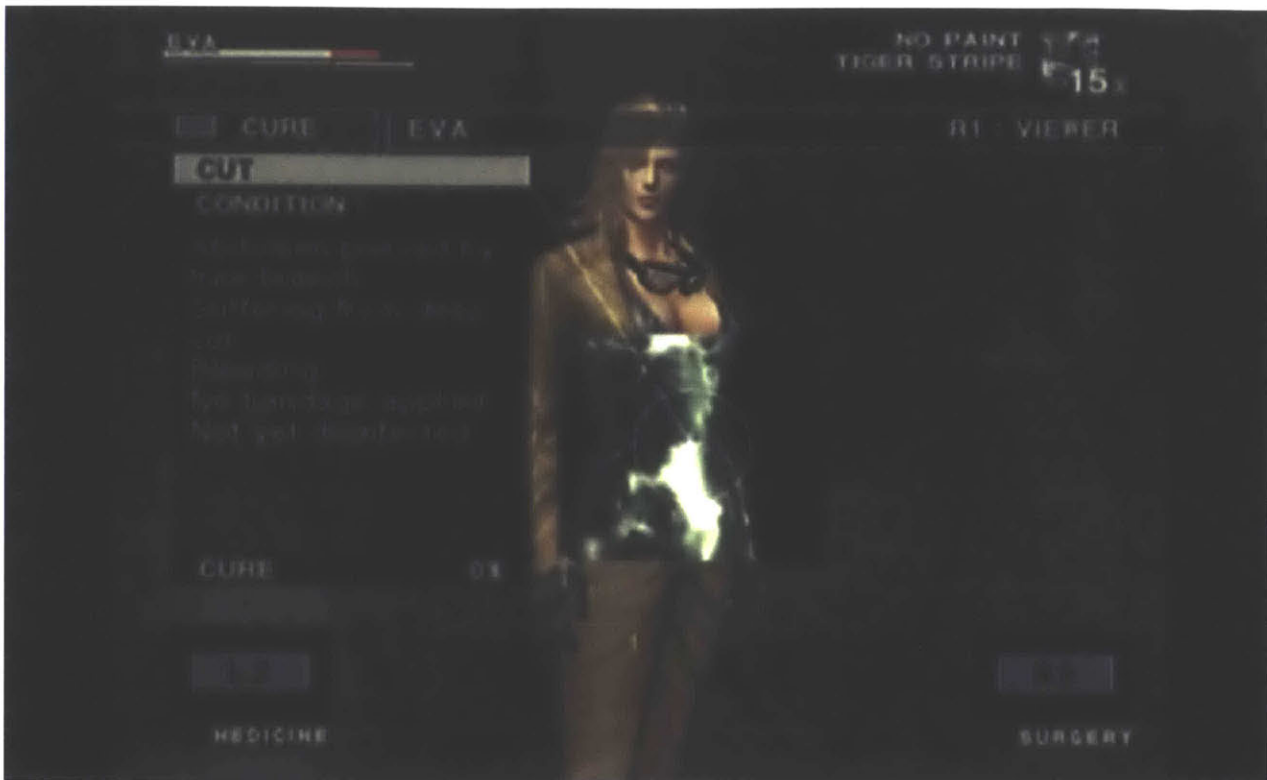


Figure 28. *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*: EVA Cure screen.



Figure 29. *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*: Raiden holds Emma's hand.



Figure 30. *Resident Evil 4*: Ashley moves out of harm's way.



Figure 31. *Ico*: Ico fights shadowy creatures.



Figure 32. *Final Fantasy XIII*: Sentinel role in battle.



Figure 33. *Final Fantasy XIII*: Synergist role in battle.



Figure 34. *Final Fantasy XIII*: Saboteur role in battle.



Figure 35. *Final Fantasy XIII*: Paradigm deck.

6 To Love and Care



Figure 36. *Fire Emblem: Awakening*: S Rank Support conversation.



Figure 37. *Fire Emblem: Awakening*: S Rank Support options.



Figure 38. *Persona 4 Golden*. Social Link Rank Up screen.



Figure 39. *Story of Seasons*: Raeger accepting a gift.



Figure 40. *Story of Seasons*: Spouse Elise in home with children.



Figure 41. *Fire Emblem: Awakening*: Marriage indicators.



Figure 42. *Persona 4 Golden*: Rise confesses her love.

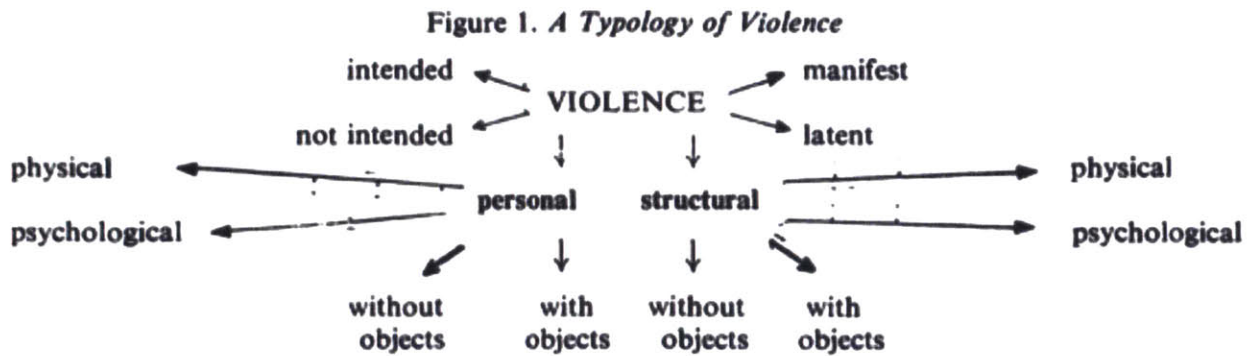


Figure 43. Galtung's model of violence.

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