The Dimensions of Co-Authorship in a Playthrough Experience of Guild Wars 2

Jasper Camille Go, De La Salle University, Philippines

Abstract

Guild Wars 2 is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) with a playerbase of 11 million as of April 2019. The game has been critically acclaimed and has garnered many awards for its graphics, hypernarrative story, and dynamic gameplay. This fantasy MMORPG developed by ArenaNet allows players to experience the game as individuals or while interacting with or teaming up with online players whenever they login and play the game. *Let's Plays* and playthroughs have grown significantly throughout the past decade yet are still relatively unexplored. This study adds to the existing literature by focusing on WoodenPotatoes, a medium sized *Guild Wars 2* YouTuber, and his playthroughs of the *Guild Wars 2: Path of Fire* expansion. The study examined how WoodenPotatoes related gameplay, design, and narrative in his videos and how he commented on his playthroughs. The findings of this study showed how YouTube gamers such as WoodenPotatoes have dimensions of co-authorship. This co-authorship operates on three levels: as a gamer, as a fan, and as a YouTuber. As *Guild Wars 2* is a theme park type of MMORPG with a branching hypernarrative, the research also explored a player's mental schema through WoodenPotatoes commentary. Due to both in-game and external influences, the mental schema of WoodenPotatoes was affected and thus contributed to influencing his playthrough experience and commentary as a co-author. Finally, the findings of this study show that player values and experience are affected by the levels of co-authorship and vise-versa.

Keywords: Let's Play, MMORPG, Playthrough Experience, Commentary, Gamer Schema

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

In recent years, Let's Play videos have become a global phenomenon. Let's Plays, a subgenre of playthroughs, are online videos of people playing video games with humorous commentaries that aim to entertain an audience; with gamers poking fun at the game or task (Dawson, 2016; Finniss, 2009; Zariko, 2016).

Games such *Guild Wars 2 (GW2)* have a program where players with Twitch or YouTube channels help promote the game ("ArenaNet Partner Program", n.d.; Ortiz, 2015; "Partner Program", 2015) as small and medium channels help bring in players and build game communities (Hudson, 2017). Players are brought to star status within the community and through ArenaNet's partner program, they are incentivized for promoting the game. Thus, this study explores how WoodenPotatoes, a significant figure in the *GW2* community, comments on his playthroughs and relates gameplay, design, and narrative.

The following are research questions this paper seeks to address:
RQ1: How does WoodenPotatoes in his playthroughs relate gameplay, design, and narrative?
RQ2: How does WoodenPotatoes comment on his playthroughs?

Review of Related Literature

The history of video games and its development have only been quite recent. It was only in the 1970s where video games started to take shape as a medium as game developers took heavy inspiration from TV and film (Lee, 2013; Wolf, 2008). The linear narrative has long dominated the narrative style of games as it is easy to apply, but it creates a natural barrier between the story and game mechanics (Grip, 2012; Lee, 2013; Schreiber, 2009). Lee (2013) argues that other media forms have figured out a form that works for narrative, but games fall short causing "dissonance" or conflict in the player's mind. Thus, narrative has become a major contention for game scholars (Lindley, 2005; Simons, 2007).

Ludologists and narratologists debate if narratives have a place in games and if a player's experience can be considered as a narrative (Frasca, 2003; Juul, 2001; Rapatan, 2017; Simons, 2007; Zagal, 2010). However, scholars have concluded that their disagreements are due to the way narrative is defined and that they are both tackling specific areas within "game theory" (Lindley, 2005; Simons, 2007, p.12). This is ironic since MMORPGs can find their origins derived from role-playing games which have hypernarrative features (Machinima, 2011). Hypernarratives can leeway for interactivity, "self-reflection", and can be read from a "reader's perspective" (Lindley, 2005, p.7-9; Myers, 2010, p.76,82). This is because players form "inner narrative models" (Lindley, 2005, p.21-23) known as schemas which pertain "to how the mind acquires, represents, and transforms knowledge" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p.2-3). Shinkle (2005) and Zariko (2016) discovered that games are not just simulations but are lived experiences. These lived experiences are considered by narratologists as part of the game's narrative (Simons, 2007) and in the case of hypernarratives, it can be considered as a form of authorship due to the "readers interpretive process" and "perspective" (Myers, 2010, p.76).

Lindley (2005) argues that by utilizing hypernarratives in game design, this would satisfy both inherent requirements of narrative and gaming. Branching options provide a player with the ability to choose and allows their choices to have an effect on the story and gameplay (Schreiber, 2009). These structures help in creating a message and elevating the theme of the hypernarrative as they provide the balance between the narrative and gameplay (Bernstein, 1998; Cicconi, 2000; Rapatan, 2017). Utilizing this in a conversation system can effectively be used as a means of storytelling, which is why many propose that game developers move towards environmental oriented storytelling (Jenkins, 2004; Schreiber, 2009).

Fabricatore's (2007) studies show that players put their focus on "playability" and "context" which include the goal of the game, design, appearance, narrative, and gameplay. This is the reason why game developers focus on the "game's world", "narrative goal", "narrative background", and the player's "mental model" (Grip, 2014) while encouraging "discovery" and "exploration" (Cook, 2006). Internal and external factors come into play when it comes to motivation as "contexts supportive of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were found to foster greater internalization and integration than contexts that thwart satisfaction of these needs" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68, 76).

Players choose "appropriate games to fit their specific play styles and preferences" (Glas, 2015, p.83) as they desire different "experiences from a game" (Lindley, 2005, p.2). Bartle grouped players into four key categories (as cited in Lindley, 2005). Since then researchers have expanded this with Lindley (2005) refining the taxonomy to cater to story structured games. "Players may cross over" from one category to another but "one play style tends to dominate the preferences of any given player" (Lindley, 2005, p.2).

YouTube gamers are "sometimes called 'professional fans'" due to their "love [for] video games" and since they provide "their thoughts and commentary" (May, 2018, p.94). Fans are individuals who have an "intense emotional investment in media text" and "who engages with the larger fandom" (Jenkins, 2006c, par.8). Developers have acknowledged that fans know the work even better than developers do (Daneva, 2017; Jenkins, 2006b). Players in *World of Warcraft* have spent a collective "5.93 million years" in the game and compiled thousands of *Wikipedia* pages on the MMORPG (McGonigal, 2010). Pierre Levy called this the "collective intelligence" where individuals volunteer their knowledge in order to benefit their community who have "shared mutual interests" (as cited in Jenkins, 2006a, p.4, 20). Terranova (2000) "identif[ies]"(p.54) the collective intelligence as "immaterial labor" (p.39-42) where "our social actions are captured and monetized" (Postigo, 2016, p.334). This can be viewed as a form of "exploitation" where companies "channel the user's own activity" to further the company's goals - unpaid and from the users "free choice"- where players "give up some rights concerning the products of their playing hours" (Andrejevic, 2009, p.416-421). However, Jenkins (2006b) provides a more positive view of the collective intelligence which he termed "participatory culture". Participatory culture through new media provides fans access to produce, create, and have a voice in various online platforms which were formerly exclusive to gate keepers (Jenkins, 2006b). Fans of a game are able to promote it and show their approval or displeasure at what traditional media producers are doing with it. But "participatory culture['s] inner workings are

subject to the rational of capital accumulation, commodification, and profit" (Postigo, 2014, p.215).

Researchers who discuss participatory culture and the collective intelligence acknowledge that fans understand their participation is free labor and that corporations have this tendency to exploit them (Banks & Deuze, 2009). However, "co-creative relationships… cannot be reduced to one simple manipulation at the hands of corporations and firms" (Banks & Deuze, 2009). Instead they credit "co-creation… [as] a disruptive agent of change that sits uncomfortably with our current understandings and theories of work and labor" (Banks & Deuze, 2009). This is why researchers such as Sotamaa (2007) are clamoring for a different model of ownership for games as the current structure of copyright might not work due to the "conflict between 'corporate' ownership and 'common' practice" (Coleman & Dyer-Witheford, 2007, p.945).

"The games industry… has been eager to broaden consumer participation" as the shape of an MMORPG does not only require the input of designers but also players (Jenkins, 2006b). This involvement occurs within and even outside the game's boundaries as the needs of an MMORPG differs in terms of design and processes compared to traditional approaches to games in famous design books (Daneva, 2017; Jenkins, 2006b). Game designers must have intimate knowledge of the game as players themselves and would view this as a "process… between game creators and players" (Daneva, 2017, p.61-64). MMORPGs are known for their highly supportive communities who are focused on helping people learn more about the game (O'Connor, Longman, White, & Obst, 2015; Hopp, Barker, & Weiss, 2015), inspire new ideas, and "come up with unimaginable approaches to in-game situations" that even "challenge" the people who developed the game (Daneva, 2017, p.64). These players "affect the development of game features that happens after the release of the game" (Daneva, 2017, p.64).

As it is important for researchers to understand both the community behind the game and the people playing the game (Nascimento et al., 2014), it is crucial to understand how YouTube and Twitch operate. Twitch is a live streaming site which allows streamers and users to interact with each other constantly (Anderson, 2017). While Twitch streamers post every day with content lasting roughly 2 hours long, YouTube gamers would typically post only a few videos per day (Nascimento et al., 2014). It was YouTube that first helped popularize gamers and their playthroughs allowing Internet users to upload and view pre-recorded gameplay (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017). "Game companies seek partnerships with the best-known [YouTube] commentators" (Postigo, 2014, p.211) providing early access or financial incentives. Big YouTubers can bring the attention of millions of people towards an obscure game. But according to developers, "creating communities of broader support" is what makes games successful (Hudson, 2017). Thus, they turn to small to medium-sized YouTubers in order to help cultivate communities and develop a loyal following for these games (Hudson, 2017).

The "architectural affordances" (Postigo, 2016, p.335, 337-340) of YouTube allow YouTubers to be producers by mixing "on-demand", "crowdsourcing", and "old-media" models of media production and sustainability (Postigo, 2014, p.214). YouTubers are incentivized to create videos and post them on the platform as they earn a percentage from ads that are placed alongside their content in the platform (Postigo, 2014). In YouTube, the subscriber is the most common social currency" as the secret advertising and ranking system is dependent on them (Postigo, 2016, p.338-339).

Although content creators can be financially independent and produce their own videos, they are also subject to the "tastes of the audience", YouTube, and game corporations (Postigo, 2014, p.213) due to the system that favors "commercial content" and YouTube's goal as a company (Andrejevic, 2009, p.421).

A full-time professional gamer must satisfy his audience, cultivate patrons, and create a spectacle that is worthy of being watched by millions of viewers (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017, p.17). "Humor, swearing and gossip" are elements that are used to engage the audience while making moral choices throughout the game (Piittinen, 2018, p.14). These YouTube gamers engage their audiences in such a way that viewers feel involved in the video through their "commentary", "reactions", "persona", "role", "spectacle", and "performance" (Anderson, 2017; Glas, 2015, p.83-84; Johnson & Woodcock, 2017; May, 2018 p.17; Pietruszka, 2016, p.68; Zariko, 2016, p.28); thus, live vicariously through the YouTuber (Glas, 2015). YouTubers may not always follow the "intended design of a game" and may show "divergent and deviant forms of play" (Glas, 2015, p.84). The way YouTubers entertain their fans "vary from one vlogger to another" (Pietruszka, 2016, p.68). Players who do live streams of their gameplay would utilize a "first person" view instead of a "third person" view (Anderson, 2017). YouTube gamers would provide their "status in the game", voice their "player expectations", and even discuss issues regarding "usability", "accessibility", and "design" (May, 2018, p.99-101). While Johnson and Woodcock (2017) discuss the aspect of performance in Let's Plays, Zariko (2016) focuses particularly on the concepts of "affect", "embodiment", and does not limit it to just "performance" (p.28). She states that a Let's Play shows players as the "writer of their own narrative content… that is unique to them" instead of just the game's narrative dragging players along (Zariko, 2016, p.158). "The nature of games and the designs implemented by the video game developers must be taken into consideration when the videos are analyzed" (Zariko, 2016, p.158).

In the literature, there are three issues that occur: the debate between ludologists and narratologists regarding game narrative, participatory culture viewed as exploitative unpaid labor (Andrejevic, 2009; Banks & Deuze, 2009; Sotamaa, 2007; Terranova, 2000) versus an agent of decentralizing power (Banks & Deuze, 2009; Coleman & Dyer-Witheford, 2007; Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b), and the idea of being an independent content creator versus being bound by the system of YouTube (Andrejevic, 2009; Postigo, 2014, 2016).

For the first issue, I am in no way rekindling the debate between ludologists and narratologists. As established by previous scholars (Lindley, 2005; Simons, 2007; Zariko, 2016), these debates tackle different areas within game theory and can shift based on how narrative is defined. In this paper, I will consider the player narrative or mental schema as a form of narrative since the structure provided by a hypernarrative game is narrative based, thus, the structure implies that there is a narrative to be engaged with and a player narrative can develop and form. In this context, I am not in any way disregarding player experience but will refer to player experience as the result of interacting with the game. "There is no such thing as a universal narrative" (Lemmens, Bouzouita, Caracciolo, & Schelstraete, 2016, p.18), "play is self-reflective and represents its own form and own play" (Myers, 2010, p.82), and the idea of the reader being a co-author has existed since hypertext (Machinima, 2011; Myers, 2010, p.76; Zariko, 2016). This struggle usually occurs between gamers, producers, and content

creators making their own videos (Clark, 2018; Rigney, 2017; Wilde, 2017). Players are no longer consumers but "co-authors" as the nature of Let's Play videos allow for a conceptualization of the play experience as a singular, unique story, as told by, not navigated through the player" (Zariko, 2016, p.141). Let's Plays place its focus on the player in the moment, not what a "player can do within the game" (Zariko, 2016, p.161). Therefore, the study builds on the idea that players are co-authors (Myers, 2010; Simons, 2007; Zariko, 2016) as they experience the game and develop a narrative schema (Lee, 2013). In this study, I define co-authorship as the collaborative interactions between different entities resulting in the co-creation of a product. As the player narrative is the result of the co-authorship between the player and the game, the study explores the flexibility of the player's narrative schema, how a player reacts to "dissonance" (Lee, 2013), how in-game and external elements affect the schema, and how player type and player values affect the commentary.

In the second issue, researchers view the collective intelligence as "immaterial labor" (Terranova, 2000) favoring corporations (Banks & Deuze, 2009; Coleman & Dyer-Witheford, 2007; Sotamaa, 2007; Terranova, 2000) since the fans work for "free" (Andrejevic, 2009) or as participatory culture where fans have access to power formerly exclusive to gate keepers (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 160, 2006b; Postigo, 2016). Thus, the study explores how a dedicated fan discusses *GW2* in relationship to the greater community and the game's development.

In the third issue, content creators have been observed to show both independence (Postigo, 2016) and dependence on the system provided (Postigo, 2014). YouTubers have been observed to author their own story (Zariko, 2016), cater to their niche market (Pietruszka, 2016; Johnson & Woodcock, 2017), take on roles that are 'expected' of them by the audience (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017), diffuse different moral choices they make in game (Piittinen, 2018) while engaging and building their audience (Anderson, 2017; Glas, 2015; Johnson & Woodcock, 2017). Therefore, the study explores how WoodenPotatoes presents himself in relationship to his audience and affiliations.

Scope

The study focused on WoodenPotatoes' main channel on a specific time period and topic in order to have better data consistency as MMORPGs constantly update and patch the game. Although *GW2* is a multiplayer game, it is just a part of the experience that WoodenPotatoes has. This paper did not explore the topic on multiplayer experiences as it is too expansive to fully cover in this paper. The study did not include thumbnails or title of the video and the comments that fans and players put in the comment section of YouTube as the focus was on WoodenPotatoes' commentary and his playthrough experience. This study did not cover dungeons, fractals, raids, monthly activities, guild missions, special items, Player versus Player, and World versus World.

Limitations

The study was done on a single individual who is an avid fan of *GW2*. Videos were created and curated after the events were experienced with most videos being spoiler free. This limited WoodenPotatoes' footage and his ability to create juxtaposing text. Another limitation of this study was that the samples selected were his first experiences

produced during the release week of Path of Fire. Being an ArenaNet partner, he may have held back on commenting considering that there might be repercussions to his account, his channel, and the popularity of the game.

Methodology

I utilized the qualitative method of thematic analysis as this method helps "manage large volumes of data without losing the context, for getting close to or immersing oneself in the data" (Lapadat, 2010, p.926). I used Braun and Clark's (2006) "six-phase guide" as a "framework" to ensure data accuracy and credibility (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p.3354). The codes that were initially generated came from the player and his background, as well as gameplay, design, and narrative. This was based on Fabricatore's (2007) and Grip's (2014) research regarding the focus of players in a game.
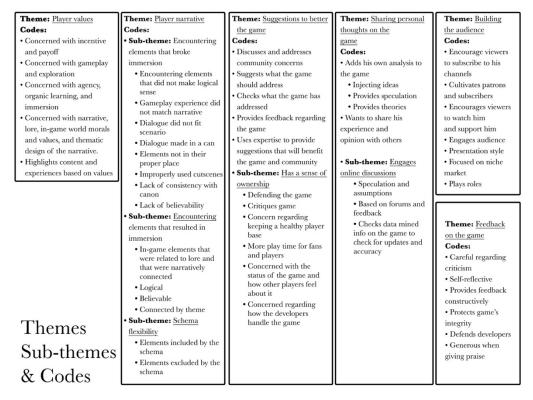

Figure 1: Themes and Codes

Sampling

I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy for the study.

The qualities that were needed for the subject of study as indicated by the literature were the following:
• An experienced gamer with significant dedication to the game
• Able to discuss gameplay, design, narrative, and relay a player narrative
• A dedicated fan of the game
• The game played must have hypernarrative affordances

- The game played must be an MMORPG due to the nature of MMORPG players and their relationship with developers
- Must have a small to medium sized YouTube channel
- Had a significant role or contribution in the game's community

Due to the criteria above, I selected nine videos from WoodenPotatoes' YouTube channel on the Guild Wars 2: Path of Fire expansion.
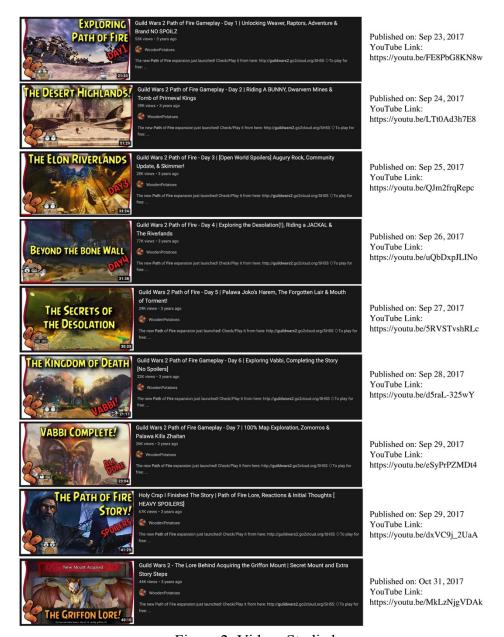

Figure 2: Videos Studied

GW2 was chosen due to the game's hypernarrative affordance, the theme park structure of the MMORPG, and the release of new elements in the expansion.

WoodenPotatoes was selected during the time that this research was conducted as his videos dominated the YouTube search results on "Guild Wars 2 Path of Fire". He has over 10,000 hours of playtime as of 2017. His channel had over 47 million views and

131,000 subscribers during the time of the study. He actively promoted the expansion during its release. His natural progression through the narrative and his relationship with the developers and the community made him an ideal subject in this study due to his expertise.
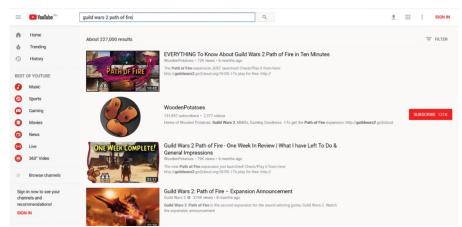

Figure 3: Guild Wars 2 YouTube search results during the time of the study

During this series, WoodenPotatoes had a play time ranging from six to ten hours per day with the exception of the video on the Griffon (WoodenPotatoes, 2017d). After his playthrough, he would produce his commentary regarding the expansion and upload it online.

Findings

The findings show that WoodenPotatoes engaged in three dimensions of co-authorship during the playthrough. The dimensions of co-authorship as are a gamer, as a fan, and as YouTuber based on the findings of the thematic analysis. In this framework, the term gamer specifically refers to the gamer as the player of the game. It must be noted that the term gamer will be used interchangeably with the word player throughout the paper.
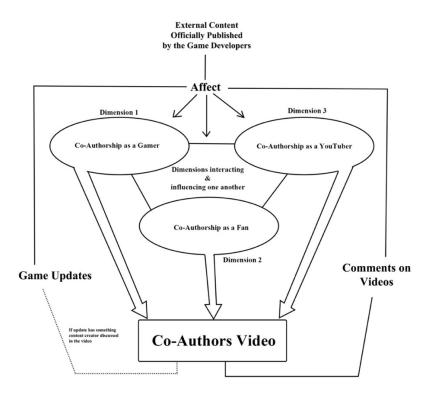
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework

Dimension 1: Co-authorship as Gamer includes the influence of player type, player motive, player narrative, and player values. This also includes the player schema in relationship to gameplay, the in-game world, theme, and narrative.

Dimension 2: Co-authorship as fan shows how WoodenPotatoes as a fan of the game engages with the greater community of players and takes on a role as a developer because of his sense of ownership for the game.

Dimension 3: Co-Authorship as YouTuber shows how the affordances of YouTube as a platform and WoodenPotatoes' affiliations affect the commentary, his behavior, presentation, critiques of the game, and structure of the video.

All of these dimensions affect and interact with the elements of the game and each other even prior to the creation of the video. The interactions of each dimension experienced as a gamer, fan, and YouTuber results in the production of a video in which each dimension then co-authors the final product. Once the content creator experiences feedback from the affordances provided by YouTube or sees an update in the game (whether or not what was discussed was featured in the update), this affects the dimensions and the next video that is produced. These three dimensions help answer the research questions below.

RQ1: How does WoodenPotatoes in his playthroughs relate gameplay, design, and narrative?

The findings of the study show that WoodenPotatoes relates gameplay, design, and narrative as a gamer and as a fan.

Dimension 1 answers this as WoodenPotatoes discusses these elements in relation to his player values and player type. Utilizing the player taxonomy schemes of Bartle (as cited in Lindley, 2005) and Lindley (2005), WoodenPotatoes fell under these four player types: "explorer", "achiever", "audience style", and "immersionist" (Lindley, 2005) as he showed motivations, interests, and actions that fit with each taxonomy's descriptions. As an explorer, he stated that he wanted to play "comprehensively" (WoodenPotatoes, 2017a, 00:46) as he wanted to know more about the game.

Even if MMORPGs try to cater to a wide variety of player types, the discussion revolved around WoodenPotatoes' player values as an individual.

The traits of his player type affected WoodenPotatoes' player values and commentary in the following ways:
•   Emphasized instances revolving incentives and payoff because of his achiever traits.
•   Focused on gameplay and exploration as an explorer.
•   Concerned with the tone of the narrative, morals, and values of the in-game world, the lore, and the thematic design of the game and narrative which align with audience style values.
•   Highlighted instances in the game revolving agency, organic learning, and immersion as an immersionist.

Ultimately, his concerns shaped and affected the video and commentary that was produced. All these values were discussed under the dimension of co-authorship as a gamer.

Dimension 2 answers how WoodenPotatoes as a fan of *GW2* takes on the role of a developer. He discusses these elements as if he were developing the game despite not being an employee of ArenaNet because he has a sense of ownership over the game.

WoodenPotatoes exhibited the following characteristics:
•   Understands the game and its playerbase
•   Keeps tracks of developer's progress, understands how they think, and how it applies to the game
•   Keeps track of the game's progress
•   Shows concern for the game while providing critiques, suggestions, and solutions
•   Showed concern regarding the health of the player base

By taking ownership of the game, WoodenPotatoes discusses parts that can be enhanced and improved. He provides solutions and features that are not currently available in game as well as suggestions that can better cater to the community. These findings align with studies done by Daneva (2017) and Jenkins (2006b). Thus, his commentary addresses the needs within the game. This is how co-authorship occurs as a fan.

RQ2: How does WoodenPotatoes comment on his playthroughs?

The findings of the study show that WoodenPotatoes comments on his playthrough as a gamer, as a fan, and as a YouTuber.

Dimension 1 shows that as a gamer, he related his experience as if he lived through it. The narrative and hypernarrative structure of *GW2* served as a guide to his mental schema which cultivated his player narrative. The schema was an important aspect in formulating his perception of the game as this heavily affected his playthrough and commentary. Interestingly, WoodenPotatoes did not just depend on in-game elements but also included external elements as part of his schema. This was seen in his commentary as he reflected on the game and his experiences and expectations.

The following items affect the schema:
- In-game narrative, content, and game play experiences
- Officially published content by the game company
- "Dissonance" (Lee, 2013)

His schema also adjusted based on his personal context of play which is why he found certain facets of the game acceptable or unacceptable. The schema did not adjust to logical leaps, continuity issues, and failure to meet narrative expectations which led to player disappointment. WoodenPotatoes (2017b) would point these instances out:

> "Now I am a bit disappointed… despite all of the world building and map story and stuff you get everywhere. I was talking about this being the serious fortification that people shouldn't be able to travel through!" (18:31)

However, when narrative expectations were met and continuity was present, it led to an immersive experience for WoodenPotatoes. Interestingly, personal player context allowed WoodenPotatoes to reflect and adjust his player narrative to adapt to elements in-game. With a recap scene, he felt the developers "made the right call" (WoodenPotatoes, 2017c, 24:25).

Dimension 2 shows that WoodenPotatoes comments on his playthroughs as a fan in order to engage with the greater community of players. As a member of the *GW2* fandom, he discusses his thoughts, theories, and findings with the greater *GW2* community which aligns with the studies done by Jenkins (2006a, 2006b, 2006c). He engages with the community and tries to answer their concerns and issues by using his expertise or by providing a theory that is based on his knowledge of the game.

In this example, WoodenPotatoes (2017b) discusses and explains the community's concern about metas in *Path of Fire*:

> "Now, yesterday, we talked about a few things that spurred quite a lot of discussion… I think when people say Path of Fire has no metas what they actually mean is there's no farm potential behind the meta events. Like, why do people really like Auric Basin in Tahrir? Well, yes, it's incredibly well built and it's beautiful… but why do people play it really? Why do they do it so much over two years? Well, because it was attached to a farm…" (00:40)

This is how he comments on his playthrough as a fan which helps co-author the video.

Dimension 3 shows how the affordances of YouTube causes WoodenPotatoes to take on a particular style of presentation, balance his interests as a fan, and his financial

interests as a YouTuber. As a YouTuber, it is necessary for WoodenPotatoes to engage the audience as it is how channels are ranked and how YouTubers earn money.

The following are the strategies he used to engage his audience:
- Direct audience engagement
- Provides context
- Uses in-game terms
- Uses first, second, and third person to relay player experiences
- Features content that adds value to player experience
- Places focus on the game by using only his voice and game clips
- Plays roles as a teacher, mentor, and experienced fan in order to establish credibility
- Provides a buffer to negative criticism and comments

This aligns with the studies done by Anderson (2017), Glas (2015), Johnson and Woodcock (2017), Pietruszka (2016), Piittinen (2018), and Postigo (2014, 2016). YouTube allows content creators to become financially independent, yet the system causes content creators to be subject to the tastes of their subscribers, corporate partners, and affiliates. As a person cultivating patrons, he must balance his own interests as well as the interests of the *GW2* community and ArenaNet. Thus, we see how the dimensions influence each other and co-author the video and commentary.

Analysis

The study adds to the literature of game studies, fan studies, and new media studies by showing how these three dimensions affect each other and are affected by each other. These dimensions interact because of the affordances of YouTube as a platform because individuals can upload their content online. Thus, these dimensions interact and influence each other through the co-authorship of the playthrough video, and it is not solely dependent on the game or its context. Dimensions co-author the playthrough on two levels: the first level of co-authorship occurs between the dimensions and the game while the second is inter-dimensional co-authorship. Although the game is engaged by the player in all dimensions, what is featured, highlighted, and discussed comes from the content creator as an individual. This is because a playthrough video includes factors that go beyond the scope of the game such as the mental schema of the player, the interests, knowledge, and engagement of the player as a fan, and the structural affordances provided by YouTube. Through this, the study also adds to the literature of game studies by showing how the mental schema requires continuity, how dissonance affects the mental schema and the player's perception, and the flexibility of the schema.

Conclusion

Playthrough is a site of both production and consumption as the player is not only playing a designed game but takes on the role of a gamer, fan, and a YouTuber. Gamers are co-authors of a game's narrative. Their mental schema or player narrative is guided by the structure provided by the game and is influenced by factors such as a player type, items they read or see from official sources, and the elements of the game itself to create their own story.

As fans, these gamers act as developers for the sake of the game's betterment by providing suggestions to improve the game's gameplay, narrative, and in-game world. Their expertise allows them to analyze the progress of the narrative, changes that were made in the game, and its need for improvement. They also engage with the larger community by sharing theory, speculation, and possible solutions to in-game problems. In this particular instance, YouTube gamers who are affiliated with companies must strike a balance between sharing their interests, cultivating their audience, and manage the interest and perception of patrons. They must play the roles assigned to them by catering to their niche market and thus manage how people view them.

Recommendations for Future Studies

As this study was done on a single YouTuber, there is a need to test the theory through other qualitative and quantitative methods. Researchers can also explore if other dimensions exist and if these affect the legal rights of content creators.

References

Anderson, S.L. (2017, July 1). Watching People Is Not a Game: Interactive Online Corporeality, Twitch.Tv and Videogame Streams. *The International Journal of Computer Game Research 17*(1). http://gamestudies.org/1701/articles/anderson.

Andrejevic, M. (2009). *The YouTube Reader* (P. Snickars & P. Vonderau, Eds.). Stockholm: The National Library of Sweden.

ArenaNet Partner Program. (n.d.). Guild Wars 2 Wiki (GW2W). Retrieved from https://wiki.guildwars2.com/wiki/ArenaNet_Partner_Program

Banks, J., & Deuze, M. (2009). Co-creative labour. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(5), 419–431. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877909337862

Bernstein, M. (1998). *PATTERNS OF HYPERTEXT*. Eastgate Systems Inc. http://www.eastgate.com/patterns/Print.html

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

Cicconi, S. (2000). *The Shaping of Hypertextual Narrative*. CicconiSergio.net. http://www.cisenet.com/cisenet/writing/essays/The_Shaping_of_Hypertextual_Narrative.pdf

Clark, W. (2018, January 28). *The (Still) uncertain state of video game streaming online*. Ars Techica. https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2018/01/to-stream-or-not-to-stream-how-online-streaming-game-videos-exist-in-an-ip-world/

Coleman, S., & Dyer-Witheford, N. (2007). Playing on the digital commons: collectivities, capital and contestation in videogame culture. *Media, Culture & Society*, 29(6), 934–953. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443707081700

Cook, D. (2006, October 23). *What are game mechanics?*. Lost Garden. https://lostgarden.home.blog/2006/10/24/what-are-game-mechanics/

Daneva, M. (2017, December). Striving for balance: A look at gameplay requirements of massively multiplayer online role-playing games. *Journal of Systems and Software,134*, 54-75. doi:10.1016/j.jss.2017.08.009

Dawson, C. (2016, July 07). *Why watching video games is must-See TV*. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/07/living/watching-video-games/index.html

Fabricatore, C. (2007). Gameplay and game mechanics design: A key to quality in videogames. In *OECD-CERI Expert Meeting on Videogames and Education*. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.1125.4167

Finniss, D. (2009, November 18). *What is a "Let's Play?"*. Yahoo Contributor Network. http://voices.yahoo.com/what-lets-play-4901264.html [https://perma.cc/4DEL-AXA4]

Frasca, G. (2003). Ludologists love stories, too: Notes from a debate that never took place. In *DiGRA '03 - Proceedings of the 2003 DiGRA International Conference: Level Up*. Retrieved from http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/05163.01125.pdf

Glas, R. (2015). Vicarious Play: Engaging the Viewer in Let's Play Videos. *Empedocles: European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication,5*(1/2), 81-86. doi: 10.1386/ejpc.5.1-2.81_1

Grip, T. (2014, April 29). *4-Layers, A Narrative Design Approach*. Frictional Games. https://frictionalgames.com/2014-04-4-layers-a-narrative-design-approach/

Grip, T. (2012, September 10). The Self, Presence and Storytelling. In *Game Developer Conference Europe (GDCE)*. http://unbirthgame.com/TheSelfPresenceStorytelling.pdf

Hudson, L. (2017, August 16). *Using YouTube as an Accelerant for Video Games.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/technology/personaltech/using-youtube-as-an-accelerant-for-video-games.html

Hopp, T., Barker, V., & Weiss, A. (2015). Interdependent Self-Construal, Self-Efficacy, and Community Involvement as Predictors of Perceived Knowledge Gain Among MMORPG Players. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking,18*(8), 468-473. doi:10.1089/cyber.2015.0073

Johnson, M. R., & Woodcock, J. (2017). Fighting games and Go: Exploring the aesthetics of play in professional gaming. *Thesis Eleven*, 138(1), 26–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513616689399

Juul, J. (2001). Games Telling stories? *The International Journal of Computer Game Research,1*(1), July. Retrieved from http://gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/

Jenkins, H. (2004). *GAME DESIGN AS NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE.* MIT Press. Retrieved from http://web.mit.edu/~21fms/People/henry3/games&narrative.html

Jenkins, H. (2006a). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2006b). *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: Exploring participatory culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2006c). When Fandom Goes Mainstream. HenryJenkins.org. http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2006/11/when_fandom_goes_mainstream.html

Lee, T. (2013, October 24). *Designing game narrative.* Hitbox Team. https://hitboxteam.com/designing-game-narrative

Lemmens, P., Bouzouita, M., Caracciolo, M., & Schelstraete, J. (2017). *Narrative in Video Games: Environmental Storytelling in BioShock and Gone Home.* https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:002375924

Lindley, C. A. (2005). Story and Narrative Structures in Computer Games. *CiteSeerX,*1-27. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.119.797&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Machinima (Director). (2011, October 31). *MMO Part 1: Crawling Through the MUD. Youtube.com / MMO Part: Crawling Through the MUD* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgYuJczGv8o

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by- Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars. *AISHE,8*(3), 3351-33514. Retrieved from http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/335/553

May, J. (2018). YouTube Gamers and Think-Aloud Protocols: Introducing Usability Testing. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication,62*(1), 94-103. doi:10.1109/TPC.2018.2867130

McGonigal, J. (2010, February). *Gaming can make a better world* [Video File]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world

Lapadat, J. (2010). Thematic Analysis. In A. J. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (Vols. 1-0, pp. 926–927). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412957397

Myers, D. (2010). Anti-narrative. In *Play Redux: The Form of Computer Games* (pp. 71-85). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv65swkk.9

Nascimento, G., Ribeiro, M., Cerf, L., Cesário, N., Kaytoue, M., Raïssi, C., Vasconcelos, T., & Meira Jr., W. (2014). Modeling and Analyzing the Video Game Live-Streaming Community. In *Conference: 2014 9th Latin American Web Congress (LA-WEB)*. doi: 10.1109/LAWeb.2014.9

O'Connor, E. L., Longman, H., White, K. M., & Obst, P. L. (2015). Sense of Community, Social Identity and Social Support Among Players of Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs): A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology,25*(6), 459-473. doi:10.1002/casp.2224

Ortiz, D. (2015, September 25). *Introducing the ArenaNet Partner Program.* GuildWars2.com. https://www.guildwars2.com/en/news/introducing-the-arenanet-partner-program/

Partner Program. (2015) Guild Wars 2. Retrieved from https://welcome.guildwars2.com/en/partner-program

Pietruszka, M. (2016). Watching people playing games: A survey of presentational techniques in most popular game-Vlogs. *Res Rhetorica 3*(4). https://doi.org/10.17380/rr.2016.4.4

Piittinen, S. (2018). Morality in Let's Play narrations: Moral evaluations of Gothic monsters in gameplay videos of Fallout 3. New Media & Society, 20(12), 4671–4688. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818779754

Postigo, H. (2014). Playing for Work Independence as Promise in Gameplay Commentary on YouTube. In *Media Independence: Working with Freedom Or Working for Free?*(pp. 202-220). Routledge. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314517380_Playing_for_Work_Independence_as_Promise_in_Gameplay_Commentary_on_YouTube.

Postigo, H. (2016). The Socio-Technical Architecture of Digital Labor: Converting Play into YouTube Money. *New Media & Society,18*(2), 332-349. doi:10.1177/1461444814541527

Rapatan, M. Q. (2017, July 19). *DEFINING INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE GAMES*. Lecture presented at Digital Design Class in De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines.

Rigney, R. (2017, December 22). *Want to Sell Your Game? Don't Tick Off YouTubers.* Wired.com. https://www.wired.com/2013/10/stanley-parable-sales/

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychologist,55*(1), 68-78. doi:10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68.

Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). Chapter 10: The Primary Schemas. In *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT Press. Retrieved from https://gamifique.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/1-rules-of-play-game-design-fundamentals.pdf

Schreiber, I. (2009, July 29). *Level 10: Nonlinear Storytelling.* Game Design Concepts. https://gamedesignconcepts.wordpress.com/2009/07/30/level-10-nonlinear-storytelling/

Shinkle, E. (2005). Feel It, Don't Think: The Significance of Affect in the Study of Digital Games. In *DiGRA '05 - Proceedings of the 2005 DiGRA International Conference: Changing Views: Worlds in Play*. http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/06276.00216.pdf

Simons, J. (2007). Narrative, Games, and Theory. *The International Journal of Computer Game Research,7*(1). http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/simons?platform=hootsuite

Sotamaa, O. (2007). Let Me Take You to The Movies: Productive Players, Commodification and Transformative Play. *Convergence*, *13*(4), 383–401. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856507081961

Terranova, T. (2000). Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy. *Social Text, 18*(2), 33-58. doi: 10.1215/01642472-18-2_63-33

Wilde, T. (2017, September 12). *Lawyers explain why Campo Santo's takedown of PewDiePie's video is legal.* PC Gamer. https://www.pcgamer.com/lawyers-explain-why-campo-santos-takedown-of-pewdiepies-video-is-legal/

Wolf, M. J. (2008). *The video game explosion: A history from Pong to Playstation and beyond*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

WoodenPotatoes. (2017a, September 23). *Guild Wars 2 Path of Fire Gameplay - Day 1 | Unlocking Weaver, Raptors, Adventure & Brand NO SPOILZ* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE8PbG8KN8w

WoodenPotatoes. (2017b, September 26). *Guild Wars 2 Path of Fire - Day 4 | Exploring the Desolation (!), Riding a JACKAL & The Riverlands* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQbDxpJLINo

WoodenPotatoes. (2017c, September 29). *Holy Crap I Finished The Story | Path of Fire Lore, Reactions & Initial Thoughts [HEAVY SPOILERS]* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxVC9j_2UaA

WoodenPotatoes. (2017d, October 31). *Guild Wars 2 - The Lore Behind Acquiring the Griffon Mount | Secret Mount and Extra Story Steps* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkLzNjgVDAk

Zagal, J. P. (2010). *Ludoliteracy: Defining, understanding, and supporting games education*. LaVergne, TN: ETC Press.

Zariko, Z. (2016). Screening Embodiment: Let's Play Video and Observable Play Experiences. *Masters by Research, RMIT University,* 1-194. https://researchrepository.rmit.edu.au/discovery/delivery?vid=61RMIT_INST:ResearchRepository&repId=12248214080001341#13248387050001341

Contact email: jasper_go@dlsu.edu.ph