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25.IT'S NO VIDEOGAME:
NEWS COMMENTARY AND THE SECOND GULF WAR

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ABSTRACT
This study analyzes U.S. news media coverage of the second Gulf War, to determine how individuals used the term 'videogame' in reference to the war.
By studying how the news media itself sought to praise or criticize coverage of the war as being un/like videogames, we can see how videogames continue to be constructed in popular media in troublesome ways.
Analysis, for example, shows that use of the term "videogame" points to coverage that (1) focuses on sophisticated technologies, (2) is devoid of human suffering, and/or (3) seems somehow fake or non-serious.
Use of the term is largely pejorative and dismissive, reflecting (and reinforcing) popular views of videogames as lacking context and seriousness. Finally, the study examines the military's own history of game-related activities, and how that context creates striking paradoxes in such usages.

KEYWORDS
War coverage, Iraq, Gulf War II, videogame, technology, war

INTRODUCTION

Popular discourse in the United States tends to treat videogames like the black sheep uncle everyone is ashamed of, but can't disown. To listen solely to mainstream media coverage of games (rather than playing the games yourself), one would think that all games are ultra-violent, blood-filled, first-person shooters, with a primary audience of (still) young boys that play alone, are socially inept and potentially unstable. The exception would be Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs), where socially deprived *adults* spend multiple hours in bizarre fantasy worlds, often losing spouses, jobs, and their self-respect. It's not a pretty picture.

This past year videogames again appeared in the news, but in a new capacity. They were invoked as a descriptor for media coverage of the second Gulf War, and that description was generally not a flattering one. News reporters, child psychologists, pundits, and even the U.S. Secretary of State uttered phrases such as "Remember, this is a real war—not a video game." Although I watched some of the coverage on television, most of my news of the war came from public radio and newspapers, but even there I found the same sorts of descriptions, claiming much coverage was akin to a videogame, with the comparison

definitely not being a favorable one for games. Initially I contemplated doing a study of the coverage itself to see just how "videogame-like" it really was. But then I decided that it would be much more interesting, and perhaps more telling, to see how people were using the term videogame in referencing the war, without determining whether that usage was "correct" or not.

In doing so, I acknowledge a couple of things up front. First, I am not concerned with whether the coverage was truly game-like or not. A study investigating that question would either need to examine television coverage globally, making comparisons and operationalizing just how certain footage would mimic videogames or not; or the study would be an investigation of viewer interpretations of the coverage, getting at whether people perceived for themselves this particular way of viewing the war. I do neither of those things here. I am also not interested in how closely coverage might seem to digital war games, in particular. I am, however, interested in media discourse—in how the news as well as popular culture help construct a reality for us that is hegemonic, or "common sense," and how a common sense view of videogames is articulated.

The attraction of this approach is that hegemonic systems are not totalizing, meaning of course that the media can't set a monolithic meaning or 'control system' for viewers and listeners to passively inhale. There will always be contested meanings, contradictions, and various groups fighting for their own particular way of looking at things to become the dominant way. That's what we're doing at this conference—studying digital games, and arguing for new ways of looking at them, and at understanding them.

So, here I examine how the U.S. news media constructed a set of meanings surrounding the second Gulf War that invoked the use of the term 'videogame' as some sort of descriptor. I limit the analysis here to U.S. news media coverage simply to get the ball rolling—I wanted some sort of baseline, and from here I would like to expand the study, to see how this picture differed. But, even the U.S. coverage comments on foreign coverage, so a slightly wider view can be glimpsed, if you look carefully enough. But, first to some theory that sets the ground for the later analysis.

WHAT 'EVERYBODY KNOWS' ABOUT VIDEOGAMES

John Fiske writes about polysemy in media texts, and how various viewers, of say television, can 'decode' a text, or television show, in different sorts of ways [1]. Celeste Condit [2] has written about the difficulties of producing these polysemous messages, however, as there are elements of the story that are usually given precedence over others, just as there are sources of information given greater credibility, and methods of production that help guarantee that certain views and ways of seeing the world are privileged over others.

Those practices help, in part, to create what Gramsci [3] theorized as a hegemonic (and "common sense") way of viewing or understanding an event or situation. Stuart Hall and others [4] have done extensive work (research and theorizing) about how the news media's reliance on certain practices (quoting officials, presenting two sides to a story for balance, etc) helps privilege certain views and marginalize others. We can see this practice at work when we think of how the news media covers videogames even generally.

For example, although there are a growing number of publications that review games seriously (*The New York Times* is probably the best example), most of what the news reports about games is the unusual, or the troublesome. The Columbine High School

shootings as well as previous school shootings; players that commit suicide after playing games excessively; the nudity found in games such as BMX XXX; these are the most prominent stories that the media features, at least in the U.S. Part of that is due to the 'it bleeds it leads' quality of much news today, and part of it is likely due to media producers' own lack of understanding of the game industry (and games themselves). James Paul Gee [5] writes that when people start to play games, (just as when they start to do other things, such as get a Ph.D.) they join an affinity group that has a shared knowledge about the object of interest, and a particular way of looking at it. I would argue that currently, most media professionals, at least not the important gatekeepers that control what is and is not aired, and how it is presented, are not members of the game playing affinity group, mainly due to a generational difference. While that is likely to change, it presents hurdles for greater understandings of games, and leads to the creation of a particular view of games, a hegemonic view, that sees games as less than serious, and not very worthy of careful thought and consideration.

That said, the news media help to construct a particular view of videogames, one that may be at odds with those that play games actively. Yet, this is the more commonly accepted, hegemonic, common sense view, as it is the one given most prominence by the media. That view, and those that hold it, are taken up and emphasized as one particular exemplar of how media coverage of the second Gulf War was executed.

This project attempts to make more explicit that hegemonic view, and question how it was deployed in reference to the war with Iraq.

METHODS, QUICKLY COVERED

This paper has one central research question driving it: "How are individuals in news reports using the term 'videogame' in reference to the second Gulf War?" To answer that question, I employed textual analytic methods to relevant news coverage, sorting for themes as they related to how various individuals ascribed particular meanings to the term 'videogame' in the process of talking about the war or coverage of the war.

For this project I examined transcripts of television broadcasts from ABC, NBC, CNN (and its smaller nets), CBC, MSNBC and CBS from March 23 to the end of April 2003 (roughly the time span of the war itself). I searched for programs by using the keywords 'video game/videogame/computer game' and 'war.' This allowed me to focus only on those programs and shows that mentioned games in the context of war coverage. Additionally, I studied newspapers from all regions of the U.S. for the same keywords, but only for the month of April.

In examining these texts, I noted the length of each story, date of broadcast/publication, principal author/reporter, name and occupation of person making the statement about war and games, the actual statement, the context of the statement, any reaction to the statement, and the overall context/summary of the story itself.

These texts are meant to be interpreted as a sample of mainstream U.S. media coverage of the war. A more comprehensive analysis would have to take into account news magazines, web sites, and local television stations, among others. The findings discussed here are representative of wider coverage, but a broader study should be undertaken, especially to compare global media commentary with the U.S. version.

In all, 75 stories were found that held the key words, although approximately 10 were not included in generation of themes, as these stories were about the

popularity of video/computer war games since the outbreak of the Gulf War. The remaining stories were read through at least twice, and preliminary themes for categorizing usage of the term 'videogame' were identified. All statements were then double-checked, and the prevalence of themes and closeness of fit of all statements were verified. The following analysis describes the themes, gives examples of how stories employed them, and their prevalence. Following that, a more general discussion of how the themes intersect with other knowledge about the military and its use of various types of games is taken up.

VIDEOGAMES AND WAR: MAJOR & MINOR THEMES

After studying all related articles, the following 3 major and 2 minor themes were identified. The three major themes relate to how various individuals commented on coverage being specifically like or unlike a videogame (with various positive and negative connotations), while the two minor themes invoked comparisons between U.S. coverage of the current Gulf War and Gulf War I, or between U.S. and foreign media outlets' coverage of the current war. All three of the major themes were about evenly represented (roughly 30% each of mentions), although some overlapped in meanings within a single quote. It is also important to note here that the three themes should not be taken in isolation from each other. Many times, a quote invoked more than one theme, and I believe the importance of the various themes comes from how they work together to shape an overall picture of videogames and their relation to war.

(1) It's not a videogame, [because war] involves real people suffering, dying, or bleeding

The first theme identified attempted to distinguish or distance media coverage of the war, or people's beliefs generally about the war, from videogames, which was a placeholder for a certain meaning. Here the point of difference was the 'human.' People—either simply present in images, or suffering, bleeding or dead, were the key. Reporters, authors, and speakers employing this theme were implying that videogames do not invoke suffering or dying, and are absent of humanity.

For example, an NBC News political analyst, Jonathan Alter, comments "that was the most wrenching, moving moment [an interview with a woman whose son had just been killed in Iraq] of television today by far because it makes you realize this is not a fireworks show. It's not a video game. It's about real human lives, and we do tend to forget that sometimes" [6]. Alter suggests that while war is about real human lives that occasionally are lost, videogames are not about 'real' human lives. Likewise, on National Public Radio a Vietnam veteran is asked for his thoughts on the war and he responds "...this is serious. Large numbers of people are going to be killed here. It's not that—actually I'm in favor of what's going on here. It's just it's not a video game" [7]. The veteran, Frank Thompson, is not in favor of people being killed, of course, but wants to make the point that people *will* be, and to argue the point forcefully, he brings in the comparison with video games, invoking our hegemonic associations with digital games—that they are not about real people being killed.

Finally, the disassociation of videogames with real people and suffering is compared to media coverage by other countries. Christopher Dickey, a *Newsweek* staffer commenting for CNN states that "What people in the United States maybe don't appreciate, although everyone has written stories about it and American television has talked about it, is the incredible divergence that exists now between what the rest of the world sees on its tel-

evision screens and what the American audience is seeing, not so much on CNN, but there are other American networks that make this sound like it's a football game and make it look like it's a video game. What the rest of the world is seeing is dead children, dead soldiers, dead bodies, ravaged cities, and it's only going to get worse" [8]. Here, U.S. media are taken to task for their sanitized version of war, making it 'videogame-like' through the omission of views of the dead. And by comparison, foreign news outlets are showing the 'adult' version of the war, which game-liking Americans are perhaps too blind to see or handle.

To sum up this theme, then, sources that range from anchors, reporters and writers to military personnel and various experts all seek to expound on the real human suffering in war, and to talk about the coverage, the 'negative example' or useful opposite, becomes videogames, which 'of course' do not feature human suffering, death, or blood (ah the irony).

(2) It's just like a videogame, with all that hi-tech media/military equipment

Another theme found through analysis is a focus on technology, and the parallels between videogame technology and media and/or military technology. Connotations here can be positive or negative—either fascination and a 'gee whiz' attitude towards the hi-tech equipment being employed, or alternately, concern that such hi-tech might be a detriment somehow—usually through showing viewers 'too much too fast' through live-satellite broadcasts. Again, this theme overlapped with other themes, and was found to apply to approximately one-third of the statements studied, and representation was almost evenly split between references to media technology and military technology.

In regards to comparisons between videogames and media technology, oftentimes reporters commented on how the mechanics of covering war had changed, leading us to the present where live satellite coverage could be beamed into people's living rooms and onto their big-screen televisions. Sometimes this was compared to coverage of previous wars, such as Gulf War I or Vietnam, which raised questions about how the viewing/listening public would react to such graphic shots, produced live, appearing in their homes.

In other instances, individuals made the comparison to comment on how the news appeared on television screens—not the 'live-ness' of the shows, but the design, composition or formatting of information as an aesthetic component. For example, the famously cranky CBS critic Andy Rooney commented that "Any time death is imminent, life is exciting. And we're watching this war as though it was a video game. On television, it's hard to know where to look to find out what you want to know. There are pictures on top of pictures, moving print on top of those. There's more than the eye can see, or the brain comprehend" [9]. While Rooney's comments could also extend to thinking about videogames in relation to their lack of 'real' death (such as I dealt with above), the statements he makes following the citation of war-as-game are revealing. His comparison of the multiple sources of information found on TV-screens with videogame screens demonstrates a similar use *and fluency* (or its lack) with hi-tech.

Andy's discomfort with such an aesthetic is telling as the show he appears on, *60 Minutes* is probably the longest running TV news magazine show in the United States, and has been a top-rated show for years, but has come under fire recently for its aging anchors and 'too old' viewer demographic. Andy's incisive remark about the aesthetic of war coverage as similar in appearance to games indicates how

many of the primary gatekeepers of U.S. media are uncomfortable, if not unfamiliar, with such a design, and so feel discomfort or unease at its presence.

Another individual, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times,* makes the same connection: "now, beyond tailoring sitcoms and dramas to a younger crowd, news coverage increasingly reflects this infatuation, from model-like anchors to gee-whiz graphics that translate the war into video-game language for those conversant in Nintendo and PlayStation. … three-dimensional animation of bunker-buster bombs or computer-generated soldiers storming cartoon buildings at times resembles an ad for 'Mortal Kombat' [10]. That columnist, Brian Lowry, is discussing the tyranny of the 18-49 demographic in U.S. commercial television, but his remark also clearly shows how media use of computer graphics and other 'hi-tech' devices can seem like a 'foreign language' to those not conversant in its design or interpretation. His remark is especially apt in relating his dis-ease with videogames, as the comparison between soldiers and the fighting game *Mortal Kombat* is a stretch, at best. So, we see here again how a 'common sense' view of videogames is maintained, by a segment of the media with power to impose its understandings (rather than others), here of videogames, and what they are like.[1]

In addition to the linkage between media technology and references to videogames, there were also comparisons between the games and military technology. Here the associations were either made neutrally (using the term 'videogame' as largely a descriptor and not offering an opinion or assessment of that linkage) or were positive, extolling the extent to which the military has 'progressed' in making hi-tech weapons and gadgets to fight wars more efficiently, more safely, and more impressively.

Many of the uses here centered on describing innovations in military equipment. For example, in describing the integration of their 3D satellite imaging into military mapping technologies, John Hanke, the CEO of the developing corporation, Keyhole, Inc., stated "the technology is a marriage of video game technology, technology that was developed for military flight simulators. We put all of those things together and we get the ability to seamlessly roam and interact with this very, very large and detailed model of Earth" [11]. Although here it is the outside company making the comparison, even those within the military acknowledge how game-like some of their equipment is becoming. This can include the outright use of game based war simulations such as one made by Gamewars Inc. for the Army Research Institute (#51), as well as technology designed to resemble videogame hardware. Major Greg Heines, an Army Major, explained to writer Bobby White that "at a Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, a 15-inch remote-controlled truck, the Dragon Runner, now close to deployment, is guided by a six-button keypad modeled after Sony's PlayStation 2 video game control … because military designers felt confident

[1] We also see, as I noted, that this particular way of understanding news shows/videogames is the view of an older portion of the population, and as demographics shift, so might attitudes about 'proper' screen aesthetics.

that soldiers would be familiar with it, and by default, partially trained to use it" [12].

As we can see then, (and I will go into more depth about later), the military creates and uses many 'videogame-like' technologies that it describes that way itself, partially in an effort to better train young soldiers. Here again there is a return to a generational divide (younger people are more inclined to be proficient at and open to game-like technologies, is the assumption), although all parties seem willing to accept it. Thus, most references to the war and videogames that relate to technology make generational assumptions, although with different connotations of positive and negative effects.

(3) It's not a videogame, [videogames are] fake/non-serious/pretend/trivial

The last major theme that was found was closely related to the first, but differed in that it tried to focus on the underlying 'truth' or reality of the situation. Rather than talk solely of humans or human suffering and death, speakers employing this theme were making a broader statement about what counts as reality, and they were situating themselves as the authorities about what counted and didn't count as 'real' in this particular construction. This theme, that wars are unlike videogames because videogames are (some variant of) fake/pretend/unreal, was also often coupled with the assertion that wars are about people and suffering. But other times this theme was employed on its own. And as the speakers were defining the nature of reality and what counted as 'real,' they placed videogames outside that boundary, as being fake, trivial, and not to be taken seriously.

The distinction between the real and the fake was made very clear by one source, a retired USAF Colonel who remarked "everybody will make post mortems of whatever even occurs and I think we've put ourselves in really an *artificial* position. It's a war. It's not a video game and it's not a game of politeness" ([13], emphasis added). Other speakers, in trying to show how 'real' the war was, made a comparison designed to underscore the point with what they thought was an 'outrageous' example of the opposite-of-real—videogames:

- "...it's really important for every American to remember that this is not a video game. This is not imaginary. Young men and women are risking their lives 24 hours a day right now in real combat against a determined opponent ..." ([14], emphasis added).

- "The families recognize, more so than anyone, the very real nature of what is happening, Johnson said. These are not video games" [15].

In this theme, the use of the term videogame was largely negative, leaving videogames to occupy the position of trivial and fake, as something not worthy of being taken seriously. Yet as I will discuss later, that positioning has interesting implications for larger media coverage of (and popular thought about) videogames, as at other times, videogames are taken very seriously, so that contradiction is deserving of careful scrutiny.

Cross themes: Gulf War I & Global Media Comparisons

Finally, two minor themes appeared, almost always in tandem with the major themes described above. Of the 75 references to war and videogames, 4 related in some way to the first Gulf War, and 6 referenced foreign news coverage in comparison to U.S. offerings.

In the first sub-theme, speakers made statements concerning media coverage of the first Gulf War, and linked

it to videogames in a purely pejorative way. This was done mainly by talking about the very limited access that reporters were given in 1991, and how the resulting coverage was largely an exercise in military PR. For example, in an editorial in *The Baltimore Sun,* Christopher Hanson wrote "in reaction to the more graphic coverage of Vietnam, the Pentagon during Gulf War I restricted access and provided film that made the conflict seem like a video game" [16]. Likewise, Ty Burr wrote an editorial in *The Boston Globe* lamenting that he learned more about the first Gulf War from the film *Three Kings* than news coverage, because "there's still more human truth to the film than in the video-game footage of buildings silently exploding that we saw on TV during the Gulf War itself" [17].

It's easy to see the other themes coming through in these statements (games as pretend, games as about humanity), but the linkage with the first Gulf War also points to a shift in how reporters considered coverage of that war. During that war, the U.S. military did not allow the "embedded" reporting such as in the current war, and the pictures being released were largely the ones the military approved of. Following the first war there was a backlash against the media, as critics pointed to the anemic coverage, and more importantly, news organizations' relatively easy acceptance of those limits. So it's likely that reporters were now trying to distance themselves from that coverage, blaming the military rather than themselves for the 'fake' version of the war that was presented to the U.S. public.

The second sub-theme related to speakers that attempted to compare U.S. war coverage with foreign outlets, including Al-Jazeera as well as European companies. In the comparison, U.S. coverage was always disparaged, and so earned the moniker of 'videogame-like coverage' compared to the rest of the world's approaches.

Many of these instances condemned all American coverage for a focus on 'fancy graphics,' animations, and use of effects like night-vision goggles. These sources suggested that U.S. coverage was more concerned with flash, rather than substance, with one Canadian writing that "too many people have a video game mentality, shock and awe. That's why the majority of the countries in the world oppose the action" [18]. Even a correspondent for Al-Jazeera argued that offering people a sanitized image of war (such as by not showing interviews with captured American POWs) would result in "war as video games" [19]. These sources and others painted all U.S. coverage with the same brush, labeling it hi-tech, but fake, and inferior to the coverage found in other countries.

To summarize then, these two minor themes are not representative of the coverage as a whole, but they do tend to reinforce the other themes, as references to war coverage being similar or dissimilar to the first Gulf War's coverage, or comparisons to foreign news coverage, reinforced larger themes of the 'reality' of war, and the necessity for including images and coverage of human suffering and death. These admonitions of 'inferior' coverage associated that coverage with videogames—leaving a negative connotation once again with games, as something real wars should not resemble. Yet that conclusion becomes troubling when we compare it to what 'normal' coverage of videogames is like (at least in the U.S.). Can a view of videogames as fake and not about real people fit easily with other coverage of human suffering somehow related to games? Here the contradictions become apparent, and demand further investigation.

SO ARE VIDEOGAMES TOO FAKE OR TOO REAL?

Performing a close reading of how various individuals, from ordinary citizens to active military person-

nel and government officials, talked about war in relation to videogames, highlights some of the instability in regards to how to think about games, particularly if these utterances are compared to more 'everyday' statements about games. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, 'normal' coverage of games in the news media highlights how games are potentially dangerous, how they are 'too violent' and too bloody, especially for children. They are implicated in school shooting incidents, and during a recent wave of sniper attacks in the Washington, DC area, much attention was paid to sniper-shooting videogames and some stores, such as Wal-Mart, even took them off their shelves (at least for a while).

Yet that coverage paints games as dangerous, which is in contrast with statements about the war, where videogames are seen as fake and trivial. How do we understand that contradiction? Some might argue that it's related to the generational issue in regards to game playing, yet it is the established (mature) media system that is trying to see games both ways—as *containing* and *devoid of* threat at the same time. If that is so, what else can explain the bifurcated view? One answer is looking again to hegemony and the presence of multiple ways of looking at reality. Although both of these views are dominant, they appear at different times, in different contexts. They also point to a potential shift in the way games are viewed, because as these two viewpoints are put in contrast, the underlying beliefs about games are held up to scrutiny, and we start to uncover some interesting views about the role of videogames in life, in the military, and how those roles are becoming more established.

WAR GAMES: THE TANGLED HISTORY

Only looking at how media coverage of the war used the term 'videogame' overlooks a history of the military that is deeply intertwined with all kinds of games, electronic and otherwise. Military strategists have always engaged in 'war games' that have encompassed pencil-and-paper approaches along with live (but simulated) engagements in the field. The film *War Games* [20] drove home the seriousness of these games as we moved into the nuclear age, and increasingly began to rely on computers to aid in testing strategies. But even as militaries have produced games to practice (or play at?) war, these games have been wrapped in a cloak of seriousness, as not about fun like 'regular' games.

Of course no one would argue that war is fun, so why the need to either show these games as serious, or avoid the term altogether by going with euphemisms like 'war simulations'? Games are still seen in contemporary (U.S.) culture as devoid of value, as about diversion and trivial pursuits, rather than having any beneficial underlying purpose. Yet, even as the military has struggled with the terms of the discourse, they have whole-heartedly embraced not just games but digital games, their interfaces, and their technologies, to help train soldiers to go to war.

For example, although digital war games have traditionally been used by military strategists, now even "the lowest level of infantry soldiers" are being trained on simulators and games to learn about team building, attack and defense strategies, and how to use various technologies [21]. Tanks are equipped with communication screens that resemble videogame screens, and weapon controls are designed to mimic PlayStation controllers.

And that training is not just limited to military activities, but is spreading across culture. For example, the Army has worked with Hasbro (a toy company) for years, trading information that benefits both partners [22]. While toy companies rely on the military for information in order to create the most 'authentic' war toys

possible, the military is also relying on the toy companies, and creating cooperative groups with them for various purposes. Toy companies along with "the gaming and entertainment industries have assisted in battle scenarios and story lines that have helped the Army understand what it might be facing in battle arenas or with terrorism" [22]. The Army created The Institute for Creative Technologies in 1999, in order to develop "immersive training simulations" [22].

Those alliances demonstrate how closely military culture has become interwoven with digital gaming technologies (in addition to more primitive gaming simulations). Yet what might work for the military in training and operations is still deemed by current discursive standards as not 'serious' enough—hence the worry about the use of the term game. Although the military uses games to prepare for war, games must still be described as the opposite of war, privileging the seriousness of war, and sacrificing the (potential) seriousness of games. Where does that leave us then in the larger discursive world of the popular media?

CONCLUSIONS

What began as a simple exercise examining news media use of the term videogame in relation to the Gulf War has led to a larger issue, one that may remain unresolved. Can games be both real and fake? Can we dismiss superficial (or boosterish) war coverage as like a videogame, and in the next breath, decry games for turning kids into killers? While some of the negative connotations attached to games in traditional media can be attributed to a generational divide—between those that play and understand games and those that don't but control most media—it seems there must be more to the contradictions than that. While writing this conclusion I took a quick break and went to a web site where the newest video game trailers are posted [23], to check out the latest developments. Two of them were a trailer and a gameplay segment from *America's Army: Special Forces*. The Army's first game, for recruiting rather than training purposes, has remained popular, and the host site boasts over 2,000,000 downloads of the free game, with over 200,000,000 missions played. So will the view of games as trivial change when these players grow up, or gain more control of the media?

Maybe, maybe not. Perhaps we need to distinguish war from games to lend more seriousness to war, to give it a language and discourse separate from our 'pretend' wars and playful strategizing. But can games then ever be seen as serious? They are taken seriously enough in relation to teen violence, but not in other (perhaps more meaningful) ways. I can't say here—the discourse is still being worked out, and gamers are still fairly marginalized in larger society. If that changes, or if games become more mainstream, perhaps the discourse will shift too. Or maybe we just need to identify something as a playspace, and we should rethink how important it is to have 'fun' or 'trivial' items surrounding us—maybe it's very important in the end. Who knows? Let's go play a game and think about it some more.

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