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Final Year Research Project

Discourses Around Video Games within Newsprint Media within the USA and Ireland Between 2001 to 2014

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Acknowledgment

Abstract

The aim of this study is to establish, via Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the presence of violent and additive discourses within American and Irish newspaper treatments of video games since 2001 and 2014. The dissertation proposes that media texts play a huge role in disseminating ideologically-driven discourses. The media can also, however, generate objective and ideologically-neutral discourses that can shape a proper debate about the consequences of video game consumption. This research employs the conceptual tools of CDA in order to expose the hidden ideological discourses embedded within newsprint texts. It finds that there has been a significant shift in the negative discursive representations of video games within the USA since Dmitri William's article (2003). In Ireland, however, discourses surrounding video game consumption remain consistently negative. The results for Ireland confirm that newsprint texts deploy forms of rhetoric that persuade uncritical readers toward conservative and fear-based assumptions surrounding video games. Whilst this also holds true within the USA newsprint texts, the results confirm that there has been a sea-change in discourses around video games there, a fact that demonstrates the media's capacity to generate ideologically-neutral free texts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims

This dissertation explores the discourses around video games in the newsprint media within Ireland and America during the period 2001 to 2014. I decided to undertake this research because I have a keen interest in the power of the media. In particular, I am interested in how the discourses generated by the media shape our understanding of video games. For the period 1970 to 2000, a Dmitri William's article (2003) traced the representation of video games within "three leading news magazines" within the USA (p.523). Williams discovered a huge amount of fear in newspaper treatments of video game consumption, specifically their potential to promote violent and addictive behaviour (p542). For example, '[y]oung male players were said to have become inured to violence" and "[w]riters often relied on the language of pathology to describe game players, frequently using terms such as 'junkies', 'mania', infected, 'pathological preoccupation' and 'madness'."(p. 542) Given that video games are even more popular and ubiquitous now than when Williams undertook his research, the issue is ripe for re-examination. I will seek to ascertain if there has been a change in the negative framing of video games (specifically violent and addictive discourses) since 2001 within the USA to the present. I will also compare these results with Ireland during the same period (from 2001 and 2014).

Moral panic around technology is not a recent phenomenon. The 20th century claims made about the deleterious moral consequences of watching television testify to that fact. With regard to video games, it has been argued that 'there is a conservative political component to these fears' surrounding video games (Williams 2003:325). Some people perpetuate myths about the dystopian themes of certain video games and blame video games for a lot of society's ills. Contemporary researchers are debunking these oversimplified and one-sided arguments (Prensky

2006). Indeed, so many "fears attached to digital games are based on speculation and conjecture rather than academic analysis and contextually situated empirical research" that it becomes necessary to ask: "How can we talk with authority about the effects of digital games," especially when we consider that "we are only beginning to understand the gamer/user relationship" (Kerr 2006:2)

William discovered that the newsprint media persisted with charging video games with inducing addictive and violent behavior. Such negative framing of video games appears to ignore the reasoning behind the ruling of the US Supreme Court, which in 2001 "ruled that video games enjoy full free speech protection," since it would be unconstitutional to enforce "regulation of sales of violent video games to minors" and the "psychological research on violent video games is 'unpersuasive' (Ferguson 2013:1). When two youths murdered twelve students and a teacher before committing suicide at the Columbine High School in 1999 digital games were partly blamed for this tragedy.   However, the several lawsuits brought against the digital games companies were unsuccessful (Cooley 2003:4).

The technological change that has led to video games of the sort encountered today does not occur in some vacuum; technology is not a self-determining force that creates itself and the conditions for its fruition. In fact, technology is shaped by a multitude of factors, including political, cultural, and social ones (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1999:4). The newsprint media, for example, has an important role to play in shaping our understanding. After all, newsprint media provides an indication of the nature of a society and the specific aspect of its culture. Further, it offers a daily account of events occurring in history (albeit perhaps a limited one).   While newspapers do not meet academic standards in marshalling and examining evidence, they are

arguably a primary source by which many people obtain their own opinions on such controversial matters such as the effects of video game consumption.

Through a Foucauldian understanding of power, this paper employs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology. CDA is used because it offers the social scientist powerful tools to unearth the hidden ideologies embedded in texts. (Wodak and Meyer 2009:22) Deconstructing discursively moulded ideologies is of huge importance within society because the process of deconstruction denaturalizes, disrupts and ultimately challenges the general acceptance of ideological texts (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 8-10).

1.2 Definition of Games

Before proceeding any further, it would be useful to define what the term game means. The word 'game' has wide and diverse meanings for different people and groups. For example, many children and adult games are understood to be recreational. However, military and corporate experts refer to games as "logistic and industrial applications," and health care professionals apply games to rehabilitation (Avedon and Sutton-Smith 1971:4) . Games are also instrumental in referring to various forms of culture. Psychiatrists use games as aids that supplement the recovery of their patients. Educators attach a pedagogic value to games. Avedon and Sutton-Smith, therefore note that the term 'game' is, conditional on contextual, manifold and complex interrelating factors (1971 p.5).

One of the pioneers of games theory, Huizinga, defines play as "a free activity standing quite consciously outside consciously 'ordinary' life and 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly" (1950 p.13). In other words, games are a free enterprise, a medium that allows people to enter into the realm of the make-believe and play simply for the purpose of fun. Not everyone is free to engage in all games, however; when a State bans a video

game, citizens have had an aspect of their freedom curtailed. Further, many people believe that video games encourage violent behaviour. If this is so, such behaviour in the real world is clearly serious and cannot be accurately considered 'play.' In sum, games are not exactly free to play and many possess serious elements. The pioneers of game theory forged their theories within a particular time and space, and it may be that their definitions can no longer encapsulate the giant leaps being made in video games (the burgeoning digital revolution continues to reshape our definitions of games).

2.Literature Review

2.1 The Sociological and Economic Importance of Video Games

Huizinga stated that people are 'homo ludens' ('man the player'). Play and games are cornerstones of civilisation. Many social institutions result from play behaviour. Such behaviours are both integral components of societies and fundamental and necessary for cultural development (Huizinga 1950:9).

Video games are a relatively recent phenomenon. (Burnham 2003:2). For those of a certain age, video games involved basic graphics that did not stretch the imagination. These games did not provoke much thought or opinion. In the past ten-to-fifteen years, however, three things have happened. First, the production values of video games have become quite extraordinary. The graphics, colours, sound, and dimensions of a contemporary video game compare favourably with the most expensive motion picture. Second, the plots, actions and issues addressed by video games now take the same imaginative leaps that movies do. Third, video games have become hugely popular.

Some statistics make this latter claim very clear. Minister Bruton predicts that the global games industry will "be worth $82billion by 2015" (cited in McCormick 2012:6). Within the "United States alone, sales of video games and consoles generated $10 billion in revenue last year, surpassing box-office ticket sales of $9.5 billion" (New York Times: 2004). The Irish Games Market has approximately "generated over €200 billion worth of sales" between 2011 and 2011. (cited in McCormick 2012:6). Video games earn gigantic sums of money for hardware and software companies, they are played around the world by people of all social backgrounds, and have books, periodicals and websites devoted to them. In short, video games are one of the key ways in which people, especially young people, entertain themselves.

2.2 Newspapers: A Powerful Medium

Newspaper analysis offers a valuable insight into the nature of a society and into some specific aspects of its culture. Newspapers offer a daily account of events occurring in history (albeit perhaps a limited one), and the data is relatively easy to access. Democratic societies tend to avoid prescriptive regulation of the media (Hesmondhalgh 2007:102) As a result, journalism plays a hugely significant role in informing people about various contentious debates, including the effects of video game consumption. Although, as mentioned above, journalism does not always meet the standards of academic research, it certainly remains the main source of information for the vast majority of the populace. What people read in newspapers has a major bearing on their own opinion. Although people may be cynical about certain media commentators, they do pay great attention to media debates, especially those that involve supposedly malign influences on people's behavior.

Some media texts are forged within particular ideological frameworks, however, and thereby contain erroneous information portrayed as factual. On some occasions,

"[i]nstead of seeking to understand the dynamics of social change, and thus encourage people to be in a better, more informed position, the mass media employ a variety of strategies, many of which owe more to the conventions of popular entertainment than to those of analysis or critique." (McRobbie 1994:94)

In this respect, media texts can actively ignore the fact that many video games contain high degrees of sophistication and meaning:

Look at video games because they create new social and cultural worlds – worlds that help us learn by integrating thinking, social interaction, and technology, all in

service of doing things we care about … we argue here for a particular view of games – and of learning – as activities that are most powerful when they are personally meaningful, experiential, social, and epistemological all at the same time. (Shaffer et al, 2005:105)

Many people are of course very cynical about the motives and operations of media outlets. For some, the culture of journalism is encapsulated with the motto 'if it bleeds it leads'. That is, in an effort to sell a greater quantity of papers, journalists actively seek out predominantly negative texts. Newspaper reporting can be exceptionally successful in creating negative discourses. It is crucial, however, to point out that newspapers also generate texts that are neutral, objective or ideologically free (Van Dijk 2001:352). Discourses can be utilized to resist the dominant discourses and initiate the process of real and lasting change in society (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258).

Prensky argues that the role video games play in our lives is mostly misconstrued by the public at large:

Since pretty much all the information that parents and teachers have to work with is a lot of speculation, conjecture, and overblown rhetoric about the putative negative aspects of these games, plus a few scary images glimpsed over their kid's shoulder, it's no wonder they're in a panic! (Prensky xvi :2006)

Of relevance here is the claim that "[g]aming's ability to mobilize and sustain a culture that immerses and fully absorbs its participants makes it threatening to many parents and teachers. And in many ways, it is" (Castell and Jenkins 2002:384). What is needed is a more factual and sensible dialogue about the effects of video games rather than some of the ideologically driven discourses that tend to focus on unsubstantiated negative views around the role video games play within our society.

Some of the misunderstanding and miscommunication is a direct result of the newsprint media. Editorials, commentaries and reports can sway the opinion of the public towards specific ideologies or agendas and set the parameters around which specific topics are received by the populace. Newspapers can encourage people to frame discourses around video games in a particular manner and, by extension, influence, politicians, policy making, censorship and the overall regulation of video games.

Social scientists must give careful consideration to how media texts are generated, both in the literal sense and at an ideological level (Devereux 2003:170-171). Some journalists regularly employ formal and objective language to appear neutral. The transmitting of media texts in such an impersonal fashion, however, is sometimes but "a rhetorical stratagem to aid the obfuscation of a reporter's subjectivity" (White 1997:130). While print journalists can claim to be objective, some generate fear-based texts around the usage of video games. They do so despite the fact that there are no studies that prove the long-term effects of playing video games:

Whether playing violent video games is causing any individual child to become more violent a complex question. It is easy enough to find studies that show correlations between exposure to violent media and aggressive behaviour or rises in averages. However, could playing violent non-electronic games like football or rugby have the same effect? Highly likely. (Prensky 2006:17)

It is my contention that part of the responsibility for the misrepresentations of video game consumption must lie with the media. After all, "every day directly or indirectly, by statement and omission, in pictures and in words [...] mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifest and concrete" (Gitlin 1980:2). However, in defense of media professionals, Herman and Chomsky (1994)

argue that journalists regularly act with integrity, believe they are feely and objectively choosing the news despite the fact that they are mistaken (p.1). Which is not surprising, since "money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent" thereby "the constraints are so powerful, and are built into the system in such a fundamental way, that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable" (1994: 2). In some instances, therefore, journalists are genuinely unaware that their own objectivity is being comprised by the ideological forces embedded within the structures of media institutions. Let us turn to that matter now.

2.3 The Role of Ideology

Devereux argues that ideological analysis is essential and necessary within media studies (Devereux 2003:151). Media institutions are increasingly owned by a few media conglomerates. Media concentration and conglomeration have serious implications, since they result in a reduction of "the diversity of cultural goods in circulation" (Murdock and Golding 1995:201) Consequently, there is often "a politically unbalanced range of news media" (Devereux 2003:101). There are a number of factors that further compound this problem. First, audience members are exposed to ever-more complex media texts. Further, these texts tend to be imbued with ideological principles. (Devereux pp.151-152).

At this point, we might ask what an ideology is. Thompson argues that 'Ideology, broadly speaking, is meaning in the service of power' (Thompson, 1990:267). In Laughey's view, an "ideology it is a set of ideas, norms, values, and beliefs set forth by a particular social group, institution, culture or religion" (2007:201). Van Dijk, argues that when media texts are driven by ideologies they are 'self-serving', they organize and legitimize the 'social cognitions' or socio-cultural knowledge-aims, interests, values, norms and identity of members within specific organizations, social groups, corporations and institutions (2001:198).

Early interpretations of ideology were somewhat restricted. Marx framed his understanding of ideology within a canon of ideas that hinged around macro-sociology. He charted a problematic issue in *The German Ideology* around ownership of the "means of production" in a specific social formation, and the determinant relationship this has with the ruling ideas of an epoch (Marx and Engels: 1976). Marx stated that "the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" and, consequently, "...the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas". This is a consequence of the structure of society, as "the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means on mental production" (pp.59-62).

Neo-Marists thinkers, such as Althusser and Gramsci, heralded a more 'open' and 'relaxed' understanding of ideology (Devereux 2003:163). Althusser theorized that the ideological State apparatus, such as media organizations, produced and disseminated capitalist ideology as natural, preordained and advantageous (p.163). However, in order for the ruling elite to continue their domination in capitalist society, the media must be viewed by audiences as a self-governing force. In this respect, "the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in struggle" (Althusser 1971). Althusser allows space for audiences to become a hegemonic force that stresses the importance of democratic values. (Devereux 2003:163). Gramsci, meanwhile, argued that the ruling elite had no certitude about their 'hegemonic position,' and for 'hegemony' to be realized, it must continuously enter into a process of negotiation and renegotiation . In Gamsci view, the 'mass media' is a significant force in the production of 'hegemonic ideology,' which competes with other opposing hegemonies (Devereux 2003:167).

Althusser and Gramsci moved away from Marx's monolithic idea of ideology and paved the way for a more open understanding of how ideological forces function in society. In this respect, they allow for conflicting voices in media institutions to oppose the dominating ideology. As mentioned earlier, the media can deploy texts that are neutral, balanced and thereby ideologically free. For example, if there is a prevalent ideologically-driven discourse within newsprint media that video games are demoralizing phenomena that encourage ordinary people to display addictive and violent behavior, then, according to the theories propounded by Althusser and Gramsci, this dominant ideology can be opposed by other newsprint media.

Contemporary scholars such as, John Thompson, adopts a multidisciplinary approach that overcomes the weaknesses traditionally connected with "ideological media analysis" (Devereux: 2003:169). Thompson employs a "tripartite methodological" framework of analysis that investigates the production, content and reception of texts within mass media. His model seeks to recognize and comprehend the organizational production of media institutions and the discursive dimension of ideological analysis; the content and arrangement of media texts, how specific "symbolic forms are transmitted" and put into circulation, and the "reception and appropriation of media messages," thereby privileging the 'hermeneutic' role audience members play in deciding if, and the way in which, the media generated ideologies are received (cited in Devereux 2003:170).

Recognizing the cultural work of audience members is crucially important because it is often assumed that audience members are passive consumers of the culture industry. Theodor Adorno (1973), operating from a Marxist perspective, argued that, lacking critical assessment, audiences essentially accepted wholesale the messages from the cultural industry. Adorno had an especially negative view the capacity of an audience to navigate and critique forms of mass

entertainment, a fact that is perhaps a consequence of the turbulent years of the Second World War and the Cold War in which he lived through. Contemporary audiences are not what Chomsky would describe as the "bewildered herd" (2002:21)   In fact, "[p]eople are not as stupid, gullible, or easy to dominate as the media indoctrination perspective would have us believe" (Croteau et al. 2012:256).

Much social research has debunked the oversimplified notions that video gamers consume games in a docile manner. Squire (2003) points out that video games create productive spaces to allow players to engage in critical thinking: "children are not just passive consumers of popular culture, but they reappropriate its symbols and forms and integrate it into their own play, as well" and of course within these video games there are choices that need to made, which offers the space to reflect and examine complex issues (p. 9).

Devereux notes that only if media texts can be explicitly demonstrated to produce a disparity of power relations can they be deemed to be ideological (Devereux 2003: 168). For example, the ideological charge would be justified if a newspaper continually produced articles that focus on the supposed negative aspects of video games, such as the stereotypes that video game players hide in their bedrooms and away from the social interaction of their families. Such articles would ignore the many studies that have revealed that video games are in fact played within "communal media landscapes of the families" such as "hallways, dens and playrooms" (Aarsand and Aronsson 2009:504). When an ideologically-driven charge is made, the job of the social scientist is to expose the media texts that are motivated by ideological principles and that reproduce unequal power relations (Devereux 152).

2.4 The Power of Discourse

Many discourses are incubators for ideologies that can produce the collective 'mentalities' in society (Barker et al 2008:280) These powerful ideologically-driven discourses are moulded as 'natural' or as 'common sense,' thereby becoming the taken-for-granted knowledge shared by the populace. (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 9).

Gramsci viewed discourse as something that was important insofar as it aids people to understand their lived experiences. Similarly, Foucault argued that discourses organize symbolic forms within our lives, in such a way that they become internalized (or naturalized) within people's minds and hearts. Discourses are not just powerful external entities, they also derive their power from within people. That is to say, discourse gets weaved into the very fabric of people's knowledge, which in turn produces compliant subjects (Jackson Lears, 1985: 568-570) For Foucault, discourses are governed by a system of rules that signifies the structures in which we catalogue and divide its various meanings. Since discourses create and engineer these meaning systems, they naturally gain the status of truth (Laughey 2007:74).

Newsprint media can create negative and false discourses that appear legitimate and true. For example, a newspaper article can claim that video games require no exercise and encourage lazy behaviour. However, many video games demand rigorous activity, such as Dance, Dance Revolution, Rock Band or the Wii sport games. Newsprint journalists may suggest that video game players are antisocial because they play video games for many hours on their own despite the fact that many video games encourage people to be social actors: "Solo games, which were the norm in the period before computers became networked, have mostly been supplanted by multi-player games, involving anywhere from two to over a million players" (Prensky 2006:47). In actuality, video games encourage people to develop social capital; gamers become team players, develop challenging skills, a sense of achievement and help others in the appropriation

of this game play knowledge. Communities are created and people have an outlet for expression and a means to engage in meaningful activities within society (Leadbeater, 2005).

Foucault points out that there are restrictions on discourse that result from the exclusionary mechanisms of power; certain talk and text are emphasized, whilst alternatives forms of knowledge are mitigated, subjugated or omitted. Foucault illustrates this claim within his historical exposition of how meanings and practices are divided into different classifications (for example, good versus bad) that ensure 'the infinite continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of a constantly recurring absence' (Foucault 1989:25). Over a period of time, the knowledge production surrounding specific discourses becomes more significant in the appropriation of power. Discourses can, therefore, constrain the production of knowledge, opposition and difference. In other words, 'discursive information' becomes a form of power exerted over individuals by becoming instilled into their consciousness in order for them to accept the underlying messages, for example, good versus evil, lawful versus criminal and so on (Foucault 1995:187).

As noted already, for Foucault, not saying something is just another way of saying something. For example, if a newspaper article criticises video games for its violent content, one might wonder why television does not face the same criticism. After all, both often depict the same levels of violence. If a newspaper report claims that violent video games are the direct cause of someone's violent behaviour, one might wonder what other important information has been excluded, such as the person's childhood, education, socioeconomic status, and mental health. The problem of knowledge production lies in the fact that it is "always bound up in a network of power relations," whereby dominant discourses become legitimized and rationalized through a process of exaggeration and denigration (Durham and Kellner 2012:146).

The discourses generated by newspaper reporters have the power to make particular ideas visible and classify them as truths and denigrate excluded ideas. In other words, newsprint media can classify specific research as true. For example, widespread media coverage was given to the 2002 claim by David Cook, the President of the American Academy of Paediatrics, stated that only 18 of the 3,500 studies of violent media completed did not register any effects. This claim has since been proven to be false due to its large inconsistencies with the gathering of data (Freedman 2002).

What I am claiming here is that one way to discern if the discourses within a newspaper are driven by ideological forces is to investigate whether or not they focus on negative stories about video games. A researcher could, for example, evaluate the media discourses that present the studies that find that after violent video game consumption people have shown increased levels of aggressive behavior compared to people who consume nonviolent video games (for example, Anderson and Dill:2000, Irwin and Gross:1995, Lynch et al:2001, Silvern and Williamson:1987). That researcher would find that the discourse has ignored or mitigated the burgeoning body of evidence that contradicts the results of these studies or testifies to the numerous benefits of video game consumption. (for example, Fabricatore 2007, Gordon 2007, Johnson 2005, Prensky 2006, 2007 and Van Eck 2006). In short, one of the ways a text can be deemed ideological is if it generates only *one-sided* arguments in order to support its position whilst ignoring or mitigating any other information that would provide an opposing point of view. The following chapter examines the methodological approach undertaken by this dissertation and the research design applied to the data.

3. Methodology

3.1 Objective of Research and Methodology

The chief aim of this research was to investigate the discourses surrounding video games within newsprint media in Ireland and America during the period 2001 to 2014. In particular, it seeks to examine if any of the violence and addiction discourses surrounding video games have changed since the William's article and to compare these results with Ireland during the same period (2001 to 2014). The guiding principle for this research is an interpretivist approach "based on the belief that reality is socially constructed and the goal of social scientists is to understand what meanings people give to that reality" (Schutt 2009:92). The research sought to discover the various representations and meanings around the discourses of video games generated and negotiated through the newsprint texts under investigation.

It is important to note that all research must adhere to ethical standards; "[a]bsolute central to research integrity is ethics" (O'Leary: 40). However, since this research is dealing with the public documents under analysis it is not confronted with the various ethical issues that arise in relation to consent and data availability or confidentiality.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, an approach that "aims to find out more about a particular problem or phenomenon" (Dyer 1995:43). Hardwired into a qualitative approach is the view that society and people can only be understood subjectively. After all, the meanings people construct are based on the interpretation of their experiences and not some shared universal truth. (Walsham 1995:78-80). A qualitative approach was appropriate for this research since it "works at delving into social complexities in order to truly explore and understand the interactions, processes, […] and belief systems that are part of individuals, institutions, cultural groups, and even the everyday" (O'Leary 2010:114) O'Leary notes that the qualitative tradition derives from both from deductive and inductive logic (p. 113). The latter involves "mining your data for predetermined categories in order to support 'theory' (O'Leary 2010: 162). In other

words, analyzing specific themes in order to ascertain what is emerging from the data. Whereas, the former "begins with specific data which are then used to develop (induce) a general explanation (a theory) to account for the data" (Schutt 2009:44). Thus, drawing from specific data the researcher narrows down and tests certain hypotheses in order to confirm (or not) a theory or conclusion.

Qualitative data analysis also involves "lots of reading and reading that needs to start right from the point of data collection and continue through the process of data management, data analysis, and evening the drawing of conclusions" (O'Leary 2010:262). Throughout this research the texts were constantly being read, organized and analyzed; the researcher had to ask "questions of the material (Strauss calls this process 'coding')". This process of "repeated coding of the data leads to denser concept-based relationships and hence a theory" and the "emerging theory is constantly being checked by means of contrast" (Flick 2006:19). The research, in other words, had to identify themes and conclusions emerging from the laborious and "iterative research" process of collecting data and continuous comparative analysis. Brevity is crucial here because "[d]ata reduction, simplification, lies at the heart of coding" (Bailey 2007:127). This was a difficult task, since the sheer volume of data meant that choices had regularly to be made in order to decide what was the most appropriate or relevant data to both include and exclude.

3.2 The Research Method: Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is powerful tool for analysis that exposes the complex, synergistic, and uneven power relationships that often occur between language, power, society, discourse, ideology, politics and culture. CDA can show how newspaper texts frame topics over a specific time period. (Tapia et al., 2011:220). As noted earlier, by acting as the ground for dominate ideologies, discourses are extremely powerful tools of control. Discourses can

legitimize asymmetrical power relations, thereby creating polarization of control within society (Van Dijka 1993:253).

Successful inculcation of ideologically-driven discourses, however, requires that they *appear* as apolitical and as the result of good reasoning. The authors who disseminate these ideologies do so by parading discourses as objective, normal and inevitable, with the greater aim of manipulating and subjecting the populace to absolute or dominant point of views (Wodak and Meyer 2009:22) Since ideologies are rarely expressed explicitly in 'text and talk,' CDA is an extremely useful way to illuminate the ideologies that are deliberately hidden within discourses (Van Dijk 1993:32).

To challenge the power of these discourses, CDA's framework of analysis gives the social researcher the opportunity to decipher and appraise the various textual strategies employed by certain authors who aim at naturalizing discourses. It can demystify the hidden ideologies embedded within discourses by the dominating culture, a culture that often seeks to manipulate people to think in a particular fashion. (Wodak and Meyer 2009:23) CDA, in short, has the capacity to expose the power constraints sometimes imposed upon people through ideologically-driven discourses. (Wodak and Meyer 2009:22)

3.3 Analysis of Data (Topoi)

The specific aspect of CDA employed by this dissertation is historical argumentation analysis, also known as topoi analysis. Topoi means the 'place' where arguments can be located within a text (Van Eemeren et al., 1996:38). Specifically, topoi are the discursive argumentations that get entrenched within texts and represent the 'doxa or common sense' that refers to the shared knowledge that exists amongst groups and communities (Boke et al.2000 24:25). A topos (the singular form) is constituted by two main elements. First, a topos validates a specific line of

argument, which is made all the easier if the validation lies within accepted knowledge. Second, since a topos represents concepts more so than words it often assumes knowledge, as opposed to explicitly referring to the concepts within a text. (Grue 2009:309-312) Exposing topoi within a text reveals latent premises of argumentations and complex viewpoints. If a large collection of topoi is discovered, this might be deemed an ideology (pp.310-312).

Topoi is an advanced framework of analysis that investigates and compares the multilayer texts which conceal discourses The crux of topoi research is to discover the distinct modes of arguments within a specific text cohort (Fairclough 1995:23-24). The application of 'negative' and 'neutral' topoi associations was employed by this research in order to measure any change in the results surrounding video games in the USA and to compare these results within Ireland.

- A text was deemed 'negative' if it contained a discourse that portrays video games in an exclusively adverse and prejudicial manner.

- A text was deemed 'neutral' if it devoid of any clear mode of argumentation.

Since language is a powerful tool that allows specific identities, ideologies, and cultures to become dominant forces in society, CDA is of great importance within social research. The arrangement and execution of language reflects the author's objectives, ideology and thought. CDA approaches can reveal how these authors employ a series of linguistic strategies "to make the subject positions of discourse transparently obvious without any visible alternatives" (Devereux 2003:168).

Discourse can be a form of 'ideological control'; as already noted. Discourses can manipulate meaning within newsprint texts by presenting a position that supports the producers' ideology. When an alternative viewpoint is adverse to the producer's ideology these texts (or messages) are mitigated, understated, presented in distorted fashion, and, in some cases, completely ignored.

(Van Dijk 1995:29) In short, CDA analyses the discourses that are shrouded in ideology and exert domination and control over the alternative ideas that are excluded (Jager and Maier 2009: 36).

3.4 Sampling

The sampling strategy applied to this research was non-random sampling (also known as non-probability, strategic sampling, purposive and theoretical sampling). This technique of sampling was employed because this research needed a calculated method of selecting specific newspaper texts. This type of sampling was effective because it looks for things which "include deviant, extreme, unique, unfamiliar, misunderstood, misrepresented, marginalized, or unheard elements of a population" (O'Leary 2010:168). Finally, one of the advantages of non-random sampling is its low cost. One of the disadvantages of course is that researchers can distort data with their 'unwitting biases' (p.168). This point will be returned to.

Texts were accessed electronically through the search engine LexisNexis. Appendix 1 outlines the steps that were taken to illustrate how the newspapers were gathered and analyzed for this research.

Being able to access print media in electronic form was a significant advantage; "the ease which corpora can be assembled for revealing the following: how media texts might be repeatedly framing issues or events which are reported over a significant period of time". (O'Halloran 2010:563). This provides the social scientists with a great array of text media to analyse, thereby a greater scope for generalization of findings and a means to gain insights into the types of ideological and cultural meaning-making disseminated by journalists. Another significant advantage of this CDA approach is that it is cost effective; it is relatively easy to access and

compile data. The texts analyzed were readily available and accessible via the internet because they are public documents.

3.5 Limitations of the Research Method

All forms of methodological approaches have shortcomings, and CDA is no exception. Schegloff (1998), for example, argues that CDA investigators conduct research in a biased manner because they are motivated by ideological principles (p.9). However, this criticism is valid for all projects of research. After all, in gathering empirical data the social scientist inevitably brings a degree of bias to his/her research based on previous experiences. Bailey (2007) notes that "reflexivity in part, critically thinking about how one's status characteristics, values, and history, as well as numerous choices one has made during the research, affects the results". (p.6) Elsewhere, O'Leary points out that "interpretations are always intertwined with a researchers biases, prejudices, worldviews, and paradigms- both recognized and unrecognized, conscious and subconscious" (O' Leary 2010:263).

Consequently, this analysis is not objective: any analyst will come to the investigation with some sort of conscious and unconscious biases. In other words, the interruptive approach for this research is only one of many possible readings of the data. Accordingly, readers may reject the argument put forward by this research because they see a different interpretation. In order to avoid or reduce erroneous assumptions and thereby increase the validity of the research, I ensured that the evidence for this study was drawn from the actual language used within the newsprint articles. This means that another researcher could conduct the exact same research. Even though that researcher may draw different conclusions, he/she would verify that my approach was conducted in a clear and systematic manner.

Researchers must be reflective about the discursive nature of their positions-values, beliefs and norms whilst conducting the research in a scientific manner (Van Dijk 1993:253). After all, a chief aim of CDA is to expose power relations hidden within discourses. The CDA investigator must not make matters worse through excessive reliance on jargon or technical language. The texts used to deconstruct discourses should be written clearly and to the point and be accessible to the population at large (Billig 2008:829). In the next and final chapter, the overall findings for this research will be presented.

4. Research Findings.

The principal aim of this research was to investigate the discourses surrounding video games within newsprint media in the USA and Ireland during the period of 2001 to 2014. In particular, I analysed any change that may have occurred since Williams (2003) discovered predominantly negative discourses surrounding video games within USA newsprint media texts (during 1970 to 2001), and compared these results to the Irish case. The research found that, proportionate to the population within the USA, there is less newsprint texts about video games within Ireland, a fact that might be attributed to a stronger video games market within the USA. The finding revealed that there has being a significant shift in the negative discursive representations of video games within the USA since William's article. Interestingly, the data revealed that within Ireland the discourses surrounding video games were exclusively negative.

4.1 The Topoi for Ireland

Overall, four articles were found within the topoi for Ireland: Two from the violent topoi and two from the addiction topoi. An interesting finding that emerged within the research is that *The Irish Times* generated of one negative article found within each topoi within Ireland. This is a significant finding because *The Irish Times* Ireland's paper of record and, as such, what it prints carries a significant weight for readers, as opposed, for example, to what the tabloids print. The data revealed that all the newsprint media in Ireland between 2001 and 2014 was disseminating conservative ideological principles that focused on the negative effects of violent video game consumption, and the capacity for video games to create addicts.

4.2 The 'Violence' Topoi in Ireland

The violence topoi within Ireland were discursively represented in a negative manner, thereby indicating no change in the negative representations of violent video games during 2001 to 2014. This can be illustrated as follows:

The author of one of the articles observed that a child development psychologist, Dr Aric Sigman, discovered that playing video games "takes away the kind of hands-on play that allows kids to experience how the world works in practice". The author then used this contention to argue that "no wonder the lines between fantasy and reality are becoming blurred". The author then made an unwarranted leap to connect this argument with a terrible tragedy that occurred in Glasgow:

In May, a Glasgow court heard how a 13-year-old boy slashed the throat of a Gears Of War 3 gaming rival and then sneered: 'Don't die', before calmly walking off - a moment eerily reminiscent of the 18-rated game, which rewards players for devising ways of finishing off their adversaries. (Carey: 2014)

Nothing in the article warrants connecting violent video game consumption and a terrible and tragic murder. In order to substantiate a connection between a child playing a violent video game and the tragic murder of a 'gaming rival', it would be helpful to employ the opinion of an expert, who might include some important information such as the child's education, the environment of his family home, and whether or not he had a history of mental health problems. No reference is made to any other possible connection to this boy's murder, other than the unsubstantiated claim that when 13 year old boys play "Gears of War 3" they can become murders. The omission of these facts is indicative of the violence topoi within Ireland.

The Irish Times article adopts a similar strategy to advance an ideological position by making an unwarranted connection between violent video game consumption and the murdering of innocent victims.

Take Robert Steinhaueser, who in April strode through the corridors of the Gutenberg school in Erfurt, eastern Germany, firing a pump-action shotgun and handgun as school friends sat their exams. He was apparently fascinated by violent video games and would often play them into the night. (Fottrell 2002)

Again, vital and revealing points of information, such as the murder's mental health, are omitted. Consequently the only possible correlative information that is made-conveniently-present is that he was 'fascinated by violent video games'. The reader is being coaxed into making a connection between violent video games and killers, but no substantial argument is made to validate this hypothesis.

Further, this article makes three appeals to authority: 'Dublin psychologist Domhnall Casey,' the American Society of Paediatrics and Paul Goldin, a behavioural psychologist'. They all, however, echo the same arguments being made by the author, "[s]tudies show that when children and young adults play violent video games, their aggressive behaviour increases," (Fottrell 2002) This is not the mark of objective journalism, since the counter arguments are not given a voice in to transmit balanced viewpoints to the readers. It is clear that the objective of the author is to not engage in proper journalistic practices but rather to disseminate conservative ideological principles.

4.3 The 'Addiction' Topoi in Ireland

This research found that the addiction topoi for Ireland were exclusively negative. *The Irish Times* article (2014) is particularly negative. Video game players who play for over forty hours are labelled as 'addicts'. Granted, this seems like an excessive amount of time to devout to playing video games. Many people, however, would spend this amount of time watching television; we would not call them addicts. Labelling anyone an addict carries a particularly negative connotation. Immediately, people conjure up negative images such as neglect and abuse. If the reader was in any doubt to what the author believes happens to people who play video games for long periods of time, the author has a very negative answer:

So all-consuming and compelling is the fantasy world they inhabit that addicts typically neglect themselves and those around them, "forget" to eat or to wash, sometimes refuse to leave their bedrooms or even to engage with friends who are not similarly enthralled (Cluskey 2014)

Throughout the article video games are painted as inherently negative pieces of software that create 'mood swings' and 'diminished imaginations' within gamers. The article also claims that the addictive nature of video games means that children become socially isolated. The author does not refer to any texts or studies that would offer an alternative viewpoint or attend to the benefits of playing video games. For the author, the problem of excessive video game usage is epic: "this is a problem on a par with alcohol or drug addiction". This is a powerful association to make, since many people would have some idea as to the destruction that alcohol and drug addiction creates. The rhetoric employed by this author could easily persuade the average, uncritical reader that video games have the potential to reduce people to addicts.

Most of the text of the second article is dedicated to re-telling the terrible events that resulted in Daniel Bartlam's murdering his mother. Within the 1357 worded text, only two pieces of information (two quotes, which are not from medical professionals but from family members) are presented to provide an exposition of what motivated this horrendous act: "He played violent computer games such as Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto" and "Daniel got far too carried away with a fantasy world where killers and video games are normal and seemed to have forgotten about reality." (Griffiths and Morgan:2012). This article is a particular bad piece of journalism. The reader is being manipulated into associating violent video games with murders. Again, no solid evidence is supplied to substantiate these claims. In addition, any other potential reasons for this terrible murder are visibly absent. Therefore, the reader is being manipulated to reach the same ideological conclusion within the text.

4.4 The Topoi for the USA

This research found that within the USA (2001 to 2014) the negative and neutral topoi surrounding video games were spread throughout different newspapers. The various topoi surrounding video games that emerged reflects the general attitude by USA journalists during this period. The findings also revealed that since the William's (2003) article and between 2001 to 2014 there were less negative themes (discourses or topoi) generated about video games consumption within the USA. This supports the position that newspapers can in some instances oppose dominant discourses and produce neutral, objective or ideologically-free texts (Van Dijk 2001:352). This overall shift within the USA suggests that, unlike the journalists within Ireland, US journalists have become more informed have been exposed to more neutral and objective studies on the effects of violent video game consumption.

4.5 The Violence Topoi within the USA

This research found three negative and five neutral texts within the USA 'violence' topoi during 2001 to 2014. A significant shift occurred during the period since the predominantly negative themes that William's (2003) article discovered. The discourses surrounding video games are no longer predominantly negative; instead, they have moved towards a more neutral and balanced position.

4.6 The Violence Negative 'Topoi' within the USA

Analysis revealed that the discourses under discussion were ideologically driven. One article begins with the findings of a study that states that "children and teenagers who play violent video games show increased physical aggression months afterward" (George:2008) which sets the tone for the rest of the article. The tone of the texts is framed with the usage of specific words, what Wodak and Meyer (2009) would describe as a form of rhetoric in order to convey a degree of

certainty, authority and taken for granted knowledge (p.9). The results from one of the studies, for example, are presented as "conclusive evidence that playing violent video games has harmful effects on children and adolescents" (George 2008). Evidence that is 'conclusive' is beyond doubt or an indisputable fact; all studies that are contrary to these findings must be erroneous. Therefore, the text is leading to the reader to reject any studies not presented, studies that may oppose or contradict some of the negative assertions formulated by the research that is present. This particular form of manipulation confirms Foucault's assertion of how discourse can become so effective in executing its power (Foucault 1989:25).

Throughout the article there is an appeal to authority: "lead author Craig A. Anderson, a psychology professor at Iowa State University and director of its Center for the Study of Violence" (George: 2008). The pre-modifying nouns used to describe the researcher are 'lead author,' which immediately connotes someone who is a front-running authority in his field. To further buttress his authoritative status he is named a 'psychology professor' and 'director' of a 'Study of Violence'. It is clear that the journalist wants to lead the reader to think in a particular way rather than allow him/her to make up their own mind by empowering them with other studies that oppose the argument under discussion.

In another article the only experts referred to were those who argued that violent video games can have terrible effects on people who play them: "psychology professor who trained at the University of California" and "Craig Anderson, an Iowa State University psychology professor who is among the top scholars studying video-game violence" argue that "[t]hings that we would never allow on television, and probably not even in the movies, we have them in video games," (De Vise 2005) Notwithstanding the fact that films like the 'Hostile', 'Saw' and 'Nightmare on Elm Street' franchises are filled with bloody and gruesome murders. The only two experts

referred happen to be in agreement with each other. To find an opposing argument within the text we must look to a young man who is not an expert but a 'subject' participating in an experiment: "You're not really going out and killing people," one 19-year-old man told his interviewers. "So, I mean, it's just like fantasy" (De Vise 2005)

Another article begins by informing the reader of a debate that occurred at the University of Pennsylvania. The speakers are introduced into the text as follows:

… speakers Gerard Jones, a San Francisco culture critic and writer, and Jack Thompson, a Miami lawyer known as the "virtue vigilante," cordially debated the effects of violence on children and even found points of agreement (Crompton 2007)

Within this text, these two interlocutors have nothing to argue about, as both generate the same arguments to support their shared position regarding the terrible effects that violent video games have on society. This text is masquerading as a debate but since no points of view are present to either question, or oppose the attack on violent video games, the text is really a platform to disseminate conservative ideological positions. The texts note that "[a]bout a dozen audience members questioned the speakers about their views". The actual viewpoints are not presented. These two people are introduced within the text as Gerard Jones, a "culture critic and writer" and Jack Thompson, a "lawyer known as the virtue vigilante." How the credentials of these speakers are presented conjures up particular images. With the former, one can envisage someone intelligent enough to discern the true nature of the ideas, customs and social behaviour of the people within a particular society. The latter description leads one to imagine someone who possesses a sense of justice, righteousness, and ultimately legitimacy. This legitimisation of these speakers continues throughout the text: "But violence in video games is Mr. Thompson's forte, and he has spent years crusading against the material and its creators" It is interesting that

the word "crusading" is used here. Elsewhere, the words **"**Christian values" and "virtue vigilante" are used to refer to Mr Thompson (Crompton 2007) It seems like these religious undertones are employed in an attempt to validate the arguments that Mr Thompson is setting forth.

This text is ideological. The information set forth is pre-determined and one-dimensional. It does not present alternative viewpoints. The arguments of the putative protagonists-'Mr Thompson' and 'Mr Jones'-arguments are left unscrutinized. Only at two points in the text is the reader offered a glimpse of an opposing position: "During the debate, a student questioned Mr. Thompson over ad hominem attacks" and when "Mr. Thompson responded, the unnamed student left the microphone stand he was using and made an obscene gesture in Mr. Thompson's direction."

4.7 The Violence Neutral Topoi within the USA

The analysis of the violent topoi with the USA reveals a significant shift from the negative themes surrounding video games since William's (2003) article. The articles surrounding violent video games within the USA (2001 to 2014) are not pedalling a particular ideology. The social complexities of violent video game consumption are being addressed in an open and objective manner. Both viewpoints are presented clearly and precisely without recourse to any forms of manipulation. The authors are including different voices to provide a mature discourse, which clearly seeks out the truth and not confirmation of some pre-packed set of ideas. The balancing of alternative viewpoints can be illustrated briefly with these two quotes within one of the articles: "People who consume a lot of violent media come to view the world as a hostile place," concludes Brad Bushman, an Ohio State professor who reviewed research on violent games."

Social scientists and game creators such as Price agree that just because someone has a passion for killing with a joystick, it doesn't make him any more likely to turn to real-world violence. Violence is as essential and defensible in the art of video games as it is in movies, books or TV, game makers say. (Fisher 2013)

Another article expresses the arguments against violent video games and for pro-censorship equitably and impartially; each position is presented without bias and a substantial response is made present. For example, on one side it is pointed out that:

… players can reenact the killings at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech; in which the goal is raping Native American women or killing ethnic and religious minorities; in which new technology may allow a player to "actually feel the splatting blood from the blown-off head" of a victim (Barnes; 2011)

The text then presents a response to this argument, "that of all of the studies that have been conducted on the effects of violent video games on children - Breyer listed 15 pages of their titles - none proves that the games "cause minors to act aggressively" (Barnes; 2011)

The articles do not employ any insinuations, presuppositions, or any form of rhetoric in order to manipulate the reader to think a particular way. Instead, both sides of the argument are presented with respect and legitimacy. In short, the articles gather the opposing and complex strands of information that both support and oppose the consumption of violent video games. This allows the reader to develop their own informed opinion.

4.8 The Addiction Topoi within the USA

This research found a significant difference within the USA addiction topoi since William's (2003) article. Two articles were negative and four neutral.

4.9 The Addiction Negative Topoi within the USA

Within one of these articles there is no real debate as to whether video game consumption can lead to addictive behaviour. The crux of the argument within this article could be summed up as follows: "Parents worry that their children "will become slack-jawed video-game addicts, whiling away their hours in front of the screen, motionless except for their hands on the controls" (Grimsley: 2001). Nothing needs to be implied here, the text is blatantly clear: video games can turn children into 'addicts'. The words such as 'slack-jawed' and 'motionless' are utilized to convey a powerfully negative image of children becoming zombie-like. This will clearly persuade an average reader that children should avoid video games, since they can potentially steal their identity.

Further along the text it argues that:

The boys understand their parents are grappling with a financial and moral dilemma in deciding whether to buy the newest video games on the market this year. These things are not cheap: PlayStation 2 retails for $ 299 for the basic model, and a second controller, an additional memory card and at least two games brings the price tag to about $ 450. For many families, that's half a month's rent, or two weeks of work for someone who earns the minimum wage (Grimsley: 2001).

Presumably, however, these boys are so overcome with their addictions that they are not concerned with the minor issues of their parent's financial struggles.

The other article is atypical of the overall negative topoi is the US. The text uses an appeal to authority to act as a bastion to support its argument that many video games are inherently addictive pieces of software and, as such, turn children into addicts. Before each argument is advanced to support this position, different authorities are named-'Dr. Sandra Fryhofer', Dr.

'Douglas Gentile', 'Dr, Suzanne Martin' and 'Roswell psychiatrist' Dr. Richard Winner'-in order to legitimize the findings. Out of the nine hundred and sixteen words used only seven of them are devoted to question the validity of the various research findings under discussion: "Calling this an addiction may be premature," Fryhofer said" (Hendrick: 2007). In order, however, to ascertain who exactly 'Fryhofer' was, most readers would perhaps need to re-read the article. Much earlier on in the article the text points out that a researcher is concerned that "American youngsters may be as psychologically hooked" on video games her expertise is emphasized when she is named as "Dr. Sandra Fryhofer". (Hendrick: 2007) Much later on in article, however (as mentioned already) when the same Doctor suggests that it might be 'premature' to call excessive usage of video games an addiction, her qualifications as an expert in her field are not presented. This article presents a discourse designed to steer its readers to adopt an ideological position as opposed to a position that is arrived at by receiving neutral and objective information (WodakandMeyer2009:23).

4.10 The Addiction Neutral Topoi within the USA

The findings revealed that a significant change has occurred with addiction discourses surrounding video games since William's article. The texts are clearly uninfluenced by any person, political and social affiliation.   The goal of the texts is to strive after the truth, rather than repeat a set of pre-arranged ideas that seek to contort the facts in ways that will advance an ideological position. One article re-tells some of the issues that a psychologist, David Walsh, must address with his clients who play video games for long periods of time:

A young mother ignores her baby's cries for hours. A student flunks out of the University of Minnesota because he's too distracted to attend classes. A fed-up wife gives her obsessed

husband an ultimatum: "It's either me or them!" He opts for the latter, and it's game over for their marriage (Salas: 2007)

On the other hand, a psychiatrist, 'Jon Grant', argues that the whole issue is a lot more complicated, since many other social and health factors should be considered. Labelling video game players as addicts could be mistaken: "There's a lot to consider before heavy video-game use is called an addiction, he said. Players, including younger ones, may turn to games out of boredom, depression, loneliness and more" (Salas: 2007). The article continues in this vein of delivering the text in an even-handed manner and ultimately concludes with the suggestion that the evidence to date is inconclusive and that further research should conducted.

The same theme of neutrality continues within another article. When the arbitrator of the discussion uses a voice of authority to present a particular position, he will then present someone who opposes this position. All interlocutors mentioned have sufficient credentials in order to substantiate their positions set forth. In this respect, the article is not aligned with either position of the controversy. For example, a study is presented which reveals that video games can turn players into addicts. No bias is shown in how the research findings are presented within the text. In addition, the results of the study are not over emphasized in an attempt to lead the reader to espouse a particular ideological position. The study, which was based on a two-year survey of 3,034 children in Singapore, found that 9 percent of players were addicted, as defined by how much their playing interfered with their grades, emotions and relationships." (Olson 2011)

Opposing positions are presented within the text even-handedly and without prejudice.

The Entertainment Software Association criticized the study and Gentile, an Iowa State University researcher who has published other papers on video game addiction. The trade group argued that Gentile used an unproven definition of pathological gaming and made negative

interpretations of "trivial" differences between the behaviors of problem gamers and other children in the survey. (Olson 2011)

These articles exhibit no signs of being affiliated with a particular ideological position. Within the texts there is a corroboration of studies through different sources and a balance of perspectives are made present. In other words, the texts are engineered to present accurate information (i.e. the balancing of viewpoints) without the restraints that are borne from mere conjecture. It is self-evident that the texts are nonpartisanship. The texts make no recourse to any rhetorical strategies in order to persuade the reader to think in a particular way. In sum, the text remains bias free. As a result the reader is given the tools to develop their own careful and considered position.

See Appendix 2 and 3 for some examples of the newsprint texts under analysis within this research.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research sought to investigate the discourses surrounding video games within USA's newsprint media (2001 to 2014) and to compare these findings within Ireland. The topoi under discussion were violent and addictive discourses about video games. It became evident that within the USA there had been a significant change in the types of discursive representations generated about video games. While some of the American discourses around video games still remain negative, the texts have moved from principally negative discourses to ones that are more neutral, informed and objective. This indicates that American journalism has moved away from one-dimensional and ideologically driven discourses towards positions of greater discernment regarding the complex, multifaceted effects of video game consumption. Overall, the articles were spread out over different newspapers, therefore indicating that the discourses being generated were indicative of the journalists' general attitudes towards video games during 2001 to 2014.

The articles within Ireland (2001 to 2014) were disseminating negative discourses about video game consumption. It became clear in the findings that over half of the negative ideologically-driven discourses about video games were being disseminated by the prominent national newspaper, *The Irish Times* (one from the violent and addiction topoi). This is an important fact, since papers of record produce articles that more legitimate than other newspapers. When *The Irish Times* generates ideological discourses it potentially has a greater impact in steering many readers to think in a particular fashion about video games. In sum, the Irish newsprint media need to travel some distance in order to catch up with their counterparts within the USA in order to produce fair, balanced, and ideologically free analysis of the true nature of video game consumption.

We should keep in mind that video games are fiction, just like many violent films. It seems rather simplistic to blame violent and addictive behaviour on video game consumption. The reasons why people commit a murder or play video games for extended periods of time are complex, involving a multitude of social and psychological factors (for example, childhood, education and mental health). We must remember that correlation does not necessarily mean causation.

It should be noted that many of the articles within the LexisNexis database were less than the word count required for entry into this study. If this research had more time it could have perhaps discovered a greater cohort of texts within other search engines that could have being added to the analysis of this paper. Further study would be necessary to investigate the discourse surrounding video games within Irish newsprint media during 1980 to 2001 (the dates for the Williams article) in order to ascertain if the discourses have changed from neutral to negative or whether the negative discourse found within this study were consistent throughout since 1980. A bigger project again could inform people if any of the newspapers within the USA were city-based, possessed any political allegiances, or were known for their ideological positions.

What we can say, in conclusion, is is that the marginalization of dissent will persist as long as dominant ideologically-driven discourses are presented as natural, common sense and irrefutable. This is one of the chief reason why CDA was methodology used in is this research, since it seeks to expose these ideological discourses within newsprint media. The discourses within newspaper are more than a mere assemblage of words and texts; they are also instrumental in executing power. Newspapers are a powerful medium through which a large proportion of the population appropriate knowledge. They play a huge role in shaping the nature of the debate and the manner in which people develop their opinions about video game consumption. In this respect,

newspapers play an important role in a proper functioning democracy; they are meant to help inform the citizens of a democratic society. Objective news reporting, however, is a professional value, not a legal requirement. For this reason, this research is, one hopes, of some small importance for society because it will encourage people—by giving them with the conceptual tools—to question the legitimacy of the arguments (or ideological positions) embedded within the discourses of newsprint media and to value balanced and informed opinions about the nature of video game consumption.

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Appendix 1

The first sample was the topoi, 'violence', within Ireland newsprint media and was detected by typing in a range of relevant keywords into the online search. This involved seven steps which were as follows: (1). Type "video games" (2) Click on 'In the headline' (3) Click on 'Not include' and typed review (4) Type Violence (5) Click on 'Irish publications' (6) Type 1st January 2001 to 10th March 2014 (7) Click on 'not newswires'. This search retrieved two hundred and thirty results of newspapers articles. The criteria for choosing from these articles were based on two things: First, the articles had to be at least nine hundred words in order to provide a substantial account of data for the research. Second, the articles had to be relevant to the topoi violence. This resulted in the retrieval of two articles.

The second sample was the topoi addition within Ireland. To begin seven steps were taken**:** (1) Type "video games" (2) Click on 'In the headline' (3) Click on 'Not include' and type review (4) Type Addictive (5) Click on Irish publications (6) Type 1st Jan 2001 to 12th March 2014 (7) Click on Not newswires. This resulted in one hundred and seventy nine results. Of these articles only the ones that were relevant and were at least nine hundred words were chosen which resulted in two results.

The sample of the violence topoi in the USA began with fifteen steps. (1) Type "video Games" (2) Click on 'In the headline' (3) Click on 'Not include' and type Review (3) Type Violence (4) Click on 'No Newswires' (5) Click on 'On More sources' (6)Click on 'USA' (7) (8) Click on 'All Regions' (9) Click 'General News sources' (10) Click on 'Group Sources' (11) Click on 'Newspapers' (12) Click on 'Major Newspapers' (13) Click on 'Information' (14) Click 'To continue' (15) Type violence (again) (16) Type 01 January 2001 to 14th March. One thousand and seven hundred and twenty two results were retrieved. The remaining articles that

were chosen were relevant and more than nine hundred words this resulted eight articles. Of these three were negative and five neutral.

The sample for the addiction topoi began with fifteen steps. (1) Type "video Games" (2) Click on 'In the headline' (3) Click on 'Not include' and type Review (3) Type 'Addictive' (4) Click on 'No Newswires' (5) Click on 'On More sources' (6)Click on 'USA' (7) (8) Click on 'All Regions' (9) Click 'General News sources' (10) Click on 'Group Sources' (11) Click on 'Newspapers' (12) Click on 'Major Newspapers' (13) Click on 'Information' (14) Click 'To continue' (15) Type violence (again) (16) Dates 01 January 2001 to 14th March. This resulted in the retrieval of one thousand and fifty six articles. Of these articles only the ones that were relevant and were at least nine hundred words were chosen which resulted in six articles of these two were negative and four neutral.

Appendix 2

"Children caught in net as addiction to online video games increases"
The Irish Times
2014 February, Peter Cluskey.

Here is a piece of information for parents who do not have enough to worry about: when it comes to video game addiction, one definition of an "extreme player" is a teenager who is glued to his or her screen or console for an average of 45 hours a week.

That, however, is just an average. It gets much worse. At the outer fringes of "extreme" are youngsters who are gaming for up to 18 hours a day, who won't to go to school because it doesn't engage them, but who use artificial highs of various kinds to keep mentally alert for the gaming challenge.

So all-consuming and compelling is the fantasy world they inhabit that addicts typically neglect themselves and those around them, "forget" to eat or to wash, sometimes refuse to leave their bedrooms or even to engage with friends who are not similarly enthralled.

No matter how they look at it, real life just doesn't compare with the buzz of what's on offer online.

Most frightening of all, says a new report in the Netherlands, is the age group that's increasingly becoming caught up in the complexity of massive, multiplayer online role-playing games, otherwise known as MMORPGs - games such as *World of Warcraft* (often known by initiates as *World of Warcrack*) or *EverQuest* (also known as *NeverRest*).

Up to three years ago it used to be predominantly teenagers of 15 or older who were seeking psychological help but now it's often preteens as well, says Jan Willem Poot, director of the Yes

We Can group of clinics, which helps adolescent gamers and their families to fight addiction.

"Some of the children coming to us for treatment are just 10, 11 or 12, and even at that young age are pretty extreme in their obsession - so that it's a positive development when either they or their parents finally realise they are just not coping with the rest of their lives."

What's happening to these 10- and 11-year-olds is that they are becoming socially isolated just when they should be learning to cope with the challenges of everyday life in the company of their peers.

This is no flash in the pan.

Last May, video game addiction was added to the psychiatrists' bible, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* .

While only a tiny percentage of enthusiastic teenage gamers are addicts, if left untreated that social isolation can lead to mood swings, diminished imagination and a "hyper-focus" on gaming to the exclusion of everything else.

Gamers say it's not just the intricacy of the games or the role-playing element that makes them potentially addictive, it is also because there is regularly no ultimate goal, no finish line, the games are essentially impossible to win - so the adrenaline-fuelled challenge is never-ending.

Reaching the highest level of the games requires hundreds of hours of play and, just when you think you've reached your maximum capability in a certain role, the game changes - which is why some players have several games on the go at once, playing with a different character in each.

The Netherlands - no stranger to leading the way on difficult social issues - opened the first residential clinic in Europe for the treatment of compulsive young online gamers in Amsterdam in 2006.

The latest Dutch report has collated statistics from eight addiction clinics nationwide and finds that while the number of youngsters being treated for computer game addiction was 256 in 2011, that figure rose to 426 the following year - an increase of 66 per cent.

At the same time, research by Erasmus University teaching hospital in Rotterdam suggests about 1.5 per cent of boys between 13 and 16 are addicts. That's about 12,000 children who play for an average of about eight hours a day - in the Netherlands alone.

Girls can become addicted too, of course, but researchers at Stanford School of Medicine have demonstrated that the part of the brain that generates rewarding feelings is more activated in men than in women during video-game play.

"Part of the problem is that parents and teachers are not well enough informed and don't take this seriously enough," said Marius Naaburs, a team coach at a youth clinic that tackles the problem.

"They think it's just a phase the kids are going through and that when you tell them to pull the plug out and put it away the problem is gone.

"But it's not that simple: this is a problem on a par with alcohol or drug addiction - but with a much, much, younger age profile."

Appendix 3

"Critics Takes Aim at Violence in Video Games"
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)
2007, 1 February, Janice Crompton.

"Featuring everything from obscene gestures to accusations that this generation is the "most self-absorbed and egocentric" in recent history, California University of Pennsylvania hosted a raucous debate Tuesday on violence in video games.

Although speakers Gerard Jones, a San Francisco culture critic and writer, and Jack Thompson, a Miami lawyer known as the "virtue vigilante," cordially debated the effects of violence on children and even found points of agreement, the crowd zeroed in on Mr. Thompson for his much-vilified views on youth and the video game industry.

More than 50 students, with a sprinkling of adults, attended the two-hour debate sponsored by the university's student activities board and student association.

Some left the Natali Student Center before the debate was over, muttering about Mr. Thompson's references to Christian values or lengthy answers by the speakers. But more came into the auditorium to hear the heated exchange.

During the debate, a student questioned Mr. Thompson over ad hominem attacks, including those aimed at former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, a foe from Mr. Thompson's days dabbling in Florida politics.

When Mr. Thompson responded, the unnamed student left the microphone stand he was using and made an obscene gesture in Mr. Thompson's direction. Members of the university's Animation Club later apologized for the student's outburst.

Calling himself "the attorney that the video game industry loves to hate," Mr. Thompson, 55, has long been an opponent of obscenity in entertainment, leading an effort in 1990 to ban sales of 2 Live Crew's "As Nasty As They Wanna Be" album, and later getting shock jock Howard Stern's show bumped from an Orlando radio station after complaining to the Federal Communications Commission.

But violence in video games is Mr. Thompson's forte, and he has spent years crusading against the material and its creators.

"I think Paul Eibeler is a sociopath," Mr. Thompson said, referring to the chief executive officer of Take-Two Interactive, which, along with its publishing label, Rockstar Games, developed the "Grand Theft Auto" video and computer game series, a special target of Mr. Thompson's. The company was investigated last year by the Federal Trade Commission and agreed to a settlement after it was discovered that a sexually explicit minigame was embedded in the game "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas," despite company denials.

Mr. Thompson said he was a strong supporter of the First Amendment and did not seek to ban violent video games, or "murder simulators," as he calls them. He wants only to keep them out of the hands of children.

A 2005 undercover study by the FTC found that 42 percent of unaccompanied young children who tried to buy M-rated, or mature, video games, were successful. That was down from the 69 percent success rate in 2003.

Sales of games rated "M" by the Entertainment Software Rating Board for graphic violence, blood, gore, sexual content or strong language are limited to those 17 and older.

Mr. Thompson blames such games for youth violence, saying there is a direct correlation between playing violent video games and instances of violence in teenage boys.

He cites a number of scientific studies and points to the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado in 1999, when teenage video game enthusiasts Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold allegedly said they wanted to "replicate 'Doom' in the halls of Columbine," referring to the 1993 computer game, known as the premier first-person shooter game.

But Mr. Jones, 49, said the attention given to violence in video games today could be just part of the "cycle in junk culture" that's been going on for 150 years. It included dime novels, television, movies, rap music and other new forms of entertainment that draw attention and quickly become popular.

"It seems to be a frightening upwelling of the depths of culture," said Mr. Jones, who wrote a screenplay that will be featured on HBO soon.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Mr. Jones said, research was done relating to violent gangster movies and behavior. The result was threats from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Hollywood to tone down the violence and sexual innuendo.

Unlike video game manufacturers, Mr. Jones said, the film industry cleaned up mainstream entertainment while modifying the racier elements.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Thompson agree that, because the video game industry has declined to cooperate with new initiatives and legislation to prevent children from buying mature games, there is more likely to be a single catastrophic event that will doom the industry.

Mr. Thompson has been involved in litigation relating to violent video games. The industry could encourage retailer compliance by withholding products and other methods, he said, and retailers should be held more accountable for underage sales.

"We're going to have a Columbine-times-10 event," because of the industry's refusal to put checks on the sale of increasingly violent video games, Mr. Thompson said. "They will have

laid the seeds for their own industry's destruction."

"They have absolute deniability," Mr. Jones said, comparing the tactics to those used by the tobacco industry in its failed attempts to stem legislation and litigation involving the dangers of its products.

About a dozen audience members questioned the speakers about their views, and although most were antagonistic toward Mr. Thompson, he got the most applause of the night when he criticized today's generation, calling them "the most self-absorbed, egocentric generation he's ever seen."

"Your generation has got to get over itself," he said."