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Educational Values in Digital Games

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to research, analyse and explain the media values and educational values of digital games. The work is based on the philosophy of education according to Vuk-Pavlović and the semiotics of the media according to Barthes' theory. The aspect of media pedagogy towards digital media is discussed, especially the context of adventures and interactive drama. It answers the question of what the hidden meanings of digital games are. The author starts from the hypothesis that digital games users receive media messages on a semiotic level, and by deconstructing symbols, educational values and media meanings are revealed. The context of media literacy was observed from the aspect of understanding the symbols of digital games in accordance with media competencies. Since digital games reflect social reality, at least in the context of messages, attitudes and values, media competences represent the ability to understand and compare cultural and media literacy. In this sense, digital games have a specific aesthetic, ideological, pedagogical, and symbolic impact on users, which results from the critical thinking of society. Kellner's theory of media culture will help us to understand the reasons why certain content, symbols and myths become popular and to raise awareness of the social environment of media culture from which digital games emerge. The research results of this study confirm that the observed digital games have educational values and that media meanings are deconstructed through semiotic analysis. This is especially true of the archetypal roles of parents and guardians.

KEY WORDS

Digital Game. Education Value. Media Literacy. Media Pedagogy. Media Semiotic.

1 Introduction

Over the last thirty years, digital game development technology has changed the understanding of the virtual world. Digital games have evolved from simple entertainment into media messages. They are determined by the term game studies[1] as an interdisciplinary field of research that includes medicine[2], psychology[3], sociology[4], pedagogy[5], marketing[6] and philosophy.[7] Understanding the phenomenon of digital games requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Media culture produces a new form of culture[8] and dominates contemporary life. Based on the content provided by media culture, users form attitudes, beliefs and analyse values. In this sense, the metaphorical understanding of the media as an *"extension of the body"*[9] that amazes people in any material that is not the human body tells us how each such extension affects the psychological and social structure. In other words, culture, as we knew it before the appearance of digital culture, changed our understanding of the world[10], society, and our experience.

It is this change, a new type of media,[11] that strongly influences the understanding and experience of aesthetic, ethical and educational values. The same content is perceived differently if the medium, through which we project it, changes. In this context, philosophically speaking, McLuhan is right when he claims the medium is the message.[12] This means that references from

1   MÄYRÄ, F.: *An Introduction to Game Studies.* London : Sage, 2008, p. 13.
2   BROWN, S. J., LIEBERMAN, D. A., GERMENY, B. A. et al.: Educational Video Game for Juvenile Diabetes: Results of a Controlled Trial. In *Medical Informatics*, 1997, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 87; BARTHOLOMEW, L. K., GOLD, R. S., PARCEL, G. S. et al.: Watch, Discover, Think, and Act: Evaluation of Computer-Assisted Instruction to Improve Asthma Self-Management in Inner-City Children. In *Patient Education and Counseling*, 2000, Vol. 39, No. 2-3, p. 275; GOLD, J. I., KIM, S. H., KANT, A. J. et al.: Effectiveness of Virtual Reality for Pediatric Pain Distraction during IV Placement. In *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 2006, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 210-211; OU, Y., MCGLONE, E. R., CAMM, C. F. et al.: Does Playing Video Games Improve Laparoscopic Skills? In *International Journal of Surgery*, 2013, Vol. 11, No. 5, p. 368; HARRINGTON, C. M., CHAITANYA, V., DICKER, P. et al.: Playing to Your Skills: A Randomised Controlled Trial Evaluating a Dedicated Video Game for Minimally Invasive Surgery. In *Surgical Endoscopy*, 2018, Vol. 32, No. 9, p. 3819.
3   See: SLEZÁKOVÁ, S.: Pathological Gambling and Co-Dependence. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 47-49. See also: BALÁŽIKOVÁ, M.: Real-Life Frustration from Virtual Worlds: The Motivational Potential of Frustration. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 64-66; MOSSELAER Van de N., CASELLIS, S.: The Narrative Effects and Value of Memory Discrepancies in Digital Games. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 38.
4   See: ROKOŠNÝ, I.: Digital Games as a Cultural Phenomenon: A Brief History and Current State. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 55-58. See also: JURCZYK-ROMANOWSKA, E., ZAKOWICZ, I.: Dominant Playing Styles in an Authorial Role-Playing Game in Different Age Groups. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 15-22.
5   See: MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-43. See also: MIŠKOV, J.: Motivation with Game Elements in Education Mediated by E-Learning Resources. In *Acta Ludologica,* 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 28-30; JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth´s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-19.
6   MAGO, Z.: The Concept of Timelessness Applied to Advergames. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2. p. 28-29; ALFÖLDIOVÁ, A., TRNKA, A.: In-World Marketing in Second Life. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 68-69; JUKIĆ, D.: To Brand or Not to Brand: The Perception of Brand Image in the Digital Games Industry. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 27.
7   See: KŁOSIŃSKI, M.: Games and Utopia. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 7-8. See also: NTELIA, R. E.: Fortnite as Bildungsspiel? Battle Royale Games and Sacrificial Rites. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 91-92; JUKIĆ, D.: Why Do We Play Digital Games? Anthropological-Philosophical-Pedagogical Aspects. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 48.
8   KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura.* Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 5.
9   MCLUHAN, M.: *Razumijevanje medija.* Zagreb : Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, 2008, p. 41.
10   KAČINOVÁ, V.: From a Reductionist to a Holistic Model of Digital Competence and Media Education. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 19.
11   BAUER, T. A.: Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture. In ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo.* Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 48.
12   Ibidem, p. 13.

literature, film and music are combined in digital games, but also vice versa: self-referentiality exists within digital games, just as there is intermediality and intertextuality.[13]

Of course, this does not mean that the use of new media will have the same effect, but for the effect of educational values[14] to be the same, the level of the media competences and media literacy of the educators is crucial. According to Škripcová, digital games can develop players' media competence[15], which can be decoded using the method of semiotics.[16] Such deconstruction starts from Barthes' theory[17] that interprets the meaning of messages.

The topic of this study is the analysis of media pedagogy[18], i.e., educational values[19] in the context of digital games. This study is partly inspired by a study in which **Škripcová** analyses digital games and confirms how they can teach. The study deepens the analysis of digital games from the aspect of media semiotics, and especially from the ludological context in which gamers are immersed in virtual reality[20] through their interaction. More precisely, we will try to answer the question of whether digital games influence the formation of educational values that shape new meanings at the connotational level.[21] And, if they do, what are the values that digital games promote?

2 Theoretical Approaches

Media pedagogy (*Medienpädagogik*) is a concept that encompasses two key areas: education and media. However, it should be noted that the concepts of upbringing and education (*Erziehung und Bildung*) differ from the concept of education used in English language. Since the theory of media pedagogy in Slovak and Croatian pedagogy is based on common values[22]

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13 See: MAGO, Z.: Easter Eggs in Digital Games as a Form of Textual Transcedence (Case Study). In *Acta Ludologica,* 2019, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 53-54; JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 532-533.

14 VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-73.

15 ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

16 JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth´s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-19.

17 BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb: Pelago, 2009, p. 147.

18   See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34. See also: TULODZIECKI, G.: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung zentraler Begriffe bei der pädagogischen Auseinandersetzung mit Medien. In MOSER, H., GRELL, P., NIESYTO, H. (eds.): *Medienbildung und Medienkompetenz*. Munich : Kopaed, 2011, p. 22-24; SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259.

19 See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-99; See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 27-56.

20 See: ANDREWS, J.: Videogames as Literary Devices. In CLARKE, A., MITCHELL, G. (eds.): *Videogames and Art*. Bristol, Chicago : Intellect Book, 2007, p. 54-56. See also: MUKHERJEE, S.: *Video Games and Storytelling Reading Games and Playing Books*. Kolkata : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 177-181.

21 See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143-151. See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-33.

22 See: VUKASOVIĆ, A.: *Graditelji mostova hrvatsko-slovačkoga prijateljstva = Budovatelia mostov chorvatsko-slovenskeho priatelstva*. Zagreb : Društvo hrvatsko-slovačkog prijateljstva, 2000, p. 75-84. See also: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 72-76; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 125. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>; VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83.

and on the understanding of the philosophy of education, the study analyses educational values in the context of the German pedagogical theory[23], on which they are based.

What is specific in defining media pedagogy is its *universality* and interdisciplinary nature. Very often, the terms media pedagogy, media literacy and media education are equated. Kačinová warns that the mentioned terms are relevant for media pedagogy[24] (i.e., media education), and its most important dimensions are the cognitive, social-affective, and ethical dimensions of educators.[25] Balážová[26] states that the field of media studies is viewed from different perspectives, such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, pedagogy, and linguistics. It is also an introduction to media pedagogy as an interdisciplinary field of educational sciences, as it encompasses different influence areas of pedagogy.

In this sense, media pedagogy contains ethical, social, psychological, political and cultural analysis of the media. The development of media education is closely related to the development of communication. We observe the areas of media pedagogy through the constructs of media education, media culture, media didactics[27], media studies and media ethics. Media education (*Medienbildung*) consists of two constructs: media literacy and media competences. We will also look at the concept of media pedagogy from the aspect of media semiotics, which is like the sociological understanding of symbolic interactionism and Kellner's analysis of media culture.

However, an even bigger problem is that media pedagogy does not yet have typical methods[28] that would be characteristic of educational sciences. German authors warn against this[29], so that media pedagogy does not, over time, become a *critical theory*. Criticism of the media is normatively oriented and refers to value principles.[30] The very concept of competence is abstract in its essence.[31] Media competences are not always related to educators, teachers, and users, but also to parents, who are part of the media world.[32] Parents should also develop media competence.[33]

[23] See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34-56; See also: HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-58; BAUER, T. A.: Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture. In ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo*. Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 54-67; BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 160-177; SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259.

[24] KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 39.

[25] See: KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 28-29; KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: Mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015, p. 28-49; BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012, p. 8.

[26] BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012, p. 20.

[27] KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 30.

[28] BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 159.

[29] See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 43. See also: BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 160.

[30] See: KÜBLER, H-D.: Prämissen und Paradigmen von Medienkritik. Ver-such einer Kategorisierung. In NIESYTO, H., MOSER, H. (eds.): *Medienkritik im digitalen*. Munich : Kopaed, 2018, p. 15; See also: NIESYTO, H.: Medienkritik – Entwicklungsphasen und aktuelle Herausforderungen. In NIESYTO, H., MOSER, H. (eds.): *Medienkritik im digitalen*. Munich : Kopaed, 2018, p. 59-61.

[31] HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-58.

[32] HOFFMANN, B.: Medien-Erziehungs-Kompetenz von Eltern im System Familie. In ANGENENT, H., HEIDKAMP, B., KERGEL, D. (eds.): *Digital Diversity. Diversität und Bildung im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer, 2019, p. 103-107.

[33] See: HOFFMANN, B.: Anregungsmilieus mit digitalen Kommunikationsmedien - Herausforderungen für Medienbildung im System Familie. In LAUFFER, J., RÖLLECKE, R. (eds.): *Lieben, Liken, Spielen. Digitale Kommunikation und Selbstdarstellung Jugendlicher heute - Medienpädagogische Konzepte und Perspektiven*. Munich : Kopaed, 2014, p. 23-27.

Digital games represent an entertainment medium that we understand as a form of cultural pedagogy.[34] In this sense, the acquisition of media literacy and media competences[35] can help in the interpretation of cultural environments. Social reality is determined by the media and, as such, it includes all the consequences: there is no existence that would be free without the media.[36] What is crucial for media pedagogy is the observation and interpretation of media and constructs[37], such as those found in the studies of D. Jukić.[38] Digital games represent aesthetic pleasure and educational value.[39]

This leads us to the conclusion that the goal of media pedagogy is not only to decode content but it should be based on the concept of media literacy, media education, media ethics and media competencies. One of the key goals of media pedagogy is to recognize the content, decode it[40] and make a deconstruction between content and form. In this sense, media, like digital games, require decoding, analysis and critical analysis. These are the so-called communicative competences[41], which include all the abilities that an individual must acquire to use media products, exchange them and on them. Only such competences can be considered media competences that lead to education.

Media literacy is part of media education and can be understood as a narrower term for media competence[42], i.e., the ability to critically analyse media content. The abilities that an individual needs to acquire (media competences) refer to building a critical reflection on media messages. This means that media competences include the ability to navigate the media world[43] in a critical and independent manner. Therefore, we view the dimensions of media competence as cognitive, which refers to knowledge; moral, which refers to the ethical dimension; and social, which refers to the social policy of society. An example of the cognitive dimensions of media

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34 KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura.* Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 7.

35 See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34-47; See also: HOFFMANN, B.: Medienpädagogische Kompetenz in der Sozialen Arbeit. In CLEPPIEN, G., LERCHE, U. (eds.): *Soziale Arbeit und Medien*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010, p. 55-59; HOFFMANN, B.: Anregungsmilieus mit digitalen Kommunikationsmedien - Herausforderungen für Medienbildung im System Familie. In LAUFFER, J., RÖLLECKE, R. (eds.): *Lieben, Liken, Spielen. Digitale Kommunikation und Selbstdarstellung Jugendlicher heute - Medienpädagogische Konzepte und Perspektiven.* Munich : Kopaed, 2014, p. 23-26; MOSER, H.: *Einführung in die Medienpädagogik Aufwachsen im Medienzeitalter*. Wiesbaden : VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006, p. 28-34; SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-258.

36 BAUER, T. A.: Medijska etika kao pitanje komunikacijske kulture. IN ROTAR ZGRABLJIĆ, N. (ed.): *Medijska pismenost i civilno društvo*. Sarajevo : Mediacentar, 2005, p. 54.

37 BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 12.

38 See: JUKIĆ, D.: Brand Semiotics and Media Pedagogy. In ČÁBYOVÁ, Ľ., BEZÁKOVÁ, Z., MADLEŇÁK, A. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: New Changes, New Challenges*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 290-291; See also: JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 532-533; JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth´s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-18.

39 JUKIĆ, D.: Why Do We Play Digital Games? Anthropological-Philosophical-Pedagogical Aspects. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 41-43.

40 BALÁŽOVÁ, E.: *Mediálna výchova v etickej výchove*. Banská Bystrica : Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2012, p. 9.

41 BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 34.

42 KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 35.

43 See: PÖTTINGER, I., SCHILL, W., THIELE, G.: *Medienbildung im Doppelpack - Wie Schule und Jugendhilfe einander ergänzen können*. Bielefeld : GMK, 2004, p. 71; See also: KAČINOVÁ, V.: From a Reductionist to a Holistic Model of Digital Competence and Media Education. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 19.

competence can be found in the study by Kačinová[44], while an example of ethical values can be found in Magová's study.[45]

Theunert observes media competences in the context of media knowledge[46], which can be understood as an understanding of communication skills. Schorb[47] observes the same concept of media knowledge (*Medienwissen*) through three groups as functional, structural and orientative knowledge.[48] For the purposes of this study, orientative knowledge is the most important because it enables the self-knowledge of digital games users. In other words, the critical analysis mentioned by Kellner is enabled. Therefore, we can connect the ethical context of media pedagogy, as well as educational values, with aesthetic values. Orientative knowledge is a precondition for developing critical reflection and educational values, and only in this context we can talk about media literacy. Also, we can understand such media competences as Kačinová does,[49] i.e., as a set of desirable qualities.

L. Škripcová observes media competence and media literacy in the context of critical thinking.[50] In this sense, knowledge, skills and abilities that help an individual to critically receive and analyse a game represent the user's media competence. This means that for every genre of digital game, there are media competencies that increase the analytical abilities of the player.[51] However, a media literate player, who recognizes advertisements in digital games, may not always recognize the semiotic level of digital game myths. We recognize such a level of media content *ideology*[52] in graphic adventure. In this sense, Škripcová is right when she says that such competences are inherent only in games and are not found in the mainstream media[53], which Baacke talks about in a similar way.[54] In other words, the event-creating function, when a gamer must interact with a character or a dialogue in the game in order to progress, represents immersion that indirectly affects the story, but also certain media messages. Specifically, in the fourth episode of *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*[55], Alvin Junior experiences a mental breakdown and rejects everything Clementine taught him and expresses a desire for revenge and aggression.

According to Kellner, we analyse media culture very similarly to the theory of media pedagogy, with one important difference: we decode the educational values of digital games. Such a point of view is identical to what the German pedagogue Baacke claims in the context

44 See: KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 49-54.
45 MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-42.
46 THEUNERT, H.: Medienkompetenz. In SCHORB, B., ANFANG, G., DEMMLER, K. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik – Praxis*. Munich : Kopaed, 2009, p. 202.
47 SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259.
48 See: TOLIĆ, M: Aktualnost medijskih kompetencija u suvremenoj pedagogiji. In *Acta Iadertina,* 2008, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 5-10; See also: SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259; KAČINOVÁ, V.: Media Competence as a Cross-Curricular Competence. In *Communication Today*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 41-42.
49 See: KAČINOVÁ, V.: *Teória a prax mediálnej výchovy: Mediálna výchova ako súčasť všeobecného školského vzdelávania*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2015, p. 26; See also: KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 36.
50 ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 133. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.
51 Ibidem, p. 133.
52 KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura.* Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 102.
53 ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 134. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.
54 BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 56-58.
55 TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2018.

of the media which not only produce entertainment, but also simulate it and promote its reality.[56] Therefore, digital games must be analysed, because only in such a discourse can educational values be revealed.[57] Such constructed realities are a key part of digital games and their virtual reality. Kellner observes such an understanding from a sociological aspect, and analyses such a deconstruction of symbols, images, and myths from the aspect of ideology.[58] According to him, ideology contains discourses, concepts, images, symbols, and myths.

Kellner includes the analysis of images, symbols, myths, and narratives in the repertoire of *ideological instruments*[59] that explain ideological messages by combining criticism, interpretation, semiotics, symbolic interactionism[60] and narrative analysis. This means that by ideologically reading a text, Kellner analyses and interprets politics, culture, and society. Such a *text*, i.e., film, music, digital game, literary work, represents the content of a certain meaning that makes up society and the individual who interprets the world. In this sense, ideology for Kellner is a way of presenting certain ideas, images, rhetoric, values, and symbols that shape reality. Media pedagogy is achieved through media culture, which Kellner calls critical media pedagogy that decodes messages and values[61], and Baacke calls it critical media didactics.[62]

Media pedagogy is not a luxury, but a necessary perspective[63] that analyses educational values. A detailed presentation of such a perspective, including epistemology, research methods that Kellner talks about in the form of critical and interpretive analysis of the meaning of media content[64] and analysis of media symbols that Barthes talks about[65], is decoded exclusively by critical semiotic analysis. In this sense, the *cultural biotope*[66], which Bauer talks about, implies the reproduction of media content in the living space, in which culture develops in the Eagletonian sense.[67] In other words, Škripcová is right when she analyses digital games and claims that they are a great tool for developing media competence[68], without gamers being aware not only of the content promoted by the media or ideologies[69], but also of the educational values that are marked on the connotational level.

According to Vuk-Pavlović's philosophy of education[70], education is an aesthetic experience[71], because it crystallizes, i.e., it arises from a work of art. If we accept the fact that some digital games can be viewed in the context of a work of art[72], then the content resulting from a digital game can be in the sphere of aesthetic pleasure. Digital games, such as graphic adventures, can be viewed as an extended context of interpretation of media content

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[56] BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 16.

[57] Ibidem, p. 44-45.

[58] KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 102.

[59] Ibidem, p. 103-108.

[60] See: MEAD, H., G.: *Um, osoba i društvo*. Zagreb : Jesenski i Turk, 2003, p. 67-77.

[61] KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 104.

[62] BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 48.

[63] BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 79.

[64] See: KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 92-97.

[65] See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 141-163; See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-39.

[66] BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 82.

[67] See: EAGLETON, T.: *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p. 87-94. See also: EAGLETON, T.: *Culture*. London : Yale University Press, 2016, p. 15-24.

[68] ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

[69] KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 158-159.

[70] See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83; See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 27-46.

[71] VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 33.

[72] See: JUKIĆ, D.: Digital Game as an Artistic Mimesis and a Cult Brand. In RADOŠINSKÁ, J., PROSTINÁKOVÁ HOSSOVÁ, M., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media: Home Officetainment*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2021, p. 532-534.

and meanings that promote ideas, worldviews, attitudes, and values. This highest pedagogical idea starts from the revival of values[73] that are decoded in the content.

3 Research Methodology

Analytical method[74], the method of semiotic analysis according to Barthes[75] and Kellner's theory of media culture[76] were used in the study. The mentioned methods are compared with the philosophy of education according to Vuk-Pavlović's theory[77], whose educational values are analysed according to the theory of German media pedagogy[78] and Škripcová's study of media literacy. The units of digital game analysis are *Life is Strange*[79], *Life is Strange 2*[80], *Life is Strange: Before the Storm*[81], *Life Is Strange: True Colors*[82], *The Walking Dead*,[83] *The Walking Dead: Season Two*,[84] *The Walking Dead: A New Frontier*[85] and *The Walking Dead: The Final Season*.[86]

Based on recent research[87], we can conclude that digital games have educational values and an educational role because they influence user behaviour and attitude formation. However, there is little research on the role of parenting, guardianship and educational values of digital games using the semiotic method.[88] Therefore, we start from the hypothesis:

H₁: Digital games have educational value.

The goal is to research and identify educational values promoted in digital games that are grouped around graphic adventure. The set was chosen for its specific interactive content construction and user role that develop the user's media competencies and educate.[89] With

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73   VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 42.

74   See: WILLIG, C.: *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Maidenhead : Open University Press, 2013, p. 101-109.

75   See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 141-173. See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-44.

76   See: KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 165-174.

77   See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83.

78   See: BAACKE, D.: *Medienpädagogik*. Berlin : De Gruyter, 1997, p. 70-94. See also: TULODZIECKI, G.: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung zentraler Begriffe bei der pädagogischen Auseinandersetzung mit Medien. In MOSER, H., GRELL, P., NIESYTO, H. (eds.): *Medienbildung und Medienkompetenz*. Munich : Kopaed, 2011, p. 22-24; BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 161-184; SCHORB, B.: Medienkomptenz. In SCHORB, B., HARTUNG-GRIEMBERG, A., DALLMANN, C. (eds.): *Grundbegriffe Medienpädagogik*. Munich : Kopaed, 2017, p. 257-259; HOFFMANN, B.: Medien-Erziehungs-Kompetenz von Eltern im System Familie. In ANGENENT, H., HEIDKAMP, B., KERGEL, D. (eds.): *Digital Diversity. Diversität und Bildung im digitalen Zeitalter*. Wiesbaden : Springer, 2019, p. 103-107.

79   DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life Is Strange*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2015.

80   DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT: *Life Is Strange 2*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2018.

81   DECK NINE: *Life Is Strange: Before the Storm*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2017.

82   DECK NINE: *Life Is Strange: True Colors*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2021.

83   TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2014.

84   TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: Season Two*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2013.

85   TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead: A New Frontier*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2016.

86   TELLTALE GAMES: *The Walking Dead*: *The Final Season*. [digital game]. San Rafael : Telltale Games, 2018.

87   See: MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-42. See also: JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth´s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 17-19; ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

88   Compare hidden messages in digital games, for example: MAJERSKÝ, M., MAGALOVÁ, L.: Semiotická analýza traileru digitálnej hry – Death Stranding 2. In HLADÍKOVÁ, V., JONISOVÁ, E., GRACA, M. (eds.): *Zborník ŠVOaUK 2023*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2023, p. 108.

89   See: ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 135-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

the stated hypothesis, we will research whether meanings of digital games can be analysed by applying media semiotics and whether educational values can be identified. Value principles were observed in accordance with the philosophy of pedagogy.

The model, according to which the semiotic meanings[90] of digital games are analysed, is based on Barthes' understanding of the linguistic sign at both the denotation and connotation level.[91] According to the structuralist theory of myth[92], myths generalize the experience of users to achieve a consensus of meaning. Mythic analysis, therefore, provides a decoding of meaning. Applying Barthes' semiotics of myth methodology to digital games[93], we view myths as cultural signs. Such cultural signs have default meanings that are encoded in digital games. The semiotic-discursive method implemented by Majerský and Magalová[94] on the example of the *Death Stranding 2* trailer starts from the level of observation and interpretation of individual symbols of the digital game but does not conduct an in-depth analysis of the myth, i.e., denotation.

A mythic statement arises from content that has already been reworked to make it suitable for a new presentation. From the semiotic aspect, the relationship between two members, one of which is the signifier (*significant*) and the other the signified (*signifié*), forms the basis of the sign. Every object can pass from a closed existence to a spoken state that opens the possibility of being accepted by society. In this sense, we will research digital games and their educational value. Table 1 shows the semiological structure of the digital game myth.

Signifier	Signified
The value or idea we evoke	An idea in the user's mind
Denotation (Sign)	
Denotative sign	
Connotative signifier	**Connotative signified**
The second level of the evoked idea or value	The second level of idea or value in the user's mind
Connotative sign (Myth)	
Decoded meaning	

TABLE 1: *Semiological structure of myth in digital game*
Source: own processing, 2023

The first level of meaning is the denotational level, which is understood as a sign, so that in the second reading (decoding) it is presented in the form of a connotative sign, that is, a myth. Denotation implies a literal meaning, and connotation an associative one. Myth is produced at the level of connotation. Therefore, the mythic statement is created from a reworked text. Such a text does not destroy the meaning of the digital game, media content, it *impoverishes* it and merges with the term into a new meaning, a new sign.[95] It is a concept that Kellner observes as a form of analysis of media ideology, and Barthes as a new connotative sign, i.e., myth.

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[90] See: BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 16-26.
[91] See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143-151; See also: BARTHES, R.: *Elementi semiologije*. Beograd : Čigoja štampa, 2015, p. 22-33.
[92] See: BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 143-181.
[93] JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth´s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 13-14.
[94] See: MAJERSKÝ, M., MAGALOVÁ, L.: Semiotická analýza traileru digitálnej hry – Death Stranding 2. In HLADÍKOVÁ, V., JONISOVÁ, E., GRACA, M. (eds.): *Zborník ŠVOaUK 2023*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2023, p. 103-109.
[95] BARTHES, R.: *Mitologije*. Zagreb : Pelago, 2009, p. 150.

4 The Analysis of Educational Values in Digital Games

The educational values emphasized by Vuk-Pavlović[96], and later taken over by Vukasović, for the purposes of this study, will be presented in three categories: ethical, humane, and family values (see Table 2). Educational values represent spiritual goods and ideals for achieving educational goals. Education is engaged in values, and educational goals are achieved through educational values, such as kindness, love, altruism, sincerity, honesty, patience, trust, friendship and the like. Education is a value category that ennobles a person.[97] However, the concept of value is highly debatable, because it is difficult to define due to its comprehensiveness. Not all values are equal for all users: some give priority to family values, for some the material value is the goal, for some values are represented by justice, love, honesty, empathy and the like.[98] In this sense, we start from the premise that the values are relative constants of ideas, standards and concepts of *ideas of desirable virtues*.[99]

Ethical values	Human values	Family values
Morality, honesty, tolerance, justice, altruism, appreciation, solidarity	Peace, sincerity, empathy, friendship, cooperation, dignity	Love, trust, respect, self-control, care, support, comfort

TABLE 2: *The educational values of digital games*

Source: own processing, 2023

In the graphic adventure series *The Walking Dead* (TWD), played from a third-person perspective, the protagonist is Clementine, although in the first part, the main character is Lee Everett. What is specific to this digital game, and the entire TWD series, is the possibility of choice that the game offers through different ethical, humane and family values. Specifically, in the first part of TWD, the player decides whether to save the life of Carley or Doug by choosing between ethical or humane values, i.e., tolerance and cooperation. Another example puts the player in a situation where they must decide whether to sacrifice another to save themselves, or to sacrifice a body part, specifically Parker's leg. The very concept of sacrificing a part of the body to save life is a motif that often appears in adventures, so we find the same example in *Life is Strange 2* (LiS2), i.e., losing an eye to save one's brother.

The symbol of sacrificing a part of the body represents a value component of digital games, which we understand as a form of player affirmation (see Table 3), because in this way the drama of the game,[100] the memorability of the story and the intensity of educational values are

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96 See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83. See also: VUKASOVIĆ, A.: *Pedagogija.* Zagreb : Hrvatski katolički zbor MI, 2001, p. 217-243.

97 VUKASOVIĆ, A.: Teologijsko i aksiologijsko utemeljenje odgoja u ozračju hrvatske odgojne preobrazbe. In *Obnovljeni život,* 2008, Vol. 63, No. 1, p. 37.

98 MRNJAUS, K.: *Pedagoška promišljanja o vrijednostima*. Rijeka : Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, 2008, p. 27.

99 See: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 45-55. See also: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 126. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_ Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>; MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 40-42; PRAVDOVÁ, H., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Contemporary Media Culture in the Coordinates of Game Principles. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 78-79. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/ wp-content/uploads/2022/12/4_Hana-Pravdova%E2%95%A0u_Zora-Hudi%E2%95%A0ukova%E2%95%A0u. pdf>; VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 27-51; VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 61-83.

100 PRAVDOVÁ, H., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z.: Contemporary Media Culture in the Coordinates of Game Principles. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 79. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/4_Hana-Pravdova%E2%95%A0u_Zora-Hudi%E2%95%A0ukova%E2%95%A0u.pdf>.

enhanced. Loss of a leg, arm, eye, sacrifice of a friend, loss of a loved one represent a hidden meaning that indicates the strengthening of the user's personality. In particular, the loss of a leg not only slows down the player in the game but puts them at a disadvantage, compared to others, and thus teaches solidarity, empathy, cooperation, care and comfort. Their sacrifice is then no longer a handicap but *a stake* in which they build themselves up through sacrifice and suffering. This is confirmed by the protagonist Clementine, who, throughout the entire TWD series, develops from a scared, fragile and wounded girl into a young, strong and determined girl who takes on the role of an educator and a guardian.

Affirmation	Cooperation	Guild
Strengthening the user's personality	Strengthening of social competences	Strengthening community affiliation

TABLE 3: *Value components of digital games*

Source: own processing, 2023

It is interesting to note that Lee, a history professor at the University of Georgia, assumes the role of an educator and a guardian. In this way, the digital game on the denotation level shows Lee as an educator who is destined to be a guardian and teach others, which is seen throughout the game and in all its scenes, for example, in the scene of the haircut,[101] or the scene of the request to shorten his suffering.

From the semiotic point of view, Clementine's development can be seen as a denotative sign of growing up and maturing, but what is most important refers to a connotative sign of such growing up, in which Clementine becomes a symbol and myth of educators and guardians. She assumes the role of a protector, guardian and, conditionally speaking, a comforting mother, who fights for others, justice, ethics, humanity, and family. She is aware of her protege's flaws, which she accepts and respects, but she teaches him, despite the society he is in, how to be a good person. If we compare the two covers of TWD, i.e., the first and the last game, the semiotic roundness is clearly visible (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: *The Walking Dead cover*

Source: The Walking Dead. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Walking-Dead-Game-Year-PlayStation-3/dp/B00EPIG606?th=1>.

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[101] JUKIĆ, D.: Marketing Semiotics in Digital Games: Myth´s Analysis in The Walking Dead and Heavy Rain. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 18.

Lee is shown as a strong, determined, and protective guardian holding an axe in his right hand, and next to him is a frightened little girl who has turned her whole body from the terror that haunts her. Her view is not directed towards the camera, but lowered, while Lee is looking decisively and insolently at the camera. The sunrise is shown in such a way that the sun's rays touch the tip of the red fire axe, thus denoting brutality and strength that conceals naturalness and calmness. Clementine's hands are raised to her face, suggesting vulnerability and fear of the metaphorical darkness she is in and does not want to look at. On a mythic level[102], two meanings are decoded here: guardianship and uncertainty. Guardianship is shown in the character of Lee who raises Clementine and uses her experience, wisdom and strength to fight her way through the hordes, while throughout the game there is uncertainty as to whether she will succeed. This is the uncertainty about the future that Vuk-Pavlović is talking about.[103] In the second example (see Figure 2), a semiotically rounded whole of upbringing and guardianship can be clearly seen, which completely take over all motifs and symbols, such as the axe and the position of the body, which is identical to Lee's. However, the key difference is that Clementine is holding the protege's hand, symbolizing an educator in the full sense of the word, denoting motherhood, as she assumes the guardianship of him from the very beginning.[104] Also, the role of light is now shown differently: the picture shows that it is dawn, and the position of the sun and the level of dark colours are reduced to a minimum, suggesting that the series ends happily. Her role as guardian, educator, friend, and survivor has been fully realized. Clementine symbolizes the rounded whole of a student and a teacher, a child and a man.

FIGURE 2: *The Walking Dead: The Final Season cover*
Source: The Walking Dead: The Final Season. [online]. [2023-08-25]. Available at: <https://www.playstation.com/en-hr/games/the-walking-dead-the-final-season/>.

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[102] BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 24.
[103] See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-53.
[104] See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 58-62.

According to Vuk-Pavlović's philosophy of upbringing, we understand Clementine's authority as a valuable experience, and the deuteragonist Alvin Junior is determined freely[105] based on the pedagogical bond of friendship, family and humane trust. This is the same family value that Clementine adopts from Lee. Such a relationship of complete *balance* is broken in the final season, the episode *Take Us Back*, where Alvin questions educational, ethical, moral, family and humane values, resisting educational ideals. This very scene is an excellent example of a means of education, as the protagonist Clementine explains to him that there is a difference between living and surviving. Clementine represents the ideal educator because her goal is to instil humanity in her protege, and that is exactly why she is holding his hand.

The second component of the value of the digital game (see Table 3) refers to cooperation, strengthening social dimensions, learning tolerance, acceptance of others and cooperation. Only after social acceptance does the strength of belonging to the community develop. In this sense, the transcoding[106] of the meaning of the TWD series reveals to us the relationships and communication between the text, users, society and the media industry. Accordingly, we interpret digital game media literacy in the context of critical social theory, as well as the phenomenon of education. More precisely, according to Kellner,[107] ideological criticism of the media implies an image, symbol, narrative and myth that become a value system. Comparing *The Walking Dead: A New Frontier*, the same haircut motif appears as a connotative link between growing up and accepting responsibility between Javier García and Clementine, just like the scene in *The Walking Dead Season 2*, when Clementine meets her old friend Kenny and has the choice to hug him.

When we compare the *Life is Strange* series with the TWD series, similar patterns of symbols, denotations and connotations emerge that create new media meanings. This is especially highlighted in the content analysis, where the social and dramatic dimension of the LIS game is strongly emphasized, which, just like TWD, has a certain choice, i.e., puts the user in ethical, social, psychological, and pedagogical choices that affect the overall gaming experience. In this sense, the games in the series LIS represent an excellent example for the analysis of the philosophy of education,[108] and the meta-theory of media culture,[109] because they show the problems of depression, parental separation, dying, bullying, racism and suicide. An example is the relationship between protagonist Max Caulfield and her rival Victoria Chase, who is portrayed as an arrogant rich snob whom Max envies, although beneath that arrogance, repulsion and mockery lies vulnerability and insecurity.

The same goes for all the protagonists in the series LIS and TWD because the characters are complex and allow for different analyses, such as questioning whether Alvin Junior from the TWD series is a product of educational values, or is he Clementine's way of expressing respect for Lee and his educational values? Also, in a semiotic sense[110], does Alvin represent a substitute for a lost childhood as Clementine represented a daughter figure to Lee? Or is the relationship between the Diaz brothers in LiS2 a representation of the educational values of togetherness, family, love, kindness and patience, a myth about a child (an older brother) growing up into a protector and guardian? From the above, it follows that the complete series TWD and LIS are representations of the same myth (see Figure 3).

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[105] See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 100. See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Djelovnost umjetnosti*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2008, p. 60.
[106] KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 95.
[107] Ibidem, p. 102.
[108] See: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-53.
[109] See also: KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 102-131.
[110] BIGNELL, J.: *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 16-17.

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            ┌──────────────┐
            │   Family     │
            └──────────────┘
              ↙        ↖
  ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
  │  Altruism    │←→ │  Goodnes     │
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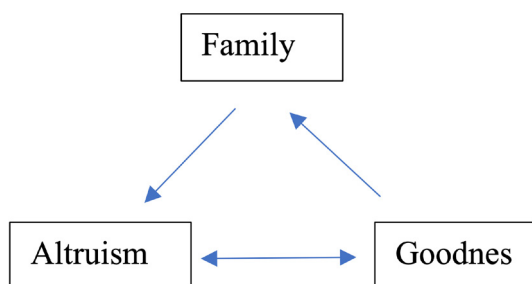
FIGURE 3: *Universal values of graphic adventure*
Source: own processing, 2023

The key media construction within the graphic adventure of the digital games stems from family values, regardless of whether it is an unhappy, separated, abandoned or rejected family. In this sense, a family tragedy can be a picture of a neglected family, like the hidden scenes in *Life is Strange: Before the Storm* (LiS: BtS), or the scene when a mother leaves her children to find their own identity in LiS2. In any case, the denotative level is a family value because the LiS scene shows a family during dinner, just as in TWD the mythic structure of the family is shown in the photo of Lee's family. Decoding the symbols that appear in digital games that are equal in genre, as Škripcová[111] points out, it can be found out that the common denotation of the sign is a lost family value that manifests itself through the search for humanism, kindness, altruism and tolerance. These are educational values that teach users of digital games through their options to choose narrative, action or continue playing.

It is important to note the semiotic level of the construction of the mother that appears in the LiS series. It is an aestheticized ethical value that allows the user to build different attitudes and beliefs around the concept of motherhood and family. The relationship that exists between Chloe Price and her mother in LiS: BtS can be connected through semiotic analysis to the complex relationship between the Diaz brothers and their mother in LiS2. At the same time, the loss of a father is a binary representation of the collapse of family happiness, family values and harmony. Both mothers symbolize the *continuation of life* as they take on another surname and continue to live after a tragic loss, or leave a husband and continue to live without him. The key paradigm and hidden meaning are revealed in the *transmission* of educational values to children who accept fate and face it differently. Because of this, there is the same motive with Clementine in the TWD series, who takes on the role of Alvin Jr.'s educator, as well as the older brother Sean, who takes on the role of a protector.

Therefore, Škripcová's theory of how digital games can teach is correct and we can supplement it that adventures like the series TWD, LiS, as well as interactive dramas, like *Heavy Rain*[112], *Beyond: Two Souls*[113] and *Detroit: Become Human*[114], action adventures, like *A Plague Tale: Innocence*[115], *A Plague Tale: Requiem*[116] and *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*[117] do have educational values that teach their users. From the above comes the conclusion that educational values are an ideal construct found in digital games that have elements of

[111] ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

[112] QUANTIC DREAMS: *Heavy Rain*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2010.

[113] QUANTIC DREAMS: *Beyond: Two Souls*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2013.

[114] QUANTIC DREAMS: *Detroit: Become Human*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

[115] ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale: Innocence*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2019.

[116] ASOBO STUDIO: *A Plague Tale: Requiem*. [digital game]. Paris : Focus Home Interactive, 2022.

[117] NINJA THEORY : *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. [digital game]. Cambridge : Ninja Theory, 2018.

the adventure genre. This can also relate to the very concept of myth as an epic genre that allows the reader, viewer, and gamer to immerse themselves in an adventurous and mysterious world that is the ideal basis for the narrative.

Through a semiotic analysis of that world and its protagonists, as well as a focus on the choice of gender, race and status, we decode a deeper meaning. This is why the protagonists are not limited by social, geographical, or religious status, but represent universal archetypes. As examples, we take Alexandra Chen from *Life is Strange: True Colors* who is a young Asian-American woman, or father Esteban Diaz, a Hispanic American from LiS2, or Lee Everett, an African American as the ideal guardian archetype from TWD. This is exactly what is in the very subtext of German media pedagogy, which systematically and theoretically describes the connection between culture and society. This is what media pedagogy portrays as an anticyclical movement of consciousness towards educational and cultural topics in media culture[118] and the desire for one's own interpretation of oneself and the world.

These are values that the user does not have to be aware of while playing the game, but these media messages strongly influence their decisions, attitudes, and ultimately, their behaviour. Kellner claims similarly[119] when he says that the analysis of such constructions should not be stopped at the limit of one text (digital game) but should be expanded in the context of their influence on other media messages. Such transcoding leads us to universal educational values and a common understanding of the denotative level of the sign, which turns into a new signifier, i.e., into the construction of the myth of the ideal family. Only then do we see how the cultural content of the family is broken and through the virtual world it is shown in fragments, in photography, parenting, guardianship, brotherhood and friends. These are the true colours of family values where, regardless of gender, race or religion, digital games construct the reality and images around us.

5 Conclusion

According to Bauer[120], the media bring people into relationships with reality that objectify them. This means that the use of media represents a construction of reality that changes us during immersion in adventure digital games. Such a change can be involuntary[121], which teaches users educational values hidden at the denotation and connotation level. This means that the analysis of media literacy requires an understanding of media semiotics and media criticism of society. In this sense, the interpretation of media signs is not found in the media, but in the cultural environment, and according to Kellner, the ideology of society; or according to Barthes, the myth of society. In other words, the ability and authorization of media pedagogy and media competence sets the reference values of socially desirable media use.

Since media pedagogy focuses its ambitions on educational values, we observe media communication in accordance with media culture. Such cultural values are intertwined with communication values in which the role of sender (producer), digital game (media) and receiver (gamer) represent the educational triangle of teacher, student, and education. In the context of the philosophy of education, it is the relationship between humane, ethical and family values

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[118] See: HEPP, A.: Netzwerke der Medien: Netzwerke des Alltags: Medienalltag in der Netzwerkgesellschaft. In THOMAS, T. (ed): *Medienkultur und soziales Handeln*. Wiesbaden : Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008, p. 81. See also: BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 192; BAUER, T. A.: *Kommunikation wissenschaftlich denken: perspektiven einer kontextuellen theorie gesellschaftlicher Verständigung*. Wien : Böhlau, 2014, p. 33.

[119] KELLNER, D.: *Medijska kultura*. Beograd : Clio, 2004, p. 48.

[120] BAUER, T. A.: *Medij za otvoreno društvo*. Zagreb : Sveučilišna naklada, 2007, p. 157.

[121] ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L.: Media Literacy in Digital Games. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 136-138. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/7_Lucia-Skripcova.pdf>.

that arise from being.[122] With such an understanding[123], the social values of the archetype of family, upbringing, parents and guardians that we have researched and analysed in digital games gain meaning only in the change of symbols, denotation, narrative and associations, but only in the context of the observed phenomena.

Observing media literacy in the broader sense of the word, the meaning of the symbols that appear in digital games decodes the destruction of family and the depressing image of an unhappy childhood. The hypothesis was confirmed, so we can conclude that the observed digital games educate and have educational values that can be decoded. Also, educational values, as well as the symbols hidden in the mythical structure of the protagonist, have a deeper anthropological and sociological meaning. The values that are shown can be direct and indirect. In other words, through digital games, we are enabled to interpret ourselves and the world, and society as such is mediated by communication that represents symbolic mediated interaction. It is precisely because of this fluctuation of signs, symbols and hidden meanings that media literacy is necessary. In this sense, media pedagogy is the foundation of the subject and society. Observing upbringing as love through which all values are realized, the future is what Vuk-Pavlović is talking about, because the future is not outside of us, it is within us.

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[122] See: HURAJOVÁ, A., HLADÍKOVÁ, V.: Educating for Good Character: From Critical Thinking to Intellectual Character Virtues. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2022, Vol. 5. No. 1, p. 187. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/10_Anna-Hurajova-Vladimira-Hladikova.pdf>; See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-53; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 45-55; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: On Perspectives of Teacher Training and Understanding of Their Digital Competencies as Determinants of Digital Education. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 126. [online]. [2023-11-25]. Available at: <https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8_Galikova-Tolnaiova.pdf>.

[123] Author's note: The term "*ars docendi*" – the virtue of teaching used by S. Gáliková Tolnaiová is like the term "personality" used by P. Vuk-Pavlović. Both concepts have their own deeper, philosophical meaning that stems from the understanding of moral values. In fact, Gáliková associates this term with the art of teaching, and Vuk-Pavlović views pedagogy as "the art of education". See: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: *Idea psychagógie v holistickej perspektíve*. Bratislava : Iris, 2014, p. 72-76. See also: VUK-PAVLOVIĆ, P.: *Filozofija odgoja*. Zagreb : Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2016, p. 39-44.

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